

Editorial

As this issue approaches the point of publication most higher education learning communities are embarking on a new academic teaching period. Many of us have participated in international research conventions and conferences during the mid-year conference period, reminiscent of newsworthy anecdotes on a theme that seems to have captured the interest among many. At a quick glance, a dialogue about redefining education for human kind (Soudien, 2011) seems to have been a topical issue raised in conference keynotes.

In hearing the academic dialogue captured during the mid-year break, a point that seems current at this time is to look at the deeper meanings of education in relation to what it has achieved historically, and against the realisation that somehow we have not managed that which we set out to do. As Soudien's keynote raises the issue of education's successes or failures, discussions tend to land in a self-scrutinising observation that alongside ever more worsening climate of education, humanity itself seems in grim trouble. The question of educational quality and its power to deliver the right kinds of 'goods' for learning is not new, but Soudien argues that the learning community ought to turn to interpersonal qualities (e.g. empathy), in our search for accountable answers. For is it not the case, as Soudien alerts, that one of the pivotal objectives of education is to generate better understanding of the complexities of our dealings with each other? Indeed, the issue of building on the strength of human relationships in our attempts to accomplish better education for all has resonated throughout many conference presentations.

Perhaps we have grown weary of directing blame on failing education systems, or its incumbents? Within some mid-year conference agendas, the common topics of 'student retention rates' and related achievement statistics have shared space with discussions about 'recovering the good' from our past educational momentum. Are we then engaged in a renaissance movement in our thinking about education? Or is it plausible that in the current search for yet another innovation, or better economic rationalism or discovering its antidotes, we have created a feature of escapism which in the process turned its back on teachers? Does the long forgotten rhetoric of 'love' and its twin, 'care' hold a legitimate place in the epistemology of pedagogy, as suggested by Soudien?

In the ontologies of pedagogy we may not be able to easily separate currency from historicity, as Professor Fazal Rizvi has reminded us in his keynote to the European comparative education audience. This might be since the 'current' is known to make other temporalities relevant, for example, the relativity of education to societies' past histories. A related discussion topic in this year's research colloquia then, pays attention to a criticism facing education today, namely in its failing of the current generation (in following debates in the mass media, e.g. *The Observer*). The claim is that education today contains little that 'the young' would be able to relate to, bringing a reiterative urgency to the issue of nurturing relations through engagement in which teachers play a key role. It reminds us about the central didactic (i.e. the European tradition of Comenius writings) obligation of teaching by way of mentoring and awakening of curiosity by bringing the unfamiliar into vibrant life in the classroom.

The articles in this issue of IIER make a contribution to and extend the ongoing discussions about the key role of education and the relevance that educational research has on its future development. The first article by Ferguson-Patrick turns to the issue of teacher retention during the early career years. It explores the role of cooperative learning in enhancing professional development and achievement in a case based study. The second article by Christine Glass presents a method of using drawings to research a pre-service teacher's image of the self to indicate the multiple contexts that forms a teacher's professional journey. The question of teacher quality is the topic of the third article in the current issue. In their paper, Hall and West explore the relationship between exam scores (GPA) and student performance among student teachers, adding the variable of emotional intelligence as a factor. The authors discuss implications for teacher students' content knowledge having a strong impact on becoming highly qualified teachers whilst not lending support for emotional intelligence as being a significant factor effecting teaching quality. Lisboa and Pereira Coutinho take up the issue of web-based social networks in the fourth article. They analyse the potential for social network sites to channel informal learning among teachers and trainers. In the fifth article, Tom Putnam and Judith Gill dissect the content in the recent Bradley Report by problematising its key term 'socioeconomic status' as being undefined and challenging. Nancy Stockall and Sara Davis then describe their study using photo-elicitation and engaging pre-service teachers in a discussion about their beliefs of young children. They found that the photo elicitation technique was useful in obtaining data but that the conversations about the photos actually entrenched students' current beliefs about children rather than provoking reflective practice. The function of personal values and learning approaches on students' academic achievements is the focus of the final article by Tarabashkina and Lietz. The authors present data collected at a German international university to confirm earlier studies on the strong relationship between personal values and approaches to learning.

I wish to thank for the support of our current assisting editorial team and team of reviewers in bringing this issue to publication and welcome Dr Anne Power of the NSWIER as a new member of our assisting editorial team.

We trust that you will find the articles in this, the second issue of IIER suitably stimulating and raising of current debate in educational research.

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Editor

References

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- The Observer*. (2011). State schools: Are they failing our children? 27 February, p.13.