

Editorial

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The Editorial Team

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This edition of the Journal consists of a selection of the papers delivered at the fourth Annual Conference of the British Education Studies Association (BESA) held at Liverpool Hope University (in conjunction with Liverpool John Moores University) on the 27-28th of June 2008. The Conference attracted nearly half of the UK's institutions which offer Education Studies and proved to be a significant step forward for the Association.

At the Conference 36 papers were delivered based upon the theme of Culture and Education. The Conference presentations reflected the wide curricular provision of Education Studies programmes. The papers spanned such areas as the early years and creativity through to faith-based teaching models and one presentation even explored the employment of unicycling as an educational motivator. The papers within this edition of the Journal, therefore, reflect the diversity of the range of topics, discussions and poster presentations experienced by the participants and provide a 'good flavour' of the Liverpool Conference.

The Conference was addressed by two keynote speakers, Professor Patrick Ainley and Professor Diana Burton. In his paper Patrick suggests that whilst Education Studies has its own unique knowledge base it also shares common features with many other disciplinary fields of study. Ainley's critique of Education Studies is contextualised within an analysis of the psychology of learning, sociology of education, traditional education degrees and teacher training. Through this critique he contends that Education Studies, but moreover the study of education itself, should have centrality as a common focus in all Higher Education programmes. Ainley's suggests that the 'subject' of Education Studies should aim to contribute to expanding the critical space in (higher) education by ensuring research and scholarship become integral parts of the independent study of all students at all levels of learning.

The debate about the nature and form of Education Studies is further developed by Alan Hodkinson, whose paper suggests that "new" Education Studies programmes are formulated within a wide variety of curricular provision which is a result of institutions developing their programmes within unique historical and geographical contexts. The paper argues that a lack of clarity in relation to both the definition and determination of the range of academic study risks not only academic incoherence but also brings into sharp focus the subjective nature of many of the employability claims for Education Studies made in universities' prospectuses.

The theme of curriculum development in Education Studies is also pursued by Stephen Griffin and Julian McDougall in their paper *Despite Ourselves? Education Studies: between spirit and passing on?* Here the authors tackle the "thorny issue" that many of us face in the formulation and operationalisation of Education Studies programmes: this being the link they should, or indeed should not, have with teacher training. Through their paper, Griffin and

McDougall contest the idea that Education Studies should have a contextual relationship with teacher training.

After what appears to be almost a forensic examination of Education Studies as a distinct disciplinary subject the journal turns to an examination of specific curricular initiatives and some of the driving forces behind such developments. For example, Chris Wakeman's paper offers a detailed overview of the evolution of the concept of Emotional Intelligence. He discusses the importance of this concept for Higher Education, suggesting that it has particular relevance within the continuing debate regarding assessment and how students with differing levels of Emotional Intelligence may respond to a range of assessment methods commonly applied within Education Studies Programmes.

Suanne Gibson and Joanna Haynes' paper provides us with a specific example of how assessment processes might be developed for our students by detailing the impact of the development of a collaborative writing project within the Education Studies programmes at two universities. Iain MacLaren and Timothy Murphy in their paper develop the theme of assessment still further by examining the potential of teaching portfolios for educational development and the purpose of academic staff promotion in Higher Education.

In his paper, Hope Nudzor investigates the usage of the term "policy" and suggests that the term is elusive owing to the ways in which it is used to refer to a highly diverse set of phenomena. Nudzor reviews conceptions explicated in education policy literature to provide conceptual insights into the meaning of this term and provides an overview of the dynamics of the policy process. This paper will have real interest to those who deliver modules which relate to the formulation and evolution of educational policy.

The final paper of the journal moves the discussion of curriculum development to a whole new level. In her paper, Wendy Bignold suggests that young people will become more motivated if they are enabled to select leisure activities and incorporate these into the formal school curriculum. Bignold argues that unicycling is an example of such a self-selected activity that can inspire and motivate young people and as such is one that should be harnessed by schools.