



Innovations in Practice

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Editorial

Welcome to Volume 9 of *Innovations in Practice*. This volume marks a new chapter for the journal as it passes from its original home in the (former) Faculty of Education Community & Leisure, to its new location as a University-wide publication based in Education and Academic Quality Services. As part of this transition, a new review and editorial panel has been established comprising researchers, leaders and innovators in teaching from across the institution. With a primary focus on pedagogic research and case studies of innovative teaching designs, the aim is for *Innovations in Practice* to continue to grow as an important platform to disseminate cutting edge educational thinking and practice within and beyond the university. As well as a new website, the format of the journal has been designed to enable papers to be downloaded as individual files to encourage dissemination.

We have seven papers in this edition from academic staff across the university. Our first article, by Amanda Mason and Val Eva of Liverpool Business School, explores the interactions between international students and a group of 'home' students in a mentoring role. Their study highlights how benefits of the mentor scheme are clearly two-way, with home students gaining a valuable opportunity to develop cultural awareness. With the internationalisation of higher education programmes continuing to increase, their paper raises important issues about how we conceptualise the benefits for all learners.

Another topic of growing importance is the 'greening' of the curriculum, with the Quality Assurance Agency only recently circulating a consultation for guidance on embedding sustainability awareness within courses. On this theme, Jane Fisher of the School of Natural Sciences and Psychology, explores variation in students' perceptions of the natural environment with a particular focus on identifying differences across disciplines. Awareness of such variation is of value for considering how sustainability issues might be incorporated differently across subject areas to maximise engagement.

Our next two papers consider interactions between students and academic staff. Mia Unsworth of the School of Education, Leisure & Sports Studies highlights how feedback remains an area of discontent for students, as any view of the NSS scores – locally and nationally – will reveal. On the face of it feedback appears, conceptually, relatively straightforward. However, the persistence of student dissatisfaction and resistance to intervention would signal that more complex issues lie beneath the surface. Through interviews with a small group of students, Mia digs deep into this territory to identify emotional reactions to receiving feedback, finding some interesting views on the provision of generic feedback. The importance of student-staff interactions are also recognised, particularly how students' may carry into university expectations from their earlier school and college experiences.

Student-staff interactions also form the focal point of the study by Sue Walker and former LJMU student (and now teacher) Erin McCarthy. Located in a school teaching setting this paper explores the importance of communication and interaction in developing children's confidence and physical literacy. Whilst emergent in a school physical education context, the concept of physical literacy has relevance and implications to a range of higher education fields.

Our next two papers confront particularly challenging aspects of teaching. Louise Platt, also of the School of Education, Leisure & Sports Studies, gets to grips with the concept of reflection in higher education. Truly a high level skill, critical reflection is important for developing metacognition and enabling transformative learning, yet can remain marginalised or poorly integrated within many courses.

Louise explores the literature to recognise the issues and challenge the way reflective learning becomes represented in national policy documentation and translated to practice through personal development planning schemes.

No less challenging, Carly Lightowlers of the School of Law investigates students' experiences of being taught in large lectures. Recognising that passivity in large classes is to a degree inevitable, she emphasises that there is always room to improve; the challenge being to identify how. By surveying students as to their current experiences, light is cast on variations in expectations and reactions toward proposed interventions.

Finally, and continuing this theme of engagement, Liverpool Screen School's John Mathews and Kate Heathman provide a case study of a role-play and simulation teaching model used in a final year Journalism course. Located around a series of 'newsdays' and news stories published on a dedicated website, John and Kate explain how the approach was designed to provide students with a more authentic taste of workplace learning. Following a series of evaluations they reflect on the benefits and challenges of incorporating such a model into the curriculum.

We hope that you find among the papers within this issue something new, be that fresh insight or ideas to consider in your own teaching. Happy reading.

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