



# Editorial

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## **‘Knowledge gets constructed by interaction between the questioner and the world’ (Takacs, 2003:31)<sup>1</sup>**

When I suggested a special issue of the International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change to devote a special issue devoted to ‘teaching and training in cross cultural competencies’, I was pleased at the response of the board of editors for their readiness to publish one. I am pleased that a range of articles have been received as a response to this call and I have the pleasure of including some select articles in this volume. I acknowledge the collaborative assistance provided to me by Dr. Bryon Smith, the Journal’s production editor working with me from UK. Time is ripe for some reinvestments of thinking about the intersections of globalization, migrations of asylum seekers and refugees, and the efficacies of race and global race theory. The current special issue features articles that address tertiary teaching in universities in many disciplines of Psychology, social work and journalism.

The line of articles is rather impressive. They deal with language and culture and diversity and human services teaching and leadership. Thi Thuy Le and Shen Chen, propose approaches to teaching cultures in English language education in the sociocultural context of Asia-Pacific countries. Culture still plays a subordinate role in language teaching and learning, and is only addressed for an understanding of a language point. In terms of pedagogy, teachers still cling to the traditional ways of dealing with culture in foreign language education. Le and Chen, highlight that cultural sensitivity needs to be integrated into the teaching of all language skills so that learners can become linguistically and culturally competent.

Culture presents a challenge to an international social work paradigm as the cultural context will influence what is looked for in leadership. An interesting perspective is presented on educating social workers for leadership in a highly differentiated society by academics, Margarita Frederica , Maureen Long and Janelle Young. Culture influences leadership in teams, however the extent of the influence is less where there is supportive leadership and more when there is directive leadership. This suggests that leadership guided by social work values which are respectful and supportive may not look too different across cultures.

Neema Nungari Salim , from Nairobi, in the context of Kenya’s multiculturalism, reports to evidence from an action research project in social work in the slums, wherein she considers

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<sup>1</sup> Takacs, D. (2003). How Does Your Positionality Bias Your Epistemology? The New Higher Education Journal Thought & Action pp. 27 - 38



implementation of indigenous approaches to reduce over-reliance on the western models of social work practice. Her study seeks to find how acts of sharing common goals; raising the level of social consciousness amongst the women; improving the social, economic and cultural status of women in the areas; reducing the socio-economic disparities between women and men take place.

Of concern around the world is sexual assault. Australia, UK or India or in other geographies seem to matter little. It is pervasive and more recently we heard of the report on higher education settings released by the Australian Human Rights Commission into sexual assault figures at Australian universities. A nationwide survey of over thirty thousand students revealed that just over half of students were sexually harassed at least once in 2016, with one in five students sexually harassed in our university settings. Dr Susan Ainsworth, of Melbourne University in her comment wrote that:

‘at some point in my class, at least one student will ask why more progress hasn’t been made, given the Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 1984 and gender equality has been discussed for decades. An excellent question, but difficult to answer. There is no one thing explaining the lack of progress. But if they take away only one point from the class, I would like it to be this – one of the biggest barriers to progress is the belief that it is inevitable’.<sup>2</sup>

I believe Ainsworth’s views don’t just reflect the Australian scene alone. They are reflected in India, UK and most other countries in the world. No amount of law is going to chase this inevitability except in change in attitudes which is again dependent on the roles that families, schools and colleges and universities play. Penology needs to improve in this direction in every society. A rather powerful commentary was sent to us on the ‘me too movement’. The aftermath of the strings of sexual allegations faced by Harvey Weinstein, one of the most powerful faces of Hollywood, the #metoo movement went viral in social media. This innovative and creative movement was initially launched in 2006 by Tarana Burke aimed at helping survivors of sexual harassment. Taking examples from different countries, this commentary by Dr Rituparna Bhattacharya, Associate Fellow, Higher Education Academy, United Kingdom, has analysed the movement and attempts to answer the question as to why most victims of sexual harassment don’t raise their voice, clearly resounding that irrespective of the country east or west, that our conscience in society seems to fail as we wade through the intersections of patriarchy, power and gender.

