

Editorial

Welcome to Vol. 5 (2) edition of **Educationalfutures: The BESA Journal** which is going online just before our ninth annual conference being held this year in Swansea. This conference, along with the journal and our annual student pre-conference, held this year at Wolverhampton University, shows how far BESA has developed over the last decade. As with our previous conferences we expect this to be a lively affair with debates at the cutting edge of Education Studies. The BESA conference is now a significant event in the Education Studies calendar when all those with an interest and involvement in the subject can come together, share ideas and discuss the issues that concern them. This year, being at Swansea, we clearly have a Welsh focus as well as the general conference theme of 'Education: Past Present and Future'.

There are several future developments for the journal that can usefully be raised at this point. Firstly, as a result of reader feedback, we are introducing a book review section to the journal. This will be launched in our next edition. The reviews editor is Professor Stephen Ward who can be contacted at s.ward@bathspa.ac.uk. Secondly, our publication dates will alter slightly next academic year as we intend to bring out our first edition of Volume 6 in September 2013, with the second edition in late November/early December 2013.

Vol. 5 (2) is a themed edition of the journal, its focus being international and comparative issues in Education Studies. The first article by Emily Hillier, Gary Beauchamp and Shona Whyte involves teachers from schools across seven countries in Europe. It is a study of self-efficacy in the use of interactive whiteboards across educational settings. It offers a pan-European perspective through its report and analysis on the preliminary findings of an EU-funded project called Interactive Technologies in Language Teaching. Significantly, despite reporting initial low levels of self-efficacy with particular features and tools of the IWB, teachers across the European cohort remained positive about the potential benefit of using IWBs to increase pupil participation, engagement and motivation.

Our next article from Marcel Botelho, Robert Kowalski and Steve Bartlett is concerned with change and the professional development of teachers in higher education in Brazil. The authors report on an initiative to promote the development of a community of practice in a Brazilian university. It was felt that the introduction of action research as professional practice by the staff of the institution held the potential to deliver the participation, empowerment, and democratic process that could bring about the revitalization of the institution.

Our following three articles are each concerned with different aspects of the student experience in higher education. Irfan A. Rind and Sajjad Alhawsawi examine the recent emphasis on the importance of English language teaching and learning in public universities in Pakistan and how this has resulted in the introduction of a new English as Second Language (ESL) programme with revised textbooks. The paper examines the impact of students' learning experiences of biology or maths subjects

at the intermediate level (the equivalent of A-level in Pakistan) in relation to their comprehension of graphs in the ESL textbooks in the first year of university. They examine how, when interacting with exercises from these texts, students deferred to their newly developed identities as 'medical' or 'engineering' students; underperformance in graph comprehension is explained in relation to these constructed identities. The authors suggest that these findings have serious implications in how graph skills are taught to students with such preconceived identities.

Following a similar theme, using survey data collected from Egypt and USA, Eid Abo Hamza and Ahmed Helal investigated anxiety about maths among undergraduates with different main subjects of study and across cultures. They examine country, gender and subject studied in relation to maths anxiety amongst students. These two articles by Rind and Alhawsawi and Hamza and Helal provide an interesting mirror to experiences of feelings of inadequacy and anxiety amongst students in relation to their mathematical skills that appear so prevalent within higher education in the UK.

Our final article examines a different kind of negativity within the UK student community. It is an analysis of undergraduate Education students' reasons for non-participation in international placements. In it Brendan Bartram considers the issue of international placements in Higher Education. The research scrutinises the views of undergraduate Education students at a post-1992 UK university, where take-up of such overseas opportunities has been persistently low. The study investigates the students' declared reasons for non-participation, their awareness of potential benefits and suggestions for improving placement uptake. It concludes with a summary of recommendations for practice and future research in this area.

These articles, whilst having an international dimension, are clearly close to issues faced by us all. We can learn much from them. The term 'British' in our BESA title shows where the society originated. It should certainly not be allowed to narrowly define our interests, limit the breadth of our learning or blinker our outlook on the world.

We hope you enjoy and find this collection of articles useful.

Best wishes from the BESA Journal Editorial Board.

Steve Bartlett, Sue Warren, Alan Hodkinson, Chris Wakeman, Stephen Ward.