Teaching in Higher Education Audio Interview with Professor Sue Clegg and Professor Stephen Rowland

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Origin and History of the Journal

(SC): Hi, I’m Professor Sue Clegg, and I’m Editor of Teaching in Higher Education and I head at the Centre for Research into Higher Education at Leeds Metropolitan University.

(SR): And I’m Professor Stephen Rowland, and I’m partly employed at UCL and partly at the Institute of Education, but I was involved in setting up the journal when it started in 1996, so I’m interested in its progress.

(SC): So what I wanted to ask you Stephen, was about that decision in 1996 to set up a new journal and what were your hopes and aspirations for that journal and what was the readership you imagined?

(SR): It was perhaps somewhat unusual, I had designed and taught a course, a masters level course on teaching university, which started 1991, Sheffield University, and I taught on this course with Professor Len Barton and one day after the course had been going for two or three years, after two years we both thought it would be good to write a book to which all the members of the course would contribute and would edit, they would edit it rather than us. That was very successful and on the basis of that success we thought perhaps these people would like to have the kind of space which a journal would offer. When I say these people I’m not talking about people who are specialists in higher education studies as we might see it these days, or even educational development, they were lecturers from across a wide range of departments from engineering to English Literature, who had joined the masters course because of an interest in teaching and using teaching as a sort of research, having a research approach to teaching, and when we put before them the idea of setting up a journal, they thought that was a good idea and our aim was that we hoped that there would be people across the sector who although teaching a discipline would have enough interest in teaching to actually give the same sort of disciplined thought to their teaching as they do to their subject. Now as we know this has been a contentious problem ever since. Many have argued how can we encourage people to think as seriously about teaching as they think about their research? Well this was our aim. We thought a journal might provide a space where that would happen – somewhat experimental, somewhat exploratory. Of course the first problem we encountered was, this is not an education journal in the sense that people writing for it we didn’t think would be mainly educationists, so, well, what discipline was the journal? And that really led to its first, what you might call policy, I suppose, was that it should be interdisciplinary, at that stage, we weren’t even really sure what they meant, but what we hoped was that someone from engineering would be as able to write and publish for this journal as someone from sociological studies and that’s what we tried to do. That was difficult because from the beginning, as is commonly understood in higher education these days, research does occupy the high ground when it comes to people’s intellectual endeavours as academics. So this was not going to be an easy
job. When it came to the first research assessment exercise the journal was very concerned that the research assessment exercise should recognise research into people’s teaching, just like they recognise research into engineering, and we took the line, and it’s a line which some don’t take these days, that for example if someone is publishing, writing on their research into teaching engineering, this should count as part of their engineering RAE. Now as a journal of course we had no impact, we had no place to really say how the RAE should do its work, we did however write an open letter to the HEFCE manager of the first RAE and we published that letter and we published his response to it, and you will find that in one of the early issues of the journal.

So that was what we were trying to do, and I think it is now interesting to look at the journal and to see to what extent have we done that and to what extent have really the professional groups who contribute to a journal like this have changed because they certainly have changed. When this course started there were no compulsory courses for university lecturers in teaching and now these are compulsory pretty well in all institutions more or less. There was not the enormous number of educational development units, teaching and learning development units, centres for the advancement of and so on and so forth. Now there is what some even call the industry for higher education, it is a field which is a highly contested field, some people say it is a field which is for educationists, others say like we said initially in founding the journal, that it should be a field to which all can contribute. And others say that it’s a field specifically for educational development in higher education, which they see as being rather separate from education as a whole. So within that contested field is where we operate, and that’s what’s exciting about the journal, it brings out I think different points of view and different perspectives, all within an attempt to make it open to people who have these differences.

**The Journal today**

(SR): So Sue, I don’t know whether you would like to reflect upon where we got to now. Sue Clegg took over as the Editor and Chief, is it 2 years ago now?

