



JOURNAL OF Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice

JPAAP Editorial

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Welcome to the summer issue of the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP), the third edition for 2017. Once again the Journal reflects the breadth and quality of research, scholarship and practice that is taking place both in the UK and further afield. Within this issue, there are articles that address common challenges across the sector such as professional development and course design, while others explore students' experiences of learning; in traditional classroom, blended and online environments. There is also discussion and commentary on the role of higher education more generally within some of the writing.

In the first section, nine articles report original research across a wide range of topics. Beginning with research into student learning, Powell, Vlachopoulos and Shaw describe the development and evaluation of a reflective log assignment. The authors present their findings, based on content analysis of students' reflective logs and focus group discussions. They also explore students' views of this type of assignment, and they raise the issue of how reflective logs can be 'counted' and assessed. Staying with student learning, McQueen and Shields' 2-stage study aimed to explore how closed Facebook groups are used by students, with a particular focus on academic integrity. In their article the authors suggest there is a need for scholarship education, especially for new students. Helpfully, they share a resource tool developed in collaboration with students, to support this work. In an action research project reported in this section, the role of co-moderator was created to work collaboratively on an online module blog. For this project, Anna Robb examined the types of engagement with the blog as well as the impact on students' confidence. She identifies the need for further research into the role of the VLE in student-centred learning and students' lack of confidence in this environment.

Three of the research articles focus on staff perspectives, such as the study undertaken by Burge, Grade Godinho, Knottenbelt and Loads that examines the professional development of university tutors. The authors explore the perceptions and experiences of both tutors and the senior staff that support them. This article will be of interest to readers for its description of an arts-based methodology as well as the outcomes of the research. In the Australian context, Cameron reports on her investigation into whether generic templates can be used to support high quality learning designs across disciplines. While the study identified barriers to sharing learning design templates in higher education, the author concludes that these could be addressed and lecturers could be encouraged to make greater use of new learning designs. Noon explores academics' views too, in his article on the use of humour in higher education. In undertaking this study, Noon revealed the complexity of the power relations that influence learning and teaching in HE, and he calls for further research into this topic.

Taking us in a different direction, Rennie, Smyth, Davies, Connor and Patterson describe a research project that investigated factors that support universities to become more effective e-publishers of scholarly work. To do this, e-textbooks were produced in two Scottish universities and their use was monitored. The project provides a potential model for digital publication, while the suggested six implications for academic practice will be of interest to many readers. Another Scottish-based study, explores both staff and students' experiences of the third year of an undergraduate Mathematic degree. Taking a transitional perspective Shovlin aimed to enhance understanding of the move into honours-level study, and her research suggests that more needs to be done with students in first and second year to support this important transition. The last article in this section looks at the place of universities in society, taking the novel approach of reviewing how universities are represented in popular music. Gossman and Illingworth state that in doing so they aim to stimulate debate, and also to show the potential value of examining higher education from a different perspective. It will be interesting to see if other researchers take up this challenge.

In the second section, the reflective analysis part of this issue, Donald, Ramsay and Joerg describe the development of a MOOC that attracted learners from many different countries. In this reflective piece, the authors compare the intentions behind the course design with the experiences of both educators and participants. The article outlines lessons learned from this process, which will be very useful to those involved in learning design for MOOCs, as well as other types of higher education provision.

Two case studies are presented in the third section. First, Brown and Janssen describe an intervention that aimed to prevent plagiarism and support students' academic integrity. Their detailed description of a 2-hour workshop will be of interest to others wishing to address similar issues in their own institution. We look forward to hearing the outcomes of the proposed formal evaluation of their approach. The second case study focuses on life science students' engagement with an online chat room. In this, Moniz describes how engagement with the online chat rooms was mostly passive, with student feedback suggesting that this was due to lack of time and heavy workloads. In her article, Moniz poses the question of how well current approaches prepare students to become critical thinking scientists.

This bumper issue also features a review of *Innovations in Learning and Teaching: Showcasing New Approaches to Higher Education* a book edited by Penman and Foster (2016). Dr David Laughton explains how and why the book was developed and suggests that all who work in higher education will find something of interest within its pages.

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Two shorter pieces that contrast in topic and approach conclude the issue. Stoszkowski, McCarthy and Fonseca outline their initial experiences and findings of a project that aimed to facilitate online peer-mentoring and collaborative reflection between student cohorts on two different degree programmes, while in his thought-provoking piece, Wright critiques and discusses higher education policy on widening participation, as part of some ongoing work.

We are sure you will agree this issue presents an interesting and varied collection of articles, and we hope you enjoy reading them, wherever you are spending the summer.

The Editors
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