

Editorial Introduction

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The general locations of educational projects are multivariate, often engage diverse contextual realities, always have some unseen historical attachments, and more so than otherwise, emerge from cultural perspectives and practices that are not detached from concerned societies and environments. Yet, educational programs still selectively distinguish themselves by exacting a high number of exclusionary factualities in their epistemic constructions, policy formulations, as well as program contents and dispensations. Indeed, this reality is hardly congruent with the widespread assumptions about the role of education as enhancing the livelihood intersections of all societies and all the peoples that reside in the geographies of those societies. Also interesting are the qualitative differences and pragmatic disconnections that inform such educational exclusionary practices. In some instances, it is about the deliberate commissions and omissions that are inherent in the knowledge systems on which the learning project is based upon; in other times, it is the lack of inclusionary practices where schooling becomes the preserve of those that are historically, socially and culturally of the schooling locations, to use a refurbished Deweyian notation, while exiling the rights and expectations of many others who are usually placed outside the normative contexts of schooling.

In both cases, the promise of the educational prospect is betrayed, for education is not only about mechanically measurable social development, or social well-being, as we have been calling in the past few seasons of our post-migration to the West, but it should actually directly represent the meanings as well as the operationalizations of viable spaces of community life. In our teachings contexts, where we work with pre-service teachers, we try to persuade them to see their professional future as fully located within the wide and selectively hopeful area of social well-being. Indeed, for us, when one is teaching learners in primary, post-primary or post-secondary educational contexts, the main objective of the story, even when it is not announced as such, should be about students acquiring clusters of knowledge categories (actually categorizations) that are intended to enhance their capacity to become actively thoughtful and independent thinkers and problem solvers who endow their own beings and productively contribute to their societies and their world.

Indeed, our intention here is not to stay with the so-called original, Latin based meanings of education where the combination of bringing people up and training them were the normative constructions of the pedagogical project. Surely, extra-where Latin was spoken, and the influence of Latin was not reaching, there were as well early systems of education that have focused on the social development of learners with their own cultural and socio-environmental needs and realities. Contrary to the western notions of training as education, for example, eastern

thinkers and philosophers emphasized socially established forms of learning that enhanced the relationship between the individual and the community, and that focused on a system of holistic learning where the learner as one member of a collectively learning community, aims to enhance his or her well-being and the well-being of others. In such contexts, a central objective of education was the full recognition of education as enhancing human relations and capacities to co-learn and care for one another. Surely there, education as an enterprise that creates winners and losers was not the story, and all knowledges, ways of living, reading and reacting to the world had dependable viabilities that were more humanizing than the current situation where schooling is deployed to create enduring and widening social divisions – indeed, an affront to education’s social development primary mission where all must be admitted to a learning context that enhances their prospects for achieving positive outcomes for themselves and for their societies. It is within these multifariously located contexts and functionalities of education that we can also talk about the marginalizations of some knowledge systems and those that have created them, the epistemic as well as the descriptive constructions of the ‘Other’ where a pedagogical marker is arbitrarily created against the subjectivities of some, with the objective of problematizing their societal ontologies vis-à-vis the dominant groups, and the establishment of certain overarching cultural and related policies that rhetorically sound promising, but never in reality meet the needs of concerned populations. Surely, the three articles electronically enclosed in this issue, variously and with the analytical inclinations of their writers, attempt to awaken us to the dangers of such knowledge as well as subjective policy constructions that are to be critiqued and where possible deconstructed and reconstructed so they achieve some form of epistemic and onto-learning inclusiveness for the lives of all people.

In the first article, *“A whey dem say fe demself?” African/Black people’s auto/biographies as pedagogical tools*, Yvonne Brown discusses how one of the major pedagogical challenges for teachers at all levels and in all disciplines of the education system, is to acknowledge Africa’s presence in the evolution of world civilizations. Knowledge about the existence and evolution of African civilizations before European contact have been suppressed, distorted or erased from textbooks. Furthermore, only relatively recently have a number of historiographies on such topics as the internal, trans-Sahara and trans-Atlantic slave trades and slavery begun to be produced in academia. Moreover, scholars have been slow to recognize the central role of Africa in disciplines such as economics, art, literature, science and music in the global currents of intellectual and philosophical thought. Hopefully, the voice, agency and self-representation of African/Black people have steadily emerged from the shadows in various forms of life writing, in addition to original research and publications across disciplines. This paper for teacher educators is this author’s initiative to bring a historical consciousness to both a curricular and pedagogical need for engagement with the scholarship produced by African-descended peoples. Brown’s thesis is that various genres of life writing - memoirs, autobiographies and biographies - can enhance the learning and teaching about Africa and African descended peoples in such a way as to bring about a holistic understanding of the historical and institutional bases for their contemporary human condition, locally and globally. Teacher educators who prepare language arts and social studies teachers for the public school system will find texts at various reading levels among the resources. Teachers of the humanities and social sciences at the tertiary level

will have the opportunity to explore ways in which auto/biographies may enhance their learning and teaching.

In the second article, *Islamic identity in the Canadian multicultural context*, Abdullah Omar explores aspects of Islamic identities in the Canadian multicultural context. He argues that Islamic identities face challenges in the Canadian liberal multicultural context, largely because multiculturalism in Canada was initially designed for well-integrated European ethnic groups and was not intended to foster Islamic identity. Further, some Muslims have a significant problem with a multiculturalism that marginalizes religious beliefs and values in favor of secular inclusiveness. The paper presents the core elements of Islamic identities as well as the challenges of external pressures. It notes that while Islamic identities are anchored firmly on the concept of *Ummah*, Muslims may develop multiple affinities, which adds another dimension to the Canadian mosaic. The paper recommends accommodating faith communities, including Muslims meaningfully. It invites Muslims to join the multicultural conversation with a genuine Islamic voice. Further, it encourages the Muslim community to respond to the negative image effectively.

In the third article, *Exotic/Other: narratives of Muslims, the role of media and popular culture*, Khalida Syed discusses experiences of Muslims being identified as an exotic/other by the media after September 11, 2001. The writer's experience of being chosen for attention because of her Muslim female dress code, headscarf, during a National Aboriginal Day of Action, was a surprise for her. Instead of paying attention to the event, a media reporter questioned "why I covered". This narrative introduces a poignant awareness of the power of media to make choices that identify and define the exotic/other. Narratives of another Muslim woman and two Muslim men illustrate the role of the media and popular culture to form and represent identities. The purpose of this commentary is to show how, in becoming aware of how we as individuals and the media in our culture, in the post 9 – 11 society, are reacting, choosing, refusing, and accepting the making of our identities. Besides the three articles, this issue also includes a poem entitled, *Show Me Your ID*, by Towani Duchscher, and two book reviews, *Culture, Curriculum, and Identity in Education* (2010) by H. Richard Milner (Ed.) reviewed by Edward Shizha, and *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (2009) by Edward Taylor, David Gillborn and Gloria Ladson-Billings (Eds.), reviewed by Teresa Strong-Wilson.