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for today and tomorrow?

INTRODUCTIONS

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Mary Gobbi

Editor

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Introduction

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Abstract: This Edition of the Journal comprises nine papers, of which six are concerned with strategic issues and /or the role and education of the academic teaching staff. The papers continue to reflect a varied range of participant countries both in terms of the authors, but perhaps more importantly the study sites (Europe, Czech Republic, Ghana, Kosovo, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Turkey, Ukraine, and Vietnam). Universities from both the state and private sector are represented, either through individual case studies or via large multi-site studies in subject areas, departments, or institutions.

What we see in this edition is the extent to which transitions towards competence-based education, pace of technology adoption, staff preparedness, and student experience and perceptions impact upon students and teachers. This edition also provides some rich accounts of small-scale qualitative studies, included for their detailed outline of their respective methodologies. So, while the findings may not be generalisable with small samples, the methods used can be replicated to enable other institutions or similar contexts to engage in local based studies. We also need to recognise that not all degree programmes have large student populations, so finding strategies to evaluate and generate ideas for improvement is critical. Some papers have offered detailed reviews of the current evidence in the field related to the topic of interest. In contrast, larger studies demonstrate what can be achieved when transnational studies are examined for the

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underlying processes that can cross boundaries and provide exemplar models of good practice.

Keywords: Staff development; on-line education; higher education strategies; competence; competitiveness.

In our first paper “*Shifting perceptions and channelling commitment in higher education communities: How to grow a Quality Culture outside the lab*” by Anca Greere and Catherine Riley we encounter a European funded project whose aim was to ‘enhance and nurture’ institutional quality culture through the identification of effective strategies for improvement, and practical step by step approaches to overcome the current gap in this area [see their literature and policy review for further details]. As they note, individual institutions and stakeholders may perceive and/or experience the concept of a quality culture differently. There is a substantive background section that critically appraises related policy, theory, and research in the field of Higher Education (HE) quality- distinguishing between quality culture and quality assurance. The empirical work reported in this paper had its origins in a European funded project SPEAQ “Sharing Practice in Enhancing and Assuring Quality” that involved a partnership between nine European universities, the European Students Union (ESU) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom (QAA). The project engaged three key stake holding groups specifically, students, academics, and quality managers. The authors provide a detailed overview of the initial (2 year) and follow up (2 years later) multi-site project that involved the institutions in micro projects related to quality initiatives. Complex terminology was simplified to facilitate engagement and a range of data collection types and sources were employed. Here we see the impact of large studies that enable the analysis of locally based culture and activity while collating and analysing transversal themes and data. The follow up study provided evidence as to the extent to which the initial project(s) and their impact were short lived, endured, remain localized or became more international. It is unusual to find such robust follow up in studies of this magnitude.

The comprehensiveness of the qualitative data covering several countries and stakeholders is a real strength of this project. A short overview or abstract cannot capture the attention to detail, critical appraisal of each step and the portrayal of different perspectives- readers need to ‘dive into’ this paper to really do it justice. Grounded in the data, five distinct stages were found to be necessary for the community wide engagement that generates the quality culture. In summary, the stages portrayed in figure 1 are awareness,

engagement, empowerment, ownership, and integration. The transition between stages requires effective communication, reflection, recognition and leadership. Finally, in Figure 3, the authors bring the model together schematically to represent the stages that higher education institutions may wish to follow so as to advance their quality culture. This is an important contribution to the evidence-based underpinning the development of quality culture that *engage* stakeholders and generate positive outcomes. The Journal would welcome articles from any sites who have applied this methodology to their situation.

We are all keenly aware of the challenging situation in which the Ukraine finds itself currently. Before the Russian invasion in 2022, Ukraine was in the process of adopting educational reforms that would facilitate its compatibility with the European Educational Space and improve the quality of its Higher Education system. In this next article by Oksana Melnyk, Olena Dashkivska, and Vitalii Pogrebnyak, “*The model of integration of higher education of Ukraine into the European Educational Area*”, we find strategic proposals to enable such transition during the period 2022–2032. Clearly, such proposals are contingent on unfolding events and, hopefully when peace is achieved, post war reconstruction will have a focus that can build upon the deliberations found in this paper. The authors also propose that readers who are making a similar journey of transformation to their pre-2022 scenario may find the findings and debates helpful. The impact of the conflict has yet to be realised and the authors wisely do not speculate, but rather point out that if the Ukrainian goals are to be achieved with respect to integration within the European Educational Area, key features associated with such transition will remain.

