



**Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry:
Special Issue, Summer 2015**

**“Having Tea at the Empress”:
Contesting Colonial Agendas in the
formal/non-formal curricula**

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CPI Special Issue: “Having Tea at the Empress”

From the Editors: Cecille DePass, Yan Guo, Margaret Dobson

Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of the three part Special Series of “Having Tea at the Empress.” This Special Issue of the CPI journal traces its inception, **to the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada’s (CIESC’s) annual conference, at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada**, a few years ago. At that time presenters such as Kathleen Sitter, Kathryn Jones, Yan Guo, Yvonne Brown, and Sandra Ryan served forth papers as diverse and compelling as an intricate multi-coloured tapestry. With the permission of the author, Pamela Mordecai (2005, 2001), selected extracts from her poetry became the dominant integrating themes for the conference papers and follow-up discussion. Mordecai’s poetry set out significant nuances and emphases which were explicitly and implicitly, hinted at by the speakers and panelists as they shaped the panels which informed the tapestry. Mordecai’s poems, fearlessly voiced important structural and systemic issues and served to loosely bind the papers together. Cecille DePass as conference “dream-catcher” and now as co-editor of this special issue, subtly, yet deliberately, conceptualized and articulated the thematic imagery of the notional tapestry. And now, DePass has extended the themes of ‘Having Tea at the Empress’ and the conceptual framework, so that the above authors could be encouraged to share their highly individual and unique voices within the patterns in the emerging tapestry of this CPI introductory Special Issue.

Some time after the University of Victoria (CIESC) experience, one presenter commented to DePass, that the entire production at the conference was similar to a dramatic performance. As anticipated, the papers sparked, a spontaneous, lively, follow -up, discussion which was led by Marianne Larsen, (then, CIESC President), and Suzanne Majhanovich, and Deo Poonwassie, (two former CIESC Presidents). The ensuing discussion, raised the level and quality of the emerging conversation, by posing some provocative and challenging responses to the papers, to which the presenters responded in well balanced, terms by drawing on their empirical research. Accordingly, as a result of the quality of audience’s responses to the oral presentations, and the tone and content of the discussion, DePass decided to work with some of the above authors, and a few selected emerging and established academics, in order to develop and extend considerably, *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry*, 2015, 7(1), pp. iii-ix
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the analysis of the key issues which were initially identified in the **CIESC** panel presentation and to shape a summer 2015, Special Issue.

As often happens in a research and scholarly process, unanticipated events occurred, for example, CPI's **Shibao Guo** attending an international conference in China, heard **Quanmin Li's paper**, and invited her, on behalf of the CPI Editorial Board to submit a paper from her dissertation. **Edward Shizha**, CPI's Book Review Editor, solicited on behalf of CPI, a **paper by Charles Kivunja**. The Special Issue continued to unfold in unexpected ways.

To our good fortune, Tania Guerrero (see also, Alif 2005), submitted **original poems** which complemented the Special Issue's themes. Then, Towani Duchscher's article arrived accompanied by a video demonstrating both music and her original choreography. Her multiple media article, accordingly, depicts a very good example of the embodiment of knowledge and ways of knowing via dramatic movement. Taken altogether, the additions of papers from far afield, poetry, and even **photography** have happily resulted in a far **more comprehensive Special Issue**.

Thus, the Special Issue will come to you in three separate servings of CPI Special Issues. As the Special Issue has developed into a trilogy, the theme or metaphor of the tapestry has taken generative as well as more tangible form. The tapestry of a single issue has become a triptych, a series of three major complimentary tapestries. Within each tapestry or issue, several articles or panels appear, as well as other presentations such as poetry, artwork or photography. The present Special Issue and those to follow can be viewed as standing alone, but ultimately, they combine to form a united thematic image. The three parts of the triptych will come to you as:

Tapestry I: Having Tea at the Empress: contesting the colonial agendas in the formal and non-formal educational curricula. [Summer 2015 Special Issue].

