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Editorial – Autumn 2018

Charles Neame

One of the clearest signs of Autumn is the throng of new students appearing in a crush on the landing between the CELT office and the lecture theatre, waiting excitedly for their first lectures of the new academic year. Squeezing my way through the buzz of lively, chatty, nineteen-year-old expectancy, what I see is not embryonic accountants, historians, chemists, business managers, teachers, designers or sociologists, but people.

In a speech in 1867, which would have perplexed Universities ministers of the 21st century, John Stuart Mill said that:

"Universities are not intended to teach the knowledge required to fit men¹ for some special mode of gaining their livelihood. Their object is not to make skilful lawyers, or physicians or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings... Men are men before they are lawyers, or physicians, or merchants, or manufacturers; and if you make them capable and sensible men they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers and physicians." (Mill, 1867)

Of course, a successful lawyer needs to learn the law, but in forgetting that lawyers, chemists, designers or whatsoever are people first, and lawyers, chemists and designers second, universities risk failing in their purpose of transforming lives and society for the better.

In forgetting Mill, the relentless twenty-first century focus on skills and metrics, whilst an understandable consequence of economic uncertainty, drains the human being out of being human. Many of the papers in this edition of LTiA (and others) report on some of the 60 or so projects funded by Manchester Met through CELT since 2014. This has encouraged a welcome and energetic infusion of great people-centred ideas for our pedagogy, which sits happily as a counterpoint to the day-to-day policy-driven emphasis on systems and process. I do not believe that many of the UK's Higher Education Institutions yet fully understand the distinction between

¹ This was 1867. It was predominantly men only at most universities then, unfortunately, apart from UCL. These days the sentiment applies to everyone of course...

quality assurance (QA) and quality enhancement (QE). The former is about making sure we meet agreed sector standards, achieved by devising effective and appropriate systems, regulations and protocols. The latter is about pursuing improvement in learning. The Scottish HE sector, which has long led the way in defining and pursuing quality enhancement, has defined QE as *"taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students"* (QAA Scotland, 2017: 3). Even this can be problematic, however, as teachers tend to interpret it as exploring and implementing the kind of innovations reported in the papers in this volume, and university administrations tend to interpret it as a call to beef up regulations and metrics. However, *"effective learning experiences"* are qualitative phenomena which take place in classrooms, coffee shops, and in reflections on reading on the bus home; all promoted by discussion and interactive ways of exploring theoretical ideas and empirical knowledge. That is all largely immeasurable, and is enhanced, not by a revised regulatory process, but by scholarship.

CELT's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) projects are a first-class example of scholarly practice in the university. Lee Shulman, one of America's great educational scholars, defined scholarship as follows:

"... scholarship ... should manifest at least three key characteristics: It should be public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use by other members of one's scholarly community."
(Shulman, 1998)

The papers in this volume exemplify that scholarly practice: colleagues undertaking work which we can now all see and review, and then use for the benefit of ourselves and our students.

One of the UK's equally eminent HE scholars, Ron Barnett, put scholarship less formally, and in a way which makes it accessible to all of us, whatever our research and teaching roles. Barnett said (2010 - my paraphrase) that being scholarly simply requires reading, writing, thinking and sharing. Nothing too grandiose or difficult about that!

Universities, as institutions, tend to misunderstand scholarship (which is rather unfortunate) and present a false dichotomy between scholarship (vaguely defined as something that careful teachers do

to check the quality of their practice) and research (which is what brings reflected glory to department heads and vice-chancellors). From Shulman and Barnett's definitions we can see that scholarship is common to both teaching and research. And if we refer to another great American scholar, Ernest Boyer (1990), we remember that in fact every great university embraces the unity of scholarly teaching and scholarly research. When we seek to separate them as distinct functions, then we fundamentally misunderstand the purpose and nature of the university.

One feature that many of the papers in this issue appear to have in common is their presentation of accounts of human drivers and responses to the various disciplinary challenges and endeavours they describe. Above all, whether teachers or students, the participants in these stories reveal that once the institutionally prescribed attempt has been made to learn more stuff, or to learn the same stuff more efficiently and effectively, the continuing, quintessential story of education is about being and becoming human.

I define education by three core values, relating to purpose, people and process. First, the **transformation** (of people and society through education), is the value defining the purpose of education. Second, **community** is the idea that puts people at the heart of education. Third, **scholarship** is the process by which we ensure that education serves people by supporting their transformation.

Without the kind of commitment to transformation, community and scholarship that these papers illustrate, our education will fail. This is my final editorial before I leave Manchester Metropolitan University, and through it I warmly thank all the colleagues who have demonstrated, through their scholarship, their unstinting commitment to our university community and the transformation of its people.

I'll leave the last word to John Dewey (1893) – feeling rather sad that it still seems relevant today:

"If I were asked to name the most needed of all reforms in the spirit of education, I should say: 'Cease conceiving of education as mere preparation for later life, and make of it the full meaning of the present life'."

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Undisciplinarity: Exploring the disciplinary nature and pedagogic assumptions of Art and Design practice at Manchester School of Art

Kirsteen Aubrey

Abstract

This paper explores the impact of cross-disciplinary student engagement, using reflection in and on action (Schon, 1983) to explore the impact of the experience on students and staff. Cross-disciplinary activities create elements of the 'unknown' for students, ranging from unfamiliar situations and environments, foreign practices and new patterns of behaviour and terminology. Collectively, these opportunities present potential for new learning as students and staff engage with diverse materials and processes that often challenge prior assumptions. Engaging in new disciplines can empower a student to acquire skills and engage in new discourse around and across academic fields that enhance cognitive development. For staff meanwhile, it may often lead to questioning of identity and roles as they traverse tutor-mentor-learner themselves. Through these experiences, we can better understand ourselves and our practice.

The paper highlights some of the challenges of cross-disciplinary engagement, including navigating new fields of discipline, negotiating with others, and managing the 'self' in unfamiliar settings. It identifies opportunities arising from cross-disciplinary activity, including material engagement, debate, peer groups, community engagement and social responsibility. The case study explores the different approaches undertaken in collaborative engagement across the Arts, underpinned by Robert Zehner's studio teaching model (Lynas, 2013) that is employed to encourage student engagement with social and sustainable design issues. The paper also references the importance of experiential learning (Beard and Wilson, 2013) and evaluates reflecting in and on action (Schon, 1983) and situation pedagogy (Shulman, 2005, cited in Boling et al, 2013).

The paper evaluates the benefits and impact of these experiences for students and staff. It also highlights the challenges posed, notably for the academic, including preparation of projects, liaising with partners, negotiating expectations and developing appropriate adjustments in

teaching delivery.