The literature review is particularly helpful in contextualising the impact of the Bologna process, not only within Europe, but in the wider global community. The paper analysed the 2022 strategic directions for the Ukraine HE system, the legislative frameworks, systems, technology adoption, statistical analyses, qualification frameworks, and other relevant policies and practical issues. This included network analysis of the many elements that form part of any HE system at local and national level. From this analysis, they develop a model that clusters actions under the four blocks, target, legal and regulatory, organizational, and monitoring. In conclusion the paper offers some points for reflection concerning post war reconstruction and the ongoing situation. On behalf of the Journal, we wish the authors and the Ukraine a just, fair, and peaceful outcome to the current situation.

Renata Skýpalová, Helena Chládková, Chijioko Esogwa Nwachukwu, Hieu Minh Vu take us to the Czech Republic and Vietnam in their study,

“Service quality as the source of competitive advantage in higher education: The difference between students’ expectations and perceptions”. Several hundred students in the two countries responded to the SERVQUAL five-dimensional questionnaire. The five dimensions are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This tool was deployed because it assumes that customer (in this case student) satisfaction captures any differences between student expectations and perceptions of the quality of their experience. The aim was to identify areas for improvement with respect to competitive advantage and international students. Traditional ties between the two countries facilitated the study with the added benefit that the Czech Republic lacked research and data in this area. Vietnam already had a record of attracting international students and had received positive evaluations. Both countries, like many others, seek to attract international students providing a quality experience during their studies.

Descriptive statistics and t-tests revealed that Czech respondents were less satisfied with the service quality than their Vietnamese counterparts. In both countries, the quality perception in all dimensions was lower than expectations, the largest gaps being found in the Assurance dimension. Czech students placed the greatest emphasis on the Empathy factor, while their Vietnamese colleagues preferred the Tangibles dimension. The detail of the SERVQUAL tool, enables specific factors to be identified for the institutions concerned. Some differences between Vietnam and the Czech Republic were attributed to the difficulties students experienced in accessing education in Vietnam. For example, where education was prestigious and costly, students may take subjects they don’t need, have a sense of gratitude and are more motivated. The authors noted that due to the diverse sample of students, making broader generalisations is not appropriate.

The preceding papers have illustrated aspects of quality and the impact on the student experience, in the next three papers we focus on teacher preparedness and development. First, Fjolla Kaçaniku explores aspects of competence-based education in her paper *“Competence-based teacher education programmes: Transitioning towards a paradigm shift or preserving the traditional?”* The paper explores the evolution of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Higher Education frameworks and relates this specifically to the impact upon teacher education in Kosovo, the youngest country in Europe which is seeking European Union integration. This article has some resonance with aspects of the pre-war Strategic aims outlined in our earlier paper from the Ukraine. This qualitative study forms parts of a doctoral thesis and wider study. The paper reports the findings from six purposively selected teacher education programmes covering bachelors and masters programmes from two institutions. Data

sources included curriculum materials, policy documents, and interviews (individual and group) with teaching staff and managers.

For readers who are engaged in university-based teacher education, the paper offers a sound discursive review of competence-based education generally and specifically within the European context. It outlines the historical move from programmes that were subject and content based to those that are competence based. This includes competence in deploying pedagogies that foster student competence in the subject and more generally as citizens, (generic or key skills and competences). The paper comprehensively outlines the qualitative methodology adopted. The data from the participants is rich, generating real insight into the espoused curriculum and the curriculum experienced by the student teachers.

Kacaniku reveals a ‘surface convergence’ of programmes with the European models, when beneath the surface the programmes are reliant on individual teacher practices. Many of whom continue to *deliver* a subject based content approach. Differences between the bachelors and masters programmes were clear, often associated with European funding initiatives with the latter providing funding and exposure to competence based education in practice. In conclusion, Kacaniku’s study uncovers the real tension where it is seen more important to preserve tradition than to actually align in practice with competence-based philosophy and practice. As Kacaniku remarks, Kosovo had a long -standing model of teacher education based on the teacher as expert. Changing the paradigm required a greater understanding of the conceptual understandings of the existing teachers as well as the ‘push pull’ factors associated with change. The article offers real debate, methodological critique and a deep exploration of these tensions.

