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Editorial

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Academic activism: A call to action

As if a pandemic weren't enough . . .

We were preparing this issue for publication, many weeks ago, when the coronavirus effected a take-down of the world as we know it. In the days and now months since all this began, we have been watching the crises unfold and the many efforts to curb the virus, protect the vulnerable, and ensure everyone's health and safety. The outpouring of gratitude for health care workers and essential service workers here in Canada and elsewhere is heartwarming, and so are the stories of generosity, care, and selflessness. They remind us of the importance of hope and shared humanity that are essential to keep spirit alive. However, let them not erase, nor lead us to avoid or ignore the evidence all around us that the pandemic is affecting people differently. The "We are all in this together" slogan may be well intentioned but it does not reflect the realities experienced by many in our neighbourhoods and globally. Indeed, it feels like yet another exclusion in times of increasing inequities, poverty, homelessness, precarity, access to basic needs, and much more.

As if a pandemic weren't enough . . .

We have been seeing, out in the open, an outbreak of the already pervasive anti-Asian racism that has a long history in Canada. From politicians ranting against the chief medical officer of Canada (who is of Chinese descent), to people hurling insults and spitting on people of Chinese descent on the street, to the irate White man assaulting a Chinese senior at a convenience store, anti-Asian racism has turned violent. We condemn anti-Asian racism, and indeed all forms of racism and oppression, and as a scholarly community we must ask ourselves: what is our responsibility to address and dismantle systemic oppressions?

As if *one* pandemic weren't enough . . .

We are horrified about the violent choking death of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, the latest death in the crisis of anti-Black racism. It is astonishing that violence against the Black community by both police and civilians goes unchecked, often ending in a death. We in Canada are not free of these incidents such as the deaths of Regis Korchinsky-Paquet in Toronto, D'Andre Campbell in Brampton, Jason Collins and Eisha Hudson in Winnipeg, and just two days ago, Chantel Moore in Edmundston, New Brunswick.

We condemn anti-Black racism and stand in solidarity with the Black community, and with protestors who are resisting anti-Black police violence. We condemn the ongoing and deep-seated racism and violence against Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The pain and anger caused by the Floyd case is widespread and has galvanized both protest and action to take up the cause, to demand and work for justice and equity.

Standing with the Black community, Indigenous Peoples, and indeed, with all racialized groups, carries with it a responsibility that goes beyond making statements. What does this moment demand of us? What are the commitments we can make as academics? We need to listen to our Black, Indigenous, Asian, and other racialized colleagues, friends, neighbours to understand how we move beyond the rhetoric of words into action. It is important to honour the pain, the suffering, the anger, and then to draw on the multiple resources we have (knowledge, expertise, networks, funds) to take up the enormous responsibility we carry as members of the academy. The work of

addressing and eliminating systemic and societal racism is urgent and we, as members of the comparative and international education community, must take up that call.

Now on to the articles in this issue. This issue marks our first that is completely open access! Members of the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada (CIESC) voted in 2018 to move the CIE, from being subscription-based, and having member-only-access for 12 months, to complete open access, and we are pleased to finally meet that commitment. We have also moved to a new platform, the Open Journal System. Our thanks to the support we have received from the staff at BePress, and to Kristin Hoffman and her team at the Library at Western University for all of the technical and other forms of support in the management of the journal. Their hosting of the CIE at Western University has been an invaluable contribution to the CIESC. Thank you!

Our first two articles are about educational experiences of new comers to Canada —the role of Chinese immigrant parents in their children's schooling, and international and refugee students in Canadian universities. Our next three articles move to the African continent: one exploring regionalization of higher education in the Arab states, another presenting a case study of how college students in Egypt experience a service-learning opportunity and the next, in French, explores a case of policy transfer in Burkina Faso. Our final article is a comparative analysis of quality assurance in higher education, comparing two reports from two similar, closely connected jurisdictions.