This paper will address the impact that cross-disciplinary engagement can have on the student experience reviewing the following aspects:

- Rationale: The need for integrated cross-disciplinary experience in HE
- Theory: approaches to collaboration
- Roles: positioning and re-positioning the tutor: student relationship
- Enhancing the student experience: discourse, skills, perceptions
- Impact: opportunities, social awareness, cognitive development, aspiration
- Challenges: preparation, workload

Rationale

Recent collaborations between artists from various disciplines have demonstrated the potential that exploring new materials, technology and environments can have on developing new work (Berengo, 2013, Petry 2012). The sharing and discourse that unfolds when negotiating with others, acquiring and sharing new practical skills, provides openings for new ideas to dawn. The result may lead to longer term complications of authorship, but the collaborative journey has many rewards. The collaborations can be performed in various ways; two practitioners may unite, sharing their respective skills, working to produce a common output. Alternatively, as in Berengo (2013), one may serve as a skilled facilitator to the ideas of another, producing new and unexpected outcomes that challenge existing material practice. Such is the case with Berengo, (2013) who invited internationally reputable designers and artists across a variety of disciplines, to develop ideas using the skilled glassmakers from Berengo.

The diverse results, ranging from Cornelia Parker's 'Reflected Glory' (2013), to conceptual work by Recycle Group ('Breath' 2013) or to Helen Storey's large scale flame worked body ('Glass of Dress', 2013), clearly highlight the benefit of such interactions. The craftsman's material expertise is evident in the execution of the works, but it is the union with the artists and designers that provides even more potential. Here, highly skilled craftsman can extend their familiar 'production glass' into innovative challenges, enabling artists to conceive new ideas in a unique material.

There remain additional benefits of cross-disciplinary material engagement; The Crafts Council's Education Manifesto, 'Our future is in the Making', highlights the opportunities learned through Material engagement, proposing that it fosters "*persistence, creative thinking, problem-solving and agency*" (Crafts Council, 2014). At Manchester School of Art we believe that cross-disciplinary engagement can broaden one's perspectives and creativity opportunity, and it proposes to be a place "*where language is extended and developed*" (Manchester School of Art, no date). This was exemplified in the culmination of the Pairings Project (Gröppel-Wegener et al, 2010) in which 32 academics from various Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) collaborated and explored disciplinary boundaries from ceramics and glass, textiles and paper through to metal, wood, film media and digital technologies. The exhibited outcomes demonstrated the impact of the collaborative processes on each individual, and created an opportunity to discuss the *pedagogy* behind material experiences.

Case Study

This case study explored the impact when students from one subject specialism were exposed to the unfamiliar process of glassblowing. The research used a constructed grounded theory approach, which allowed the theory to emerge from the research using an iterative process. The approach involves constant comparison where new data is reviewed in light of previous data collated. Patterns and codes emerge from the data, and the findings lead to greater understanding and the development of theory (Charmaz, 2014).

Over a period of one academic year (September to June) willing participants (predominantly in their second and third year of study) engaged in a series of optional glassmaking sessions. Documentation was collated using participant observation, filed notes, questionnaire, interviews and film footage. This multiple approach sought to minimize the Project Leader's bias when interpreting the data. Reflection in action, a process that happens in a fleeting moment, was captured within the Project Leader's field notes and through review film footage. However, as the year progressed, reflection on action, a process that occurs over a longer period of time, became an invaluable tool through which to record and reflect on the research.

The literature review revealed the impact that medium, location, group dynamics, understanding of the creative process and prior experience can have on our material assumptions. (Lave and

Wenger 1991, Sayer et al 2006, Nimkulrat, 2010, Lynas et al 2013). Following the review, the disciplines of textiles, fine art and photography were identified as representative subject specialisms of three Departments involved in the Research. The disciplines differed substantially enough from glassmaking for them to provide comparisons for the purpose of the study. The case study provided consenting participants with the opportunity to engage in a range of glassmaking processes, including cutting sheets of glass, fusing glass within a kiln and glassblowing. The research objective included observing their process of engagement with the unfamiliar glass environment and their interaction with glassmaking processes. Longer term, the research considered how these experiences could inform their Home Programme study. This paper focuses on an individual participant from a photography practice within the case study (Participant A), observing and recording the changes made to their practice following their participation in this case study.

The diversity of practice involved in Photography and Glassblowing is extreme, in terms of medium (film and glass respectively) and dimensionality (two dimensions typically in photography and three dimensions in glassblowing). A Photography practice may involve the use of a camera, capturing a 'moment' outside of the camera where the photographer may seem to be an observer of a situation, positioned behind the camera. By contrast, the process of glassblowing is immersive, well planned yet spontaneous and responsive to the molten state of the material. Glassblowing is a process where molten glass at 1100 Celsius is extracted from a furnace using an iron. The liquid glass is then manipulated on an iron using hand and breath, to create a form. The process requires dexterity, timing and sensitive handling of tools to require the desired form. It is experientially different from photography.

Glassblowing

Entering the glassblowing environment, before the process commences, participants can find their surroundings daunting. Initial reactions noted by the participants were to the noise of the furnace and the extraction system that operates in the room. Communication and delivery of instructions over the extraction system can be problematic, and there is an increasing reliance on accompanying gesture and signing than on words. Participants also commented on the heat of the room, which houses a furnace at 1100 Celsius, the heat from which is felt when in close proximity. To a novice, these foreign elements, and accompanying sounds of glass cracking, and series of unfamiliar tools and benches, present unfamiliar

scenarios. For some participants, their body gestures communicated excitement, if a little nervousness at these new navigations. For others, their stances suggested that the glassblowing process was not one with which they could easily associate themselves.

During the pre-requisite glassblowing induction, participants were shown how to use a four foot iron safely to retrieve molten glass from the furnace. As each participant enacted the process shown to them, each was observed and notes made regarding the ease with which they responded. For glassblowing, similar to many crafts, is a learned skill. It is often 'easy' to demonstrate a series of learned manoeuvres such as extracting liquid glass safely from a furnace, but it is only in the repeated engagement with the process that meaningful learning takes place. For an initial demonstration only shows key features, such as holding the iron and sitting in a glassmaker's bench, whilst the delicate interplay of hand and finger positioning can, at first, go unnoticed by a newcomer to the process. At first, the focus is on awareness of more explicit features such as heat, noise, people. Meanwhile, the smaller intricacies such as how each finger performs its role in the rotation of the glass iron, may seem insignificant at first. It is only in the repeated personal experience of handling and rotating the iron that the participant begins to 'feel' the significance of hand and finger positioning. It is only over time that one's body and awareness becomes finely tuned to the subtle significance of these details.

Gathering Glass

Keeping the molten glass on an iron requires engagement of each finger; whilst the right hand holds a paper to shape the molten glass, the left hand uses each finger to complete the action – each finger rotates their 'fraction' of a full rotation. Without a full rotation, the molten glass could fall off centre, or worse, fall from the iron onto the floor. Centeredness is key. Each finger on the left hand works in synchronicity with the next – moving from thumb to index to middle finger and so forth, to rotate the iron and keep the molten glass in position. The little finger, 'little' in terminology but not significance here, is pivotal, for as the little finger completes its part of the rotation, it must transmit the rotation back to the thumb and index finger without stutter or pause. The delicacy of this interplay, and the impact of this 'rhythmic' finger dance translates to a smooth rotation of the iron, which maintains the position of the molten glass on the iron located over a foot away.

