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# Practitioner Research in Higher Education

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## Teacher Education Special Edition

### Editorial

This issue of *Practitioner Research in Higher Education* presents the work of academic staff who are investigating and developing their pedagogy in the professional field of teacher education. However, the collection of papers and the issues that they engage with are of relevance to colleagues across the full range of subject disciplines in higher education. They demonstrate how a subject discipline community is able to push forward academic development and professional learning through enquiry within the academic workplace. This prime location for effective academic development, within subject discipline teams, is strongly argued for by Boud (1999) and by Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006).

In their classic paper Brown and Duguid (1996) draw together key concepts in workplace learning to argue that:

*...individual learning is inseparable from collective learning*

and that communities of practice emerge rather than conform to formal boundaries. The implication drawn by Brown and Duguid is that an institution:

*...must legitimise and support the myriad enacting activities perpetrated by its different members [and that] this support cannot be intrusive or it risks merely bringing potential innovators under the restrictive influence of the existing canonical view.*

(Brown and Duguid, 1996:77)

They go on to discuss the need for boundary crossing within an organisation and argue that organisations need to consider the potential benefits of 'synergistic collaboration' rather than 'conflicting separation' between different groups. The purpose of *Practitioner Research in Higher Education* is to contribute to academic development by:

- encouraging collaborative research and evaluation projects
- helping colleagues to share their practice across institutional boundaries through a supportive peer review process and – hopefully – subsequent publication.

In considering what form effective academic development might take, Brew (2002) directly addresses the link between research and teaching and argues for enquiry-based learning to become more significant for both students and academic staff. Reid and Petocz (2003) also pursue this argument for academic development through subject-specific pedagogical research. They argue that effective academic development work needs to focus on supporting subject discipline teams to develop their own pedagogical research projects and that the outcomes of these will help to shape teaching and learning development.

The *Practitioner Research in Higher Education* journal particularly welcomes submission of papers reporting pedagogical enquiry work that is rooted within subject disciplines and, for prolific subject teams, there is also the possibility of further subject discipline special issues.

In this special edition of *Practitioner Research in Higher Education* **Pugh** reports on a project that aims to explicitly integrate the development of emotional intelligence into the professional learning of himself and his students. An emotional intelligence framework is used to guide the observation and feedback by tutors and mentors of school teaching by student teachers. Such an approach is of relevance to work-based

and collaborative learning activity across a wide range of professional fields and subject disciplines, and it complements work by Mortiboys (2005) on the emotionally intelligent lecturer.

**Bloxham** uses teacher education cases to illustrate her argument that the conflicting purposes of assessment in higher education demand our attention. This requires us to review the resources, mainly lecturer and student time, currently put into summative assessment and consider how this effort might be shifted towards formative assessment activity. She argues that student teachers need to experience their own assessment 'for' and 'as' learning to help them to shape the assessment regimes within their own school classrooms.

The assessment of online activity is often used in order to motivate students to participate. **Smith** investigates the possible assessment of student teachers' contributions to structured online discussion and argues that in her context this does not appear to encourage effective learning.

**Toyn** sets out to nurture creative approaches to teaching and learning among student teachers and critically evaluates as a learning activity the creation of short, edited digital videos. Making and editing digital video is easy and quick and this technology has a contribution to make in teaching and learning. Perhaps, as Laurillard (2008) argues, the most effective approach is for lecturers to identify the educational problem first and then seek solutions from the appropriate technology.

Student teachers in the primary age range (pupils aged 4–11) all need to learn to teach mathematics. This is a topical issue of national concern and **Jackson** investigates student teacher anxieties about mathematics and the implications that this has for their school classroom practice. Student anxiety about mathematics is likely to have an impact on the wider learning of the key graduate skill of numeracy and on learning of methods in statistical analysis across a wide range of subject disciplines.

**Read and Hurford** report on their attempts to nurture independent learning by student teachers on a blended but largely distance-learning programme. Their early findings in this important area suggest some initial student resistance to course tutor team expectations of independent learning.

Together the six articles in the current issue provide some insight, within one professional field, into the widespread academic development work that is taking place through pedagogic enquiry in subject teams.

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