Editorial

Change in education frequently echoes changes in social policy and practice. Modern society is currently preoccupied with educational quality enhancement through change initiatives, fuelled by government criticism which is not infrequently aimed at the teaching profession. This social observation is for example, available through a glancing inventory of themes afforded international forums and conventions in and on education. In examining the titles of leading international conventions and educational publications, the concept of change and renewal in its various lexical nuances can be reiteratively traced back roughly to the mid 1990s.

It comes as no surprise that change is indeed a factor of human encounters. The debate about teacher efficacy and the potential for schools to alter future societal configurations has been at the forefront of open dialogue throughout the history of public schooling. Why then the restlessness at the current prospect of change in education? Perhaps a rhetorical apprehension about renewal initiatives lies in the conjecture of their labour intensity. In reality, the implementation of educational reform places immense additional work demands on professional communities. An interesting experiential observation about these processes worldwide is their very silent achievement brought about through dedication immeasurable in hours.

Upon transferring to a new academic position in Sweden, I have been witness to a yet another national education reform, the nationwide process of which requires all institutions offering teacher education to reapply for accreditation of their programs. The process of reform can be described as holistically motivated involving the curriculum reform of the secondary education system during an election year. The process has been competently implemented, yet silently accomplished through endless hours devoted to administrative duties by many.

A counter argument put forward by social researchers claims that when political systems fail to implement their policies, education systems are held responsible for all ills, ranging from low achievement rates among youth to lack of leadership among adults. During the global economic turmoil of the past few years, the research field has seen an upsurge of comparative studies measuring everything from literacy and numeracy competence (e.g. the PISA studies) to sustainable educational environmental structures. The relativist principle that can be assumed to inspire such research is the anticipation that by comparing ourselves to others, we are able to affirm quality. While comparative studies rightly inform policy development, harsh economic times feed thinking about limitations in a spiral within which quality measures of a human relational kind may receive lesser priority. Does the current measurement hype on educational quality measure up to the many daily teaching and learning accomplishments witnessed everyday on the floors of our global education systems? How do we sensibly measure the ethical rewards of educational opportunity?

While officials are enacting educational reforms, the schooling of our children is jointly maintained through persistent efforts by dedicated teachers and the wider educational community. The issues of educational efficacy and the enhancement of quality teaching and learning are the central focus of the current issue. Part and parcel

of educational quality enhancement is lead by inquiry into improved knowledge about students and their overall experiences of educational provisions. However, this aspect is reported somewhat more infrequently in the research literature and is therefore worthy of our collective attention.

Groves and Welsh present a survey of student insights into learning as a basis for providing high-school students a voice from which to develop future educational opportunities. Their study illustrates that school experiences are initially explained as generally positive; such perspectives however became progressively more critical as students were asked to elaborate on specific aspects of learning and schooling.

Communities of practice in the context of primary students are at the focus of the article by Morcom and Cumming-Potvin. The authors show that authentic classroom practices which focus on social responsibility and leadership capabilities can provide proactive means through which to affect change for example, in bullying and other socially unfavourable behaviour.

The issue of change is further addressed by Mansfield and Wosnitza from the point of view of adolescent motivation for learning. Their study compared junior with senior high school students on achievement and social goals. They discuss the relational differences between the groups where senior high school students scored lower than their younger peers on both aspects of goals suggesting that for senior high school students peer groups are becoming less relevant for learning achievement.

In the article by Macqueen we move from studies investigating student experiences to focusing on teacher attitudes towards achievement-based grouping of students in literacy classes. Macqueen reports on interviews with teachers about the impact of the strategy on classroom practice and argues that the regrouping has negative effect to the detriment of student learning.

Maher and Mitchell focus our attention on the investigation of learning experiences in higher education contexts and specifically among students studying in the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. The authors problematise the instructions students receive about 'what to do and how to do it' leading to uncertainties and superficial, pragmatic strategies for learning success.

In the last article of this issue, Turner and Fozdar discuss ethical considerations in the context of researching refugee education, in which newly arrived and uninformed refugees research volunteers may be unfairly disadvantaged. The authors point to a need to increase reliability and validity through focus on transparency of the refugee research in which ethical considerations are continually renegotiated methodologically as well as by 'asking the right questions'.

We hope that the current collection of articles inspires reading and furthers the debate on educational change, quality, efficacy and related ethical professional considerations.

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