(SC): Three years, three years ago, yes. One of the things I think is interesting about the journal and perhaps just to reflect on is that although it came from a very particular context, in Sheffield, I guess one of the other aspirations of the journal has also been the relationship to international debates and international audiences and I think also that I’m very aware of a continuity in a sense, not only of the aspirations of being interdisciplinary, but also of the aspiration to be critical, and to challenge some of the orthodoxies around what constitutes good teaching, what constitutes good learning, what policies frame those conversations, and I think it’s interesting that you reflect on how much more literature is available now but nonetheless I still feel that *Teaching in Higher Education* perhaps is aspiring to quite a unique voice in terms of those sorts of debates. Would you like to comment on that at all Stephen?

(SR): Yes I think it is a unique voice perhaps because we want to actually encourage those kinds of debate and argument, we don’t see there being a set and determined field. I think many journals do, they see themselves as speaking for or being a space for academic developments, or education developers, or researchers into the field of higher education policy, and whatever.
I think we see this as being very open and those things being interwoven and contested, and I think that’s really what’s rather special about the journal. I know having been on the editorial board from the beginning we’ve always encouraged articles which take sometimes a rather provocative line, as long as that’s well argued and well founded, where we’re wanting people to pick out what those debates are. It is about teaching in higher education and about how best to promote teaching, but it’s also about how best we can study that, whose job it is to study that, how that study takes place, as well as just, as it were, a more direct kind of help for teachers in their teaching. Some other journals take that more direct sort of help and guidance kind of line. Others take perhaps a line which is less related to the practicalities of teaching and is more concerned with policy and so forth, whereas our concern is to both have what we would like to think of as being a critical approach but an approach which is grounded very much on the ground of teaching itself.

(SC): That’s very much, from my perspective, reflected through the everyday running of the journal. So we have a small executive editorial board and I’ll say a little bit more about that later in terms of commissioning special issues, looking at things like the policy statement, but unlike some journals, we actually have an extended Editorial Board and all our refereeing is done within that Board. So in a sense, what we are trying to do is create a particular ethos, a particular way of thinking about the field, and I think that that gives the journal its distinctive feel, so that when people submit to us, they are likely to actually find that their papers are read from people who are not necessarily the same discipline specialists. So we are trying to create an engaged readership and audience and I think that that’s something that is important about the journal, sometimes we might struggle to articulate exactly what’s special about it but I think that those notions of criticality, of disciplinarit, of finding different voices as well within which to write. So I think if one looks for example at some of the articles that have appeared over the years, there are people writing in first person, reflecting quite closely and quite critically on their own practice, very different sorts of voices and I think that that’s something that’s quite important because I guess when you talked about the issue of whether it’s a part of an education discourse, I guess one of the things is that we want it to be that, but more than that, we want to actually find a language with which to talk about teaching and practice in higher education. So I think that that is something I certainly have felt that has been very important.

Role of the editorial board

(SR): The Editorial Board is of course the means by which those who run a journal can lead and influence its progress and by having all of our articles refereed by the editorial board it gave us when we set up the journal some ability to shape the sorts of reviews that would take place. And we thought that was important, while we wanted to be really open to different voices, in order to be open to different voices you’ve actually got to exercise some control in getting people in to your editorial team who will ensure that different points of view and different kinds of experience, disciplinary, but not only disciplinary, methodologically as well. Different kinds of experience are acknowledged. The editorial team is perhaps now at least twice, and coming on perhaps for three times as large as it was when the journal started which reflects the increase in
the number of issues per year and readership of the journal. But it’s still an ongoing issue how
we are going to replace, almost every meeting we will be discussing the need for another editor
of the journal, how are we going to find that person, what are the criteria for making those
judgements? My own experience of often asking people to join the editorial team, for many of
them it’s quite a new experience. They will come from, often from a different subject, and it
feels very strange to suddenly be put on an editorial board, quite an important role, in a
discipline which isn’t even their own discipline as they see it. People like that have, I think
seeing as this is something really quite different to what they normally expect and I feel they
are very valuable in their contribution, as well as of course those who come from a background
which has been more centrally concerned with higher education and teaching.

