Preface

The major purposes of this edited collection are to explore student engagement, globalization, and the challenges that reveal a variety of key theoretical and practical implications that shape international education. These include the increasing inequality, achievement gap, international academic standards, poverty, student engagement, teacher preparation, and assessment. This text is designed to bring to light commonalities as well as differences between approaches as well as understandings from a wide variety of international foci about student engagement during teaching and learning. Engagement may well be intuitively understood yet it continues to have multiple interpretations. One such interpretation is that engagement is connected to motivation. The role of motivation is significant therefore in mediating the interaction between the teacher and the students. What students are allowed and expected to demonstrate, the tasks assigned by the teacher, the use of certain teaching strategies, and the routine culture of the classroom provide opportunities for student engagement. Empirical studies show that engagement is elicited and enhanced by recognizing, respecting, and developing the student’s identity and role as a change agent in influencing classroom interaction (Turner, Christensen, Kackar-Cam, Trucano, & Fulmer, 2014; Cooper, 2014; Reeve, 2013).

Many of the chapters of this book focus on practical aspects of teaching and learning. While policy makers seek evidence to inform their decisions based on quantitative/scientific data, practitioners focus on how individual children learn over time. This point of view requires a bottom up approach that integrates the best teaching practices with individual clinical expertise and learners’ choice and cannot result in “cook book” approaches. As a result of this difference, this collection focuses on specific classroom experiences. Authors share their processes of engaging their students irrespective of contemporary global initiatives while maintaining a clear goal of preparing students for the 21st century.
CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

The chapters begin with the classical general learning models: Bandura with a mix of Rosenthal and Jacobson, Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence ideas along with critical theory. These theoretical models shape the initial chapter offerings and these classical thoughts still excite in the authors a possibility of insight into classroom teaching and learning. They set the stage for the dynamic interaction between and among the implementation of theoretical constructs that have been reworked over the years to establish some historical precedents to critical theory analysis. The editors allow the reader the opportunity in the beginning chapters to enter into the contemporary thought of teachers as they struggle in the chapters with commonsensical educational practice with new perceptions of teaching and learning such as critical theory that are gradually entering the activities of classrooms portrayed in chapter one.

Chapters 2-6 provide the reader with student engagement issues that seem unique to the country represented by the chapter authors. However, it is possible from a readers’ geographical perspective to see that issues raised in these chapters are somehow reflected in their own locality. For example, in looking at Bhutan and the attempt to maintain traditional culture there are elements of dual language education and cultural awareness prominent in many countries. Also visible in the Bhutanese example is a desire to be cautious of globalization and reflect on what elements of education contribute to happiness. The Gross National Happiness Scale seems an apt element related to the aims of critical pedagogy. If the critical theorist can expose educational flaws, then the happiness scale can draw attention to what education would look like if those flaws were rectified.

The chapter describing how faculty provide happiness to students in Bosnia-Herzegovina point to the challenges teacher educators encounter in the face of a horrendous recent history. The description of teacher education is a depiction of hope. The chapter also displays a sense of resiliency between and among teachers who move the profession forward despite political machinations. Teacher colleagues worldwide can recognize the challenges at work in such an environment. As global boundaries shift and global alliances disappear and as civil unrest continues, educators in these areas may benefit from reading this chapter.

Chapter 5 and 6 remind the reader of children who are in the shadows of any system. Engaging students who are outside their traditional society definitions is an engagement issue that begins with teacher sensitivity. School refusal seems to be a psychological burden on the school more so than a burden on the child. Yet it is the child who suffers. Schools refusing to accept the Roma, for example, appear to present yet another school based problem. Educators should not blame the child for not engaging when the school and its concomitant environmental factors do not offer a welcoming space.
Chapters 8-11 provide practical ways that teachers and researchers attempt to engage students. In a general sense engagement can be substituted for motivation. In these chapters teachers demonstrate how they motivate students through science, music, critical media studies and other topics keen to the adolescent.

The text concludes with a personal narrative of a teacher’s journey related to the ongoing evolution of the global environment. This movement of change is related to the attention that globalization continues to receive. Its influence on teaching and learning is constantly reinventing itself while ironically remaining the same. Students and teachers have a perennial set of needs no matter the age, country or status. Navigating individual experiences to maintain pace with the seemingly changing but very perennial ideas of teaching requires teacher reflection. Such reflection establishes the human nature of teaching and learning and the spirit of teachers willing to engage with students.

REFERENCES

