

# Foreword

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Empathy is a foundational element in ethical and impactful research. When researchers approach their project’s subjects and participants with a genuine effort to understand their perspectives, needs, and lived experiences, they not only uphold the dignity of those involved but also enhance the quality and relevance of their findings. It involves a conscious effort to appreciate their circumstances and challenges, ensuring that their voices are respected and authentically represented. Trust is fostered by empathetic research, opening channels for authentic dialogue and ensuring new knowledge produced is rooted in real-world contexts.

The varied articles in this issue of the *Journal of Innovation in Polytechnic Education (JIPE)* reflect this principle. For example, the subjects and participants in these studies include service providers, teacher communities, individuals with special needs, and students facing deadlines—these articles highlight how applied research thrives when it centres human connections. By acknowledging the complexity and uniqueness of participants’ lives and needs, these projects deliver the types of insights that can bridge the gap between theoretical exploration and practical application.

As researchers, our responsibility extends beyond generating data; we must ensure our work contributes to solutions that resonate with those most impacted. This issue reminds us that empathy is not just an ethical obligation—it can be a catalyst for innovation and a means to foster more inclusive, sustainable outcomes. Let the studies featured here inspire us to prioritize empathy at every stage of our research endeavours, shaping a future where knowledge truly serves humanity.

## Author Note

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