Scope

(SC): More recently as well one of the things that I’ve been very aware of wanting to do is to
increase the international scope of the journal and in particular looking to North America
because I think that traditionally in our field there’s been a very much an Australasian, I mean
the old empire in a sense, feel to the debates that we’ve had. And often we haven’t actually, in
terms of citation, really covered the full range of debates that are going on, I think that that’s
something that’s an ongoing work in progress, but certainly becoming listed in Social Sciences
Citation Index has been a big step forward for us because it’s encouraged for example our
connections with South African colleagues who can only submit in those sorts of journals. So
again I think if we look at the sorts of papers we are getting in, I think we are seeing more
papers from North America, more papers from South Africa, but that’s a constant struggle I
think for any journal to actually extend and consolidate that coverage so I think that’s
something that I have been very aware of.

The other thing that’s perhaps worth saying about the role of the executive editors, is that I
think as well as reflecting on what’s been happening in the field, I think we’ve quite consciously,
and it’s clear from when you first set the journal up, that was intentional from the very
beginning, but quite consciously actually tried to shape and think about where the field is going
and the way we do that, and again it’s different from some other journals, is we don’t do special
issues in response mode, I get lots of requests from people who’ve had really great
conferences, and say ‘would you be willing to put a special issue together on this for us’, and I
say ‘well no, actually we don’t do it that way’, although some other journals do. What we do
then encourage people to do is to write extended reviews about their conferences where they
want to say things so we’ve got some space. But what we’ve done is we’ve tried to, every two
years, craft a call that we feel is going to make a difference in the field. So the first one under
my editorship, was the 2007 ‘Diversity and Commonality in Higher Education’, and such was the
response to that call that became a double issue, and I think had a wonderful mix of writing.
Louise Archer’s paper on challenging the ways in which widening participation has been
reshaped. We had an amazingly interesting paper by Robert Toynton on the de-representation
of science and gay discourse. I mean something that I think one doesn’t normally see in the run
of the mill higher education context. One had Louise Morley, ‘Sister-matic: gender
mainstreaming’, and lots of people also talking from a quite personal stance about their
experiences so a very interesting paper looking at the way a dialogue of Japanese women graduate students in the Canadian higher education system. So voices that are not often heard and I think that that was partly because we made it very explicit that we were looking for different sorts of voices and I mean I don’t know of course how our most recent call for a special issue is going to pan out but we’ve called it rather provocatively I think, ‘Leaving the Academy’, and trying to actually position higher education, and what’s going on outside higher education because I think in some ways the debates we have can become very internal. So I think the role of the executive Editorial Board in trying to shape the field as well as respond to it so that the journal really is trying to create a space for debate and dialogue, and I know that you have been the long term editor of the bit of the journal that was called Points of Debate, and we have rechristened Points of Departure, so again, I wonder if you can say something about that, because I think that’s quite a, it’s a small part of the journal but again I think it’s part of that ethos of the journal if you like, to try and find different voices, different areas of debate and to problematise what we do in higher education as well.

