Guest editorial

Creative approaches to researching further, higher and adult education

This special edition of *QRJ* is reflective of the great breadth of research in the field of further, adult and higher education. In this edition, we bring together work by authors from Australia, Canada and the UK, each exploring a different aspect of research in one of these fields. Apart from the sector in which they are located, the papers for this edition are linked by a concern with relationships, expressed through narratives of different forms. Littlefair *et al.* draw on the words of actors in the field to demonstrate the importance of values, collegiality and intellectual kinship in the building of external relationships essential to a University's business model and income generation. In Crimmins *et al.*, seven women-writers-performers-artists-academics, whilst having a very different focus to their paper, demonstrate the importance of their relationships in supporting one another as they use narrative to story, de-story and re-story the experience of their lives. In contrast, Roberts utilises the art of Kendo, or Japanese fencing, in which the opponents "confront each other with decorum, discipline and focus while striving towards a decisive combative outcome" as a means of framing phenomenological inquiry. He draws on this to develop a narrative of organisational sensemaking. Shabtay *et al.* work closely together to use dramatic techniques as a means of enabling the process of becoming pedagogical amongst groups of pre-service teachers. They present a narrative account of this process. Working with graduate class, Glasser *et al.* discuss the process of working towards the pledge "I am enough" through a process of collaborative enquiry which involved the positive affirmative actions of self-acceptance, self-grace, self-improvement and positive encouragement of oneself and others. Becker discusses the concept of "musicking" to create an "in-between" space challenging researcher positionality and giving voice to the "researched". The paper also explores how music also acted as a bridging agent encouraging open and honest dialogue and relationship building. In the final paper, Arnold seeks to illuminate the way in which pre-service teachers adopt ways of thinking critically about learning and practice.

The importance of relationships in each of these papers is significant: all seek to understand different aspects of the education process post-school, in different countries and contexts. However, all illustrate the fact that "we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through [...] rich modes of expression we learn through exchange with others [...]" (Taylor *et al.*, 1994, p. 32). These notions of self-understanding, of having agency are significant in the moral underpinning of educational research (see Sikes *et al.*, 2003). Christians (2013) argues that moral convictions are not only developed through discourse within a community but that such communities, where moral discourse is "nurtured and shared" form a radical alternative to what he describes as the "utilitarian individualism of modernity" (p. 151). Individualism may be seen as part of a wider malaise resulting from ideologies of globalisation and neo-liberalism; issues touched upon by Littlefair *et al.* in their paper. Such concerns highlight the continuing importance of journals such as *QRJ*, which offer a space for critical debate on the multiplicity of issues faced by groups and individuals at the current conjuncture.

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About the Guest Editor

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