



Dear readers,

This issue includes 14 articles that span key areas of current concern for policy and practice development: inclusive education, assessment, literacy and numeracy, e-learning and leadership. Just as significantly, they focus on learners across the age span - from preschool to elementary, high school and tertiary education settings, and from pre-service (4 papers) to in-service teachers and school leaders (2 papers). Readers might also like to read the papers to consider the breadth of research methods and approaches used. For example, data sources include video of classroom practice, interviews, student achievement data, questionnaires and curriculum documents. Data were sought directly from students, teachers and school leaders. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed deductively and inductively. Some of the studies made use of a control while others examined the impact of an intervention on different student groups. Read as collection the papers provide a rich insight into the complexity, dynamics and potential of innovative educational research to contribute to our collective understanding of how to foster learning and learning cultures and to enhance instruction.

### **Inclusive education**

How to meet the needs and build on the strengths of the diversity of students present in the classrooms of today has emerged as a point of interest and concern worldwide. Five papers in this issue focus on this matter.

The study by Michael Whitacre, Zulmaris Diaz and Joy Esquierdo explores the reading instruction practices of pre-service teachers in dual language/bilingual classrooms in the USA. This study makes use of the English Language Learner Classroom Observation Instrument (ELLCOI) to analyse classroom instructional events captured on video. Data are presented on the nature and quality of instruction, as well as reading instructional practices specific to the teaching/learning process in the dual language classroom.

The motivation to read of struggling readers with and without disabilities to read is the topic of the paper by Macid Melekoğlu and Kimber Wilkerson. They note there is limited research into the reading motivation of struggling adolescents with disabilities. Their study examined significant changes in the reading motivation of struggling readers with and without disabilities significantly after an eighteen-week period of reading instruction in three schools in the USA. Findings indicated significant improvement in motivation for adolescents without disabilities while motivation scores declined for students with disabilities. The paper includes some suggestions for teachers to use to enhance the reading motivation of upper elementary and high school students.

Huda Hindal, Norman Reid and Rex Whitehead investigated the characteristics of students in Kuwait whose examination performance had led to their being regarded as 'gifted'. Their study explored the inter-correlations between examination performance in various subjects and how examination performance correlates with measures of working memory capacity, extent of field dependency, extent of divergency and the visual-spatial abilities of a large sample of grade 7 Kuwaiti students (age around 13). It

was found that students who performed best tended to be those who are highly divergent and strongly visual-spatial as well as those tending to have higher working memory capacities and being more field independent. Analysis of the examination papers indicated that the national examinations test recall-recognition. Implications for assessment and for the way high ability is defined are discussed.

The study by Hossein Bozorgian and Hitendra Pillay was conducted in two classrooms in an English language institute in Iran. Bozorgian and Pillay investigated the effectiveness of teaching listening strategies explained in L1 (Persian) and subsequent effect of the intervention on listening comprehension in L2. The same teacher taught students in the control class and intervention class. Pre and post listening test results indicated that the experimental class showed a statistically significant improvement in their discrete listening scores compared with the control group.

The final paper with a focus on student diversity/inclusion is by Saiful Malak who explored pre-service teachers' actions to include students with special educational needs in regular classrooms in primary schools in Bangladesh. Findings from one-on-one interviews with 20 pre-service teachers indicate that majority had unfavourable attitudes towards including special needs students in regular classrooms. Misconceptions and a lack of knowledge about disabilities were evident in their responses. Organisational matters and the limitations of their teacher education programme were also identified as hindrances to inclusion. Issues are discussed as implications for the fostering of better inclusive practices in regular primary classrooms are discussed.

Looking back over this set of papers we can see that when combined they provide an expansive insight into the challenge of diversity and inclusion, covering as they do matters to do with language, students with 'high ability' and students who struggle, and students with and without disabilities.

### **Assessment**

Internationally, there is strong recognition of the impact of assessment on curriculum, teaching and learning (Looney, 2011) irrespective of whether an assessment is conducted by the teacher, as part of a national examination for student accreditation and/or via an international testing programme such as PISA and TIMSS. There is clear evidence that, despite developments in assessment tending to run behind developments in curriculum, assessment and curriculum change need to go hand in hand. The paper by Lynn Kelting-Gibson looks back over 100 years to analyse 15 historical and contemporary curriculum designs for elements of assessment that might support student learning and inform instructional decisions. Findings indicate that aspects related to assessment were included in each of the curricular designs analysed, but that various terminologies were used for assessment-related matters. Kelting-Gibson proposes that teachers need to focus on ideas such as pre, formative, and summative assessments rather than the terminology used. By way of contrast, the paper by Hussain Alkharusi presents canonical correlational models of tenth grade Omani student perceptions of assessment tasks, motivational orientations, and learning strategies. Work on student perceptions is unusual and so this paper makes an important contribution to this area.

