Introduction to the issue.

Moira Maguire

Morag Munro

Ronan Bree

We are delighted to welcome you to the first issue of volume 12. We have an interesting and varied collection of papers and we hope that you will enjoy them.

In our first article, Francesca Keogh. Alice Lee and Fiona Gibbon, from University College Cork, discuss the use of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) whereby students are facilitated to view, examine and interpret pieces of art. VTS is '… *a tool which can assist students to develop observation, communication, team working and critical-thinking skills…through engagement and participation in group thought and discussion processes'* (p.2). In 'Visual Thinking Strategies: Experiences of an Arts-based Curriculum in an Irish University Medicine and Health Faculty', the authors report a qualitative, descriptive study of facilitators' and students' experiences of its use on a number of healthcare undergraduate programmes. This study is unique in exploring the perspectives of facilitators as well as students. Both groups were positive about the role of VTS in skill development, however facilitators felt that greater student engagement was needed to realise the full potential of the approach. Issues such as quantity and timing of deliver and class sizes also emerged. The authors highlight the need for further research on the impact of VTS on learning and particularly on the transfer of this learning to clinical settings.

Unlike disciplines such as medicine or legal studies, students in the arts and humanities are less likely to be consciously engaged in the development of a 'professional identity'. In 'Service Learning As A Means To Develop Geography Graduates' Professional Identity', Marie Mahon, Therese Conway, Maura Farrell and John McDonagh from the National University of Ireland, Galway, discuss how service learning, "…*a pedagogical approach that emphasises experiential learning, and particularly critical reflection on those experience…s*" (p5) can enable disciplines such as rural geography to support students in the development of a professional identity. Using

a case study example of a Master's module, the authors examine service learning as "*a participatory and reflexive approach to teaching and learning, using methods that link the application of academic knowledge of rural geography and more applied skills to a practice-based setting*" (p3). They conclude that service learning has significant potential to develop students' professional identity, as well as having scope to provide spaces of professional socialisation. They also highlight that academic staff have a pivotal role to play in supporting students to "…*construct a narrative of professionalisation … that guides students towards developing a professional self with consequent links to a range of employability attributes*" (p15).

Aidan Mooney and James Lockwood from Maynooth University present their novel Computational Thinking (CT) test with first year computer science (CS) students. CT is defined by the authors as "*the thought processes required in decomposing problems and constructing solutions that are encountered in CS".* The authors initially draw on the literature to highlight how CT scores correlate with academic achievement, and hence could act as a predictor of academic success. In addition, they highlight that CT has improved understanding of how programming centres on problem solving while also improving female attitudes to programming. In this article, the authors present their findings from working with first year students who took their CT tests and completed surveys on CS and CT. The aim was to gather and analyse perceptions of first year undergraduates who had been exposed to two semesters of CS, and to see if a change in those perceptions was observed during that experience, as well as compare data from the CT tests taken by the students. Comparing their CS survey results, one can see the students' perceptions of certain aspects of CS change, such as an increased awareness of the importance of solving problems being central in CS. The authors also provide an insight into the responses between various demographics such as those who had prior programming experience vs. no experience, ordinary vs. higher level maths in schools and gender. The authors complete their article with a view to the future, identifying how cross-Institute comparisons would be of interest while perhaps comparing with Institutes using Java as a first programming language would complement this further.

Instructional videos can be very powerful learning and teaching tools, but many educators feel they don't have the skills or the confidence to develop their own. The final article 'Practical Recommendations on the Production of Video Teaching Resources' will be an invaluable resource for anyone who would like to produce their own educational videos. Karen Dunne, Ronan Bree (Dundalk Institute of Technology), Vivienne Duggan and Deirdre Campion (University College Dublin) provide a step-by-step guide to the entire process: planning,

shooting, editing and sharing. The article provides an incredibly clear and comprehensive explanation of each of these stages. The authors consider the ethical issues associated with video production and also povide clear guidance on editing for Universal Design for Learning (ULD). The use of illustrations and practical tips ensure that this article will be of use to novices in addition to those more experienced in developing videos.

We hope that you enjoy the issue and we would like to express our sincere thanks to all the authors and reviewers. Finally, we would like to remind you that we are also accepting papers for consideration for the Summer 2020 issue and beyond. If you have an idea for a contribution that you would like to discuss, please contact us, or any member of the editorial team and we will be delighted to help.