

Navigating Policy, Place, and Identity: Contemporary Crises and Paths Forward in Canadian Higher Education

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The Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education is pleased to highlight the work of emerging scholars whose contributions to this issue reflect a shared commitment to addressing systemic barriers and strengthening educational equity in Canada. Collectively, the authors underscore the central role that higher education and teacher-preparation programs play in students' lives and in the health of communities and society more broadly. Bringing together critical research, thematic reviews, book reviews, and scholarly personal narratives, this collection seeks to contribute to the ongoing improvement of educational systems by advancing structural accountability and inclusive practice.

The articles in this issue of the Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education collectively foreground higher education as a deeply relational and politically charged endeavor, shaped by questions of policy, place, identity, and institutional responsibility. Across university environments, international student pathways, and teacher education, contributors examine how learners and institutions navigate rapidly shifting policy landscapes while responding to diverse student needs and sociopolitical realities. Rather than treating inclusion as a set of neutral or symbolic techniques, the authors in this issue attend closely to the ethical and systemic dimensions of educational practice, emphasizing how connection, trust, and place-consciousness shape meaningful learning and settlement experiences.

A shared thread running through this collection is the tension between dominant institutional structures and the possibilities that emerge when educators and researchers advocate for meaningful structural reform. Several articles highlight how entrenched norms, including frequent policy disruptions, malperformative diversity frameworks, settler-colonial citizenship narratives, and geographic isolation, constrain and marginalize both international and Indigenous learners. At the same time, contributors offer grounded pathways forward through frameworks such as Noddings' Ethics of Care, Rourke's social accountability metrics, and critical policy analysis. Together, these works underscore how intentional relational care, criticality, and accountability are central to fostering equitable, inclusive, and responsive higher education environments in a rapidly shifting social landscape.

In This Issue

This Spring 2026 issue includes 7 articles:

Christine Eligwe contributed a thematic review entitled *International Students' Struggles and Barriers Arising from Policy Changes in Canadian Higher Education*. Based on an analysis of 26 empirical studies, this review examines the complex struggles international students aged 18 to 35 face as they navigate frequent Canadian government policy revisions to study permits, work permits, and pathways to permanent residency or citizenship. The findings highlight significant financial pressure, mental health concerns, and academic stress, alongside additional barriers such as cultural adaptation, culture shock, academic honesty, cross-cultural navigation, and instances of discrimination or exploitation. Drawing on Noddings' Ethics of Care and Ball's Critical Policy Analysis, the author advocates meaningful structural reform and offers targeted recommendations.

Minh Bao Ngoc Pham contributed a thematic literature review entitled *Universal Design for Learning in Vietnam's Primary ELL Classrooms: Balancing Introverted and Extraverted Voices*. Synthesizing findings from 15 empirical studies and 12 conceptual papers, this review examines how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can help balance the distinct needs of introverted and extraverted primary English language learners (ELLs) amidst Vietnam's shift toward student-centered instruction. The findings suggest that UDL provides a flexible, proactive framework that fosters inclusive participation, allowing learners to engage in ways that align with their individual strengths, despite limited empirical research at this specific intersection.

Amy Tucker contributed a scholarly personal narrative literature review entitled *Creative Changemaking and the Crisis of Malperformative Inclusion: A Scholarly Personal Narrative Literature Review of International Student Experience in Canadian Higher Education*. Synthesizing scholarship on the international student experience in Canadian higher education, the review introduces malperformative inclusion as a conceptual framework to explain how academic institutions demonstrate awareness of equity problems while maintaining the very structures that produce them. Drawing on performativity theory, epistemic justice, trauma-informed pedagogy, and the Canadian education context, the author uses inversion thinking to critically examine how contemporary diversity practices strategically deploy inclusion rhetoric to forestall substantive change.

Narjes Hashemi contributed a critical study entitled *Unveiling Representation: A Discourse and Visual Analysis of Indigenous Narratives in Canada's Citizenship Guide*. Utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and visual semiotics framed by postcolonial and settler-colonial theory, this article examines Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship to explore how Indigenous peoples and Indigenous-settler relations are represented through language and imagery. The findings reveal that the official guide constructs a sanitized national narrative that marginalizes Indigenous sovereignty, minimizes colonial violence, and normalizes settler-colonial authority through euphemistic language, a softened treatment of residential schools, and constrained visual framing.

Steffie Dmello contributed a book review entitled *Teaching, Coaching, and Mentoring Adult Learners: Lessons for Professionalism and Partnership*. This review examines an edited volume by Heather Fehring and Susan Rodrigues that brings together diverse scholarly and professional perspectives on mentoring and coaching in adult education. Drawing on the book's 12 chapters, the review highlights key themes including professional identity, inclusive practices for learners from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and the application of practical tools such as solution-focused questioning and action research frameworks. The findings emphasize the importance of reflexivity, relationship-building, and context-responsive approaches in supporting adult learners. While the review commends the book's integration of theory and practice and its strong emphasis on equity and inclusivity, it also notes a limitation in the lack of clear conceptual distinction between mentoring and coaching roles. Overall, the author underscores the book's value in advancing adaptable, relational, and learner-centered approaches to adult education and professional development.

Carson Ouellette, Derek Stovin, Erin Cameron, and Brenton L.G. Button contributed a research article entitled *Exploring Social Accountability in Canadian Faculties of Education*. Using an adapted version of Rourke's social accountability framework, the authors conducted a content analysis of 18 pre-service teacher education programs across Canada to examine the extent to which Faculties of Education demonstrate commitments to rural communities. The findings reveal a striking absence of rural-focused considerations across mission statements, admissions policies, curricula, practicum placements, and graduate outcome tracking. Despite the ongoing crisis in rural teacher recruitment and retention, none of the institutions explicitly incorporated rurality within key program structures. The authors highlight how this gap may perpetuate educational inequities and limit the preparedness of future educators to serve underserved regions. Drawing on insights from socially accountable medical education, the study advocates for systemic reform, recommending the integration of place-conscious frameworks, targeted admissions strategies, rural service-learning opportunities, and enhanced transparency in graduate outcomes to better align teacher education with community needs.

Abiah Ann Sara and Ashna Annu Philip contributed a thematic literature review entitled *Barriers to University Enrollment for Indigenous Students in Canada*. Drawing on an analysis of 15 peer-reviewed studies published between 2007 and 2024, this review examines the intersecting systemic, cultural, and economic factors that shape Indigenous students' access to and persistence in Canadian higher education. The findings highlight five major themes: racism and microaggressions, cultural disconnect and curriculum irrelevance, historical trauma and colonial legacy, geographical isolation, and economic barriers. The review reveals that institutional racism, culturally unresponsive curricula, and the enduring impacts of residential schools collectively contribute to disengagement and higher dropout rates, while financial hardship and remoteness further constrain educational opportunities. Guided by an intersectional and Critical Race Theory-informed lens, the authors advocate for comprehensive structural change, offering targeted recommendations such as increased Indigenous representation in faculty and leadership, culturally responsive curriculum reform, expanded financial support, and the development of Indigenous-centered support systems to promote equity, inclusion, and reconciliation in Canadian higher education.

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