This 'knowing' is both learned and felt over time; learned in the sense that one is initially instructed and guided, and 'felt' in terms of 'becoming' where the activities are seamless and responsive to each other. It is only in the experience of touch, sound, smell, that relevant understanding is gleaned. Polanyi explains that these two activities are linked but not synchronised;

"two kinds of indwelling meet here. The performer coordinates his moves by dwelling in them as parts of his body, while the watcher tries to correlate these moves by seeking to dwell in them from the outside. He dwells in these moves by interiorising them." (Polanyi 1983: 34)

Guidance may still be needed to steer the appropriate action (Atkinson 2013), providing key indicators of timing, angle and pressure, that will help the recipient to gain confidence and material appreciation. Through repetition and reflecting in action, our hands, mind, and sense unite, our actions and consequences of the actions become implicit, and *"smooth sequences of activity, recognition, decision, and adjustment"* (Schon 1987: 26) are made intuitively.

Engaging in new experiences allows us to reflect, but the impact of the reflection may vary depending upon the individual, context and timing. Reflection in action appears to provide an 'in the moment' registering, a flickering of connections between something known and something unknown. Reflection on action provides a distance between the activity and the thinking; it may involve reflecting *on* the reflection *in* action but somehow the distance (from activity and of time) provides greater scope for enlightenment.

Reflection on action opens up possibility, allowing new information to be registered by one's mind set and previously unthought-of ideas to gain potential. This combination of reflection and imagination is Wenger's understanding of reflective practice as *"the ability both to engage and to distance"* and where *"Imagination enables us to adopt other perspectives across boundaries, time, to visit 'otherness' and let it speak its own language"* (Wenger 1998: 217).

The reflective practice of Participant A evidences a more substantial leap of awareness and understanding of practice. Working with the molten glass, he reflected on the 'flow' created through the glass blowing experience. As the case study developed over the academic year, the intrigue with glass led to a more informed understanding of his photography practice. The experience in a new discipline guided

him to 'academically' research more historical overlaps between the disciplines, acquiring more informed approach to the material of glass and his practice.

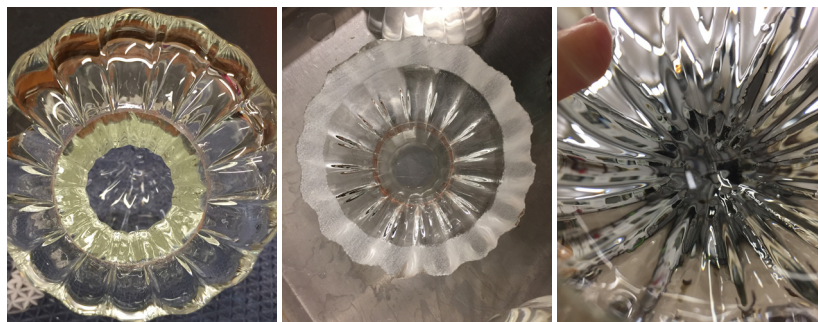
Reflecting on his engagement with glassblowing, and the tactile qualities involved, led him to:

"step back from all of the new technologies and photographic equipment we are introduced to on a weekly basis and look at the medium of photography as something stripped back and basic." (feedback from participant)

His language indicates a return to and removal from earlier academic learning - *"step back"* and *"back to basics"*. However, it may be that through the prior learning of the photography practice, the glass experience gave the confidence to de-assemble the theoretical and physical components of the photography practice and camera respectively.

Participant A expressed surprise at realising the 'intimate relationship' (feedback) between the two practices, particularly the realisation that a camera is based on mirror (glass) and lens (also glass). Although daunting to explore glassblowing processes to create new lenses (see figs 1-3), the Participant felt reassured, almost gleeful in the response of his academic home tutor and peers: *"Everyone has been really positive and impressed with what I am doing and excited to see the new work that I aim to produce"*. (feedback from participant).

Fig 1-3: Images show left to right: Blown glass optic; cut form to reveal inner viewing; top view of optic form. Images: Kirsteen Aubrey



The feedback from participants seems to have helped support the discovery of new pathways and language that could unite photography and glassmaking. The growing confidence became evident through emails that communicated understanding, through academic tutors acknowledging the benefit that the glass research project has had for students. At the end of the project, Participant A successfully attained a place to display his work in the Vertical gallery of the School of Art – a prestigious venue within the Institution. He exhibited hand-blown lenses, made during the project. The exhibits explored new disciplinary practice, which seemed unconventional in light of previous image-based photography practice, and explored a new approach to traditional glass-blowing practice. Instead the new lenses created for a camera responded to photography practice, enabling the participant to photograph new perspectives. In displaying the lens without its camera, however, he allowed the observer to immerse themselves in the experience of creating bespoke new perspectives also.

Participant A had allowed new experiences to challenge set boundaries, to question material assumptions. The interactions with glass had opened up the opportunity for 'other', offering the chance to reflect upon practice; to *"re-think...knowing-in-action in ways that go beyond available rules, facts, theories and operations"*. (Schon 1987: 35)

Scope

The research demonstrated the creative opportunities available in cross-disciplinary practice, an approach that can meet with some resistance and challenge within the same Department with its numerous other programmes. The response from staff teaching their home programme students was positive, and informal dialogues occurred that presented hope for future collaborations.

For further investigations, a number of considerations need reviewing; a more flexible timetable that offers opportunity for intensive workshop sessions followed by periods of engagement, experimentation and reflection. Staff need to have the flexibility to question their other material specialisms, seeking to uncover its potential in relation to their own specialism. For this to happen can require time, commitment, patience and courage. Similarly, those fortunate enough to teach cross-disciplinary practice (and outside of their preferred practice) need to have the ability to move flexibly between roles, from disseminating information (tutor) to demonstrator to mentor, helping students to *think* through problems, *reframe*

questions, *interrogate* their practice and *challenge* materials.

The benefits of such interactions and challenges are vast. Through creative exploration the students question, discuss, interact with new peers, new disciplines and new concepts. New discourse emerges. Students learn to expand their skill base, extend their repertoire and in turn challenge and develop their practice. Using reflection in and on action are worthy approaches by which a student can review, comment, analyse and develop; elements that can enhance student learning and aspiration.

Manchester School of Art recognises its role in challenging educational boundaries. In doing so, it promotes curiosity of materials, experiments with process, questions material assumptions and extends the boundaries of practice. Such an approach is outward looking and aspirational, serving to challenge, extend innovative practice within art and design.

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Towards a Psychosocial Pedagogy: The 'student journey', intersubjectivity, and the development of agency

Susanne Langer, Geoff Bunn and Nina Fellows

Abstract

We report preliminary results from a CELT Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research grant. Informed by psychosocial psychology and Lacanian discourse analysis, the project studied students' transformations into autonomous and effective agents. Repeat interviews (n=15) with final year students were informed by the psychosocial themes of power, affect, intersubjectivity and agency. The analysis was guided by Lacan's theory of the 'four discourses' (Lacan, 2007; Neil, 2013) and T. R. Johnson's (2014) application of Lacan in a higher education context. We found that students can move backwards and forwards between discourses depending on their desires and ambitions: the Lacanian *objet a*. We conclude that the pervasive metaphor of the 'student journey' is an inadequate representation of the student experience. Our critique addresses the implications for learning and teaching and for the university's mission to develop its students.

Keywords: Lacanian discourse analysis, the four discourses, agency, the 'student journey', *objet a*.

