A Message from the Editor-In-Chief

When Pedagogy and Innovation Matter!

I welcome you to the first issue of the new journal *International Journal of Pedagogical Innovations*. You may ask: Why a new journal on pedagogy? Before proposing an answer, a few contextual comments on the name of the journal are in order.

There is no doubt that the terms ‘pedagogy’ and ‘innovations’ have become popular terms, at times even misused in educational slogans. This journal aims to go beyond slogans by offering articles on different aspects of pedagogy and innovation from different theoretical perspectives as well as from different parts of the world. Slogans can indeed make us act, but it is crucial, especially in education, that we act according to our beliefs and ideals based on informed research, theorizing and practice. While in education, as a profession, we have to act, it is equally important that we act responsibly. The latter implies that we have to reflect critically and seriously about the nature of education and teaching. It also means that we have to deal openly and fruitfully with the tensions between theory and practice. This kind of tension is found in every profession whether it is law or medicine or engineering or teaching. We need to embrace such tensions because professionals do not shy away from identifying and ethically dealing with tensions which create both angst and joy. If we were simply to follow slogans mechanically and unreflectively, then we would not be acting professionally. Unfortunately, however, we do live in neoliberal times that have forced many professions to focus on efficiency and effectiveness for their own sake without raising and dealing with thorny issues that are at the heart of a profession. When efficiency and effectiveness become ends in themselves, then education and teaching are no longer seen as goods that help individuals to grow autonomously and creatively. Teachers and students are no longer seen as full-fledged subjects with agency and critical abilities; they are reduced to objects that are controlled for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness at all costs – sometimes even the loss of life itself! The very soul of education and teaching becomes lost.

As the late Professor Roger Simon noted in a famous article “Empowerment as Pedagogy of Possibility”: “Pedagogy refers to the integration in practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, a time and space for the practice of those strategies and techniques, and evaluative purposes and methods. All of these aspects of educational practice come together in the realities of what happens in the classroom. Together they organize a view of how a teacher’s work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representation of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment. In other words, talk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. To propose a pedagogy is to propose a political vision.” (*Language Arts*, 64, 4, 1987: 370-380).

Pedagogy then is much more than mere teaching or teaching methods. It embodies our conscious or unconscious beliefs and values as they are enacted in and through our teaching, curriculum, evaluation and assessment, the use of techniques and strategies, and decisions. Inevitably in our pedagogy we have a combination of theory and practice, and our pedagogy is inevitably infused with values; neutrality is impossible and claims to neutrality are contradictory. Of course, given the human predicament, we are bound to have expressions of different values and beliefs in our pedagogy, and, at times, even diametrically opposed
ones. But, I repeat, it is dealing with these very kinds of tensions which distinguishes a professional perspective.

The word ‘innovation’ is derived from the Latin verb ‘innovare’ which means to renew, restore, or change. There is no doubt that the act of renewing, restoring, or changing is also part of the human condition and experience. Very few, if any, may contest such a claim. However, what are much more crucial are the direction, purpose, reasons, and justification of the innovation. As professionals we have the responsibility to ask: change with what and with whose aim? On what basis? Inevitably this is where tensions arise again. But it is these very tensions which push us to renew ourselves. To do so properly, we need to consider both theoretical and practical aspects, facts and values, reason and emotions, the mind and the heart, the east and the west, the south and the north. We also need to study and analyze our contexts, yet at the same time we cannot ignore the global context which impacts on us.

I hope that my brief comments give a strong educational reason for the establishment of this journal which focuses on conceptual, practical, curriculum and policy aspects in education as they relate to pedagogy and change. The journal accepts articles both in Arabic and English, and as such it is one of very few existing journals which focus on pedagogy and innovation that is bilingual in nature.

This first issue offers a diversity of topics and aspects written from scholars and practitioners from various parts of the world. The articles cover a variety of topics including: the importance of problem posing in mathematics based on real life situations, the role of English for engineering courses, the role of students in pedagogy, the issue of selecting controversial texts in literature, the role of social entrepreneurship in school counseling, the implementation of the Neo-Vygotskian theoretical learning approach, the use of mathematical software in undergraduate classes, curriculum development and holistic education, pronunciation variations among non-native ESL teachers. Moreover, the contributors to this issue come from various parts of the world: Canada, Egypt, Iran, Kurdistan Region, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates and U.S.A.

I hope you will enjoy this issue and that you will consider submitting an article for consideration in future issues.

John P. Portelli

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