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Revealing the present and past to improve the future
in a different era and context

INTRODUCTION

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Mary Gobbi
Editor

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Abstract: Eight papers comprise this edition of the Journal reflecting a varied range of participant countries both in terms of authors and study sites (Latin America, South East Asia, Europe, Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean). Universities from both the state and private sector are represented together with bibliometric studies that identify gaps in the international literature concerning the concept of the 'ideal student' and the dominance of certain countries within a field of study. One important aspect of quality assurance is the ability to evaluate and research the nature of student/teacher relationships, competences, impact, experience, efficacy and effectiveness of adopted pedagogies and strategies to enhance teacher effectiveness and learner achievements. This is where higher education leadership, management / administration is an emerging field of study. An illustrative example from Turkey explores the tensions, realities and opportunities posed by this development. Three papers explicitly draw upon the Tuning methodology, or its tools, to develop or analyse institutional/national practises related to: a) the impact of the methodology upon national policy and curricula development; (2) quantifying and analysing student workload; and (c) comparing national quality assurance frameworks. The significance of the papers is their application to different countries and regions of the world. From these papers one can see the nuances of local or regional interrelationships between policy, culture, context, academic staff conceptions and experiences. The benefits of utilising recognisable tools and processes via the Tuning Methodology

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while providing genuine opportunities for frameworks of comparison within, and between, countries are also critiqued. Several authors analyse the extent to which European derived tools may be applicable to other contexts, systems and cultures. The papers also reveal differences between what is expected of students and what students actually experience. Academic staff development and teacher perspectives remain areas for exploration, with specific papers considering digital literacy, artificial intelligence and teacher concepts of pedagogic innovation, good teaching, available resources and enabling and impeding factors. As previous papers have identified, access to new, innovative and good pedagogies often carry with them ethical challenges, tensions in resource allocation and disparities between specific groups of students (e.g. rural versus urban). The papers in this edition continue to offer fresh perspectives on new educational challenges while questioning the suitability of applying good practices from one region to another. The diversity of settings and studies together provide rich insights into the global experiences of Higher Education whether from policy, management, institutional, teacher, administrative, or student perspectives.

Keywords: quality assurance, technology, tuning methodology, student workload, staff development.

The first three papers in this edition focus on aspects of quality at the institutional or national level and deploy Tuning tools and frameworks to assist analysis. Our first paper by Feras Al-Azzeh, and Amal Qassed Ahmad, *'The Tuning Higher Education: A Comprehensive Analysis of Quality Assurance and Qualifications Frameworks for Enhancement'* compares Jordan's National Qualifications framework with South Africa, Australia, European Union, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The paper debates the relative merits of the different models and their relationship to accreditation, global mobility, recognition of prior learning, lifelong learning and alignment with employment needs. Challenges were noted, for example in Jordan itself, institutional variability in capacities, resources, and commitment to quality assurance strategies and the need for change as educational environments alter over time. However, when compared with the criteria found in the other settings, the Jordanian system was found to be robust, fulfilling all key criteria and having mechanisms in place to improve.This study illustrates the benefits of deploying established tools to analyse, and hence compare, quality assurance and qualifications frameworks in different countries.

Academics are often challenged by the tensions between maintaining and evolving their research, and the educational administration (EA) dimensions of their role without comprising quality. Through a study in Turkey, Pınar Ayyilidiz and Zehra Keser Özmantar, (*'The trajectories of educational administration in Türkiye: The production and dissemination of*

the field knowledge'), the authors explore not only how EA produces and circulates its knowledge, but also how its academic identity is created and contested at both local and national level. The authors offer an informative critique of the epistemologies associated with EA, the general tensions in the research community (as is often the case with applied disciplines); the specific context of EA in Turkey; and the challenges these factors bring to both academic theory development and applied practice. The study explored the educational backgrounds and professional experiences of academics with an EA role so they could understand how their research identities emerged. In addition, they were interested in the academic and scientific productivity of those professors who influenced educational policies. Through survey work, the authors gathered information on the academics' publication, research record, professional experience and academic roles during the period 2016-2021. This detailed study offers a rich portrayal of an emerging field of academic practice and research in Higher Education administration, leadership and management.

