



JOURNAL OF Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice

Editorial

February 2016

Welcome to our first issue for 2016 of the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP). Within this issue the range of articles demonstrates the diversity of research being done in academic practice. As the journal is now increasingly receiving submissions internationally this issue is no exception, with articles from the UK, New Zealand, Malta, Denmark, Canada and the United States. As well, there is a good mix of new and emerging authors with those that are well established in their careers.

The first section provides three articles of original research. Cornelius and Nicol begin by presenting an interesting discussion on the needs of Masters Dissertation supervisors as distinct from those doing PhD supervision. They examine the challenges and issues around providing part-time supervision, particularly when students are in professional contexts, and consider what support is appropriate. Rennie then presents his article on the use of social media and what opportunities this medium provides for engagement with staff, students and the general public. His article explores the policies, practices and attitudes involved with social media. Rennie expresses his concerns that there is currently no consensus on who can use social media, or for what purpose it is being used. The guidelines he points out are unclear on how social media should be used for engaging with education and research. The third article in this section provides an interesting debate by Milner, Cousins and McGowan on the role of extra-curricular activities that graduates participate in, and whether these enhance the employability of students. The authors pose the question around whether universities should engage in developing these skills so students can add them to their CVs.

The second section consists of two reflective analysis papers. The first reflects on the process for applying for ethics approval, how it is an essential but often challenging task for university teachers carrying out pedagogical research. In this piece, Buissink and Mann describe a model they are developing in New Zealand to offer some insight into understanding what ethical systems are at play in contemporary learning spaces. The second reflective piece focuses on the drive for educational institutions to adopt online modes of communication, interaction and education. Montebello discusses the situation of students, in the health care sector in Malta, having competence in digital literacy and the challenges these students face for post-certification. The article provides some interesting overviews of how digital literacy is developing around the globe. A SWOT analysis is presented for those readers involved in developing digital literacy in their institutions, and from this Montebello offers a number of recommendations.

The issue then moves on to three case studies, the first presenting the findings of a small-scale project at the University of Glasgow, on the nature of the moderation process between course leaders and markers involved in summative assessments. McGuire and Raaper present the different perspectives of both groups, highlighting that both experience assessment moderation as a diverse and problematic part of their work. The article is nicely structured and offers some suggestions for improving this process for both groups, applicable to all those involved in teaching and marking. The second case study presented by Ratz, describes and evaluates the use of the Moodle glossary tool to support vocabulary learning in modern languages. The students in this case study were enrolled in a first-year German course in a Scottish university. The author follows their use of the tool and highlights how it can be used effectively with recommendations for implementation. The final case study, by Wright, Miranda, Wilson and Dryden, focuses on the retention and attrition rates of American Indian students completing their degrees at community colleges in the United States. This phenomenological study investigates whether cultural discontinuity is a contributing factor to success by examining how the students integrated their culture into the mainstream college settings. It offers insights for working with diverse populations so that faculty develops a greater understanding of those students from other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Two review papers follow, which explore different pedagogies of learning; the first about blended learning involving digital literacy and the second, problem-based learning. Digital information literacy is an ongoing topic for discussion amongst educators. Here, Schwenger invites us to consider our practice of integrating it into a blended learning delivery (a mix of face-to-face and online) and what opportunities and challenges this approach invites. She discusses the situation from a New Zealand context suggesting a framework of questions for teachers to guide them as they design a blended lesson. The second review in this issue provides a literature review investigating different theories of teaching and learning associated with problem-based learning (PBL) at university level. Gewurtz, Coman, Dhillon, Jung and Solomon investigate how theory can inform the implementation of PBL, the learning outcomes, and the support required for students, in health professional education programmes based in Canada. Eight principles informing PBL are identified and illustrated from across eleven teaching and learning theories. A very comprehensive article.

The final section presents two 'on the horizon' pieces, one project in the early stages of implementation and the other reporting on initial findings. The first presents the early stages of a systematic review of the core reading list, for an online undergraduate degree in Childhood Practice. The methodology Boyle and Mitchell are aiming to employ involves action research which they hope will produce a replicable learning cycle to be used annually for reviewing core reading lists. They would welcome feedback from the academic community and provide the website to their blog. The second 'on the horizon' and final piece for this journal issue is an intriguing piece in which Bager-Elsborg and Loads use creativity as a means for examining disciplinary characteristics of academic

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law. They describe the process of research as complex and messy, and through the use of cut-up and collage they suggest that researchers can let go their urge to rationally analyse data and instead allow subconscious observations to come to the fore. Using this method, the authors advocate that researchers use creative approaches to move their research forward beyond the obvious.

The collection of articles in this issue is well worth the read! I hope that they challenge your thinking and nudge you to reflect on your own practices, and perhaps prompt you to share some research in a future issue.

Barbara Kensington-Miller, Co-editor

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