EXPLORING CONNECTIONS: OUR 10TH EDITION

David McMaster and Trish Chaplin-Cheyne

Welcome to the 2021 edition of *Scope: Learning and Teaching.* As with our last issue, this tenth edition issue also has an open theme. Despite the disruptions wrought by the global pandemic, we received a record number of submissions for this edition which address challenges and concepts relating to programmes, people and pedagogy that inform contemporary understandings and practices of learning and teaching.

CURRICULUM DESIGN/EMPLOYABILITY

As educators, we understand the need for continual course and programme review and redesign to ensure that our learners receive the best possible learning experiences, and that the capabilities and knowledges acquired position graduates to meet the needs of key stakeholders, whether in industry, the professions or government agencies. The curriculum design/employability nexus is explored in a cluster of papers that focus on the importance of keeping abreast of relevant research literature and the importance of ongoing stakeholder consultation.

Amber Paterson provides a research snapshot of the outcomes of a major research project at Otago Polytechnic investigating the alignment of the key learner capabilities embedded in its programmes with those identified by alumni and employers as being the most important. The research found that the core capabilities identified by teaching staff – "communicates effectively verbally," "works in teams," "solves problems" and "communicates effectively in writing" – align with both employer expectations and alumni workplace experiences.

As part of their five-yearly review of Toi Ohomai's Bachelor of Nursing programme, Judith Honeyfield and Reghuram Ravindran undertook research which examined the mental health and addictions teaching, learning and assessment components of the programme. Feedback from stakeholders led to important changes in the programme including the introduction of mental health themes to all papers across the Bachelor of Nursing curriculum. Also at Toi Ohomai, Cath Fraser, Judith Honeyfield and Mary White present an extensive literature review of aged healthcare research with a view to gaining a deeper understanding of the capabilities that nursing and healthcare students require in order to provide exemplary services to seniors in their care. They also explore how iterative programme development can ensure that elder care is viewed as an attractive and valued career choice.

Bradley Hannigan and Dilhan Athapaththu's contribution presents the findings of their research undertaken with Sri Lankan international students who graduated from an applied management programme. The insights provided by the research participants suggested a range of possible enhancements to the programme, but also prompted the researchers to reconsider what is meant by vocational learning in the context of equipping international learners with work-ready skills, particularly for graduates entering a new (work) culture. Helen Geytenbeek, Dr Lesley Gill, Rachel Byars and Melissa Clarke-Fuller's research with learners in their Improving Organisational Performance paper at Otago Polytechnic explores learner's resistance to teamwork. While, as the authors emphasise, working in diverse teams is a key employability skill for business majors, student reflections on their experiences indicate that when faced with group conflict, they tended to avoid conflict rather than work through it with team members. This insight led to the redesign of a paper, with a stronger focus on team management skills and an increased emphasis on critical reflection.

One of the criticisms often levelled at information technology (IT) education is that the knowledge and skills students acquire date very quickly. However, as John Mumford demonstrates in his contribution, critical thinking in IT is particularly vital today as we move from a mindset of knowing how to apply IT solutions to well-understood situations to one of being able to think critically about problems and identify solutions to unknown issues. As Mumford suggests, this requires shifting the focus away from whether something does or does not work to thinking about why certain solutions work, thus leading to greater cognitive engagement with tasks. In line with this thinking, Tara Malone's article emphasises the importance of formative assessment to encouraging deep learning and the building of work-readiness for new graduates. This mode of assessment, she argues, instils a range of attributes and skills in learners including self-regulation and reflection, self-efficacy and self–other interpersonal skills.

Roz Tocker's fascinating article, "A Starry Starry Night," rounds out this section. Tocker describes an innovative approach to the teaching of indigenous knowledge and values to international food and beverage students, explored through the design and preparation of a Matariki dinner/banquet. Reflecting on this experience, she explains that the event led to "epiphanies" for teachers and students alike in preparing for this major cultural event, an outcome which, Tocker reveals, "completely changed my own teaching pedagogy."

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY/LEARNING ANALYTICS

In "Mining for Gold," Claire Goode and colleagues highlight the increasing importance of learning analytics to the design and redesign of online and blended courses. Through this data, educators are able to discern not only when and how learners access courses but, crucially, which components of a course they access, and for how long. The researchers also focus on the ethical issues thrown up by learning analytics and the need for transparent policies and practices that protect user confidentiality. They draw our attention to the importance of the Ōritetanga learner analytics ethics framework (2021) produced by New Zealand's Tertiary Education Commission.

