

From the Editor's Desk:

Charting Educational Innovation in a Time of Crisis: Developing Pedagogies of Hope, Compassion, and Insight

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“Transformations, openings, possibilities: teachers and teacher educators must keep these themes audible.”

Maxine Greene

As our most recent issue of the IJTDC goes to press, we are in the midst of a global pandemic. The problems of the Covid-19 crisis are urgent and lasting and, they challenge us to acknowledge this historical moment with its unknown complexities involving future planetary sustainability. Restoration, repair, and re-envisioning life will take creativity, commitment, and care. Individual agency and social action require a new way of thinking. This time of crisis has resulted in catastrophic losses and an upheaval of life. While nature appears to show some signs of recovery, we need to make more concerted efforts to rethink the energy grid and find alternatives to the fossil-fuel industry are needed. Finding and implementing the infrastructure that supports alternative energy sources will require new learning if we are to protect the essential matrixes of life that include our air, water, and soil. Work, travel, social networking, and shopping have also radically changed within a short period of time. As educators, we have had to make a pivot to online technologies and teaching from home. Hybrid models of learning continue to be explored.

W.B. Yeats captured the post-World War I malaise and trepidation in his 1919 poem “The Second Coming.” One hundred years later, the opening stanzas seems to speak to the time we are in today:

Turning and twisting in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

How do we move ahead with a positive vision for the future, one that presents an alternative to the dim world view that Yeats presents in his apocalyptic poem? Awareness and empathy are critical foundations. In *One Drum*, Indigenous writer Richard Wagamese (2019) asserts that too often, people fail to understand “the relationship between the words,

and the spiritual word communion. To be in harmony.” (p.22). While we have developed technologies that allow us to communicate with expediency across greater geographic distances, spiritual longing and exploring the inner recesses of human emotion remain elusive. We are one world sharing a fragile planet and it is time to settle rifts that tear people apart “in neighborhoods, communities, cities, societies, and nations” (p.22). Influenced by traditional Anishnawbe culture and the Seven Grandfather Teachings, Wagamese writes that it is imperative to heal and work together in communities that are life-sustaining:

In our separation the song is diminished and the Earth shows the effect of that. What is needed now is a return to elemental teaching. We need to recognize the fact that we are all one song, one family, one energy, and one soul. Or when my people say ‘all my relations’ at the end of a ceremony or a prayer, it is in recognition of that truth. It does not mean only those who look like me, sound like me, speak the same language as me or live like me. It means *all*, every voice in our common chorus. We need to return to that teaching now for the good of the planet we call our home....So the most profound truth in the universe is this: we are all one drum and we need each other (p.24).

Education can play a central role in creating a new vision for the future. For some, this time of crisis has been a catalyst for awakening a new appreciation of life. The on-going pandemic has also exposed substantive inequities and injustices in access to health care, safe and adequate housing, education, and work. It is not a question of rebuilding world economies; the question must be framed in re-visioning communities that demonstrate a reverence for life. Bud Hall (2002) writes that we need a vision “that responds to the collective needs of the majority of people in the world, not simply the few” and that “in order to redress wrongs such as poverty, cultural imperialism, racism, sexism and other forms of injustice, individuals need to be able to envision alternative ways of living”(p.43). Along similar lines, Darlene Clover writes that for too long “the ideological underpinnings of globalization of increased competition, production, marketing, privatization, and deregulation—all in the single-minded pursuit of wealth---have created massive ecological imbalances of unprecedented proportion” (p.6). The process of production and unbridled material consumption “reflect the way humans interact with each other and the rest of nature” (p.7). Clover details examples of the way that globalization and the exploitation of so many natural resources have weakened the planet, destroyed plant and animal life, and forced many people worldwide to live in harsh circumstances and poverty. Deforestation, social erosion, water and air pollution, toxic waste, and climate change need to be addressed in urgent ways by all world communities. Learning is key. Economies of the future need to be grounded in green ecologies, health care for all, and sustainable neighborhoods, cities, and world communities. Elders, artists, educators, activists, and a community leaders need to mobilize together, notes Clover, to develop environmental and economic justice. To accomplish this, educational initiatives need to be more holistic, interdisciplinary, and authentically rooted in the lives and experiences of learners.

