

Introduction

Teacher Education and Teaching: An Introduction to Special Issue #1

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When the call went out for this Alberta Journal of Educational Research (AJER) themed issue, it was unimaginable that at publication we would be in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world has changed. We are in a global crisis. The consequences of this invisible threat are immense. Social, political, and economic responses along with overwhelming tragedies are touted daily through various forms of social media: Twitter, Facebook, radio and television newscasts, newspapers and video conferencing platforms. The weak façade of respect and care from many governments are crumbling, the powerful are seeking more power, and the vulnerable are becoming more vulnerable. Youth are caught in the cross hairs of what was, what is, and what would be. It is regrettable, at present, that the “would be” is mired in political squabbles, arrogance, inflated self-worth, and myopic views about what it means to be an educative society, an Albertan, a Canadian, and a global citizen.

Teacher education and teaching research and dissemination has never been more critical. The bounded in-person, on-campus, in-class traditional classroom and, may I add, expected, is no more. Online, remote, and distant/distance instructional approaches have stormed mainstream classrooms. No longer the distant cousin, online delivery is sitting at the dinner table, on the sofa, in the home office. The classroom is the kitchen table in two-dimensional form via a computer screen—every day. Teachers who had little experience with online delivery are caught in this shifting teaching and learning experiment. Tried and true pedagogies, the art and science of teaching, hold some ground in this pandemic tectonic shift, if only because this is what we know. After all, this is what we learned in our teacher education programs, which were further supported in teaching practices of the physical classroom. Even with this drastic adjustment, the underpinnings of quality teaching and learning remain yet pedagogically there is a longstanding question, one that existed prior to the pandemic, specifically: “what needs to change?” The seven articles that comprise this Special Issue #1 begin to address this question. Scholars and researchers continue to seek possibilities, to ponder, and to expose ideas and visionary actions that promote and inspire sustainable stable educational practices and theory.

Special Issue #1

Special Issue #1 was designed to disseminate findings about theoretical and applied research about teacher education and teaching. Authors were invited to submit manuscripts that addressed the following topics:

1. Preparation and development of/for pre-service and in-service teachers.
2. Policy and practice: local, provincial, national, and/or international.
3. Teacher education communities and partnerships with, for example, organizations, administration, and post-secondary faculty, students, and staff.
4. Youth, teachers, and families.
5. Subject-specific teacher education.
6. Pedagogy and knowledge: practical, critical, and content.
7. Teachers and teacher educators: everyday work and working conditions, work-life balance, identities, agency, and professional learning.
8. Critical concerns related to teacher education and development: care, hope, second career, transitions, field experiences, mentor(ing), curricular development, immigration, migration, ethnicity, age, equality, class, gender, early school leavers, youth and adult education, community-based education, leadership, and indigenous education.

There were no limits placed on methodologies and theoretical conceptualizations. As a guest editor, it was my aim to honour the scholarly expertise of those who submitted abstracts for consideration.

The first article of this Special Issue #1, written by Melissa Oskineegish, is titled “Exploring Instructional Strategies in an Indigenous Education Course in Initial Teacher Education”. This title clearly depicts its contents in that Oskineegish examines and analyses teaching techniques undertaken by five teacher educators who taught an Aboriginal Education course. Jona R. Frohlich, Lauren D. Goegan, and Lia M. Daniels’ “Practicing Teachers’ Attributions for the Behaviour of Students with Learning Disabilities [LD] and Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD]” is the next article in this issue. These three authors’ study findings inform teacher education programming. Of particular importance for the preparation of teachers is that increasing teachers’ sense of self-efficacy will directly and positively affect the learning environment for youth especially those with ADHD and LD. “Undergraduate Education Students’ Perceptions of Effective and Ineffective Course Experiences: What Counts as an Effective Experience?”, the third article, is written by Mark W. Aulls, Jason M. Harley, Dawit Asrat Getahun, and David John Lemay. In their study of 34 teacher education students’ course essays, these authors explore how individuals conceptualize their instructional experiences within the context of teacher characteristics, teaching practices, and content.

Mijung Kim authors the fourth article: “Teacher Scaffolding Strategies to Transform Whole-classroom Talk into Collective Inquiry in Elementary Science Classrooms”. Inquiry-based learning is a pedagogical approach that aligns with many experiential subject orientations. In this study, Kim extends the inquiry-focus learning to a “whole-classroom talk” project in a Grade 5-6 science classroom. The fifth article, “Possibility not Difficulty: Difficult Knowledge in K-12 Classrooms as Opportunities for Renegotiating Relationships with Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledges”, features the research of Velta Douglas, Fiona Purton, and Daniela Bascuñán. This writing clearly articulates the value of educators’ reflective and responsive teaching through an examination of pedagogical approaches that disrupt settler colonialism.

According to Kathy Sanford, Kerry Robertson, Tim Hopper, Vivian Collyer, and Laura Lancaster, many teacher education programs isolate the theory and practice of teaching because

of their organization: university coursework followed by in-school practicums. In the sixth article of this special issue, “Link2Practice: A Model of Ongoing Teacher and Teacher Candidate Professional Learning”, these authors address this concern by creating another model. They explicitly develop partnerships between school districts and universities that deliberately weave education theory and practice throughout pre-service teachers’ university education programs. The seventh article, “Moving the Needle on Literacy” Lessons Learned from a School Where Literacy Rates Have Improved Over Time” is written by George K. Georgiou, Greg Kushnir, and Rauno Parrila. This mixed-methods research investigates teachers’ views about how to advance student reading successes. This study’s findings contribute to scholarly discussions about collaborative school-based initiatives. The seven articles in this themed AJER Special Issue #1, *Teacher Education and Teaching*, humbly remind us that quality teacher education programming and the profession of teaching multiplies possibilities for youth.

The journey from conception to completion of a special issue is winding and, at times, strenuous. A heartfelt thank you for the dedication, persistence and professionalism of the authors; Editorial Assistant, Leah Spencer; and Editor, Dr. Anna Kirova. The scholarly endeavours extend beyond the writing, submission, and rewrite. They include the valuable expertise offered by those who accept the invitation to review. Thank you to the reviewers of Special Issue #1. I close this message with a thank you to the *Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development* community and grateful appreciation for Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, my PhD student. To everyone: take care.

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