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Educational Journeys in times of uncertainty:  
Weathering the storms

GUEST EDITORIALS AND ARTICLES FOR THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF TJHE

## Editing the Journal during transition

Luigi F (*also known as Lupo*) Donà dalle Rose

Past Editor

Anna Serbati

Past Assistant Editor

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E-publication: November 2023

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# Guest Editorial for the 10th Anniversary of TJHE

## Editing the Journal during transition

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**Abstract:** Both authors express their gratefulness to the whole Tuning Academy and to the many colleagues who cooperated to their editorial experience. Moreover, revisiting that period, they present some new remarks and reflection on that “incredible 5-years journey”. Anna’s contribution focusses on three big added values, that – according to her editorial experience – TJHE offered (and offers) to the higher education community worldwide. Indeed, TJHE offers – in the first place – a platform of individual and collective reflection on the themes emerging in the international scenario; in the second place, it offers an inclusive international approach, the variety of countries represented by authors being very large; finally, it offers a reference database, since it collects a variety of scholarly experience, from more structured projects and reforms to local teaching innovation and scholarship of teaching and learning. In Lupo’s contribution, the focus is “a meditation on competences”, those which are the heart of the Tuning community. The contribution starts from a description of the different competences and roles, which occur in a

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*More information about the authors is available at the end of this article.*

well-structured editorial process (whose achievement was the aim of those 5 years). Such an example – in its particular context – shows the complementarity and the circularity of competences, qualities which are present even in more general contexts of human life. Moreover, this example leads to a deeper understanding of the splendour and magnificence, that the competences may generate.

**Keywords:** Tuning Journal mission; editorial process; HE database; generic and specific competences.

## Lupo's part

One day, walking with Julia and Robert in a street of Rome, where we were for a meeting of the early Tuning, we were talking about “when” it is appropriate to put an article down on paper. And Robert emphasized that this can occur only when the whole content is mature in the author’s mind. I must confess that I found it very difficult to reach this stage in writing this editorial. I thought about it for some months. At the end, I had to write: the focus is “a meditation on competences”. More precisely, a focus on the complementarity and the circularity of competences in human life or, in other words, on their splendour and magnificence.

In these last years, after leaving the editor role in the precious hands of Mary, I devoted most of my life to my family, in the small or sometimes committing actions of everyday life. And I had time to “*look back at*” previous periods of my life. The period at the Tuning Journal for Higher Education appeared to me in a deeper perspective, which I had lived somewhat unconsciously at the time of action.

The light which triggered my reflection was a short stanza in a prayer of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, which I found on the songs book of my parish church in Padova and which I report here in my translation from the Italian version.<sup>1</sup>

*When I sing for You Lord  
You are present there  
in my singing ability.  
Hallelujah.*

When I acted as editor, I developed new competences, simply while doing, and – along the way – the competences of many other persons were of great help to me. As a whole, “*a tuning of actors and competences*” occurred

<sup>1</sup> Mother Teresa of Calcutta, “Ringraziamento per la musica ed il canto,” in *Pregchiere di Madre Teresa di Calcutta* (Milano: Mondadori Editore, 1997), 10

and it led finally to the Journal issues. Each actor, while giving, was at the same time receiving and growing. Moreover, *tuning* was in this case assured by the initial wishing caress of Julia and Robert.

