



Title: Welcome Letter from the Editor

Author: D. Philip Montgomery

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There is no advance of community knowledge
apart from the discourse. —Marlene Scardamalia

With this issue, *NUGSE Research in Education* has officially completed its first volume of publication. The editorial board, peer reviewers, authors, faculty and students of Nazarbayev University join me in thanking you for your interest and participation in this community of scholars. This issue brings some changes to the journal in terms of growth and participants, and the central vision and structure of the journal have taken a more defined shape over the course of the year.

One key goal for this journal is to help create and promote a community in which we learn from each other. In the months after our first issue, we took on the task of expanding that community, albeit incrementally. This fall, the journal saw an increase in peer reviewers, and includes the first participants from outside NUGSE. The editorial board remains composed of NUGSE students, alumni and faculty, but we have taken small steps to involve more scholars in this project. The more participants we have, the richer our dialogue and exchange of ideas can be.

As a public forum, an open access journal like ours can play a pivotal role in advancing community knowledge. Marlene Scardamalia, an educational philosopher concerned with the ways knowledge is created and shared, suggests that *knowledge building* is a core function of education. This constructivist principle maintains that knowledge is not transmitted from those who have it to those who do not, but rather it is constructed, often socially and through discourse. *NUGSE Research in Education* places that discourse on a pedestal: the articles in this issue involve the collaboration from all members of the community. Without the community to evaluate, select, discuss and improve these articles, there would be no journal.

This journal has firmly established the aim to involve emerging scholars into the process of creating knowledge about educational research and reform, particularly in Kazakhstan. The first part of this issue presents the peer-reviewed articles, while the second half presents editorials written by editorial board members and alumni. This balance of genres also serves to acknowledge the various perspectives within our community: the articles represent the intellectual side, while the editorials recognize a more personal and social element. Both genres afford the reader an opportunity to join the conversation and advance our knowledge and understanding together.

We are proud to publish the three articles from NUGSE students and alumni, as they offer varied perspectives on a range of topics in education. The first is an overview of various teaching approaches and their changing implementations in Kazakhstan. In it, Olessya Akimenko presents a detailed account of the ways in which teachers choose their teaching approach, and how globalizing trends affect those choices. The second is a policy review of assessment policy from Meruyert Kabulova, Gulzada Pussurmanova, Dina Shaikhina, Assel Akhmedina, and Gulden Issina. The authors make the case for the formal inclusion of attendance and participation into the assessment policies of mainstream schools. The last article comes from the journal's first *regular* author, with her second piece in *NUGSERIE*. This time around, Zhanna Jumabayeva examines the Unified National Test and its complicated impact on secondary school graduates.

In addition to those highly academic texts, this issue presents three editorials of particular interest to current students and aspiring scholars. First, Rizagul Syzdykbayeva, whose name graced the cover of our first issue, reflects on her progression through the journal's blind peer-review process. Her experience will be useful for any current or future authors coping with the journal's rigorous requirements. Aisara Yessenova then shares a series of student reflections about participating in academic conferences, highlighting the benefits and providing some tips on applying to and preparing for these valuable events. Finally, Aidana Sirgebayeva shows us a "where are they now?" account of NUGSE's first cohort, which graduated in 2014. Their professional and academic lives reflect some of the key impacts that NUGSE has on its students. We sincerely hope that you will join our community of scholars by reading and sharing the discourse within our pages.

D. Philip Montgomery
Chief Editor