



EDITORIAL

The educational landscape in transition: contexts and actors

El panorama educativo en transición: contextos y actores

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With the new millennium and the emergence of the network society, as defined by Manuel Castells (1996, 1997, 1998, 2001), an important shift has occurred in the educational landscape. Openness, scale and interdependence of actors, institutions and processes have been the critical elements driving this transformation mediated by technology. With it a broader, more holistic understanding of teaching and learning has progressively emerged. The basic idea being that the process should be learner-centred, as well as personalised, contextual and scalable. This has led also to an important transition and even an occasional reversal of the traditional actors' roles in education.

Being in the framework of small organised communities or in randomly generated large networks, learners are increasingly assuming co-leadership in the teaching process of their peers and their own. On the other hand, teachers tend to perceived their role ever more as of community managers and facilitators. However, due to the increased diversity, differentiation and innovation of teaching and learning practices, the pressure has increased for teachers to be continuous learners as well.

If we look at institutions, the same change of roles has occurred. Schools and universities have become increasingly more diverse in their mission, organisation and mode of educational provision. In addition, they have been reengineered in order to become learning organisations themselves. On the other hand, the growing integration of digital education has allowed for educational institutions to widen their outreach. However, if this has led to an increased access and also participation, as a consequence educational institutions are becoming just a part of much larger learning ecosystems mediated by technology.

This change of the traditional roles in the educational landscape has implied a redefinition of the set of skills and competences needed for actors to continue to play effectively. As roles are changing and so does the settings in which they operate, students as teachers or school leaders require different competences which have to be acquired.

As stated above, this transformation process is closely connected with the increased perception of the importance of context in education. As educational policies and processes are shared globally, they are also applied everywhere. But, national situations are necessarily different. Similarly, as educational provision scale up and becomes international, institutions and teachers start operating in multiple social and cultural environments. But, learners also demand ever more personalised approaches. Thus, the need for recognising and adjusting learning content and delivery to differentiated contexts is increasing exponentially. This phenomena has been understandably accelerated by the use of artificial intelligence as well as of open educational resources, by engaging the collaboration of large-scale networks of learners.

The impact of social, cultural and economic contexts on teaching and learning has been known to education theory for many years. Most notably, the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1990) has highlighted how schooling was used as a tool to support the needs and aspirations of the wealthy dominant class. This has been supported by researchers in Australia (Teese & Polesel, 2003), who demonstrated how those in society from high socio-economic backgrounds manipulate schooling and the curriculum to ensure their interests are maintained. In the US, studies also have demonstrated how schools, curriculum and teaching can limit opportunities to learn and achieve for students from low socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic minority groups (Buckley, 2010; Gamoran, 2010; Oakes, 2005; Terwel, 2005).

Context is as relevant as content or the format of its delivery for the design of a quality learning experience for all. Although, awareness of this factor is not really new to educational literature, the perception of its importance has raised dramatically in recent years due to globalisation and the impact of the Internet and social media. However, it is critical that this understanding becomes also part of the new educational discourse.

The current issue of JETT – Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers offers its readers eighteen very interesting studies which reflect on the changing landscape of education. The variety and richness of the perspectives and methodological approaches presented is quite

impressive. The same applies to the high number of countries and continents represented. A very significant feature is also the fact that most articles have been produced by teams, mostly involving several institutions and some are even different countries.

We can divide the articles into two main groups. One analyses significant aspects of the roles of teachers and students and show how they are shifting. How is this process of adjustment being prepared and conducted? And, how is it being perceived by the actors themselves? A critical aspect involved is the acquisition of new skills. Vanessa Rubio García and José Tejada Fernández address this issue in their paper which focus on the informational skills of teachers and students of Mandatory Secondary Education in Spain. Their research aims to produce a snapshot of current educational practices regarding the assessment of information skills of teachers and students.

Efrain Duarte Briceño and María Teresa Díaz Mohedo also focus on the topic of the development of new teacher skills and creative strategies which lead to student engagement and participation. In their paper they look specifically at creative problem solving as a teaching competence. Javier Loredó and Francisco Alvarado address the need for more intensive and effective teacher training as well, by reporting on the results of a research on learning assessment practices used at the Technological Higher Secondary (Bachilleratos Tecnológicos), within the framework of the Comprehensive Reform of Higher Secondary Education (RIEMS). The authors collected online answers of over 4.000 teachers from all over México. Overall, it was found that while teachers have appropriated the discourse of the RIEMS, their actual classroom practices have not been changed accordingly.

Another interesting and innovative perspective explored by the authors is how teacher qualifications and characteristics influence students attitudes and academic performances. In her paper, Rune Müller Kristensen present a growth analysis of teacher qualifications and students' global self-esteem. Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study she shows that elements in teacher certification, educational degree and employment status do actually have a minor but significant effect. Dragana Pavlovic, Zorica Stanisavljevic Petrovic and Maja Injac analyse in their paper teachers' characteristics and the development of students' attitudes towards school. The paper addresses both secondary school teachers' characteristics and the impact of these characteristics on pupils' perceptions of school. The study which involved 448 students showed significant difference between vocational and grammar school teachers' characteristics and confirmed the positive correlation between students' perceptions of teachers' characteristics and attitudes toward school.

