

Introduction

London Churchill College has experienced a productive but challenging year in 2018-2019. Given the many changes and diverse events taking place since the publication of volume 6 in January 2019, the decision has been made to produce Volume 7 of the *Journal of Contemporary Development & Management Studies (JCD&MS)* as a single issue. Although *JCD&MS*'s traditional remit to explore issues relating to business, education and health care continues to be honoured, the five articles published in volume 7 reflect the talents, diverse interests and multi-cultural perspectives of contributors who have undertaken in-depth research projects aimed at exploring issues impacting on contemporary development at national and international levels.

Dr Michael Nieto's Editorial, 'Riding a Tiger, Backwards. A dialogic case study of contemporary Leadership in Business Schools', provides an interesting and provocative account of senior managers' and academics' impressions of issues in UK University business schools in response to a changing UK higher education environment. Dr Nieto adopted a qualitative research design, with participants responding personally to interview questions. Respondents were assured of their anonymity and encouraged to share their impressions of how they viewed their universities. As a consequence, the Reviewer was able to record what respondents believed to be happening, rather than restating their management and organisational standpoints. Answers were recorded with the respondent's permission and subsequently sent to a transcription service where all comments made were transformed verbatim into text. In his view, "At times what respondents shared is amusing, surprising and occasionally sad." Dr Nieto has requested that Dr Bradley Saunders be recognised for his helpful contributions in writing up the research project.

Ms Sisy Wang's, Dr Abu Munsur Hussain's, Dr Rhyddhi Chakraborty's, and Mr Mehfuzul Haque's article, 'The Impact of Collaborative Learning on HND Students' aims to demonstrate the positive impact of collaborative learning and teaching approaches applied to HND learners, by reference to a pilot study undertaken in London Churchill College in 2017-2018. On the basis of positive survey results and feedback obtained from students, the authors take the view that a collaborative approach to learning exerts a positive impact on students' prospects for successful completion of higher national qualifications. Consequently, they argue that such an approach should be adopted by all lecturers delivering units on HND programmes.

Isabel Morrell's and Dr Nick Papé's article 'The Assad hegemony, a commentary on dynastic occupation and exploitation' (Article two in the three part series, 'The Syrian Identity'), provides an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of the al-Assad presidential dynasty in establishing and securing unity and stability in Syria. Their research findings indicate that despite the rhetoric of unification espoused by President Hafez-al-Assad, ruthless means were implemented to reduce prospects for dissent and opposition throughout the country. Moreover, although tactics originally implemented by father and son differed substantially, the son, like his father, eventually resorted to repressive tactics that were controlling and ruthless. As a consequence, in spite of efforts made to foster the image of a unified Syrian identity, internally and abroad, political directions taken by the al-Assads have re-enforced adverse colonial legacies and intensified fragmentation within the country.

Mr Kavir Thakrar's article, 'Exploring the relationship between personality factors, general aggression, negative attitudes towards cyclists and aggressive driving behaviour towards cyclists', investigates an issue in the area of traffic psychology. To gain a better understanding of the factors influencing aggressive driving behaviours of motorists demonstrated towards cyclists, a quantitative research approach was selected. Adopting a correlated approach to survey design, a pilot project was undertaken that involved 109 participants completing five questionnaires on-line. Results were analysed using hierarchical multiple regression. His research findings indicate that individuals who demonstrate

high levels of general aggression are more likely to display aggressive driving behaviour towards cyclists. He argues that further research undertaken on a wider scale in respect of traffic psychology, could assist planners in developing future systems for effective traffic control and reducing levels of aggressive driving behaviour demonstrated towards cyclists.

Nasser Amin's article, 'The dynamics of the Sino-Pakistani strategic partnership from its formation in the 1960s to the present', provides an interesting and intriguing account and analysis of the basis, dimensions and historical trajectory of the Sino-Pakistani entente. In his view, Beijing and Islamabad have gained a shared advantage in entering into a balancing partnership to counter and contain India's expansionist ambitions, despite the existence of highly divergent societies and politics with conflicting views on central global issues. Nasser claims that the most significant part of Chinese President Xi Jinping's global Belt-Road Initiative (BRI) has been the £40bn investment to modernise Pakistan's infrastructure. He argues that the Pakistani component of the project ought to be understood in the context of Beijing's long-standing political and strategic interests in South Asia, which form a central plank in the China's strategy to gain dominant power status in the region.

These brief descriptions of the articles have been provided to encourage readers to reflect upon the diverse topics covered and different approaches adopted that fit comfortably within the broad perspective of education as a basis of academic research, in spite of topic differences. It is hoped that positive impressions will encourage others to contribute to *JCD&MS*, whether submissions are in the form of an article, expressing a point of view, reviewing published work or offering a response to one of the articles put forward in this volume. A number of contribution modes are available, and production information is set out in the 'Guidelines for Journal Contributors' that appears as the final entry in this volume.

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