Writing styles

(SR): We realised that if we were going to make the journal open to people who came from different disciplinary backgrounds, with different viewpoints, that that reflected even in the way we write. Sue earlier mentioned about how people might write articles in the first person, whereas other people write in the third person, and we welcome a diversity of ways of writing and we wanted to extend that diversity, right from the beginning, because we felt that there were people even from the fine arts and the sciences who didn’t speak in the same research kinds of languages, and did the journal anyway just want to in a narrow sense be a sort of research writing and initially in some of the earlier issues there are even poems in the Points of Debate, there was even in one case a cartoon in the Points of Debate. There is an unusual way of representing an idea. What was difficult about the Points of Debate, we didn’t just want to be like a magazine, a professional magazine and readily put forward as it were, easy ideas which were just a bit of fun, we wanted to be as serious as the other articles, but we wanted that seriousness, rigour, to enable people to extend and push beyond their normal boundaries of ways of writing. I remember one piece in an early issue which was in the form of a drama script, which made the point very well. This could be done easily in those first issues because we didn’t send the Points of Debate out for widely being totally blind refereed. On the whole they were semi-commissioned pieces passed in the end by the editor of the Points of Debate section, myself and the Editor of the journal Len Barton. As the journal became more international and it grew and gained ISS status, we thought it important that this Points of Debate section should be properly independently refereed so that people who write in that section can say,’ ok this might be a slightly shorter article but it is in every sense an article’, and for that reason it is now quite independently reviewed, very much like others although it is reviewed/refereed by members of the executive editorial team. It is much more like a normal article in its reviewing process in that way. This has meant that the opportunity for commissioning pieces directly is limited. We are still looking for pieces, we still do ask the editorial board to encourage individuals to write and even offer them some sort of assistance with their ideas, in a way which perhaps you wouldn’t with a normal journal article because we are still using this part of the
section in the hope that we will push out the boundaries of normally accepted ways of writing, and that’s I think what it’s doing. So that’s a very exciting development. It’s changing from Points of Debate to Points of Departure. It’s slightly longer submissions, people can make if they want to, but it maintains broadly the same purpose.

**Reviews**

(SC): The other thing we’ve tried to do, I mentioned about where people have had very successful conferences we have the traditional book review, and Barry Stierer is our book review editor, but Jan Parker is our more general reviews editor, and what Jan’s tried to do is to encourage review essays and also where in fact as I’ve said there have been interesting conferences, so we’ve extended the notion of what a review essay might include, so it might be a reflection on already published material, but it might be a reflection on a particular conference, the sorts of papers that have come out of that conference, so it provides a sort of half way house. So it’s about the journal trying to capture the field as it’s emerging and in the process actually trying to have an impact on the field.

(SR): Yes I think that’s right and I think in both that section and with these essays, but also with the special edition that you mentioned before, illustrate what we mean in the journal when we talk about encouraging critical writing and critical approaches. So for example in that Special Issue about widening participation or diversity, diversity is a theme which is spoken of a lot in areas of policy and by people across the sector, how we must have more diversity, widen access and so forth. So seeing a special issue which is on diversity you might think, well this is going to say all the normal things that we are hearing every day about diversity, but of course it isn’t, what it is doing is encouraging a critical view about a term and an idea which has gained a sort of common currency, and I think that reflects the way in which the journal is always engaged with the popular sort of ideas, but taken those popular ideas and tried to open them up to a kind of discussion which is often lacking in the wider forums.

(SC): A good example of that would be Stephen Brookfield’s paper in that Special Issue; *Diversifying Curriculum as a Practice of Repressive Tolerance*, so not taking for granted the pre-existent framing of diversity as necessarily just something that’s generally good but actually trying to give a different take on that. If you look at the most recent issue, Tony Harland and his colleagues talking about *Neo-liberalism and the Academic as Critic and Conscience of Society*, asking some of those sorts of questions that are often not really raised in the, now very dominant, ‘Learning and Teaching Discourse’, which talks about how do we make things better but rather actually for us I think there are issues around what constitutes better. That’s one of the ways in which I think we’ve understood critical, but of course there are many ways in which one might understand critical in the field.

(SR): And it is being open to those different ways of understanding which is what’s a great interest in the journal.
Just returning for a moment to the review essay, the way the review essay perhaps enables us to be critical in a way that just a review often doesn’t, reviews in journals tend to be short, they say what a book’s about, and they give a view about it to encourage people to buy it or not buy it. We see a review essay as being more an opportunity to explore something in greater depth so it will look at a book, an article, or a collection of books, and be much more like an essay which develops a critical view point. And that gives that section also, brings it under the broad concern of the journal to offer different views and critical views about dominant ideas.