McWaters and Hawkins, have two papers included in this volume around the issues of cultural sensitivity in our teaching. In one article ‘The imagined contact hypothesis: Prejudice towards asylum seekers in Australia’ they report on an interesting study that have contacted in relation to asylum seekers. We heard recently that over 7000 asylum seekers are likely to lose their social security in not so distant future in Australia. I have quoted Doherty from the Guardian in my own article in this Journal. The apathy and indifference and detached attitude prevalent in our society is appalling. We call ourselves a lucky country yet generosity and

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<sup>2</sup> Ainsworth, S., & University of Melbourne. (2018, April 09). Teaching the next generation of #MeToo. Retrieved April 11, 2018, from <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/teaching-the-next-generation-of-metoo>



compassion do not appear to be our Australian traits. They are present in pockets of people when counted are too few. The authors, found some gratifying results in the future generation that is now being nurtured in the tertiary portals. They note that low levels of prejudice were found in student sample from a north Queensland university. Further they attribute such results to the characteristics of, predominately relatively young and female and university going. The first key seems to be education as it gives opportunity to express informed opinions. Gender wise differences need to be narrowed down on humanistic issues and the road we take is the road of education. With the cost of university education predicted to be soaring over 15,000, each year, I can guess that we will see the shutdown of many tertiary programs and possibly many universities. Unfortunately, the media in our country seems to be happy providing taglines to the political parties in power and in opposition and hardly there is a balanced opinion that heralds our mornings. We need disruptive education and disruptive journalism for our times. Attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers can be formed and influenced by the wholesome journalism, seems difficult to find today.

Ndungu Wa Mungai and Ignatius Chida, MSW, from the Charles Sturt University in their paper discuss the challenges presented in rural and regional settings. The availability of services seems to be relatively poor across the country particularly in remote rural regions. They seem to disappoint inhabitants both in terms of relative access and equity in comparison to their counterparts in urban and more prosperous regions. The host communities haven't seen people of colour and people who speak another language other than English language for a long time in their history. In supporting people from other cultural and ethnic groups, the receiving groups' attitudes count. The federal government and the current department of border security continues to resettle a sizeable number of migrants from different non-European backgrounds, several of them that have come into the country having lived previously in refugee camps. These new inhabitants from developing countries often have minimal formal education and are poor or no English Language skills. Nevertheless, the authors see some opportunities like agricultural product processing and seasonal farm work in the rural regions that keeps these new residents. Lack of continuous work is clearly a challenge.

*Identity, Ethnicity and School Education: An Institutional Ethnography of schools in Assam* submitted by Aparajita Sharma depicts how various identities and perceptions about identity groups are formed through invisible and visible pedagogies in school. Her article is set in the context of the Bodoland separatist orientations in India in its North-Eastern State of Assam. School education plays a significant role in a multicultural setting reinforces ethnic identities/perceptions about identities among children about 'self' 'other', citizen and about plurality. "Does learning in school contribute in making identities about 'Self' and 'Others' rigid and aggressive or does they develop responsible identity of themselves that allows room for others and respect of diversity of thought and being? This is an important question.

My own article deals with presents ideas to engage students in reflexive practice and reviews a more recent engagement in an Australian University context. Preparing social work and human services students for their work in Multicultural Australia is a challenge by itself. Working with diverse communities i.e. communities that are other than their own language grouping, birth country origin, colour, creed, religious or spiritual beliefs and or sexual orientation requires gaining adequate practice with reflexivity and understanding their own positionality and working with their perceptions. Here in this last paper I offer my understanding and approach to transformational learning and the reflexivity. I present



explanations around the usage of concepts of reflexivity, positionality, privilege, situated knowledge and perceptions, and the intricate relationships between these concepts. I hope there is something of everyone in this special issue.

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