Editorial Introduction

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In these times of globalizing, complex, networked, at times macro-constructed while at the same time, micro-controlled world contexts, the role of education as an important prospect and platform for social well-being is as important as ever. Yet as we move forward into this rapidly shifting technological and social-relational locations, the divide between the educational haves and learning have-nots is as stark as ever. Indeed, educators like myself who for many years continually saw a possible and inclusively reachable horizon of educational possibilities, even if, in pragmatic terms, occasionally less visible, have to wonder about the increasing tenacity of the dividing lines that are sustaining these divisions which enfranchise the real lives of some while certainly marginalizing the actual contexts of others. That being as it is, the need to analyze these situations, explain the attendant weaknesses and establish propositional conjectures that could rebuild the situation for actively and expansively enfranchising learning and pedagogical prospects is as urgent as ever.

Indeed, as educational researchers, our intellectual commitment to analytically and critically engage the corrugated surfaces and their attached uneven inner structures of educational opportunities or lack thereof, is still binding and should have the same imperatives in both the near and distant futures. But the focus on this important issue cannot and should not have a single uni-directional objective of just raising the availability of educational programs and provisions. As much as the quantitative representations are important, we should also be aware of the many times when what was (is being) provided did not liberate either the measurable needs or the ontological realities of people. So in educational research and certainly in the overall contexts of contemporary learning dispensations, the qualitative responses must be highlighted to the point where irrelevant education is, for all pragmatic considerations, a non-education. It is with this understanding that we need to excavate a little deeper and seek the sub-macro/micro policies and programmatic arrangements that can facilitate the relevance of new learning possibilities at the global, national and local levels.

The three articles in this issue are more or less, responding to these shifting and complex realities between society and education. In general terms, and as alluded to above, we should analyze learning relationships as either reproducing society as it is, or assuring some transformational possibilities that constructively affect the lives of people. From our perspective, especially with respect to the urgently needed situationally viable and socio-culturally relevant educational projects that could liberate people from the myriad of daily problems they face in their spaces of residence and work, the time is now. As such, we must continue our current topical concern and attachable praxical analysis of the possibilities of contextually transformational education in contemporary locations of subjective and social restrictions where the need to re-invent the

general domains of learning so they fit the immediate needs of targeted populations is so needed and desired. In addition, an important focus remains finding ways of dealing with issues of inclusion and exclusion, not only in societal contexts, but as well, in instructional and pedagogical relationships where the rhetoric of established rights for all is not necessarily helping those who may be continuously marginalized, and by extension, epistemically minoritized through their cultural, linguistic or religious affiliations. That itself should at least be diagonally related to the wider debates on educational relevance, especially in selectively specialized areas such as the physical and mathematical sciences where via perforce normalized historical terms, western epistemological categories reigned supreme for so long. Indeed, it is through the thick and well-drafted analyses of the authors that we shall critically discern the need to re-examine and where possible relocate actual and future learning structures and relationships so they actively and effectively respond to both the current and emerging needs of peoples across the world.

In the first article, *"Lock 'Em Up . . ." but Where's the Key? Transformative Drama with Incarcerated Youth*, which is based on a research study doing applied theatre with youth at an Alberta, Canada, Diane Conrad starts with a question asked by young offender facility: *How can participatory drama contribute to the education of incarcerated youth to avoid future negative outcomes of their "at-risk" behaviours?* From this life-wise, seminal question, Conrad's article focuses on the social implications and the advocacy aspects of the research. It asks how spaces can be created within institutions such as prisons and schools for transformative processes to occur. Rather than the current "moral panic" that blames youth for social ills, rather than punishment and retribution – enacted against the majority of young Aboriginal inmates, the author raises the need for strategies that focus on personal and social development. Citing an example from the participatory drama work, the work proposes the need for appropriate programming for youth and more compassionate attitudes regarding their needs. As Conrad notes, participatory drama, along with emerging restorative justice practices based in Indigenous cultures, offer hope for community-based solutions to creating more caring and compassionate processes of schooling and justice and a more caring and compassionate society overall.

In the second article, *Islamic Education and Multiculturalism: Engaging with the Canadian Experience,* Faisal Ali and Carl Bagley note how Canada has a long history of immigration by diverse ethnic minority groups arriving in the hope of establishing economically successful – yet socially and culturally distinct, i.e., communities with particular values and beliefs not necessarily shared by the ethnic majority. In recent years however the arrival of new immigrants whose values differ from the mainstream has intensified the multicultural debate, as the aspirations and needs of ideologically-motivated minorities feel current policies and institutions marginalize their values and beliefs (not dissimilar to that historically encountered by Canada's indigenous people). As a result of these social divergences, Ali and Bagley say, the secular state and orthodox religious groups often compete for the hearts and minds of children. Consequently as Muslim communities in Canada seek to protect their children and youth from perceived negative outside influences so Islamic schools have been established. Such schools face particular challenges in negotiating the tensions between their aspiration to preserve Islamic

values and wider socio-political pressures to integrate into Canada's multicultural society as a whole. The article engages with this tension to uncover and explore the nature of Islamic education and its potentially contested relationship with Canada's multicultural ideals. At the end, the work also reflects on possible ways in which multicultural-Islamic education tensions might be ameliorated.

In the third article, *The iSPACES Framework to Restructure Culturally Responsive Secondary Science Curriculum in Tanzania*. Ladislaus (Ladi) Semali states how the *iSPACES* project for teaching a culturally responsive science curriculum in Tanzania emphasizes practical skills to develop scientific knowledge among secondary school students. *i*SPACES employs a framework that involves interdisciplinary teaching to motivate students to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and to produce useful products that will fill needs encountered in real life. Semali considers methods for restructuring an existing curriculum and rethinking the methodologies for teaching of physics, chemistry and biology (PCB) to overcome students' cognitive conflicts between their everyday world and the world of academic science. The examination of the issues concludes with an illustration of curriculum structure that may guide teachers who wish to rethink PCB pedagogy and designers who want to create culturally responsive curricula. Besides the three articles, there are also three book reviews in the issue: Greg Wiggan and Jean Walrond's *Following the Northern Star: Caribbean Identities and Education in North American Schools (2013), reviewed by Michael Kariwo*; A. Akkari's *Internationalization of Educational Policies: Challenges and Transformations* (2011), reviewed by *Gérlia Maria Nogueira Chaves*; and J.E. Romão *Avaliação dialógica: desafios e perspectivas* (Dialogical assessment: challenges and perspectives) (2011), reviewed by *Marcia Aparecida Silva.*