

Editorial for Vol. 4 No. 3 June 2012 edition.

As this edition goes to press we are looking forward with great anticipation to the 8th BESA annual conference to be held at the University of Hull. Looking at the programme of papers and the titles of the keynotes we are reminded of the enormous breadth of Education Studies. It is clear that a range of research methodologies and theoretical approaches developed from other subject areas such as history, psychology, sociology and philosophy are used to further our understanding and knowledge of education. Whilst acknowledging this rich diversity we can also see what binds the subject together. Whether the study is rooted in the early years, primary, secondary, further, higher education and even lifelong learning itself, it is the desire for a critical understanding of the nature of the education process that is at the fore. What makes Education Studies distinctive is how, whilst making use of such eclectic approaches, education remains as the focus.

In this edition we have 4 articles that, whilst all based in the HE sector, are looking at very different aspects of this. In the first Amanda French discusses her experiences of conducting research into developing academic writing and writing practices amongst undergraduate students. She focuses on the struggle she has faced with values and assumptions that underpin the qualitative research process itself.

Richard Parker presents a case study of the evolution of a centre set up within a university to develop partnerships with the wider professional education community, conduct research into professional practice and to ensure the link between university programmes, such as Education Studies, and professional practice. The author considers the challenges faced in maintaining an overview of government policy and establishing partnerships in a rapidly changing political and economic environment and cites the need for a broad concept of partnership working. On a positive note Parker concludes that this approach enhances both the university as a whole, and the particular contribution of Education Studies, in terms of curriculum content and opportunities for students to engage with the wider children's workforce.

The revolution in learning triggered by constantly developing technology is absolutely astounding if difficult to keep apace. Looking at pedagogy in HE, Jonathan Hickman and David Kane present a case study of the use of web 2 technology in supporting students learning. Of particular interest is the means by which they keep students in touch with them as tutors and fellow students through the use of the institutional VLE and also the innovative use of social media services by the students themselves as part of this learning process.

Our fourth contribution, whilst still in the area of HE, is very different in nature to the previous three. Ambreen Shahriar was a student presenter at the 2011 BESA conference in Manchester and this article comes from her paper presentation that was based upon her ongoing PhD research. It examines the very different HE experiences of two young men from economically poor backgrounds from villages in a southern province of Pakistan. The study highlights particular life decisions taken by individuals and how these can significantly affect their futures. It shows the influences of family, school and village life on making participants who they are which, in turn, influences their decisions and behaviour.

The final article in this edition, by Ruth Goodman and Diana Burton looks at the development of the academies programme under the Conservative-led Coalition government in England. They suggest that actually the policies of the Coalition and the previous Labour government are remarkably similar. They also point out that aside from the scale of the proposed academies programme it is not as innovative as may at first appear. Goodman and Burton conclude that contrary to the stated aim of narrowing the achievement gap the academies programme may further deepen the differences in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils.

This collection of articles shows the breadth of Education Studies and there should be something of interest for all our readers. We do hope that you enjoy reading this edition of Educational futures.

Best wishes

The editorial board: Steve Bartlett, Sue Warren, Alan Hodkinson, Chris Wakeman