

Advancing Cross/Intercultural Awareness and Responsiveness In Higher Education Contexts

COLLEEN KAWALILAK

JENNIFER LOCK

Guest Editors

University of Calgary

Internationalization is frequently cited in the university's *Academic Plans* and *Internationalization Strategies* across Canada and beyond, in response to a rapidly shifting in higher education landscape and in deference to an increasingly diverse student, staff, and faculty demography. Having reviewed numerous university academic plans across Canada, it became clear that goals, priorities, and strategic initiatives targeting internationalization were on the rise. These included increasing international student enrollments and more opportunities for students to gain international experience while pursuing their academic program goals.

Further, advancing *cross-cultural competencies* were frequently cited as a strategy in support of these aims. As one example, the University of Calgary in 2011 established *Internationalization* as one of seven priority areas in its Academic Plan. Then, in 2015, the *University of Calgary Internationalization Task Force on Cross-Cultural Competencies* generated a report entitled “*Supporting the Development of Cross-Cultural Competencies*”. This report, identified priorities that encompassed creating a welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant campus community—a community attentive and responsive to cultural diversity. This report was further updated in June 2017 and presented to the the executive leadership team and to deans, faculties, and non-academic units across campus.

Internationalization is complex and multi-faceted. As such, how do we create spaces that support greater understanding and responsiveness to cross-cultural, multicultural, intercultural, and transcultural perspectives and practices in higher education contexts? What types of opportunities and activities are needed to raise a greater consciousness and responsiveness regarding how we take up and *live well* with diversity in our work and learning contexts, with all community members—students, staff, and faculty?

Further, deepening our understandings and thoughtful responsiveness to cultural differences extends far beyond recruitment of international students and study abroad programs. Rather, universities represent a diverse community of scholars and learners—responding to differences *right here at home* that also needs to be part of this conversation with respect to values and guiding principles that inform policies, initiatives, practices, and ethical engagements *with differences*.

The Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary has made a strong commitment to advancing *internationalization and cross-cultural competencies*—this was the impetus for this *Special Issue*. After circulating a *Call for Proposals* across our School, we received a robust response from staff and faculty interested in addressing this topic. Potential authors were encouraged to approach this topic from a research, theoretical/conceptual, or a critical, reflective perspective. Indeed, final selection of papers was challenging and we appreciate all individuals who submitted their manuscripts for consideration. After a robust peer-review process, eight manuscripts were selected that reflect a diversity of approaches, serving to illuminate complexities, opportunities, and challenges pertaining to and responding to *internationalization and cross/intercultural responsiveness* in higher education contexts.

We begin this Special Issue with *Developing Intercultural Competence amongst Higher Education Staff: Is there a Role for Organizational Change Management?* Henningsmoen and Solis in their article use a change management lens to examine the importance of promoting and strengthening intercultural competence among staff in higher educational context in meeting internationalization mandates and outcomes. Zhao, Yu, and Zhang in their article, *Intercultural Competence in Higher Education: A Normative Anchor, a Developmental Perspective, and a Discursive Approach*, formed exploring challenges and noting issues with various models of intercultural competences, the author propose the use of Habermas' theory of "*principle of universalization*" as a guiding principle for defining and practicing intercultural competences.

The next two articles use auto ethnography to study individual and collaborative experiences with cross-cultural competency. Hull in *A Reflection on Cross-Cultural Competencies: How Attitudes Shaped Experience in Rural*

India shares an auto ethnographic reflection of a graduate student's experience in rural India. From this reflective process, the author shared insights and implications on career and educational pursuits. In *"Like Bubbles Floating on the Surface:" Reflections on Transcultural Doctoral Seminar Participation*, Becker, Ko, Groen, Czuy, Kim, and Roy members of an international doctoral seminar, used a collaborative auto ethnographic approach to study their transcultural experience as part of identifying their development as scholars in an international setting.

With a focus on particular elements in a higher educational context, three articles focused on themes of autism, plagiarism, and language development. First, Waisman and Simmons in *Autism Spectrum Disorder and the Implications for Higher Education: A Literature Review*, examined factors that contributes to the learning of autistic students in higher education, as well as how these students experience such educational contexts. Second, in *Exploring the Intersection between Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Academic Integrity among EAL Students in Canadian Higher Education*, Eaton and Burns examined literature focused on culturally responsive pedagogy in terms of academic integrity for English as an Additional Language among international students. They conclude their work by sharing strategies for instructors to help address plagiarism. Third, in their research, *Second Language Socialization in Higher Education: An Exploratory Case Study*, Boz, Barrantes, and Tweedie report that current models of language support tend to focus on academic language and literacy development, and tend to overlook direct engagement. They argue that such engagement be integral component in language support curriculum.

The special issue submissions concludes with a phenomenological study. Kassan and Green in their article, *Prioritizing Experiential Learning and Self-Reflection in the Development of Multicultural Responsiveness*, reported on the experience (pre-reflections, post-reflections) of a counselling psychology graduate course assignment that required students to learn more about a minority cultural group. From the study, the authors share implications for cultural competence training that includes experiential learning and self-reflection.

In the concluding article in this *Special Issue*, Kawalilak, Lock, and Redmond continue to deepen the

dialogue on internationalisation in higher education. They examine perspectives and practices of internationalisation and share initiatives from their own two Schools of Education located in Canada and Australia. They conclude the work by sharing recommendations for action on how internationalisation can be advanced within teacher education.

We extend appreciation to all of our colleagues who responded to the Call for Proposals in support of this Special Issue. All submissions, including those not selected, provided evidence of a deep and thoughtful commitment to advancing *internationalization and cross/intercultural competencies*. Also evident was an expressed desire to explore and make deeper meaning of the myriad of dimensions, opportunities and challenges brought about by internationalization and its impact in higher education contexts. Granted, this is an ambitious and demanding work in that cultures and contexts are not fixed but fluid. We maintain that it is not possible to achieve any absolutes regarding becoming cross/interculturally competent. Rather, this is an ongoing process and demands leaning into difficult conversations to uncover hidden biases and all that we do not yet know. Opening up spaces for conversations and diverse perspectives was what ignited our interest to pursue this Special Issue. Undoubtedly, we will continue these conversations in formal and informal spaces as, indeed, we all have so much yet to learn!

Colleen Kawalilak
Jennifer Lock
Guest Editors