

INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE*

The current issue of AISHE-J has come about through collaboration with colleagues the International Conference on Engaging Pedagogy (ICEP). ICEP is an annual event that brings together researchers and practitioners in the field of third-level education to discuss means and methods of improving student engagement. A key factor in achieving this has been to offer delegates, authors and presenters opportunities to share their experiences with each other. This is reflected in the overarching theme of espoused by ICEP, 'the voice of the educator'.

The issue focuses on topics concerning the emotional, broadly interpreted. Taken in its entirety, it explores the concepts such as emotional intelligence, social engagement, care and carelessness and, as so clearly enunciated in our keynote addresses, love care and solidarity in the building of emotionally intelligent education.

The development of ICEP has been interesting: the first ICEP conference was held in Dublin at Griffith College where many of the original ICEP members were based. Since then it has been hosted by University College Dublin; Maynooth University; National College of Ireland; Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown; Athlone Institute of Technology; Sligo Institute of Technology; and the College of Computing Technology. This year ICEP is proud to be returning to Griffith College for its 10th anniversary homecoming.

In the last decade, ICEP has grown from strength to strength, attracting the attention of many prominent members of the teaching and learning community. This is apparent in the calibre and diversity of papers presented to date and in the relentless commitment of the steering committee and founding members. It is further evidenced in the recognition of ICEP as a T&L Partner by the Irish National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, a status shared with AISHE.

This AISHE-J / ICEP joint issue is important for both ICEP and AISHE-J. Many members of the ICEP steering committee and the AISHE executive have worked side by side for years, but until now have not formalized these efforts in a manner as significant as this issue. As two of the core functions of

* URL: <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/315>

ICEP are the sharing of best practice and dissemination of research findings, through this issue we hope to find a wider discussion channel, leading to a more varied audience than we traditionally enjoy.

This not just in terms of readership, but also at the authorial and editorial levels as well. AISHE-J has a stated mission towards early career writers. Some of the authors in this issue, who have presented and published at ICEP several times, have now published their first journal article in the area of teaching and learning. Similarly, we hope that through this issue some long-time AISHE-J readers and authors consider attending and perhaps presenting at ICEP in the future.

The ICEP steering committee would be delighted to receive submissions for this year's 10th anniversary conference to be held in Dublin at Griffith College, with a date to be fixed soon for late November or early December. We also welcome all readers to join us for what we hope will be the best ICEP yet. For more information please keep your eye on www.icep.ie and consider joining our mailing list. If you have a specific question or comment, feel free to directly contact any members of the ICEP steering committee, whose contact details can be found on our website.

The papers that are published in this issue include two keynote addresses from the 2016 ICEP conference. In each case the substance of the piece remains close to the address as delivered. Rather than request a paper translated from the keynote genre to the more formal idiom of the written piece, the editors decided to retain, insofar as possible, the immediacy of the spoken piece. We appreciate that both of the speakers were happy with the approach.

Bernie Grummell, of Maynooth University, challenges us with a reminder that love, care and solidarity are at the heart of humanity and as such must be at the heart of the educative relationship. She leads us on a journey that allows us to view "bonds of interdependency" that are essential to human development, learning relationships and educational encounters. Her paper explores the changing political, economic and cultural context of Irish higher education in recent decades and considers the care implications of these changes. Referencing Lynch et al (2007) and Lynch et al. (2015), and the argument that a culture of carelessness in education, "has been exacerbated by the rise of neoliberalism in an increasingly volatile context of global capitalism," Grummell explores the implications for learners and educators of the caring roles we occupy, our relationships with colleagues and learners, and our positioning in the organizational structures of higher education. In a profound reflection, we are brought from the deeply personal to the implications to questions about how we know and care about our world.

In his keynote address, Aiden Carthy National Research Centre for Psychology, Education and Emotional Intelligence, based at the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown outlines a vision for creating emotionally intelligent colleges. He discusses how in recent decades there has been an increase in the role of formal education in empowering students' social and emotional development. Referencing a wealth of research evidence that suggests that a focus on students' social and emotional development can yield tangible benefits for students and for educators. Increased student engagement and decreased levels of drop-out have benefits for both.

Carthy has recently published 'The Emotionally Intelligent College', released by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2016 and this provides an interesting synthesis of current theories in the field of emotional intelligence and a tool-kit of simple exercises for use in third level educational settings, that are designed to help students develop a range of key aspects of emotional intelligence. The transcript of his keynote address discusses his research and outlines key policy changes that could help lead to the creation of emotionally intelligent colleges.

