Editorial

Welcome to Volume 4 of *Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences*. LATISS has been gradually widening its focus from its point of origin in the U.K. and this issue is truly international with material from Latin America, U.S.A, Sweden and England. LATISS's approach – to study and reflect on the detail of teaching and learning practices in contexts of institutional change and national and international policies – is also well exemplified by the articles in this issue. For example, three of the articles explore issues of 'race' and ethnicity in connection with programme design, institutional politics and classroom relations respectively and in very different historical and policy contexts. Two articles also connect to topics on which LATISS has recently published special issues: on gender in higher education and on using the university as a site to critically explore the meaning and operation of neoliberalism.

In the first article, Gunther Dietz and Laura Mateos Cortés analyse the development of the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (UVI) in Mexico. Aimed at providing higher education opportunities in rural areas with predominantly indigenous populations, the UVI started to offer undergraduate degrees in four regional centres in 2005. The original course offerings were integrated into a single B.A. in Intercultural Management for Development in 2007. The programme is trans-disciplinary and students are taught a variety of methodological skills that enable them, from the first semester onwards, to engage in research and knowledge transfer with their home communities. The recognition of cultural diversity, the importance of intercultural competences and close links with indigenous activists are all central to the programme and challenge existing concepts of academic knowledge and the traditional role of universities.

Next, Ann-Mari Sallerberg presents the findings of a Swedish project to address gender imbalances in the academic profession. Twelve prominent women academics from a variety of countries were invited to work with postgraduate students in the Department of Sociology at the University of Lund, with a view to encouraging more women postgraduates to consider

academic careers. It was anticipated that the 'outsider' role of these guest professors would offer new perspectives to the postgraduates and to the department. While it is too soon to tell if the long-term aim of the project has been met, the reports of the guest professors indicate that students gained new insights by having to explain their work to someone outside the department. They discussed their academic insecurities more freely with the guest professors than with their supervisors and were encouraged to see themselves as part of a wider scholarly community.

Dana-Ain Davis's article was originally intended for the Winter 2010 special issue on Learning Under Neoliberalism: Ethnographies of Governance in Higher Education but space constraints meant that it had to be held over to this issue. In this autoethnographic account, the author shows how everyday examples of neoliberal practices in higher education can create fear among academics and discourage any form of direct challenge to the power of the university managers and administrators. The increased power of university leaders enables them to take decisions about courses and the use of space on campus based purely on calculations of profitability and prestige, ignoring the interests and opinions of students and academics. However, the author shows how opportunities remain for academics committed to social justice to put neoliberalism on the curriculum and make it a subject of intellectual scrutiny by students and teachers.

In the fourth article, Shirin Housee explores the way a small group of minority ethnic students in an English university experience their interactions with other students and with tutors. In the interests of finding out more about what helps and what hinders the achievement of minority ethnic students, the author interviewed students of Sociology in the second year of their degrees. She found that studying alongside a significant number of other minority ethnic students, open class discussions in which the experiences of all students are valued and accessible tutors all had positive effects on the students' ability to learn. Experiences of racism, actual or perceived lack of support from teaching staff and being unable to concentrate on assignments because of family commitments or the demands of paid work undermined both their progress and their sense of belonging in the university.

This issue concludes with reviews by Shaun Hargreaves-Heap, Stefan Hurdak and Jeroen Huisman of books about the funding of higher education in the U.S.A., developments in European higher education and the impact of changing modes of university governance on academic work.

Our thanks go to the authors of articles and reviews, the anonymous referees who read the articles, the publishers who provided review copies of the books, our own publisher Berghahn and the Editorial Board. Special thanks to Paul Wingrove, who is stepping down from the Editorial Board after seven years of service to this journal and its predecessor.

Penny Welch and Susan Wright