



## EDITORIAL

### Challenging social hegemonies through pedagogies of resistance

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It is my great pleasure to author my first editorial for *International Studies in Widening Participation* (ISWP). I write these words directly after attending the Gender and Education Association 2018 conference, hosted by the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE), University of Newcastle, Australia. The conference theme, *Gender, post-truth populism and pedagogies: Challenges and strategies in a shifting political landscape*, interrogated the specific challenges to feminist and critical research about gender and education in contemporary socio-political contexts which are often challenging to those with a concern for social justice. Another aspiration of the conference was the exploration of possibilities for feminist interventions across a range of intersecting platforms: scholarly, activist, and pedagogical.

In many ways, both ambitions resonate with this Issue of ISWP. The articles gathered here are diverse, including in terms of their epistemological, theoretical and empirical standpoints. They also span a range of institutional and cultural contexts. Yet they are brought together by their shared scholarly and political concern for deconstructing the power relations at play in relation to discourses of widening participation and for pedagogies of resistance and the possibilities that come with these.

*Aboriginal enabling pedagogies and approaches in Australia: Centring and decolonising our approaches*, by Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, provides a topical opening to this Issue, as higher education contexts continue to exclude and marginalise those who do not perform White, middle-class masculinity and silence or discredit the voices of the ‘subalterns’ and the oppressed (Spivak, 1988). In her Viewpoint, Leroy-Dyer calls for the development and recognition of an Aboriginal enabling pedagogy for use in the Australian Higher Education sector. Drawing on her experience as an Aboriginal educator/academic and on a literature review of the intersections of enabling education and Aboriginal pedagogies, she provides a compelling case for centring and decolonising pedagogical approaches and a way forward for how this can be achieved.

In *Spaces of solace and world-building: A praxis-based approach to creative and performing arts (CAPA) outreach for equity and widening participation in higher education*, Helen English, Matt Lumb, Jessica Page and Jarrod Wilton argue that Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) outreach has the potential to disturb contextual power relations. Drawing on a participatory methodological framework, their research team (composed of an academic, a practitioner-researcher and two Masters of Teaching students) provides a compelling illustration of how music and other CAPA outreach can support the development of fruitful interpersonal

connections with potential for disrupting power relations and for creating spaces of solace and collective ‘world-building’ (DeNora, 2010).

*Fairness and inclusion: Online learning as an enabler of Australian higher education policies aimed at student equity and social justice*, by Andrea Dodo-Balu, explores how online delivery of degree programs contributes to widening participation. Drawing on a qualitative approach and informed by the theoretical work of Amartya Sen, this article critically engages with the benefits and limits of two models of widening participation (the ‘fairness model’ and the ‘inclusion model’). The article calls for online learning’s potential to foster inclusion in higher education and to transform students’ lives to be further recognised and valued in higher education policies.

In *Supporting postgraduate coursework students through their time of transition*, Anne-Maree Hays and Sue Sharp argue that, while numerous universities provide research and study skills to support students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, research and evaluation of such programs remain scarce in relation to postgraduate coursework students. A survey of students enrolled in a transition program leads the authors to conclude that the students regarded participation as beneficial to preparing them for their postgraduate studies, thus challenging the widespread view that postgraduate students do not require support with the transition process. In turn, these findings led them to develop a model for postgraduate transition programs, with ‘personal and professional identity’, ‘community of practice’ and ‘academic and research skills’ identified as key themes and strategic intervention areas.

*Asking the right questions: Opportunities and challenges of survey methods in widening participation research*, by Bethan Collins, Clive Hunt, Alex Wardrop, Lizzie Gauntlett, Vanessa Heaslip, Maggie Hutchings and Colin Pritchard, adopts a more methodological focus, and as such, is complementary to the other contributions included in this Issue. The article considers issues of survey design and deployment in higher education, while also considering, more specifically, issues related to survey methods in widening participation research. While the authors avoided terms referring explicitly to disadvantage and favoured euphemisms in their survey design, students themselves had a very different understanding of these terms. Ultimately, the authors convincingly argue that we need to “question whether the use of euphemism clouds the potential reality of inequality and that to uncover and act upon this inequality – surely the aim of widening participation practice – we need to directly ask students about their experience of disadvantage”.

Last, this Issue concludes with a new section, Student Voice<sup>1</sup>, which is planned as a recurrent annual feature of *International Studies in Widening Participation*. Taylah Gray’s piece, *The danger of a single story: Gari Yala (speak the truth)*, provides an illuminating account of her educational experience and broader life. The story she tells is both personal and political, individual and collective. Most importantly, Gray tells us a story of exclusion and of social change – a social change facilitated by the enacting of pedagogies of resistance.

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<sup>1</sup> *International Studies in Widening Participation* is pleased to introduce Student Voice, a new section with the express intention of providing former enabling students with an opportunity to critically reflect on their experiences in an access program and to write about its impact on their educational journey. Hearing from students who are the beneficiaries of widening participation policies provides the ISWP readership with an important flipside to the work of academics and practitioners.

## **References**

- DeNora, T. (2016). *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spivak, G.C. (1988). 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' In C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271-313). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.