

## EDITORIAL

*Norbert Pachler, Editor*

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On behalf of the Academic and Professional Advisory Board

Welcome to the new professional online journal *Reflecting Education*.

The open access electronic format of the journal aims to provide a platform for the dissemination of findings from research and practice-based enquiry on issues of learning and teaching to as wide an audience as possible, including education practitioners in the field who tend not to have ready access to library resources as well as to staff and students on award-bearing courses, for whom the articles are, *inter alia*, meant to provide an incentive and encouragement to seek publication of their own work.

The title of the journal, *Reflecting Education*, has been chosen not only to signal the desire to illuminate a range of aspects of education and related fields but also to allude to the aim of featuring new forms of professional discourse, for example, case studies, reflective teacher narratives or reports on personal professional practice.

We believe that a focus on practitioner research can have a significant and positive effect on evidence-informed practice and that encouragement of and support for new and less experienced authors can add considerable value and vitality to the range of material available (and accessible) in the public domain.

In addition to established quality criteria for research, such as methodological and theoretical robustness, we particularly foreground what Furlong and Oancea (2005, pp. 13-15) classify under 'social robustness' and call 'capacity development and value for people'. Under this quality dimension for applied and practice-based educational research they list the following sub-dimensions in their framework: plausibility; partnership, collaboration and engagement; reflexivity, deliberation and engagement; receptiveness; and transformation and personal growth.

In part, the decision to establish the journal comes from years of witnessing external examiners at the Institute of Education, University of London comment on the high quality of much of the work presented as well as on the publishable nature of some of this work. Alas, hardly any of these pieces of coursework, reports and dissertations have tended to find their way into the public domain.

There normally exist a number of barriers including, importantly, the fact that these pieces were originally written as assessment tasks for an award-bearing course. This means that they inherently conform to different discourse conventions than those governing academic and professional journal articles and, therefore, invariably require re-writing before they can be published. In addition to the time and effort required, which are in short supply at the best of times for busy professionals – particularly if they are still

working towards aspects of their course, there usually exists little support for novice writers to 'translate' such pieces appropriately.

*Reflecting Education* has assembled a range of experienced Higher Education tutors, themselves authors of academic and professional output, as part of its Academic and Professional Advisory Board who not only act as expert referees for submissions to the journal – all papers received are peer reviewed – but who are also willing to support and mentor less experienced colleagues.

Therefore, unlike most – if not all – of its competitors, the journal looks for potential in submissions received, rather than necessarily for a finished product in order to enable educational professional at all stages in their career to make an active contribution to important discussions in their field.

In addition to standard issues featuring a range of contributions across different educational topics, the journal will regularly run special issues with the aim of illuminating a particular theme from different perspectives. It is particularly appropriate, therefore, that the inaugural issue of the journal is a special issue on the theme of e-learning. For details of the issue and some background on the work presented, please see the Guest Editors' introduction.

We hope you find the contributions to this, and future, issues interesting and stimulating and we would like to encourage you to contribute to the debates initiated by the authors as well as by submitting your own work. If you are looking for an outlet for a series of contributions around a particular topic, for example a conference or a symposium, please do not hesitate to contact us.

London, September 2005

### **References:**

Furlong, J. and Oancea, A. (2005) *Assessing quality in applied and practice-based educational research. A framework for discussion*. Oxford University Department of Educational Studies. Available at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk> and <http://www.bera.ac.uk>