

The STeP Journal **Student Teacher Perspectives**

Volume 1 Issue 1
September 2014

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Editorial

Welcome to TEAN's first issue of The Student Teacher Perspectives (STeP) journal. A new initiative started in 2014 inviting papers from student teachers attracted high quality papers and has inspired this new journal. Until now the papers have been in the Teacher Educators' Storehouse on the TEAN website, but from now on student teachers' research and study will have a prominent place on the TEAN home page. For this first issue of the STeP journal we have taken six papers received during 2014. Thanks are due to the six student teachers who submitted their work and to their tutors for the recommendation to TEAN. It is hoped that this will be the start of a rich digest of high quality work for student teachers everywhere to engage with and that it will be just one of the steps towards TEAN's enhanced commitment to sharing student teachers' work in as many ways as possible. What is very evident from all these papers in this first issue is the commitment of these student teachers to the notion of exploring theory to inform their practice. They are evidently open to a wealth of ideas, eager to research and keen to implement what they learn in their day to day teaching. From wherever they are writing, their papers are transferable to other contexts and form a rich repository to be shared and to inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

To submit for the journal, it is important to refer to the guidelines on the STeP page of the TEAN website. We hope to welcome many authors to publish in STeP.

In this issue we have already a wide range of topic areas:

Rebecca Green from Canterbury Christ Church University examines dyslexia as a potential cause of stress and concern for students and teachers in schools. She argues that its effects on learning can vary from minor to extreme and investigated whether the actual learning disability is not just academic but also one of self-concept and esteem. She concludes that the interrelationship between dyslexia and confidence is key to understanding how to move forward and improve the learning of students with dyslexia. Her research suggested that the best way to achieve this is by creating safe learning environments in which students are not afraid to ask to for assistance or help.

Edward Clarke from St Mary's University College Belfast investigates Technology and Design within the context of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. He asks whether or not it can be classified as an academic subject and examines how it is perceived within the school environment, what academic and career avenues it may open, and what approach the government holds in terms of the wider contribution of the subject to industry. In terms of subject content, Technology and Design meets the various markers in terms of accreditation and examination, however the classification of the subject as an academic one is a separate issue to that of acceptance and Edward suggests that this is the main challenge.

Roisin Carron from St Mary's College Belfast considers the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in schools in Northern Ireland. One of the challenges currently facing Northern Ireland and other countries is the apparent declining interest in, and uptake of, STEM subjects by pupils. Roisin suggests that the importance of STEM subject

teaching cannot be over emphasised in order to encourage pupils to take an interest in, and develop positive attitudes towards, STEM subjects from an early age. Her study concludes that it is clear that schools play a major role in promoting STEM subjects to young people.

Lauren Cogger from Canterbury Christ Church University reports on a study she undertook to discover to what extent the attainment of a Level 2 English qualification affects teaching and learning in Further Education. From her research she found that there were doubts concerning the Level 2 from various stakeholders, regardless of governmental assurances that this is no longer the case as students are becoming equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. She suggests that the concept of lifelong learning is not being enhanced by an emphasis on the 'functional' and 'the norm' and that, in a constantly changing environment, the most valued attribute is the ability to learn how to learn, regardless of standards and norms.

Luke Beegan from St Mary's College Belfast conducted a study into innovation within an educational context. He found documentation suggesting that society currently finds a need for people to be creative and come up with new ideas in order to overcome the challenges that may appear from our rapidly growing world. While recognising the limitations of his study, Luke pinpoints for us the importance of this whole journal as his study was highly relevant to him as a trainee teacher. He hopes to use it to inform his practice in the future so that he can be an innovative teacher who is accessing all their pupils' abilities and allowing them to be creative and innovative.

The final paper of this issue is a thought piece from **Jenny Rogers** from the University of Exeter who discusses the challenge of gender and heterosexual stereotypes in primary education. She argues that stereotypes should be challenged in primary education so that children can grow up secure in their own identity, whatever that may be. She argues that the primary classroom is a space in which the teacher can form a close bond of trust amongst the class, and can therefore initiate discussions on diversity to ensure that all pupils feel valued and included.

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