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AUTHENTIC TEACHING AND ENGAGED LEARNING

Trish Chaplin-Cheyne

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Trish Chaplin-Cheyne

A warm welcome to this sixteenth issue of *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Learning and Teaching)*. This year, our main issue returns to an open theme, although last year's focus on generative AI continues to be a topic of discussion. Our authors come from polytechnics and universities across Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. Overall, the eight articles in this issue explore the challenges and opportunities currently facing vocational and tertiary educators. Whether by offering reflections on practice or evidence-based original research, the contributions to this year's journal show how kaiako and support staff continue to adapt and evolve in a fast-changing world.

Catering to diverse learners

As in previous years, we begin *Scope (Learning and Teaching) 16* by considering our ākonga; specifically, those learners who may be in the minority at higher education institutions. The opening contribution from Rachael Burke considers international postgraduates on an early childhood education programme. International students bring a range of experiences and backgrounds to their education and training in Aotearoa New Zealand, itself an increasingly diverse country. However, some learners can find the unfamiliar context and bicultural curriculum of teacher training in this country difficult to navigate. In her article, Rachael Burke reflects on three strategies she has used to prepare international master's students for practicum in early childhood centres, and for wider success in their study.

The second contribution from Warren Granger considers how we support non-traditional tertiary students aged 25 and over. For many people, the 'traditional' path from school into tertiary learning is no longer the norm. Career changes, professional development, and lifelong learning bring increasing numbers of learners into vocational and higher education. Many international students also fall into this group beginning or returning to education later in life. Warren Granger's research hypothesised that self-efficacy was key to success for these learners. His contribution reports perspectives from both teachers and learning support staff on how to foster academic self-efficacy in our non-traditional tertiary students.

In the classroom

The next two contributions to this issue take us into the classroom and pedagogy in action. First, Edgar Burns from the University of Waikato describes how to use micro case studies in business education. His flexible, time-saving method engages students in discussions grounded in real business stories, allowing them to grasp and apply concepts in a user-friendly way. The technology involved can be as simple as photocopying newspaper articles or can be adapted to online learning environments.

Although the technologies discussed in John Mumford's article are considerably more advanced, the principles underlying good critical engagement with course content remain. Mumford reflects on information technology students' use of AI, and how these tools both help and hinder critical thinking in learners. He points out that AI tools have the potential to enhance students' critical thinking, but not without costs if used unwisely. Both authors' approaches encourage kaiako to develop learners' confidence in their own problem-solving and work-ready skills.

Course design and assessment

The issue now moves into course design and assessment, where artificial intelligence is also reshaping practice. The next article comes from lecturers in business at Otago Polytechnic's Auckland International Campus who have had to rethink learning design and assessment in the light of developments in AI. While experiential learning was already embedded into teaching practice at OPAIC, the authors reflect on how AI exposed assumptions around how ākonga were being asked to demonstrate their learning. Chintankumar Patel and colleagues report on how changes in technology prompted them to improve assessments and course design, and introduce their new framework to help others negotiate this process.

Despite technological advances, education in Aotearoa New Zealand remains a bicultural context guided by the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In "Authentically Weaving Mātauranga Māori into Outdoor Education," experienced educator David Williams reflects on what it means for non-Māori to enact their responsibilities under te Tiriti in a field inherently concerned with our relationships with te whenua (the land) and te taiao (the environment). In the past, outdoor education has over-emphasised individual pursuits and achievement, rather than acknowledging the histories and cultural significance of the land. David Williams's research asked outdoor educators what it might mean to take a more place-based approach to their work, one that integrated an evolving sense of identity as tangata Tiriti in partership with iwi Māori.

Professional development and evaluation of teaching quality

The final two contributions to this issue turn towards teacher identity and professional development. "Teacher Identity Shaping in Vocational Educators Transitioning From Industry to Education" reviews literature on how kaiako form and maintain an identity as teachers. Kaiako in vocational education and training (VET) often come from industry and are valued for their workplace or subject knowledge. In my review, I argue that teacher training for VET kaiako needs to take this complex dual role into account, centring the creation of teacher identity. Professional development needs to provide novice kaiako opportunities to reflect on their transition from industry expert to educator and to engage with colleagues in the co-construction of a strong teacher identity.

Closing this issue, Patrick Gillett and colleagues from Southern Cross University in Australia describe the development of an evidence- and theory-based rubric for evaluating the quality and teaching of online courses. Student evaluations of teaching are widely used but often lack theoretical grounding and are difficult to validate statistically. In this article, the authors outline the process behind their 23-item 'teaching presence' rubric. The rubric offers a structured framework for consistently assessing teaching, without losing sight of the benefits of professional judgement, collegial insights, and context-specific understanding. The authors' aim is to offer a robust resource for measuring and improving the quality of online and blended courses, while also contributing to the ongoing discussion about how best to evaluate teaching and learning.

Learning design special issue

We are also proud to present, alongside this main issue of the journal, a special issue of *Scope (Learning and Teaching)* on Learning Design. *Scope (Learning and Teaching) 17* is guest edited by Amy Benians and Daniel Fridberg of Te Ama Ako | Learning and Teaching Development at Otago Polytechnic. As Learning Design takes shape as a standalone profession in a world of increasingly flexible, online learning, this issue offers a timely account of contemporary approaches in this field. We encourage readers to discover these complementary publications and enjoy a range of thought-provoking reflections from teachers and researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.

Trish Chaplin-Cheyne (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2709-572X) is the Director of Te Ama Ako | Learning and Teaching Development (LTD), where she is responsible for developing and implementing the learning and teaching strategic direction and workplan to implement the goals and objectives of Otago Polytechnic's strategic plan. Te Ama Ako (LTD) are tasked with ensuring that Otago Polytechnic programmes and courses are designed to best practice standards, that our academic staff have the full range of knowledge and skills needed to facilitate learner success, and that learners enjoy an outstanding experience with Otago Polytechnic. Trish holds a Master of Educational Leadership and is the editor for *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Learning and Teaching)*. She is also a member of various polytechnic-wide committees, task groups and panels. Trish joined Otago Polytechnic in 2015, as a Learning Facilitator involved in the Designing for Learner Success initiative. Her areas of particular interest are curriculum and assessment design.