Editorial

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1 Introduction

In this issue, as with all Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability (EAEA) issues, we provide a veritable world tour of interesting and important studies covering a range of pressing issues across all phases of education. The first two articles focus on higher education via a national Portuguese survey of higher education-based teaching assessment and a US-based institutionally focused study of an innovative redesign process to improve the overall gathering of graduate student experience evidence. The final two papers examine school-level issues. In Hong Kong, we learn about how students from various backgrounds interpret and experience student assessment practices. Finally, in New Zealand, we are offered a glimpse into an important dataset examining differences in how teachers and leaders evaluate leader performance.

The first paper, by Cardoso, Tavares and Sin, is entitled *The quality of teaching staff: higher education institutions' compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance—the case of Portugal*. The authors provide an important and timely contribution in sharing the results of their recent study into the university-level strategies for both improving and assuring the quality of teaching of their faculty members in line with European and national-level requirements. The study found that selection, recruitment and appraisal strategies are well developed. However, institutional support, incentives and training designed to develop the pedagogical knowledge and skills of faculty members remain in their infancy. This article will be of great interest to those considering the recent proposal in the UK to formally assess institutions on the overall quality of teaching.

Globally, universities appear to be taking great notice of the importance of student experience, perhaps inspired by increasing global competition for students or the increase in tuition fees that creates pressure to ensure what some would refer to as 'value for money' in their university experience. For these reasons, Hardré and Hackett

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make an important contribution to discussions and debates related to student experience in their paper *Beyond instrumentation: redesigning measures and methods for evaluating the graduate college experience*. The paper examines the process and outcomes to redesign the strategies employed for measuring graduate student experience. The redesign engaged stakeholders in a rigorous reflection and feedback exercise to understand more about individual and organizational needs. New instruments, designed to collect entry, mid-point and exit evidence, were tested and refined, providing the institution with a coherent and meaningful analysis and feedback strategy. The authors provide food for thought for scholars and university leaders who are currently examining the own individual and organizational contributions to overall student learning and experience.

In their paper *Student perception of assessment practices: towards ‘no loser’ classrooms for all students in the ethnic minority schools in Hong Kong*, Hue, Leung and Johon Kennedy explore the Hong Kong schools reform focused on creating ‘no loser’ classrooms to support the development and learning of all students. The authors examined how both Chinese and ethnic minority student perceived assessment practices and their alignment with their own preferred assessment strategies. The study employed the 11 items of assessment practices list (Brown et al. 2009) with a sample of 1518 students from 15 primary and secondary schools. Confirmatory factor analyses showed secondary student preference for teacher-dominated assessment, while primary students preferred teacher-student interactive assessment as the most important practice. Ethnic minority students demonstrated the greatest preference for teacher-student interaction assessment practice. The paper creates an interesting contribution to discussion of student assessment from the important vantage point of the students themselves and raises the essential consideration of how different groups of individuals may perceive their educational experiences differently from their peers.

Sinnema, Robinson, Ludlow and Pope present a sophisticated and timely contribution, again examining how different educational stakeholders may interpret the same experience in their paper *How effective is the principal? Discrepancy between New Zealand teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of principal effectiveness*. The study, and evidence presented in the paper, explore (1) the magnitude and direction of discrepancy between how principals and their teachers perceive the principal’s effectiveness and (2) factors that predict principals who are at risk because their self-ratings considerably exceed the ratings others give them. Using a 16-item educational leadership practice survey, the authors drew on one scale of principal effectiveness ratings by New Zealand principals and teachers ($n=2757$). The evidence demonstrated that, on average, principals and teachers rated principals highly with teachers often offering higher ratings than the leaders themselves did, with greater variance as well. Variables increasing magnitude of discrepancy included principal age (younger), time in principal role at the school (shorter) and socioeconomic status of the school (lower). The authors highlight the challenges and consider the implications in the wider field of leadership and school improvement. As educational jurisdictions around the world continue to debate and design evaluative measures and enact a range of accountability-driven strategies as a result, the findings from this paper offer essential points of consideration for policymakers and professional development and school-level officials. In addition, the authors make an important contribution to the scholarly debate about how

difference, and perception of difference, may make leading schools a more challenging proposition.

The articles, as a collection, explore important contemporary issues in evaluation from the vantage point of various stakeholders. Each article, on its own, makes an important contribution to discussions of evaluation and assessment in its respective educational setting of focus. However, as a collection, the authors remind us all that the perspectives of different educational stakeholders are important but can also be influenced by their own individual and collective experiences.

As a global education community, while acknowledging both policy and practice resisters, we appear to be relentless in our oft-forced adoption of increasingly higher-stakes accountability strategies. These strategies are often underpinned by one-off quantitative yet increasingly multi-stakeholder measures of performance. In many jurisdictions, the use and implications of the outcomes of these measurements are becoming increasingly high stakes for the individuals and organizations involved. The articles in this issue of EAEA demonstrate that different perspectives are important to triangulate opinion and experience. However, they also highlight how a difference in one's own experience and opinion can challenge, complicate and/or condemn others within the context of performance evaluation. As such, we need to continually consider different perspectives and experiences. However, for our most vulnerable professional and student colleagues, we need to consider how evaluation of their practice, performance and ability may well be influenced by evaluator or instrument bias.

References

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