Transcript of Interview with Allan Luke, Founding Editor of *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, by Joshua Pitt, Publisher - Taylor & Francis Australasia

1. **For researchers or students who have never encountered Pedagogies: An International Journal**, what is the journal about in a nutshell?

Well, we set up the journal about 5-6 years ago in Singapore in the National Institute of Education (NIE), with the idea that we needed to have a forum for the core business of what goes on in classrooms. Now, let me clarify that. It seemed like a lot of the policy debates were shifting 5-7 years ago to both systems of accountability, to large scale testing, and to educational psychology studies that were based on quasi experimental design. I mean those are broad shifts within the field that have been pushed since the ‘no child left behind’ in the UK literacy reforms of the early 2000’s.

What we can clearly see is that there were a couple of things that were missing from the debate. Specifically we knew that the face to face work between students and teachers is the core business of schooling. That bureaucrats can rail on, that educational scientists and theorists and researchers can rail on about what systems should do and how systems should head in this way or that way, but in fact the innovation and the hard work and the core equity issues were being faced by teachers and students in their everyday work, in what we call the ‘enacted curriculum’. So the focus of the journal is, you could say, is pedagogies, you could say is enacted curriculum, but the focus of the journal is what goes on in classrooms, in these ubiquitous institutions called schools. So that was one thing that we wanted to do. We wanted to provide a forum that covered the element of the field that we knew made the difference in people’s everyday life and that is face to face, teacher-student talk, relations, knowledge construction and so forth.

The second thing that we knew is that under all the political pressures, there were people fossicking around for all these magic bullets: back-to-the-basics direct instruction, constructivism, critical pedagogy, etc – different approaches that were going to solve some of the real dilemmas facing schooling. We knew at the same time that not only do these things need to be translated into an accessible talk about what goes on in classrooms, but that a lot of the innovation entailed new pedagogies, new cultures, new technologies, new genres and new ways of understanding the world. Everything from video games to online interaction to the use of digital and creative arts in the classroom that in many ways, the policy environment and the research push on evidence-based educational science was dampening down and failing to report on a lot of the instructional innovation that was going on in these new areas. So the two principal focuses of *Pedagogies: An International Journal* are actually the oldest issue and some of the newest issues. The oldest issue, specifically: what teachers and kids do in classrooms. And the newest issues are: what kind of experimentations beyond print based, face to face, oral interaction are people engaged in, in terms of visual literacies, critical literacies, engagements with new digital technologies and so forth. Around 5-7 years ago, when we started the journal, those were the two areas that we really wanted to open up.

2. **What do you think are the most contentious issues in contemporary debate and research in education which your journal seeks to address?**

Nominally, our journal is committed, and *Pedagogies* – its editors, its editorial board, and the people that founded the journal – were absolutely committed to issues of equality of educational opportunity, of social justice in education, of basically everybody getting a fair shake and access to education, and
those are ubiquitous questions that we found were as important in Asia and in East Asia, as they were in Europe, or they were in the United States and so forth. I mean, one of the interesting things about the foundation of Pedagogies and the orientation of Pedagogies: it was set up in Singapore, nominally for an international audience. So one of our other goals was to, in effect, shift some of the knowledge and power relationships so that it wasn’t everybody running off and consulting their North American journals or their UK journals for answers that would be supposedly universal to other contexts, but in fact, the papers, the studies, and the production of the journal were actually coming out of culturally and demographically different settings. But the major issue is this: it was our view at that time of the journal, that all this orientation towards test scores, towards numbers, towards quasi experimental designs, etc, was in having a very reactionary effect on the field, of failing to engage with the innovation that teachers and kids were engaged with in classrooms. So really, I think, one of the things, the contentious issues that we’d like to cut through, is how do you engage with new technologies, new student cultures, new ways of knowing, new ways of expression that are both digital, visual, oral and print based.

