

## **Editorial**

Welcome to the first edition of the *Journal of Educational Enquiry* for 2014, Volume 13 Number 1. While Number 2 will be based around a special theme, this number presents papers addressing several of the themes of interest to the journal – ‘communities of practice’, ‘becoming a teacher’, ‘academic communities and ‘teaching teachers collaboratively’.

Two articles fall under the theme of ‘communities of practice’. The first, by Roppola and Whittington, engages us in learning about the worlds of 5 to 8 year old children and, in particular, the pedagogies employed by exemplary practitioners to foster children’s imagination and creativity. The authors note the power of engaging in creative practices to enrich people’s lives, motivate learning, and contribute to economic, social, cultural and environmental issues. However, they also note the potential of education to stifle the very creativity curricula aim to develop, especially when constrained by rigid assessment agendas. Rather than investigating child development, the study investigated teacher thinking, actions and insights through non-participant observation, video recording of teaching and learning and the use of stimulated recall interviews. As well as identifying successful pedagogies, the study also reminds us that emotion and uncertainty need to be considered when enhancing children’s creativity.

A second article, also focused on 5 to 8-year-old children, explores what is being done in one school community to foster the well-being of refugee children. The authors, Shallow and Whittington, note that, in spite of the large numbers of refugee children in Australian schools, little is known about what is being done in school communities which are supportive of refugee children and their families. The authors note the importance of teachers having an ethic of care which extends further than having mere sympathy for refugee children. The well-being of eight children was observed using a well-being scale developed in South Australia. Parents and school staff were also interviewed. Of the eight children, only one was found to be at possible risk in terms of well-being. Several structural community and child focused connections were found to be in practice in this school community. Of particular note were a buddy system, home visits, and school organised integrated events. The authors make several recommendations for this school and others to further enhance the well-being of refugee children in our schools.

Morrison, Willis, Crosswell and Gibson address another of the key themes of the journal, ‘becoming a teacher’. Their paper reports the results of a study with a group of beginning teachers working in rural and remote communities in Queensland. Finding and retaining staff for remote schools is a particular challenge for education authorities Australia-wide, as these schools are often staffed by recent graduates, who face the double challenge of forming their new professional identity while being removed from the home and professional support networks which have sustained them to now. The researchers employed narrative inquiry and harnessed the possibilities of web based resources in order to both explore what was happening with these new teachers and enhance their resilience. Of particular interest were

the ‘turning points’ identified and the complexities of the teachers’ experiences and their responses to them.

Related to the theme of ‘academic communities’ is the article by Foster and O’Donoghue. Their research was based in an unusual context, the teaching of religion in a secular university. The authors were curious about the effect of the study of religion on students’ knowledge, understanding and attitudes. The students surveyed were different from the general Australian population in two ways – they were both more highly educated than the norm and less religious. The students’ motivation for undertaking studies of religion was driven by a desire for better knowledge of religion and understanding of the religious practices of others. Students indicated that their study had broadened their knowledge of religion, both their own and that of others, and helped them to see the similarities and differences. Students reported development of the ability to think about religion in a more enquiring way and also reported on the development of more tolerance, understanding and respect. However, the study of religion appeared to have minimal impact on students’ own beliefs.

Finally, related to the theme of ‘teaching teachers collaboratively’ is the article by Hammond and McCallum, which explores an innovative teaching program in the learning area of Society and Environment. Pre-service teachers used the construction of curriculum in International Humanitarian Law as a way of exploring their emancipatory and transformative capabilities. Before commencing their critical inquiry pre-service teachers expressed their interest in the areas of relevance, connection, emancipatory perspectives and student voice. Harnessing input from their lecturers and from Red Cross staff, students constructed WebQuests around issues. The application of critical pedagogical practices was evident in the students’ enquiries and shows how the study of a contemporary issue can be transformative.

We wish to thank those colleagues from the University of South Australia and Queensland University of Technology who have contributed articles for this issue of the journal. Thanks are also due to those colleagues who have given of their time for the process of blind reviewing all the articles contributed. The assistance of Louise Carslake in the administration of the journal has been invaluable. We look forward to the next edition of the journal which will be a special issue devoted to the theme of pedagogies for social justice.

Michele de Courcy and Tom Stehlik, Editors.