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The Learner Development Journal Issue 4: Exploring the Supervision Process  
Across Diverse Contexts: Collaborative Approaches

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# INTRODUCTION

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Sabine Little and Michelle Golledge, University of Sheffield

It was in 2006 that Sabine began working with a group of students on a “Student Ambassador Network” which would have considerable input into learning, teaching, and scholarship at her institution. Over the four years that the network ran, conferences were organised, an online student journal was born, and a large number of resources were created, all through student-staff collaborations. The work was highly regarded, however, when plans began to edit a book on staff-student partnerships in higher education (Little, 2011), no publisher wanted to commit to a volume that would be co-edited by a student and a member of staff. Instead, all chapters within the book were co-authored by students at varying stages of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and staff members working with them. Throughout the work on the volume, as well as during the work on the Student Ambassador Network, and during the work on this issue of the Learner Development Journal, an important realisation keeps raising its head: while staff members remain (more likely than not) constant, student lives are transient by their very nature (Little, 2016), and their engagement with any Higher Education institution is, compared to the length of some publication schedules, fleeting. This necessarily means that a partnership between staff and students evolves as it goes on – these changes are not necessarily better, nor worse, but have allowed author pairs, at our insistence that papers should be collaboratively authored, to explore such relationships over time. Our own relationship as editors evolved throughout the work on this issue, too. When we proposed the call for this particular issue, Michelle was in the middle of her (part-time) Masters in Education; however, by the time you read this, she had completed her studies, and our relationship had evolved into a more collegial one, where our work was bound by a mutual enterprise, rather than a relationship where one person (Sabine) would ultimately grade the work of the other (Michelle).

Since the book was published in 2011, several works have dedicated themselves to student-staff/staff-student partnerships and collaborations, typically in the area of teaching innovation (see e.g., Brown, 2019; Dickerson, Jarvis & Stockwell, 2016; Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014). The supervisory relationship in particular has, however, received comparatively little attention, with the notable exception of Harwood and Petrić (2016), whose book is reviewed by Jang Yuan in this issue.

Michelle has been an educator for over fifteen years and has spent the last four years teaching in international schools in Germany. She made the decision to broaden her horizons by combining her work in school with a part-time iPGCE course at the University of Sheffield back in 2017, culminating in the award of a Masters degree in Education in 2020. Studying has been a boon to Michelle’s practice as a teacher as she has been able to incorporate many ideas which she has learned on these courses, which she would not have otherwise had the opportunity to do.

During her time at Sheffield, Michelle was presented with her first opportunity to write a collaborative research paper together with Sabine and three other undergraduate students. After publication of this paper, we then decided to collaborate in editing the issue of the journal which you now see before you. The opportunity to share the hands-on experience of a practitioner in the school system combined with the perspective of an academic in the field has led to a very fruitful collaborative relationship, emphasizing the benefits of combining very different working experiences and perspectives.

As an educator, Michelle feels that it is her responsibility to help students learn from their own experiences and from the experiences of others. She tries to help her students facilitate learning that students are unable to do by themselves. This means she has to create affordances for learning, situations that the students by themselves would not typically, if ever, see as opportunities for learning. As a teacher she is part of their experience, their guide, and because she is part of their experience, they are part of her experience and learning is something they share together in a collaborative manner.

The Merriam-Webster's 11<sup>th</sup> Collegiate Dictionary defines collaboration as: "to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavour", accompanied by the vision that true collaboration eventuates when all research parties involved carefully apportion responsibilities within the same project of research, for the purpose of full realisation of their combined effort. Each of the collaborators are expected to contribute significantly towards the project, by putting to the fore their contributions in line with their strengths, diverse skills, and abilities. Within academic research, the term "collaboration" is predominantly thought to mean an equal liaison between two academic faculty members who are in pursuance of significant and beneficial research. Today, however, a great number of collaborations involve researchers whose status varies considerably, and can involve several other people including post-doctoral fellows, graduate students, or undergraduate students within academic research. It is therefore clear that academics collaborate in many ways, and that the practice of labelling a person an "academic" might need to become more inclusive and flexible.

It was this variety of collaborations that we wanted to encourage, specifically, we wanted to draw out those voices that not only facilitated collaboration, but also questioned the implied (and sometimes imposed) hierarchical relationships inherent in supervision. We wanted to create a forum where supervisors and supervisees alike were able to explore what they brought to the table in a supervisory relationship, and we wanted to encourage author pairs to engage sensitively and thoughtfully with their own and each other's position.