Tapestry II: Still having Tea at the Empress: taking action: disrupting the colonial agendas in the formal and lived curricula. [Fall/Winter 2016 Special Issue].

Tapestry III: Yet another Tea at the Empress: embodying ways of knowing ...reflexivity, body, spirit and voice. [[Fall/Winter Sequel 2017 Special Issue/or TBA](#)].

Each tapestry/issue will contain a sequence of articles which may be described as panels. Each panel appears individually but in essence, each contributes to a whole work of many multi-coloured threads, pictures and patterns bringing ideas and challenges to the mind's eye. This initial offering of the Special Issue includes contributing authors from China, Africa, Australia and diverse parts of Canada who have been encouraged to incorporate their distinctive styles (Miriam Said, 2008), critical perspectives, worldviews (Edward Said, 1996), inflections, and usage of englishes, as well as other languages. These important aspects have been deliberately kept in the present and the two subsequent parts of the trilogy.

Tapestry Themes

Within the bigger picture of the Trilogy are woven, for example: (i) current patterns of research in postcolonial studies in education in its broadest sense; (ii) subtle variations in structural and systemic patterns of dominance and subordination; (iii) dominant and minor threads and concomitant variegated colours in for example, contemporary analyses of social, economic, literary, linguistic, ethnic, and racial patterns of the interplay between justice/injustice, equity/inequity, equality/inequality, tolerance/intolerance;(iv) the implicit and explicit assumptions and implications regarding education as a gift/ privilege/human right, in fact education is regarded by some as the social glue which binds or disrupts communities. All are major themes in the larger trilogy of tapestries.

This exploratory issue presents worldviews of formal/non-formal/informal education in which education, plays important functions as screening mechanisms which foster or restrict 'the life chances' of students, in particular, minority students. The screening mechanisms may be used by gatekeepers of knowledge in at least two ways: firstly, to push for meaningful social change which benefits the marginalized and oppressed students. Or secondly, to continue well established, historical and contemporary policies and practices in education which fall predominantly, within models of transmission or banking (in Freireian terms).

Articles selected for inclusion in the present and two forthcoming issues of the trilogy of the 'Having tea series' (explained below) concentrate explicitly and/or implicitly with issues, often associated with 'border crossings'. Such border crossings can be: symbolic, imagined, structural, instrumental, and functional. They depict imaginary and lived realities. The border crossings can

also be pragmatic, grounded, and inspirational. As well, articles which promote social and systemic changes to the formal and non-formal curricula are included.

Tapestry I, Having Tea at the Empress: contesting the colonial agendas in the formal and non-formal educational curricula. **Tapestry Articles:**

The first instalment contains seven highly diverse papers which illustrate the multi-coloured threads and patterns of our themes related to dominance and subordination, equity, tolerance and educational assumptions.

Panel/Article 1: Kathy Sitter's nimble, and sure fingers, deftly explore the patterns surrounding societal taboos and lack of understanding regarding sexual rights and health issues among the disability community. This article, drawn from her innovative doctoral research, highlights a Participatory Action Research project in film making involving and engaging adults with disabilities both in the research, and the film creation and editing processes. Participants share their responses to the process as film-collaborators and their realization of abilities as self-representatives and self-advocates.

Panel/Article 2: In her paper, **Sandra Ryan** draws on her considerable expertise of working with adult and primary students in the field of international development education. Her panel depicts graphic illustrations of the worldviews and perspectives of some Albertan primary students in two urban schools. Fund raising projects were essential components of the schools' global development education initiatives. Ryan's article critically examines how the students acquired an increased awareness of issues in developing countries, but at the same time may have learned stereotypical and imperialistic perspectives. The panel reveals the hidden meanings often buried deeply in tapestries and might be likened to the murals of Diego Rivera in Mexico City which exposed the negative impacts of colonization on the body, spirit and mind.

