

## It started with a KIS...

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*I never thought it would come to this...*  
- Hot Chocolate

In Robert Troschitz's (2017) *Higher Education and the Student*, the universal and the particular sit side by side. In the universal sense of HE, the economic, liberal and social ideas that have structured discourse since 1945 are illuminated and, from this telescopic lens, Troschitz sends our vision plunging from huge vistas to focus on some fine detail. In this journey, one notices how the position of the student in terms of power has shifted. There are many points of departure but, for me, the KIS (Key Information Set), articulated in the 2011 White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*, strikes me as one of those points of detail that have cast a particular shadow on us today, especially in relation to the subject-level TEF (Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework).

KIS accentuates the impression of 'students as consumers' and, with the Unistats website, invites comparisons of courses, where student satisfaction data has been the mainstay of the evidence. Using market

mechanisms, relying on student choice and HE provider competition to improve quality, and value-for-money is a vision that appears firmly set. In spite of the information available, a recent National Audit Office (2017) report noted how few students used this. However, since the report, there may be something of a game changer with prospective students able to review the average earnings (three years after graduating) from each course, courtesy of the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset. How important is salary for the prospective student? Does this emphasis mask, or downplay, the other senses of 'being' (or wanting 'to be') in HE?

In a paper on 'student motivation' Graham Gibbs (2014) asserted that there are differing reasons why students go to university. Significantly, "[students] make judgement about the quality of teaching, in part in terms of the extent to which it helps them to achieve their goals" (p. 1). In addition to being 'vocational' or 'academic', students will have intrinsic or extrinsic orientations. Thus, an 'intrinsic vocational' orientation to studying medicine might

involve wanting to become the best doctor and learning about medicine and learning practical skills to the greatest extent; an ‘extrinsic vocational’ orientation might involve simply wanting to qualify as a doctor, and being highly strategic in study behaviour (e.g. question spotting, opting in to modules with lower failure rates, and doing just enough to pass) (*ibid.*). Whilst acknowledging that students evolve in their orientations, the evidence suggests that “... this often involves a shift from intrinsic orientations to extrinsic orientations...” which Gibbs describes as “an indictment of HE and the opposite of what teachers aspire to achieve” (p. 4). How student aspirations are affected by the LEO dataset, has provoked many and merit careful monitoring. Jeffrey Sharkey (2018), Principal at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, commented: “From our experience, the personal satisfaction and the ability to work at what you love are far more important to our [Arts] graduates than their annual income.”

When at university students can engage in a range of activities beyond the curriculum or, as Gibbs states, apply ‘intrinsic personal’ motivation, and becoming ‘the best person one can be’. This might include engaging in volunteering which is the focus of Jan Murphy’s Viewpoint paper. Universities are rethinking their responsibilities, engaging in learning beyond the classroom, developing discovery beyond the academic community, and service that benefits the public. This model of the institution as a ‘civic university’ captures the mutually beneficial engagement between the community, region or wider world and the university (Goddard et al., 2016).

In Amy Gerrard’s paper, there is a nod to recent national and institutional initiatives to assist in embedding enterprise education in the curriculum. In an era of the ‘portfolio career’, where those graduates from subjects allied to the creative arts have had the highest engagement in business start-ups and freelancing, how can enterprise be encouraged in other subject areas? And, what form should these conversations take with both the student and the teacher?

This issue of *Innovations in Practice* has been released just after LJMU’s Teaching and Learning Conference, where George Kuh (2018) wowed the audience with his take on ‘high-impact educational practices’ (HIPs). These are practices that have demonstrable, and significant, impact on student success. Charlie Smith takes up the theme of small group-working. This can be challenging to manage from both the perspective of the learner and tutor but careful preparation can reap positive results. Collaborative assignments and projects, and learning communities are two key HIPs.

Another HIP is study away or global learning – an educationally purposeful activity. Dhiya Al-Jumeily, Alastair Balchin, Laura Bishop, Alice Ferrebe and Padam Simkhada provide an overview of the value of staff and student international exchange, with reference to LJMU’s internationalisation agenda. As a HIP, study abroad can broaden one’s mind, increase understanding and appreciation of human differences.

*Innovations in Practice* reaches an audience well beyond LJMU. In a first for the journal, I am especially thankful to Phil Robinson-Self from the University of York, for providing personal and timely reflections on the role in-house teaching and learning journals

might make in developing and embedding the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). I can attest to the major effort required in getting such journals off the ground and in sustaining them. At York, which has released two issues of *York Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, there appears to be a thriving culture – supported by a ‘communities of practice model’ in the form of a ‘SoTL network’ – which, I’m sure will lead to several further issues.

Finally, we end with a couple of reviews. In the book review of Stephen Brookfield’s updated classic, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Pamela Langan offers a handy comparison with the original edition, published in 1995. This issue of *Innovations in Practice* also features its first ‘tech review’ with Nicholas Wise’s thoughts on using Google Earth with his students.

As always, I am thankful to all the authors for their contributions to this issue. I am also grateful to the reviewers. If you would like to be involved in the work of the journal, as a reviewer or proof-reader, please do feel free to contact me.

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