Editorial 9.1

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Abstract

Welcome to the first issue of Volume 9 of Journal of University Teaching and Learning (JUTLP) in 2012. Higher education institutions continue to adapt to the many changes occurring in education. Increasing pressures on systems and the people who work within them are becoming more evident. For this journal one such impact has been the submission of several papers which have evidence of plagiarism or self-plagiarism. Contributing factors may indeed be increased pressure to publish and a lack of understanding of what constitutes plagiarism amongst inexperienced authors. In the Higher Education Teaching and Learning group in Linkedin (http://tinyurl.com/HETL-SOTL) suggestions have been offered in terms of education for authors and reviewers to address the problem. It seems that new technologies, as well as those that have been around for quite some time, offer both advantages and disadvantages for academic activity. Fortunately, for many of our authors the use of technology to support teaching and learning is providing avenues for increased support for student learning.

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Several of the papers in this issue highlight the increased move to blended learning environments to support the needs of the changing student body. In our first paper, the impact of increasing student numbers in higher education is identified as a challenge by Bissonauth-Bedford and Stace in first year foreign language teaching, which they have addressed though the embedding of peer learning via a discussion space in their university's learning management system. This method was used to build on the face to face component of the first year French class to provide additional scaffolding for student learning in this group of eighty students whose previous experience of the language varied from none to five years. The paper analyses student discussion over the semester to determine the impact of using small mixed ability groups to extend their use of the French language.

In the next paper, Jungic, Kent and Menz also use a blended approach to teaching mathematics by determining where technology is most useful for calculus classes. They analyse a five year collection of survey data to support an approach to using online assignments across a number of disciplinary areas including science, engineering and social science calculus subjects. They also propose that a combination of face to face and online provides the optimal learning experience for their students.

The third and fourth papers focus on student access to self-directed support. Carmichael and Farrell propose an online environment for access to support materials specifically for the development of critical thinking skills. They provide a case study, building on substantial earlier work in the area, for providing both independent and group access to learning materials. Their evaluation of the resource included data collected through patterns of usage, examination of discussion within the site as well as surveys and semi-structured interviews. They identify that a standalone site can indeed support student learning for the development of such skills and look to future opportunities for further developing and sharing of the materials developed. Adamson, Brown and Fujimoto-Adamson take a different perspective as they examine the role of a self-access support centre in a physical campus in a new university in Japan. Their ethnography provides a wonderful insight to the challenges faced when establishing a new centre and role within the changing climates of higher education.

Czabanowska and her colleagues at Maastricht University take a new approach to Problem Based Learning (PBL) when they identify a real challenge for students and tutors of 'PBL fatigue' as students' attitudes to self-directed learning were diminished. They discuss some

interesting ways of addressing this problem through the development of a new instructional design model which focussed on additional time and better support for developing the cognitive skills required. Their three year study offers some useful new directions for PBL.

Hendry and Oliver, in the next paper for this issue, focus on ways of improving teaching through peer observation and the use of social cognitive theory to support their study of a group of lecturers in a teacher development program. They build on the substantial earlier work in this field and propose that the use of modelling and critical reflection have greater impact than feedback alone to inform new practice in the teaching space. Their study provides a useful direction for those considering such implementation in foundation teaching courses.

In the final paper Joseph discusses an aspect of authentic learning for internationalising the curriculum though music education. She describes ways of engaging students with many aspects of South African culture through the integration of assessments involving research and oral presentations with playing instruments and singing.

 As always, I must finish with my ongoing acknowledgment of all who are involved in making this journal the success that it is. Firstly, the Associate Editor, Dr Meg O'Reilly, for her support and allocation of reviewers; our reviewers and editorial panel for their consistent high standard and detailed feedback to our authors; and the many people involved in the background who keep the journal running though their roles in managing the website, the editing and layout of the journal.

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