Introduction

Universities endeavour to nurture their students' ambitions and skills. Manchester Metropolitan for instance has committed

"to develop [students'] intellectual powers, creativity, independent judgement, critical self-awareness, imagination, and personal skills that will clearly identify them as global learners, MMU graduates and as world class professionals."
(MMU SLTA 2.3)¹

This aspiration informs and underpins learning and teaching principles across the institution. Nevertheless, conventional Higher Education (HE) teaching practices, including those at Manchester Metropolitan are frequently at odds with these lofty pedagogical

¹ <http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/ltstrategy/standards2.php>. Accessed 12.07.18.

aspirations. Many conventional teaching methods arguably militate against the development of agency: the traditional 'top-down' transmission lecture format that enrols its audience into passivity and indifference (Folley, 2010; Maphosa & Chimbala Kalenga, 2012); tedious 'death-by-PowerPoint' presentation styles that command rote learning (Mann & Robinson, 2009; Clark, 2010; Hill, Arford, Lubitow & Smollin 2012); the pragmatic prioritising of learning outcomes over learning processes (Bennett & Brady, 2014; Lassnigg, 2012; Stoller, 2015); risk-averse and intellectually-limited assessment regimes such as the Multiple Choice Test that ferment student anxiety, instrumentalism and counter-productive second-guessing of the tutor's wishes (Mann, 2008; Paxton, 2000; Groothuis, 2018); the imposing presence of the lecturer whose expertise is considered sacrosanct and whose authority – from the vantage point of the student – is difficult to challenge (Alshahrani & Ward, 2013; Su & Wood, 2012; Johnson 2014). Although many of these conventional practices have undoubtedly been subjected to extensive criticism, recent HE sector market reforms, we argue, will not inevitably promote their replacement by more progressive pedagogies. Indeed, the introduction of new technologies (e.g. Edwards & Clinton, 2018), the harvesting of big data to enact 'learning analytics' (Munro, 2018; Williamson, 2018), the recruitment of very large student cohorts (Arvanitakis, 2014), and the promotion of the 'student-as-consumer' model (Nixon, Scullion, & Hearn, 2018) may foment a perfect storm of regressive pedagogical practices. Students are unlikely to develop efficacious agency whilst subjected to a barrage of such restrictive interventions. And universities are unlikely to nurture critical and creative 'world-class professionals' as a result. Investigating new ways to generate and foster agency is therefore of fundamental importance to all stakeholders in the university, from administrators to academics and, of course, to students themselves.

Towards a Psychosocial Pedagogy

This study contributes to the introduction of a *psychosocial* approach to pedagogical research (Clarke, 2002, 2006). Psychosocial studies examine the ways in which subjective experiences are entangled with the social, cultural and political. This approach aims to resist the objectification and reification of the human subject (Frosh, 2003). It is characterised by the development of non-positivistic epistemologies and non-reductionist ontologies, and an orientation towards progressive social and personal change.² Drawing inspiration from

2 "What is psychosocial studies?" The Association for Psychosocial Studies, <http://www.psychosocial-studies-association.org/about/> accessed 12.07.18.

a variety of approaches including sociology, psychoanalysis, critical theory and post-structuralism, psychosocial research is emphatically interdisciplinary (Parker, 2010).

Having an explicitly critical orientation, psychosocial research examines the conditions of possibility for the exercise of agency within relations of power (Hollway and Jefferson, 2005; Dean, 2010). Student engagement, progression and achievement are undoubtedly psychosocial matters insofar as psychological and intellectual development occurs within an intersubjective network (Frosh, 2016). The analysis of agency therefore proceeds by examining a constellation of factors that include power, knowledge, affect and intersubjectivity.

Lacan's theory of the four discourses has been productively applied by T.R. Johnson to Higher Education (Johnson, 2014, 2017; Lacan, 2007). We use Johnson's pioneering work on the development of the student writer as a stepping stone to explore the development of student agency. Building on Johnson's innovations, our research:

- i) assessed how final year undergraduate students experienced different psychosocial frameworks, operationalised as Lacan's 'four discourses';
- ii) examined the extent to which those discourses nurtured or thwarted the development of agency.

The Four Discourses

Lacan's (2007) theory of the four discourses is an attempt to account for how certain forms of social relations can construct and transform the social order (Bracher:1994, p.107). Lacan's notion of discourse refers to an intersubjective matrix, a social bond that includes speaking, writing and the organisation of space to generate systems of meaning "*that define things for people and define people for other people*" (Parker:2010, p.29).

Each of the four discourses contain the same four *signifiers* arranged in four different *positions* relative to each other. The four signifiers are: the Master signifier (S1), the chain of knowledge (S2), the split subject (\$) and the *objet a* (a). In terms of pedagogy, three of these four signifiers are relatively straightforward to understand. For example, whereas the 'Master signifier' could represent the *lecturer*, and the 'chain of knowledge' could stand in for the university's *assessment regulations*, the 'split subject' could symbolise a

student's conflicted identity as both *scholar* and *consumer*. We will discuss Lacan's fourth signifier, the '*objet a*', separately.

The four *signifiers* can occupy any one of four *positions*, (although they follow an invariant ordering relative to each other, i.e. $S1 \rightarrow S2 \rightarrow \$ \rightarrow a \rightarrow S1$).³ The four positions that each signifier can function as are: *agent*, *other*, *product* and *truth* (Table 1).⁴ The circulation of the four signifiers through the four positions creates the discourses: Master, University, Hysteric, and Analyst (Bracher, 1994, 2006).⁵ This means that the arrangement of Lacan's signifiers takes account of transformation and change – a germane characteristic in this study with its focus on student development and agency.

Although Lacan's system is highly abstract, it can be empirically tested. Two of the four discourses ('the Master's' and 'the University') produce impoverished pedagogical outcomes, despite being the most prevalent modes of provision in Higher Education. The Master addresses the other as an apprentice, at best, or a slave at worst. University discourse is a matter of bureaucratic codes: deadlines, attendance monitoring, assessment regimes, matriculation rules and so on. University discourse only allows for agency within these narrow parameters. Through no fault of their own, students who remain within University discourse fall short of the university's stated ambitions for them. Although the remaining discourses ('the Hysteric' and 'the Analyst') have the greatest potential for the development of agency, we would argue that they are marginalised in Higher

3 To cut a long story short, as this sequence of signifiers implies, ideally a student would start out as an apprentice (S2) to the master (S1) but would progress towards achieving mastery themselves.

4 Lacan's four discourses may be understood with the help of an analogy with a toolbox. Imagine the top layer of a toolbox containing four shallow trays for storing hardware; red, yellow, green and blue, arranged in a 2 x 2 grid. The trays represent Lacan's fixed *positions* and their hardware contents represent Lacan's *signifiers* (which have no fixed meaning precisely because they are signifiers). So the red tray might, on one occasion, contain assorted nails, the green tray various screws, the yellow tray nuts and the blue tray bolts. The hardware can be stored in any of the trays, just as any signifier can occupy any position. Different signifiers in different positions result in the different discourses. Because Lacan maintains that the signifiers circulate through the positions in an invariant order, namely: S1 ('nails') à S2 ('screws') à \$ ('nuts') à a ('bolts') à S1 ('nails') etc., the result is four basic discourses. (This analogy recalls the apocryphal American tabloid newspaper headline that allegedly reported on how an inmate at a maximum security psychiatric hospital assaulted guards before making his escape: 'Nut Nails Screws, Bolts'.)

