

Higher Education Quarterly Editorial, October 2018 Issue

University life: students and teaching, organization and research collaboration

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The last issue of 2018 of Higher Education Quarterly presents 8 papers that are based on substantial conceptual frameworks, research design and empirical data to investigate students and teaching, the university organizational dimension and the challenges of research management.

Kevin Schoepp draws on the case of a University in the United Arab Emirates where English is a medium of instruction to illustrate how IELTS tests for non-English speaking students constitute a predictor of study success. At the same time though, the author cautions on the need for curricula to embed language support and consider a second language for teaching.

The link between reputation based on national and international rankings and leeway to charge high fees is analysed by Alison Wolf and Andrew Jenkin: in the English setting the higher and lower ranked institutions can charge significantly different student fees. The authors argue that climbing the rankings become then instrumental for universities to gather increasing financial resources.

José Miguel Cerdeira, Luis Catela Nunes, Ana Balcão Reis and Carmo Seabra show how teacher evaluation provided at the end of secondary school is a better predictor than final exam performance when it comes to access to university. Based on a study on Portuguese pupils, it becomes apparent that the influence of family characteristics and support depends on the selected higher institution and discipline, while parents education is negligible once high school performance is considered.

The international cooperative aspect of international comparative research is examined by Anna Kosmützky, who focuses on how methodological complexity and social diversity affect research processes and outputs. The author argues that international comparative research both facilitates international team collaboration and aggravates the distinctive social challenges in such enterprise, and provides a research agenda for further investigation.

In a survey of 89 teaching programme directors about their role and tasks, particularly vis-à-vis the new challenges posed by the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), Ruth Massie points to insufficient training as an important dimension affecting programme directors' ability to fulfil their job. The author argues that increasing targeted training may have a beneficial impact on universities' TEF results.

Kimberly O'Connor, Michelle Drouin, Jedidiah Davis and Hannah Thompson present the case of cyber abuse - such as cyberbullying and revenge porn - in a US university. By looking at victim characteristics and student awareness of existing policies, the authors offer systematic knowledge on cyber abuse on campus and provide recommendations to improve policies within universities.

Kristian J. Sund and Stephane Bignoux, make a contribution to the debate on the importance of student attendance in relation to their exam performance and completion rates. Drawing on 674 student records in a London-based university, the study shows that attendance does affect positively exam performance, it then provides recommendations for policy makers, institutional leadership and lecturers on how to craft appropriate attendance policies.

Finally, Jill Jameson elaborates a theoretical model of stoical critical corridor talk (CCT), drawing on selected empirical data and reflective observations between 2005 and 2017. The data shows that resistant academic critique is increasingly questioning economically driven trends of command and control in academia. The author points to the centrality of the role of informal leadership, who needs to practise correct moral principles when resisting dysfunctional environments in the academic setting.

In the last issue of the year we traditionally thank all our reviewers for making a central contribution to the quality of all papers submitted to Higher Education Quarterly. We feel privileged that this commitment remains as strong as ever in a moment where workload is putting pressure on academics' availability to review the work of their colleagues.