The launch of a given Journal issue involved many actors, who interacted offering their own personal gifts. All of them inherited a smoothly working online platform and a robust Journal organization, set up in the previous years by Paul Ryan, the Journal founder, and by Ladislav Bizimana, the Managing Editor, with much of competence, wisdom and love. My Assistant Editor Anna Serbati and myself, were very grateful to Paul for his being Guest Editor in the first issue of our mandate. Among all actors of our editorial period, I mention at first Anna, who offered to the Journal her most valuable previous research and editing experience, made at her department in Padova in the area of university education. She also brought to all of us the freshness of her age and her special gift of being most concrete and well-balanced in deciding. Moreover, her being rich in academic relations became extremely useful when looking for reviewers or even when hunting for new submissions, asking potential authors – met at Conferences or occasionally – to contribute to TJHE with a manuscript of their own. The other essential person for our editorial work was Ladislav Bizimana, the Managing Editor, a true and lasting pillar of the Journal, who – as a first gift – made us feeling at home. He offered us his expertise not only in the crucial role of editing and copyediting the two annual issues, but also shared his precious knowledge and familiarity with the procedures for the validation of the Journal. Finally, his ability in managing all technicalities related to the on-line nature of the Journal was basic for the Journal growth and success. In the first years of our editorial period, most precious was the role of Pablo Beneitone, who in the dawn of Buenos Aires was coaching us three by skype, on behalf of the Tuning Academy, often helping us with concrete ideas and suggestions and cooperating in this also with Maria Yarosh, who at the time took care of the Tuning short grant visits in Deusto. Sometimes, these latter led to publishable submissions.

The Editorial Board acted in those days in several ways: after its enlargement, on the basis of a balanced gender and geographical distribution, the topics of the TJHE mission were detailed under four new points, in order to make it clear that the Journal – even though inspired by the richness of the many Tuning projects experience – was accepting worldwide contributions by all academic communities concerned with innovation in university education. Several EB members and Advisory Editors were involved in preparing this decision: here I would like to remember especially the enthusiasm of Arlene Gilpin. Many EB members and Advisory Editors also

committed themselves in promoting submissions in their own academic milieu: as a whole, their sensitivity and competences gave an unbelievable help to our work.

Among the group of cooperating actors, the Reviewers – and again the Advisory Editors – were most important: their wisdom, specific competences, patience and respect of deadlines were crucial for the overall quality of the Journal. Each issue, on a special page, witnesses our personal gratitude to each one of them. Many qualitative aspects about the “fruits” of this whole editorial period are described in our Guest Editorial of Vol 7,1 of the Journal.<sup>2</sup> We only recall here that, until when the handover to Mary occurred, the published “non-Tuning” articles were slightly more in number than the “Tuning” ones, thus confirming the strategic global role of the Journal. Moreover, we learned with joy that the Journal was accepted for indexing by Scopus on September 2018 and by ESCI (WoS) on June 2019.

Of course, all the efforts of these actors got sense only because authors submitted for a Journal evaluation their articles. The authors and their manuscripts, rich in findings and reflections, were the focal point of the whole process. Only rarely submissions were accepted as they were sent in. In my opinion, the most valuable aspect of the whole editorial process – whatever it takes in dialogue, suggestions and patience – is the interaction between authors and all the other actors of the editorial process in order to shape the relevant submissions into publishable manuscripts. This is the aspect, which I name “healing aspect” of the process, i.e. a respectful service to authors.

“Looking back at” and “reading through” those editorial years, I feel as most important to underline the cooperative nature of the whole editorial process and the complementarity of the different competences (related to knowledge) and roles (related to action), offered and played by each actor. Of course, the real process, which we went through, never was only “roses and flowers”, but involved several difficult days of patient work for paper hunting, of submissions’ reading, of reviewers availability and of dialogue and wait for the answers of the reviewers; sometimes we experienced days of anguish, especially when the copyediting phases were approaching. Recently, the editorial pains were vividly described by the EB member Damtew Teferra,<sup>3</sup> who runs an appreciated HE journal in a different context.

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<sup>2</sup> Luigi F. Donà dalle Rose and Anna Serbati, “Four Years of TJHE at a Glance,” *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* 7, no. 1 (2019):19-22, [https://doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-7\(1\)-2019pp19-22](https://doi.org/10.18543/tjhe-7(1)-2019pp19-22).

<sup>3</sup> Damtew Teferra, “The arduous journey to establish a successful journal,” *University World News Africa Edition*, March 23, 2023, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post>.