In the context of a rapid increase in the numbers of Chinese immigrants to Canada, authors George Zhou, Lan Zhong, and Jie Zheng, present findings from a study investigating the little understood topic of Chinese immigrant parents and their engagement with their children's after-school education in particular. Challenging the efficacy of parental involvement models that are based in the cultures and values of mainstream (dominant culture) parents, this qualitative study interviewed members of 12 Chinese immigrant families in southern Ontario. The findings confirmed the high expectations parents had for their children's academic achievements. Parents hoped that high educational achievement would be the best way to overcome potential discrimination in the job market, and lead to social mobility. Similar to mainstream parents, these parents encouraged their children to take up extracurricular activities and broaden their horizons through community engagement and travel. The authors further demonstrate that cultural values and participants' immigration status are key factors that either encourage or dissuade parental involvement in their children's education. They suggest that a sociocultural dimension would be an important addition to psychological models of parental involvement.

The context of global mobility and internationalization is the site of Tim Anderson's article, which is a review of recent literature on international and refugee student issues in Canadian universities, including enrollments, participation, and outcomes. A discussion of recent developments in enrollment and demographics of university students in Canada leads Anderson to highlight structural inequities for refugee students in general, with more barriers for refugee students from less economically advantaged countries. The article then discusses gender composition of international and refugee students at Canadian universities, noting high levels of male enrollments from the top source countries for international students, and also for refugee students. Refugee students faced more significant barriers including access to university education, being the first generation to seek postsecondary education, being in low-income families, language barriers, all resulting in low completion rates. These numbers are in stark contrast to high success rates among international students. Anderson argues that universities need to pay attention to

equity in admissions and enrollments of both international and refugee students, especially ensuring participation from and access to those from low income families through scholarships and grants, addressing the gender gap in enrollments among these groups, and focusing more on admission to and support of refugee students.

There is little scholarship on regionalization of higher education in the Arab states, and we are pleased to feature a thoughtful analysis of that topic by Hayfa Jafar and Jane Knight in their article, “Higher Education in the Arab States: The Realities and Challenges of Regionalization.” They observe that there has been more collaboration across higher education institutions and systems recently in the Arab states, and demonstrate the compatibility and complementarity of regionalization and internationalization of higher education. Drawing on data from national, regional, and international organizations, they explore the progress and challenges of collaboration, partnerships, and networks in higher education in that region. They first discuss higher education regionalization in general providing a context for the next section, discussing regionalization initiatives in the Arab states through their political, historical, sociocultural and economic characteristics. The Functional, Organizational and Political Approaches Framework (FOPA) developed by Knight is used to analyse these initiatives as well as to discuss the key developments and challenges of regionalization faced by institutions. One of the key goals of this article is to promote more reflection, research, and policy making on higher education regionalization in the Arab states, and this article certainly brings into sharp focus the importance of higher education regionalization.

Located also in that region of the world, “In the Pursuit of Justice: A Case Study on the Role of Service-Learning in Developing Civic Engagement among College Students in Egypt” by Neivin Shalabi, seeks to establish the potential of service-learning in fostering a more critical civic engagement among college students in Northern Egypt. In the midst of a growing body of literature that is critical of service-learning in general, Shalabi’s study has evidence that there is much potential in service-learning when carried out with a critical pedagogy approach. Participating students found value in connecting with people different than themselves, gained civic skills, enhanced their capacity for critical thinking in relation to social issues, as well as the application of leadership skills in relation to their communities. Shalabi concludes that the success and effectiveness of service-learning is dependent on students’ critical engagement with questions about structural causes of inequity in their communities.

Ramdé, Lapointe, and Dembélé, the authors of our article in French, are interested in how students in Burkina Faso interpret and appropriate the Licence-Master-Doctorate (LMD) reform, a European academic model imported a decade ago to the universities of Burkina Faso, among other French-speaking African countries. Beyond the data and analyses proposed by the authors, this text allows us to inform our reflection on the transfer of public and academic policies at the international level, and in particular policy transfers from Europe to Africa.

With the observation that “‘Quality’ is a word that is as ubiquitous in higher education as it is fuzzy,” author Daniel Lang launches into a comprehensive interjurisdictional comparison of two higher education quality assurance reports. Using multiple sources of data, the study identifies and compares several recurring areas in the reports including the boundary line between academic support services and student services, balancing commonality and diversity, the institution versus the basic academic unit as the focus and scope of assurance, self-regulation versus system regulation, the assurance of quality versus the enhancement of quality, the role of league ranking, performance indicators, benchmarking, and aggregation. The study has important findings not the

least of which is that “quality assurance and quality enhancement cannot and should not be conflated.”

We hope you enjoy this new issue!

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