

## Editorial

### Vol 12, Issue 3 (2024)

Our final issue of 2024 brings together a range of papers on the themes of approaches to learning, the learner experience, identity, wellbeing, and community.

Our first theme, of approaches to learning and the learner experience, begins with an on-the-horizon piece from Sarah Crowe, University of Dundee, in which she discusses her experience in using self-directed learning (SDL) with urban planning students. Crowe undertook a pilot project, using an action research approach, to assess an SDL teaching intervention against a background of limited literature on SDL in this particular field. This article outlines student reception to the idea of SDL, authenticity in teaching and learning, and the links to professional practice afforded by an SDL approach.

Roger Kerry and colleagues, from the University of Nottingham, discuss another student-centred pedagogy in their research paper on the implementation of a problem-based learning (PBL) centred course of study in physiotherapy. Utilising a mixed methods approach, they involved students and staff in an evaluation of this educational approach, summarising their findings in five domains, demonstrating the importance of stakeholder perspectives to implementation.

In our next research paper, David Stoten used a mixed methods approach to look at the student experience of collaborative learning on a foundation programme. The paper outlines how the findings of this research can contribute to the further theorisation of collaborative learning with reference to gender and academic ability. Stoten's research focused on student control of social-emotional reactions in group work, noting that "although there is a high degree of consensus about group work ... [it] is not a socially-shared process". Demelza Hayer, from the Open University, implemented a systematic review aiming to understand the current evidence base underpinning the use of breakout rooms in synchronous online nurse education. The experience of online and simulated learning is another area where a consensus on experience is not necessarily shared amongst students. Identifying five themes from the research, Hayer's reflective analysis goes on to identify implications for simulated practice learning.

Our paper from the US is from Gerri Connaught, and it opens up our next focus on identity and the learner experience with this paper on imposter syndrome (IP), a term identified here as first coined by Clance and Imes in 1978. Connaught's reflective analysis aims to reframe the way that IP is discussed as it relates to Black/African American college students, going on to argue that their experience of IP is "more than just an internal reaction and is instead a byproduct of structural racism and white supremacist norms". In light of this, Connaught goes on to discuss the ways in which IP can be addressed by higher education institutions at both micro and macro levels.

A concern for student - and staff - wellbeing is implicit in our next section of papers, explored first by Andrew Davies from Frontline in a reflective analysis based on work with social work students and individual practitioner experience. This then expands into a discussion of the university community by Meryl Dickinson and Sarah Wolfenden from Brunel University London, in their opinion piece on aligning staff and student experiences. Davies uses a practitioner research methodology to reflect on themes from the literature “relating to the mental wellbeing of students in HE” prior to “exploring the author’s own experiences related to teaching and mental wellbeing”. Davies goes on to discuss changes made to practice, and an evaluation of these. Increased stress and anxiety in the HE sector is addressed by Dickinson and Wolfenden whose opinion piece considers the role that community and compassion can play in alleviating these symptoms. The divide in policy and practice in supporting students and staff is addressed and the authors propose a holistic approach to university community welfare in order to “create a more compassionate community”.

Ailsa Foley and colleagues from the University of Glasgow unite these themes of identity, experience and wellbeing in their equality, diversion and inclusion (EDI) case study. Their case study discusses the application of the *Whose W.O.R.D.D. Counts?* tool in an MSc Programme, underscoring:

the importance of diversifying curricula to challenge systemic biases, promote inclusivity, and address pervasive attainment gaps in higher education linked to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Advocating for continuous improvement and active student involvement, in order to “foster a genuinely inclusive educational environment” the review of the tool has identified ongoing developments within three broad themes, leading to a move to decolonise the curriculum.

We complete this issue with a paper from William Carey from Nottingham Trent University and colleagues from the University of Abertay, Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, and the European First Year Experience (EFYE). Their case study outlines an international experience involving colleagues, learners and identity, as they discuss the successful evolution of the EFYE conference over a period of more than 17 years into a “third space development community”. The authors describe the EFYE conference as bringing together collaborative working, a community focus and a willingness to share practice in support of the student and staff experience, working within a third space that challenges existing silos. It can be argued that it also brings with it inspiration and hope for vibrant, truly international communities of practice as we move forward.

We hope that you have enjoyed this issue and we would like to take this opportunity to thank our authors, reviewers and readers for their continuing interest in JPAAP. We have a full year ahead to look forward to in 2025, as in addition to our regular issues we have a special issue on Creativity in Higher Education, with guest editor Lesley Mickel from the University of the Highlands and Islands starting off the year, and a second special issue on the Enterprising University, with guest editor Robert Crammond from the University of the West of Scotland, due out in December 2025. The call for proposals for this special issue is open now.

With best wishes for the festive season and 2025.

The JPAAP Editorial Team