

**Call for Papers for a Special Issue of the  
open-access, Scopus-indexed and peer-reviewed journal  
*Postcolonial Directions in Education***

Proposers and special issue editors:

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**Title of the Special Issue:**

*(In)visibility of 'young' researchers in Europe: a postcolonial perspective*

**Introduction**

This special issue of *Postcolonial Directions in Education* will showcase select proceedings of the conference [\*Voicing Young Researchers for the Future of Europe\*](#), which took place between the 14 and 15 February 2023, in Malta. This conference was part of the deliverables of the work programme of the [\*COST\*](#)

[Action CA20137 Making Young Researchers' Voices Heard for Gender Equality \(VOICES\)](#). It was convened at the University of Malta, under the auspices of Organisation of Basic Science for Sustainable Development and of the [European Platform of Women Scientists](#), in connection with the work programme of the [International Year for Basic Science and Sustainable Development 2022](#) #IYBSSD2022.

## **Background**

Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (HERI) institutions are increasingly compelled by neoliberal economic models, and this reflects in their recruitment, remuneration and management of human resource management (Yangson & Seung Jung, 2021<sup>1</sup>; Beban & Trueman, 2018<sup>2</sup>; Moller Madsen & Mahlck, 2018<sup>3</sup>; Ergül & Coşar, 2017<sup>4</sup>; Takayama et al., 2016<sup>5</sup>). It also translates into research positions that increasingly imply travelling, migration, working in multicultural settings and adjusting to transnational family and community experiences (European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, 2018<sup>6</sup>; Vohlídalová, 2014<sup>7</sup>). These trends and developments foreground manifestations of postcolonial dynamics within HERI contexts on matters such as which countries and cultures are (still?) calling the shots with respect to epistemological and ontological directions; funding matters and resource allocation; perceptions

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<sup>1</sup> Yangson, K. & Seung Jung, K. (2021). Being an academic: how junior female academics in Korea survive in the neoliberal context of a patriarchal society. *Higher education* 81(6), 1311-1328.

<sup>2</sup> Beban, A. & Trueman, N. (2018). Student workers: The unequal load of paid and unpaid work in the Neoliberal University. *New Zealand Sociology* 33(2), 99-131.

<sup>3</sup> Moller Madsen, L., & Mahlck, P. (2018). Postcolonial critique of knowledge relations in higher education. *Postcolonial Directions in Education* 7(1), 1-10.

<sup>4</sup> Ergül, H. & Coşar, S. (2017). Editorial Introduction. In Ergül, H. & Coşar, S. (Eds.). *Universities in the Neoliberal Era: Academic Cultures and Critical Perspectives* (pp. 1-18). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>5</sup> Takayama K. Heimans, S., Amazan, R. and Maniam, V. (2016). Doing southern theory: towards alternative knowledges and knowledge practices in/for education. Special issue editorial introduction. *Postcolonial Directions in Education* 5(1), 1-25.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. (2018). [MORE3 study: Support data collection and analysis concerning mobility patterns and career paths of researchers](#). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>7</sup> Vohlídalová, M. (2014). Academic mobility in the context of linked lives: Postdisciplinary Humanities & Social Sciences Quarterly. *Human Affairs*, 24(1), 89-102. <https://doi.org/10.2478/s13374-014-0208-y>

and (mis)representations of status and quality differentials between education systems, power dynamics; explicit and implicit hierarchies within HERI institutions; and gendered dimensions and trends in related mobility, doctoral and postdoctoral studies (Ergül & Coşar, 2017; Nalbantoğlu, 2017<sup>8</sup>; Adriansen et al., 2016<sup>9</sup>; Vohlídalová, 2014). Nonetheless and concurrently, such trends and developments also translate to opportunities to decolonise curricula, resist epistemicide and voice intersectionality (Adefila et al., 2022<sup>10</sup>).