Our first research article is an interesting case study entitled "Collaborative Tools to Enhance Engagement in a Blended Learning Master's Programme" tackles the challenge of achieving student engagement in an online blended learning setting with the additional dimension of the students being in Malawi. The aim of the study is "to explore the contribution of collaborative tools to enhance student engagement with online learning in the context of a blended learning programme delivered to students in Malawi." Physical distance from students can undoubtedly make engagement more challenging. A case study exploring the extent of engagement and the influence of learning technologies, staff, and other factors on student engagement is a very welcome contribution. Authors, Lisa Donaldson, Anne Matthews, Aisling Walsh, Ruairi Brugha, Lucinda Manda-Taylor, Victor Mwapasa, Elaine Byrne, represent three Institutions, DCY, RCSI and the University of Malawi.

Closer to home but also contributing to the issue of engaging students, Fiona Broughton and Fiona O'Riordan have contributed a research paper entitled "Care to Share? A study of the extent to which an expectation sharing and setting induction exercise is an effective pedagogical tool for first year law students." The authors describe the aim of their paper, which is "to present a pedagogical strategy used to help integrate and transition first year law students into their programme." The approach they have developed offers the students a voice and partnership role while allowing the lecturer to manage expectations and integrate the students into the programme. The work was undertaken with a student population of undergraduate first year law students. The research methodology is mixed using both qualitative and quantitative data. The study is situated in a

contemporary policy landscape that seeks to balance the economic imperatives that are driving them with aims of societal improvements through an educated people, all in the context of concerns about fair and equitable access and support resources.

Drawing on a wide range of research that indicates the first year is the most decisive in obtaining a positive outcome for the learner (Blaney and Mulkeen, 2008; Diggins et al, 2010; Tinto 2007, Palmer et al, 2009, Bozick, 2007; Moore-Cherry et al, 2015) the authors consider whether learner induction requires complex and sophisticated solutions or whether induction techniques to assist with transition into higher education can be quite simple, relating to “a basic sense of the learner feeling that they matter and are cared for (Bermingham et al, 2015).”

Darby offers an evaluation of emotional labour coupled with aesthetic labour in the context of teaching in higher education. The concept of emotional labour is, she suggests, more widely researched alone, without the addition of the aesthetic dimension. “Lecturers are emotional workers, responsive to the demands that their occupation makes on their emotions. The purpose of emotional labour is to promote in others a feeling of being cared for. When you engage in emotional labour, you regulate your feelings to satisfy the goals and expectations of your organisation.” The dimension of the aesthetic brings “a related line of inquiry in the paper”. Aesthetic labour can be exemplified in such concepts as “good and sounding right in an organisational setting”. The paper reports a work in progress as the author indicates that emotional and aesthetic labour, especially in combination, form an under-researched area in higher education, deserving of further research and offering potential in understanding and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

Gerry Gallagher has contributed an illuminating piece on the topic of Constructive Alignment - an approach to curriculum design and delivery in which learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment are integrated to create the conditions for high-level learning. Well grounded in research that recognizes the essential role that feedback plays in learning, the author argues that to be effective, feedback needs “to be based on and consistent with learning outcomes, assessment criteria and learning and teaching activities”. The paper suggests that, the potential impact of feedback on student learning warrants its explicit inclusion as a key element of the model, though the author acknowledges that it may be implicit in a constructive alignment model. A key discussion point in the paper is the value formative feedback in particular, in assisting teachers and students to “the extent of the alignment of the existing three elements of the constructive alignment model,” offering a route to deepening the shared understanding of the

learning design students and teachers alike.

To our readers, we hope that you will find the issue informative and productive in terms of supporting your practice. We would also like to encourage you to consider submitting your work to the journal and, if you would be prepared to devote some time to the ongoing work of AISHE-J, to register as a peer reviewer in your area of expertise.

It would be remiss of us to close this introduction to the issue without registering our appreciation of the work everyone who has contributed to the issue, as authors, peer reviewers, and editors in their various roles. On this occasion, it is also important to thank the ICEP steering committee and the wider ICEP community for making the issue possible. Without the work of ICEP, in listening to the voices of the higher education community, and in facilitating the work of that community in relation to topics such as presented in this issue, the discourse and the practice of higher education would be much the poorer.

Introducing the final issue of 2016, we commented that the contributions of the authors demonstrated a gratifying level of commitment to the student. Although the topics and educational contexts of the papers presented are at somewhat of a remove from those of the last issue the same sense student-centredness is present in this issue. On that satisfying note, it gives us great pleasure to bring you the Volume 9 Number 1, Spring 2017 issue of AISHE-J.

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