5 The signifier that occupies the agent's position gives the discourse its name. For example, what Lacan calls the 'Master's discourse' occurs when the Master Signifier (S1) is in the *agent's* position and the chain of knowledge (S2) in the position of the *other*, the split subject (\$) is in the position of *truth* and the *objet a* is the *product*.

Education. They are insufficiently fostered, we claim, because they are non-normative, if not potentially disruptive, in the neo-liberal university.

Four Forms of Agency

In the context of Higher Education marketisation, agency has been afforded a privileged status within the rhetoric of the 'student journey'. Student satisfaction, engagement and retention, together with discourses around employability and 'lifelong learning' have encouraged a renewed focus on agency as a key component of student success. However, as Zepke (2018) has written, student agency has (paradoxically) become a target of knowledge to be operationalised, nurtured and developed by mechanisms of power aligned with neo-liberal ideas about what should be the business of education. This, we would argue, imprints agency with an ideologically shaped and restrictive meaning (Hethrington, 2015).

Ransome (2011) has argued that a dominant 'performative rationale' has come to influence every aspect of university life, including teaching and learning where it comes into conflict with an academic-qualitative rationale. Crucially both rationales generate different kinds of actors: scholars and service-providers. Students are positioned as job-oriented consumer stakeholders at the same time as they aspire to becoming disinterested scholars and engaged citizens. In Lacan's terms, students are 'split subjects' (\$), conflicted by the antagonistic demand to be both producers and consumers of knowledge.

Table 1: A four factor model of agency

	SUBSERVIENT AGENCY	SUBSISTENCE AGENCY	SUBLIMINAL AGENCY	SUBLIME AGENCY
Lacanian Discourse	Master	University	Hysteric	Analyst
Lacanian Matheme	$S1 \rightarrow S2$ $\$ \times a$	$S2 \rightarrow a$ $S1 \times \$$	$\$ \rightarrow S1$ $a \times S2$	$a \rightarrow \$$ $S2 \times S1$
Fate of the student's objet a	The Master steals the student's <i>objet a</i> .	The University defines a proxy <i>objet a</i> for the student.	The student is motivated by but is unaware of their <i>objet a</i> .	The student embodies their <i>objet a</i> .

From the vantage point of the student's positioning, Master's discourse produces Subservient Agency whereas University discourse produces Subsistence Agency (Table 1). Both are aspects of what Nick Zepke (2018) calls "*mainstream student engagement*".

Zepke argues that student agency can be understood not only in terms of conventional values of knowledge and skills on the one hand, but also critically, in relation to the quest for meaning, ethical purpose and citizenship on the other. Building on this distinction, we predict that critical forms of agency are nurtured by two discourses marginalised by Higher Education: the discourse of the Hysteric (\$), and the discourse of the Analyst (a). A critical model of student engagement, we argue, would have to include their agency analogues, namely, Subliminal Agency and Sublime Agency respectively. Although Sublime Agency is the most effective and desirable form, it is also the most precarious (and indeed risky) in the current political climate.

The discourses framing student agency have implications for student learning. Mann (2001) argued that many student learners adopt either a *surface approach* to their studies (rote learning, unreflective reproduction of material, task-focussed orientation), or a *strategic approach* (a focus on meeting assessment requirements and lecturer expectations and securing high grades). Both approaches rely on impoverished opportunities for the exercise of agency precisely because they locate the responsibility for success in the perceived demands of others. In Lacanian terms, surface learning occurs when the student is addressed by the lecturer speaking from the Master's position of authority (S1). The student works for the lecturer, perversely, like the slave works for the master. The student's agency is defined by the lecturer/master who secretly enjoys the student's creativity (*objet a*) (Mann, 2001). Strategic learning arises when the student is trapped by the bureaucratic demands of University discourse (S2), where there is an emphasis

"on performativity and functionality; a greater focus on efficiency and effectiveness at the expense of complexity and ambiguity...and especially the educational life course, as institutionalised, following normatively and inexorably the same 'prescribed' path." (Mann, 2001)

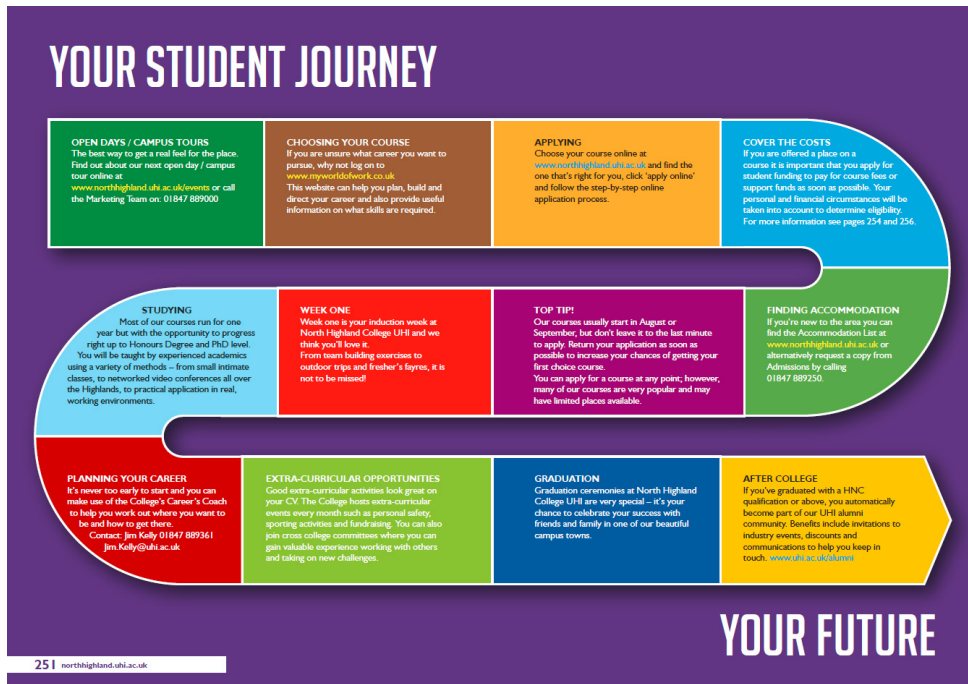
University discourse not only has consequences for students' approach to learning but also effects affect. Lacan's model predicts that the bureaucratic obligations of University discourse can hystericize students, resulting in fear, anxiety and insecurity. This can lead to acts of self-sabotage such as deliberately producing sub-optimal work, avoiding challenging or ambiguous assessments, failing to assimilate feedback and engaging in plagiarism (Mann, 2008). The tragedy of University discourse is that it does not give the

hystericized student an opportunity to develop the self-efficacy afforded by the Analyst's position.

