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Editorial: Volume 7, CERJ Role and the Responsibility of our Graduate Community

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I sit to write this editorial note on 25.09.2020, the 17th anniversary of the death of Edward Said. I scroll down through social media posts commemorating his legacy and I recall the strong impact his work had on me when I first read it. I still remember how his book “Representations of the Intellectual²” (Said, 1994) struck me as exceptional and awe-inspiring. It was through this work that I also learnt about Gramsci’s concept of the ‘organic intellectual³’ and about Foucault’s distinction between the ‘specific’ and the ‘universal⁴’ intellectual. More recently, I have also been deeply engaged in what de Sousa Santos (2015, 2018) calls ‘the post-abysal’ researcher⁵. Against the backdrop of this body of work, I was left with questions that never ceased to run through my mind; What type of intellectual do I want to be? What is my share of responsibility as a scholar and how do I live up to it? According to Said, the intellectual’s role is to “*challenge and negate both an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power wherever and whenever possible*” (Said, 2002, p.31). Said urged us to always remain responsible for how we occupy our positions.

With this responsibility in mind, we approached our position as an editorial team at Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal (CERJ). We found ourselves serving at a uniquely eventful year; from COVID-19 Pandemic, police violence in the US, Black Lives Matter Protests, ongoing war in my home country Syria, continuous assaults against my people in Palestine⁶, the “migration crisis” that Britain is facing, and the persistence of structural racism in our societies and institutions, among others. On a broader geopolitical scale, we have also been attentive to the times we live in, where the scientific knowledge developed in the global North has been turned into the hegemonic way of transforming the world according to one’s own needs (Santos, 2018). In light of this, we started this year by setting CERJ’s goals and vision. We endeavoured to provide a platform that encourages the mutual enrichment of different knowledge, and to shed light on contributions that speak for the poorly represented and the

² This book is a collection of essays based on Edward Said’s 1993 Reith Lectures.

³ Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) was a leading Italian scholar. He distinguished between a traditional intelligentsia that acts as a class apart from society, and “organic” intellectuals who speak for the masses and represent excluded social groups of a society.

⁴ You can read more on this in Michel Foucault’s ‘Truth and power’ (1980).

⁵ In simple terms, post-abysal researchers, according to Santos, identify and valorise epistemological alternatives that may strengthen the struggles against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy.

⁶ See this for an example: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/video/israeli-soldier-kneels-elderly-palestinians-neck-violent-arrest> - The connections between the militarisation of the police in the US and the ongoing assault on people in occupied Palestine, the West Bank, and Gaza is well documented. You can read about this in several of Angela Davis’s works. For a quick read, see <https://www.jvpsandiego.org/2019/09/16/breaking-seven-san-diego-county-law-enforcement-personnel-join-deadly-exchange-training/> .

oppressed. We have been greatly influenced by Santos (2018) who calls for valorising ‘Epistemologies of the South’; the types of knowledge that contribute to maximizing the possibilities of the success of social struggles. Informed by Santos, we recognise that remaining neutral in global societies characterised by structural and cultural violence amounts to being on the side of the oppressor.

To achieve CERJ’s goals for this year, we also planned to take some concrete steps during the publication and dissemination of the volume. In the following, I briefly comment on some of the technical and stylistic changes that CERJ has undergone over this past year. Following that, I present an overview of the content of volume 7 before moving on to discuss the concrete steps we took for its publication and dissemination.

Technical and Stylistic Changes

May I draw readers’ attention that during this past year, this journal has undergone a name change. CERJ has been previously known as CORERJ. This name change followed a unanimous voting on part of the Faculty of Education’s graduate student organisation (FERSA). Our editorial team has proposed deleting the two words ‘open review’ from the journal name in order to foreground the rigour of the double-blind peer-review process that CERJ articles undergo. In this volume, our articles are also presented in new templates. We ensured to add articles’ DOIs, authors’ ORCID IDs, Creative Common licensing information and logo, and to boost the overall academic and professional outlook of CERJ.

The Content of Volume 7

Volume 7 is CERJ’s largest volume to date. It includes 14 articles where authors explore pertinent questions in a multitude of areas of education research; from language teaching, childhood education, socio-emotional learning and educational achievement to children literature and international development.

Important insights can be drawn from Yanwen Wu’s article on Cogmed memory training and education achievement. Ryan Irvan and Maria Tsapali present a timely exploration of the relationship between academic achievement in early childhood education and inhibitory control, and Sue Chatterton examines the teaching and learning strategies considered the most important amongst young learners. Three articles in this volume focus on language teaching and learning (Grace Bentham, Sun Min Lee and Yan-Yi Lee). These articles offer significant contributions around English as an Additional Language, the role of the social context in second language learning, and the difficulties some learners face when learning a genetically related language.

