



# Editorial – Special Edition: Doctoral Research in Education

---

Michael Thomas,<sup>1</sup>  John Goulding,<sup>2</sup> Mireille Patrick,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Education, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK ([M.Thomas@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:M.Thomas@ljmu.ac.uk))

<sup>2</sup> School of Education, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK ([J.Goulding1@2019.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:J.Goulding1@2019.ljmu.ac.uk))

<sup>3</sup> School of Nursing and Allied Health, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK ([M.Patrick@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:M.Patrick@ljmu.ac.uk))

---

## 1. Introduction

This special edition of *PRISM* brings together seven papers authored by postgraduate research students arising from the 1<sup>st</sup> International Doctoral Research Conference in Education hosted by the Centre for Educational Research (CERES) at Liverpool John Moores University on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Over 500 participants registered for this fully online event delivered via videoconferencing from over 17 different countries, just as the first of our several lockdowns were occurring throughout the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference involved over 60 presentations and addressed a wide range of themes, from initial teacher education to the role of digital technologies, decolonising the curriculum and the philosophy of education. Keynote lectures were delivered by Professor Lesley Gourlay (University College London), Dr Peter Kahn (Liverpool University) and Dr Gary Motteram (University of Manchester). The event was inspired by the theme of ‘resilience in doctoral research’, a particularly apt one at a time of significant disruption to students and supervisors involved in the initial stages of emergency remote online learning. Indeed, many of the doctoral students involved in the event were also in the process of significantly adjusting their on-going research to adapt to the transition to digital practices

in terms of remote supervision, ethics, and data collection and analysis.

Rhody-Ann Thorpe’s paper, [The Idea of a Post-Colonial University](#), explores issues of diversity and inclusivity while challenging traditional models of higher education in the English-speaking world, arising from inherited Oxbridge models. In particular, the paper traces the connections between higher education and British colonial policy, and analyses how they have continued to exert an influence in the post-independence histories of many former colonies, and explores the vision of a future post-colonial university.

In [Beyond Perfection: Reclaiming Death in and for Education](#), Juliette Clara Bertoldo examines how the ‘death register’ is represented in contemporary education. Drawing heavily on the work of Gert Biesta, Bertoldo deconstructs notions of education that marginalise and deprivilege what she calls the ‘complex, relational, and fragile qualities of educational life’. Reconfiguring death as a space for ‘unpredictability, riskiness, ambiguity, and messiness to occur’ leads to a repositioning of education as an encounter with a complex reality rather than something that can or ought to be controlled.

Nicola Robertson’s [The Future of Teaching? Asimov’s Three Laws and the Hypothetical Robot Teacher](#), explores the barriers to using technology in

education, arising from an experiment in China involving the use of remotely controlled robotic teachers. Examining Asimov's three laws of robotics as a foundational base for predicting the behaviour of a potential, autonomous, robot teacher, the paper investigates three hypothetical scenarios to determine to what extent robot teachers could effectively engage in teaching activities. At a time when artificial intelligence (AI) is making significant advances in web-based education, the paper aims to stimulate more critical approaches to the integration of new technologies.

Stephen Foster, Denise Whitelock, Simon Cross and Karen Kear's paper, [\*To What Extent Can Graphical Feedback from a 'Rainbow Diagram' Help Students Develop Coherence in their Academic Writing?\*](#), analyses the role of an automated writing system in higher education. OpenEssayist aims to provide immediate textual and graphical feedback to students using a 'rainbow diagram' or visual representation of the writing process. Building on previous research, the study involved 13 doctoral students in interviews and an eye-tracking application explored their gaze on a rainbow diagram arising from their own writing. Findings suggest that the approach can provide a valuable tool to help students understand coherence and the structure of academic writing.

Anita Suleman, Philemon Chigeza and Jo Mensinga's paper, [\*A Scoping Review and Thematic Analysis of Mentoring Models that Include Leadership and School Connectedness Theories\*](#), aims to fill several gaps in the research on peer-to-peer mentoring in leadership programmes in Australia. Using a scoping review, the paper evaluates research during the period 2010 to 2020 by adopting a thematic approach focusing on peer support and peer relationships, school connectedness, well-being, and transition and leadership in the private or independent sector. Findings suggest that a future research agenda should explore several interconnected themes such as peer-to-peer mentoring, leadership and school and peer connectedness, and analyse overlooked participant groups such as disadvantaged or vulnerable children, as well as indigenous populations.

Musarurwa David Chinofunga, Philemon Chigeza and Subhashni Taylor's paper, [\*Senior High School Mathematics Subjects in Queensland: Options and Trends of Student Participation\*](#), provides a detailed quantitative study of senior Queensland students' (year 11 and 12) participation in calculus and non-calculus-based Mathematics from 2010 to 2019. Identifying trends in student participation, the paper addresses several gaps in the existing research literature by including a range of variables such as type of schools, location, gender, indigenous or non-indigenous, residence status and the different types of options available. Findings highlight several areas of imbalance in the current provision of mathematics, and the study calls for future research on the topic that explores questions relating to gender and mathematics in Australian schools.

In the final paper, [\*"How Difficult Can it Be?" A Non-Indigenous 'Asian' Australian High School Teacher's AsianCrit Autoethnographic Account of Dealing with Racial Injustice\*](#), Aaron Teo investigates how Australia's colonial past continues to impact on its education system. Drawing on Critical Race Theory (CRT), Teo explores the lived experience of early career teachers from Asian backgrounds, who have typically been marginalised from research in the field. Teo's powerful autoethnographic account examines his own identity as a migrant 'Asian' Australian high school teacher and highlights the importance of 're/addressing the dearth of minority (teacher) voices in the literature'.

While the seven papers collected in this special edition represent only a snapshot of the many research studies presented at the doctoral conference, they nevertheless demonstrate the quality and depth of the contributions that were made and are testimony to the resilience and determination of the postgraduate students involved. The editors would like to thank the journal and its anonymous peer reviewers for their constructive feedback and support during the reviewing and production process.

## 2. Disclosure statement

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## 3. Open Access Policy

This journal provides immediate open access to its content with no submission or publications fees. This journal article is published under the following Creative Commons Licence:



This licence allows others to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to this article (and other works in this journal), and/or to use them for any other lawful purpose in accordance with the licence.

*PRISM* is also indexed in the world largest open-access database: DOAJ (the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#)). DOAJ is a community-curated online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals.