In her timely contribution, Terri Brian reminds us that although educational technology is a powerful tool that can open up access to learning opportunities, particularly for marginalised and excluded learner populations, an overdependence on edtech may also lead to (unintended) negative effects. She argues that it is vital that, as with other sub-disciplines in education (curriculum studies, pedagogy, work-based learning), we adopt a critical theory perspective. As Brian reminds us, "far from being neutral, educational technology helps to convey values and biases that reflect its development and carries with it certain conceptions about learning and teaching."

STUDENT EXPERIENCE FOCUS

As Amy Benians and Nathan Laurie point out, while developing employability skills in learners is important, the social and personal outcomes of vocational education also need to be a focus of vocational education. Through their collaborative work, the authors demonstrate the value of a pedagogical model of learning based on teacher–learner co-creation as they worked together to organise a student voice symposium. This spirit of co-creation is also explored in Amber Fraser-Smith's article where she describes how, in the context of a learner-centred approach, her classes with Syrian refugees became more collaborative as she moved away from a general understanding of learner needs to a new learning environment where learners were able to identify their specific knowledge gaps and have these addressed. Also with a learner focus, Trudy Pocock and Anthea Fester advocate for alternative pathways to vocational education for learners who are in care and who may also experience behavioural difficulties and/or mental health issues. Charlotte Chisnell, Mandy Pentecost and Sue Hanna's research also examines the distinctive challenges and barriers to the learning needs of what they call an "invisible population" – young carers and young adult carers. Their case study explores the motivations, obstacles and coping strategies experienced by a range of 18-24-year-old learners undertaking tertiary study while also

managing the demands of family responsibilities. They call for closer cooperation between tertiary researchers and professionals in the field in order to enhance the learning opportunities and experiences of young carers.

Exploring how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on learner experiences, Emma Collins and Josie Crawley describe the impact on Year 2 Bachelor of Nursing students dealing with interruptions to their clinical placements. As the authors describe, the resilience and reflections of both lecturers *and* learners produced valuable insights that were integrated into the programme.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The next cluster of articles focusses on teacher professional development and also learner facilitation pedagogies. Kawar Tani kicks off this section in an article provocatively titled "Those Who Can Do, Teach." Tani argues that vocational educators' professional development should include their own continuing work-based learning, in addition to maintaining their professional currency in learning and teaching and research.

Examining the approach to professional development at Otago Polytechnic, learning and teaching specialists Amy Benians and Danny Fridberg explore how the delivery of professional development might move from a hierarchical "transmissive" mode to a more bidirectional "transformative" experience for both provider and recipient. Interestingly, this approach to professional development is picked up in an article by David Woodward and colleagues which describes their community of practice initiative, focussed on exploring the range of constructivist theories and models that inform their respective approaches to learning facilitation. Marcia Johnson, Martin Andrew and Glenys Ker also turn their attention to learning facilitation, arguing that professional learning within self-directed educational frameworks is increasingly transdisciplinary, with each participant offering their particular experiences and learning to form what they call "eclectic critical conversations." This notion of eclectic learning is further explored in Johnson's paper, which also emphasises the intersubjective nature of professional development and the importance of trust and empathy to "constructive critical conversations."

The final contribution to this edition of *Scope* comes from Trish Chaplin-Cheyne and presents a critical review of transformational leadership. While this form of leadership is highly valued in higher education, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand, Chaplin-Cheyne points out that a significant gender gap remains at the executive leadership level. This is particularly evident in the New Zealand Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics sector, where only three women hold chief executive positions compared to 11 men. This imbalance will hopefully be addressed by the wide-ranging Reform of Vocational Education initiative currently underway.

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David McMaster is a principal lecturer and academic mentor in the College of Work-based Learning, Otago Polytechnic. He is currently completing a PhD on transnational higher education in the Persian Gulf.
 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1041-9991

Trish Chaplin-Cheyne is the director of Learning and Teaching Development at Otago Polytechnic, where she is responsible for the learning and teaching development service team. This team is tasked with ensuring that OP programmes and courses are designed to best practice standards; that 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. She is involved with facilitating on the Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education and enjoys being in the classroom environment. 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.
 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2709-572X