



# JOURNAL OF Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice

## JPAAP, Editorial Vol 8, Issue 2 (2020)

Welcome to the latest issue of the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice. This is the second issue of the current calendar year, and comes fairly swiftly following Volume 8, Issue 1 which was published in September. Our previous issue was one of our largest to date, and as we observed in our last editorial that was partly due to changes in the management of the journal and a delayed migration of the journal to a new home. However both our new and previous contributors, the latter of which feature many long standing authors who have shared their work through JPAAP, need not worry. Our issues to date will remain online and openly available, simply from a new location.

As we also observed in our previous editorial, we were somewhat delayed in publishing both our last issue and in migrating the journal due to the impacts of COVID-19. As we write this current editorial, a few days from Christmas 2020 and on the eve of the new issue being published, we are dealing with the continuing challenges the pandemic is bringing to people and their lives on a global basis. In the United Kingdom, across which the members of the JPAAP editorial team are based, we are dealing with the news that a planned relaxation of travel and social restrictions for a five-day period over the Christmas holidays are now being limited solely to December the 25<sup>th</sup>. There are similar festive period lockdowns now coming into place across and beyond mainland Europe, with an increasing number expected within the coming days.

The collective health and wellbeing of all is of upmost and foremost importance, yet we recognise that the respite many people were looking forward to, including the opportunity to see family and friends, will be another difficult challenge at an already difficult time, within an incredibly difficult year where ill health and loss have been both tragic and recurrent.

Within the education sector major disruption through COVID-19 has resulted in sustained periods where school level learners have been studying from home, with continuing home study still in place and looking like continuing for many college and university students. Of course, like those who find themselves working from home, very few of us are actually studying or working from home. With variable access to resources, with home spaces and technology we are sharing with others, and with many people dealing with being at home in isolation, the reality is that we are at not studying and working at home, but instead at home trying to study and work as best as we possibly can. For university students who were asked or who were able to return to the campus in autumn 2020, as the start of this academic year, their experience has been no less challenging or precarious. Many found themselves within further localised outbreaks of the COVID-19 virus, and were quickly put into further lockdown situations within student halls of residence. For some, this looks set to continue into the festive season and there is little or no prospect of being able to return to their home countries, cities, towns and villages.

While there is little positive to take from the last nine or ten months there are lessons to be learned, both generally and also within the field of education with respect to learning and teaching, student support, what learning and teaching could and should look and feel like in blended, hybrid, distributed and online contexts, and the resilience of our educational institutions, systems and processes. We are seeing many recent and current efforts to learn what we can from the pandemic with respect to educational practice and policy, focusing on a multitude of dimensions including: equity of access and opportunity; those who have and have not with respect to digital access and adequacy of place and space to engage; undertaking learning and teaching within the context of existing and perhaps increased caring and self-care responsibilities; and the general 'fitness for purpose' (or not) of established approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in the context within which we now are.

Here at JPAAP we are cognisant of the above and keen to contribute to a collective reflection on how in particular, and in line with our remit, the post-school Further and Higher Education areas of the sector have sought to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 both in responding to, being within, and hopefully moving through the pandemic. To this end, we are very happy to be supporting a number of colleagues at the University of Glasgow and Glasgow Caledonian University to bring together a Special Issue of JPAAP on the theme of 'Institutional Transitions to Remote and Blended Learning'. To be published in June 2021, the Special Issue is being guest edited by Dr Vicki Dale, Dr Nathalie Sheridan and Professor Jo-Anne Murray, all from the University of Glasgow, and Dr Josephine Adekola from Glasgow Caledonian University.

The call for proposals is open to Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, and will have come to a close by the time this editorial is published (although we will certainly consider any proposals that come in by the first week of January 2021 when we return from a much needed break and ready to face whatever the new calendar year may be bringing forth for each of us). There has been a very robust response to the call for proposals for the Special Issue, and we look forward to the experiences, lessons learned and recommendations that editors and authors for the issue will be able to share with us through JPAAP.

Editorial

In the meantime, we have a new and broad ranging issue of JPAAP to bring to you, as we come to the end of 2020 and as the journal comes to the end of its eight year of existence. In the preceding eight years it has been a privilege to help disseminate the work of new and established educational scholars and researchers globally, who have chosen JPAAP to share emergent research and practice, original empirical work, reviews, case studies, meta-analyses and opinion pieces spanning a full spectrum of topics, issues and approaches related to general and also discipline-specific dimensions of academic practice.

Our new issue is very much reflective of this, and offers a range of articles and papers addressing diverse aspects of learning and teaching, academic development and institutional development. We open the current issue with the On the Horizon piece by Fiona Smart, Elizabeth Cleaver and Alastair Robertson, reporting their ongoing work exploring 'Beyond the metrics: the importance of intangible assets in the HE context'. We then offer a number of Original Research papers, which focus on topics including: psychological predictors of National Student Survey course satisfaction (Bowles, Sharkey & Day); the honours degree as a stepping stone for postgraduate research (Kool, Haysom, Newcombe & Carter); and the use of flipped lectures in undergraduate medical education (Stapleton, Price & Sneddon). Our Original Research papers also feature two phenomenographic investigations, one pertaining to building educational research capacity (Smyth, Rennie, Davies & Tobgay) and the other focused on academics' experiences of research-teaching linkages (Rayner, Smyth & Fotheringham).

We then offer four in-depth Case Studies. The first, by Neil Allison, explores 'students' attention in class: patterns, perceptions of cause and a tool for measuring classroom quality of life'. We then proceed to the exploration of lessons learned from the first internationally accessible Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on suicide prevention (Sharp, Karadzhev & Langan-Martin), before exploring experiences of running a journal club for continuing professional development in higher education (Turner, Mason, Harrison & Varga-Atkins). Our final Case Study asks the question 'How can we improve the final year dissertation?' in a consideration of ethics, quality, and one-to-one supervision (Verrier & Day).

We then conclude our new issue with a Reflective Analysis that sees previous contributors to JPAAP (Lake, Luke & Boyd) investigating the mismatch between student and university expectations of academic achievement.

We are immensely grateful to our contributors for this issue, some of whom have been very patient in awaiting their work being published and others whom have been working with us in recent weeks as we approach the end of a troubling, turbulent and saddening year.

We hope you enjoy their work.

We hope you enjoy something of a break at the year end.

We hope for a more hopeful and happier 2021.

The JPAAP Editors

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