

Foreword

Digby Warren
London Metropolitan University

Education for Social Justice at London Met

As Head of Educational Development at London Metropolitan University since 2009, it is a real pleasure and honour for me to endorse this Special Issue of *Investigations* - our University pedagogical publication which I originally launched in spring 2003 – which illuminates and celebrates the innovative, theorised and/or evaluated educational practice of our dedicated teachers and learning developers, edited by Tom Burns and Sandra Sinfield, our esteemed and cherished pioneers and champions of liberatory education for empowering all students and creating a fairer, more democratic society. As Tom and Sandra remind us, London Met and its preceding institutions represent a proud history of opening up higher education, which is nowadays sustained by the strong commitment of our staff to education for social justice (ESJ), as shown in my earlier study (Warren, 2020) of the influence of teachers' values on curriculum and pedagogy, based on a qualitative survey among lecturers at our university:

“Respondents revealed how core values – inclusivity, social justice, empathy, respect, fostering student engagement, empowerment and critical thinking – aligned to shared notions of social responsibility – enabling equal access, developing informed, aware and active citizens who can contribute for the benefit of society – are infused into choice of content, teaching, learning and assessment activities, and management of the learning environment” (Warren, 2020: 261).

Continuing our historic commitment to widening access to higher education, in 2020 London Met launched our distinctive Education for Social Justice Framework (ESJF), driven primarily by our belief that our curricula and practice should align with principles of equity, with who our students are, and the challenges facing London and its communities. In keeping with the University's mission “to transform lives through the power of education”, our holistic, values-based ESJF builds on our rich tradition of inclusive practice and critical pedagogy in seeking to provide education that enables all our diverse students to gain knowledge and awareness, to develop their potential and to achieve success that empowers them in their careers and to become agents of progressive social change in the world. Integral to our social justice, equity and inclusivity agenda is our quest to eliminate differential outcomes between White and Black as well as minoritised students and ensure fair outcomes for all – refashioning our educational practice in partnership with our students.

As a guide to enhancing practice, **key principles for ESJ pedagogy**, formulated as part of the roll-out of our ESJF during 2020-2022, include:

- strive, as teachers, to be ethical – showing care and respect for the dignity, autonomy and identity of students – empowering, authentic, reflexive and self-aware;
- create brave, egalitarian, dialogic, active learning spaces where all voices are heard and valued, and learning is co-constructed among students and teachers;
- incorporate students' authentic experiences and “cultural wealth” via problem-posing and critical engagement with topics connected to students' lives and interests;

- explore diverse perspectives, epistemologies and theorists/scholars, and how we position/are positioned as teachers and students;
- interrogate assumptions about different ethnicities or cultures conveyed in course content and held by teachers and students, and their implications for equality and social justice;
- develop assessment strategies which allow students to reflect on and demonstrate engagement with critical perspectives, in diverse ways, with creative opportunities.

This volume contains a wealth of articles pertaining to the conceptualisation and practice of ESJ, which exemplify these pedagogical principles in action - from thought-provoking articulations of decolonising, feminist, creative and “queer” pedagogies and initiatives to engrossing case studies of course and module design/delivery, assessment redesign and development of academic literacies. We hope they will inspire and further advance enticing implementations of education for social justice across courses and disciplines.

Professor Digby Warren (Professor of Higher Education)

References

London Metropolitan University (2020) Education for Social Justice Framework. Contextual overview and diagram of ESJF available at <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/centre-for-equity-and-inclusion/a-fair-outcomes-approach-to-teaching-and-learning/the-degree-awarding-gap/education-for-social-justice-framework/>

Warren D. (2020): "'Social responsibility" and the curriculum in higher education: the influence of teachers' values – a case study', in E. Sengupta, P. Blessinger & C. Mahoney (eds) *Civil Society and Social Responsibility in Higher Education: International Perspectives on Curriculum and Teaching Development*. Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, Volume 21. (HETL and Emerald Publishing), chapter 13