(SC): And I think that’s notable actually also right through the journal in terms of, I was thinking for example there’s been a lot of writing about postgraduate research and in particular doctoral studies, and Catherine Manathunga’s paper which was quite controversial using post-colonial theory, and that’s been taken up and critiqued within the pages of the journal. So it’s not a journal that has a consensus, not at all, but it’s provided a space for people who wanted to reflect on pedagogy in new ways. So again Alison Lee’s work again looking at pedagogies for writing for publication with PhD students, so I think when one looks across and I was quite struck reflecting and thinking about preparation for this interview, was both the continuities, but the ways in a sense that, new ways of theorising, new ways of thinking, are actually being reflected in the pages of the journal, but in a way that I hope hasn’t lost the disciplinary voices that you were talking about, because there is always a danger of course that we can get too far from those disciplinary voices and it becomes simply a reflection of a reflection on teaching rather than being about the shaping of that.

It’s a quite tricky balance that the journal is trying to maintain, but I think that one of the messages from this interview is that we want to encourage, we still really want to encourage those writings and those reflections on practice and those struggles if you like that teachers have in terms of research in practice, but also finding a voice to actually talk about teaching in ways that are critical but also speak to international audiences and so on. So I think actually writing for the journal but also refereeing for the journal is quite challenging, and I think it’s something that’s emerging as well, I would never feel that the journal’s reached its perfect form so I think that it’s a journal that’s trying to shift the field and move forward with the field and so encourages a sort of liveliness of tone and debate.

(SR): Yes I think the editorial team and how that’s put together and maintained is crucial in that. There’s a danger with a journal that it becomes an internal conversation, just between those who write for and read the journal, it doesn’t go outwards, and on the other hand I think there is also a danger that a journal is not sufficiently led by people who really are thinking together about these things and therefore developing ideas along a line which allows for the emergence of the style of that journal. I think that we have managed to achieve both of those things in this journal.
(SC): In terms of the new Special Issue about *Leaving the Academy*, those debates about the particularities in some ways of the way the higher education literature is being shaped and I mean of course Janice Malcolm and Miriam Zuckas’s critique of that in terms of their mapping out the field, and so looking beyond the usual paradigms, beyond the usual spaces and places one thinks about where higher education, or those sorts of intellectual debates might be happening. So I think again it’s trying to have a conversation and a debate that perhaps isn’t going on, I wouldn’t say not necessarily going on elsewhere, but it’s going on perhaps in a different voice. So that is where I would see *Teaching in Higher Education* as sitting.

(SR): That’s right, I guess that most of us involved in the executive editors team, are involved in other higher education communities. What always strikes me whenever I go to almost any of the other communities, how there is a lack of contact between these different people in different communities across higher education. I think that’s a need which the journal fulfils.

*Teaching in Higher Education* Editorial Policy Statement

(SC): Perhaps Stephen and I should just say something about the policy statement. The title *Teaching in Higher Education* is quite interesting because I think we’ve always seen teaching in its broader context and so one of the things we’ve really tried to work on is the policy statement in signalling to our writers and indeed our readers what the interests of the journal are. Very recently over the last couple of years we’ve revisited the policy statement and I think that what was fascinating about that from my perspective was the continuity I think with the original vision of the founding editors of the journal. So I think that we didn’t make any major changes in terms of what we wanted to see, but what we were very much doing was revising in relationship to the recognition that the field itself has changed, that there is as you said, so much more now going on, there are many, many compulsory courses, the numbers of people who are writing in the field has greatly expanded, but I think that what we were trying to do with the policy statement was really to extend a welcome to people. And we talked about some examples about the ways teaching is influenced by wider contextual factors. Looking at things like power, authority, in relationship to assessment and the understanding of learning and there’s been some really interesting papers in relationship to assessment, for example Suellen Shay who works in the University of Cape Town, talking about those sorts of relationships, I think her example was in engineering. So very interesting where people have been working in situations where issues of curriculum and curriculum transformation have been very much to the fore, and people writing with practitioners so I think one of the things that I would see as an advantage as well is that we often get papers with quite a few authors, now in RAE terms, that might be seen as a disadvantage but what I see it often as is as a huge advantage because it’s clear that the papers we are getting have come out of these sorts of debates that we are encouraging in the policy statement, between perhaps people in education development units or educational lists as you say, but with disciplinary colleagues, so I think that again that is one of the things that I think is important.
We’ve talked again in our policy statement about concerns with issues of social justice and equity and again about bringing together theory and practice so I think they are all things that resonate with the original intentions of the journal but trying to at the same time acknowledge the ways in which the landscape has changed and I think if anything that one of the things of course that’s changed is that the sheer intensity of research selectivity I think is even greater than in 1996 when you launched, I mean it’s impossible almost internationally to escape from that. And so the theme of bringing teaching to the fore and actually treating it with the same critical seriousness that one deals with disciplinary research seems to me as relevant as ever, but the world has moved on slightly, and I wonder if you’ve got any additional reflections on that Stephen?

