

Editorial/Éditorial

An Active Relational Quest

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Paulo Freire (1997) referred to an active relational quest for learning as the “critical quest” highly dependent upon a “dialogic relationship” or genuine communication among and between the teacher, the student, and the quest of and for knowing. We are privileged in this issue of CJE to have five articles that reinforce the importance of relationality in andragogical and pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning.

One article addresses the importance of faculty engagement with low-income adult learners and how relationality between faculty and students contextualized in a college-community partnership has resulted in the creation of engaging and empowering classroom environments. Faculty play a critical role in shifting the dispositional and attitudinal barriers of adult learners toward a new relationship with education. While the article advocates a social justice approach to post-secondary education for adults, it is quick to caution that faculty facilitate the difference, they are not the difference. Another article focuses on the persistence required of Indigenous students attending universities to overcome the tumultuous history of Indigenous education in Canada and to be academically successful. Talking circle and interview data revealed good relationships with faculty and other students was essential in developing and maintaining persistence. It was John Dewey (1938) who posited that the quality of educational interaction is the realization that education is a social process and that teacher and students conjoin to form community that results in the shared development of experience (p. 58). Faculty reaching out to students and vice versa coupled with experiential learning in the form of hands-on learning for learners, especially Indigenous students, leads to an ability to learn on one’s own and become successful in post-secondary education.

The transition from project-based to experiential learning via design thinking is the focus of a third article in this collection. Design thinking (DT) aims at achieving global

competencies while emphasizing an iterative, flexible, user-focused design process. It draws heavily upon 21st century learning skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, citizenship, and creativity to effect an integration of digital technologies with existing core curricula. DT is ‘failing forward’ and one of the integral stages to DT is ideate where learners imagine solutions and possibilities and strive to create prototypes that emphasize the user’s needs as end product. George Couros (2015) reminds us that as educators, “The power we have at our fingertips to learn and create is awe-inspiring” (p. 94). However, this is not always the message that learners receive. Indeed, the antithetical message is contained in an article that investigates the lack of achievement on Ontario mathematics tests in grades 3 and 6. The scholarly focus is not on percentile reporting of results, which are thought to be insufficient and misleading, but on students who struggle to meet achievement standards based on language and literacy characteristics. ELL students, as well as other students who struggle with literacy characteristics, are more likely to demonstrate decline in mathematics achievement and to differentiate themselves from those who do not struggle to meet academic standards. It is argued that additional resources need to be directed toward students who struggle with attaining mathematic standards, for the root cause of their inability may not be directly related to computational thinking. Communication about and promotion of instructional resources to key educational leaders is not restricted to meeting achievement standards in mathematics but is also equated with teachers’ decisions to develop inclusive physical education (PE) especially for students with disabilities (SWD). Awareness of, acquisition of, and implementation of effective learning and training support services to educators is essential in creating a plan of action that facilitates optimal physical education for all students.

Ira Shor (1987) reminds us: “Education is ... transformational of the relationships between students, teachers, school and society” (p. 86). Each of the articles in this Issue of CJE have in their own right articulated what education is and, at times, what it is not. Theories and principles of learning whether drawn from andragogy or pedagogy have at heart the notion of relationality which is the ability to actively discriminate between what is most appropriate and what is least appropriate for children, young people, and adults. Intentionality, appropriateness, and responsibility are the dialogic relationship in active relational quests that reverberate throughout this assemblage of articles and sound and resound in the hearts and minds of each of us, as educator.

References

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