

scope

Contemporary Research Topics

Learning & Teaching 8
Sustainable Practice

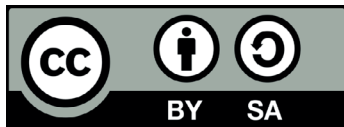
November 2019

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Scope (Learning and Teaching) aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in blended learning for emerging scholars. It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding learning theories and practices and seeks to address current and topical matters in education. Its focus is on building a sense of community amongst researchers from an array of New Zealand institutions with a goal of linking in, and stepping up to a wider international community.

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This issue of Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Learning and Teaching) takes the theme of "Sustainable Practice". It aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in the field of sustainable practice (including resilience, sustainability science etc). It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding issues of practice, theory, history and their relationships as manifested through the experiences of researchers and practitioners in sustainable practice. The focus of this issue is the integration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Formats include: editorials; articles; perspectives; essays; artist and designer pages; logs and travel reports; reports on and reviews of exhibitions, projects, residencies and publications; and moving, interactive works (to be negotiated with the editors for the online version, with stills to appear in the hardcopy version). Other suggested formats will also be considered; and special topics comprising submissions by various contributors may be tendered to the editors. All material will be published both in hardcopy and online. High standards of writing, proofreading and adherence to consistency through the APA (6th Edition) referencing style are expected. For more information, please refer prior issues for examples. A short biography of no more than 50 words; as well as title; details concerning institutional position and affiliation (where relevant); and contact information (postal, email and telephone number) should be provided on a cover sheet, with all such information withheld from the body of the submission. Low resolution images with full captions should be inserted into texts to indicate where they would be preferred; while high resolution images should be sent separately.

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Sam Mann

In writing an editorial such as this one, the task is fourfold - to describe a theme that binds the contributions in a way that makes the whole greater than the sum of the parts; to highlight particular features of contributions; to look to the future, to espouse on challenges raised by the papers therein; and lastly, to thank all the people who contributed time and expertise to make it happen

First. The theme. This is where it gets tricky. The call for papers for this issue included the notion of “integrating the Sustainable Development Goals”. And indeed, all the papers in this issue align with at least one of the SDGs and all of the SDGs are included. For some this link is clear; for others it is a bit more tenuous. Some, such as Marianna Cherrington’s description of the role of Environmental Social and Governance Sustainability clearly fits in Goal 8 but it also has links to others. Perhaps because transport doesn’t have a goal of its own, Kawtar Tani’s study of Transportation habits of students can be seen to contribute to efficiency of energy use (Goal 7), transport infrastructure (Goal 9). Urban systems (Goal 11), responsible consumption (goal 12), education (Goal 4), and possibly addressing poverty (Goal 1). Perhaps more genuinely contributing to a wide range of goals, Ana Terri’s conversation with Claire Goode about Ana’s experiences in volunteering in Vanuatu. Ana’s various projects contributed to reducing poverty (Goal 1), help subsistence farmers with education (Goal 2 and 4), developing capabilities (Goal 4), reducing inequalities (Goal 10), social justice (Goal 16), Life on Land (Goal 15) and is a clear partnership approach to achieving the goals (Goal 17).

But the SDGs are not supposed to be a checklist, a scorecard to pick a winner by who touches the most goals. Rather the brief analysis above highlights for us the diversity of areas covered by the papers in this issue. From Mary Butler’s social innovation for wellbeing through vision, to Tori Clearwater’s description of art providing the vision by which people can “see”. Hey, there’s a theme - “vision”, but we’re grasping at straws, probably plastic which would become part of Tori’s wall. But while we should celebrate the diversity of the papers, it seems to be cheating to describe the fact that we can’t see a theme is the theme.

So what else could we describe as the theme for the issue? There is a definite cluster around education. Hamish Smith and his colleagues’ description of frustration - “everyone had the same frustration but for the lack of model for doing something...nothing was being done”. This led to an eWaste repurposing scheme which is not just in an educational institution, it is treated as an opportunity for education. The solution is not treated merely as a materials flow, but as a solution integrated with learning (this has interesting echoes of Finn Boyle’s development of a learning system integrated with composting described in our previous issue). Mazin Bahho’s paper aims to educate students about what sustainable living practices are through engaging them in a reflective practice inquiry of designing a demonstration project for sustainable building. In designing the repurposing of a log cabin as a demonstration of sustainable building, students move from a transactional interaction of designing a thing, to realising the capability of design to reveal new understandings of ecological and sustainability issues. Similar transformations can be seen in Emma Anderton and her nursing student colleagues’ (with Jan Ross) work in eScooters. What started out as a simple brief to work with a community group became an insightful project about motivations.

Overlapping with this cluster around education, are papers with a creative emphasis. Meg Brasell-Jones and Pam McKinlay describe the role of the oceans and argue that "for water quality to change, we have to change what we do on land". Like Tori Clearwater, they take the stance that art has an important role in challenging and inspiring people into action - reaching new audiences to inspire the public.

Clearwater describes the "attempt to create a space where people bring their own knowledge and prior experiences to the work as they recognise materials that exist in their daily lives. Through this realisation, I hope the work will get people thinking and start a conversation".

Both describe the artists' visual response rather than aesthetically pleasing versions of data. Clearwater describes "the use of materials and products to create 'beautiful' works that become object as the message and product become apparent".

Otago Polytechnic's "Our People Make a Better World" describes all the papers. The cynic might argue that you would be hard pushed to find a paper in a sustainability journal that didn't meet this but we like it so that's what it is.

So that's the first editorial task - a theme. And task two- the highlights seem to have come along for the ride already.

So, third task, what can we learn from all this? What does this collection of papers tell us about sustainability? Only one takes a pillars approach. All describe a thriving approach to sustainability (rather than a reduction approach). Only two begin with a threat and then only briefly before focussing on positive action. Only one has an undertone of pessimism. None take an explicitly regenerative approach except perhaps Ana Terry's work in Vanuatu where she advises us to slow down and to build relationships. We would like to see more systems approaches - more joined up thinking. Mary Butler's social innovation for vision comes close in this respect.

Last and most heartfelt. We would like to thank our contributors, reviewers, editorial board, research office, and colleagues. Without your efforts towards making a difference the world would be in a poorer place.

Finally, to paraphrase from Tori Clearwater's paper we hope that you are interested in this collection of papers, we now invite you to read them, as they reveal their meaning or you discover the meaning of your own.