Francis Espinoza's paper *'The Tuning Project and the harmonisation and internationalisation of HE in Chile',* addresses a very important development period regarding the higher education system in Chile. Chile is often used as a reference for others in the region due to its degree of development and quality. The paper addresses issues of globalization and internationalization through the lens of 'soft power'. The case study example is how three interrelated European Processes and structures (the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Bologna Process in Higher Education and the Tuning Methodology for programme design) informed the development of HE in a non-European context, namely Latin America and specifically Chile. Espinoza traced the two-phase impact and interactions of the European influences and the Chilean HE system from the harmonization of country based HE (2005-2013) and then the internationalisation and globalization strategies (2013-2021). The paper is informed by two Spanish language studies.

The paper offers useful summaries and critiques of the European Processes, the European and international drivers in a global HE sector, and the specific Chilean context within Latin America. The paper contributes to our understandings of the extent to which the application/appropriateness of European initiated processes, strategies and tools has relevance and positive impacts upon contexts and cultures. While there are examples of application in other regions of the world, it remains an area that lacks evidence over time. Espinoza shows that European influences exerted soft power because they were 'transmitted as a common language determined by a specific vocabulary'.

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In the second phase the internationalisation process was enhanced through the Tuning Methodology that offered guiding principles, normative processes and curricular management. Through demonstrating the impact and strategies employed to reform Higher Education in a different context, the paper is of interest to academics, policymakers, and educational practitioners in diverse regions.

Our next paper from Richard Jugar, *'Conceptualising and Optimising Student Workload in Philippine Higher Education'* used Tuning and Bologna Process tools to ascertain student workload in the Philippines. This paper will be of particular interest to countries developing comparable qualifications within, and between, institutions and countries. As Jugar argues, "A balanced workload ensures academic rigor without overburdening students, encourages active participation and engagement, and aligns with institutional goals for learner development". The paper has a particular focus on HE in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and their Associated University thematic network for the ASEAN Credit System (ACTS).

Analysis of the Philippine HE policy and the literature on student workload, led Jugar to examine academics understanding of student workload and their implementation practices in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The study involved 135 academics from different disciplines, ten higher education institutions in the Philippines comprising three private and seven state universities. Academics were asked to explain their understandings of student workload and then to describe the activities, processes and timings that a typical higher education student would do to produce an acceptable synthesis paper result. The findings illustrated that some academics largely focussed on contact time and assessment requirements, with little consideration given to other activities of engagement. As Jugar proposes there was a distinction between formally acknowledged *workload* and *workload experienced* by students.

At the theoretical level, the study positions student workload not merely as a measurement tool, but as a mediating construct between policy, pedagogy, and learner experience. Jugar demonstrated that, in practice, there was no standardized credit system that included non-contact time with any degree of consistency or rigour. This was attributed to a lack of connection between policy and practice in the design of the relevant policies, available and utilised methods to assign credit, and little attention paid to non-contact time. His paper cogently proposes strategies to enhance the Phillipine system that may have resonance for similar contexts elsewhere.

From student workload and accreditation, we move to the concept of the 'ideal college student [IS]' In this paper, the term refers to a generic higher

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education student, whether situated in an institution labelled 'university' or 'college' (Saeedeh Esmaeeli: *'Mapping the characteristics of the ideal college student: A bibliometric analysis (1971 - 2023)'*). Methodologically, the paper provides an insightful analysis of the techniques of Bibliometric analysis involving 475 research studies. The theoretical approach of Bourdieu's social and cultural capital underpins both the analysis and interpretation of the data/evidence. Readers unfamiliar with these techniques should find the paper instructive.

Esmaeeli observed that most of the literature derived from five countries, namely United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and Australia. Other findings related to the concept of the IS included: (1) the nature of data capture; (2) the presence or absence of data over time when changes in the perception or reality of the IS may have changed; (3) how the preferred characteristics of the IS may be associated with available resources, culture and experienced pedagogies; (4) the extent to which diverse student populations from a range of countries, cultures and contexts are represented in the evidence; and (5) influences, influencers and their impact on the IS concept development over time.

Esmaeeli offers a constructive critique and debate on the many facets of this wide-ranging study. He argues cogently that the concept needs to 'realign' with the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion to facilitate students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those who may not possess the dominant cultural and social capital associated with the IS characteristics privileged in a specific context.

