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# Innovations in Education and Teaching International

## Editorial

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This edition exemplifies the vital role played by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) not only as knowledge providers, but also in addressing societal challenges and transforming societies. Such a role is particularly vital given the significant developments in the global arena affecting technologically advanced HEI provision. Yet, advancement can, at times, pose some challenges to students and staff, too. This, in turn, prompts continuous quests for innovative studies. Sound examples of these pedagogical innovations, development of information technologies and internationalised advancements – sometimes overlapping with each other – are all featured in this edition.

As a response to the ongoing progress on international and intercultural learning, we start with two different but equally valuable studies. A mixed-methods investigation conducted by Naicker, Singh and van Genugten of South African HE students' preparedness, engagement in internationalisation and development of global competencies, the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) course served as an intervention for promoting 'internationalisation at home' approach. Despite some issues arising, e.g. in relation to technology, enablers including having a structured course outline, student receptivity, and a supportive system for learning, they were outweighed by the benefits of capably emulating a study abroad experience, particularly for students who stay in their home countries. In the other study, recognising the extensive and diverse previous teaching experience of international Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) mostly from their country of origin, Collins, Brown and Leigh conducted a practice-based enquiry on this group's experience of higher education in the host country. This study aims to seek a better appreciation of how international GTAs navigate the 'cultural bumps' or 'discrepancies' they frequently encounter in relation to teaching, essay marking and classroom boundaries. Such understanding is arguably invaluable as it crucially affects the development of GTAs' teaching identity as they work in the UK.

The next group of articles puts forward insightful innovations that are of value to both students and staff in the higher education setting. An innovative approach to staff professional learning via an initiative called 'The Sipping Point' was the focus of an Irish case-study by Gormley. Drawing upon the notion of peer learning for staff members, this online lunchtime platform for informal and open discussion and short talks involves staff members' sharing new ideas and approaches to teaching practices, including those that 'add variety and novelty'.

Unsurprisingly, participants tend to not only be encouraged by the common issues they face but more importantly, they are also inspired by ideas from colleagues and by tools they become aware of – prompting them to initiate their own projects. This study highlights that although ‘less formal modes of professional learning are not acknowledged as important’, they nevertheless make a valuable contribution and impact. At the student level, participation from taxation students in three Nigerian colleges aimed to foster innovative pedagogies with a view to developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (e.g. critical thinking, creativity, information literacy, technological literacy, social skills, etc.). Edeh, Ugwoke and Anaele endorse that inquiry-based and evidence-based methods for taxation courses can improve student interest, retention and their academic achievement while developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills among students. Another study in Hong Kong advocates and stresses undergraduate students’ preference for using discovery-learning (or self-directed, inquiry-based learning) rather than the expository approach (or traditional lecture) for literature studies. Equally importantly, Lee and Yeung reported the associated efficacy of discovery learning in achieving greater student performance through more effective learning as well as greater retention of target lessons. In the postgraduate context, Sarfati undertook a mixed-methods case study in Brazil with the aim of reflecting on a professional Master’s programme to ascertain if it is an alternative model for suitably developing practitioners’ knowledge. This study led to recommending a Master’s degree in Business Administration as ‘a bridge between theory and practice’. Finally, Delgado-Garcia, Velez and Toscano Cruz reported their analysis of the psychometric properties of the Cooperative Learning Questionnaire. Their analysis recommends that attention be paid not merely to the innovative nature of cooperative learning’s content and resources, but equally, the time required for evaluating the extent in which it has been successfully implemented in the university context.

Some of these innovations are technological by nature. In a quantitative study undertaken in an English language setting in China, Yu carried out an investigation of video-mediated learning to compare and contrast the impact of teacher presence on learners’ cognitive effort, specifically, the extent in which the social cues sent are able to motivate learners as they engage in academic activities, facilitate effective learning, or encourage students to relax and prolong their attention – altogether contributing to favourable academic conditions or improving academic achievement. Another study features the pedagogic value offered by a hybrid Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) in enhancing the quality of the learning experience in HE. By giving Malaysian students a different approach to learning, Badiozaman, Segar and Hii suggest that increased usage of technology not only supports active learning, but it also promotes engagement and analytical skills that can enrich learning experience and encourage knowledge construction. In the same vein, the abrupt switch to online learning due to the pandemic prompted Murdoch, Lim and Cho’s quantitative investigation of effective technology-mediated learning in English, student satisfaction and performance gains via online engagement. Their study in the South Korean context suggests how students’ perceptions of their instructors’ warmth, concern, openness, and empathy and having a well-organised course can stimulate learning engagement, which in turn, leads to learning satisfaction.

Last but not least, the systematic review from Leijon, Gudmundsson, Staaf and Christersson articulated the potential application of Apple's 'Challenge Based Learning' (CBL) in Higher Education with a view of transforming the processes involved in adult learning. This review critically highlighted the contribution of this learning framework as a means of educational change as well as addressing its gaps, including the lack of a critical analytical approach in CBL, particularly its scientific grounding in research and the necessity to seek student voice, praxis and evidence of CBL on learning.