Introduction

Employability, Lifelong Learning, Work-Based Learning and Partnership

This section has combined papers from two themes of the 4th ECE International conference; Partnership, Collaboration, Lifelong Learning, Employability and Workforce Development. There were fewer submissions to this theme and a decision was taken to place all of the papers together. There are four areas represented within this broad theme and these are partnerships and collaboration, work-based learning and lifelong learning. These groupings are functional for the introduction but within each group there are different approaches and perspectives. There are two broad aspects that cross cut the groups and these are descriptive accounts of developments and empirical research that is informed by a theoretical framework.
In the partnership group of papers there are contributions from Owens and Rutherford (2007) that describes a partnership development in healthcare and one from Buckley *et al.*(2007) dealing with a development aimed at improving Black and ethnic minority access to specific health care programmes. Doyle (2007) draws on Engestrom's (1999) cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to explore the tensions in partnerships between employers (local authorities) a group of Further Education Colleges and a Higher Education Institution in developing and teaching a Foundation Degree. Barnes *et al.* (2007) describe their partnership approach which focuses on developing courses to raise the skill levels of the workforce and in particular their work with Cleveland Police Force. Rowan and Saenger (2007) describe a collaborative project based on tuning the curriculum of Occupational Therapy in two higher education institutions in Europe. The Bologna Declaration and the development of European structures capable of allowing mobility within the European Union is the context of this collaboration.

In the lifelong learning grouping three papers examine barriers to participation. Booth and Takruri-Rizk (2007) explore the reasons for low participation in Science, Engineering and Technology employment by Black and ethnic minority graduates. Meehan *et al.* (2007) describes a course developed specifically to encourage women into higher level learning and Burns (2007) explores the problems that dyslexic students have when enrolled on a clinical programme. There are overlaps with work-based learning and Jones (2007) examines the actual changes of adult learners on a work-based Foundation Degree in the context of the policy discourses that appear to provide a one dimensional view of learners' identities. Davis and O'Doherty (2007) draw on Stones (2005) strong Structuration Theory to explore agency as a key aspect of 'learning as becoming' (Biesta Hodkinson and Macleod, 2007). They provide an analysis of strategic conduct through a site of engagement, the workplace, the college and the qualification. Walmsley (2007) provides evidence from an evaluation of a work – based Social Work qualification of the ability of these learners to 'synthesise' new knowledge and concepts into their practice.

In terms of employability, Blake (2007) examines the extent and nature of part-time employment among a group of undergraduates and explores the possibility of accreditation for the skills and knowledge acquired. Hordyk (2007) takes a normative view of the preparation for employment in the 21st century and develops an approach that advocates an alignment of the curriculum with the request for 'work ready' graduates by businesses in Western Australia. Zaitseva and Mitchell (2007) describe a CPD project that involves boundary crossing as lecturing staff use employability sabbaticals where both preparation for the change and aspects of belonging are central to managing and understanding such experiences. Bolt (2007) argues that 'A strategic and balanced approach to practice based learning is required to fully realise its ability to enhance employability, develop the workforce and balance individual and organisational needs.' She provides empirical evidence from a case study that explores the tensions in practice based learning. Finally, Procter (2007) in a shortened paper provides a critique of the plagiarism panic. This ECE conference was reported in the THES in October 2007 from an interview about his findings. The wide range of approaches to applied or practice based research is evident in this theme and is evidence of Furlong and Oancea's (2005, p.8) point to the '..shifting meanings and boundaries of applied and practice-based research.'