The other issue that I think that we want to address both indirectly and directly is we need to have a journal forum where qualitative work, discourse analytic work, purely theoretical work, innovative and speculative work is still valued in a setting where a lot of journals and a lot of journal editors are moving back to an early twentieth century quantitative paradigm under legislative and under political pressure.

3. Who would you describe as being your core readership or audience?

I’ll start from the outside in. It’s is obviously an English language journal, so it is principally targeted for English language researchers and so forth. The work has been cited and used elsewhere. But really we wanted to get to Asian, North American and UK – notice the order that I just said that – teacher educators, researchers, systems bureaucrats and to an extent teachers. Now, there’s always an ambiguity about that, because academic journals are never really teacher-ready, teacher-accessible, etc. But I think one of the things that we’ve shown with Pedagogies is it is quite possible for theoretically coherent and scientifically defensible articles to also be written in a fairly accessible language that teachers and people working within systems can pick up and work with.

4. For researchers considering submitting to the journal, what do you look for when considering articles and submissions?

Clarity, clarity and more clarity. Having worked as a journal editor for 15-20 years on different journals, I often think of an incident that is in Tim Robbins’s movie, in which Robbins is actually sitting at the polo club in Beverley Hills and people have the opportunity to come and pitch him and Spielberg on their movies. Authors have about five minutes of an editor’s attention. The article comes in – hardcopy, softcopy, Manuscript Central, whatever – I’m tired, it’s a late night. I’ve got to look at your article and what you do in the title, the abstract, the first two or three pages is absolutely crucial in terms of presenting a clear, defensible view of the world, an exposition of what you’re going to do and how you’re going to do it. It is that simple. Some of the pitfalls that I see in these articles regularly are people burying me in literature review, people burying me in paradigmatic and field-specific high language that I’ve got to read two, three, four times in order to actually suss out what their article is. It is quite possible to be a critical ethnomethodologist, a post-structuralist feminist thinker, to be a quasi-experimental design person, to be a defensible scientist or an interpretive sociologist, and to present
these things in language that our generalist audience can actually get without having to read a sentence five times over. So I think that that kind of clarity, no matter paradigmatically, and we like to think of the journal very much as an open field that doesn’t a priori have a prejudice towards behaviorists, or towards Neo-Vygotskian work, or doesn’t have necessarily a set of paradigmatic barriers to getting published. We like to think of it as an open field, but in order to get into that open field, you’ve got to write with some degree of clarity and precision.

5. **What are your aspirations for the future of the journal?**

I hope the journal actually continues morphing and changing and pushing the field, and being pushed in all kinds of new directions. What’s really problematic about some of these journals, is that the journal gets to be known as being the home of paradigm ‘X’ – and only paradigm ‘X’ – and then begins to ossify and replay itself and creates kind of a cannon around that paradigm: citing the same people, kowtowing to particular authors and theories. What I’d like with *Pedagogies* – because I guess I’m a bit of an anarchist and a bit of a counter-orthodox thinker – is for it to be virtually unrecognizable in 10-15 years. A lot of the innovations that have to come in schooling, that have to come in face-to-face educational practice in the current century and for this next generation are things way beyond the 19th century print paradigms that persist in schools. Now whether that means online teaching and learning, the use of digital and creative arts, whole new curriculum forms, social networking, those are just some of the areas that are opening for us as productive engagements with community cultures, with changing economies and with the changing world around us. So, I would expect and hope that the journal continues to morph and push schooling along new directions, as it tries to desperately seek a way out of its post-war, late twentieth century paradigms.

