

Editorial for Vol.6(2) June 2014

The publication of this edition of 'Educational futures: e-journal of the British Education Studies Association' coincides with the 10th annual BESA conference being held at The University of Glasgow. The association has come a long way since that first conference at Chester University and a critical approach to the study of education remains at its heart. In these times when there is such controversy in the English midlands involving religious governorship and control of schools there remains an urgent and continuing requirement for such critical voices.

We always aim, in this journal, to present a wide range of papers that reflect the appeal of BESA. It is for all those interested in the study and advancement of education in its broadest sense. In this edition our collection of articles is taken from the primary, secondary and higher sectors of education with two of these being international in scope.

In our opening article Melanie Macer presents us with a scoping literature review into primary-aged children's participation activities that influence adult decision-making. This review, which identifies seven empirical studies involving primary-aged children's participation in adult decision-making, describes a range of characteristics associated with these children's participatory activities. The type of adult decisions being influenced included issues relating to school domestics, teaching and learning, the local community and local government. Involvement in decision-making is a core element in the maintenance of democracy and it is interesting to see how approaches to it begin in the early years.

Developing the theme of student voice and mindful of current A-level reform with all of its associated ideologies, Irenka Suto, Gill Elliott, Nicky Rushton and Sanjana Mehta explore A-level students' preferred assessment approaches. These researchers surveyed a large number of students studying Mathematics, Economics and French. Across all three subjects, patterns of preferences were found to be remarkably similar. Modular assessment is generally favoured over linear assessment and A-level course difficulty is mostly perceived to be appropriate. The authors suggest that to better prepare students for higher education, A-level reforms should focus on ensuring that assessment engenders deeper learning whilst discouraging surface learning, elaborate re-sit strategies, and highly targeted revision tactics.

In our third offering Charles Buabeng- Andoh and Issifu Yidana investigate students' pedagogical use of ICT in learning in Ghanaian secondary schools. The study finds that students' pedagogical use of ICT is low. Students are appreciative of the value of ICT but they are concerned about the morally inappropriate use of the technology. Also students see costs as significant barriers to their use of ICT. The authors hope that in the future these financial barriers can be reduced to help students to use and integrate ICT into their learning. Alan Hodkinson and Amir Ghajarieh, using impairment as an example, analyse the role of school textbooks in reinforcing the position of different groups in society. In particular they look at the part such books play in categorising, containing and constraining societal conceptions of the 'Other'.

The authors make the case for what they term 'a counter signifying semiotic to overcome pathologies existing in schools today'.

Our final article, by Eid Abo Hamza, explores the well-being profile of international graduate students in the USA. Significant differences in certain well-being scores between international graduate students and normed groups of US adults are recorded and explained. The author goes on to discuss the implications of these findings for higher education and counselling professionals. Following on from the articles we have the second iteration of our book review section edited by Stephen Ward. We do hope that you find this range of articles and book reviews stimulating and useful.

Best wishes

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