

# ICIE – Practitioner’s Talk

“Dialogue – the Firestarter for Leveraging Diversity in Education”

Joel A. Brown – Pneumos LLC, San Francisco, USA

**Thursday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – 14:00 – 16:00**

Lille: Room B252, 3 rue de la Digue

Paris: Room P400, Promenade building

## **Abstract:**

When we think about education, the assumption is that we as educators (teachers, administrative staff, etc.) always have to introduce special models, instruments, or theoretical frameworks into the forum to maximize learning. But in truth, the best and most under-utilized resource that educators have in the educational setting is the participants, and particularly the diversity of the students within the educational setting. Indeed, it is the students – with their diverse perspectives and experiences – who are the firestarters that can make learning rich, compelling, and impactful.

If students are the firestarters, then how do we harness this energy? In my mind, the best way to tap into this innovative and diverse phenomenon is simply and problematically through dialogue. Dialogue is our simple and fungible technology that everyone can participate in if they choose to access it. Simultaneously, dialogue becomes problematic because there are no common rules of engagement. Unless you are a diplomat or have extensive experience in intercultural communication, very few of us understand *how* to dialogue and communicate with people from different backgrounds. In an era of increased internecine conflict, a seemingly small number of us seem inclined to listen to other perspectives in a thoughtful and critical way.

Yet, to solve any of the issues that we face as a species, we must increase and enhance our ability to dialogue. And...if we view our societies as multi-dimensional educational environments, then learning how to dialogue and participate in thoughtful communication should be a priority of the first order. Dialogue is the foundation for continued education, social enlightenment, and our collective evolution. Through this presentation, my aim is to humbly foster a dialogue about dialogue, and to give attendees an opportunity to think critically about the considerations that will help create more effective dialogue, more attuned thinking, and more empathy and understanding in our society. The world is itself a classroom, and at any given time, each of us may find ourselves in an educational setting where dialogue will help us to understand cultural norms, critical data, or the means to our very survival. Dialogue is not just an adventure, but a skill, and regardless of its orthodoxy, dialogue is the most effective tool we can use to promote education, sustain learning, and harness the knowledge we need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.