Editorial 18:3 Celebrating women in higher education on International Women's Day

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Abstract

We have timed publishing our first standard issue of the year to coincide with International Woman's Day, 8 March 2021 to celebrate the contribution women have made to higher education. The first woman documented as teaching in a university was more than 800 years ago, and yet it is only the last century that the number of female academics has started to increase (Whaley, 2011). In Australia, the first university was established in 1851, yet it would be another 32 years until Julia Guerin graduated in 1883 from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in 1883 (Women's Museum of Australia, 2020). And another 10 years when Leonora Little graduated from Melbourne University with a Bachelor of Science in 1983. Despite these accomplishments in the late 19th century, it was not until 1959 when the first woman, Dorothy Hill, was awarded a Chair appointment (Chair of Geology) in an Australian university, and nearly a century before Australia has its first female Vice Chancellor, when Dianne Yerbury became the Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University in 1987, a position she held for twenty years. Australia's higher education history tells a clear story of the slow integration of women in higher education, particularly within the STEM fields. For example, Little graduated in 1893 with a Bachelor of Science, but it was 1928 before the first female Lecturer in Mathematics, Ethel Raybould was appointed, and another 36 years before Hanna Neumann became the first female Professor of Pure Mathematics in 1964. It was just over 60 years ago that Margaret Williams-Weir was the first female Indigenous Australian to graduate with a university qualification in 1959. Female Indigenous Australians remain under-represented in the Australian university graduate population. The current situation for Australian higher education still retains a dominance of males within academic roles, such as 30 percent more men in Associate and Full Professor roles than women (Devlin, 2021). And whilst there has been progress in some jurisdictions, such as the majority of Queensland vice chancellors are women in 2021, these continue to be the exception, for example only 28% of vice chancellors in Australia are women. International Woman's Day is an opportunity to reflect on the significant contribution women make in higher education in Australia and globally. We celebrate through the publication of this issue, with many female authors from across higher education globally.

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In an emerging adaption to the Journal, the first publication following the Editorial will be an expert commentary. The first of these for 2021 focuses on the challenges of publishing during the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and remaining relevant. **Crawford** discusses the opportunity to align the work of scholars to better reflect the conditions before, during, and beyond the pandemic. Indeed, the work of practitioners is to contextualise pre-pandemic studies within the new environment, and imagine a future beyond the challenges of vaccines and lockdowns.

Continuing our focus on International Women's Day, **Allen, et al.** provides a critical reflection of the literature related on equity for women in higher education. This piece examines the impact of higher education structure, policy, and leadership on employment, career, and leadership opportunities for women. These opportunities may be further exacerbated by the intersection between gender and race, culture, religion, or age. We acknowledge and are encouraging continuation of the work in this area. This paper heralds the call this week by the Journal for an upcoming Special Issue *Women and Leadership in Higher Education,* led by Professor Angela Carbone and Professor Kerryn Butler-Henderson. Details for the Special Issue will be available on the Journal website shortly.

Focussing on pedagogy in the practical anatomy classroom, **Whitburn et al.** used an iterative educational research design to compare students perception of the effectiveness of a multi-disciplinary team-taught format and a sole-taught format. Drawing on data from student surveys and interviews, they found that while both formats provided positive experiences, the team-taught format provided a richer learning experience. This was in part due to the diverse composition of the teaching team, which included lead and clinical educators, but also and perhaps significantly, the use of 'near-peer' demonstrators who were able to relate to students' challenges.

Larsen et al. paper, Short, multi-modal, pre-commencement transition programs for a diverse STEM cohort presents the Get Ready pre-commencement transition program, designed to cater for diverse students, particularly non-traditional. The paper has two components: it details the literature-informed design, which applies affective principles to build self-efficacy in students via developing attitudes and behaviours associated with success and then the evaluation of the design. A challenge posed by the authors is the disconnect between the understandings of transition reaching consensus among first-year experience experts/practitioners (and affirmed by their study) and what is accepted in the sector. While claiming success in the context of a short pre-commencement program, the authors point to the scalability of the program, and therefore, opportunities to extend such a program to an institution-wide transition approach. They also reflect on the challenge of shifting from a deficit construction of non-traditional students.