In the above-described contexts young researchers play a somewhat recognized role in advancing research innovation and knowledge development by bringing fresh perspectives to research (Chen et al., 2015<sup>11</sup>; Cantwell, 2011<sup>12</sup>; Musselin, 2004<sup>13</sup>; Åkerlind, 2005<sup>14</sup>). Young researchers also contribute to the enrichment of academic life and culture, through innovative teaching, founding, and participating in associations and networks – and therefore to research excellence overall. Yet in many parts of Europe, there is only a minor share of women and other minorities among young (and senior) researchers (European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, and Innovation, 2021). Only slightly over half of those in the academic sector are employed on permanent contracts, compared to the vast majority of those in other sectors (European Science Foundation, 2017,

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<sup>8</sup> Nalbantoğlu, H.U. (2017). [‘Homo Academicus’ in University Inc.: The Ersatz Yuppie Academic](#). In Ergül, H. & Coşar, S. (Eds.). *Universities in the Neoliberal Era: Academic Cultures and Critical Perspectives* (pp. 217-271). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>9</sup> Adriansen, H. K., Madsen, L. M. and Jensen, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Higher education and capacity building in Africa: The geography and power of knowledge under changing conditions*. London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Adefila, A., Vieira Teixeira, R., Morini, L., Teixeira Garcia, M.L., Zanotti Guerra Frizzera Delboni, T.M., Spolander, G. & Khalil-Babatunde, M. (2022). Higher education decolonisation: Whose voices and their geographical locations? *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 20(3), 262-276, DOI:10.1080/14767724.2021.1887724

<sup>11</sup> Chen, S., McAlpine, L., & Amundsen, C. (2015). Postdoctoral positions as preparation for desired careers: a narrative approach to understanding postdoctoral experience. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34(6), 1083-1096.

<sup>12</sup> Cantwell, B. (2011). Transnational mobility and international academic employment: Gatekeeping in an academic competition arena. *Minerva*, 49(4), 425-445.

<sup>13</sup> Musselin, C. (2004). Towards a European academic labour market? Some lessons drawn from empirical studies on academic mobility. *Higher Education*, 48(1), 55-78.

<sup>14</sup> Åkerlind, G. S. (2005). Academic growth and development-How do university academics experience it? *Higher education*, 50(1), 1-32.

p.11<sup>15</sup>). Moreover, their working conditions have become increasingly unstable as they are particularly affected by the growing casualisation of the academic workforce and precariousness of the academic life (Murgia & Porgio, 2019). They face, among other things, insecure employment conditions (short-term contracts, part-time), low remunerations, long working hours, increasing requirements (mainly mobility), intense academic competition, overwhelming administrative and organisational tasks, and a lack of recognition by research organisations. Many of these work experiences are profoundly gendered, with intersectional dynamics at play (European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, and Innovation, 2021<sup>16</sup>).

In parallel, and from a theoretical / ideological stance, international, and national research communities are advocating the integration of intersectionality across research fields. Intersectionality recognizes that the simultaneity of individuals' multiple social identities, such as gender, race, class, age, etc., may lead to both opportunities and oppressions that vary according to a given situation (Silva, 2020). Notably, it has been argued that, whereas some postcolonial perspectives (e.g., postcolonial feminist studies) have not given due attention to particular forms of class, gender, race, and/or age (Bahri, 2010), intersectionality adopts a more inclusive view; because it allows us to go beyond a focus on gender that ignores class, race and other social-political structures, such as decision-making. It has been suggested that intersectionality can give a more comprehensive perspective in the analysis of the extent to which inclusive higher education is committed towards gender equality, discrimination, and genuine opportunities for young researchers.

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<sup>15</sup> European Science Foundation (2017). 2017 Career Tracking Survey of Doctorate Holders: Project Report. Strasbourg.

[https://www.esf.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/esf/FFINALCareer\\_Tracking\\_Survey\\_2017\\_Project\\_Report.pdf](https://www.esf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/esf/FFINALCareer_Tracking_Survey_2017_Project_Report.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, and Innovation (2021). *She figures 2021: gender in research and innovation: statistics and indicators*. Brussels: Publications Office.

<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/06090>

In response, summons and work plans for gender+ equality are increasingly featuring in the European political agenda, reformist, strategic and quality assurance discourses, and work programmes; and many EU-funded projects are increasingly focused on gender mainstreaming in research institutions through the implementation of Gender Equality Plans. These include LeTSGEPs (2020-2023), GEARING ROLES (2019-2022), SPEAR (2019-2022), GENDERACTION (2017-2021), EQUAL-IST (2016-2019), ACT (2018-2021). Several certification and award schemes already exist in Europe (Athena Swan Award, Label égalité, etc.); while the CASPER project (2020-2022) examines the feasibility of establishing a European certification system for gender equality for Research Performing Organizations (RPOs).

### **Rationale**

The choice of the VOICES' network to publish the proceedings of its first annual conference in this journal is informed by the recognition of the explained (post)colonial dynamics within HERI contexts, and the curiosity about a postcolonial reading of young researchers' lived experiences as students, professionals, and persons that is enhanced by the nuances that the intersectionality perspective can illuminate.

