

Journal Editor: Pete Boyd

Editorial

This issue of PRHE brings together papers reporting on research and professional inquiry projects that investigate support for higher education students in a range of national contexts. From problem-based learning in Northern Ireland to innovative programme evaluation and design of tutorial support in Wisconsin USA and to student-led conferences and a journal club in England. Context, including national and community context as well as the subject discipline or professional field, is an important dimension of educational research and evaluation. It is important to consider context and avoid 'cherry-picking' from examples of practice that seem successful in contexts that differ significantly from our own. However, it is also possible to learn and to borrow from close to practice research and professional inquiry in contrasting contexts. It is helpful when close to practice projects are well-theorised and positioned by the authors within a critical review of the relevant literature. The first paper in this issue provides a useful model of this approach.

In their case study of introducing Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Michael Ievers, Brian Cummins and Mark Ballentine, based in Northern Ireland, found a strong impact on student development of transversal skills. It is perhaps surprising to see this kind of significant change in practice project, especially in adopting PBL, achieve such positive outcomes and feedback.

In an innovative professional inquiry approach to curriculum review, Cody Marie Busch and Lynn Gilbertson, based in the USA, used the e-portfolio assignments of 39 students as secondary data. They investigate and review the curriculum as well as the design of the assessment task itself, looking for perceived alignment and misalignment with program goals. This proved to be an efficient and insightful approach and certainly more informative than most simplistic evaluative feedback student surveys.

With a strong emphasis on thinking as an element of academic writing Zheng Li, Lynn Machin and Duncan Hindmarch evaluate the DREAM model -discovering, refreshing, engendering, adapting, and measuring. They propose its use across disciplines and all students but perhaps especially with English as an Additional Language students.

For many academics, across the USA and internationally, the intensity of work has increased in recent times and so the design of advice or tutorial support systems needs to include consideration of workload. Lynn Gilbertson and Cody Marie Busch evaluate a student advice system that includes asynchronous content in a learning management system, hybrid group tutorials, and targeted individual follow-up support.

In a pragmatic but scholarly approach Lewis Baker reflects on the impact on learning of his students of their engagement with a journal club. With details of the underpinning practitioner research project reported elsewhere, in this paper he aims to provide practical advice for those considering this useful approach to building the research literacy of students as well as their critical thinking, speaking and writing skills.

The Practitioner Research in Higher Education (PRHE) journal is proud of its international range in both authors and audience. As editors based in the UK it is informative and often humbling to read studies from colleagues based in challenging national contexts. Hopefully this issue has provided something of interest and usefulness to you, whatever your national and subject discipline context.

Pete Boyd
PRHE Journal Editor