The students point of view is also addressed in two other papers. In the first one, Ana Bertha Luna Miranda conducts an analysis on the perspective of postgraduate students regarding academic excellence indicators. She presents part of the results of a Bi-Nacional research about the search for indicators and attributes which define the academic excellence of teachers in eleven universities in Mexico and Spain. In the second one, Emilio Jesús Lizarte Simón describes a significant biographical trajectory of a dropout student at the University of Granada, analysing the specific variables which affect the phenomena.

In order to set a good learning environment which fosters academic performance and personal fulfilment, the reinvention of school as a continuous learning organisation is paramount. Naturally, leadership plays a critical role for the realisation of this. A multinational team of researchers, including Juliano Vikuana Moisés Muli, from Lobito, Angola, and Inmaculada Aznar Díaz and Miriam Agreda Montoro, from Spain, present a descriptive analysis on the educational management of secondary schools in the province of Benguela/Angola. The focus of their research is on how the directors of these schools lead the pedagogical activities towards improving the structural and functional organization of the school, favouring a positive climate for teaching and learning.

Apart from skills, competences, and organisational culture, another major driver for changing teaching practices are learning resources. Carlos Segura Vidal, Ernesto Parra Inza, Ronald

Tamayo Cuenca and Ricardo Abreu Blaya present in their paper a proposal for a Virtual Learning Object designed to improve teaching and learning of Analytical Geometry.

A second group of authors address aspects related to the new importance being given to context in order to assure the quality of the learning experiences. This is the central topic of Carlos Francisco de Sousa Reis' paper, which explores how outdoor learning is fundamental to educate children. By bringing them closer to nature, the author claims children improve their perception and personal experience of peace as a fundamental social value.

Jonathan Aguirre in his paper also explores this importance of context. He explores the results of a doctoral research on public policies, in particular the project "Poles de Desarrollo" (2000-2001), in the framework of the Argentinean Teacher Training programme. His analysis focus on the pedagogical and educational potentialities of the project which was based on the actors narratives and territorial voices. The author concludes that the success of public policy planning lies in respecting local contexts and actors, in being participative and in involving institutional collaboration and networking.

The importance of community engagement and involvement is also addressed in Edgar Iglesias Vidal, Cristina Sánchez Romero and Santiago Castillo Arredondo's paper. They present a study on the community dimension as a factor for preventing school dropout. They suggest that dropout can be reduced if educational centres and community educational organisations establish a strategic collaboration.

Public policy is a most relevant contextual factor in education. In their paper, Francisco Ramón Ballesteros Rueda, Daniel Guerrero-Ramos, and Manuel G. Jiménez-Torres focus on the effects of an Intervention Program to improve Self-regulation of Learning. This study was conducted with a group of students registered in an Adult Education Center in a municipality of the province of Granada (Spain). The authors show students registered a significant progress thus leading them to conclude that training in this field is highly beneficial.

The importance of context is also quite significant when we consider gender issues. Ana María Pino Rodríguez's paper focus on the treatment of gender equity in a multicultural educative context. She presents the results from a research about gender equality in Higher Education centers in Ceuta. The research has been carried out in order to evaluate and assess specific plans organized by the Spanish Ministry of Education for the training of teachers as future specialists in coeducation.

On the other hand, Olga Belletich, Rolando Angel-Alvarado and Miguel R. Wilhelmi address in their paper the impact of epistemic norms in the musical training for primary teacher education. Their research shows that competency based education implemented by higher education centres it is not sufficient because institutions are not establishing didactical interventions internally coherent with the development of musical, pedagogical, and essential competences required for college students.

Cristina Querol Gutiérrez focus also on the theme of music education and its relation with political and educational context but on a different perspective. She presents a descriptive exploratory study of the perceptions of current leader's of professional music conservatories in Spain. The paper shows a high heterogeneity of educational provision amongst the institutions, but also a clear disagreement of the directors with the regulatory framework of their profession.

The importance of context is also highlighted in the building of an historical narrative. A multinational team including Onaida Calzadilla-González, from Cuba, Auxiliadora del Rocio Mendoza-Cevallos, from Ecuador, and Félix Díaz-Pompa, from Cuba, present an historical-logical analysis of the training of primary education teachers in the Ecuadorian context.

On a different approach, Francisco Ramallo and Luis Porta invite us in their paper to reflect upon the possibilities and the meaning of (re)founding the narrative about the Argentinean High School in the first half of the 20th century. Through a narrative approach and on the basis of

School Memory, they have harvested the practices and experiences of the diverse social actors implied, in a way which defies the traditional meta narratives from Educational History.

Finally, we look at the importance of context from the point of view of the family environment. In his quite interesting paper, Yasin Khoshhal presents an insight on the effect of birth order on learning a second or foreign language. Considering that birth order has a strong psychological influence on the way children in a family take different roles, he researches on how birth order may affect the procedure of learning a second or foreign language for the children. In his study, he concludes that there is a conventional relationship between birth order and learning a second or foreign language.

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