While CERJ’s scope covers the field of education, we are particularly delighted with the increasing number of contributions that extend beyond this speciality and convey the voices of our authors in relation to historical and contemporary social and political struggles. For

example, the volume starts with Olivia J.E. Slater's reflexive piece. Olivia is the first First Nations Australian woman to undertake a PhD at Cambridge. Through a practical application of Storying as a tool of knowledge creation and transmission, she explores her own personal narrative of pursuing epistemological resonance while undertaking research with her own Indigenous community within the Australian settler state. Notions of courage, honour, legacy and community that fuel Olivia's work are inspirational to emerging scholars who have been historically silenced and represented on others' terms. In the second article, Mollie Baker unpacks existing shortcomings and critiques of contemporary UK higher education. She focuses on future-oriented discussions and presents 'utopiaS' as a means that might broaden the imaginative horizons of scholars, teachers and students. At a time when neo-liberal capitalism, racism, settler-colonialism and imperialism stifle the imagination of the possibilities of freedom, Mollie's paper brings to my mind the idea that only through "*imaginative resistance can we envision justice beyond hegemonic ideologies and oppressive institutional systems*" (Walcott, 2018).

Articles in this volume also critically engage in some crucial debates in the field of Education and International Development. A field fraught with accusations of Eurocentric epistemological hegemony (see for example Novelli et al., 2014⁷), our authors attempt to push some of its theoretical and conceptual boundaries. Richa Sharma, for instance, problematizes what she perceives as the entrenchment of conceptualisations of equity in discourses of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within the hegemonic ideology of neoliberalism. She calls for a paradigm shift out of an exploitative anthropocentrism to think of the environment and us as equal parts of a larger ecosystem. Similarly, Simone Eringfield exposes the problems that arise when conceptualisations of 'equitable education' as formulated in the North are uncritically applied to the spatio-temporally liminal context of refugee settlement camps. Both Angana Das and Seun Adebayo engage in exposing how structural inequalities impact on the educational experiences and the school choice of the disadvantaged. Emily Rushton shifts the focus to an important question around increasing the accessibility of students with special education needs/disabilities (SEND) to education. While Olivia Marsh's article discusses the use of fairy tale intertextuality in Holocaust novels to navigate the moral grey area between fact and fiction, the wider strength of this paper lies, I believe, in signaling our commitment to acknowledge and continuously engage in enduring histories of injustices, and racial and colonial domination (Sriprakash et al., 2020).

Thus, in addition to the significant contributions that this volume offers in multiple areas of education, authors also unpack wider issues around cognitive justice, indigenous studies, refugees, disability, ecological balance, and critiques of neoliberalism and structural injustices in academic institutions. We are incredibly proud of our authors who reflect the commitment of our graduate community at the Faculty of Education to challenge the normalized quiet of unseen power, to engage in the public space and the larger body of politics.

⁷ For a quick access to these debates, go to page 13 and see the section that starts with 'The political economy of education and development'.

The Presentation and Dissemination of Volume 7

As for the concrete steps we took in our pursuit of CERJ's vision for this year, I present below two areas we focused on in relation to the presentation and dissemination of volume 7.

First: In addition to written articles, this volume presents an additional short video alongside each article. In these videos, authors provide an oral summary of the main argument of their papers.

We have decided to take this step for three main reasons. First, we hope that this will give the ideas presented in our publications a liveliness and an embodied human quality that are absent from the written text. Second, we aim to make our written knowledge more familiar and accessible to a wider range of audience. Third, we draw on Santos (2018) who argues that abyssal science is a monumental science that requires a 'demonumentalizing intervention'. Santos proposes 'knowledge oralisation' as one way to 'demonumentalize knowledges' and open spaces to other ways of knowing. Thus, this step is a way to push ourselves out of our comfort zone. It is important, however, to flag up a cautionary note. Our attempt to oralise knowledge in this volume remains a first incomplete step. More nuanced work is needed if we would like to meaningfully help fulfil Santos's call. Moving forward, I encourage future editorial teams to take this step further in a way that truly makes our knowledge more familiar to the experiences of the masses. Future authors can be encouraged to avoid monological narratives and to share short dialogic films instead. They can attempt to avoid using technical language and focus on intelligible results. In other words, they can focus on foregrounding how their work contributes to society and to strengthening social struggles.

Second: In this volume, we present the abstracts of our articles in two more different languages; Spanish and Arabic. This step has been prompted by CERJ's belief in the widely recognised epistemological, cultural, and political relevance of plurilingualism (Santos, 2018). At a time when linguistic imperialism is part of the dominant politics of knowledge, and when non-English speakers are largely excluded from knowledge production and participation, we have taken this step as a gesture to intentionally incorporate the richness of other languages into our publications. This year, we chose two widely spoken languages; Arabic and Spanish. I encourage future editorial teams to incorporate more languages, especially more local languages from the Global South⁸.

⁸ My use of the term 'Global South' is not related to different stages of development, cultural difference or geographical location. In line with Dados and Connell (2012), I use the term to denote geopolitical relations of power and to refer to countries that are wrestling with unjust global power dynamics and legacies of colonialism, imperialism, neoliberalism and patriarchy. That said, I acknowledge some limitations of the term and understand some concerns around possible negative effects of its use on enhancing problematic North-South dichotomies.

