New Beginnings: Reflections on the Cycles of Life

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New Beginnings

Reflections on the Cycles of Life

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Life is a cycle of epiphanies, the meaning and relatedness of which hardly can be grasped immediately and fully until after the experience. Thus far, I have gone through several markedly important experiences in my life.

The first epiphany occurred when our family moved from Kazakhstan to the Ukraine. Although my parents were ethnic Ukrainians, they were forced to live in the land of exile in Kazakhstan for many years before the Soviet government allowed them to return to the Ukraine. My parents’ tragic destiny did not affect my childhood. Growing up, I loved learning and being surrounded by the multicultural milieu of my Kazakh and non-Kazakh friends, schoolmates, and neighbors. It was in Kazakhstan where I first learned to appreciate the diversity of educational and daily settings.

Adjusting to new circumstances in the Ukraine was not easy, but my knowledge of both Ukrainian and Russian allowed for a fairly smooth transition from secondary to high school, and later on to undergraduate and graduate levels of education. It was in the Ukraine where I first experienced the power of education to transform an individual life.

My second epiphany, my journey toward higher education accomplishments, began at Chernivtsi National University (CNU). After completing undergraduate studies, I worked as a teacher of English in local public schools for several years, and then returned to CNU to pursue graduate studies in general linguistics and English. The graduate studies at my Ukrainian alma mater have been instrumental in my advancement as a scholar and education professional.

Nineteen ninety-four marked another turning point in my life. I came to the United States to further my graduate education. I clearly saw one circle of my life closing and another one about to begin. It took me several years to complete my graduate studies at Northern Illinois University and eventually become a professor at National Louis University (NLU).

I remember how, in 2004, when I joined the then-department of Educational Foundations and Inquiry, Ruth Ravid took me under her wing to mentor and mold me into the professional that I am today. A remarkable scholar and individual, Ruth has dedicated several years of her career to *i.e.: inquiry in education* as its editor and reviewer of numerous submissions. Thank you, Ruth!
Joining the editorial team of *i.e.: inquiry in education* signifies an important threshold of my professional life. Each stepping stone on the path of my over 10-year career in the National College of Education seems to have brought me to a new level of professional maturity and a deeper understanding of research and inquiry grounded in professional practice. I have been particularly fortunate to walk this path with my dear colleague and friend, Virginia Jagla, under whose leadership *i.e.: inquiry in education* has gained substantial recognition beyond NLU. Thank you, Ginny!

Special thanks are in order to Arlene Borthwick, Linnea Rademaker, Wendy Gardiner, and Elizabeth Grace, who have contributed immensely to the foundation and advancement of this journal since 2010. As the new editorial team of *i.e.: inquiry in education*, we will uphold the journal’s notable traditions.

The Fall 2016 issue offers a multifarious compilation of research and scholarly articles by national and international authors.

John A. Huss and Shannon Eastep (Northern Kentucky University) venture on the study of faculty familiarity with the rights, responsibilities, and resources pertaining to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Workforce Rehabilitation Act in terms of compliance and accommodations for online courses. The authors discuss the initiatives that have brought their college faculty to facilitate expediency on the matter of implementing online teacher education courses, and at the same time on cultivating a more “humanized” instructor presence within online classes.

Laura Jacobi (Minnesota State University, Mankato Campus) examines the effectiveness of online teaching in an upper-level online organizational communication course. Evaluations from 27 students were used, with questions focused upon the structure of lectures in the online course as compared to other online courses and to traditional classrooms. Jacobi posits that the use of audio voice-overs with PowerPoint slides, the concise nature of lectures, the ability to review them, and the use of key points contribute to student success. Interestingly, Jacobi concludes that the majority of the students participating in the study found online lectures more effective than live lectures in traditional classrooms.

Jennifer K. Allen (University of West Georgia) presents a study on student-created digital photo stories combined with focused teacher conversations guided by the NOT-ICE Teacher Discussion Protocol, which she herself developed. Allen makes use of visual media as a springboard for intentional and productive discussions, and a purposeful small-group arrangement that allowed for cross-grade-level collaboration focused on a relevant issue of shared concern within the content of her coursework. Allen’s study underscores the significance of an effective professional learning experience.

Ken L. Turner, Jr. (University of Dubuque), Melissa Kirby (Kettle Moraine School District), and Sue Bober (Schaumburg High School) share their experience of employing engineering design as a key component of STEM education. Engineering design is becoming increasingly adopted as part of the Next Generation Science Standards on a state-by-state basis. The authors make compelling arguments in support of engineering design as a useful tool for building students’
confidence in science, engaging students in science classes, and building relationships with the community.

Finally, Faisal S. Al-Maamari (Sultan Qaboos University, Oman) provides an insightful analysis of the gaps that exist between researchers and teachers, and research and practice in teacher education. Al-Maamari explores the relationship between research and reflective and exploratory practice, and offers strategies that can assist classroom practitioners to recognize and overcome the challenges they encounter along the way. Al-Maamari appeals to practicing teachers who engage in and with research, and to educators who are tasked with preparing the teachers of the future.

As the curtain falls on this calendar year, presaging a new cycle of life events and happenings, the new editors of i.e.: inquiry in education reminisce on the journal’s foundational traditions and ponder what lies ahead.

Here’s to new beginnings!

*The 2016-17 i.e.: inquiry in education editorial team:*
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