



EDITORIAL

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Single questions: Multiple answers for multiple settings

The six papers in this issue of the *Journal of Learning Design* deal with some of the perennial questions facing educators and learning designers in higher education. In this issue, university teachers in differing disciplines and from different institutions consider the questions that they find most perplexing. This includes wondering if putting lectures online will affect student attendance, how to set up group work to achieve a fair balance of skills and dispositions and if students have achieved the competency standards that we believe they have. One paper in this issue looks at how academics might meet to regularly and meaningfully share experiences while another asks how to get teaching staff enthusiastic about a new model of teaching, here problem-based learning in small group settings. One author takes a quite technical look at digital objects and works through how these characteristics can affect their learning potential. These are not isolated concerns and the wisdom of the authors in this issue will surely assist others in arriving at their own localised contextualised solutions.

As with all issues of the *Journal of Learning Design*, what appear to be localised problems have a broader range and potential application. For instance, the paper (which begins this issue) is concerned with teamwork in Design, but the recommendations the authors make has applicability to a myriad of other teaching settings. Similarly, the studies described in the second, third and fourth papers conducted respectively in Physiotherapy, Pharmacy and Psychology will strike a chord with educators in disciplines outside of health and medicine. The final two papers in this issue have applicability in all disciplines and teaching contexts.

This issue

The first paper in this issue, by **Tucker** and **Abbasi**, is concerned with design students and their perceptions and experiences of teamwork. The factors the authors have identified rest within three broad categories: (1) unequal contributions and unfair assessment, (2) individual differences between students and other issues arising from the process of designing, and (3) pedagogical factors including team formation, task design and teaching. Their paper provides recommendations for practice that would be applicable in discipline areas other than design.

The second paper, by **Skinner, Hyde, McPherson** and **Simpson** is concerned with how Physiotherapy students develop interpersonal skills, particularly in clinical settings. The authors describe their response to a complex matter based in clinical reasoning, patient positioning and handling, and communication. The authors have trialled an experiential small-group PBL approach and found, surprisingly, that some teaching staff expressed concern about the suitability of the approach.

The third paper in this issue, by **Nash, Stupans, Chalmers** and **Brown**, is concerned with how students in Pharmacy courses demonstrate national competency standards benchmarks against Miller's (1990) Pyramid of Clinical Competence across the four years of their program. The authors identify a disconnect between how students and their teachers perceive their competence which has implications for teachers and curriculum designers. Critically, a novel approach to reporting and to responding to the Australian national push for the "assurance of learning" based on a "traffic light" is presented in this paper. This, as noted by the authors, has "potential for portability to other professional disciplines."

The fourth paper, by **Yeung, Raja** and **Sharma** deals with the interesting and perplexing conundrum of the impact of online lecture recordings and lecture attendance. They found that the majority of students believed that having recorded lectures available made a moderate to significant impact on their learning and their achievement of better results. Their results are fascinating including the counterintuitive finding that students who frequently attend lectures are more likely to access recorded lectures for revision and consolidation than their absent peers "catching up" on a missed class. There was also a difference between students' defence of the retention of recording and their actual use. The authors conclude that recordings are complementary to rather than competitive with lecture attendance.

Fifth, **Baker** and **Beames** describe a Community of Practice to support and sustain effective teaching and learning practice in first-year Science courses. They offer both practical and theoretical advice as to how to sustain such communities. The authors have looked to the research in the field and used this to inform their own practices. They have also conducted research with the members of the community they established to ascertain the group's ongoing needs as well as determining which factors had led to their success. As with Nash et al. (*this issue*), the authors have sought the views of both educators and students.

The sixth and final paper in this issue, by **Reece**, shares understandings of best practice in the design and development of digital objects for elementary schools. This article meets the criterion for portability noted in other articles in this issue, here from elementary classrooms to higher education. Reece discusses the five best practices identified in the literature for the development of digital objects: granularity, formatting standards, stand-alone capabilities, composition and stylistic approach, and creation of metadata and tags. Her aim parallels that of other authors in this issue, that is, to provide optimal learning environments for students.

Each paper in this issue shares significant and transferable knowledge and experience. The authors have generously shared their wisdom drawn from systematic review and analysis. We commend the issue to you and hope that you not only enjoy reading it, but that the ideas and recommendations find resonance within your own practice.

Margaret Lloyd, Queensland University of Technology, Australia
Nan Bahr, Griffith University, Australia

References

Miller, G. (1990). The assessment of clinical skills, competence, performance. *Academic Medicine*, 65(9), S63-67