6. **Do you have any specific advice for researchers seeking publication who write about, and from, contexts traditionally underrepresented in international journals?**

Well the first thing I mentioned to you is that *Pedagogies*, its Editorial Board and many of its reviewers are situated in East Asia and Australia and elsewhere. So the first thing is that we don’t want to slavishly reproduce the particular paradigm wars or educational debates that are dominating the UK or the US scene – in fact they are quite parochial vis-à-vis some of the emergent issues in Europe, in Asia that are covering the much larger population bases and much larger school systems. When I first moved to Australia from Canada and migrated in the 1980’s, I remember there being a cultural cringe of people saying, ‘well you’re writing about Australia and Australian education – you’ll never get published’. And there was a similar sense of when I was working in Hong Kong, in Singapore and elsewhere in the early 2000’s, a sense of ‘oh well we’re underrepresented in the journals because the journals won’t publish from us’.

I’ve always thought of turning the cultural difference and the locations of the authorships into a strength. Quite specifically, not always writing as if the US or the UK is the centre of education research, and not apologizing for the fact that this paper is going to be principally about school reform in Turkey, or school reform in Iran. Some of those issues – I’ll give you an example of something that we sponsored very early on in *Pedagogies* – we had a special edition on madrasahs. We’ve had materials, not in *Pedagogies*, but in some of our Singapore journals on madrasahs, on Islamic education. We’ve had articles on East Asian pedagogical issues and cultural identity issues, and I hope in due course we’ll have continuous work on indigenous education issues.
My own view is that we’re at a historical moment where the centre-margin relationships, even if we talk to publishers like our colleagues in Taylor & Francis and elsewhere, where the centre and margin relationships between North American and English-speaking markets, and China and East Asia and India and Europe are actually shifting in some dramatic ways. It’s time now for both editors and authors and reviewers from areas that historically are now putting runs on the board in terms of international scholarship to step up and make no bones about representing their work. It’s also time for us as journal editors to assist, edit, shepherd first-time authors from the horn of Africa and from elsewhere into access to international knowledge flows. So I would say, be direct about it, approach the editor directly, ask for exactly what kind of adaptations of locally focused work might be of interest to a broader international audience. And reciprocally, for editors, it’s time for us to open up and engage with those authors.

I would say this for any of the journals I’ve worked for and for all journals, which is don’t just send us the article. Sit, go to the library, look at back issues, go online, read some of the articles, get a feel for what the editorial orientation is, read the editorial statement, and paradigmatically go back and read what Gunther Kress has written there, what Courtney Cazden has written in the journal, and get a sense of some of the debates, some of the stylistic decisions, some of the key issues from the journal. I think there is nothing more irritating to us as editors, is when we get pieces from people who clearly are just scattering seeds to the wind and haven’t paid attention to who the audience is and who they are writing for.

7. Allan, why do you think people should consider Pedagogies as an outlet for their work in teaching and learning?

I’d like to say idealistically we should support, just as we support underdogs in institutions, schools, etc, we should support new journals more generally. But the other snob appeal line that I’d give you is, look at the editorial board of Pedagogies. All of those people get copies of the articles, read the articles, and potentially use it. You’re going to get circulated to that audience to start. The other thing about Pedagogies is you’re going to get circulated to a lot of people who are innovative and relatively breaking new ideas in the field type thinkers. And the other thing about Pedagogies is that you’re going to get to an international audience, it’s not just going to stick with the Midwest or the heartland of the UK.

8. And just finally, could describe the review process in Pedagogies?

Yup, it’s a standard review process. It goes to one of the two editors, Yew-Jin or Anneliese. They will select the reviewers from the large pool of reviewers, and there are probably a thousand reviewers, including the editorial board. The reviewers are from all over the place. So you’re going to have international reviewers as well as an international audience. You’re going to get your two or three or four referees’ report back and an editorial executive decision. One of the things about Pedagogies is, like most of the journals I’ve been involved in, we pride ourselves on a turnaround of eight to twelve weeks, having had these awful experiences in another generation of journals sitting on work for 6-12 months and so forth. So thanks to Manuscript Central and a lot of the digitization of the review process, those things are speeding up. So it’s a standard editorial blind review process, run out of the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore, through international reviewers – honest, straight up, fair shake.