

Editors' Introduction to Special Theme Issue: Meanings Emerging in Practice (Part 3)

Kaye Cleary (clearyk@usq.edu.au), Patrick Alan Danaher (danaher@usq.edu.au),
Warren Midgley (midgleyw@usq.edu.au), Shirley O'Neill (oneills@usq.edu.au) and
Jeong-Bae Son (sonjb@usq.edu.au)
Faculty of Education, University of Southern Queensland, Australia

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Articles in Part 3

This issue publishes the third and final set of refereed papers from the first wave proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Pedagogies and Learning, held at the Springfield Campus of the University of Southern Queensland in Australia on 27 and 28 September 2007. This third conference in the series focused on “meanings emerging in practice” as a lens for examining and evaluating multiple enactments of pedagogies and learning.

10 anonymously peer refereed articles have been selected for publication in this third issue. Each article engages with a specific theme nominated by the conference organisers as a useful means of identifying whether and how pedagogies and learning can be maximised through meanings emerging in practice.

The first article, by Patrick Alan Danaher, Geoff Danaher and Beverley Moriarty, contributes to the theme of researching personal pedagogies by interrogating the perhaps over-used term “learner-centredness” from the perspectives of their separate and shared interests in transformative learning, self-efficacy and social presence. Drawing on their lengthy experience across multiple disciplines, delivery modes and educational levels at two Australian universities, the authors present a mixed report card about the extent to which their colleagues and they have successfully implemented learner-centredness as a core principle of their learning and teaching. The authors conclude by eliciting three implications that illustrate as much about the prevailing climate of contemporary higher education as about the authors’ specific aspirations and contexts and their personal pedagogies.

In the second article, Bernadette Lynch and Shalene Werth engage with the theme of features of successful pedagogical practice by examining what can be done to maximize the learning outcomes of undergraduate students with low entry scores. Part of a team teaching a large first year management course, Lynch and Werth elaborate their design and application of two key strategies: scaffolding and academics as a supportive social presence regardless of delivery mode. The authors invite readers to identify attributes that rendered these strategies successful that might have broader applicability and relevance.

The next three articles take up separate elements of the enduringly significant question of how to engage the student voice in practice. Michael Ryan uses the third articles to articulate the rationale for and implementation of incorporating the voices of former students into the current offering of a large first year undergraduate course. This articulation is accompanied by the results of a longitudinal design experiment exploring the pedagogical benefits of such involvement. The author is sufficiently encouraged by the positive outcomes of the experiment to recommend its wider adoption in other disciplines.

The fourth article, by Anita Ryle and Kaye Cumming, makes an explicit link between engaging the student voice in practice and forms of engagement in online learning communities. Informed by a targeted literature review and empirical data from three postgraduate online courses, Ryle and Cumming elicit seven strategies that they contend are crucial to fostering effective online learning communities. In the process, the authors provide authentic and lively examples of what does and does not work in enacting those strategies.

In the fifth article, A. S. C. Hooper explores engaging the student voice in practice in relation to the monitoring of and improvement to a post-experience information and communication technology masters management program. The article traces in considerable detail the principles and parameters informing the course design, and draws on focus group data to analyse the diverse expectations of the course and postgraduate education more generally held by participating students. One intriguing finding is the potential barrier to effective career development constituted by professional stereotypes.

Damian Blake uses the sixth article to contribute to the theme of exploring the challenge of pedagogical change by identifying some of the obstacles and opportunities involved in applied learning reform in postcompulsory secondary schooling in Victoria. Like all educational sectors, this one has experienced the challenges of broader socioeconomic change, which have concentrated the minds of students and educators alike. Drawing on five case studies, Blake asserts that the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning has highlighted multiple assumptions about learning that must be explicated and negotiated if students are to benefit from that introduction.

The seventh article, by Mary-Anne Fleming, takes up the theme of pedagogy for intercultural literacy, specifically with regard to the intersection between diversity in Queensland classrooms and teaching literacy in changing times. The article draws on current literature, conceptual resources and contemporary provision to make a case for envisioning what success might look like in this complex and contested terrain. The result is a timely reminder of the need for caution in engaging with notions such as “diversity” and “literacy” and of the importance of deconstructing the competing discourses that attach themselves to such terms.

In the eighth article, Serene H.-J. Choi enters the equally complex and contested terrain represented by the theme of inclusive pedagogy, by presenting a theoretically informed and critical interrogation of peer training methods for children and adolescents with autism. The article explores several currently endorsed strategies that

accompany these methods and examines their likely appropriateness and utility. The article presents both conceptual principles and practical ideas relevant to the field.

Beryl Exley uses the ninth article to contribute to ongoing discussion about the theme of understanding transformative pedagogies, by focusing on the impact of an early years multiliteracies project on linguistically and culturally diverse students. The author examines the multiliteracies pedagogical framework as the backdrop for analysing the statements and strategies of one early years teacher. Exley argues for the framework's effectiveness in helping to explain why the teacher's practice can be regarded as pedagogically innovative.

The tenth and final article, by Janice S. Stenton, investigates the theme of meeting the pedagogical challenges in new contexts by highlighting the context of physical health and its potential impact on educational achievement. Stenton reports on a study of the self-reported attitudes towards behaviour and learning by a group of young adolescents in Brisbane, some of whom had been identified as experiencing otitis media with effusion, which is often associated with conductive hearing loss. The findings suggest some specific pedagogical strategies for supporting learners and their teachers who find themselves in this context.

It is clear that these 10 articles, and the ones that preceded them in this first wave of the conference's refereed proceedings, have been intended to extend the existing scholarship in international pedagogies and learning, specifically through the lens of multiple and contested meanings emerging in practice. We congratulate the authors and anticipate with interest the further contributions to that scholarship by the papers to be published next year in the second wave of the conference's refereed proceedings.

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