

Introduction To The Issue*

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As the month of June comes to an end it gives me great pleasure welcome you to the Summer issue of the *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (AISHE–J). Published by the All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE), our open-access journal of research into teaching and learning is designed to provide a forum collegial interaction.

In a paper entitled “The Impact of a Constructivist Approach to Assessment and Feedback on Student Satisfaction and Learning: A case-study” Tom O’ Mahony explores assessment principles applied to different cases in higher education. In doing so he illuminates some core attributes of models that support learning. It is interesting to note that the cases involved in the study are distinguished according to the assessment instruments used: specifically, unseen examinations and coursework based on a two-stage written paper. These are fairly well known instruments in higher education but the reflection and interventions described draw out their potential for the support of learning rather than using them as evaluation tools. Another point worth noting, especially in the context of our final piece in the current issue, are that the data were collected over an extended period, without the rush to publish so prevalent in the corporate institution of today. Interventions described are designed to communicate with the learners and to support learning. At the heart of the approach is the opportunity for the learners to apply feedback received in their final assignment, thus benefitting from their learning in their grades

It is unsurprising that the learners indicated, in the case of both instruments, they were highly satisfied with the assessment methodology: the supportive process, rather than the selected assessment instruments seemed to be key. This is significant “it illustrates how both understanding and learner satisfaction can be enhanced by evidence-based assessment

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practices that focus on the assessment process”.

On the surface Grant’s paper, “Formative test-driven development for programming practicals” with its focus on automated testing may seem to contrast sharply with O’Mahony paper. However, in each case, the primary purpose is to develop assessment that supports learning.

The author explores the value of value of contemporaneous formative feedback computer programming practicals and questions why automated testing, a key feature of industrial software development, remains less than in the delivery of computer programming courses

This study “examines the effect of adopting a signature pedagogy (Shulman, 2005) of test-driven development that utilizes formative automated testing in applied programming laboratories. Informed by the literature on formative feedback, “laboratory sessions were re-designed to incorporate automated formative feedback that combined lecturer-supplied test cases with industry-standard software testing frameworks.” Tools designed for staff use are described and will be informative for readers wishing to consider the approach in their own teaching. The author reports that: “The approach discussed is shown to provide improved certainty of completion and correctness. Student feedback particularly noted the easy penalty-free access to formative feedback within familiar programming environments.”

In our third article we move to another discipline with a paper entitled: “Peer Assessment in Medical Science: An exploration of one programmes approach to peer assessment including staff and student perceptions” contributed by *Mary F McGrath*, *Lloyd Scott* and *Pauline Logue-Collins*. The framework here is again an acceptance of the widely accept view that assessment is fundamental to the learning process in higher education.

The authors argue that the assessment strategy employed in a given programme plays a major role in “how, what and when students engage” and as a result, it influences the depth of learning that they achieve. They believe that “A well-structured holistic approach to assessment within a programme can be of a major benefit to both students and academics.” The paper argues that the use of Peer Assessment (PA), among other formative tools, can assist in developing of self-directed independent learners. The paper presents an exploratory review of the current assessment methodology in use in the B.Sc. (Hons) Medical Science degree programme in GMIT. The aim is to develop a framework for the cohesive inclusion of PA as an approach to assessment. Among the interesting findings of the study, is that there

can be “a marked lack of transparency and detail in relation to assessment strategy in the module documentation. As the student perceptions and experiences of assessment and PA are generally positive it is argued that the programme and the students “would benefit from a more structured programmatic approach to the inclusion of PA”.

In our Reflections Journeys and Reports section, we have a paper that illustrates a common experience of colleagues in the higher education sector today: doing many things at once. This too resonates with the final contribution to the issue. The author is both a postgraduate student and a facilitator, educator and coach. The paper shares a personal reflection on engaging with two leadership development approaches, namely that of Goleman’s (2000) leadership styles and of Silsbee’s (2010) coaching. This is a reflective paper rather than a critique of frameworks, and as such it draws on the two named leadership development frameworks. The reflection is based on the author’s individual interpretation and use of the frameworks but is nonetheless relevant for other educators, coaches and professionals.

The paper provides a succinct insight into Goleman (2000) and Silsbee’s (2010) frameworks while maintaining a focus on sharing a personal journey of related to these frameworks within a single context. The author states that: “The application and reflection has resulted in a heightening of self-awareness, enriching presence, allowing unlearning and relearning which continues to frame everyday practice and *modus operandi*.” The stated intention of the paper is “to open up new ways of reflective practice and thinking for the reader, encouraging reflection on possibilities for experimenting with integrating leadership styles and coaching voices into their practice.” It is intended to encourage the reader to reflect on the usefulness of the models for their specific context. I have no doubt that it will also encourage reflection on other models and approaches that we incorporate into our every day practice: we will be the better for it.

The final contribution to this issue is a book review. There is a measure of serendipity associated with its arrival in the issue. It arose, at least in part, because both of the authors had received the book as a gift. In one of our conversations we found both similarities and differences in our response. We decided to see if we could produce a review that would capture a shared response. The result is the Review of *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy* by Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber (University of Toronto Press, 2016). The book offers a manifesto of the slow professor, counselling against the crisis language, instrumentality, utility based knowledge and the sheer speed of

contemporary academia, favouring instead a more reflective and collegial journey towards understanding. On perhaps a lighted note, and lighter notes are both needed and allowed as June gives way to July, the volume is full of apt, sometimes witty, and always insightful quotations from a range of contemporary, and some not so contemporary, authors on the diverse topic of higher education today.

We hope that you will find AISHE-J Volume 9 Number 2 (2017) of value to you in your practice and that you will find the content supportive of your work and your collegiality. As always we would like to thank our authors for their work and patience as their papers progressed through the stages towards publication. We would also like to thank our peer reviewers who gave their time and expertise so generously. The journal could not be published without them.

Finally, we would like to remind our readers that AISHE-J invites submissions from colleagues in all discipline areas, and particularly welcomes submissions from early career researchers. We have scope to publish papers from academics, educational developers, and colleagues engaged in e-learning, information skills and student support. New works on any topic in relation to the development of teaching and learning in higher education are therefore appropriate. The key criterion is that submissions focus on higher education. We look forward to seeing your submissions.

Saranne Magennis, June 30th, 2017