

## Editors' Introduction to Special Theme Issue: Meanings Under the Microscope (Part 1)

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For Wilson Marsden and Eileen Urith Marsden (*née* Morton)  
and Maurice Danaher and Phyllida Nina Coombes (*née* Radcliffe-Brown)

*–Adieu, dit le renard. Voici mon secret. Il est très simple: on ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux....C'est le temps que tu as perdu pour ta rose qui fait ta rose si importante....Les hommes ont oublié cette vérité....Mais tu ne dois pas l'oublier. Tu deviens responsable pour toujours de ce que tu as apprivoisé. Tu es responsable de ta rose...*

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*, pp. 72-74

*Familiar acts are beautiful through love.*  
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Prometheus Unbound", IV, 403

### Rationale

This inaugural, three-part, special theme issue of *the International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* publishes the refereed papers in the first wave proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> international pedagogies and learning conference, conducted at the Toowoomba campus of the University of Southern Queensland in Australia from 18 to 20 September 2005. The conference theme was "Meanings Under the Microscope", connoting the multiple ways in which educators and learners make sense of, and derive purpose and authenticity from, the various acts and artifacts that constitute education.

Of the 17 papers submitted for refereeing in the first wave of the conference, 15 were accepted for publication subject to revision and one of those was subsequently withdrawn from the conference. The second wave proceedings papers, due for submission after the conference, will be published subsequently.

The *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* itself is a direct outcome of the 1<sup>st</sup> international pedagogies and learning conference, also conducted at the University of Southern Queensland from 1 to 4 October 2003, with the theme "New Meanings for a New Millennium". The conference organisers and participants decided that the journal constituted a fitting forum for the continuation of the lively and engaged discussions that the conference had facilitated.

Linking both the first and the second themes, and clearly evident in the articles assembled in this inaugural issue of the journal, is a consistent concern that educational meanings, whether they are new, millennial and/or microscopic, must articulate with the ongoing mission of enhancing and enriching international pedagogies and learning. This mission is also common to both the journal's *raison d'être* and the conference foci. This commonality is not accidental: it reflects a general recognition that at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite the scientific and technological advances enjoyed by some individuals and nations, there are enormous disparities and inequities in access to different forms of capital and hence to the opportunity to undertake and benefit from formal education. Part of the responsibility of participants in the journal and the conferences is therefore to interrogate their own and others' philosophies, policies and practices for how they might be able to understand and hopefully to ameliorate those disparities and inequities.

In the case of the 2<sup>nd</sup> conference, whose first wave proceedings papers are published in this and the next two issues of the journal, this responsibility has been facilitated by the posing of several questions for conference participants to frame their respective and shared reflections on the theme of "Meanings Under the Microscope":

- What is my personal pedagogy?
- How can I reflect on my practice?
- Where does critical pedagogy fit in?
- How can we use metaphor to enrich our making of pedagogical meaning?
- In what ways can I enhance my pedagogy?
- How can we develop a community of practice?

These framing questions are deliberately inclusive and iterative; the assumption is that there are multiple meanings, metaphors, practices and communities associated with pedagogies and learning, and that placing these phenomena under the microscope is a necessary part of understanding and evaluating their intentions and impacts. Furthermore, it is assumed and hoped that that understanding and evaluation will be informed by conceptually and methodologically rigorous and systematic data gathering and analysis. One important corollary of this assumption is the possibility – perhaps the probability – of disagreement and debate about what constitutes effective, efficient and equitable pedagogies and learning and the most appropriate ways of bringing them about. Certainly as editors we hope that this collection of articles, and the future issues of the journal for which they have prepared the way, will be seen as contributing substantially to the discussions that we must all continue to hold if dialogue and empathy are to hold sway over lack of awareness of and interest in the lives and the educational futures of the citizens of the world. For us, such discussions are the best guarantee that subjecting our individual and communal meanings to microscopic analysis will lead to the enhancement and enrichment of international pedagogies and learning to which the contributors to this journal and the conferences aspire.

