



**Editorial Introduction:
In the Face of Urgency, Making Space for the Emerging**

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Abstract: This Editorial Introduction reflects on the challenges and complexities facing education amidst political, social, and environmental crises, emphasizing the need to engage with emerging solutions rather than being paralyzed by urgency. In the context of the current multicrisis, it envisions *CIE* as a beacon of hope—a space to step back and recognize emerging efforts. We call for slowing down, not as a passive act but as an active effort to nurture the possibilities arising from these crises. The introduction highlights the five articles in this issue, featuring scholars addressing real problems in education, exploring alternatives, and uncovering unexpected possibilities. From teaching white nationalism in the Trump era to navigating the challenges faced by women in online doctoral programs, or examining skateboarding as a counterculture in higher education, these studies illuminate the layered realities of education and society.

Keywords: Current issues in education; emerging possibilities; multicrisis; unexpected possibilities; complexity.

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Editorial Introduction: In the Face of Urgency, Making Space for the Emerging

In this second issue of Vol. 25 in *Current Issues in Education (CIE)*, we continue a journey that began with the inaugural volume in 1998. Produced and led by doctoral students at Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College of Arizona State University, *CIE* is an open-access, peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated to advancing scholarly dialogue on pressing issues in education. This issue continues that tradition, bringing together five thought-provoking articles that explore different challenges and possibilities within education, offering fresh perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches that enrich our understanding of the field.

As an interdisciplinary journal that creates space for a variety of approaches and perspectives on education topics, *CIE* is open to diverse theoretical views, methodological approaches, and submission formats. This issue reflects our commitment to this openness, with methodologies spanning from a systematic literature review (**Greta G. Freeman and Brooke L. Hardin**) and critical theoretical analysis (**Eric M. Davidson**) to collaborative case study research (**Robby Lee Robinette**), reflections on educators' perspectives teaching about white nationalism, grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), exploring pedagogical approaches and impact of the anti-racist teaching (**Beth Ribet and Leslie Bunnage**), and narrative inquiry with thematic analysis (**Staci Gilpin and McKenzie Rabenn**). This rich mix of methodologies speaks to the value of an inclusive, interdisciplinary journal that brings diverse voices into dialogue. Theoretical perspectives also reflect this diversity, encompassing frameworks such as CRT, intersectionality theory, and critical analysis.

As we continue this tradition of 26 years of publishing scholarship, this issue comes at a time of profound uncertainty and instability, marked by global political, social, and environmental crises. Globally, ongoing injustices and inequalities affect the purpose and potential of education and access to it. The war in Gaza is so devastating that it is projected to set back the education of children and youth by up to five years, potentially leading to a lost generation of Palestinian youth deeply impacted by permanent trauma (UNRWA, 2024). In Afghanistan, September 2024 marked three years since the Taliban re-deprived women from education beyond Grade 6 (Fetrat, 2024), erasing decades of progress toward educational access and equal opportunities for women. This is a direct attack on women's rights with long-lasting effects on Afghan society. In the same month, South Korea faced an alarming escalation of its deepfake crisis, with students at more than 500 schools involved in generating or possessing AI-generated explicit content targeting female students (Smith & Brake, 2024). This disturbing trend mirrors the Nth Room case in 2018–2020, which involved blackmail and cybersex trafficking (Mackenzie & Choi, 2024) and underscores persistent failures to address systemic inequities. The recurrence of these crises highlights the urgent need for school reforms that foster safer and more equitable environments for women.

In Venezuela, increased poverty, hyperinflation, and heightened emigration—perpetuated by a dictatorship that claimed to win democratic elections again this past July—have caused a serious crisis of teacher loss (Moleiro, 2024), undermining the capacity of schools to respond to students' needs. Additionally, climate disasters caused by global warming are disrupting children's access to education all around the globe, especially in countries lacking infrastructure like cooling systems or resilient school buildings. Events like wildfires, floods, and earthquakes destroy schools, and even resourceful nations face challenges. For example, in North Carolina, thousands of students missed over a month of classes this fall due to Hurricane Helene, which damaged infrastructure and hindered online learning options (Wong, 2024). Not to mention, the lasting effects of COVID-19 on educators' and students' mental health remain significant, with

many still seeking ways to recover, particularly those from low-income and disadvantaged communities (Paun, 2024).

