

# Songs of Our Cities

Michael Ryan Moore, Editor

“When you look at a city, it’s like reading the hopes, aspirations and pride of everyone who built it.”

Hugh Newell Jacobsen

Across the world, our cities move with distinct rhythms. Every metropolis reverberates with a singular sound reflecting the tenor of its people: their past, their present, their hopes, their aspirations. In this issue of *Perspectives on Urban Education*, we turn our ear to this chorus of voices. Volume 8, Issue 2: International Issues in Urban Education looks broadly, across borders, at the ways in which education intertwines with the cultures around it. Each of the articles in this issue explores the relationship between place and practice, between school and society.

In “Collaboration as a Site of Personal and Institutional Transformation: Thoughts from Inside a Cross-National Alliance,” Sharon M. Ravitch and Cathi Tillman deeply interrogate this practice of listening. Reflecting on their work in Quito, Ecuador, the two authors question what it means for researchers to truly collaborate with their research participants. For Ravitch and Tillman, true collaboration demands discomfort. Collaboration requires a constant and deliberate interrogation of one’s own position within the research. Authentic partnerships develop through informed, reciprocal and respectful dialogue.

Continuing this line of inquiry, Dr. Ravitch speaks in depth about her work in and beyond Ecuador in “An Interview with Dr. Sharon Ravitch.” In this audio addendum, Dr. Ravitch reflects on her work with Cathi Tillman, explaining in-depth the struggles involved in creating authentic cross-national collaboration. Moving beyond Quito, Dr. Ravitch recounts the fundamental pillars of her research that apply across multiple international settings.

From Ecuador, we turn to Greece. “Lessons for Life: Roma Children, Communal Practices, and the Global Marketplace” is Mary Christianakis’ first-hand account of informal ado-

lescent education in five multigenerational Roma families. For these families urban education is quite literally in the city. Education and on-the-job training go hand in hand as parents use language, music, and markets to teach. Through these apprenticeships, Roma families help their children cultivate critical thinking skills through direct participation in a traditionally “adult” marketplace. Through these stories, Christianakis reminds us that individual communities often tailor education to meet their personal values and goals.

Building on this idea of personalization, Radhika Iyengar and Sharmi Surianarain suggest that top-down education policy take local circumstances into account. In their article, “A Comparative Analysis of Education Policy and Practice: The Case of Institutions in Mumbai and Delhi” Iyengar and Surianarain outline the institutional factors that distinguish urban education in two of India’s largest cities. In particular, the authors suggest that each city’s unique infrastructure shapes the implementation of education reform. If national policymakers hope to make effective changes throughout a country, they must start by looking locally.

These various local influences intersect as students from diverse backgrounds come together in the classroom. Here the burden of communicating and collaborating lies squarely on the teacher—a burden which not all teachers are equally prepared to shoulder. In “Cognitive Development of Social Justice through Re-Designed Courses and Community-Based Partnerships: An Initial Investigation,” Robert E. Lee, Gary Creasey, Brent D. Showalter and Verence D’Santiago take up the issue of professional development for urban school teachers. In their exploratory research, these authors examine how pre-service coursework affects students’

beliefs, intentions, and confidence regarding working in urban settings.

Local communities shape education at every level. Moving from individual classrooms to entire educational organizations, David Soo suggests that urban schools constantly evolve in relation to their surroundings. In his article, “An Added Dimension of Mission: Metropolitan Colleges and Universities,” Soo compares two urban schools, Northern Kentucky University and Portland State University, to demonstrate how widely urban education varies, and yet how strongly that education depends on local contexts.

In each of these articles we find a different route into international issues in urban education. Yet, from every road we reach a common ground. From every fixed point we find that education always exists within communities, that education is always in context. When we look at a city, we see the hopes, aspirations, and pride of everyone who built it. When we look at education, we see the same hopes, the same pride. Education reflects its surroundings.