Welcome to the latest issue of *Compass: Journal of Learning and Teaching*!

This issue of *Compass* explores further the applications of technology to learning and teaching and emphasises the importance of academics' partnership with students in their growing command of digital devices and tools, including social web tools. Institutions and their staff can't avoid technologically-enhanced methodology and some of the papers here may offer hope and reassurance to anyone with fears about embracing it. The issue continues the themes of staff-student collaboration, student empowerment and students as co-producers; it also offers an insight into the way adults learn.

An opinion piece by Daniel James Peart aims to allay the possible fears of academic teachers about embracing the use of mobile technologies in teaching and learning draws its conclusions from the observation of student practice with mobile devices. Although the project was small, it does confirm that students are well-versed in this technology and deploy it successfully to their own ends. (Indeed, staff should, Daniel says, take encouragement from the fact that students see them primarily as subject-specialists and don't have expectations of them as technological experts.) A table of student responses to questions about their subsequent use of mobile devices in other higher education contexts helpfully reveals aspects of their attitudes to these powerful hand-held units.

A reflective piece by S. Yerrabati sheds light on the way adults learn. By considering the relevant literature and personal observation of the adult students' approach to research and its methodology, S. Yerrabati concludes that student validation of what is taught in class by relating it to life experiences and developing conceptual and practical competence through the medium of group discussion are key to adult learning. However, in a challenge to the literature on the subject, S. Yerrabati emphasises that the power of cultural and social expectations in influencing adults' learning behaviours must not be underestimated.

A thoughtful reflection by S. Yerrabati on the close involvement of students, this time in the assessment process, in tutors' making clear to them the broad context of its purposes and the detail of its criteria and methods of evaluation, demonstrates how academic performance might be positively influenced by appropriate summative tasks and constructive formative assessment. The paper considers how, when students are well-versed in the expectations of a course, when judicious feedback is not only provided but also properly understood through further discussion and when reflection is practised and acted upon, learning outcomes may be considerably enhanced.

In a case study focused on the deployment of wiki technology to enhance collaborative learning by Andrew James Ferrier, the author argues that this strategy can overcome the twin challenges of time and large-class constraints, but, more importantly, that it can track and measure student participation as well as stimulate much greater levels of contribution and resultant learning. The paper produces some positive evidence of the correlation between wiki-incorporated learning activity and academic achievement.

Wiki and other social web tools also come under the spotlight of Francesca Robinson's very engaging study of an effort to embed technology-enhanced learning into the programme of a postgraduate course in higher education teaching and learning. Empowering participants to make use of such current technologies in their own teaching and thereby similarly influencing their students to take control of their own learning certainly disseminates excellent practice! This paper reflects, in its carefully-selected supportive literature and detailed exploration of one institution's experience, Francesca's considered objective of achieving a partnership approach to course design, creating a community of practice, communicating and collaborating. Skill in the application of social media tools is already well-recognised in the workplace and Francesca provides convincing argument for how students will benefit when these elements are an intrinsic part of their courses.

Continuing the technology theme is a case study by Malgorzata Iwaniec, Tatiana Simmonds, and Zoe Swan. This case study, which confirms the beneficial impact of flipped-classroom learning analyses the reactions of two distinct groups of students (computing and law) to this method, which their lecturers chose as a means of developing the skills essential to graduates, with particular focus upon problem-solving. Alongside some very positive participant-response data, the authors helpfully provide student comments that are critical of some aspects of the experience, as they illuminate areas for fine tuning the delivery of both pre-release study material and interactive classroom activities; additionally, a summary of what the authors see as the potential challenges facing teachers in adopting flipped learning gives the whole paper a feeling of informed objectivity and balance.

A case study by Louise Hewitt reviews the introduction of the flipped classroom method among two cohorts of law students - first year and third year students. The piece begins with a clear outline of the flipped classroom method, helpful for readers who may be unfamiliar with the approach. The hypothesis was that first years students would engage more quickly with the flipped method in comparison to third years, as the latter were assumed to have become used to the regularity of teacher led lectures of previous years. However, the surprising results found that many third year students were complimentary of the flipped approach and were engaged with the learning materials. Louise offers a detailed reflection upon how students responded to the flipped classroom method over the course of five weeks, and highlights the benefits which such an approach can have on enhancing the independent study skills of students.

A frank and very informative account of personal experience - of a teacher-training module for the application of elements of e-learning to healthcare courses - contains a wealth of useful and supportive advice for any lecturer unfamiliar with the range of strategies for incorporating online learning into her/his practice. Rebecca Sherwood carefully appraises the potential benefits of a first-hand exploration of a range of digital applications, especially in stimulating in students the deeper forms of learning, but it is particularly helpful in flagging up the practical challenges to educators. The module's central task required participants, working cooperatively, to review one or more learning tools within the shared aim of building a Moodle database; membership of this 'community of practice' enabled Rebecca to understand precisely what students would themselves experience and therefore to plan appropriately for their needs, leading to the logical and preferred choice of blended learning, delivered in the integrated manner of the flipped

classroom. There is much reassurance here, against a thorough background of relevant reading.

Further reassurance for both academics and their institutions is provided by Katharine Jewitt in a very thorough perspective of the emergence and growing impact of MOOCs and their potential to transform learning and teaching. Katharine is in no doubt of the value of online learning in offering opportunity for collaborative student activity that is personalised and can be monitored by teachers; the data generated and the online tools and materials offer much to students and their teachers, especially since the software is sophisticated enough in some cases to adapt itself to individuals' performance and progress. Furthermore, for students across the world who, because of their straitened circumstances, do not have much chance of accessing higher education in person, what is on offer online can transform their educational experience. There is a clear message that universities and teaching staff do need to reappraise what they offer to students – unwillingness to adapt to the changing world of technologically-enhanced methodology is not an option – but there seems no question that students, in spite of the huge benefits to them from online sources, do want and need the human reality of face-to-face engagement in the classroom as well.

A conference reflection on the topic of unconscious bias in learning, teaching, and assessment by Karla Benske and Sheila MacNeil points to the lack of critical attention allocated to this particular area of research. In an effort to raise awareness of the topic, valuable resources have been created and made available online through a blended learning approach. Taking on the comments of participants at the conference, the term 'unconscious' bias is interrogated and the term 'cognitive' bias becomes favoured. Karla and Sheila explore the importance of how greater levels of understanding unconscious bias 'encourages practitioners to be more mindful and reflective about their biases'.

I hope you enjoy this latest edition of the journal and that it encourages continued critical discussions concerning these topical issues in the sector.

Danielle Tran
Editor