

Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal

Volume 9 Issue 2
May 2017

Alison Jackson
TEAN@cumbria.ac.uk

Editorial

A warm welcome to this seventeenth issue of the TEAN journal where we present a thought-provoking range of ten papers to give food for thought to teacher educators in their practice. Many thanks to our excellent team of reviewers whose thorough and helpful response to the papers is so effective in guiding authors to success. Thanks also to our authors whose perseverance and hard work to get their message to you is so very much appreciated. As ever, thanks to Linda Shore, the publishing editor, for her work in producing the issue for us.

We start the issue with a very interesting investigation into the use of Twitter and blogs in the Primary School from **Paul Cammack, University of Cumbria and Joe Henthorn, Seymour Road Academy, Manchester**. They set out to consider how social media has the potential to stimulate motivation, provide access to sources of information, and facilitate communication in order to promote teaching and learning in the Primary School. Given the popularity and growth of social media among young people, this is a timely study. Despite the limitations of their small-scale study they present a compelling case to suggest that social media does have the potential to enhance professional practice and pupil learning.

Martha Boyne and Hazel Beadle from the University of Chichester present an account of teacher perceptions of the value of using evidence-based practice, and the contribution to this of a school-based Journal Club. They found that the potential benefit of the presence of a Journal Club within the school was recognised by the teachers in their research and there was general support for the bridging of the gap between reflection, evidence based practice and a desire to maximise student learning. They suggest that any of the difficulties associated with effective engagement with the Journal Club process are time related and that an exploration of measures that could rectify the time issue would be worth further investigation.

Helen Bovill from the University of the West of England explores Teaching Assistants' conditions of employment and workload. Helen's subtitle suggests a possible reliance upon goodwill and ad hoc systems of preparation time, rather than a co-ordinated and research based approach to this important role. Her study demonstrates evidence that some Teaching Assistants now routinely work unpaid hours outside of their contract and that this 'goodwill' is becoming a 'cultural expectation'. Also it has become increasingly necessary for many Teaching Assistants to keep up with the changing professional demands of their pedagogically focussed role. Her paper concludes with a comprehensive list of very pertinent and informed recommendations.

Teachers use their voice on a daily basis and it seems not uncommon for teachers to experience voice problems due to the vocal demands of the classroom. **Lesley Mycroft** is an experienced education consultant who guides us through her research into this area. She collected data through a variety of questionnaires and interviews with student teachers and draws on writings of an Australian actor F.M. Alexander who successfully worked on remedying his own voice problems. Lesley makes us very aware of how important research into the teacher's voice is and that there is a need for more research to be undertaken.

Helen Coker from Inverness College, University of the Highlands and Islands advises us that developing understanding of student-teacher agency, that is to say, the ways in which student teachers actively participate in their learning, has the potential to inform programme development. This in turn will contribute towards developing student teachers to become confident and effective professionals. Data were collected from student teachers reflecting on their experiences during the PGDE year. The deeper understanding of student-teacher agency has informed practice in a blended learning environment and, Helen suggests, has the potential to inform the development of programmes utilising different methods of delivery.

Wendy Cobb from Canterbury Christ Church University is joined by **Nick Haisman-Smith from Family Links** and **Kerry Jordan-Daus from Canterbury Christ Church University** to discuss an evaluation of the processes and impact of a University and Charity social and emotional well-being partnership. Acknowledging the need for effective partnerships between schools and universities, they point out that there is limited research surrounding academic partnerships with social enterprises. It is this latter form of partnership with which they are concerned, exploring the benefits and challenges of partnerships between university initial teacher training providers and charities. They argue for the power of positive partnerships and identify the need for a new model of the processes of such unique partnerships to support future developmental and outcome-focused partnership evaluations.

Jo Byrd from the University of Derby challenges us to consider 'meaningful' digital reflections as she looks at challenges to implementing a new technology in Teacher Education. PebblePad5 was introduced to trainee teachers to encourage them to write their reflections on placement digitally. It was hoped that the students would be enthusiastic about using PebblePad, but also the issues that arose and the plan to overcome barriers are discussed. It was found that a digital tool can support a student teacher to make relevant reflections that have meaning and significance for the student and are a support to their practice. However, more support from tutors is needed and, indeed, more support for the tutors themselves.

Next is a thought-piece from **Helen Ward, Bartley Green School with Richard Sanders, Newman University**. Helen provides a reflective commentary on the modification of her professional practice in a secondary academy in England as a result of work conducted on a postgraduate Masters module. The motivation to publish this paper is one which will doubtless find resonance with readers: it is 'in light of a heavily structured, prescriptive and time pressured approach to teacher development which disconnects professionals from more meaningful enquiry into the practice in which they are engaging'. The paper concludes that it is vital that practitioners have the opportunity to reflect and socially construct relevant, meaningful knowledge and Helen and Richard offer recommendations for ways forward.

Martina Cottam from the University of Cumbria reminds us that universities continually endeavour to improve the level of student satisfaction and learning experience. However, although various types of Student Feedback Forms are employed at the local institutional level, their value is unclear. Martina proposes that the often low impact and inconclusive results from the use of these forms are largely due to inadequacies in the design, and implementation process of these questionnaires. In her study, a carefully designed form led to clear, actionable outcomes with high value in confirming what was working well and identifying areas for improvement. She hopes that this may be used as a guide to improve the future design and implementation of Student Feedback forms for other types of courses and teaching programmes.

The issue concludes with a paper from **Michael Allen, Elizabeth Briten, Kulwinder Maude, Ann Ooms, Matthew Sossick and Mari Jo Valentine from Kingston University** who investigated how to identify

potential early-career leavers. Their study asked questions of student teachers in their final year at a university in England and then, when they were teachers, in their first year of teaching. They did find that 'a notable proportion' of them had considered leaving since they qualified. Their findings are fascinating, not least that the most satisfied ITT students went on to become the most dissatisfied NQTs, and *vice versa*. In a careful argument they discuss that teachers in danger of leaving the teaching profession at an early stage in their post-qualification career could potentially be recognised during their university training.

Alison Jackson

May 2017