Editorial

This issue begins with a Research Note by Eva Sakellaridi looking "Inside the Black Box: School Business Management in a Multi-Academy Trust in England". That is followed by a Commentary by Maria Savva "Making Sense of 'Construct' Terminology in Qualitative Doctoral Studies", which emerged out of the challenges faced in developing the theoretical framework of her doctoral thesis. Next we have a Research Paper by Alexander Spiteri "From inspection of schools to quality assurance in schools? External quality assurance for school improvement in a post-colonial micro-state: Malta. We also have two book reviews: Deepa Idnani reviews *Teachers Under Pressure* by Maurice Galton and John MacBeath; and Stephen Willoughby reviews *Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants: Guidance for school leaders and teachers* by Anthony Russell.

Finally, we have the abstracts from the UCL Institute of Education's 2017 Poster Conference and 2017 Summer Conference. For the latter, we were delighted to welcome Professor Becky Francis as our keynote speaker. Professor Francis joined as the Director of the UCL Institute of Education in July 2016, leading the Institute through the transition into a new phase of its history and helping the Institute to carry forward its commitment to social justice.

Professor Francis spoke on "Segregation by attainment in English schools, and its effects". She noted that grouping students by 'ability' is prevalent practice across the globe, whether via between-school segregation or in-school segregation. However, research has consistently failed to find significant benefits of 'ability' grouping; and indeed has identified disadvantages for some (low attaining) pupil groups. However, this research evidence has apparently failed to impact practice in England. She provided a brief analysis of the existing research evidence on the impact of 'ability' grouping, with particular reference to socio-economic inequality; identified seven different explanations for the poorer progress of pupils in low sets that emerge from the literature. She argued that practices of 'ability grouping' reflect cultural investments in discourses of 'natural order' and social hierarchy. Finally, she introduced the Education Endowment Foundation-funded 'Best Practice in Grouping Students' study, outlining some early findings of the impact of attainment grouping on pupil self-confidence.