Likewise, it is hoped that the postcolonial perspective will enrich the select proceedings published in this special issue with a problematised approach to the intersectional epistemological and ontological backbone guiding the VOICES' network. Specifically: on how under-representation, misrepresentation, dislocation, and fragmentation limit the co-construction of quality ecologies required for genuine capacity-building and professional development.

Furthermore, cognizant of concurrent risks and manifestations of ‘cancel culture’ in HERI contexts, that result from antagonistic and divisive trends within the scholarly/activist debates and interactions that have equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) agendas (Sullivan & Suissa, 2022<sup>17</sup>; Hillman, 2022<sup>18</sup>; Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018<sup>19</sup>), the VOICES network identified a rationale for a dialogue between postcolonial and intersectional perspectives. This will be elaborated in the aims of scope that follow.

### **Aims and scope**

By hosting a dialogue between intersectional and postcolonial analyses of the matters discussed in the selected papers, this special issue will:

1. Build on the existing knowledgebase and further develop the discussions of earlier issues of the same journal, which include:
  - [PDE, Volume 7, No. 1](#) (2018) Special Issue: Postcolonial Critique of Knowledge Relations in Higher Education, Guest Editors: Lene Møller Madsen and Paula Mählck; and
  - [PDE, Volume 3, No. 1](#) (2014) Special Issue: Knowledge and Activism, Guest Editor: Nisha Thapliyal;

and

2. Scrutinise and discern the nuanced gendered/intersectional visibility and invisibility of ‘young’ researchers at various study and professional

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<sup>17</sup> Sullivan, A. & Suissa. (2022). The EDI Opponents of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. *Culture Wars Papers* 22 (Illiberalism Studies Program). <https://www.illiberalism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Culture-Wars-papers-no.-22-October-2022.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Hillman, N. (2022). ‘You can’t say that!’ What students really think of free speech on campus. *HEPI Policy Note* 35. Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute.

<sup>19</sup> Haidt, J. & Lukianoff, G. (2018). *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. London: Penguin Books Limited.

development stages: from PhD candidates to postdoctoral researchers and beyond by:

- fostering further sustainable, nuanced, and comprehensive treatments of (anti)racist and (de)colonizing higher education, research and innovation contexts and experiences;
- challenging canon and canonicities, hegemonies; as well as divisive, siloing or ‘cancel culture’ identity politics; and
- reimagining politics of representation and hybridity of institutional cultures and practices.

### **Thematic areas:**

#### **1. Concepts and values**

Demystification, problematization or rearticulation of **concepts and values** underpinning policies and practices impacting 'young' researchers; and lived experiences and professional development journeys of ‘young’ researchers;

#### **2. Policies, legal frameworks, infrastructure, practices**

Critical mapping of **policies, legal frameworks, infrastructure, practices** (e.g., working conditions, communication channels and networks, and broader practices concerning ‘young’ researchers);

#### **3. Datasets, data gaps, or grey data areas**

Critical scrutiny and mapping of **datasets, data gaps, or grey data areas** - particularly when these concern funding, working conditions, mobility and transnational family arrangements for ‘young’ researchers’ studies, career advancement and professional development; and

4. **Voicing of researchers at-risk or vulnerable** to discrimination, gender-based violence, misrepresentation, or under-representation, globalised and localised conflict, diaspora and dislocation, unsustainable work-life formulae, alienation, isolation, precarity, etc.

The special issue will feature state-of-the art interdisciplinary expertise, thanks to the broad range of disciplines and research interests that characterise the participation in *VOICES*. These include Philosophy, Sociology, Physics, Engineering, History, Political Science, Cultural Studies, Law, Women Studies, Migrant Studies, Anthropology, Psychology, Public Policy and many more.

### **Paper selection**

**The special issue will include 5 to 7 papers.**

**Paper selection will be guided by the criteria such as a clear aim, methods that prioritise quality, innovation, originality, and representation**, e.g., from [COST Inclusive Target Countries \(ITCs\)](#), research teams with interdisciplinary, intergenerational or intersectional composition.

Authors will need to adhere to the [journal's guidelines](#) on matters concerning format and ethical standards.