The Metaphor of the 'Student Journey'

Mann's (2001, 2008) critique of the 'prescribed path' for learning can also be directed against the metaphor of 'the student journey' (Figure 1). This metaphor generates normative aspirations of unproblematic belonging, validated and immediately useful achievements, and predictable and measurable outcomes (Zepke, 2018). Derived from consumer discourses, the student journey metaphor implies that attaining a degree is merely a matter of moving in a straight line from beginning to end, acquiring the right skills in the right order – and not inadvertently wandering down any unproductive dead ends. In this model, students start out as "empty vessels" (Freire, 1970) that are passively filled up with knowledge as they move along. The journey metaphor is limited precisely because there is no sense of struggle, no hazards to negotiate, no potential to fail. Nor does it consider students' individuality. Completing the student journey requires a conception of minimal agency because the student's desire (*objet a*) is either captured and enjoyed by the Master or defined in advance by the University. A more effective account of agency generates desire in ways that are personally meaningful to students themselves.

Figure 1: A Typical Representation of the Student Journey ⁶



6 <https://www.northhighland.uhi.ac.uk/study-at-nhc/apply/Yourstudentjourney.png> Accessed 21.09.17

The *objet a*

Crucially, desire is absent from discussions surrounding the student journey in the two discourses most prominent in Higher Education today (the Master's, the University). Yet in Lacanian terms it is desire in the form of the *objet a* that must be generated and acknowledged for agency to thrive. In University discourse it is the university that defines what a student's *objet a* should be on behalf of the student. In Master's discourse, it is the Master who enjoys the student's *objet a*, not the student. For our purposes, Lacan's concept of the *objet a* can be translated as an outrageous amalgam of desire, motivation, perceived lack and purpose. The highest form of agency – Sublime Agency – emerges when a student's *objet a* mobilises their past in the service of their future.

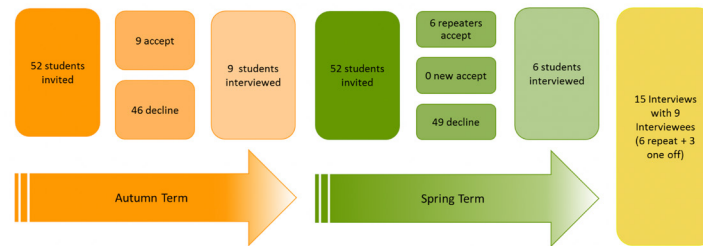
Lacan's *objet a* is a necessarily elusive and paradoxical concept that is related to the formation of the subject's identity and experience. The *objet a* is the "*lack of being that causes all desire*" according to Bracher (1994, p.114), the radical gap that is also the supplement to the subject's incompleteness. According to Richard Boothby, the *objet a* is a liminal thing, "*strangely suspended between the subject and the other, belonging to both and neither*" (Boothby, 2001, p.243). In terms of the development of student agency, the *objet a* is a relational category that encapsulates both the exhilaration of absolute possibility and the comfort of realistic contingency.

Methods: participants, ethics, methodology, analysis

Participants consisted of final year undergraduates (n=52) taking a critical psychology unit. This was a popular, interdisciplinary, and interactive unit that made explicit the concepts and paradigms framing the discipline.

Conducting research with university students is ethically challenging (Humphrey, 2013). The research adhered to the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics (BPS 2009; BPS 2018) and Ethics approval was granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee. As teachers and researchers, we were committed to ensuring that students did not feel pressured to participate so we removed ourselves from the interview process. The research project was introduced and advertised in class, but recruitment and data collection was conducted by the project's research assistant (NF).

Figure 2: The Recruitment Process



Students were invited to participate by email during the autumn and then again in spring (Figure 2). Recruitment resulted in nine initial interviews, with a further six follow-up interviews ($n=15$). Two of the nine participants were male. Participation was rewarded with the standard rate of psychology participation pool credits which can be redeemed by students for their own research.

Interviews were conducted using a flexible, semi-structured topic guide that explored instances of the four discourses in students' university lives. The data was then carefully transcribed and anonymised. In addition, students were introduced to Lacan's four discourses in class. The concept of the Master-Slave dyad particularly sparked discussion and influenced how some students came to think about their other units. To disrupt the discourses of the Master and the University, classroom interventions aimed to generate an atmosphere of discussion, trust and critique. In-class discussions also provided powerful opportunities for students to share personal experiences. A further pedagogical intervention was that NF acted as a trusted and effective in-class mediator, role model and supplementary teacher.

Lacanian Discourse Analysis

Our analysis of the transcripts was guided by Neill's (2013) account of Lacanian discourse analysis. We initially read each transcript without making any analytic interpretations. A second individual reading then engaged with the text more abstractly, noting not only subject positions, master signifiers and moments of transition, but also rhetorical features such as metaphor, storytelling and patterns of diction. The principal researchers (SL and GB) subsequently discussed each transcript extensively. Collaborative analysis challenged individual interpretations and added new layers of insight and meaning. Disagreements were resolved through dialogue. We also kept a continuously updated meta-analysis log, to record further

observations and theory-building ideas. Discussions with NF further helped to triangulate and consolidate our interpretations. A series of vignettes of all six repeat interviewees momentarily concluded this stage of the research process.

Results: Four vignettes

We have used extracts from four of these vignettes to evidence the contingencies of the 'student journey'. We also highlight the transitions between the different discourses and the associated forms of agency. We focus on two salient aspects: the dissertation and the object cause of desire, the *objet a*. The dissertation was a large piece of independent research that constituted a quarter of the students' final year mark. It is an essential precondition for achieving professional recognition (BPS Graduate Basis Chartership). The best dissertations are eligible for publication in the Department's e-space and can count as a first publication. The dissertation was sometimes aligned with a student's *objet a* but not always. While both offered opportunities, they were also full of risks.

Jack

Jack was a methodical, well-prepared student who largely managed to avoid what he called the "*madness*" of the third year. Law-abiding and highly organised, he felt most at home within University discourse. Exams were his preferred form of assessment. He appreciated Multiple Choice Tests for their predictability and sense of order. As a large piece of independent research, the uncharted territory of the dissertation was initially a matter of stress and worry for him. He felt insufficiently prepared for it and in November described himself as "*still floating in the water*" [J1 362]. His unease was further exacerbated by an unresponsive supervisor:

"I've been the most stressed, like because when you're asking a question and – I think I've emailed [my supervisor] probably about thirty times altogether, and she's probably replied about seven." [J2 169-173]

Realising the supervisor's unreliability was more stressful than doing the dissertation on his own, Jack "*lost faith*" and decided to "*try it off his back*" [J2 203, 206]. By the time of the second interview, this strategy had enabled him to conquer any rising panic and settle back into his comfort zone of University discourse. The imposition of order came at the expense of forsaking the pleasure inherent in the pursuit of the *objet a* as part of the dissertation. Instead of affording an opportunity for self-directed learning, the dissertation became a

chore. This was a price Jack was willing to pay, as his *objet a* was resolutely located outside his degree. His plan was to stay on in Manchester, find a steady retail job, and learn a foreign language before going travelling with his new girlfriend. Together with the prospect of earning decent money and taking up rugby again, these plans propelled him through the ordeal of his final year. By the end of the interview, Jack considered himself "*done with education*" and was looking forward to the pleasures of "*real life*" [J2 333-334].