The “*reading through that period*” revealed some deeper aspects to me. The first aspect is the complementarity of the competences offered by each of the many actors: in this respect, the editorial process can be a parable for all good human activities. I quote here the address by pope Benedict XVI to the participants of the Bologna Seminar held in Rome in 2006 on “The cultural heritage and Academic Values of the European University and the attractiveness of the EHEA”.<sup>4</sup> There, he recalls “*the Christian vision that recognizes the human being as the masterpiece of creation, since he is formed in the image and likeness of God* (see Gen 1: 26-27)”.<sup>5</sup>

As said above, I had an enlightening inspiration by the words of mother Teresa, and connected the Genesis words to the beginning of the Gospel of John:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.*<sup>6</sup>

The Word is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos, who pre-exists to the creation and who reveals God the Father.<sup>7</sup> Each human being was/is in the mind of God before the creation, each one is an image of Him, but since – being creatures – we are limited, each one is a wonderful and small spark of Him, who is infinite. When many human beings bring together these sparks, embodying among all their own gifts their own competences, the image of God shines forth in their being together, in their communion:<sup>8</sup> in our humble context, in the group taking part in the editorial process. This whole, which is not the sum of the single ones, becomes the splendour and magnificence of the competences. We must not forget that, because of the present futility of the whole creation,<sup>9</sup> human beings need to be cured: in particular competences need education, i.e.

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php?story=20230321085410216&utm\_source=newsletter&utm\_medium=email&utm\_campaign=AFNL0398.

<sup>4</sup> I thank prof. Hendrik Ferdinande, University of Gent, for pointing out to me the Seminar Proceedings.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Benedict XIV, “Human Beings Must Not Be Sacrificed to the Success of Science,” *Higher Education in Europe* 31, no. 4 (2006): 351-353, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720701302725>.

<sup>6</sup> The Gospel of John, 1:1-3 in *THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE*, downloaded on 01/09/2023 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/\\_PX9.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_PX9.HTM).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, footnote 1(1-18) in ch.1

<sup>8</sup> See “#1702 of Article 1, Man: the Image of God,” in *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, Part Three, Section One, Chapter One (Latin text copyright (c) Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993).

Downloaded on 01/09/2023 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P5G.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P5G.HTM).

<sup>9</sup> New Testament Letters, Romans, 8: 20 in *THE NEW AMERICAN BIBLE*, downloaded on 01/09/2023 from [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/\\_PX9.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_PX9.HTM).

taking out<sup>10</sup> of the persons being educated their own competences: competences which were already in the mind of the Creator before creation. This is to me the “presence there” mentioned by mother Teresa.

A second deeper aspect in this “parable of the Editorial process” concerns the link between knowledge and action. Continuing in the above quotation of pope Benedict XVI, we find the statement that

*the conviction that there is a profound unity between truth and good, between the eyes of the mind and those of the heart, ... has always been typical of this vision. Love makes one see. Universities came into being from the love of knowledge and from the curiosity of knowing, of knowing what the world is, what man is, but also from a knowledge that leads to action, that leads ultimately to love.*<sup>11</sup>

Thus, a circularity appears between knowledge and love, between competences and actions nurtured by competences. In a way, applying knowledge in practice becomes a “gym”, where we train ourselves to love the others.

As a conclusion, I thank with my heart all the actors I mentioned above for what they gave me.

### Anna’s part

Writing an editorial for TJHE 10 years celebration brings me back to the period 2015-2019 when Luigi F. Donà dalle Rose (Lupo) and I were editing the journal.

Those 5 years were really an incredible journey: we began our work building on the solid basis established by Paul Ryan and we enthusiastically contributed to this voice of Tuning!

From my personal perspective, I’d like to say that there were and still are three big added value that TJHE offered and offers to the higher education community worldwide.

The first is to be a platform of individual and collective reflection on the themes emerging in the international scenario: the journal in fact collects manuscripts on key topics as competence-based learning in higher education, academic teachers’ professional development and teaching competences, cooperation and partnership building, emergence and development of higher education areas, higher education in times of emergencies. Individuals,

<sup>10</sup> See the etymology of the word “education” from the Latin verbs *e-ducere* and *e-ducare*, i.e., “take out, ex-tract, raise,....”.

