



# JOURNAL OF Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice

## Editorial

### September 2015

As universities chase the research league tables produced following various research assessment exercises around the world, the pressure to publish original research in high quality journals has long been felt by the traditional academic research community. Indeed the term ‘publish or perish’ was coined to describe the experience of academics pressured into publishing to further their own careers and the reputation of the institution. Within learning and teaching in the UK, the current debate around how excellence in teaching should be measured is leading to talk of a ‘Teaching Excellence Framework’ (TEF) (Times Higher Education, 2015). Will the result be an increased pressure for academics who champion the learning and teaching excellence to publish original research? This raises questions such as: Should we be measuring scholarship of learning and teaching in this way? And, what are the risks associated with introducing TEF?

One of the key issues for researchers is around ethical conduct. Within traditional disciplinary related research, ethical guidelines are long established and ethical practice is expected. Most reputable journals will not publish without reassurance that the research conducted has been done so in an ethical manner. This should be no different for education research. Studies submitted to JPAAP are often based on evaluation research, sometimes using data gathered from interactions with students. Evaluation of practice is a key component of what makes us scholarly, reflective and evidence-based practitioners. Evaluations of teaching are gathered routinely for end-of-course evaluations, through the National Student Survey in the UK and in many other formats. However, you need to bear in mind that although the data are being gathered as a matter of course, the individuals providing the data should still be informed of how you might use the data. For data originally collected for the purpose of ongoing evaluation to then be used as data for a research project, we expect that you adhere to good practice and standards in relation to ethical approval and data protection. As the journal’s ethos is to support and develop new scholars, advice can be obtained from the editorial team.

Within this issue we have a number of original research papers; all raise different ethical issues and are good illustrations on why we need to consider ethics as a matter of course. The paper by McGregor is particularly poignant as it focuses on the effect of term-time paid work. Increasingly students are forced to consider part-time work to support themselves whilst studying at University. On the face of it, the subject is fairly innocuous, but when the data provided show that students are disclosing the effect this has on their physical and mental health, the ethical issues come to the fore. Similarly, when students report it affects their studies, the tension between being honest and raising this issue in front of the module or course lead may suggest a conflict of interest. While it is beyond the scope of a journal article to go into depth on these issues, a study which has been approved by the relevant ethics board provides some reassurance that such issues have been considered.

The articles by Lemon et al. and Viol draw our attention to the use of social media (or what we used to call Web2.0) in their research papers. The area of consent in social media can be vague – surely what’s out there is free for all? The Association of Internet Researchers have produced helpful guidance for researchers interested in this area (Association of Internet Researchers, 2012).

Reed et al.’s review on the use of assessment analytics provides a useful exploration on the usefulness of analytics for monitoring staff and student performance. Whilst such analytics are framed in terms of informing teaching practice and enhancing student support, the authors have addressed potential ethical issues by adhering to the guidance produced by the British Association of Education Researchers (British Association of Education Researchers, 2014).

It is good to see such consideration of ethical conduct in education research, and as a journal particularly aligned to supporting those new to research, we are keen to support authors consider the ethical aspects of their work when planning to submit to JPAAP.

*The Editors*  
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Editorial

References

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