



## **Foreword**

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The Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) was created by a group of people who are enthusiastic about opening a space for “publishing explanations that connect a flow of life-affirming energy with living values such as love, freedom, justice, compassion, courage, care and democratic evaluation” (<http://ejolts.net>).

The first issue of EJOLTS was published in October 2008 and we are pleased to be publishing issue four in December 2009. We continue to expand our list of reviewers and welcome Alison Gilliland and Josefina Quintero Corzo to the review team. We have set up a [Development Team forum](#) to encourage the sharing of ideas among the team so that we can learn from each other and continue to provide critical and constructive feedback to authors.

We are exciting by the opportunities opened up by emerging web-based technologies. They offer new possibilities for representing educational practices and for reaching out to a global audience. EJOLTS operates an open review process and this means that communication between the reviewers and the authors is transparent and the readers are able to participate in the whole process at [Open reviewing process forum](#).

This issue contains five articles from a number of different countries: Croatia, Rwanda, China, Ireland and the UK. The articles range from Primary school, International Non-Government Organisation, Mental Health, University Teacher-Education and English Language-Learning. The themes include encouraging pupil creativity (Gavran), mutual learning on the issues of ICT integration in teacher professional development (Hooker), learner autonomy (Li), recovery-oriented e-learning website for people with mental health difficulties (Mulhern) and accountability in teacher education (Renowden).

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In the first paper, Mario Gavran from Croatia opens the door of his primary school classroom and his own professional work. Through his text based accounts and the videos of his teaching with pupils he illustrates how he encourages pupil creativity through the creation of a class journal, in the form of a print journal and a blog. The photographs show the pupils creatively at work and their creative work. Mario discusses how the pupils' blog helped him to gain further insights into their interests and to monitor their progress more successfully. He brings the reader through the action research process from the introductory activities with pupils through to the finished product. Mario's openness to share his ongoing learning with his professional colleagues adds to the authenticity of the account.

In the second paper, Mary Hooker, an Educational Specialist with the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI) demonstrates how she encourages reflection on ICT in professional development in Rwanda. Mary aims to improve her own practice as she assists the GeSCI partners to develop their own solutions to the challenges of ICT integration in their own education system. She uses a hybrid approach adapting 'Activity Theory' (AT) and 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) frameworks and tools and integrates these within her living theory. Mary points to the power of the action research process in enabling her to engage with partner in a process of mutual learning on the issues of ICT integration in Teacher Professional Development in Rwanda.

In the third paper, Li Yahong from the Shangluo University, China provides the reader with the background to her cultural and educational context and draws the reader into her learning environment. She describes and explains how she helped her students to develop their learning autonomy. Li draws on evidence from her students, critical friends, mentor and her own reflections as she narrates her story of learning. Li Yahong's commitment to the process of enquiry into her own teaching is clearly communicated through the extracts of her own journals and student journals. The action research process has proven to be an enabling experience for her as she discovers that "students could be more creative in learning than you expect them to if they have a chance to show and manage themselves."

In the fourth paper, Ronan Mulhern, an assistant manager of an occupational service centre for people with mental health difficulties illustrates how he seeks to develop his practice as he researches the question: "How can I design a recovery-oriented e-learning website for people with mental health difficulties?" He recognises the significant inequalities experienced by people with mental health difficulties in accessing e-learning environments due to issues around usability and accessibility. Ronan shows a clear understanding of the potential of action research to empower and give voice to the participants in his research enquiry. He engages with Habermas (1984) criteria of social validity as he presents his research account of his own learning and his influence in the learning of his participants.

In the final paper, Jane Renowden, a Senior Lecturer in Education in a Teacher Education college in the UK offers an account of her reflections and theorising on her practice. She describes the move from primary school to working in Higher Education as the catalyst for starting her research. She comes to appreciate the meaning of the word "practice" as she engages with the questions "What is my practice?" and "How do I understand my practice?" In the first video clip, Jane shows her willingness to be publicly accountable for her practice: "this need that I feel in me now to be accountable for what I am doing on a deeper level than just ticking boxes." She discusses how her engagement in

the action research process has enabled her to become more confident professionally as she becomes a participant in the change process rather than an observer.

There is an emergent realisation that quality in practice-based research cannot be encapsulated in a list of criteria, as there are different kinds of excellence—“excellence that ‘resists instrumentalisation’ and that promotes diversity, hybridisation and versatility in research” (Oancea & Furlong, 2007). The authors engage in a self-study of their practice. They clearly express their concerns when they recognise that their values are not being lived as fully as they desire, they imagine a possible way forward, gather data in the action and make evaluations of the effectiveness of the action in living their values more fully and then modifying concerns, plans and actions in the light of the evaluation. Through a disciplined form of educational enquiry the educational knowledge of professional educators have been made public in the true spirit of research as “systematic inquiry made public” (Stenhouse, 1981, p. 104).

We would like to take the opportunity to thank the Editors and Reviewers for their commitment to this issue: Dr. Yves Bertrand, Dr. Pip Bruce Ferguson, Catherine Dean, Dr. Jacqueline DeLong, Tian Fenguin, Professor Moira Laidlaw, Dr. Sarah Porter, Dr. Jacqueline Scholes Rhodes, Dr. Ram Sing Punia and Dr. Jane Spiro.

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