How can we nurture communities of hope and cultures of peace? How can education promote respect for the diverse cultures worldwide? How can a sense of global citizenship evolve so that individual and collective actions bring about positive and transformative

changes in access and opportunity for all? What role do empathy, critical thinking, and responsibility play in education? How do we re-imagine aspects of life such as the economy, health, work, communication, culture, literacy, and education? Maxine Green's (1995) conceptions of social imagination are valuable as we re-imagine education today. A transformative education today involves discussing the interconnections between disciplines; human rights, environmental global issues, gender inequities, the rights of children, species protection, and other themes connected to social justice, peace, conflict resolution, and equity. Critical pedagogies today challenge educators to engage learners in a critique of social and global issues such as undemocratic social structures that produce and sustain inequalities and oppressive social conditions. Greene (2005) writes that "educator(s) must be awake, critical, and open to the world" (p.80) and to the prospect of alternative possibilities that can mobilize individual talents and skills. She further observes:

It must be the recovery of imagination that lessens the social paralysis that we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done in the name of what is decent and humane. I am reaching toward an idea of imagination that brings an ethical concern to the fore, a concern that, again, has to do with the community that ought to be in the making and the values that give it colour and significance....In thinking of community, we need to emphasize the process words: making, creating, weaving, saying, and the like.... [Community] has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common. (p.39).

Today, we are challenged to think of global interdependence not through a market based frame that emphasizes capitalism, monetary power, but through a global interdependence that is rooted in a common good (Kornelsen, Balzer, and Magro, in press). Curriculum approaches could tap into creativity, lived experience, agency, and arts-pedagogies that explore alternative possibilities in all realms of work and life. Creativity in education involves an openness to change and adapting to new life circumstances.

The articles that comprise this double issue of the IJTDC reflect educational innovation at many levels and across diverse cultures, educational levels and content domain. Dalit Levy explores perspectives of pedagogical innovation in Israel. Her article is timely as educators and institutions must use more innovation and adaptation in creating online courses and programs. Levy's insights remind us that education and curriculum are ever-evolving, dynamic, and specific to a particular context and educator. New ideas, breakthroughs, and innovations in technology can lead to transformative change. Hanni and Tim O'Brien compare the way the United States deals with its low-income gifted students with approaches from Finland, Japan, and Singapore. Their article addresses the methods used for identifying gifted students, the educational opportunities for low-income gifted students, and the challenges facing each nation with respect to educating gifted students.

Taina Makkonen, Jari Lavonen, and Kirsi Tirri contribute an important article that addresses conceptions of mindset within the context of giftedness. They write that a key factor in encouraging talent development among students may be in fostering a growth mindset. Openness to change and adaptation are dimensions of a growth mindset. In their

study, Makkonen, Lavonen, and Tirri examined the mindsets of academically gifted Finnish upper-secondary students and Finnish physics teachers. The authors draw upon Carol Dweck's (2016) pivotal research on "fixed" and growth" mindsets as central to understand the cognitive and emotional processes that influence an individual's ability to navigate life. Mindsets refer to specific beliefs that individuals hold about self-efficacy, intelligence, effort, and work. Cultural norms, socialization practices, and unique personality features can influence individual mindsets. Dweck posits that both conscious and unconscious thought processes affect motivation and learning. Her research integrates elements of personality psychology, developmental psychology, and social psychology. A person with a fixed mindset seeks to avoid challenge, risk-taking, and failure. Effort, persistence, and creative thinking are minimized or ignored as a person with a "fixed mindset" seeks finite answers, personal control, and predictable outcomes. In contrast, a person with a growth mindset embraces challenge and learning opportunities that require persistence, effort, and creative thinking. Learning is exploration and discovery. The authors' study further adds and enriches our understanding of mindset and its connection to conceptions of intelligence, giftedness, and talent. Implications for classroom practice also emerge.

