

# EDITOR'S NOTE

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Student voice as reflection of values, opinions, perspectives and cultural backgrounds in the higher education community (HEA, 2017) is currently a key theme on different fronts in the sector. And rightly so. For example, the Office for Students has emerged as a regulatory body, although student level of participation still remains to be resolved. NSS data are a major influence on issues of access, participation and outreach. In learning and teaching, student centred approaches aspire to embed the student voice in curriculum design and to provide our students with the competences they need in order to succeed after their studies.

Of high relevance to these developments, Walker's reflective article examines the evolving purpose of the English universities from elite institutions to engines of social mobility. This purpose has recently been impacted negatively by commodification of knowledge and the marketisation of higher education. What shines through Walker's narrative is the belief that our students will be important voices in the discussions yet to come in the sector.

Two of the papers in this issue explore environments where learning is effective because it takes place outside traditional transmissive boundaries: via peer assisted learning and student debates. Churchyard considers the application of peer assisted learning to facilitate an enhanced interactive learning environment and student experience. There is evidence that his intervention enhanced the student experience and helped to stimulate engagement. Thomas discusses the value of student debates and motion-writing exercises across all disciplines, starting from a public health-perspective. A valid contribution, as the motion-writing aspect of debate has not been widely discussed as a pedagogical exercise.

Another aspect of the student voice is giving our postgraduates and undergraduates the opportunity to engage in academic writing and scholarship activities. In this vein, Gilbert explores one prevailing commonality between mental illness and crime and discusses whether there is a correlation between the two. The article contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between mental illness and offending.

Two articles report on strengths the University has in discipline-based research. Khan engages with the unique challenges of demography, discussing the specific needs of a diverse group of women at particular risk, within the ageing population. Little research has been done about the circumstances of single women living alone and how changing relationship status impacts on their needs and wellbeing. He also highlights the importance of education for women living alone in terms of how they may be able to adjust and cope with the challenges of later life. Lohneis brings Erik Ambler's crime thriller '*The Mask of Dimitrios*', a masterpiece of the genre, to our attention. He focuses on Ambler's inversion of the conventional spy story aesthetic and its traditional 'heroes' and shows Ambler's protagonists as 'the opposite of suave, the opposite of superman', engineers, managers, writers and academics who respond to the crises they face as might you or I.

**Professor Stylianos Hatzipanagos**

New Vistas Editor



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