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 5 above, *ibidem*.

groups, institutions, countries can find useful directions and practices through this open access database of evidence-based research.

The second added value is to offer an inclusive international approach: the variety of countries represented by authors is very large and this reflects the contribution of Tuning to the world community of higher education particularly in the effort to move programs towards competence-based approaches and towards answering to the current challenges of students and teachers in our millennium.

The third added value, in my view, is to collect a variety of scholarly experience, from more structured projects and reforms to local teaching innovation and scholarship of teaching and learning. TJHE offers a kaleidoscope of experiences, practices, reflections, activities, documented by research and double blind reviewed, that constitutes an interesting database that can enrich and stimulate Tuning Academy projects and activities and can contribute to the worldwide culture of student-centered approach.

I have great memories of the period when I was editing with Lupo the journal: in 2018 the journal was indexed in Scopus and in 2019 in Web of Science Core Collection Emerging Sources Citation Index. These achievements demonstrated the quality of the work done by the editorial team.

The collaboration with Lupo as main editor and Ladislav Bizimana, journal manager, was great: I learnt a lot from both of them and I am very grateful for our collaboration. Reviewers were also very helpful; I appreciated their competence and their willingness to provide feedback that could help for the development of the reviewed paper when possible.

My TJHE journey was based on collaboration and supportive approach, competence and professionalism: my gratitude goes to Editorial Board, to the Advisory editors and to the whole Tuning Academy. And finally, my best wishes to the current editor, prof. Mary Gobbi, who is leading the TJHE journey with greatest competence and commitment.

Let's continue enjoying TJHE as international platform and network for the development of and reflection on higher education!!

## About the authors

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metals, quantum electron gas, heat transients by ultra-short laser pulses in metals, solid-liquid metal interface. Since 1995, he took interest in Physics education. From 1990 until 2015, he was Delegate and later Consultant of the Rector for European Student Mobility at the University of Padova, being also actively committed at grass-root level in Erasmus exchanges and several other European projects. He acted as Institutional co-ordinator for the University of Padova in T.I.M.E -Top Industrial Managers for Europe network (2002-2009). He was a member and expert of the Italian Team of Bologna experts along its whole duration (2004-2013). He was cofounder (1995) and member of the Steering Committee of EUPEN, a Socrates Thematic Network Project for Physics (later STEPS by EUPEN and STEPS TWO). He contributed to start the European Master in Human rights and Democratization (1995) and later on to develop the related procedure for awarding a joint degree/diploma. He was a member of the Coimbra Group Executive Board (2007-2013). Moreover, he was the coordinator of the project EMQT-Erasmus Mobility Quality Tools (2009-2011). He has been an active participant in Tuning Educational Structures in Europe, being member of the Management Committee and co-Chair of the Tuning Physics Subject Area Group in Europe (2000-2008), He actively participated as Tuning expert in the project CoRe2 (2008-2010).

ANNA SERBATI (anna.serbati@unitn.it, <http://www.tuningjournal.org/>) earned a PhD (2010-2013) in Educational Sciences at the University of Padova (Italy) with a research focusing on adult, experiential learning, recognition of prior learning, competences assessment. She won a two-year post doc fellowship on faculty development (2014-2015), investigating approaches for teachers' training, teaching and learning innovation, with specific focus on syllabus design, active learning methods and assessment of/for/as learning. She worked as assistant professor at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology at University of Padova (2017-2020) and she is currently associate professor of Educational Research at the University of Trento (2021-current). She has collaborated and still collaborates with several international institutions as visiting scholar, visiting professor, and researcher in Erasmus+ projects. She served as assistant editor of *Tuning Journal for Higher Education* from 2015 to 2019 and she is currently a member of the Editorial Board. Her main research fields and interests are: higher and adult education; academic and professional development; educational innovation; syllabus design and constructive alignment; competences recognition and evaluation models; peer assessment and peer feedback in face to face and online contexts, assessment for learning, sustainable assessment.