

Authenticating our Students' Work

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When I was thinking about the idea for this special issue of *The Morning Watch*, a number of things were percolating in my mind. First, I had just transitioned from the K-12 public school system into the Faculty of Education and was searching for ways to contribute. Second, I was also looking for ways to continue my work in student engagement –albeit, now to a much different audience. And finally, I was in the middle of finishing some graduate work of my own. Having guest edited a past issue of *The Morning Watch*, I thought that this could be an avenue to consolidate my converging thoughts into a workable project. So, from these three simple streams of thought came the idea to develop a special issue of *The Morning Watch* that would focus on the work of our graduate students.

In particular, I hoped that this issue could be used to highlight the bright ideas and insights that many times never see the light of day after evaluations have been returned and marks submitted. From my own experience, some of the assignments that I have worked on over the years have just gathered digital dust. While these assignments may have helped me master some aspect or idea, the effective radius of their impact was probably small. Others have noticed this trend and have offered counter measures by means of developing assignments with more meaningful scopes (Davies, 2015). This edition was designed to be a means by which some of our students could publicly share their ideas with the rest of their peers and the world. This exercise will hopefully bring a little more of what Newmann and Associates (1996) classified as authentic engagement to our students' journeys.

What follows in this issue is an eclectic mix of ideas, theory, positions, and research stemming from the experiences and interests of our graduate students. While there was no assigned topic for this issue, three themes emerged from the submissions. The most prominent theme was the relationship between teaching and learning, and educational technology. Whether it was Munro's (this issue) examination of failure through the lens of digital game-based learning or Dintoe's (this issue) description of the challenges of Botswana's technology integration efforts, the idea that technology has dominated the educational discourse of many jurisdictions for years, and from many different viewpoints, is supported. This diversity of thought on the subject is evident in the various perspectives presented in the papers in this issue. The second theme to surface deals with the struggle of emerging researchers to come to grips with their place within academia and the relationship between their personal identity and their researcher identity. This is apparent in Xu's (this issue) struggle to place herself on the continuum of insider to outsider in relation to her research. Cumby (this issue) also deals with this through his detailed analysis of the challenges of merging one's own beliefs and self into the existing theoretical structures of an established community. Identity, and what it means to belong, remains a significant element in many students' writings. From a slightly different perspective, identity and belonging are the third theme to emerge from this group of gathered ideas. The final two position papers shift the focus a little by placing the emphasis on the classroom and the idea of student and teacher belonging. Collette (this issue) explores the ideas of connecting her intercultural students to the curriculum and each other in her work as an International Baccalaureate teacher. McLean and Saqlain (this issue) continue these

thoughts as they outline what it means to connect and teach in isolated rural Aboriginal communities. Regardless of the geographical or cultural differences, the idea and importance of belonging to something bigger than oneself was evident throughout these last two papers.

I believe this issue has captured, in some small sense, the essence of what it means to work, learn, and share in a larger community and hopefully this gesture will have a lasting impact, not only on our students, but on the people that have the good fortune to read their ideas. And in the end, if we can't help authentic our students' work, who will?

References

- Davies, J. (2015). Don't Waste Student Work: Using Classroom Assignments to Contribute to Online Resources. In P. Isaías, J. M. Spector, D. Ifenthaler, & D. G. Sampson (Eds.), *E-Learning Systems, Environments and Approaches* (pp. 277–285). Springer International Publishing. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com.qe2a-proxy.mun.ca/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-05825-2_19
- Newmann, F., & Associates. (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.