

Introduction to the issue

**Saranne Magennis**

Editor

February 2015 is coming to its natural close and it is therefore time for the annual thematic issue of the *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (AISHE-J)*. As Editor, it gives me great satisfaction to bring you an issue focussed on the theme of leadership in academic and educational development in higher education. The issue has been planned and developed in collaboration with the Education Developers in Ireland Network (EDIN) and the theme identified as one that would appeal to EDIN members and to AISHE-J readers more generally. EDIN members were invited to submit contributions for the issue and, in consultation with EDIN, the invitation was extended to colleagues from Ireland and overseas whom it was felt could contribute interesting experience and research-based ideas to the discussion. The result is a varied issue with voices from as far afield as Australia and New Zealand complementing voices from Ireland.

For those of us who have lived through decades of the mantra “change is the only constant” in higher education, an opportunity to reflect on the impact of leadership on the myriad of changes that we have seen, and continue to see, is welcome indeed. The variety of contributions is perhaps the strongest indicator of the changes that have taken place in the landscape of higher education in recent years.

\* URL: <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/227>

The issue is unique in one respect: it is an entirely invited issue. Prepared as a collaborative issue with EDIN, members were invited to contribute. Once the theme had been agreed, we sought to give opportunities the colleagues involved in developmental work consonant with that of EDIN to complement the submissions from members of EDIN. Lorraine Stefani, Professor of Higher Education Strategic Engagement, at the University of Auckland in New Zealand was an obvious choice. A longtime friend of AISHE, whom, we are delighted to announce has agreed to become an international member of the Editorial Board of the Journal, has a depth of experience coupled with a global reach in the area of teaching and learning development. That she is currently engaged in research on leadership in higher education was more than fortunate. She remarks that leadership in higher education has been under-researched as a topic. However, with higher education, in common with other publicly funded services, being pressured to adapt to the 21<sup>st</sup> century reality, examining “our conceptions of leadership and our identities as leaders” is an important step. Stefani explores different interpretations, of leadership and leadership development and “*challenges readers to take more responsibility for engaging with the leadership literature and blending the scholarship of leadership and the scholarship of learning and teaching*”.

Shelda Debowski, also from the southern hemisphere, though this time from Australia, has worked for over twenty years as a leadership expert. Her work as Professor of Higher Education Development at the University of Western Australia and as Deputy Vice Chancellor at The University of Notre Dame Australia, give her a perspective grounded in experience and research in the area of academic leadership and strategy. Higher education needs good academic leaders. This is particularly so in our present times which Debowski characterizes as “*turbulent*”. Despite its criticality in preparing institutions for the challenges of such times, it has not been particularly important on the higher education agenda. In her contribution, Debowski explores some of the challenges and issues that are emerging, including addressing higher education's less than exemplary performance in the area and she suggests paths to improvement through enhanced valuing and support of good leadership.

In an extremely useful and comprehensive review of the relevant literature, Ann Coughlan examines one of the most critical issues that the higher education sector is facing, that of part-time teaching and one that impacts on the shape and leadership of institutions and the sector as a whole. Her article presents the findings of a literature review that forms part of a collaborative project between EDIN and HECA, aimed at identifying the professional development needs of part-time academic staff. The project was funded by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. We look forward to further publications from the study and would like to record our thanks to EDIN and HECA for supporting the publication of this important review in AISHE-J.

Donnelly and Harding, in their paper entitled 'An Exploration of the Effects on Programme Design and Development Effected by Educational Leadership in Reaction to Societal and Economic Factors in Ireland', look to the heart of the academic endeavour. While they acknowledge that the trends they refer to are global, and profound in their impact, their focus is on Ireland where multiple pressures have required the emergence of programmes that respond directly to the current national needs. In a case study looking at emergent trends in higher education programmes in a five year period, the authors explore how two Irish higher education institutions are being shaped by the market and how they seek to maintain or enhance the viability of their offerings.

We were anxious in the current issue to acknowledge that many changes and developments in higher education, as indeed in many fields, commence with action on the part of an individual or a group of like-minded individuals, who take a first step. This was particularly relevant to our celebration of the work of EDIN, which has evolved from small beginnings, as an informal network among those working in the field of educational development in Ireland, based on a wish to share practice and offer mutual support to one another. Martin Fitzgerald, the Chair of EDIN has contributed a piece, which looks at the development of the organization and its key leadership role in the sector in Ireland.

Helen Fallon and Hugh Murphy, librarians from Maynooth University, who recently completed the UK Future Leaders Programme (FLP), offered by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, reflect on their experience and discuss how the programme has impacted on their practice and their identity as leaders. The programme, designed originally to help develop visionary library leaders, has been extended to include a range of senior staff. While the focus is on personal development journeys in leadership, the tools and practical interventions involved in the programme will have wide appeal.

Larry McNutt of the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown and the TU4D Alliance with the DIT and the ITT Dublin in an endeavour to create a Technological University for Dublin, also sets out to share a journey on which he says he will '*unpack and critique ... [his] own preconceived notions regarding the essential characteristics of our Higher Education system*'. In a wide-ranging paper, he looks at choice of course, models of teaching and learning, the competitive system of higher education and the benefits of collaboration and cooperation.

Colleagues from the 3U Partnership, Ruth Davis and Mary Fenton reflect on the significant structural reform, underpinned by the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, that has characterized Irish higher education in the recent past. Their 'commentary' looks at the new higher education policy context driving change in the Irish Higher Education sector with a particular focus on mergers and regional clusters. They say that they "*provide an insider's perspective of 3U Partnership, a collaboration between DCU, Maynooth University and RCSI.*"

Ann Heelan of AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, gives us a marvellous insight into the change in culture that has been effected in relation to students with disabilities in her reflection intriguingly entitled 'From Professors Wives to Livescribe Pens: how the culture of inclusion has changed in higher education'.

Also included in the issue are higher education focused abstracts from European Sociological Association conference 'Education and Citizenship: theoretical issues, policies and practices' which took place on 8 -9 September 2014, ISCTE-IUL Lisbon Portugal.

In closing, I would like to remind all our readers that the next two issues, scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> of June and 31<sup>st</sup> October, will be general issues that will welcome contributions on a diverse range of topics: I encourage you to submit your papers and contribute to the discussion and the action that is developing higher education.

All that remains is for me to thank all of our contributors, editors and reviewers who have made the issue possible and with great pleasure, bring you AISHE-J Volume 7: Number 1.

Saranne Magennis, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2015.