Caitlin

While Jack retreated into the security University discourse offered, Caitlin felt pushed back into it. A mature student who had taken the risk of embarking on a degree to escape a dead-end job and to prove to herself what she was capable of, Caitlin had started at university with high expectations. In the first interview, she was emerging as an original if tentative critical thinker who could challenge orthodoxies:

"So like, you know, the university is the master and we're all the slaves, sort of...and I kind of disagree in a way, because I, a little bit, and maybe that's because of me working, I've worked for customers my whole - like for a long time, so in my eyes, a little bit, we're the customer and like you've got to ensure that we're happy." [C1, 260-269]

Caitlin's dissertation topic offered her an opportunity to explore important aspects of her own sexual identity. She was excited by the prospect of her research and in her first interview eloquently explained her motivation. By the time of the second interview a bout of illness and the early stages of a not unexpected pregnancy had turned the dissertation into something she was "*clawing [her] way through*". Her exhaustion exacerbated her feelings of uncertainty and self-doubt. This was a much wished-for pregnancy, yet it left Caitlin deep in limbo:

"I feel like everything's just a waiting game at the minute, I know there's not much I can do about anything in particular apart from waiting to hear if the pregnancy's okay and then I know I do need to just try – as hard as it is – just try and focus on the last few assessments and dissertation stuff that I have." [C2, 103-110]

Initially, Caitlin's *objet a* had been "*to have that line on my CV that says 'degree in psychology'*" [C1 297] because it would open up new opportunities. She had felt confident that her commitment and

discipline would allow her to realise it. Now these individualist and intrasubjective desires had been replaced by the relationality and intersubjectivity of pregnancy. She felt compelled to settle for less than she knew she was capable of. Instead of embedding herself into the Analyst discourse, Caitlin reluctantly retreated to the predictability and low-risk demands of University discourse.

Mae

Mae was also a mature student who had left a well-paid public service job to go to university. Outspoken, creative and unconventional, she was not afraid of controversy or to speak out in class. Mae could embrace University discourse confidently and strategically, whilst being firmly rooted in the Analyst position. A lower than expected mark in one of her units led her to critique her performance but, nevertheless, emerge with her head held high:

"I think the [other unit's essay] I tried to make a bit more something I'd be interested in and then it backfired on me. [So] basically they were like 'You weren't critical enough.' It's like, 'Well I was, I just wasn't critical of [what you wanted]!'"
[M2, 153-165]

In contrast to the other unit's restrictive assessment, Mae's dissertation played a crucial role in encouraging her to develop her *objet a*. The sustained validation Mae received from her supervisor boosted her confidence and enabled her to master the challenges of independent research. Her unusual topic allowed her to assimilate her existing interests, skills and experiences with nascent ones. It thereby bridged past, present and future identities. She conceived an ambitious *objet a* that built on her undergraduate degree:

"I want someone to be like, 'Dr [Smith] saved my kid's life!' Like, do you know what I mean? I don't want someone to be like, hmm, 'She came up with this theory'. It's like – that's not what I want, I want to actually help people who are there in front of me, so." [M2, 324-336]

Unlike Jack, Mae's university degree was directly relevant to her imagined future. She had already received a conditional offer from a prestigious university to do a Master's degree. Excited by these prospects, Mae was making plans to move to the new city before the term was over.

Zach

While Mae was gaining momentum, Zach was going around in circles. Like Caitlin and Mae, Zach was not a conventional student, but unlike them, he was unable to make this difference work for him. Zach's accounts were full of contradictions, hyperbole, and obscure allusions. He was simultaneously rude yet strangely coy. He showed some affinity with all four discourses, yet was committed to none of them.

By the time of the second interview, Zach's already strained relationship with his dissertation supervisor had broken down due to the supervisor going on leave for an extended period. Zach interpreted this as a hurtful act of profound indifference:

"He's going to leave for a month, I thought 'Who the fuck authorised that? I'm handing in my dissertation thingy and you're just getting off for a month?' And he goes 'By that point [when I get back] I won't really be able to help you,' and I thought, 'Yeah I know you won't!'" [Z2 77-81]

Zach's initial sense of abandonment quickly turned into anger. He forcefully denied that his supervisor had ever been able to offer expertise and guidance:

"Even while he was here, he did fuck all anyway! So it's not like I'm missing anything, it's not like he was the greatest guy ever." [Z2 81-82]

Facing an analogous situation, Jack had retreated into the security of University discourse, but Zach was unable to attach himself in this way. His accounts were full of references to his childhood, and he remained remarkably vague about the future. That future was not characterised by enticing possibilities, but by anxiously anticipated closures, absences and defeat. He thought about it, darkly, in terms of *"picking your own grave"* [Z2 273]. If he had an *objet a* at all, it was *"going to go to wherever the wind takes me"* [Z2 269]. This was a deviant, normatively unacceptable goal that his high school teacher had publicly reprimanded him for. It was also an *objet a* that disavowed the essential importance of individual agency. As Mae's experience showed, the formation and pursuit of the *objet a* is relational and intersubjective. However, Zach's previous experience with his high school teacher and then again with his supervisor had made it clear to him that attachment only made him vulnerable to humiliation and abandonment. In the end he was unwilling to take that risk.

Conclusion

All our participants made different journeys through the four discourses; that is, their desire or *objet a* was mobilised in different ways. Whereas Jack's had perhaps always been located beyond the university, focused as it was on moving from the village to the city and from there into the world, Mae's sustained her academic achievements during her undergraduate degree and looked set to be effective beyond it. Caitlin's *objet a* started out as pure academic ambition, but altered course when she became pregnant. Zach constantly floated between discourses, never finding security in any of them, unable or reluctant to articulate his *objet a* at this point.

Our analysis shows that in contrast to dominant Higher Education rhetoric, the 'student journey' is perilous and not unidirectional. Such risks are necessary, in fact, because the 'journey' is about daring to make transitions that incur shifts in identity. Therefore, we argue that pedagogy should not aim to create predictably navigable spaces as such, but instead indeterminate ones that encourage students to embrace the liminality of their desire (Stenner, 2017).

Harris, Brown and Dargusch (2018) remind educators of their responsibility to design educational opportunities that encourage students to strive towards mastery and growth. Our research has shown that of the four discourses, two are privileged but limited. The other two are marginalised but expansive. There are many opportunities for students to be 'filled up' with knowledge (as in the Master's discourse), or to comply with rules and regulations (as in the University discourse). But there appear to be few opportunities across the curriculum for nurturing the *objet a*. We argue that Higher Education establishments need to abandon the metaphor of the 'student journey'. Instead they need to embrace alternative approaches that accommodate the complexities of students' psychosocial development.

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The Need to Balance Technological Innovation With Pedagogic Potential: A case study using Apple TV in classrooms

Chris Chambers

Abstract

This paper reports the findings from a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) project funded by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), which aimed to evaluate the potential of AppleTV, in terms of enhancing the pedagogy of staff and the engagement and learning of students. With an Apple TV in a classroom, it is possible to stream wirelessly any content from an Apple device, both staff and student, to the display screen.