Kati Aus and Kirsi Tirri further explore the concepts of false, limited, and authentic growth mindsets in learning processes. Their study analyzes findings from fourth grade students in Estonia and Finland. Their study reinforces Dweck's (2016) observation that conceptions of mindset must go beyond simplistic understandings and delve more deeply into the complex psychology of learning dynamics. In their research, Aus and Tirri explore situations encountered when working with highly able children. These issues may relate to self-concept (especially in terms of intelligence), self-esteem, levels of self-efficacy that are related, for example, to the issue of 'how intelligent am I.' Ideas linked to perfectionism, the "imposter syndrome", motivation, preference for self-direction, and other learning preferences, personality type, perceptions of success or failure are among the factors that influence mindsets. What is the relationship between intelligence and a growth mindset, for example? There are many factors that may influence students' ability to develop a growth mindset. Specific teaching behaviors and perspectives are critical in establishing a climate that is conducive to creative thinking and students' developing self-efficacy, critical thinking skills, and problem solving behaviors that are consistent with growth mindsets. Conceptions of mindsets can be situation specific; a learner, for example, may be willing to discover, take risks, and problem solve in one context but not another. Professional development courses and programs could help teachers reflect on their own professional practice and develop innovative ways that could encourage creative and critical thinking among all learners.

Conceptions of mindsets can also be connected to concepts of intelligence, academic achievement, and dimensions of creativity. Affective, cognitive, kinesthetic, and imaginative dimensions of learning are central to our understanding of intelligence. Creativity includes a willingness to take risks, a high tolerance for complexity, mental mobility, intrinsic motivation, and a strong sense of self-direction. Creativity integrates dimensions of imagination, intent, effort, and explorations as Jackson and Sinclair (2006) suggest the "snowflake" image for creativity best captures the unique creative potential that each person has.

Earlier, Sternberg and Lubart (1995) write that successfully intelligent individuals succeed, in part, because

[Individuals] achieve a functional balance among a ‘triarchy’ of abilities: analytical abilities, which are used to analyze, evaluate, judge, compare, and contrast; creative abilities which are needed to create, invent, discover, imagine; practical abilities which are used to apply, utilize, implement, and activate. Successfully intelligent people are not necessarily high in all three of these abilities, but find a way to exploit the patterns of abilities they may have (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995 cited in Jackson, Shaw, and Wisdom, 2006, p. 124).

In a classroom that might be compared to a creative atelier, teachers would co-design the architecture of learning environments with their students. Learning outcomes are not predicted in advance and students have multiple opportunities to practice, refine, and develop their skills in ways that draw out interconnections between the disciplines.

Lara Milan, Maria Assunta Zanetti, Sally M. Reis, and Joseph S. Renzulli explore the different ways that Italian, European, and American educational frameworks approach talent development and giftedness. Particular emphasis is placed on the Italian educational system and the importance of creating a climate of change that encourages the development of 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and technological literacy. The Renzulli (1977) Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) provides a conceptual framework for encouraging talent development, inclusive education, and giftedness across cultures.

Sharon Alston and Kirsten Ericksen explore the application of “high impact practices” for teaching social justice content in Social Work. Creative and innovative teaching and learning strategies include experiential learning (EL), project-based learning (PBL), and Service Learning (SL). Social justice issues may address the effects of persistent poverty, disabilities, homelessness, racism, sexism, cultural imperialism, colonialism, and other forms of inequity. Equitable participation in society is precarious unless these inequities are explored, and social workers are on the front lines in their work with so many vulnerable populations. The social workers’ personality, level of awareness, interpersonal and communication skills, and commitment to social change are central. Alston and Ericksen provide important insights into the way Social Work courses can be designed more creatively, with a focus on initiating positive social justice changes for vulnerable populations. The authors’ research presents important ideas for the way professions can integrate social justice themes in their courses.