Panel/Article 3. Yan Guo's panel, rounds out Tapestry I of the 'Having tea' series in this Special Issue. Guo demonstrates with the skill of a tai-chi master how educational policies, procedures and practices are illustrative of mental conquest and conformity. In a manner reminiscent of Pieterse and Parekh's (1995) 'decolonization of the imagination', and with Bob Marley's emphatic plea 'to emancipate [oneself] from mental slavery,' Guo explicates the attitudes, beliefs, and privileges which members of the dominant culture take for granted. As a

teacher educator, Guo has developed strategies to challenge pre-service teachers to re-think and re-conceptualize the school structure in relation to immigrant students. Teacher educators preparing teachers to work effectively and equitably in a linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse context can employ strategies described in this article.

Panel/Article 4: Quanmin Li's article is an artfully embroidered tapestry which marvellously juxtaposes with the Special Issue title and theme of "having tea." As the author investigates tea and social relationships among the De'ang people, she highlights the role of tea in the culture of an Indigenous community, and uncovers how the interactions surrounding tea and the spirit of tea, contribute to the construction of community. Quanmin Li, with the analytical skills of a traditional anthropologist, reveals the symbolic, instrumental and literary meanings attached to the tea ceremony and gift-giving in southwest China. The analysis is made at several levels, material, emotional, and ideological, and as an ethnographic study of a distinct minority group of about 20,566 members, less than 1% of the total Chinese population, the article shares insights into the identity of the De'ang community about which there is little previously published in English.

Panel/Article 5: Charles Kivunja's article brings analytical precision and philosophical clarity to the topic of knowledge and understanding and its relationship to learning evaluation. He wields his tapestry hook with dexterity so that some of the sacred cows in the field of measurement and evaluation are revealed. His panel argues against an instrumental approach to teaching. Instead he explains in considerable depth, what it means to teach for understanding. More specific elements of his thinking are to be presented in a related paper for Kim Koh's Special Issue for CPI which focuses on high stakes, testing, measurement and evaluation.

Panel/Article 6: Kathryn Jones brings deft needlework to her tapestry in which she explores major contradictions confronting instructors and students when they grapple with potentially highly troubling and emotionally challenging literature. She traces the impacts of teaching for peace and ways of becoming peaceful, responsible citizens in Canada, in terms of teaching-learning strategies which literally numb the students' minds with an excessive quantity of literary materials or types of movies which graphically depict man's inhumanity to man, euphemistically called 'collateral damage.' Jones considers the ways instructors could or should be interacting

with students who are encountering harsh life truths while activities are focused on classroom realities and curricular and provincial educational expectations.

Panel/Article 7: Towani Duchscher's presents another tapestry panel displaying a different type of hooking needle and selection of variegated threads, demonstrating that teaching is an evolving, not a rigid or static work of art. Duchscher's article depicts in voice, script, and dance, the metaphor of flight in terms of individual narratives of her pre-service teaching and learning experiences and strategies of resistance to conventional wisdom. Her approaches to teaching, are deliberately adopted to disrupt the rigidity of for example, the seating chart, and to circumvent the reliance on teaching strategies which fail to make the curriculum either come alive or to incorporate students prior knowledge (formal/non-formal/informal). By involving as many senses as possible, the paper literally dances on and off the page.

Finally, Poetry by **Tania Guerrero**, and Photography by **Robyn Chin Fatt**, perform functions of ending the first, 'reserved seating only' of the 'Having Tea at the Empress' trilogy. It points to some of the possible paths to be followed in the 2nd and 3rd parts of the trilogy.

In each panel of our generative tapestry, the colours, fabrics, threads and patterns are sometimes vibrant, and other times more subtle and muted, however in all of the tapestry panels, contestations and disruptions are used creatively, to help the reader to think of a better and fairer world for its present and future children, for many generations to come.

Do join us for the first serving of high tea! Brew up a particularly, rich, spicy blend of black tea, subtly infused with fruits of the tropics. Definitely a tea 'produced in Canada, eh!'

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