

Editorial

As we go online BESA is preparing for its 7th Annual Conference. This year we are hosted at MMU and an interesting and informative programme has been planned. The editorial team look forward to meeting many of you there and also receiving contributions to the journal thereafter.

This edition of *Educationfutures* consists of a collection of articles from the Research Informed Teaching conference: *Delivering participation, engagement and enquiry*, held at Staffordshire University in July 2010. The conference was a very successful gathering of practitioners from across the sector who were able to exchange and discuss experiences on engaging students and developing their skills of enquiry, considered to be an essential part of the HE experience. The range of papers presented here illustrates the breadth encompassed in such a gathering.

The first two papers by Tim Harris and Rob Boast and then Jonathan Hickman, David Kane and Anita Reardon concern the increasing use of technology in the enquiry process. Certainly the ways in which we communicate and our ability to collect and store information has been revolutionised in recent years. The technology is being upgraded so rapidly that sometimes one wonders if it is worth investing in current hardware or waiting for the next incarnation. ICT is having a profound effect upon pedagogy as we move from the traditional rigid lecture based setting to more fluid approaches to teaching and learning. Embracing this technology, whilst presenting challenges, does open up whole new experiences for both students and teachers. Boast and Harris, discuss the use of mobile digital media devices by students in collecting data for their geography research projects at Staffordshire University. Students readily take to using such technology but Harris and Boast point out the problems of keeping abreast of technological change. Inevitably this is something we must do and learn to cope with in the future. If learning in HE is to remain at the forefront of knowledge then it must also use the most advanced technology.

Hickman, Kane and Reardon report on a research informed teaching project which explored the role of technology in the delivery of the Secondary Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) at Birmingham City University. The research project focussed on a pocket-sized camcorder which was issued to staff and students. Lecturers were requested to experiment with the technology to supplement their existing practice while students were asked to use the technology during their teaching placements. This investigation examines a number of current developments and concerns including adoption of technology into the learning and teaching process; incorporation of web technology and social networking sites into a teaching programme; the implications of such developments when external organisations are involved; and the willingness of both lecturing staff and students to experiment with new technologies. A key realisation was that students adapt and use technology themselves and imposing a set of normative uses of technology within teaching and learning can actually prove to be restrictive and counterproductive.

In her paper 'Learning at the coalface: staff and student perceptions of research informed teaching' Helen Puntha reports on a large study conducted with staff and students at a UK university into perceptions of the value of research informed teaching. Her findings support those of other studies in this area indicating a positive relationship between teaching and research.

She found the widely held belief amongst her sample that both staff and student engagement in research can have a positive impact upon student learning.

Surveying first year undergraduates Rosemary Cann explores their perceptions on the transition from further to higher education study. She found, surprisingly perhaps, that being taught in large lecture theatres does not cause these new students concern but that they were anxious about independent learning requirements that they felt unprepared for. The article offers a number of practical recommendations as to how the transition from further to higher education can be eased.

In 'Walking in the footsteps of children and young people' Bernard Moss, Lee Pardy-McLaughlin and Mandy Rollins take us into a very different, yet also vitally important area of professional learning. The paper has come out of a Research Informed Teaching Project at Staffordshire University that aimed to improve the teaching and experiences of trainee social workers through data and experiences generated by children themselves. This contact with young clients is something that is ethically very difficult to enable for trainee social workers yet at the same time it remains vital. The project brought together various key organisations involved in working with children and young people in order to present a conference for young people with care-experience and care giving at which their 'voice' could be clearly heard.

The content of the conference was determined by the children and young people and key themes and messages from the children at the conference could be identified for practitioners and trainee students to incorporate into their professional practice. A DVD of the conference has been produced to enable these key research messages to be incorporated into future training, education and professional development courses.

Thus we present to you an interesting and wide range of articles that have research informed teaching as their focus. The journal, Education**utures** continues to go from strength to strength with this our third volume. The next edition is currently being prepared with future articles currently under peer review. Times are difficult in education generally and the HE sector in particular, as we hardly need reminding. However, we in BESA and at Education**utures** will continue to provide a critical forum for all those involved in the broad field of education studies. We hope you enjoy this edition of the journal.

Best wishes

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