

EDITORIAL

## A Pause for Thought

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Summer holidays for most students are a time to relax, enjoy themselves, catch up on studies, spend time with family or relatives or earn much-needed money. But what about teachers? Our profession often leaves us with little time for professional enrichment. However, the summer does offer us the perfect opportunity to catch up on new and thought-provoking ideas about learning and teaching.

Although this July issue of the *Asian Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* does not have a single, overarching theme, it does contain a rich smorgasbord of scholarship ranging from research articles to reflections on practice on a wide range of topics—ideal for dipping into as you recharge your batteries this summer.

The topics of the articles in this issue range from case-based learning and teaching to the coping strategies of students transitioning from school to university, and from aspects of academic performance to graduate teaching assistant training, by way of reflection pieces on reflective practices in public health education, interdisciplinary learning on common core courses, and critical thinking across cultures. This stimulating breadth of topics is sure to offer food for thought for anyone involved in university teaching and learning.

The first article by **Pua et al** considers some of the challenges of students transitioning from school to university in Singapore, and explores some of the coping mechanisms they employ. Along the way, Pua et al identify peers as an important source of support for at-risk students. The transition that students make from school to university has long been a subject of interest to scholars. As Beverley Webster and Min Yan stated in their 2011 study on the transition, induction and goal achievement of Hong Kong students, “the extent to which these students were able to overcome transition difficulties, become inducted into their academic discipline and achieve their learning and personal goals was dependent on the extent to which they were provided with a supportive teaching and learning environment”. By foregrounding the role of peers, Pua et al’s article makes a welcome contribution to research relating to the plight of students who are in transition from school to university.

In our second article, **Sockalingam** considers some ways in which international graduate teaching assistants who lack training and pedagogical experience can be prepared through a short training course to teach in learning contexts which are student-centred. Graduate teaching assistants currently serve an important role supporting university teaching and learning around the world. In most cases, the training support they receive takes the form of courses dealing with the fundamentals of university teaching and learning, forms of assessment and grading, and so on. The pedagogic assumptions that underpin such courses may sometimes be less than explicit, however. Sockalingam’s article is a timely exploration of trainees’ experiences on a training programme with an explicit focus on student-centred learning, and adds to our understanding of how graduate teaching assistant training can be tailored to the specific learning and teaching contexts within which they teach.

In our next article, **Seck Tan** contributes an interesting regional perspective on case-based learning in an Asian context that enhances our knowledge and dialogue about students’ class participation and engagement in discussion. Case-based learning and teaching is now a well-established methodology in many universities around the world, primarily because of its proven usefulness as an active learning strategy, focusing on students as the centre of the learning environment, and encouraging the community-based, student-centred and work-related exploration of realistic and specific situations (Bi et al, 2019). Seck Tan’s article also offers helpful practical advice on how we can make case-based teaching work, specifically in Asia.

Our last article by **Tan et al** explores the potential for modifying Bigg's 3P model of teaching and learning (1987). By specifically identifying personality traits, student-to-instructor personality match and motivation as presage and process factors, respectively, and by using Semantic Equation Modelling to examine the relationships between the various parts of the revised model, Tan et al offer a welcome additional perspective on Biggs' well-established model.

Last but by no means least, our Reflections on Practice section for this issue features three Reflections. The first of these, by **Teng et al**, considers the use of self-reflection as a tool for teaching and learning in public health education. In our second reflective piece, **Foo and Mun** explore the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge on a core curriculum interdisciplinary course at the College of Humanities and Sciences at NUS. The final Reflection in this issue by **Zhou** challenges the assumption that critical thinking is a uniquely Western construct, and proposes ways in which modules can be enhanced to foster critical thinking.

All that remains is to wish all our readers a restful and thought-provoking summer break.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Grahame T. Bilbow is currently Director of Grange Education Consultancy Services, and was most recently Director of the Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning at the University of Hong Kong. He is a member of *AJSOTL*'s [Editorial Board](#).

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