A Map, Compass and GPS: Metaphors of Teaching and Learning
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Abstract
Metaphors are an effective tool in depicting complicated situations and interpersonal processes, such as those prevailing in classrooms. This paper opens with a discussion on the metaphor ‘life is a journey’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which provides rich varied images of learning. Thereafter, three navigating aides, that help the wanderer (and the learner) continue their journey, are presented: Global Positioning System (GPS), a map and a compass. Analyzing these metaphors helps characterize the relations between learners and teachers; modes of communication that facilitate or disrupt their discourse; and the environmental conditions that encourage or block their efforts to expand their knowledge and understanding. The analysis exemplifies the uniqueness of each model and compares its advantages and shortcomings with the other models. In order to examine the contribution of this conceptualization, we presented it to 40 pedagogical mentors and 150 freshman student teachers. All the participants considered the metaphors as a very fruitful, illuminating mean to describe various methods of learning and teaching. Most of them preferred the simple direct mode (GPS) upon other more complicated measures that must be practiced in uncertain condition and call for much investment of patience and efforts. The discussion of these two findings calls for further research and application in various educational settings.