

Teacher Education Advancement
Network Journal
Volume 12 Issue 1
November 2019

Dr Lisa Murtagh
Lisa.murtagh@manchester.ac.uk

Dr David Owen
d.h.owen@shu.ac.uk

This is the 22nd issue of the TEAN Journal, which was launched in 2009. David and I are delighted to have been invited by the TEAN Executive Committee to act as editors for this issue, and to now present nine excellent, very diverse and thought-provoking papers for you all. Thank you to everyone who has contributed papers to this edition. Once again, the quality of the papers is to be commended, and submissions with such a high should serve to contribute to the field of teacher education.

Pete Boyd from the University of Cumbria conducted a selective review of international research into mixed-age teaching and positions the findings in relation to key characteristics associated with mastery approaches to teaching mathematics. A common feature of mastery approaches to teaching mathematics is an underpinning assumption by the teacher that virtually all your students can be successful. Pete Boyd asserts that this is a challenge for teachers in England, not least because national level policy, such as national curriculum documents, as well as textbook schemes, tend to reinforce age-related expectations of content and mastery. The paper concludes calling for further research and increased support for teachers through professional development and mixed-age friendly teaching resources.

Diana Chaplin and Heather Munn from the University of Greenwich explore the nature of effective mentoring practices in training Early Years Teachers. The paper reports on exploratory interviews held with mentor and mentee pairs on an Early Years Teacher training programme. The findings of Diane and Heather suggest that Mentors and Mentees jointly saw their work together as being about using professional standards, and quality measures, to demonstrate professionalism in their practice. Notably, when considering the quality of assessment of trainees progress against the standards for Early Years Teacher Status, key points that emerged, were around training from the university and its consistency, and the effectiveness of online systems and moderation in bringing people together as communities of practice. Mentees and Mentors revealed that the assessment process enhanced professional development. On the basis of their findings, Diane and Heather recommend further exploration of the benefits of a community of practice model in supporting mentors and mentees and exploration of the potential of assessment as a tool for driving quality.

In the third paper, Richard Holme, Susie Schofield and Elizabeth Lakin of the University of Dundee collaborate to present a position paper, making the case for adopting the general term 'grassroots professional development', specifically when this is self-directed activity led by educators. The paper explores three examples of grassroots professional development, namely TeachMeets, EdCamps and BrewEd. The authors note that the main shared theme across all three examples discussed is that they share a 'bottom up' philosophy and suggest given the recent rise in prevalence of such grassroots teacher Professional Development, there is potential for further research in this area to provide an opportunity to understand any potential impact on teachers, and ultimately learners.

Michael Levers of Stranmills University College, Belfast and Kieran McGeown of St Mary's University College, Belfast have worked together to analyse the progress made since the last government review

of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education in Northern Ireland. The authors conducted a study to examine STEM education in Northern Ireland within an international context, to seek to find out about current perceptions of STEM education and determine if current practice shows any improvement. 'Success through STEM' (Department for Employment and Learning, 2011) had listed actions to be taken by each of the Northern Ireland government departments to meet a number of recommendations, however, in November 2015, a report prepared for the Northern Ireland's government's Committee for Education noted little improvement if any, from the position in 2009. Drawing on a range of qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders, Michael and Kieran conclude that the evidence indicates a systemic failure in Northern Ireland to provide an effective STEM education. Whilst the data revealed high levels of pupil enthusiasm for STEM education, adults in the study expressed high levels of frustration over the current provision. The paper proposes a move away from high-stakes testing towards inquiry-based learning approaches to improve the STEM education experiences of pupils.

In the fifth paper, Pete Atherton of Liverpool John Moores University presents a socially autoethnographic account of his transition from an experienced teacher to a newly appointed teacher educator. The paper is designed to critique and contextualise the process of autoethnography as a way of making meaning from the diverse and complex skills and roles of Pete as a teacher educator. The purpose of this autoethnography, Pete states, is to try to make sense of the researcher's situation - to find a voice in the hope that it contributes to others' understanding their own situation in a more measured way. The dataset that was drawn on from narrative writing of the author's experiences, conceived as a mock novel, 'Confessions of a portfolio careerist'; his Twitter posts over a transformative six-month period.

Clare Lawrence and John Rimmer of Bishop Grosseteste University have joined forces to consider the potential of the film '*Broken*' co-created by an individual with autism and Dr John Rimmer. The film strives to capture other fluency experiences as recorded in the literature, and through this to give insight to the neuro-typical viewer of what these experiences may be, specifically in a classroom context and from the pupil perspective, in order to support trainee teachers' understanding of autism communication issues in mainstream classrooms. Twenty Students training to become mainstream secondary school teachers participated in the study. Clare and John conclude that the intention of the film to raise awareness and consideration of communication issues in autism appears to be valid. However, they also note that the film is likely therefore be more effective to support teacher education if greater clarity regarding the autistic perspective is presented, along with accompanying resources to support a more measured response to the film, focussing less on an overwhelming sensory experience and more on the specifics of what is being portrayed.

Paper seven is composed by Jonathan Doherty of Leeds Trinity University and is a systematic review of literature on teacher attrition and school-related factors that affect it. Jonathan draws the reader's attention to the fact that in England, the numbers of working-age teachers leaving teaching each year have been increasing since 2010. His review of the literature notes that there are many factors that impact upon teacher retention and he also notes common themes that occur and re-occur, but that workload is *the* crucial factor influencing teachers' decisions to leave the profession and the greatest threat to retention. Furthermore, the author presents evidence that attrition is most acute for teachers in their first five years highlighting that 20 per cent of new teachers leave within their first 2 years of teaching and 33 per cent leave within their first 5 years in schools in England. The paper concludes with a number of practical suggestions for policy makers and school leaders that may help to halt the high numbers of teachers leaving the profession.

Mike Toyn, of the University of Cumbria has composed the penultimate paper, which explores the role that Social Networking Sites (SNS) play in the learning of post-graduate trainee teachers. Mike

undertakes a three-fold analysis to provide insights into how students use social networking sites (SNS) and what impact they have on learning. Adopting a case research design, this qualitative study, led to 62 participants from the four participating alliances agreeing to provide transcripts of the content of their closed Facebook or WhatsApp group posts for subsequent analysis. Mike concludes that the SNSs play an important role in supporting students to succeed on a busy and stressful course, and that students draw on social media in equal measure for social cohesion and learning related interactions.

The final paper in this collection is about understanding barriers to discussion-based learning. In seeking to open this up for critique, Fufy Demissie, Sheffield Hallam University uses an epistemological perspective to theorise student teachers' perceptions. The study involved a series of in-depth interviews with five female student teacher participants. The participants were all undertaking a three year. The findings of the study illustrate the richness and complexity of the participants' lived experience of DBL. By examining student teachers' perspectives of DBL, Fufy provides a valuable insight into how learning and teaching work in everyday teaching and learning contexts, presenting findings that are conceptual and have practical implications for educators and teacher educators.

Lisa Murtagh

President of TEAN Executive Committee

November 2020