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Weathering the storms

EDITORIALS

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Editorial

Mary Gobbi

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Educational Journeys in times of uncertainty: Weathering the storms

Editorial

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This edition is the tenth anniversary of the Tuning Journal for Higher Education (TJHE). We are delighted to welcome two guest editorials and a contemporary review. The first editorial is from Paul Ryan our founding editor and the second from Luigi Filippo Donà dalle Rose and Anna Serbati my immediate predecessors. As Paul outlines, the Journal was launched in 2012 in an endeavour to disseminate, and value, through open access, the knowledge and experience of those developing high quality teaching programmes. Paul traces the origins of the Journal in the preceding ten years, capturing the ‘conception, gestation, birth and infancy’ period of the TJHE. Paul’s determination and enthusiasm, ably supported by the core Tuning team and Ladislav Bizimana, the Managing Editor, enabled the crucial Journal infrastructure to be constructed and stand the test of time. Lupo and Anna then managed the transition from childhood to young adult maturity. Both Lupo and Anna make explicit their energy, love, and care as they ‘parented’ the Journal, authors, and reviewers. Lupo aptly commented that, while there were periods of “roses and flowers”, there were many days of difficult patient work and iterative dialogue with the various actors involved in the Journal. Despite the challenges, Lupo and Anna secured SCOPUS listing in 2018- a major landmark achievement.

Initially, the papers received were primarily from those within the Tuning community and their partners. There was an unsurprising focus on competences as the European inspired Bologna process unfolded. This remains at the heart of the Journal, albeit extended to reflect the global audience and the process of university reforms and programme innovation over time. From the TJHE website, this focus is described as “original

research studies and reviews of student-centred learning and outcome-oriented education reforms at university level, with reference to the national, regional, and international environments.” (<https://www.tuningjournal.org/about/#focusAndScope>)

Anna’s reflection drew attention to three ‘values’ of the Journal, namely the value of individual and collective reflections on themes; an inclusive international approach; and the reporting of a ‘kaleidoscope’ of experiences, reflections, and activities. These values endure in the Journal today.

Our third invited guest contribution is a paper by Julia González and Robert Wagenaar entitled “*Tuning in Higher Education: Ten years on.*” This editorial paper provides a comprehensive outline of the impact of Tuning over the past decade as well as a critical reflection on the early years. One can note that, while the global reach of Tuning might have been an emerging aspiration, the practical achievements could not have been envisaged at the beginning. At present nearly 130 countries have been / are involved in one or more of the Tuning projects. Their paper demonstrates the multifaceted, complex, and political nature of Higher Education with its challenges, cultures, and dynamics. Their account shows how the unfolding of the Bologna Process revealed the hidden influences within the Higher Education system, and, in some cases, the lack of alignment, coherence and logic exhibited between different stakeholders and actors in the field. Conversely, the various projects have also shown that when committed academic teachers gather, especially within their subject disciplinary fields, innovative and solution-based initiatives emerge.

Key features of the Tuning approach, namely student centred, competence and outcome-based quality assured education that promotes active student engagement, social and ethical responsibility, require necessary infrastructures and staff who have appropriate pedagogical expertise. Tuning and its associated projects have shown that the link between effective competence-based education, employability, and entrepreneurship is contingent upon the engagement of a range of stakeholders relevant to the disciplines concerned, the labour market and civic society. The thorny questions of mobility, mutual recognition, work-based learning, and recognition of prior learning within, and between, countries remain practical challenges. Recent projects are responding to these problems.

The title of this edition, “*Educational Journeys in times of uncertainty: Weathering the storms*” captures the Tuning Journey, the development of the Journal and the realities expressed in the papers within this edition. Each new step along the road to improvement requires an awareness of change management, effective leadership, and a clear vision of the ‘desired future’

from which the initiatives are launched. Yet as recent history has demonstrated, the unplanned (e.g. COVID-19), if not unexpected (conflicts and wars), storms can buffet and threaten the educational journey of individual students, as well as the teachers, institutions and communities to which they belong. In a literal sense, the storms caused by nature, accelerated by global warming and other ecological and environmental disasters, have had serious impacts with repercussions for future generations in many parts of the world. Tuning competences, both the generic and subject specific ones are not fixed: with stakeholder engagement they develop over time and enable our graduates to be better equipped to ethically anticipate, prevent, mitigate, and respond effectively to the current and future storms of life.

As we celebrate the ‘ten-year anniversary’, on behalf of all the editors and myself, let me express our sincere gratitude to Ladislav Bizimana, the Managing Editor, who to paraphrase Lupo, is ‘a true and lasting pillar of the Journal’ who gifts us welcome, kindness, and expertise. To our founder members, guides, and confidants, ‘thank you, good health and enjoy the fruits of your endeavours’. May we continue to uphold the values, spirit, and quality of the Journal as we enter the next educational journeys of uncertainty.

Editorial Team
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