

Editorial

As I come to write this, my final, editorial for Educational futures my focus is on the whole nature and purpose of Education Studies. For many, in these times of performativity and accountability, the study of education remains at the level of description. Accounts of learning, teaching and managing are used to identify the best of current practice to be adopted and copied by others. The whole education enterprise appears to be unproblematic with the sole purpose being to raise standards. Education Studies plays a vital role in all of this. Its critical approach enables us to question the purposes of education, what these revered standards are, where they come from and how they are measured. It shows the whole process of education as not something to be accepted but to be contested from start to finish. Some may see this as disconcerting in their search for certainties. We see it as something to be celebrated as it is such lively critical analysis that drives change in democratic societies. If ever debate is stifled in favour of what those from certain standpoints take as 'the obvious approach' or 'what we know to work' then we become a less open and free society.

In this edition we have a collection of articles that clearly seek to widen and extend these debates. In our opening article Mark Wilson uses Paulo Freire's philosophy to reflect upon differing approaches by tutors to leading seminars in higher education. Wilson argues that seminar leaders must reject rote learning and instead be concerned and committed, to raising *critical consciousness*. Thus seminars should be about how to think rather than with teaching what to think.

Our second article by Zeta Brown and Mark Wilson follows directly on from this by investigating students' perspectives on the use of debates as an in-class teaching strategy in Higher Education. The research considers differing debate designs at two universities. The findings suggest that the majority of students benefited from the use of in-class debates and differing debate characteristics but that they did so in a variety of ways.

Tom Feldges and Sonia Pieczenko focus upon the education of future health care professionals in 'Learning about "Life" or valuing "Life"?' Their aim was to explore whether the current 'standard-approach' to teaching practice, with its content-orientated learning assessments, was prone to ignoring the values held by the students and was thus unable to reveal wrongly guided attitudes in terms of care-related values. They presented Higher Education students with a collection of moral dilemmas and assessed their responses in relation to authority, trust and the value

of life. The results indicated the prevalence of in-appropriate value-judgements within the sample. From this they argue that the standard-approach of learning-outcome orientated teaching is unable to assess and monitor a sufficient ability in students to reach individual value-judgements.

In our final article Paul Wiseman presents the findings of a quasi-longitudinal investigation of the lived experiences of Children's Service professionals between 2004 and 2012. The research identified a number of tensions that were evident within Children's Services. It also challenged the concept of a stable 'community of practice' and supported Vygotsky's notion that learning is underpinned by discontinuity, conflict and displacement.

We hope you find these articles as useful and thought provoking as we have

Best wishes from Steve Bartlett and the editorial team (Alan Hodkinson, Chris Wakeman, Stephen Ward, Sue Warren)