



JOURNAL OF Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice

JPAAP, Editorial

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Welcome to the latest issue of the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice. This is our third issue of Volume 9 of JPAAP and our final issue of 2021. The last year, like the one before it, continued to be a tumultuous and challenging one globally. Within the education sector, we continued to work, teach and learn in online, blended and hybrid modes, refining our practices and seeking to further develop them as we aim to ensure we engage students effectively in the continuing pandemic situation, and make informed decisions about the ways in which education needs to be configured and positioned going forward.

Many of the challenges we have faced, and a range of the responses we framed to tackle them during the last two years of the pandemic, were the focus of our well-received Special Issue on Transitions to Remote and Blended Learning (the second issue of this volume). If you have yet to explore the Special Issue, and the excellent contributions to it, we encourage you to do so.

How we have continued to respond to the pandemic also features in one of the contributions to this new regular issue of JPAAP, but as part of a collection of articles, of various kinds, that span a rich range of topics and issues.

We open Volume 9, Issue 3 with a thought-provoking Opinion Piece by Jemima Thompson and Mansor Rezaian, titled “‘But I’m not a doctor’”: The quirks and challenges of a PhD in Medical Education as a non-medic’. Within this, the authors explore the imposter syndrome that can arise for PhD researchers who are studying in medical education, but who come from a non-medical background. The authors, both social scientists, consider the challenges that face colleagues from similar backgrounds in operating and existing within a discipline that they do not yet feel they belong to. The authors then explore how the multidisciplinary character of medical education, and a further reframing of this, offers opportunities going forward to start resolving imposter syndrome and identity issues.

In the first of two Original Research papers for this issue, Alison Clapp offers the aforementioned contribution relating to the challenges of the pandemic in the article ‘Preparing to teach online before and during emergency pandemic teaching: Staff perceptions and future directions’. Drawing on Rogers’ ‘diffusion of innovations’ theory, Alison Clapp’s study explores the factors, including staff development, that enable online teaching approaches to be deployed effectively. The research involved investigating the perceptions of two groups of staff, a pre-COVID group and a post-COVID group, with thematic analysis revealing enablers including clear knowledge of who to ask for help and access to education technologists as innovation champions, and barriers in the form of lack of dedicated support and inadequate time for training. Recommendations for future training provision include harnessing early adopters as mentors for colleagues, and support for staff to work relationally together.

Technology remains as a theme in the second Original Research paper of the new issue, in which Mark Minott explores exam invigilators’ perspectives, tacit knowledge and skills in relation to computer-based examinations. The qualitative research undertaken set out to: explore the extent to which reflection-on-experience enacted through interviews can unearth the tacit work-related knowledge and skills exam invigilators developed on the job; and to redress the lack of attention given to invigilators in the research literature. The study underlines that extent to which invigilators learn ‘on the job’, concluding that knowledge and skills are often implicit or tacit, and may remain that way if not given an opportunity, through reflection, to be made explicit.

The development of specific skills sets is explored in a different context within the Reflective Analysis paper from Jo Ferrie and Anna Scott, which reflects on and evaluates a national initiative to enable PhD researchers to develop capacities and capabilities to engage effectively with industry. The paper explores the approach taken, which was also focused on building relationships between the next generation of social scientists and business communities. The effectiveness of the training programme in improving the confidence and skills of the participating PhD researchers around working with businesses is considered, in addition to design limitations that were identified through the evaluation.

In a second Reflective Analysis paper for the new issue, and one also concerned with supporting colleagues in their emerging roles, Mark Breslin, Julie Harvie, Brian Leslie and Evelyn McLaren consider ‘Enhancing the agency of early career academics’. Within this article, the lived experiences of four early career academics (ECAs) transitioning from school educators to lecturers in initial teacher education are explored. The research undertaken was aimed at developing a deep understanding of how the participants’ agency was impacted in their transition, and providing an insight into the evolving identities of the ECAs as they embraced and developed their new careers within Higher Education as lecturers. Factors emerged which both hindered and enhanced agency, and these are linked to recommendations for change in the inducting of new staff and supporting the early stages of their academic careers.

Issues around induction are also addressed in the Case Study paper by Beth Dickson and Janis McIntyre Davidson, titled ‘Supporting sessional staff through structured induction: Evaluation, reflections and lessons learned’. The case study that is the

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focus of their article concerns a professional development opportunity provided for sessional staff recruited to a School of Education at a research-intensive university. Taking a socio-constructive view of teaching and learning, the authors outline the construction and delivery of an induction training programme for sessional staff recruited to supervise master's dissertations. The programme was evaluated via an online survey, with findings and the authors own reflections concluding that the induction sessions had enabled sessional staff to become more confident in taking up their roles, and underlining the importance of active learning and discussion that is enjoyable in addition to the importance of support from knowledgeable staff.

Finally, in the concluding contribution to our new issue, Lorraine Anderson reviews the book 'Towards the Compassionate University: from Golden Thread to Global Impact'. This recent publication (March 2021) is multi-author volume edited and also co-authored by Kathryn Waddington, who also guest edited a past Special Issue of JPAAP on Compassionate Pedagogy. As Lorraine posits in her review, "we are all familiar with the idea of compassion at an individual and societal level, and perhaps never more so than in the last two years when the COVID-19 pandemic has seen a huge outpouring of compassion, but are we familiar or comfortable with the notion of organisational compassion? The compassionate university?". Organised into three sections, the book explores the concept of the compassionate university, and the place of compassion in universities, from multiple angles and perspectives. Our reviewer notes several common threads throughout that span COVID-19, mental health issues, and neo-liberalism, and concludes with the strong endorsement "This is a gem of a book; and while it deals with a topic that may be new to many and poses significant questions and challenges for our practice, it provides inspiration and hope in equal measure".

And on that note, we hope that you enjoy our final issue of 2021!

The JPAAP Editors

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