SPECIAL FIRST ISSUE *LEARNING IN CONTEXT – INVITATION FOR CONTRIBUTIONS*

Setting the scene for Learning in Context and what publications are expected to encompass

The launch of the journal *Learning in Context* reflects EARLI's ambition to highlight a field where insights into teaching and learning are rooted in interpretations grounded in their specific contexts. This ambition stems from the recognition that the actions, intentions and perspectives of all participants including teachers, students, families and educational leaders, are key to understanding the situations and the phenomena of teaching and learning in ways that recognize their non-uniform, multifaceted and fundamentally open nature.

Central to this field is context, which encompasses elements such as geographic location and time, the timing and general and specific purposes of the situations examined, as well as the history of the individuals and communities involved. It also includes unique experiences of the key actors and participants that together constitute the multifaceted interpretative frame of events investigated or narrated. These contexts may span across the lifecourse, from formal school settings, higher education, workplace settings, informal learning situations, intentional and non-intentional learning. The context is not understood as a mere setting, but rather as including the participants and their history, perspective and characteristics, the tools involved, the activities performed, and the relationships between these elements.

A shared feature of articles published in the journal will be a clear conceptual and nuanced description of the context of the study, having varying emphases and definitions, but carefully argued and theoretically consistent. Descriptions of the context would thus be expected to be well conceptualized, relevant and to the point as well as taking the perspective that is most consistent with the research described or the position taken. Relevant perspectives include those in which individuals are an integral part of the contexts; the cognitive perspective that focuses on how the context is perceived and processed; the phenomenological perspective that emphasizes the experiential and bodily character of context as constituent in perceiving meaning; the constructivist, socio-constructivist, and cultural perspectives that consider the context not as objective but rather as subjectively and intersubjectively constructed. Additional relevant perspectives may focus on context in ways that highlight the relationship between nature and culture such as the socio-ecological view or any instance of linguistic anthropology that examines how meanings are negotiated by participants in interactions with tools, objects, and tasks.

It is important to adequately render the dynamic nature of contexts and the relationship of mutual influence between various levels of the context – for example individual, community, institutional, cultural or systemic. Perspectives highlighting dynamics and interplay between context at different levels may, for example, show how practices and community context sharpen participants' perceptions of tasks and phenomena and how variation in skills and expertise lead to different utilization of similar contexts. Context may in this sense be described on an individual or collective level as a "space of thought" or symbolic space, which includes conceptual and material elements that potentially are perceived and used in a range of different ways.

This broad understanding of context is expected to enhance a focus – empirical or theoretical - of situated accounts of individual, institutional, cultural, and societal dimensions of learning. This may address the processes of teaching and learning, and the relations, dynamics and temporality in such processes. The journal is open to a broad interpretation of learning that is well grounded in this kind of understanding of context, complementing the broad understanding of learning across the EARLI community.

On the community of authors and readers of *Learning in Context*

The research field most attuned to publish in *Learning in Context* has hitherto been scattered with respect to organization and publication possibilities within EARLI, as well as elsewhere, and thus the journal opens up an unique platform for furthering the intellectual and social organization of the research communities constituting the field. It also opens up for new understanding of the research object - situations of teaching and learning – emerging through synthesis across the cohesion and variety in the research field.

Research communities addressing issues relevant to the field, may, for example, be defined by an interest in teaching and learning in specific contextual characteristics. However, it is also common to have communities formed around methodological traditions developed to bring out the perspectives of participants – such as narrative research, interaction and discursive analyses, dialogic methodologies, phenomenology, phenomenography, grounded theory, case studies, design-based research or formative interventions. The capacity in this family of research methodologies to explicate issues of situated accounts of learning is a nuanced and carefully crafted feature of these research traditions. These traditions have been consistently developed over time, but less so in cross-methodology discussions. In order to contribute to the development of the field as a whole, the journal aspires to be a forum for methodological exchange and quality discussions.

Further, many of these methodological traditions typically nurture ambitions for enhancing recognition of the emancipatory, positive, world-making and multifaceted potential of education and they strive to make a difference through improving teaching and learning on the terms of and with respect for those involved. This points to the potential of a synthesis across multiple methodological spaces, furthering a multifaceted understanding of what is investigated. It may also encourage the combination of different theoretical and methodological perspectives allowing a more profound understanding of learning in context.

Aims and structure of this Special Issue

This special first issue of *Learning in Context* thus aims to highlight some of the scope, depth and potential in the field the journal aims to represent. It will consist of up to ten original articles and is expected to be published by August 2025.

Each article is expected to include two components. The first component will be a brief report of an original empirical or theoretical contribution, based on a distinct methodological tradition of relevance to the field. This component should be a succinct and complete report of an empirical study or theoretical development that addresses a research question aligned with the journal's aims and scope. Collectively, the articles in the special first issue are expected to showcase a variety of key methodological approaches central to the field, as well as highlight important contextual dimensions.

The second component should be a reflective piece that offers a critical or forward-looking perspective on the field shaped by the journal. For example, it could explore the potential impact of engagement within the field on the specific tradition and context of the researcher and the contribution made in the first component. It may offer a crisp measure of the status of the research area focused in the first component in the light of

the larger field, or it may critique or offer paths of development for the methodological characteristics in (parts of) the field. Additionally, it might identify important dilemmas in research endeavors in the field or propose conditions for synthesizing different strands of research across the field. This reflective component is expected to complement the first, allowing the article to be read and appreciated as a cohesive whole.

The special first issue is expected to show some of the complexity, richness, possibilities and perspectives in teaching and learning, showcasing uniqueness and contextual dependencies as well as recognizing recurring pattern. Given the expectations of distinct contributions with respect to both components, it is recognized that length restrictions may be an issue, and in the special issue articles of up to 11,000 words may be acceptable. The reflective piece would typically constitute up to one third of the total length.

We invite contributions along the lines briefly sketched here that give body and soul to the ambitions stated. Practical information for proposing a contribution to the special first issue follows below.

Proposals of contributions should include a title, an abstract of maximum 1000 words, and the contributing authors and their affiliations should be stated. The abstract should clearly describe important aspects of each of the two components outlined above. The description of the first component should include a brief statement of research query, methodology, context and main points of the knowledge contribution. The description of the second component should briefly outline the argument to be made, including starting point(s), logic and main concluding points. Core references should be included where appropriate; the reference list does not count towards the word limit. In addition, a brief bio of contributing authors (100 words each) should be included in the proposal, outlining their history and location in the field.

The selection of articles to be published in the special issue will be based on quality with respect to the two components described, as well as their quality with respect to collectively covering the diversity in the research field relevant to EARLI and educational research in general.
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The Learning in Context editorial team

Summary of Instructions for submitting a proposal

Proposals should include:
- Title and abstract, maximum 1000 words excluding references
- Brief bio of contributing authors, maximum 100 words each

Submission should be made via email to Åke Ingerman: ake.ingerman@gu.se

Timeline
Deadline for submissions of abstract proposals: **November 14, 2024**
Notification of acceptance of abstracts: December 1, 2024
Submission of full paper: April 15, 2025
Following review, revision is expected to be completed in late June.
Publication: August 2025