

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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Welcome to Volume 14, Issue 5 of the International Journal of Higher Education (IJHE). This latest issue arrives at a pivotal moment for higher education worldwide, as institutions grapple with profound challenges stemming from globalisation, digital transformation, equity imperatives, and evolving workforce demands. IJHE remains committed to bridging research, policy and practice — offering an international, interdisciplinary forum for scholarship on teaching, learning, leadership, strategy and innovation in higher education.

In this issue, readers will find a compelling mix of empirical studies, critical reviews and theoretical contributions that address core themes such as student engagement, pedagogical innovation, institutional accountability and inclusive access. The articles span a diverse set of national and institutional contexts, reflecting the journal's global scope and its emphasis on evidence-informed solutions to enduring and emergent issues.

We are proud to present this issue with contributions and perspectives from the UK, Brazil, Egypt, Democratic Republic of Congo, Belgium, and Portugal. This issue has a strong focus on learner pedagogy, student and teacher experiences, and social, cultural, and economic influence on student retention and performance. Research in these areas provide interesting and informative reading, on how global educators continue with their core business of delivering relevant and meaningful education to their students.

The first article by Valentine Matthews reports on a student and faculty evaluation of teaching project within a small Asian university, with the aim of exploring the relationship between students and faculty perceptions of teaching. It sought to establish faculty perception of fairer or collective mechanisms for evaluating teaching, learning, and curriculum course materials towards evaluating the faculty. The study reported small differences between scores from student evaluation and faculty self-evaluation of teaching. However, the findings from the qualitative comments provided more valuable policy arguments. The findings also indicated that half of the faculty agreed or strongly agreed with the use of SETs for student satisfaction or as a control tool. The next article by Vianna Jr and Enne identified the implementation and evaluation of an active learning strategy in an undergraduate Chemical Engineering course. The course was redesigned using a flipped classroom model, incorporating active-cooperative learning method. Their findings reported that integrating flipped learning with active-cooperative and hands-on activities can enhance student engagement and support deeper learning in challenging engineering subjects. Additionally, academic outcomes improved with a rise in the average final grade, and there was a significant reduction in failure and remediation rates, even amid rigorous summative assessments. The third article is from El-Neggar and Zayed that explored the relationship between psychological stress coping strategies and academic passion, as well as the extent to which these strategies contribute to predicting academic passion among university students. Their findings reported that students' scores on the Psychological Stress Coping Strategies Scale significantly predicted their levels of academic passion. Based on this finding, a set of recommendations is proposed, and avenues for future research identified. The fourth article by Kapinga-Mutatayi et al., explores the psychometric properties and validity of the Approaches to Learning Questionnaire (ALQ) within a Belgian educational setting. By evaluating its structural integrity, reliability, and construct validity, the research aimed to assess the ALQ's transferability and its potential as a robust instrument for measuring students' learning approaches across diverse educational environments. Future recommendations for further research are identified.

The fifth article by Biondo and colleagues examines the extent to which the Ranking Universitário Folha (RUF), Brazil's most visible national ranking, aligns with the Berlin Principles on Ranking of Higher Education Institutions. Drawing on a longitudinal document analysis (2012–2024) and semi-structured interviews with higher education experts, the study evaluates RUF's compliance with each of the 16 Berlin Principles, with special attention to

Principle 3 concerning the recognition of institutional diversity. The findings reveal strong alignment in areas such as methodological transparency, data verifiability, and multi-criteria evaluation, but persistent misalignment in acknowledging institutional mission differentiation and social engagement—dimensions central to Brazil's higher education ecosystem.

The sixth article by Justino, Dias and Santos centers on the experiences of low-income students in Portuguese higher education, focusing on universities in peripheral regions, despite policies aimed at widening access since the 1980s, inequalities persist. The research examines whether families with greater social, cultural, and economic capital are disproportionately represented in higher education relative to their presence in Portuguese society. Their findings reveal the strong influence of socioeconomic background on access to higher education, underscoring the persistent selectivity and barriers faced by disadvantaged groups.

We hope this curated collection inspires scholars, practitioners and policy-makers alike - equipping them with insights to navigate this era of change and to advance the quality, relevance and sustainability of higher education systems. As always, we hope you enjoyed learning from our international academic peers through their work published in this issue. We encourage you to contribute your research findings to the IJHE journal, so others in our readership may benefit from your professional research activities. Wishing you all the best with your work.

Warm regards and the season's greetings,

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