

Special Issue Editorial: Shifting the Lens of Learning

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Participation in academic conferences is one of the great privileges and milestones of a graduate student's journey. They provide opportunities to share the work in which we are intellectually and emotionally invested, connect with peers and colleagues from around the world, and network with scholars whose work we lean on for our own understandings and academic growth. Thinking back to a year ago, as graduate students across the country awaited word of their acceptance to present their emerging research at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), no one could have anticipated what lay ahead for us all in 2020. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted drastic changes to life across the globe, and for those of us engaged in graduate work, it has meant disconnection from our communities in the physical sense as well as requiring a pivot to learning and conducting research through online platforms.

In the midst of this, conference organizers everywhere were required to confront the emerging situation with care and consideration. When the CSSE Board of Directors met to discuss the situation in March, needing to make critical decisions, at the heart of the conversation was the impact of cancelling the 2020 conference on graduate students. As the President of the Canadian Committee of Graduate Students in Education, it was heartwarming and comforting to witness the support and care that so many of our senior colleagues hold for their students. Despite their own challenges of navigating the impact of the pandemic on their teaching, research, and supervision responsibilities, not to mention the need for us all to focus on mental and physical wellbeing, every board member expressed a profound and heartfelt desire for this situation to have limited impact on their students. It was with this sentiment that this special issue was conceived, wanting to provide those most impacted by the cancellation of the conference with an opportunity to share a "snapshot" of their work, therefore continuing to contribute in a meaningful way both to their personal growth and to their field of research.

As a result, we have six submissions to share with you. Reading through them, what struck me most was the breadth of ground they cover. As you journey through this issue, you will discover research exploring educational leadership frameworks and cultural diversity, teacher identity and pedagogy, arts-informed practices for working with children and youth, the intersections between technology and language learning, and the shifting educational practices and professional requirements for pharmacy students. These six papers exemplify the beauty and complexity of undertaking graduate work in education, highlighting the reality that wherever we might go in the world, whatever professional space we occupy, the importance and complexity of teaching and learning is always within our midst—evolving, changing, and requiring critical and creative thought by graduate students committed to the progression of their field.

Thank you to the authors who took the time to contribute to this special issue. By sharing your work, you inspire us all to carry on. As we continue to wade through these unprecedented waters, the work you are undertaking, and which is represented in this issue is vital to the future of education. We await the days when we might meet again in person, once more engaging in lively dialogue and learning alongside one another. Until that time comes, please remember as isolating as this time (and graduate studies in general!) can be, you are a part of a large and vibrant community where your knowledge and commitment is valued.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patricia Jagger is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. Her research explores the use of digital storytelling in educational contexts and she is particularly interested in the potential for participatory visual methods as feminist pedagogies. She has been the president of the Canadian Committee of Graduate Students in Education since June 2019, a role which allows her to support and represent her fellow graduate students while making a larger contribution to a rich and diverse community of scholars committed to advancing research in education.