(SR): There have been times when I’ve thought about the title of the journal Teaching in Higher Education and when I’ve spoken to colleagues who don’t know of the journal and they’ve asked me where they might publish something or where they might take some research they’re doing and I say have you thought of Teaching in Higher Education and they don’t know it. And I’m struck by the title of the journal because a lot of people would think this means ‘it’s about how to teach really, it’s about what’s good teaching, what’s bad teaching, active learning’, all of these sort of things. Well of course what actually the journal is about is, as you were saying, it’s largely a whole range of things that influence the way students learn in higher education and teaching. One thing that was made quite clear when we very first started the journal was that it should draw together teaching and research. This is still important, still there are articles published in the journal which look at the importance of teaching in a way which is supported by research and vice versa, but the range of contextual factors has now widened much more I think and so we’ve got a number of articles which deal with wider things about society that influence what we call the curriculum of higher education. And of course the term curriculum in higher education is a term not commonly understood outside of those who have some sort of educational background. Often people from the disciplines when you talk about the curriculum think more or less that you mean syllabus whereas this is a journal which is not about syllabuses, but it is to some extent about what you might call curriculum studies in higher education. And so I often find that this requires quite a bit of explaining if someone just asks me off the cuff about where they might take their research and about the journal and this is why I think it’s really important that people do read the policy statements, these are things we’ve struggled over quite a large number of meetings to get across these ideas. I think also that it’s absolutely right to keep the title Teaching in Higher Education rather than Curriculum Studies in Higher Education, or Studies, although there is already a Studies in Higher Education because our view is that teaching is impacted upon by this and should be seen in the context of these wider issues rather than some kind of, as it were, applied psychology of how one does it.

(SC): I think that’s really important because, certainly as Editor, one of the things that, when I do the first read through of papers that come in, it’s clear that I am sometimes getting things from people that haven’t read the policy statement and actually haven’t read papers so one of the things that we added to the policy statement last time was to actually encourage people to situate themselves within the journal. So I’m afraid that the reason sometimes that papers get rejected before they go out to Peer Review is that they’re simply not suitable for the journal; that they are very descriptive, small scale descriptions of what went on in their classroom, and so that actually they’re not suitable. One of the most important things that we say back to
people at that stage, is ‘please go away and read the policy statement, please go away and read the journal’.

**International dimensions**

(SC): The other thing that’s really important in terms of when people are submitting to *Teaching in Higher Education* is to make explicit the international dimensions. It’s all too easy sometimes to assume that even quite small things like terms like faculty or the nomenclature of the particular country, so I think that the challenge for our writers is to be truly international. And I guess if I were thinking about the challenges of the journal and indeed the whole field looking forward it would be to actually extend our meanings of international. Louise Morley for example has pointed out that while we hear voices from South Africa, we very rarely hear voices from sub-Saharan Africa. There are whole emerging and highly developed higher education systems in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, indeed some of the more, I mean, while we’re retracted in many ways in the present climate, these are systems that are expanding and of course India and China. And yet I would have to be honest and say that not only have we not been terribly successful in attracting Editors from those regions I think we are probably not aware sufficiently of the sorts of debates that are going on. So if I were thinking about challenges for the future of the journal in terms of where it’s going I would very much say that that’s where I would see perhaps the editor beyond me as well, actually really trying to get a grasp of and to extend the number of participants as it were in international terms in the debates.

