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Introduction
Six Perspectives on Innovation in Contemporary Education

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The concept of innovation is defined in an internet dictionary as something "new and different." Innovation can mean anything from doing old things in new ways (Smith, 1976) to doing something substantially different (Stanley, 1992; McLaren, 2005; Welton, 2005). It can imply the tactical use of novel methods – intellectual, organizational or technological – to achieve longstanding purposes, or it can involve nothing less than revolutionary changes not only in instrumental means, but also in fundamental ends. The papers in this second special issue on education cover different aspects of innovation and each one provides insight into a new aspect of educational change.

Innovations in education must be understood and assessed in context. Instead of judging whether new educational practices and technologies produce measurable improvements in the success of educational programs (more success in learning, lower attrition rates and so on) it is first necessary to establish the material conditions under which education happens, the normative values it carries with it and the social interests it serves. Like any other human project, education in not "value free" but is inherently biased – philosophically, politically and economically. To undertake a thoughtful discussion of educational innovation requires a preliminary exploration of the political economy of education – an inquiry into the ways in which educational policies and applied pedagogy support larger special interests and either uncritically support or critically interrogate deep patterns of social and cultural power and authority. Education does not lack innovation, but there is often a failure to act upon the need for renovation.

The six papers selected for this second special issue on education cover a wide variety of innovations.

Pollock takes a look at how innovation occurs in an elementary information and technology (ICT) school based on Watt's Four Pillars of Innovation. The knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors of school staff are examined in terms of creativity, continuous improvement skills, implementation abilities, risk taking capacities and relationship-building skills.

The preparation of teachers for entry to classrooms is a challenge for teacher educators, schools and for pre-service teachers. Beisser's paper outlines an innovation of field-based pedagogical partnerships in the professional education of teachers. The collaborative

approach to the education of teachers outlined in this paper is based on engagement with "field-based" educators.

Bartell and Bartell provide an insight into innovation in the emergence of charter schools in the United States and Canada. Case studies of charter schools are outlined in the article based on research undertaken in Minnesota and Alberta. Charter schools have been controversial for some time and the nature of this innovation is likely to be debated in future issues of *The Innovation Journal.*

Taylor and Allen write about an innovative approach to changing household behaviours for urban sustainability in New Zealand. Their paper focuses on the underlying learning theory that contributed to this innovation.

Fleming looks at innovation from a different perspective by examining academic change in Ontario Colleges and small teaching universities. The issue addressed here is likely to be of interest to many people who teach in colleges and smaller tertiary institutions that have traditionally emphasized teaching rather than research as they reinvent themselves to focus on both spheres. Fleming's article examines both structural and cultural aspects of what is an innovative change for these institutions.

Finally, Lindsey examines the complexities associated with the process of persuading people to adopt new ideas using innovations diffusion research. Five principles of innovations diffusion are outlined in the research study that is reported here.

Educational innovation is diverse and multi-faceted. The industrial revolution, the advent of Internet-based education and new ways of organizing teaching and learning have led to many innovations in the school as an institution as it adapts to social and economic changes.

Sources

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