Findings show that high degrees of authenticity and transparency in assessment were associated with positive student self-efficacy and task value. A high degree of authenticity, transparency, and diversity in assessment is associated with a reliance on deep learning strategies. This paper includes implications for classroom assessment practice and research.

### e-learning

This issue includes three papers on aspects of e-learning. These papers form a cohesive set in that they variously explore student-teachers' thoughts about the potential of technology, practicing teachers attitudes towards information and communications use, and student-teachers' experiences of distance learning. The first paper in the set, which is by Kung-Teck, Wong, Rosma bt Osman, Pauline Swee Choo, Goh and Mohd Khairezan Rahmat is based on a study that set out to validate and test the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in the context of Malaysian student teachers' integration of their technology in their teaching and learning. A goodness-of-fit test analysis showed partial support of the applicability of the TAM in a Malaysian context. The researchers note that perceived usefulness is a significant influence on attitude towards computer use and behavioural intention. In addition, perceived ease of use significantly influences perceived usefulness, and behavioural intention is influenced by attitude towards computer use. The paper includes implications for the research and practice of technology integration development. In the second paper Mohamed Elsaadani reports on the findings of a survey of teaching staff in Egyptian HEI. He found a moderate and positive relationship between the age of participants and their attitude towards ICT. The paper includes recommendations that higher education institutions in Egypt consider how teaching staff attitude towards ICT is related to their age when they plan, develop, and adopt ICT. There is value in reading across these two papers as providing complementary insights into innovation and development with technology.

The third and final paper to do with e-learning presents the results of a study into student-teachers' views of the andragogical teaching skills of their distance education tutors. Irshad Hussain investigated attitudes towards the academic, tutoring and assessment skills of distance education tutors. Research participants were pre-service teacher education students in a university in Pakistan. Overall the student teachers, responding as distance learners, provided a positive rating of their tutors academic, tutoring, assessment and evaluation skills, and technical and social skills. They indicated tutors needed training in the use of social media. The paper includes a recommendation for both short and long-term training for tutors.

### Learning

This next cluster of papers focuses on aspects of learning. It includes two papers that elaborate on the impact of interventions to enhance mathematics teaching and learning, both using a control group design with a pre and post-test and a third paper focused on student epistemological beliefs. At this point it is important to note that the issue includes two papers on reading, categorised earlier as having a strong focus on inclusion. Hence the learning focus across the paper set as a whole encompasses both literacy and numeracy and student understanding of the nature of knowledge, all key

themes and concerns in the international literature on curriculum, learning and instruction.

Bhutto Ilyas, Khalid Rawat, Muhammad Bhatti and Najeeb Malik, in their paper, describe the effect of teaching algebra through social constructivism on the learning outcomes of seventh grade students in public schools of District Jamshoro Sindh, Pakistan. Their analysis of student pre- and post-test data revealed that the group that was taught through social constructivist approach achieved statistically significant learning outcomes when compared with those of a control group that was taught through traditional transmission-oriented teaching. Working in preschool classrooms in the USA Myoungwhon Jung, Paula Hartman, Thomas Smith and Stephen Wallace examined the effectiveness of explicit number relationships instruction. They administered the TEMA-3 (Test of Early Mathematics Ability-3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) as a pre and post test assessment of children's understanding of number and quantity. Results indicated that children in the intervention group scored significantly higher on the post-test than children in the control group. They did not however reveal any advantages by age group for number relationships instruction. The researchers suggest that the small sample size may have limited this analysis.

Research on student epistemological beliefs and learning approaches is emerging as an area of interest internationally. In their paper Habsah Ismail, Aminuddin Hassan, Mohd. Mokhtar Muhamad, Wan Zah Wan Ali and Mohd. Majid Konting explicate the epistemological beliefs of students in public and private higher institutions of learning in Malaysia. To this end they designed and used a survey based on Schommer's Epistemological Questionnaire (1990), Schraw, Bendixen and Dunkle's (2000) Epistemic Beliefs Inventory and Bigg's Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ), designed for tertiary-level students. The paper reports differences in epistemological beliefs among higher education students, including differences related to ethnicity and gender.

### **Leadership**

The issue includes a single paper on leadership. Semra Kiranlı scoped out the expectations and perceptions related to teachers' leadership among primary school teachers and principals in Turkey. Teachers and principals were surveyed in two sections. One sought demographic information and the other section was based on "The Questionnaire of Expectations and perceptions of Teacher Leadership Roles" developed by Beycioğlu (2009). Findings related to institutional development, professional development and collaboration with colleagues are reported.

Sincerely,

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