In the United States, the potential impacts of the second Trump administration loom large, threatening to exacerbate existing inequities. Policies aiming to dismantle the Department of Education (Alfonseca, 2024), cut federal funding for schools teaching critical race theory (Meltzer, 2024), and ban transgender female athletes from participating in school sports (Migdon, 2024), are just a few examples of proposed changes that undermine efforts toward equity and inclusion in education. This moment calls for strategic and collective resistance—not merely opposing these measures but also finding ways to advance the field of education and support areas under attack.

It is in this context of urgency that we envision *CIE* becoming a beacon of hope in the coming years—a space to step back and recognize *emerging* efforts. There are countless researchers, practitioners, politicians, and activists working to create an education system that addresses these crises and advocates for those most negatively affected and vulnerable. Echoing Bayo Akomolafe, we want *CIE* to serve as a space for slowing down, attending to, and amplifying these ongoing efforts to make education better.

It is no longer time to rush through the contested world blinded by fury and anger – however worthwhile these are. Now, we think, is the time to ‘retreat’ into the real work of reclamation, to re-member again our humanity through the intimacy of our relationships. The time is very urgent – we must slow down. (Akomolafe, n.d.)

This call to slow down is not about taking a passive stand but an invitation to nurture the possibilities emerging from these crises. It reminds us to look beyond the noise of the moment and to focus on the constructive responses already happening. Journals like *CIE* serve as spaces for these efforts, providing a platform for scholars to present their work towards resilience and transformation. The title of this Editorial reflects that shift—from being paralyzed by the urgency to highlighting the powerful and creative responses emerging from it. Recognizing that “we have gotten so distracted by the urgent, that we stopped listening to the emergent” (“Becoming Monster Opening Ceremony,” 2024), we invite contributors and readers to embrace this perspective too: to acknowledge the challenges while engaging with the innovations and solutions already taking shape and embracing unexpected possibilities.

This issue reflects this approach, featuring the work of scholars presenting real problems in education, thinking of alternatives, and revealing unexpected possibilities. For instance, **Gilpin and Rabenn**, in their article “Balancing Acts: Navigating the Complexities of Female Online Doctoral Journeys,” explore the unique struggles women face in navigating online higher education programs and offer reflections on navigating such spaces as rooted in intersectionality theory to highlight the malleability of privilege. Using narrative inquiry, their research brings attention to systemic barriers, including limited access to research opportunities and collaborative spaces, while highlighting the power of storytelling to shed light on these complex realities. By sharing the stories of these women, the study not only highlights their resilience and accomplishments but also underscores the urgent need for systemic changes to better support female doctoral students.

Similarly, **Ribet and Bunnage**, in their article “Teaching About White Nationalism: Ethics, Vulnerability & Racial Pain in Learning Environments,” explore another urgent topic: the challenges and strategies for teaching about white nationalism in higher education. Their study considers the impact of raising white nationalism on Black students and challenges the idea of a

post-racial society—timely topics illustrated by the case of Black students receiving racist text messages after Trump’s election (Faheid et al., 2024). Through their piece, these authors aim to provide insights from the educators’ perspective and to provide pedagogical support to other educators. They do so by addressing ethical considerations when teaching about white nationalism, as well as the structural and historical relationships among white privilege, white nationalism, and white supremacy. Moreover, the article delves into the complexities of teaching students about white nationalism across three key areas: a) empathy, distancing, and humanization, b) racial vulnerability, grief, and rage, and c) physical safety. This study demonstrates the urgent need to resist bans on CRT, especially in higher education, as it equips students to recognize that white nationalism is a manifestation of systemic racism rather than isolated extremism with tangible and harmful consequences (e.g., the 2021 Capitol riot).

