

## Editorial Introduction

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The open topical focus of social and educational criticism that has become a character of this journal continues in this issue. While the complex interplay of learning contexts and social situations has many facets that might seem simple to describe, the historical-actual evidence affirms the complicated nature of this relationship. As much as anything else, the clash between the quantitative locations of education vis-à-vis the qualitative exigencies is perhaps where contemporary possibilities of learning should be continuously analyzed; that is while, the availability of learning programs is more abundant than ever, the central question of how good are these programs so we do few good things with them is not as clear. Needless to add that at the end of the month, the destination of educational programs should still be active ways of enhancing the lives of people.

Indeed, the debates of whether schooling or general educational realities are always in the best interest of learners are concerns raised, not only by some eminent educational thinkers including John Dewey, Paulo Freire and Julius Nyerere, who as pragmatist philosophers of education, have become over the years, my preferred analysts and critics of the educational and the social, but as well, by many others. The converging points of the philosophical and the educational is actually a natural outcome of the way we learn, teach and use related outcomes to achieve societal intentions and projects that either enhance our realities, or could complicate it in ways that may not ameliorate the lived surfaces of life.

Indeed, reading the world from the perspective of pragmatic educational thinking and practice is also extensively sociological. As such, the intersections of education and societal realities is so comprehensive that it also involves the historical, the cultural, certainly the technological and the global, and as well, the futuristic analyses that should illuminate for us and for posterity, the active rapid changes that are also informed by such relationships. A propos, all facets of education and their attachments of desired social development should be analyzed, formulated and implemented with the thick questions that pertain to contemporary instructional and pedagogical designs, relationships and intentions. It is with this in mind that, while this journal's scholarly objectives are topically wide, they must also be deep in that they should speak about the living realities of educational situations, the lives of learners and the societal changes that are especially so rapid and extensive in these times of overarching and systematic processes of globalization. Certainly the quality of education accorded to learners anywhere in the world is no longer about their local lives, their local socio-economic well-being, or even issues that directly affect their families and cities.

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As should be known to all of us, social, political and economic distances have been so narrowed by technological platforms and mobile employment realities, it is no longer much of a secret that all of us are competing with one another irrespective of where we are, what time of the day it is, and what prospects for subjective or community advancement are probable or less probable. Hence, the wide applications of education to contexts that range from everything to everything and from everywhere to everywhere. It is indeed, with these learning and social facts that the three articles in this issue descriptively construct and deconstruct issues that concern ways of working with marginalized youth, ways of deploying education for the well-being of communities that have experienced civil discord for a long period of time, and prospects of analyzing risk in higher risk contexts that are necessitated by the proliferation of study abroad programs which usually emanate from universities and colleges in the northern countries, and via specific philosophical, socio-political and pedagogical platforms, exported to the so-called developing world.

In the first article, *‘Engaging disenfranchised urban youth in humanities learning’*, Diane Wishart and Luis D’Elia examine the literature aimed at addressing ways to meet learning needs of disenfranchised students and how that can be enhanced through the addition of case studies. They point out how international comparative approaches looking at the specifics of cases can also add to the literature on schooling for disenfranchised students. Based on those understandings, the purpose of their research is to elicit the perceptions of humanities educators in Spain and in Canada so as to ascertain ways of enhancing opportunities to retain disenfranchised students in secondary schools. Their analysis is based on case studies and document analysis. For the purpose of this specific research, they define disenfranchised youth as those at-risk of leaving school prior to high school completion due to personal difficulties resulting from socio-environmental conditions such as poverty, family difficulties, drug addiction, and violent communities.

In the second article, *‘Unhu/Ubuntu and Education for Reconciliation in Zimbabwe’*, Oswell Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru and Edward Shizha examine the concept, strengths and shortcomings, role and implementation of the reconciliation policy as Zimbabwe emerges from periods of conflict crisis soon after independence in the 1980s, and the current crisis in the 2000s and how the policy can be introduced in schools through ‘education for reconciliation’. The authors argue that education can be used to cultivate reconciliation and national healing in the evidently ‘wounded’ people of Zimbabwe who bear scars of colonial times and war, and the post-independence conflicts. They note how reconciliation through education for “diversity” and tolerance can make a compelling argument in so far as we understand how education shapes culture and cultivates values among a people. Education for reconciliation, they write, is perceived as a philosophy that promotes respect for human life and human dignity. The article

concludes that education is an instrument for the inculcation and promotion of the epistemic and ontological principles enshrined in the African philosophy of *Ubuntu/unhu*.

In the third article, '*Safety and solidarity: Governance of higher risk study abroad programs and activities*', Derek Tannis examines the role of risk governance in relation to higher risk study abroad programs and activities involving post-secondary students. He notes that in the face of increased global uncertainties, post-secondary institutional legal and financial risk thresholds can conflict with an ethic of global solidarity, mutuality and academic freedom. He adds that a relational standard of care augments prescriptive diagnostics of informed consent and exemption/appeal structures, safeguarding faculty and student liberty and security through deliberative, informed choice. This approach, says the author, provides a viable means to pursue ethical internationalization in post-secondary education, as it places value on global human wellbeing through sharing of knowledge, skills and resources, aligning safety with values of solidarity and mutuality. In addition to the three articles in this issue, there is also a review of David Starr's (2011) book, *From Bombs to Books: The remarkable stories of refugee children and their families at an exceptional Canadian school* by Neda Asadi.

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