This edition of the Learner Development Journal was designed to elicit research collaboration and knowledge sharing between supervisor and supervisee. A peer review process was created, enabling this relationship to flourish and consequently to showcase the fruits of intermutual, diverse and internationally minded partnerships. These international partnerships allowed for a more global perspective on collaboration.

The result is a volume which shows a wide variety of supervisory relationships, and a considerable spread and depth of issues raised. Victoria Crawley and Dai O'Brien explore aspects of British Sign Language, identity, and professionalism, in their thoughtful discussion around a supervisory relationship where both were occupying multiple roles. David Hyatt and Sally Hayes engage in a co-autoethnography as they critically explore ways to decentralise traditional doctoral supervision processes. Ken Ikeda and Sumire Shiba use language skills as a lens through which they discuss notions of expertise and connectedness. Stachus Peter Tu and Jim Ronald examine the complexities of navigating the ethical review process in culturally unfamiliar context, and Theron Muller and Tracy-ann Tsuruoka play with the notion of "teacher" and "student" in a supervisory relationship where both roles are occupied by each of the authors. We are particularly grateful to Alison Stewart, Mao Goto and Zhou Xiaotong for agreeing to provide a reflective conclusion to the issue.

In exploring the notion of collaboration (and especially noting the aforementioned issue of student transience), considerations around co-authorship and ownership are worth mentioning. While academics are notoriously busy, engaging in scholarship and publishing work is clearly part of our job description, and thus provide a "constant" in the ever-increasing demands of our professional lives. The same is not necessarily true for all students once they have completed their studies. On top of this, the past 12 months have given the world chal-

lenges incomparable to what many of us would call our own “living memory”, and, as such, priorities necessarily shifted, reformed, and evolved over the process of bringing all the articles in this issue to completion.

Ponomariov and Boardman (2016) explore the concept of co-authorship, and the level of collaboration involved in co-authored work. They offer an interesting analysis and critique of how co-authorships are constructed, and a variety of their constructs are mirrored in the writing practices of author dyads in this volume. While we do not seek to offer the same level of analysis, it is a fact that the supervisory relationship is somewhat unique, and yet, we posit that few supervisor/supervisee pairs have available to them the requisite time to truly reflect on this relationship, and how it changes over time, rather than primarily ensuring that the student submits the required work necessary to meet pre-determined educational targets. With this volume, we wanted to give supervisors and supervisees the opportunity to engage in an “arrest of experience” (Oakeshott, 1933): the stepping out of “our everyday experiences of people, objects and places”, subjecting them “to different sorts of examination” (p. 324). These “arrests of experiences” are contained in this volume. Collectively, they offer a fascinating insight into this complex relationship, and how mutual respect, together with reflection, facilitate understanding and collaboration.

All articles in this issue benefited from the Learner Development Journal’s Open Review policy, where reviewers and authors collaboratively discuss the paper over an extended period of time. We would like to thank all the authors, as well as the reviewers (Alice Chik, Katherine Thornton, Louise Ohashi, Fumiko Murase, Thomas Bieri, Tanja McCandie) and the Learner Development Journal steering group (Darren Elliott, Alison Stewart, Tim Ashwell, and Dominic Edsall), for their invaluable input, patience, and expertise, along with Malcolm Swanson for the layout, and all translators and others who helped with logistics—like many authors involved in the process, we were both at the giving and the receiving end of the ouroboros-style, never-ending cycle of learning and development.

—Sabine and Michelle

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## **Author Bios**

**Sabine Little** is a lecturer in Languages Education at the University of Sheffield, as well as Deputy Director for Learning and Teaching in the School of Education. She is a strong believer in working collaboratively with students on learning and teaching development, and has focused efforts on this for over 15 years. With a research background on multilingualism and identity, her students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, which sparked an interest in the focus of this journal issue.

**Michelle Golledge** has been teaching English for over 15 years and is currently an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher at the International School of Ulm / Neu-Ulm in Germany. During her studies at the University of Sheffield, Michelle deepened her research interest into language and identity and completed two research projects within the field of Third Culture Kids and teacher identities. Her research interest continues to be focused on language, including raising cultural awareness in the classroom. Michelle received her iPGCE in 2018 and received her Masters degree in Education in 2020 from the University of Sheffield, England.