(SR): I am very aware that we are very concerned to attract papers which are international and by that we mean papers that come from different countries and can speak across national boundaries. But one has to recognise that part of the problem, the challenge of that, is rather like the challenge of being interdisciplinary. If you are writing from Turkey and you want to publish a paper in this journal, how can you speak of higher education in Turkey, your own context, in a way which connects with the interests of those who don’t have a direct interest perhaps in Turkey? And I think this is really what we are beginning to do, what we’re doing more, and as globalisation, however one feels about that, becomes more prominent, there are more common issues across boundaries. But also what we are very concerned in developing in a critical aspect of our journal, is not just to look at the generic, common themes, or themes that are common across national boundaries, I think then it would be very easy to slip into comfortable generalities and accepting normal ways of thinking about things, but to open up and encourage writers to explore those aspects of their national position which can do with being shared with the wider international community. So I think the idea of being international is not altogether an easy idea but it is one which we are encouraging to go alongside of a particular view of critique which opens up normal understandings to a more rigorous kind of debate.

(SC): I entirely agree and I think again, as we spoke about with diversity, there’s a danger that the international simply becomes a bland sort of evocation of everything that’s good whereas actually I think that if we were truly international it would actually be very, very challenging.
That’s something that I think I would hope that the journal would continue to do i.e. to be challenging of those sorts of assumptions, but also to be challenging of forms of writing. One of the debates we’ve been having in the journal is about the essay because in the same way that we think about these notions of international or diversity, what it counts to write, and what we mean by research into higher education or research into teaching is problematic. I think often there is a pull toward the empirical and in fact often some of the most interesting writing is where someone teases out and takes a notion and deconstructs it and often in essay form. There is always a pull I guess towards, and I speak as a sociologist, so Mea Culpa, towards a form of sociological imperialism or social science type writing and so I think that in terms of when I think of the future and the challenges, I think we want to go on having that debate about the sorts of voices and the sorts of forms of writing. So that’s where I would see very much the journal going.

The future of the Journal

(SC): What about you Stephen, where do you see the journal going, what do you think the challenges are?

(SR): Well, I think one has to consider how the field of higher education studies is developing. To some extent that is a concern, and becoming more of a concern of those involved in academic and educational development, that is those who are concerned to use their research for the purpose of improving teaching. But there is also those who are concerned with higher education as more straight sociologists, sociologists of higher education, who might not have the same kind of concern as a practising people trying to develop teaching in higher education have. I think the challenge of the journal is to draw those together. It’s important that we don’t separate our self off from those who might be as it were sociologists of higher education, and build up a false dichotomy between them and practical pedagogy enthusiasts on the other hand because as teaching, and I think teaching will become more prominent in higher education and university education generally, it is absolutely vital that, there is a voice in that which isn’t just concerned with everyday assumptions about practically good teaching or the improvements of teaching without asking those sorts of wider questions.

So I think although the journal has gone a long way to do this, to have that sort of critical voice, I still think that is an enormous challenge for the future. And I think that within, as part of it, wanting to be internationalists, but also as far as the review essays are concerned I think that offers that opportunity. I suppose that my fantasy would be that in 20 years time when people thought of teaching in higher education they would quote essays which were perhaps written over the last 20 years rather than just in the last year. So there we have a, the journal is up to date, it wants to be addressing the modern concerns and in that sense it must be thinking right up to the minute but on the other hand it must recognise that real educational discussion is lasting. Will the journal produce another John Dewey perhaps would be my question.

(SC): So I think we’ve got a lot to say that we feel very pleased about with the journal: it’s got continuity, it’s becoming more cited, I think lots of successes. But I think it’s a journal that certainly doesn’t feel it’s self-complacent and as you say, like you looks forward to the next 10-
20 years, under new editorship and hopefully when the new editors have this sort of conversation they will be still thinking of things that they need to do to improve the journal. Thank you Stephen.