

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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To cite this article: Associate Professor Ingrid Harrington. (2024). Message from the Editor-in-Chief. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 13(6), p0-1. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v13n6p0>

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Another year has passed quickly, and I'd like to take this moment to ask all of us to reflect upon the highlights of our professional and personal year. Too often we progress from deadline to deadline, significant dates and events, and once passed, we fail to remember and again enjoy these highlights that defined parts of our year. In our hometowns and on the broader global scale, some of us may remember events with mixed feelings and regret, whilst others rejoice with national pride. As such, our work as academics to disseminate important research findings and promote our cultural diversity and knowledges, is more important than ever. The IJHE continues to provide an important forum for the development of theory, the addressing of policy questions, and the dissemination of innovative practice in the field of tertiary education, specifically widening participation and lifelong learning. I am proud to be a part of the successful promotion of widening participation in tertiary education and lifelong learning. This edition includes seven interesting articles exploring citation counts and the student experience and learning performances, from Texas USA Singapore, Kuwait, South Africa, Kuwait, Germany, and South Sudan.

The first article by Williams and Sutanto explore the application of the Kardashian Index (K-Index) as a tool for measuring the social media influence of business and management faculty relative to their academic citation counts. By calculating the K-Index for 50 prominent business and management scholars, the study reveals significant discrepancies between social media engagement and traditional academic impact, along with shortcomings in the K-Index as a tool to measure research impact. The paper proposes a new framework, the Research Impact Index (RI-Index), which integrates multiple social media platforms, and considers other academic contributions such as preprint downloads and conference presentations. The study encourages higher education institutions to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to measuring research influence, incorporating both traditional academic metrics and social media engagement to more accurately reflect the societal contributions of faculty.

The second paper by Intan Mokhtar presents excerpts from written reflection entries authored by 15 students who participated in a social innovation project module at an applied learning university in Singapore. Their written reflective practice provides rich insights into their personal development, team interactions and dynamics, challenges faced, perceptions of the social impact of their work, and areas for improvement based on what the students experienced. The paper concludes with suggestions for implementing similar modules or initiatives related to social innovation or social impact in HEI curricula. The third article from Al Rubaie, Shuqair and Alhaji examines how the incorporation of debate strategies in a first-year English as a Foreign Language conversation course at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait, influenced students' oral fluency, critical thinking skills, and confidence in public speaking via debate activities. They found that debate activities significantly enhanced engagement, thinking abilities, and public-speaking ease, especially among students with stronger English language skills. Many participants reported feeling more comfortable asserting their views and applying analytical skills.

The fourth article from Mkhize and colleagues examines the influence of socio-economic factors on Grade 12 Accounting learners' performances in the Eswatini Accounting General Certificate Secondary Examination. They report that socio-economic factors that negatively influenced learners' performance in Grade 12 included parents' lack of interest and involvement in their children's learning, as well as the family's income and background, with poverty and overcrowded living conditions playing a role. The study raises awareness of the socio-economic factors that are

likely to influence learners' academic performance, and recommend that parents or guardians allocate a regular time and dedicated space at home for their child to complete their homework, and discuss their progress regularly with their child's teacher as strategies to support their child's learning.

The fifth article is from Hayat, Alazemi, and Boland who investigates the effects of using bilingualized dictionaries on English as a foreign language learners' vocabulary. They found that using a bilingualized dictionary significantly improved students' vocabulary at both post-tests, and could inform vocabulary teaching in the EFL context. The next article is from Winter and colleagues who sought to clarify and understand the overall definitions and economics of educational degrees. They conclude that the economics of information, the real options approach of investment theory, agency, as well as transaction cost theories, can help to understand the design features of degrees, their inner complexities, and their hierarchical embeddedness. A deeper understanding of the rationales behind degrees allows for new approaches to optimize degrees.

The final article is from Kiri and colleagues who identified the importance of International academic mobility for the internationalization of higher education. Upon closer examination they realised that information on the practices at the University of Juba in South Sudan was limited. They explored academic mobility practices through university participants, and found mobility practices for students and staff were ad-hoc and primarily focussed on outbound mobility. They suggest that this imbalance could lead to brain drain and negatively impact the University of Juba's reputation and competitiveness, and that they need to prioritize the development of comprehensive academic mobility programs.

I sincerely hope that the topics and information shared are of benefit to our readers. Importantly, I would like to thank all contributors and reviewers who continue to make the timely publication of the current issue possible. I look forward to receiving more contributions from researchers and practitioners for our future issues. I would like to wish all our contributors and readers the very best with their research studies.

Warm regards and the season's greetings,

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