The next two papers consider different aspects of the academic teacher perspective. The first, by Omar Paccagnella, Debora Aquario, Lorenza Da Re and Anna Serbati (*(A Bottom-Up Approach for Faculty Development: A Latent Class Analysis on Teaching Innovative Practices and Needs for Improvement in Higher Education)* reports on one component of a large seven university study from Italy: the *AsdUni* project. The overall aim of the AsdUni project was to establish a national. systematic approach to educational development of staff, considering teachers' beliefs, practices and needs. This paper reports on the responses to three specific survey questions that had been distributed to all the academic staff in the seven universities. These questions were associated with what constitutes 'good teaching', innovation, and the support academic teachers consider necessary to improve their teaching and student learning outcomes.

The introductory literature review provides readers with a current overview of the literature and evidence related to the nature of good teaching from the perspectives of: (a) disciplinary content; (b) the move towards

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student centred and participatory approaches to learning, teaching and assessment; (c) the impact of technologies like Artificial Intelligence; and (d) situation and personal factors influencing students as individuals or cohorts. The implications of these factors for teacher competence and staff development are critically discussed. Methodologically, the authors used qualitative data analysis and Latent Class analysis for which a comprehensive explanation is offered. From the data analysis, 'classes' or 'types' of teachers were identified with respect to their strengths (excellences) or needs. This enabled identification of staff development needs at three different levels: national, inter- institutional (where groups of institutions shared common needs) and at single institutional level (local). This distinction is very helpful for the effective and economic provision of staff development. There were some limitations to the study related to sample sizes in some sectors. However, the overall responses provided informative data for application.

Our next paper by Sekar Purbarini Kawuryan, Anwar Senen, and Urmila Umardiant is based in Indonesia, where the authors evaluated elementary teachers' perceptions of digital literacy in one university ('*Prospective Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Literacy as A 21st-Century Skill)'*. As the authors discuss, it is important that 21st Century prospective teachers are digitally competent to best utilise digital technologies not only for their own learning, but to deploy their use effectively with their future pupils. Specifically, there were national concerns regarding elementary pupils' abilities with digital literacy with implications for the teaching profession at this level. The rapid evolution of a range multimedia technologies presents its own challenge for teachers to be current in their digital competence. The authors offer a sound background review to digital literacy, its multifaceted nature, and its development in pupils /students. This quantitative study to elicit the teacher trainees' perceptions and understanding about digital literacy, aimed to identify areas to strengthen the teacher training programme in one university. 563 undergraduate teacher students were surveyed in semesters 2 and 4 of their programme.

Profile data from individual students showed differences in perceptions of digital literacy, this included gender (first year female students), geographical location (rural), related previous experience. The data also revealed specific digital competences that needed strengthening in their teacher preparation programme. for example digital content production and the utilization of information technology.

Our final paper from Zouhaier Slimi and Beatriz Villarejo Carballido (*'Artificial intelligence in higher education: A foundational analysis of*

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drivers, barriers, and solutions') links to the previous paper. To some extent the evidence in the paper is now superseded by contemporary debates, however it is important to situate the current in the recent past and the anticipated issues from 2021 – 2022 before the generative AI era. 47 educators, administrators, and policymakers across 26 countries were surveyed using both closed and open ended questions. The questions provided data to map adoption strategies. The paper has a specific contribution in so far as it provided base line data for eliciting cross cultural adoption patterns, particularly in underrepresented regions. It also offers a socio historical insight into the then emerging issues, including those of ethics, resources and enablers. The study provided a platform for subsequent work in this field. While the empirical work drew on thematic analysis, it was also grounded in two theoretical models the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the AI Ethics Framework. The authors also offer detailed and comprehensive accounts of their methodology, strategies to mitigate the effects of English language competence, ethical conduct of the study and study limitations.

The findings illustrate common patterns of adoption, barriers and enablers as well as revealing the differences between well-resourced and under resourced institutions. The detailed section on study findings and their practical implications makes a fascinating read for a range of stakeholders anticipating the current challenges in the AI field. As the authors discussed, 'Institutions and policymakers must recognise that AI readiness is not merely about acquiring tools but about building the human, technical, and governance capacities that enable responsible adoption'.

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

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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 17 (now) doctoral students to successful completion.

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