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Editorial

Welcome to the 2016 summer issue of the Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice (JPAAP). We have a series of interesting and diverse articles, and it is encouraging to see contributions from across the globe, adding to the international flavour of the journal. The papers reflect the variety and diversity of pedagogic research being carried out, not only on student learning, but on wider academic issues.

We begin this issue with a piece of original research by Peter Cruickshank. Peter investigated postgraduate students' perceptions of examinations and assessment. His premise for doing so was the tension between the increase in international students, and the use of written exams carried out in English. Of interest, Peter discovered support for a range of assessment formats, including written examinations in English, and perhaps surprisingly, open book exams and access to a computer were not considered to be helpful. This paper, whilst a small scale study, indicates that international students take into consideration the need for proficiency in English, and Cruickshank suggests that more care should be taken in that regard during recruitment and admission. From his findings, Cruickshank also makes recommendations for exams, including the addition of a "reading time" of fifteen minutes, reducing the weighting of the exam overall, the purpose of exams to test clarity of thought above English grammar, and better exam preparation. All of these suggestions would seem to benefit all, not just international students.

The second section of this issue contains three reflective analyses on diverse and interesting topics of the use of online breakout rooms, on being an insider-outsider researcher and the use of outsider witnesses to support nursing academics. The first paper by Kathy Chandler focuses on the use of breakout rooms in synchronous online tutorials. Online learning may be challenging, and the sense of isolation needs to be overcome. Giving students the freedom to enter their own spaces is an innovative way to tackle this and allow students some effective peer-to-peer learning. It also improves the social presence within the group (Garrison & Anderson, 2003), adding to the effectiveness of the online learning experience. Chandler reflects on her own experiences as an online tutor and offers helpful tips which improve the experience for both students and the tutor.

The second paper in this section is a fascinating reflection by Ema Wolfgramm-Foliaki on the intricacies of returning to her own culture as a researcher, and the challenges she faces with the unfamiliar familiar. Although set in a Polynesian context, this paper reminded me that as researchers we take on different identities which separate us from our research participants, even when we are part of the community we wish to research, and we have to find ways to reconnect through our researcher identities.

The third paper in this section is a reflection of the use of outsider witnesses to support nurse academics. Paul Morrison's account of how this was used to support nurses make the transition to academia reminds us of the importance of communication and reflection. The sessions described in the paper created a safe space where nurses could explore their experiences and challenges as academics, and is a powerful way of utilising professional practice in an innovative way.

One of the issues that all academics and students have to face is that of plagiarism. Nicole Brown's review of *Against Plagiarism – A Guide for Editors and Authors* by Y. H. Zhang is a helpful one for academics who seek to avoid plagiarism, written from the point of view of an editor with many years' experience. Disciplinary conventions are explored, including the practice of publishing conference papers in journals, and the use of plagiarism software. While the book is not written for students, Brown suggests that it could be used to teach students about plagiarism, with some amendments.

Three On The Horizon papers conclude this issue of JPAAP. The first, by Inga Heyman, Gavin Innes and Kate Goodhand, looks at the development and implantation of COLT, a tool which supports Public Protection understanding. This is a complex area, and one which is under public scrutiny, given high profile cases where such protection has failed. COLT aims to address the complexities of protection of vulnerable individuals, and address areas where there may be a lack of transparency. A strength of COLT is that it encourages students to formulate appropriate courses of action, rather than looking for the right answer. This type of critical thinking and problem solving is essential for an area where situations may not always be clear, and information may change at short notice.

The second On The Horizon paper by Deepak Prasad, Rajneel Totaram and Tsuyoshi Usagawa looks at the development of a learning analytics system to quantify open books usage. While students struggle with the cost of course textbooks, open books appear to be an attractive option to them. The development of a tool which tracks their usage is seen to be of benefit to authors of open books, as well as the potential audience of students who use them.

The third paper in this section takes a case-study approach to critical thinking. Beverley Barnaby looks at the perceptions of both staff and students on a BA in Early Childhood Studies, noting the areas of agreement and disagreement between the two groups, both in terms of the importance of specific critical thinking skills and the difference in how tutors and students rate how well students think critically.

Overall, this issue of JPAAP covers a wide range of issues current within higher education. I hope that you enjoy reading them, and can take something from them into your own practice, whether it is supporting students, supporting colleagues or supporting research.

Anne Tierney, Co-editor
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Reference

Garrison, D. R. & Anderson, T. (2003). *A Framework for Research and Practice.* Routledge Falmer: London and New York.