### **Articles in Part 1**

This inaugural theme issue of the *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* has been divided into three parts. Parts 2 and 3 will be introduced separately in the next two issues of the journal. Here we provide a brief overview of the articles that compose Part 1. While the articles in Parts 2 and 3 relate to primary and secondary

schooling as well as to higher education settings, the articles in Part 1 engage with some of the issues entailed in university programs preparing graduates for different kinds of careers: as early childhood, primary and vocational educators and as members of defence forces. The articles in Part 1 also reflect the journal's consciously international focus, by canvassing the perspectives on pedagogies and learning held by researchers working in Australia, Malaysia and Pakistan.

The first article, by Phillip Stacey, Joanne Brownlee, Karen Thorpe, Drew Reeves and the students of Class EAB016 from the Queensland University of Technology in Australia, is concerned with the measurement and manipulation of epistemological beliefs in early childhood education students. Several strategies were deployed to facilitate the students' explicit reflection on their personal epistemologies, with a questionnaire being used to trace changes in their beliefs. The authors assert the utility of linking explicit reflection and experience in research pedagogy with a focus on developing sophisticated epistemological beliefs.

In the second article, by Neill Ustick from the Australian Catholic University, the author turns his attention to the strategies needed to enhance the development of deep learning and critical thinking. In doing so, he raises an issue that exercises the minds of most teacher education program designers: the complexities of maximising coherence within and across such programs. The article reports the diverse yet integrated ways in which four teacher education lecturers engaged with the lively and topical theme of "Constructing the world, constructing meanings".

Catherine H. Arden, Patrick Alan Danaher and Mark A. Tyler, from the University of Southern Queensland in Australia, use the third article to advocate a conceptually framed debate about some of the key issues involved in (re)designing a teacher education program for tradespeople and (para)professionals moving into teaching. They present a dialectic drawing on critical theory, criticality and the humanist tradition in education and informed by reflective and reflexive practice. This dialectic is used to engage with a number of fundamental questions about approaches to pedagogy – or andragogy – and learning that are likely to bring greatest benefit to the students and other stakeholders in the program.

The fourth article, by Jowati binti Juhary from Monash University in Australia, focuses on certain pedagogical issues associated with the proposed introduction of e-learning provision to undergraduate cadets studying at the Military Academy of Malaysia. The author contends that some of these issues are more generic, while others are located directly in the context of the Academy and the students' lives. The article is a timely reminder that, like all forms of education, e-learning is not necessarily a panacea and that its introduction must be preceded and accompanied by careful and serious weighing of options.

In the fifth article, by M. Jamil Anwar and M. Ashraf Iqbal from the Lahore University of Management Sciences in Pakistan, attention is given to the teaching of what many students regard as the difficult topic in algebra of group theory. The authors propose a blend of concept maps and discovery learning to underpin this teaching. The study has wider relevance, including to university teachers and administrators concerned with reducing attrition from courses of this type.

Finally, this first part of the inaugural issue of the journal contains what the editors hope will be the first of a large number of reviews of books and media pertaining to international pedagogies and learning. This review, by Phyllida Coombes, Patrick Alan Danaher and Emilio A. Anteliz from Australia and Venezuela, is of Chris Tyler's edited book *Traveller Education: Accounts of Good Practice*, about a specialised pedagogy for learners whose ethnicity and/or occupations reflect/s a mobile lifestyle.

As editors, we are delighted that this inaugural issue of the *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* encapsulates and synthesises such a rich diversity of strategies, issues, concepts and arguments about educational philosophy, policy and practice that ranges so broadly across contexts, countries and sectors. This diversity and range augur extremely well for both the journal's future and the learners and other stakeholders in the various forms of educational provision canvassed here. We look forward to working with educators and learners throughout the world to establish and extend the journal as one among several significant contributions to enhancing and enriching international pedagogies and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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