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## Editorial Introduction

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## Editorial Introduction



**Bradley A.U. Levinson**  
Lead Editor

Recent events across the Americas suggest that the work of building a democratic political culture through educational practices and institutions is more important than ever. The June, 2009 coup in Honduras, the September, 2010 coup in Ecuador, the recent electoral travesty in Haiti, and the evidence of state-level Machiavellian power plays revealed through the Wikileaks scandal—all of these events call into question the strength and maturity of civil society to sustain democracy or to contest non-democratic actions by state actors or franchised players in the political system. Here at the *Inter-American Journal of Education for Democracy*, we hope that our scholarly contributions to discourse and debate—our *granito de arena*—can continue to tip the scales in favor of a deep and long-lasting democracy across the region.

It has been my honor to serve as founding editor of this journal over the last four years, and with this sixth issue I hand over the editorship to my dear Mexican colleague, Medardo Tapia Uribe, a social scientist at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) with a distinguished record of leadership and publication in the field of education for democracy. Without doubt, Professor Tapia will continue the strong tradition of scholarship established at the Journal, even as he infuses it with new energy and brings to the task a new editorial team. I can assure you that the Journal is in very good hands, and I urge all readers to get the word out and encourage top-quality contributions, as well as volunteering their services as peer reviewers for manuscripts.

Meanwhile, I would like to take the opportunity to thank just some of the many people who have made this Journal possible over the last several years. As we have noted on several occasions, the creation of a truly bi or tri-lingual journal that spans the Americas has presented unique challenges. The Department of Education and Culture at the OAS, headed by Lenore Yaffee Garcia, has been a source of stalwart support throughout. I thank Dr. Garcia, as well as the many specialists in her department who've provided advice and leadership along the way: especially Jorge Baxter, who was perhaps most instrumental in making the Journal a reality, as well as Karla Jiménez, Adriana Cepeda, Romina Kasman, and Juliana Bedoya. I also wish to recognize once again the leadership of Daniel Schugurensky and Roberto Gonzalez, founding co-editors of the Journal, who helped conceive it and give it early form, as well as institutional backing. Thanks, as well, to our most recent team of Associate Editors, who provided important early readings and feedback on manuscripts—Aurora Elizondo, Daniel Schugurensky, Glenford Howe, Ana María Rodino, Inês Barbosa, and María Loreto Martínez—as well as the entire editorial board and all of our peer reviewers, without whose conscientious work the Journal could not have proceeded. At the Indiana University Libraries, Jennifer Laherty has been singularly helpful in providing support for our conversion of the Journal to an open-source format, and both Terry



Mason and Christi Jones, of Indiana University's Center for Social Studies and International Education, as well as Dean Gerardo González of the School of Education, have provided crucial budgetary and administrative support. Finally, a huge debt of gratitude goes to Carolina Casas, the Managing Editor for the last several years. An experienced practitioner and budding researcher of citizenship education in her own right, Carolina has applied her great intelligence and resourcefulness for the benefit of the Journal. In addition to corresponding with authors, Carolina has coordinated all copy-editing, translation, and layout procedures. The Journal owes a great deal to Carolina for her dedicated work.

This final issue under my editorship displays all the vitality and variety that our readers have come to expect of the Journal. Indeed, what we see is a broad and fresh opening up of the ways in which democratic citizenship education is both conceived and conducted; we shall need such fresh approaches to continue consolidating and deepening democracy in the region. Looking well beyond the classroom, we can discern a variety of educational means to construct a democratic political culture: these include the use of "ecomuseums" (Graybeal), the creation of different kinds of student leadership for "peace building" in schools (Bickmore and MacDonald), the strengthening of forms of family participation in education (Zurita), the advancement of an intercultural dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous citizens of a country (Herdoiza-Estévez and Lenk), and, finally, in the broadest ecological sense, the creation of more transparent and bottom-up processes in the realm of international cooperation for education (Baxter).

Lesley Graybeal begins this issue with an original discussion of the burgeoning phenomenon of "ecomuseums" around the region. She argues that such museums can play an important role in presenting alternative histories to the conventional, dominant narratives, and in democratizing the process of heritage preservation. Graybeal opens up important questions about how the museums can advance a certain kind of democratic education—both for the communities that create such museums, and for their external visitors.

Kathy Bickmore and Angela MacDonald relate the results of a study of peace building and anti-violence programs across three diverse Canadian school districts. The study illuminates contrasting approaches to student participation: teachers and administrators empowered differing sub-sets of students as "leaders" in differing ways, to help reduce violence and build peer conflict management capacity. The contrasting student roles that were implemented—monitors (enforcing rules), social skills leaders (addressing bullying), peer mediators (facilitating dispute resolution), student voice representatives (engaging in democratic consultation), and equity advocates (resisting bias and marginalization)—imply differing understandings of "peace" and of citizenship. The paper then probes the implications of these activities for diverse students' unequal opportunities to develop citizen agency and to build sustainable democratic peace.

Ursula Zurita provides an important review of recent efforts in Mexico to foster "education for democratic life" (EVD). Mexico, Zurita tells us, has followed the trend across the region to re-conceive "civic education" as something that occurs far beyond the formal lessons of the classroom. In that context, she highlights the salience of "social participation" as a construct that has been advanced to more closely and deeply integrate families and parents into the life of schools and other formal



educational institutions. Yet as much as social participation has been advanced at the level of rhetoric, and as desirable as it is normatively for a more robust democratic education, Zurita shows that the nationwide creation of School Councils for Social Participation (Consejos Escolares de Participación Social) has fallen far short of its promise. Drawing on empirical research in Mexico City, Zurita identifies the challenges and obstacles to realizing a fuller, more democratic practice of social participation.

Magdalena Herdoíza-Estevez and Sonia Lenk provide us with a unique comparison of the efforts to create new programs for intercultural education in Ecuador and Guatemala. They ground their analysis of such programs in the countries' recent political histories, and through an account of the different forms that indigenous politics and social mobilization have taken in each country. Normatively speaking, intercultural education is a thoroughly democratic construct that, in nearly every version, attempts to build equitable dialogue across deep cultural differences. Yet, by engaging in such a comparison, Herdoíza-Estevez and Lenk enable us to see more clearly the practical implementation challenges that intercultural education faces in real historical contexts.

Finally, Jorge Baxter closes the issue with a provocative exhortation to democratize the very process by which powerful international organizations—in conjunction with state actors—contribute to educational development in the region. Using the framework of deliberative democratic theory, Baxter shows how such organizations routinely contradict their own democratic rhetoric, and potentially undermine ordinary citizens' ability to have a voice in the direction of their country's education policy. Drawing also on notions of "empowered participatory governance," Baxter suggests that new forms of civil society involvement in education policy forums ought to drive the process of international aid for education, and thus fulfill the promise of a genuine "cooperation" in the field. Indeed, Baxter shows that such civil society involvement could itself constitute varied new forms of democratic citizenship education—with the Citizen's School of Porto Alegre, Brazil, as one existing example.