

Foreword

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In an era where disruption rules, no sector is insulated from the impact of technology-driven change. Whether it is the internet of everything leading to new products, services and business models, or the impact of social media and ubiquitous access to information, every organization is challenged to respond if they are to remain relevant.

Higher education is no exception. Often criticized as slow to adapt and adhering to time-honoured yet outdated approaches, the ivory towers are in for a makeover. Teaching and learning is undergoing transformation as institutions respond to the changing requirements of learners and the demands of modern society and an interconnected global economy.

The Journal of Innovation in Polytechnic Education (*JIPE*) reflects this change and the dynamic environment within which we operate. As a learning-centred polytechnic institution, Humber is excited to create, through *JIPE*, a forum to advance dialogue and improve knowledge and capacity in response to the world around us. We also believe that the scholarship of teaching and learning is critical to informing our practice and building our culture as a learning organization.

With a practical orientation as a distinct model of education, the polytechnic approach is characterized by its adaptive nature, serving both social and economic functions. In focusing on providing access and pathways to a breadth of credentials and professional programming, the polytechnic model engages a wide range of learners while serving a key role in matching supply and demand in the labour market. While there is considerable variation in institutional types adopting or identifying with a polytechnic approach, the common denominator tends to be an integration of theory and practice in an applied, learning-centred environment. Close alignment of curriculum with industry requirements for talent and problem-solving situates polytechnics in an innovation

ecosystem where linkages with employers fine-tune and contribute to the development of the highly skilled workforce demanded by the modern economy.

Through featuring scholarly work exploring innovation in the context of polytechnic education, *JIPE* contributes to communities of practice within higher education sharing a similar outlook and philosophy, and enhances broader understanding of the value of the polytechnic model. As the contributing articles to this first issue demonstrate, innovation occurs in many ways, serving many purposes. From Lego robotics and work-integrated learning, to solutions for national economic challenges, innovation and practical approaches to real world issues are at the core of polytechnic education. In creating a forum about innovation in education we are sharing best practices and ideas, and going a step further to challenge conventional practices and thinking. We need to examine innovation in terms of contribution to present needs and desired outcomes, and also through a future-focused lens of the requirements of tomorrow and beyond.

I hope this inaugural issue sparks interest and ignites excitement for all those passionate about the value and contribution of higher education in making a difference for learners, communities, and society.

Author Note

Chris Whitaker is the President and CEO of Humber Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning, and the Chair of Polytechnics Canada.

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