

Editorial Introduction to the Journal of Learning and Student Experience

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INTRODUCTION

The past few years has witnessed a proliferation of new journals in the fields of educational research. This is due to the fact that enhancing student learning experiences has become very important in Higher Education (HE) due to increased student enrollment and diversification (Newman *et al.*, 2004; Barber *et al.*, 2013; Chowdry *et al.*, 2013; Hornsby and Osman, 2014). Therefore, the publication of the first volume of still another Journal focusing on those areas deserves some introductory comments.

The main aim of the Journal of Learning and Student Experience (JoLaSE) is to promote empirical and theoretical research into processes of student learning experiences, development, and instruction in, or relevant to Higher and Further Educational (FE) settings. The Journal does not exclude any scientific discipline, nor any disciplinary perspective. The only criterion is that these diverse disciplines and perspectives should contribute to the aim of acquiring a deeper understanding of student learning experiences and instructional processes. Hence, the ultimate goal is to make a contribution to the improvement of instruction and student learning experience.

The aspiration to start JoLaSE is entirely in line with the aim of the University of Bolton to offer an even more exciting and challenging student experience with high levels of proactive student support. It is in this promising and potentially fertile context that the Journal intends to be an international, multi-disciplinary forum for the publication of the most advanced high-quality research in the areas of student learning, instruction and teaching. Our audience is broad and includes academics, teachers, students, managers and researchers whose daily responsibility is to enhance student learning experiences. The articles published in the Journal will also provide academic recognition for our colleagues producing the research we all need to develop more successful educational programs.

The Journal welcomes several types of contributions: research articles, reviews, case studies, opinion pieces, workshop and conference papers, and book reviews. The manuscripts may represent a variety of theoretical perspectives and different methodological approaches - quantitative as well as qualitative. They may related to a diversity of settings - learning environments for special educational needs, vocational and industrial training of various kinds,

permanent education, and informal educational settings. The major criteria in the review and selection procedures are the significance of the contribution to the area of student learning experiences and instruction, as well as the technical quality of the manuscripts.

OVERVIEW OF ARTICLES IN THIS VOLUME

Research on the current practices and prospective approaches to promote equitable and high-quality learning and teaching has undergone tremendous changes over the past five years. Moreover, it has begun to produce gradually an empirically underpinned knowledge base for the design of powerful learning environments. This inaugural volume features eighteen articles covering a wide variety of topics related to teaching, learning and the student experience.

The flipped classroom has been gaining popularity in recent years. However, the literature suggests that students tend to prefer in-person lectures. [Williamson \(2018\)](#) suggests that video lectures being produced by lecturers who are not personally known to students, is a potential reason for them tending to prefer in-person lectures to video lectures. In addition, [Williamson \(2018\)](#) provides evidence that a low number of pre-prepared pages in a video lecture function as a trigger of student engagement in the flipped-classroom environment.

Research-informed teaching is another successful instructional model. It offers opportunities for the development of research skills, including critical analysis and problem-solving, and promotes an understanding of the research processes through which knowledge is generated. In this volume, [Poulis and Charnock \(2018\)](#) describe a collaborative research-informed teaching approach leading to individually composed assignments, aiming at developing an undergraduate research skill set and writing performance.

Providing information about, and access to, library resources and services is a crucial for research-informed teaching. Supported by the American company, Springshare, LibGuides is used by nearly 5,000 libraries worldwide to provide online information on library services. [Taylor \(2018\)](#) describes how a university library sought to improve the student learning experience with the implementation of LibGuides.

Over the last two decades there has been a surge in scholarly interest in student writing in HE. [Bailey \(2018\)](#) provides a critical review of the developments in HE which have shaped and defined the experience of both learning and teaching. [Bailey's \(2018\)](#) article considers the role of student academic writing in subject learning at university by making the case for embedding student writing and academic literacy

pedagogy in curricula in the contemporary context of HE.

[Kitchener \(2018\)](#) provides an overview of characteristics frequently associated with adult education and offers a brief historical synopsis of some of the main developments. In connection with this, knowledge and clear understanding of the major educational theories and the thinkers behind them is essential in order to appreciate how different practices impact on student learning experiences. This is the content of a book that has been reviewed by [Olukoga \(2018\)](#) in this volume.

Erasmus+ supports training periods for staff working in HE institutions. Several pieces of research suggest that mobile staff working in HE often become more active, more intellectually thriving and also, in some cases, more visibly successful in their careers. [Kuti and Grundy \(2018\)](#), having been abroad twice with Erasmus+, share their experience and viewpoint on the benefits of Erasmus+ activities for staff, their school/ academic services and students.

On another level, other articles in this volume address student-academic staff interactions. In this line, [Gurbutt and Gurbutt \(2018\)](#) outline some useful strategies for responding to negative student feedback while also keeping it in perspective. The reflection by [Sun et al. \(2018\)](#) focuses on 'how to motivate Chinese students' using the lecturer's personal influence. This type of support could allow the Chinese students to be more engaged in the class or any other learning activities.

Another approach to increase student engagement is through guest lectures. Guest speeches are usually based on the speaker's own experiences and knowledge. [Turner \(2018\)](#) offers a personal reflection on delivering a presentation at an external organization.

Studying at university can be hard work and, sometimes, students get so much advice about student life. In his article, [Dougan \(2018\)](#) describes 9 ½ things he wished he had known as a university student. This is the text of a talk he gave at a student conference and it is written in a conversational style. In this line, there are the three different reflective articles submitted by [Coles \(2018\)](#), [Higgins \(2018\)](#), and [Walker \(2018\)](#), who provide insights gained and lessons learnt in attending a HE institution.

In the first volume of JoLaSE, there is also room for discussions related to FE. This is because a significant part of the expansion in HE provision has been provided by FE colleges. Interestingly, the FE and Skills Sector is large and diverse and incorporates: community learning, FE and Sixth Form Colleges, employers and apprentice-

ships, independent training providers, offender learning, public services, charities and the voluntary sector. Daikou and Telfer (2018) provide an examination of the current roles and responsibilities of the teacher in the FE and Skills Sector, whereas Sawyer and Stevens (2018) focus on the development of 'scholar teachers' in respect of their current self-identity and their aspirations for the future. Trying to integrate the two very different worlds, Andrews *et al.* (2018) disseminate, via a case study, research and reflection on teaching practices which sought to address the needs of first year BA Theatre degree students who were transitioning from a BTEC performing arts background.

CONCLUSION

Taking the ongoing developments of the field into account, we seem to face an exciting future in the study of learning and instruction. The growing interaction between scholars representing different domains of expertise, will lead to the improvement of research methodologies as well as to the further elaboration, enrichment, and validation of theories of teaching-learning processes in a variety of instructional settings. As a forum for the communication and discussion of theoretical ideas and empirical results, JoLaSE intends to be a vehicle for progress in those directions.

The birth of JoLaSE comes from a long process and we took all the necessary steps to make it a high-calibre publication. We are relying on the collaboration of all our editors, reviewers and contributors to make it a contemporary, lively and relevant forum. Hence, we would like to thank the JoLaSE community, who have both submitted and reviewed articles by adding and sharing their knowledge. We hope you will enjoy reading our first volume, and that you find these articles useful to stimulate your research into the vibrant field of student learning experiences.

Please join us by contributing to this growing community of scholars and scholarship.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors confirm being the sole contributors of this work and approved it for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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