

Editorial Introduction

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This second issue of 2014 connects its descriptive, analytical and critical platforms with the ongoing and desirable attachments of learning contexts to the lived experiences of people. The factedness that educational research is never a purely theoretical exercise should be corroborated by the established relationship between learning programs and the practical locations of social well-being and occasionally social unwell-being. More often than otherwise, we engage in educational research to explain, inter alia, discrepancies or gaps of learning and living weaknesses that deserve our observations and analysis so as to suggest better ways of reconstructing social phenomenon and learning connections with the main intention of realigning these into more viable platforms that enhance the concerned situations for the concerned.

The importance of such explanatory intentions, practices and related suggestive possibilities should have many elements of the continuously desirable restructuring of educational programs for social development which should consistently talk about potential improvements in the socio-cultural, political, and economic as well as the technological and emotional well-being of peoples irrespective of their birth circumstances, prevailing life situations, or their relationships with the institutions and governments that manage the public spaces in which they reside. With these observations, one should be able to see the stable but still transitional nature of educational research. At one level, such research explains the social and related educational weaknesses or strengths that need to be understood; on another level, educational research should always aim to play the role, as suggested above, of a forward-looking prospect that, by learning from the current experiences under consideration, suggests a better and more inclusive way of doing things. The articles as well as other components contained in this issue actually fulfill such potential double mission of most, if not all educational research.

It is with this in mind that the promise of learning programs, whether formal as in currently dominant types of schooling or conveyed via different modes of communication and knowledge sharing, has become a central perspective of contemporary life. In almost all national or global educational contexts, the essence of educational research is more or less, responding to this socio-culturally habitualized learning imperative where by understanding problems or weaknesses in political relations, for example, and related institutional characteristics, we explain the issues/problems we observe, then suggest ways of improving lives through reconfigurable educational and policy platforms. In responding to these main categories of educational research,

the articles analyze ways of understanding and overcoming social relations that involve cross-boundary issues which could negatively affect family contexts that might be in transitional contexts. Though not fully related but extendable from this is also the issue of gender power relations that differentially affect men and women with entrenched categories of reading the world that refuse to change with the transformations of time and space.

In the first article entitled, *An Insider Viewpoint on Cultural Norms for Marriage and Mate Selection Relevant to Immigration Fraud Detection in South Asian International Arranged Marriage*, Noorfarah Merali discusses the case of South Asian immigrant families residing in Canada often seeking spouses for their children from their home countries, and filing applications to enable the foreign spouses to immigrate. She notes how what she calls marriages of convenience for immigration pose a major threat to genuine international unions, as immigration officers evaluating marriage-based immigration applications must rule out fraudulent relations. Through focus groups with 27 cultural insiders, including South Asian religious and community leaders, Merali identified subculture norms for marriage and mate selection that can directly inform immigration fraud detection: (a) intra-familial marriage practices among Pakistani Muslims and South Indians, (b) extra-familial marriage traditions among Hindus and Sikhs, and (c) exceptions to norms for widows and intergroup marriages. With this in place, Merali discusses implications for cultural education for immigration officers.

In the second article entitled, *Men's Perception of Women's Role and Girls' Education among Pashtun Tribes of Pakistan: A Qualitative Delphi Study*, Aamir Jamal examines how Pashtun men perceive women's role and girls' education. Jamal conducted a modified two-round Delphi exercise followed by in-depth qualitative interviews with Pashtun men of diverse backgrounds, including representatives of religious and political groups. The interviews demonstrated that the sociocultural status of women, and consequently their access to education, remains deeply tied to *Pashtunwali* (tribal code) and rigid religious interpretations. Jamal notes that though at times contradictory, the ideas and stereotypes arising from religion, culture, and politics were found to meaningfully shape men's attitudes about women's participation in community and education. In this study he found that, compared to rural and tribal areas, these traditions and restrictions are not as rigidly practiced in the urban and plains areas. As he suggests, understanding men's views can be an important starting point in the situation; that can be followed by new ways of engaging men in the collective struggle for gender justice.

Besides the two articles, this issue also contains a poetry piece entitled *Smile (Snarl)* by Towani Duchscher. In her poetic disposition, Duchscher examines issues related to racial identity, Canadian identity, and racism through a critical reflection upon a lived confrontation. She questions the complex meanings of being a Canadian and how our often limited understandings of the Canadian identity perpetuate the marginalization of some and the inclusion of others. The poem also addresses the ambivalence of living in the hyphen between two races, where Duchscher considers how the challenges of defining our personal and national identities are often thrust upon us when we least expect them. Beyond the two articles and the poetry piece, the issue also contains two books reviews. The first is G. Aikenhead and H. Michell's *Bridging Culture*,

Indigenous and scientific ways of knowing (2011), reviewed by Yovita Gwekwerere; the second is O.H. Chemhuru's *Philosophy of Education: Its relevance to teacher education* (2011), reviewed by Ngoni Makuvaza. Together, everything contained in this issue thematically but selectively sustains and certainly responds to the critical locations of educational and related human life research where we shall continually analyze and respond to the social and learning scenes and realities that surround us and with which we interact in ways that we hope will make our lived experiences more viable and more connected.