Remaining Accountable: CERJ Role and The Responsibility of our Graduate Community

In light of the concrete steps that we have taken this year as well as the involvement of a considerable range of our articles in wider public issues, we were tempted to frame this volume as an attempt to contribute to the efforts of ‘decolonising knowledge’ in the faculty. However, we decided to avoid a too-easy adoption of decolonizing discourse. We turned to Tuck and Yang (2012) who say that “decolonization is not a metaphor” and who warn against superficial ‘moves to innocence’⁹. Contemplating the different types of struggle that indigenous people continue to suffer from in different parts of the world brings Tuck and Yang’s argument home. Thinking of the illegal occupation, annexation and settler colonisation¹⁰ of Palestinian lands, we come to better understand the superficiality of claiming that what we have done can be called ‘decolonial work’. We also realised that as long as nowhere in our call for papers have we encouraged authors to grapple with the breadth of Britain’s colonial legacy, its past active involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, and how these are deeply connected with the injustices and struggles that persist today, then a claim that we are contributing to ‘decolonising knowledge’ will be only a performative attempt to add value to CERJ’s reputation at the expense of the experiences and bodies of people living real struggles (Left of Brown et al., 2018). We thereby chose to remain accountable and to comprehend the scope and worth of what we have attempted to do in this volume.

Through volume 7, CERJ has attempted to claim a space, to seize a moment and somehow innovate on the margins. What we have done this year is a gesture, a half-step, a commitment to be more actively involved in FERSA’s campaigns and to play a role in making our faculty an inclusive, anti-racist, anti-imperialist and a cognitively just space. We in CERJ recognise our role in actively challenging sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, xenophobia along with anti-semitism and Islamophobia. We recognise that we have a choice of what social and political struggles to support and we embrace our responsibility and duty to align ourselves with the oppressed. It is thus crucial that we develop a critical distance that liberates us from the shackles of systems and frameworks that tacitly direct and benefit from our work. In this respect, we might turn to Davis (2016) and follow her calls for taking seriously the feminist insight that “the personal is political”. The political does reproduce itself through the personal. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to remain attentive to the dangerous ways in which our own individual scholarly work might unintentionally complements and extends institutional and/or global structural violence¹¹. We must endeavour to comprehend these connections, and to

⁹ Strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve settlers’/ former colonisers’ feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land, power or privilege, without having to change much at all.

¹⁰<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200926-netanyahu-orders-construction-of-5000-new-settlement-units-in-west-bank/#.X28eb5K4-t8.twitter>

¹¹ One example is our own citation practices that can be used as a means of resisting hierarchies of knowledge production. Another example of a dangerous way to replicate violent and unjust structures is for a graduate student to go to the Global South, conduct research, and report findings without connecting the local to the global, and the lives of individuals to their historical, economic, political and geo-historical contexts. By approaching their

understand the deep relationality that links struggles against institutional and global injustices and struggles to reinvent ourselves as scholars.

Finally, we in CERJ have high regard for the gifts and intellects of our graduate community to continue to work for our vision of what institutional spaces we would like to occupy. We are immensely proud of the sense of community and solidarity that continues to develop among us in powerful ways. It is indeed in “the collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism” (Davis, 2016. p. 49).

Acknowledgments

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We are greatly indebted to Dr. Kevin Kester for delivering an online training session where he provided our peer-reviewers essential guidelines. I strongly believe that this session made a great difference. It set the right foundation for the high quality, thorough and constructive reviews we later received. That said, all thanks go to the anonymous peer reviewers who gave generously of their time and expertise. The effort of the translators who translated CERJ abstracts into Spanish and Arabic is also highly appreciated.

study apolitically, they ultimately do damage. They subconsciously feed into the ‘civilising mission’ narrative and conveniently ignore that in most cases, international actors and governments are politically and causally responsible to rectify harms caused or perpetuated either by the foreign policy of their own countries, by their past colonialist involvements in other countries, or by the unequal power and wealth distribution in a complex global system.

My big thanks go to Prof. Susan Robertson for her ongoing support as a senior advisor to CERJ. The session prof Susan delivered to our graduate community in collaboration with Dr. Luís Gandin afforded us a great opportunity to promote CERJ, provide guidelines and tips on publishing for new authors. We are grateful to Dr. Luís Gandin.

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Last but not least, we are grateful to the graduate community at the faculty of education who elected us, trusted us and afforded us the opportunity to serve as the editorial team of this volume. We hope to ensure a smooth transition to the new team and we look forward to the possibilities the future holds for CERJ.

About the Author:

Basma Hajir is a third year PhD candidate, researching the field of Education and Conflict with a particular focus on the Syrian context. A member of St John's College, her research interests lie in the sociology of education, post-colonial theory, education for peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Basma's most recent publications are in the journal of [Intervention and Statebuilding](#), the international journal of [Studies in Philosophy and Education](#), [In Factis Pax: Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice](#), and in [Cambridge Educational Research e-Journal](#). Apart from her PhD, Basma has been involved in several research and publication projects looking at peace education in formal schools, research ethics in conflict contexts, exploring researchers' positionality, as well as violence against women in the global south.

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