In a review drawing on national student experience data, **Arasaratnam-Smith et al.** discuss the outperformance of non-university higher education institutions against traditional institutions. The data draws on an in-depth case study analysis of Alphacrucis College to unpack reasons why the divergence in outcomes may be observed. The authors explored the data against different study modes, highlighting opportunities to disseminate benefits and challenges associated with alternate modalities. They reflect on the student experience, lecturer training and performance, and infrastructure as an output of content analysis of student experience surveys.

Hadiyanto et al. paper evaluates a novel approach to the development of 21st century skills in blended versus conventional learning environments. These 21st century skills can be difficult to translate in an online environment. An English Education subject at a university in Indonesia employed pedogeological principles to enhance students' capabilities, reporting a significantly higher integration of these skills in virtual classes compared to conventional classes. The blended learning model encouraged flexibility, communication, group work, and ideas sharing, which all correlated highly with these 21st century skills.

Another innovative use of technology was reported by **Mahardika et al.** to engage low English motivation learners. Through teaching video production skills, students learnt that English is a subject that matters, in turn increasing their motivation to learn English. Students reported a high level of agreement that video production assisted then in learning grammatical rules, improve their writing and speaking using English, and their confidence in using English. This technology is an enjoyable yet affordable way to increase motivation to learn English and provide feedback for their development.

Picking up on the important theme of feedback and supporting students' development of evaluative judgement, **Smith and Lowe's** study implemented and evaluated over two consecutive years, a co-design and feedback process for students producing a qualitative lab report in Social Psychology. Engaging students in the construction of the assessment criteria, and then implementing a process of tutor- and self-assessment, the authors report that the students found the process assisted them in

better understanding the expectations of the task and identifying areas to improve, as well as increasing their engagement in the task and with the feedback itself.

Similarly focussing on strategies that improve students' development of evaluative judgement, and using the theoretical frame of self-regulation, **Hawe, Dixon and Hamilton** report on their three-phased project to examine why and how educators use exemplars with their students. The study found three main reasons: clarifying task requirements, helping students evaluate the quality of their own work, and motivating and building students' self-efficacy. Importantly, they note that building in dialogic and interactive engagement with the exemplars in class (and not just placing them online for students' self-access) is a critical factor in catalysing students' ability to be more self-monitoring and self-regulated as learners.

In quite a different vein, and drawing attention to the possibilities and challenges of doing postcolonial pedagogical work, **Liddy** reflects on her own experiences of working with the topics of sustainable global development and global justice in the Irish higher education context. Bringing critical pedagogy, postcolonial perspectives, and active and participatory learning processes to her educational encounters with students, Liddy first describes two very different examples of her pedagogy: international volunteering preparations and a Sustainable Development lecture module. She then talks us through three critical tensions in doing this kind of work: structural tensions, pedagogical tensions, and her own reflexivity as a postcolonial educator.

Guimarães and Lima presents a local logistics and transportation curriculum change in Brazil away from traditional lectures towards a curriculum embracing problem-based learning. The study documents a mixed-methods evaluation of the outcomes of the change. Through a multi-phase evaluation process, the researchers found that 91 percent of students agreed that there were strong benefits to problem-based learning practices.

Abushammala et al. documents the ongoing effects of COVID-19 in Omani higher education. In the institution studied, 213 students participated in a survey to examine satisfaction with emergency remote teaching arrangements. These students tended to be dissatisfied with their transition online, and many students were concerned with their ability to pay tuition fees during the pandemic. This latter concern has been a consistent challenge facing higher education, outside of a pandemic environment, and will likely continue to do so during and beyond.

The use of self-directed learning was explored in a Saudi Arabia context by **Alghamdi**. The small sample of twenty postgraduate female students reported the self-directed learning during the crisis distance education resulted in an increased awareness of self-reflection, monitoring and evaluation. These skills developed during a time of crisis have long term impacts.

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