Another aspect of staff development is developing competence in the pedagogies associated with technology deployment as outlined in our next paper from Turkey by Kamil Kırkıç, Zehra Sedef Korkmaz, Selçuk Doğan, Ümran Yazıcılar Nalbantoğlu, and Sina Güzin Cengiz “*Faculty development to design effective online courses: Responding to requirements*”. The authors offer a detailed summary of the programme they designed to prepare lecturers for designing and delivering on line courses using an evidence based approach. To test the efficacy of the programme, they enrolled fifty academics from different subject areas into the study. Many of the staff had not received prior learning on teaching on line, particularly designing a programme, and were at an early stage of their academic career. The programme was proven to be effective, with participants acknowledging changes in knowledge, skills and beliefs about online course design and delivery. This included altering their strategies for assessment. The methodology was qualitative and explained

well, showing how trustworthiness, reliability and other qualitative evaluative criteria were fulfilled.

Readers interested in designing on-line faculty development course in this area, will find the detailed account of the programme design and the rationale for doing so helpful. The focus on adult learning pedagogies combined with an evidence-based approach to the design and evaluation of the programme offers ‘thick description’ and an ability for readers to replicate the design strategy. While clearly limited by the restriction to one institution, the paper shows how such professional development can be initiated, delivered, and evaluated in other contexts.

Our third paper, “*Predictive role of psychological capital and perceived organizational support on innovative work behavior among higher education teachers of Pakistan*” by Maria Wahid and Nadia Ayub who conducted a study with two hundred teachers from private and public universities that analysed the psychological factors that enabled or hindered teachers to innovate in their teaching. The background literature shows the potential relationships between psychological capital (PsychCap), the perceived organizational support (POS) individuals may experience and their academic behaviours. The literature outlines the various elements that comprise these concepts (for example hope and resilience) and the psychological tools used to measure them. The paper provides useful critiques of the literature in this field and their application to higher education teachers.

In the context of Pakistan, the authors were particularly interested in the organizational support dimension suggesting that in developing countries, these aspects are often neglected. Their findings demonstrated that POS was one of the key factors in enabling innovation. Similarly, when the teachers possessed PsychCap they were more likely to show innovative work behaviours. Unfortunately, the paper lacked suggestions as to how these qualities could be encouraged or supported within the academic environment, specifically in context. This required a leap from psychological studies to leadership, management, and change.

We are often interested in pedagogical strategies that have worked, however in this paper from Mexico, “*Entrepreneurial intention development: The contribution of specialized entrepreneurship academic programs*” by Carolina Llorente-Portillo, John Alver Dobson, Niyan Kwame Omari Fraser, and Laura Gómez-Urquijo, the authors report on an initiative concerning entrepreneurship education (EE) that, while it did not statistically demonstrate an improvement between two time points, revealed subtle but important shifts in student attitudes towards entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurship education.

The background section provided an interesting historic overview of the development of entrepreneurial education internationally and within the case study site in Mexico that has a strong history in this field of education. The literature review indicated that EE had no impact on student intentions and hence the study was developed to explore this and to identify whether any alternative teaching strategies may be helpful. The theory of planned behaviour formed the conceptual framework for the study. Twenty-five students were enrolled a specifically designed programme at a prestigious university in Mexico. The authors acknowledged that the results cannot be generalised on a national scale, but their detailed methodology informs the development of entrepreneurship education within the university network. What was shown, and it applicable, is that the empirical approach revealed issues that can form areas for improvement within the case study site. Hence the process has application elsewhere. The attitudes portrayed showed a connection with planned behavioural control and entrepreneurial intention-constructs that are important for both the student, but also the university environment.

