

## Editorial

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Innovative Practice in Higher Education Journal, which is an opportunity for colleagues in HE to share ideas, innovations and experiences of learning and teaching. This issue comprises a selection of peer reviewed papers and short papers, as well as posters and book reviews.

The Articles section could be described as following the student journey. Boath, Machin, Dixon, Thomas, O'Connell and Taylor focus on enhancing the experience of students who are new to HE. Their paper shares the results of a study to evaluate the use of "FLO", a mobile phone automated text messaging service, designed to provide pastoral support in order to help alleviate the stress and anxieties that some new undergraduate students experience, with a view to reducing student attrition. Meanwhile, Turner and Plant examine strategies to engage students in their learning, discussing the use of popular culture as an aid to learning in a range of settings, using a case study of "The Simpsons" (the animated US TV show). Tsaroucha and Randall discuss the involvement of postgraduate students in curriculum design, focusing on the development of a pilot research and statistics course.

The three short papers in this issue elaborate and contextualise practical strategies which can be used to enhance student learning. Wiseman presents a seven stage framework to guide undergraduate students through the process of writing a literature review – with a view to supporting students and alleviating the demands on project tutors. Martin and Tapp discuss the use of the asynchronous multimedia communication tool VoiceThread, including examples of embedding it within a virtual learning environment. Meanwhile, Matthew Jones, frustrated by the many long, bland and poorly produced academic video blogs available online, set about piloting the use of "micro" video-blogging – hence "5 Minutes with Matt".

Each of the four posters presented in the Posters section has an accompanying podcast which gives more context and detail to the content. Woolliscroft explores the integration of technology into teaching and learning with Operating Department Practitioner students. Wood identifies the shift from static pictures to dynamic visualisations used for learning, and indeed the debate regarding the relative effectiveness of each. Based on this, he reports the results of a study which aimed to compare how able university students could focus, engage and understand with the topic specific content between animation and static picture conditions during an exam revision session. In an issue of the journal with much focus on technology supported learning, it is refreshing to include an alternative perspective. Dawson questions our reliance on technology, exploring the extent to which it may be hindering the creativity in today's students of technical theatre.

## Book reviews

Who better than a current student to review a study skills guide? Zhandra Belgasmi (current student) kindly submitted a review of Groppel-Wegener's "Writing Essays by Pictures". Our other book reviewers for this edition, Merry, Partridge, Burton and McFarlane, also reviewed the books listed below.

Boud, D. & Molloy, E. (eds.) (2013) *Feedback in Higher and Professional Education: Understanding it and Doing it Well*. London: Routledge.

Ryan, J. (ed.) (2013) *Cross-Cultural Teaching and Learning for Home and International Students* Oxon: Routledge

Richie, L. (2016). *Fostering Self-Efficacy in Higher Education*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Shephard, K. (2015). *Higher Education for Sustainable Development*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

I hope you find value in this varied selection of practical strategies, research, recommended reading and challenges to established practice – and perhaps consider sharing your own ideas and experiences through this inclusive and innovative journal.