

Editorial 24(3)

Education is about making a difference in the lives of those who experience its interactions as a social justice project of modern democracy. It is intended to encourage the free exploration of ideas and the development of creativity. Quality education needs the underpinning of access to good teaching, challenging curriculum and engaged learning. The articles in this issue demonstrate some of the ways researchers approach these issues. The first article by Kearney, Perkins and Maakrun is about a cross-cultural service learning experience located in Kenya. The assessment of the program used a framework derived from Dan Butin and one of the findings was about the impact on the pre-service teachers of the daily reflection sessions. The final section raises the issue of hope, a key aim of democratic public policy.

The study by Murphy, Dionigi and Litchfield is about gender issues in physical education. The authors acknowledge the 'problem' for young women participating is located in curriculum and pedagogical contexts. Using a single case study approach, the study initially found four commonly perceived factors affecting female participation in PE: the peer group; body image; role modelling; and the competitive nature of PE classes. The authors highlight the importance of the teacher creating an environment for female students to focus on 'doing your best' rather than competing against others. One of the teachers in the case study felt that having different activities, such as skill-based activities for female students, allowed them a choice in different types of non-competitive activities. Readers will notice the benefit of strategies that challenge stereotypes and provide the opportunity for students to co-create curriculum.

E-learning is under scrutiny in the article by Sridharan, Deng and Kinshuk as it is an approach that universities are busily implementing, in response to students' demands for accessibility to flexible learning. Some of the challenges for tertiary institutions are outlined here: how to scaffold the learning trajectories of students; and how to provide collaborative learning opportunities. The participants were engaged in learning through Open University Australia. There is no indication that the students are themselves engaged in teaching activities; hence the distinction drawn that students were not necessarily concerned with the 'how' of the pedagogies. The findings sound a salutary warning that major differences between the perceptions of e-learning providers and e-learners exist especially with regard to pedagogies and the management of learning resources.

The study by Soodmand Afshar, Rahimi and Rahimi examines the relationships between instrumental motivation, critical thinking, autonomy and academic achievement among English as a foreign language learners in Iran. The authors comprehensively survey the literature. The findings reveal positive relationship among the variables of the study and the academic achievement of the learners. Moreover, critical thinking was a significantly stronger predictor of Iranian EFL learners' academic achievement. The specific recommendation, for language teachers to encourage their learners in thinking critically and analytically, could indeed be broadened to include all cross-cultural learning.

Siew Yap's research is about developing sophisticated epistemologies of science, which include an appreciation of the social context and ethical thinking. The study is located in a faith-based school and the teaching of a biotechnology unit. The researcher reports that the provision of a framework enabled students to think about options and alternatives. Concurrently, some improvement in engagement resulted from a model of using pros/cons and benefits/risks. There was also more positive and greater awareness of the benefits of biotechnology and with the gain in knowledge, also a greater discretion on the use of biotechnology. The issue of the development of ethical thinking, at the heart of this research, is one that educators encourage and here, the students were seen to move from appreciation of socio-scientific reasoning towards informed judgement.

The study by Hains-Wesson and Campbell is about a work integrated learning (WIL) experience in which a street performance assessment task formed part of a regional community arts event. The students created performances around historical narratives connected to a selection sites being celebrated in *Heritage Week*. Some powerful findings emerged: students found the street performances challenging but also life changing. They noted that the assessment task allowed them to develop self-confidence and transferable skills such as being self-aware so that they could be prepared to take on new obstacles in study, work and life. It is noteworthy that recommendations developed from the findings are relevant to teaching and learning across the creative arts industry, locally, nationally and internationally, and to any non-placement WIL group-based assessment activity.

Anne Power
Editor