Several papers in recent editions have addressed aspects of the international student market. Pui-Yee Chong, Andrew Jia-Yi Kam, and Siew-Yean Tham analyse the “*Factors influencing international students’ perceived value and satisfaction at private universities in Malaysia*”. Malaysia has moved from being a ‘sending’ country to a ‘receiving’ country, particularly over the past twenty years. As the authors discuss, their paper moves the analysis from student satisfaction to the concept of ‘perceived value’ whether before or after their programme. Through theoretical analysis and evidence, the authors have developed a theoretical model that brings together the determinant of perceived value and the interrelationship of constructs between perceived value, satisfaction, post-behavioural intention, loyalty, and WoM (word of mouth). The literature review provides good background information and analysis on the key concepts just mentioned. The empirical work sought to consider and test the relationships between service quality (academic and non-academic), external living environment and perceived value.

The sample of second year students comprised 13 of the 25 private universities in the Klang Valley who agreed to participate in the study. Through purposive sampling the authors generated a return of 66% giving 630 returned surveys, where the minimal sample for statistical purposes was 379. The paper provides a detailed and rigorous account of the development of the survey instrument, its pilot testing and operation. For example, substantive literature reviews (primary and secondary reviews) on existing instruments,

and the conduct of a preliminary investigation interviews. This gleaned five major themes generating five constructs and 39 dimensions. With very scant literature conducted in Malaysia, the preliminary interviews conducted in Malaysia enabled contextual data, verification, and generalisability to be explored. This enabled a survey to be generated that was tested on 10 students for comprehension and another 45 students as a pilot. The extensive and specific results are worthy of review, as they offer detailed accounts of the differences and similarities between different groups of international students (e.g. country of origin), comparisons with the international literature and the interrelationships of the different factors/variables. Their findings highlighted the impact of the different constructs on student experience, identifying areas for local and national consideration. As the authors remark, the model tested direct relationships, but not moderating factors and a particular part of the country. While further research is needed, the applicability of their theoretical model in other countries and cultures could be fascinating.

Our final paper, situated in Ghana, "*Global education: The need for innovative approach towards engaging intellectually brilliant students*" by Isaac Atta Senior Ampofo and Isaac Atta Junior Ampofo, looks at the characteristic of 'brilliant' rather than 'clever' students and the pedagogical strategies that students perceive as being important to them. The study discovered that they were able to maintain an active memory, supported by spaced repetition, flexibility in assessment and the capacity to link different forms of knowledge. It was noted that the students often need assistance to enable their cognitive strengths to be applied to real world situations 'in the field' and the importance accorded to field work teachers and experiences. Many topics in the background literature are worthy of consideration, especially the importance of defining and recognising 'brilliant' students; the factors that enable them to flourish or, indeed, hinder their development; and their potential to offer innovative and creative solutions to the socio-economic needs of their country. The authors small case study example (10 students) is not of itself generalisable as they point out. However, the in-depth interviews, matched with a retrospective analysis of 'brilliant' students from education records over the preceding twenty years is fascinating.

While the study was on college /higher school students, there are some interesting points made which are worth considering in Higher Education in countries with developing educational infrastructure and institutions and where the education may not be sufficiently 'dynamic'. The paper could have extended the discussion to consider more deeply the implications for the training of teachers and the transition to higher education of these 'brilliant' students.

About the author

MARY GOBBI (mary.gobbi@deusto.es) is Emeritus Professor (University of Southampton, UK) and Editor of Tuning Journal for Higher Education since 2019. Professor Gobbi (PhD, MA Ed, Dip N, Dip Ned, RN) has been Tuning Nursing co-ordinator since 2003 and is an expert educational developer and evaluator, with extensive national and international experience. These include projects within the European Union (e.g. technologies in healthcare training, on Sectoral Skills Councils for Nursing'; role and training of health care assistants; developing a European MSc in Advanced Rehabilitation Technologies.); South Sudan (developing standardized in service midwifery training)'; Germany and US (Leadership Competences for executive nurse leaders); Republic of Georgia (developing bachelors nurse education); and Canada (comparing EU and Canadian nurse education and advising on masters level standards). Mary has experience with different levels of education for nurses and other health care professionals (from care assistant to post-doctoral level); and with different educational strategies and technologies (from the use of grading in practice, simulation and use of mobile technologies to improve critical care education and resuscitation performance using 'smart technologies'). She has supervised 10 doctoral students to successful completion.