**250-word abstracts, or requests for further information, need to be emailed to [maria.brown@um.edu.mt](mailto:maria.brown@um.edu.mt) by 31 January 2024.**

**The abstract needs to specify:**

- Overarching research question/s or problem statement
- How the research question/s or problem statement targets the aims and scope of the special issue<sup>20</sup>
- Thematic area(s)<sup>21</sup> addressed
- Methodology
- Main findings - or, if works-in-progress, outcomes to date
- Implications or recommendations, with attention to value added by the postcolonial perspective to voicing ‘young’ researchers in Europe
- 5-6 keywords

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<sup>20</sup> As explained earlier, the special issue aims to:

1. Build on the existing knowledgebase and further develop the discussions of earlier issues of the same journal, which include:
  - [PDE, Volume 7, No. 1](#) (2018) Special Issue: Postcolonial Critique of Knowledge Relations in Higher Education, Guest Editors: Lene Møller Madsen and Paula Mähle; and
  - [PDE, Volume 3, No. 1](#) (2014) Special Issue: Knowledge and Activism, Guest Editor: Nisha Thapliyal;

and

2. Scrutinise and discern the nuanced gendered/intersectional visibility and invisibility of ‘young’ researchers at various study and professional development stages: from PhD candidates to postdoctoral researchers and beyond by:
  - fostering further sustainable, nuanced, and comprehensive treatments of (anti)racist and (de)colonizing higher education, research and innovation contexts and experiences;
  - challenging canon and canonicities, hegemonies; and divisive, siloing or cancelling identity politics; and
  - reimagining politics of representation and hybridity of institutional cultures and practices.

As explained earlier, thematic areas can include:

1. Concepts and values;
2. Policies, legal frameworks, infrastructure, practices;
3. Datasets, data gaps, or grey data areas; and
4. Voicing researchers at-risk or vulnerable researchers.

## **Timeframes**

11 January 2024	Publication of the Call for Papers
31 January 2024	Final date for abstract submission
11 February 2024	Special issue editors send response
20 March 2024	Authors submit first draft
15 April 2024	Feedback on first draft
5 May 2024	Authors submit updated draft
15 May 2024	Finalisation
June 2024	Publication

**Note:** The Editorial Team also welcomes expressions of interest for paper reviewers. These need to be accompanied by a 100-word bio and emailed to Dr Charmaine Bonello - [charmaine.bonello@um.edu.mt](mailto:charmaine.bonello@um.edu.mt)

### **Bios of special issue editors:**

**Dr Maria Brown** lectures in Adult and Community-based Education within the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta. Her research interests include adult and community-based education, education for sustainable development, social impact assessments, cultural studies, and social policy. She contributes research and advisory work for the European Commission, Eurydice, the Council of Europe, the European Co-operation in Science and Technology (COST) and several Ministries in Malta. She sits on the Board of Administrators of the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning and on the Board of Educators of the Institute for Public Service (Malta). She is also a member of the National Book Council (Malta). Dr Brown led VOICES' Working Group 6 Monitoring and Evaluation between 2021 and 2023.

**Dr Anneleen Mortier**, obtained her PhD in industrial and organisational psychology from Ghent University in 2017. Since 2018 she has been a senior researcher and project manager at the university's Department of Work, Organisation and Society. Within the Expertise Centre for Research and Development Monitoring (ECOOM), she coordinates research on Human Resources in Research. Her main research topics are the careers of PhD candidates and PhD holders. Dr Mortier co-led VOICES' Working Group 6 Monitoring and Evaluation between 2021 and 2023.

**Dr Gilda Hoxha**, graduated in Political Science, University of Tirana in 2010. She obtained her MSc degree in Political Theory in 2012, Faculty of Social Science, University of Tirana) and a MSc degree in Political Science and International Relations, Epoka University. During her PhD studies she earns several scholarships such as, Swedish Institute Scholarship program: SI

Scholarship for the Western Balkans for PhD and Postdoctoral research at Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES), Stockholm, Sweden (2017-2018) and PhD exchange student Doctoral Support Programme: Department of Political Science, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary (2016-2017). Lately, she obtained a doctoral degree in Political Science Department, Faculty of Social Sciences. University of Tirana. Research interests: Political Science, Political Sociology, Social Movements, Political Movements, Democracy, Political Participation, Europe, Eastern Europe, Balkans, Albania. Experience: has been engaged as a lecturer in Political Science and International Relations, since 2012 at the University of Tirana, 'Aleksandër Moisiu' University and since 2019 is a full-time lecturer at the Mediterranean University of Albania.