

## **Editorial 25(2)**

Every country has research to show that the achievement gap favours high socio-economic status communities (Awartani, Whitman & Gordon, 2008; Cullingford, 2004). Traditionally students in low SES schools may not have a sense of hope for the future and their disengagement may manifest as behaviour disruptive to learning or truancy (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Nevertheless, there is also research to show that creative educators, who establish a relationship with their students, make a difference in the lives of students who contend with disadvantage that may be economic or physical or psycho-social (Carter & Welner, 2013; Gannon & Sawyer, 2014). Research indicates that teachers have the ability to transform students' lives, for the better or worse, through the way they interact with those in their care (Delpit, 2006). The perceived level of support, care and guidance from a teacher is known to influence a student's perception of self-worth and capabilities (Foster, 2008). Research also confirms that students commonly identify a teacher's ability to empathise and provide positive recognition as important characteristics in building a positive learning environment (An, Hannum & Sargent, 2007). Such research can be revisited at this time when the nature of tertiary education is changing because of economic factors. The group of engaging papers in this issue have connections with the positive educating qualities of creativity, care and support. Two of the papers are specifically about alternative modes of feedback and one other highlights this aspect of the research conducted; two papers on professional learning are about the collaborative benefits of lesson study approach; and two papers are about measuring confidence and enabling autonomous growth and development.

Mirella Atherton, in her article about measuring confidence in open access enabling courses, argues for the need to build confidence in students, especially female students. The majority of students were returning to study and the enabling programs were intended to provide a bridge to a smoother progress in the first year of university. Consequently it is useful to have the research show that the female students had a much higher level of uncertainty in comparison to the males in all areas; and especially was this evident around the assessment items including a mid-semester test, quizzes and a final exam. Such knowledge allows for an adjusted level of support, care and guidance; and it can positively impact on universities attracting a diverse student cohort into higher education.

From the Philippines, Sally Gutierrez writes about inquiry-based teaching through lesson study. Her findings are that, with insufficient time devoted to inquiry in the classroom and insufficient inservice for teachers, the lesson study approach is not yet deeply embedded but its potential is clear. The teachers who participated in professional learning with this approach had the benefit of the cyclical process of planning, implementation, observation, reflection and revision – an approach that values collaboration and critically identifies the necessary components of an effective lesson.

Feedback is one of the ways educators demonstrate their care, guidance and support to students. Various feedback models used for summative assessment are at the heart of Josh McCarthy's article focusing on tertiary digital media students. Three summative feedback

techniques were evaluated at the end of the semester and the findings of the study are discussed in light of the growing use of non-traditional feedback measures in higher education. Video feedback was seen to be more individualised – a bonus where universities also promote online learning that could be seen as de-personalised. In the discussion section, McCarthy observes that a range of feedback techniques may allow for stronger insight into academic performance, rather than a single technique, be it video, audio or text based.

From Iran and Japan, the article by Alireza Moghaddam, Mohammad Reza Sarkar Arani and Hiroyuki Kuno is a study of teaching elementary school mathematics through the lesson study approach. The study, using an ethnographic approach, examined how collaborative teaching within an adapted lesson study framework might change the teaching-learning process in mathematics. The study suggests that teachers need to have high expectations when dealing with students, and use more daily life situations in their math problems.

Parvin Safari investigates teacher education in Iran that moves beyond transmission. Specifically, the field of inquiry is English as a foreign language (EFL). Safari argues that the transmission models in practice threaten the confidence of teachers in their own actions and practices, reducing critical thinking. Instead Safari seeks to introduce an educational model, based on Freire, where students and teachers collaboratively grow and develop. She advocates steps towards autonomy and the conduct of research tracking progress, forming a longitudinal study.

Su Iong Kio writes about feedback using social networking sites (SNS). Specifically, he demonstrates the relationship of the connect model of feedback with SNS and argues that the properties of social networking have enabled feedback to remove limitations of time or place. The study makes it clear that convenience and mutual assistance were key themes in student evaluations because students were able to receive timely feedback both from fellow classmates and from teachers.

Susan Blackley and Rebecca Walker's article has focused on a small scale study, with the extended use of a one-on-one laptop program. They raise the important issues regarding teachers needing to be convinced of the worth of the time and energy expended. More importantly, they emphasise that the provision of equipment does not guarantee change. Nor does it mean that support, care and guidance will be paramount. However, the researchers found that participants reported that the laptop program facilitated their teaching of mathematics, catered for the specific needs of students, and, like other authors in this issue, highlighted the provision of feedback to students on assessment tasks.

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**Anne Power**

*Editor*