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Editorial Introduction

Bradley A.U. Levinson

Indiana University, USA

As I write these words, the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago has just wrapped up, and a renewed sense of respectful hemispheric cooperation is being widely proclaimed. The Inter - American Democratic Charter, which stimulates and reaffirms all OAS member states' commitment to democracy as way of life, has once again been invoked as a touchstone for such cooperation. At the Inter-American Journal of Education for Democracy, we are heartened by these trends, and we also look forward to similar collaboration at the upcoming sixth OAS Meeting of Ministers of Education, already in planning for August 12th, in Quito, Ecuador. We see our work as contributing to educational development in the Americas, and we envision this work unfolding in a spirit of mutuality and public-mindedness. The Journal serves as a space for the exchange of research experiences and ideas, a vital forum for reflection amidst the otherwise urgent business of constructing and strengthening democratic political cultures in our region.

It is in this context that we proudly make available Volume 2, Issue 1, in effect our third issue. For this issue of the Journal, we are pleased to provide a rich selection of articles that encompass many different aspects of democratic citizenship education. The authors included, and countries discussed, range from Canada to Argentina, and from Brazil to Costa Rica. The themes and issues covered include global citizenship, human rights education, university-based service-learning, legal rights education, and critical pedagogy for nonviolence.

We begin the issue with an effort to "theorize global citizenship" by the Peruvian-American comparative education scholar, Nelly Stromquist. Most discussions of citizenship education occur with reference to national polities, yet increasingly, under conditions of globalization, the concept of preparing youth for "global citizenship" has gained positive attention. Stromquist provides a useful overview of the concept, and she cleverly identifies four different thematic strands in the discourse on global citizenship: "world culture," "new-era realism," "corporate citizenship," and "Earth as planetary vessel." She discusses the institutional origins, assumptions, and ideological entailments of these themes. Finally, Stromquist addresses the practical challenges involved in attempts to implement forms of global citizenship education, especially through school-based civic education programs. She takes the U.S. education system as a type case, and outlines the likely impediments that would arise in a system which, like most, more effectively inspires national patriotism than international solidarity. Typical of this resistance is the response of one parent who, objecting to the



introduction of a new “global citizenship” program in a western U.S. state, said: “I don’t want global citizens; I want children who understand the global economy.”

Based on first-hand interviews and close document analysis, United States education scholar David Shiman provides us with a provocative account of the promises and pitfalls of human rights education in Costa Rica. For many years, Costa Rica has been held up as a model of human rights practice and a “human rights culture” for the rest of the Americas. Shiman acknowledges the positive contributions made by Costa Rica, but he also discovers the absence of any truly national plan for human rights education, and a paucity of curricular and human resources available to implement human rights courses or lessons. This is especially striking given the rise of unprecedented levels of anti-immigrant sentiment toward poor Nicaraguans living in the country, the emergence of new forms of poverty and inequality, and other current developments that ought to put human rights education higher on the Costa Rican agenda. Shiman offers a set of explanations for how and why human rights education has not been more widely implemented in Costa Rica, and, drawing on the insights of fellow educators in the country, he articulates several recommendations for correcting this situation.

In their recounting of a program for service-learning at a Buenos Aires veterinary school, Spanish and Argentine scholars Pilar Folgueiras Bertomeu and Marcela Martínez Vivot discuss the potential promise of such programs for developing democratic citizenship competencies amongst university students. First, Folgueiras and Martinez discuss and situate the growth of service-learning as an educational innovation in higher education across the Americas, arguing for its value as a means of instilling democratic values and competencies, especially those of solidarity and responsibility that reach across social class and ethnic lines. Then they provide a detailed account of the kinds of competencies that were developed in a particular service-learning program, which linked middle-class veterinary students from the Universidad de Buenos Aires with poor, immigrant residents in an urban slum. In this case study, they argue that the program was largely successful in creating new kinds of democratic commitments and values amongst the university students, and in helping them develop a professional ethos of compassionate service. While identifying some of the weaknesses and problems with the program, they nevertheless portray it as a hopeful example of curricular innovation for democratic citizenship at the university.

Next, Brazilian scholars Fernanda Castro Fernandes and Flávia Schilling examine the lived experiences of a group of women in Sao Paulo, Brazil, who participated in a widespread legal literacy program called “Promotoras Legais Populares.” Through these women’s assessment of their own participation in the program, the authors anchor a discussion on the issue of access to justice in a democratic society, and the roles that expert knowledge and different forms of literacy play in the vindication of basic rights. Because the program was envisioned as a catalyst for social transformation, the authors frame education as an instrument for re-signifying and thereby transforming individual and collective experiences, as well as a mean for developing an emancipatory political culture.

In his article, Canadian scholar Adam Davidson-Harden invites us to develop a “critical pedagogy for confronting global violence.” Drawing on the work of the renowned peace education scholar Johan Galtung, and combining it with research in the psychology of stress and coping mechanisms, Davidson-Harden urges us to challenge the kind of helpless “paralysis” often induced when we confront the full horror and extent of global violence.



If we truly wish to confront and transform structural violence, he says, then we must transform paralysis into “peace praxis.” His article sketches the theoretical and pedagogical elements necessary to educate citizens for such peace praxis.

Finally, rounding out the issue are an extended book review essay by Milton Francisco about the relation between sociolinguistics and citizenship education, and the next in our series of “dialogues.” Jorge Baxter treats us to a frank interview with the renowned developmental psychologist and comparative education researcher Judith Torney-Purta, known especially for her leadership role in the IEA Civic Education studies. Through this dialogue, Torney-Purta provides us with a brief history and a contemporary assessment of civic education research, identifying the most urgent problems to be studied, and the most effective methods to study them.

So here you have the latest issue of our Journal, which has been a long time in coming. We are pleased to report that our next issue is already well into production, and should be appearing before the end of the summer. This is a special theme issue on “Interculturalism, Citizenship, and Democracy in Education,” guest edited by Sylvia Schmelkes. It will consist of some 8 full-length articles on issues raised by various forms of cultural diversity across the Americas. Then, by the end of the year, we will publish yet another issue with a special theme section on “Deliberative Democracy and Citizenship Education.” Stay tuned!