A challenge for educational institutions, at all levels, is to address learning barriers and create a context where educational access and learning opportunities are made available for all members of society. How can we mobilize learners so that specific talents and skills that may be dormant in individuals begins to surface? How do we create learning communities that benefit all? What policies and procedures must be in place? Beverly Sande presents a paper on educational innovation that highlights the importance of collaboration between practitioners in different institutions. Dr. Sande writes about Education Preparation Programs (EPP) that encourage collaborative methodologies of program design,

development, implementation, and evaluation. Mary Frances Agnello, Naoko Araki, and Florent Domenach analyze elements of sustainable education in rural Japan. Their article highlights the important role that universities can play in mobilizing educational stakeholders in developing educational curricula that are responsive and dynamic. Increasingly, universities are challenged to work more directly with communities to activate positive socio-economic and cultural change. The authors' community action model examine the importance technical literacies, interpersonal competence, systems thinking, English language skills, and critical and collaborative problem solving that can be applied to all levels of education. Agnello, Araki, and Domenach posit that by tapping the talents of university student and training them to work in schools with teachers and public school students, rich learning experiences can develop.

Malak Krayem and Anies Al-Hroub explore the link between gender and perceptions of specific personality traits in gifted students. The authors draw upon Kazimierz Drawbowski's (1964) personality theory of Positive Disintegration. For Drawbowski, anxiety and psychological tension are necessary pre-requisites for creative learning and personality growth. "Advancing" into higher levels of personality development may be predicated on particular traits of "over-excitabilities" such as a surplus of energy, imaginative abilities, reflective thought, problem solving, probative questioning, and strong affective expression. This research article raises interesting questions: To what extent do societies nurture particular personality traits and to what extent are these traits gendered according to social and community norms? How are these traits perceived in an educational setting? Are specific student behaviors and attributes viewed as assets or deficits? How do teachers (male/female) perceive these traits with respect to learning and normative socialization patterns in school? Krayam and Al-Hroub explore teachers' perceptions of "over-excitability" in students by using experimental vignette methodology (EVM). Their study presents interesting findings that shed light on the importance of teaching perceptions of students' talent and giftedness potential. Further professional development opportunities for teachers would help to encourage a greater awareness of factors that influence individual learners: unique personality traits, socialization, experience, and individual talent and skill. Misconceptions and misunderstandings can abound as teachers perceive "over-excitability" to be connected to oppositional defiance disorder, ADHD, or a lack of skill and effort. The values, beliefs, and ideals of educators—regardless of gender and culture—are important factors to consider when discussing the psychosocial dimensions of the teaching-learning enterprise. Dr. Sisk and her colleague provide an illuminating article on the way mindfulness techniques can be applied to create a climate conducive to creative learning. Their ideas are particularly valuable considering the anxiety of the present times in which we live.

The section on *Creativity Profiles* highlight the importance of personal commitment, relationship building, courage, curiosity, and the motivation to learn in the attainment of professional and personal goals. Hisham Ghassib provides an eloquent narrative of his own personal intellectual journey. Autobiographical insights depart from a "familiar logocentric understanding of the world" in an effort to discover new and alternative way of knowing. Revelation, exploration, discovery, and liberation are associate with narrative forms of

writing (Chapman-Hoult, 2012, p.76). Passages, transitions, disorienting dilemmas, perspectives taking, and reflective observation are processes of significant personal learning. Dr. Don Ambrose provides an illuminating tribute to Tracy L. Cross and his accomplishments. Cross's accomplishments, reflect, as Ambrose notes, a dynamic interplay of wisdom, creativity, and intelligence. In "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Opportunity, Serendipity and Commitment," Tracy L. Cross (Cross and Riedl Cross, this issue) reflects on the people and experiences influenced his career as an academic and educational leader. Our interviews feature two well-known scholars in the areas of gifted education, intelligence, and creativity. Taisir Yamin and Fred Bonner II interview Dr. Dorothy Sisk. Michael Shaughnessy and Jayson Evaniuk have a conversation with Bruce Uhrmacher on the important interconnections between aesthetics, creativity, talent, and the arts. These important contributions highlight Griffith's (2014) observation that "creativity is key to a continuing reassessment of beliefs, values, perceptions, and professional commitment" (p.123). Creative learning and significant personal learning are lifelong endeavors that balance risk-taking and reward. The featured scholars reflect on the stories, metaphors, experiences, and turning points that shaped their vision of education and life. Our featured book review is written by Dr. Sandra Linke. As we continue to discover innovation in education, I look forward to receiving future research articles, book reviews, technical reports, interviews, and creative texts.

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