Editorial Introduction

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In this issue of the journal, the generalist and topically inclusive perspectives of education that are usually treated in this publication continue. While educational contexts could be selectively described as timeless - that is, all learning as a process that is ubiquitously located within and around the lives of people – and has to contain different descriptive characters and characteristics, their research intentions should still sustain some interactive unitary in the way they impact the situations of individuals and groups, and as well, in the desirable outcomes that people could extract from their design and implementation. As has been noted in the previous issues of the journal, the multi-disciplinarity of educational programs could also be a *fait accompli* with respect to the quasi-permanency of learning projects as critically located on the thick lines that attach societies to possibilities of development and overall social well-being. No, we will not abandon the constant analytical point of continuously attempting to locate educational projects as capable of constructively effecting active platforms of *desarollo* global. But in many instances, more readers could challenge this almost *a priori* and perhaps occasionally simplistic construction about the world of such complex and system-based enterprises as education leading, without some necessary conditions, to expansive development.

There have been and continue to be many instances where learning programs did not actually lead to social well-being, or to many tangible libratory practices for that matter. Indeed, for a long time, colonial education was a deliberately constructed edifice of oppressive practices that have led to the destruction of histories, cultures, peoples and their lands. We do not need to engage a detailed discussion of this story, it has been extensively analyzed in many spaces, but it is important to briefly re-introduce this fact whenever we decide to publicize educational possibilities as bringing about the desired social changes in one context or another. But the sorry state of an education that underdevelops, is not limited to historical spaces; it is also of the here and now. Indeed, the journal's focus, 'contemporary issues in education', partially takes some of its clues from the problematic case of many current learning programs that are not meeting the needs of today's intensively globalizing spaces of life. More often than otherwise, the rhetoric of education overwhelms the reality that it is neither fulfilling the material needs of all segments of societies, nor emancipating the cognitive existentialities of its direct recipients. Even in areas where the scientific method supposedly lessens the ethnocentric nature of knowledge systems, the imprint of the imperial order is still splashed across the propositions and findings.

It is via this reality, therefore, that the contents of the journal always had, and will continue to have inclusive critical inclinations that, while aiming to inform about specific research findings, also problematize the learning and social development contradictions of the status quo, hence pushing of the boundaries of not only the descriptive, but as well, the analytical and the oppositional. With the realities of globally interactive and interconnected environments, the problems as well as the prospects of education could be local, national and international. In many instances, the discrepancies (in terms of provisions and outcomes) that would be found within one system could be extensive. Taking Canada as an example here, the qualitative as well as the quantitative misconnections of education can be the result of social, cultural, linguistic, immigrants or refugees specific, policy based, or related to all of the above. Indeed, the relationship between viable educational possibilities and socio-economic status should no longer be a platform of contention, but the fragmentary nature of the relationship and its long-term impact on the lives of people is always more extensive than limited research outcomes could reflect.

The case could also be true for the other so-called liberal democracies where mainly due to the sanctity of the ill-understood and hardly effectively analyzed so-called individual rights, all social resources including education are at the mercy of market influences, along with all the mechanistic measurements that come with it, and the select commoditization of schooling, with all continuously spawning out concretized ideologies of competition whose raison d'être is to exclude some people from accessing the economic and political resources that can enhance their well-being. Hence, the necessary foci on contemporary issues of education, with the deliberate intention of not only disseminating the wrongs of the systems, but as well reporting and constructively analyzing when and how select experiments and programs work and could lead to better livelihood contexts that brighten the lives of learners and their societies. But even here, such research philosophy should be comfortable with the original constructions and intentions of criticism: all situations, when inclusively located, have the potential to improve and yield still better outcomes from their constituent components, and as such can improve, even more, the lives of those who inhabit them.

It is without any systematic detachments from these educational locations and possibilities that the three articles contained in this issue address learning contexts that deserve their timely dissemination and the spaces they occupy thereof. In the first article, 'Five Teachers' Range of Views on the Iraq war', Khodadad Kaviani and Terrence McCain discuss 'for the first time', what American teachers are teaching about the Iraq war and their conceptions of controversy and balanced instruction in the context of their lessons. Through in-depth interviews, five high school social studies teachers' lessons related to the Iraq war were examined and analyzed through the lenses of Issues-Centered Education and teachers' curriculum gate keeping. The authors' findings show that teachers' conception of controversy and balanced instruction influences the way they teach about public controversies. Furthermore, the Iraq war controversy provides a

unique opportunity to see how the Iraq war is taught during war time. In the second article, 'An Analysis of the implications between the theoretical framework and the policy context of Provincial Education Policy in Ontario', Lorenzo Cherubini reports how in Ontario, Canada, the establishment of the Education Quality and Accountability Office and large-scale external assessments to measure student learning have underscored the significance of teacher quality. The Ontario Ministry of Education, says the author, has put into policy that all public school boards deliver the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) to new teachers. To a great extent, NTIP includes many of the components discussed in the literature that defines effective practices; however, there are profound implications between the theoretical framework and the policy context of this initiative. The article especially discusses the fundamental disconnect between two core concepts associated with NTIP policy that relates to the role of the school principal and to the language of Professional Learning Communities. In essence, notes Cherubini, the evaluation component of NTIP maintains the traditional hierarchy of schools, reaffirms industrial-type connotations of power, control, and status, and ultimately creates a normative assumption of structure that is deemed to be rational.

The third article is entitled, 'Is Participatory Action Research Relevant in the Canadian Workplace? In it, Candy Khan and Donna Chovanec discuss the contemporary locations of Participatory Action Research (PAR), and analyze how, with its emphasis on grassroots empowerment and local control, it has a long history as the research method of choice for marginalized communities. However, note the authors, unsettling questions remain about the nature of power and the promise of PAR as a truly participatory and empowering methodology. Earlier in the article, Khan and Chovanec summarize the key theorists, principles, methodology, researcher's role, strengths and limitations of traditional PAR. In subsequent sections, they review current critiques and revisions of PAR. Finally, a special focus point from Khan proposes an adjustment to PAR that reflects the strengths and limitations of PAR and the implications of applying PAR within the bounds of a capitalist social-economic structure. The three full-length articles are followed by a research report: 'Challenges of Implementation of e-learning in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education (MSTE) in African schools: A Critical Review.' Here, Samson Gunga discusses the general ICT challenges in education and poses questions that should yield some answers which could establish the manner in which e-learning technology could be appropriate for understanding and communicating the structures of mathematics and science. Challenges in understanding mathematics and science arise out of the interaction between these two intertwined yet disparate disciplines. While challenges in implementation of the understanding of mathematics and science through technology arise from social and infrastructural issues related to ICT in African environment, writes Gunga, the difficulty posed by challenges of communicating the principles of understanding the structure of mathematics and science are not yet insurmountable. In this work, an attempt to bring into coherence the mathematical and scientific understanding through e-learning instructional paradigm in quasi-philosophic terms is the main subject of the following perspectives and

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analyses. Besides the three articles and the research report, this issue also includes two book reports, Bronwen Manby's *Struggles for Citizenship in Africa* (2009) reviewed by Musembi Nungu, and *Coming to critical engagement: An authoethnographic exploration* (2006) by Frank Fear *et al.*, reviewed by Tania Kajner.

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