

Editors' introduction

In 2010 the university hosted two annual conferences focused on learning and teaching. The first, *Inspiring Learners: Equipping the Next Generation of Graduates*, explored the interplay between learning, teaching, employability and the wider world. The second conference, *Future Learningscapes: a 21st Century Challenge*, invited delegates to consider how the technologies that surround us, and now impinge on every aspect of our life, might shape future learning and teaching practices, and provide a better understanding of the approaches and environments needed in the decade ahead.

Although both conferences developed quite different themes, and attracted very different audiences and constituencies, the papers that emerged from the presentations addressed common challenges and issues. We believe that there is considerable value in capturing the process that conference presenters undergo in writing a proposal, presenting their work, and engaging the audience in a discussion of the issues, and then analysing these discussions and writing them up as an act of scholarship. The following chapters in our third issue of *Compass*, then, are much more than a set of dry academic conference papers – they are the result of interactions and reflections with other practitioners and research peers about their research into teaching and (technology-enhanced) learning.

We have maintained a similar format to previous volumes. In his opinion piece, James Derounian provides a brief, lively report, giving readers who were not at the conference a flavour of the day. His reflection

on David Robinson's citing of Mandela echoes many practitioners attitudes to teaching - better to do it slow...and right. The pressure is always for immediate action. His conclusion that inspirational teaching and learning is the payoff for increased student

debt will strike a chord with many university managers keen to add value within the context of increased fees and competition.

The three case studies provide us with many new ideas and strategies that are transferrable across subjects. Although different disciplines undoubtedly have signature pedagogies, the common thread that joins these case studies together is learner engagement.

Sandra Clarke discusses how technical subjects can be made more interesting by using strategic and highly engaging methods of teaching and assessment. She provides a set of principles which are

illustrated with novel examples, such as commissioning students to take photographs of the 'dry' subject for use in lecture material and demonstrates that this varied approach to teaching not only engages learners more, it produces better results.

Rose Heaney's case study from the University of East London has lessons for many in other institutions and on courses not remotely related to herbal medicine. Much of the innovation echoes the use of computer marked assignments by the Open University and, collective feedback to the cohort. Heaney reflects on the need to develop an academic community in which staff develop with their students, but notes that students need support to make the transition to new modes and initiatives - we should not assume they are all digital natives. Heaney's model extols many of the benefits of e-learning and proposes evolutionary change – successive innovations and introductions from the bottom up, and with peer involvement, is, in her opinion, much more likely to succeed than revolution, particularly if imposed by those who do not have to implement proposals. Our history is littered with such initiatives.

Sandra Rankin and Rob Willson recount how their initial experience of working with psychology students to create digital posters using video and YouTube resulted in a new approach to scaffolding the learning tasks and its assessment. Their example

illustrates that in our brave new world, we need teachers who are prepared to take calculated risks and create new techniques for assessment.

Following these illuminating case studies, Diana Bath provides insights into the emotional aspects of learning. She uses her background of Dance Movement Psychotherapy to argue that if emotional responses to learning are not integrated, then the learning process may not be complete. For Bath the narrative of 'personalisation' can reduce the learning context to a mere set of learning needs and strategies. Personalised learning calls for personalised pedagogies.

Jennefer Hart, Theo Zamenopoulos and Steve Garner describe their innovative approach to the practice of the 'atelier' teaching model in undergraduate art and design education at the Open University. They experimented with the use of a range of learning enhanced technologies to create a modern studio learning environment. Their findings reveal a number of benefits and challenges for staff and students, and provide insights into the issues facing staff and their institutions in developing new learningscapes in design education.

Andy Coverdale, LeRoy Hill and Tracy Sisson from the University of Nottingham describe how their student-led initiative of introducing social media into formal graduate training engaged PhD students in a process of sharing expertise as well as contributing to their own professional development. Although they recognise that differences in individual skillsets did impact upon their peers' ability to use the technology, they provide a convincing rationale that social media tools now play an important part in the development of academic and professional network development.

Wayne Barry presents findings from the work of the iBorrow project, a self-service laptop loan initiative that coincided with the new build development of Augustine House at Canterbury Christ Church University. Using Radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags, the project was able to map the ways that learners were using these devices, and

provide new insights to learner behaviour in using mobile technology in large flexible learning spaces.

One of the keynote speakers at the conference, Bernhard Niesner, the co-creator of Busuu.com, discussed the uptake of his web 2.0 language learning site with over 2 million users. In his article, Billy Brick, from Coventry University, reported on his experience of integrating the web 2.0 language learning tool, Livemocha. His valuable analysis of the various sites that are now emerging identifies the benefits for learners, but also discusses some of the issues and challenges in integrating these resources and approaches in formal language teaching settings. There are significant implications for institutions that realise the importance for employability and diversity of speaking other languages.

We believe that a conference edition, as our journal matures, is a valuable addition to the series, allowing readers to reflect upon ideas and innovations and inspiring new submissions from practitioners and researchers.

We hope that you will find something of interest.

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