Davidson, in “Insider Knowledge, Outsider Practice: The Disruptive, Liberatory Potential of Skateboarding in US Higher Education,” also offers a novel approach to challenge current educational issues. He employs a critical theoretical analysis through the lenses of skateboarding culture to challenge the systemic inequalities and power dynamics embedded in higher education spaces. By reframing skateboarding not just as a means of transportation but as a tool that “provides a unique capacity for uncovering truth and challenging injustice” (p. 4), the author underscores its potential as a critical framework. This framework has to balance the complex duality of skateboarding’s social transgressiveness and the exclusionary norms within the subculture itself, which continue to reflect cisheteropatriarchal values. Skateboarding culture’s potential within its duality is particularly valuable, as it mirrors the positioning of most critical perspectives that seek to disrupt the system from within. The opportunities that skateboarding culture offers for rethinking power dynamics, design, and institutional norms in higher education are significant, even as they embody contradictions.

Acting as a developer and facilitator in a professional development initiative, **Robinette**, in “Recognizing Teacher Well-being as Essential for Professional Development,” details a collaboration with two teachers, describing how his initial goal of providing technical support transformed into a comprehensive approach addressing the teachers’ well-being. This shift revealed that well-being is not just an important aspect of teacher development—it is foundational to meaningful and lasting changes in teaching practices. This article underscores the importance of acknowledging and supporting the complex, evolving needs of educators, reminding us that prioritizing teacher’s well-being is fundamental to effective professional development. Finally, in “Text Sets: A Comprehensive Analysis of Literature,” **Freeman and Hardin** focus on expanding our knowledge of an instructional strategy known as “text sets” and their effects on student achievement and growth. Noticing a gap in comprehensive literature explaining and organizing the multitude of text sets’ styles, the authors reveal interchanging terminology used to describe this instructional strategy and highlight its impact on student learning and engagement in class across the P-20 landscape.

In line with the ongoing multicrisis we described above, another theme that resonates across all five manuscripts in this issue is complexity. Whether navigating the complexities of teaching white nationalism in the Trump era or the complexities of online doctoral programs as women (and mothers living in rural areas), or exploring skateboarding as a counterculture with its own internal tensions, these studies reveal the layered realities of education and society. Also, the shift from mere professional support to a more holistic approach addressing teachers’ well-being and the overlapping and myriad terms for text sets and their historical/theoretical underpinnings, speak to the complexities embedded in any research or praxis within the

education field. In this way, all of these articles remind us that when we embrace complexity, we uncover hidden, unexpected possibilities—possibilities that have the power to move the field forward in transformative ways.

In this issue of *Current Issues in Education*, we are reminded of the complexities, challenges, and possibilities that define the educational landscape. As we navigate an era marked by political, social, and environmental crises, the contributions in this issue demonstrate the critical importance of slowing down to reflect, connect, and engage with the *emergent*. Each of these studies reveals the intricate interplay between systemic structures and individual agency, urging us to confront the enduring and pervasive inequities while embracing the potential for change from innovative perspectives. At the heart of this issue lies a call to resist the paralysis of urgency and instead amplify the creative and solution-oriented responses learned from the crises. Whether addressing systemic racism, navigating gendered and geographic barriers in education, or rethinking professional and cultural practices, these works underscore the critical role of education in fostering resilience, innovation and social transformation.

We want to close this introduction by expressing our gratitude to everyone who has contributed to making this issue possible. First, we extend our thanks to the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 editorial boards. The voluntary work and commitment of our student editors have been essential to ensuring the smooth operation of the journal. We also deeply appreciate our reviewers; in these challenging times it is increasingly difficult to find committed reviewers, so we are especially grateful to both our longstanding and new reviewers for their dedication, which makes this journal possible.

To the authors who entrusted us with their manuscripts, we are honored to publish your thoughtful and important contributions. Your work enriches our field and keeps the journal moving forward.

We would like to extend special thanks to our consultant Stephanie McBride-Schreiner for her invaluable support of our student-led journal, and to Felicity Warren for providing guidance and useful resources. Additionally, we are thankful to our faculty advisors, Danah Henriksen and Frank Serafini, whose guidance and encouragement provide vital support.

Finally, we encourage students to engage in this enriching and unique experience, whether as authors, reviewers, or members of the editorial team. Your participation is essential to the continued growth, consolidation, and evolution of the journal. We are excited to move forward together, building on this foundation, and continue to contribute to the vibrant conversations about current issues in education.

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