Two tentative conclusions emerge from the project. The first, reinforcing the findings of Sintjago and McKay (2012), is that students are more receptive to technological innovation than staff, who can face a number of constraints when implementing change. The second is that for any spending on technology, there needs to be an attendant investment in staff training. This should go beyond the functional of how new hardware or software works; consideration needs to be given to the pedagogic potential of the new technology. This would seem to chime with the work of other in this field (Nguten et al, 2015).

Introduction

Beetham and Sharpe (2007) argue that pedagogy ought to come before technology. Rather than starting with what the technology can do, Biggs and Tang (2011) contend that the focus should be "*what makes good teaching, and thus encourages successful learning, whatever media are being used*". However, it could be argued that there are times, in the world of education, both in schools and university, where the reverse has been true. Evidence could be cited of the large sums of money that have been spent on the latest technology in the last decade without a corresponding investment in planning; one for example being interactive whiteboards. Currently the use of tablet technology is increasingly popular in schools and universities. The work of Nguyen et al (2015) shows how the higher education sector tends to react to the external market rather than building a sound pedagogical approach to what is perceived to be

cutting-edge technology.

The latest survey by the British Educational Suppliers Association (2015) claims that:

"71 per cent of primary and 76 per cent of secondary schools (an increase from 56 per cent in 2014 in both school types) are making use of tablets in the classroom."

The same survey cites:

"15 per cent of schools suggesting that they will have 1:1 access to tablet technology by 2016 and 44 per cent of schools having one tablet per child by 2020."

One of the catalysts for the increase in the purchase of tablet devices is the marketing of companies such as Apple, who claim that:

"something magical happens when you put Apple products in your classroom. You can create unique opportunities for personal learning at every level. Lessons become more immersive through the power of touch, motion and sound. Assignments can be sketched, scored, charted, coded or performed. And the work your students need to do becomes the work they love to do." (Apple, 2017)

Apple's claims are supported by recent research; for example, the Scottish Government (Social Research, 2015) found there were benefits to the use of digital technology including: raising children and young people's attainment; reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion; improving transitions into employment; enhancing parental engagement and improving the efficiency of the education system (Social Research, 2015).

Other studies support these contentions. Clark and Luckin (2013) claimed that tablet devices support learning which is *"personal, collaborative, augmented and enhanced"*. The benefits for tablets for supporting children with special educational needs was highlighted by Haßler et al (2015), who concluded how the *"easy customization"* of the devices supports inclusion, allowing *"learners to adapt tablet-based resources to their individual needs"*. Furthermore, the *"stigmatization commonly associated with bespoke assistive technologies is minimized, raising academic confidence"* (Haßler et al, 2015).

Although these studies were focused on school aged pupils, it could be argued that university students could benefit in similar ways. In fact, there is now a growing body of research that students are found to hold a positive attitude about using iPads in their learning (Brand et al, 2011; Kinash, Brand & Mathew, 2012; Perez, Gonzalez, Pitcher & Golding, 2011; Rossing, Miller, Cecil & Stamper, 2012).

However, the value of technology is contested. The OECD (2015) found that:

"students who use computers very frequently at school do much worse, even after accounting for social background and student demographics."

Though the same report also conceded that:

"students who use computers moderately at school tend to have somewhat better learning outcomes than students who use computers rarely."

Other concerns relate to the ubiquity of mobile phones in a learning context. The results of a study by Beland and Murphy (2015):

"suggest that low-achieving students are more likely to be distracted by the presence of mobile phones, while high achievers can focus in the classroom regardless of the mobile phone policy."

Context

At Manchester Metropolitan University, there has been a surge of innovative practice in the last few years which recent editions of this journal have highlighted (Bober, 2016; Fisher, 2016; McCabe, 2016; McCullagh, 2015; Smith, 2015). These articles have demonstrated the value of technology in terms of enhancing student engagement. This has been mirrored in the Faculty of Education, which invested in iPad technology with monies from the university's Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF). In the academic year 2013-2014, all academic staff were provided with an iPad to support their professional practice and teaching. In addition, all students on the Primary PGCE programme received an iPad Mini for use both on campus and their school placements.

The evaluation of this project highlighted that:

"the iPads were generally highly valued and used heavily to support student learning (e.g. through email, internet searching, access to documents) but there was limited evidence to their integration in teaching within the faculty."
(Whitton and Overland, 2014)

This supports the findings of Lindsey (2011) who found that academics' primary use of iPad apps was for administrative purposes.

Whitton and Overland (2014) concluded that:

"greater support and training in embedding mobile devices in pedagogic practice would be valued, so that best practice in the use of mobile learning is modelled to students."

It was suggested that one logical extension of this project could be the piloting of the installation of Apple TV technology in four rooms in the Brooks building, home to the Faculty of Education, alongside the purchase of a mobile unit which could be used in any of its classrooms. With an Apple TV in a classroom, students can connect to the display just as easily as their lecturers, even though they are on a different network; this means they can share content from their device with the whole class.

There are potential benefits of installing Apple TV in a teaching space. It allows the classroom dynamic to shift from the lecturer at the front, who controls what is displayed on the screen, to potentially anybody in the room. This means that knowledge is no longer the preserve just of the tutor, but can be co-constructed by a tutor working alongside students. Collaborative learning has a long history and can be defined as a process of constructing shared knowledge by all involved in the learning process with the aim of a convergence around a shared understanding (Roschelle, 1992).

Findings from Staff

The aim of the project was to evaluate the potential of AppleTV to enhance the pedagogy of staff and the engagement and learning of students. To gauge this, the following research methods were used with staff: observation of teaching, questionnaires and follow up interviews. Students completed a brief online questionnaire after

AppleTV had been used in one of their sessions. However, the data captured suggest that this main aim were not realised. Sintjago and McKay (2012) found differences between student and academic attitudes to technology, with the former being more positive whilst the views of the latter were more mixed. This was borne out by the findings from this project.

In terms of staff evaluation, caution needs to be exercised due to the limited amount of data. A staff questionnaire only received four responses and so it would be difficult to draw any conclusions with any reliability. However, two teaching sessions were observed and discussed afterwards with the tutors concerned and three semi-structured interviews were carried out with those colleagues who had made the most use of Apple TV. The main conclusions, emerging from staff are:

1. The difficulties of integrating Apple TV into established units:

The University decided centrally that fixed Apple TVs would be set up in the computer suites, assuming that the technology would be most used in this curriculum area. However, the interview with one of the computing tutors highlighted that this subject was constrained by the need to *"deliver content that's already been predetermined"*; in this case by the national government's emphasis on programming and coding, which is most commonly delivered in school using software which only runs on computers. Thus, the content flexibility offered by the use of Apple TV was not relevant in this context...?

Ironically, the one cohort with their own iPads were the ones who had no sessions using Apple TV in computing sessions; the limited curriculum time on a one year postgraduate course meant that there was insufficient time to use the devices.

This local issue is reflected more widely. As Nguyen et al (2015) found:

"it is not clear how best to align and integrate it (technology) within the academic programmes and workflows, and how best to manage it as a resource within a university's organisational setting."

2. Problems with the technology

Yeung and Chung (2011) raised a concern that it is premature to use tablets in a classroom, particularly where there is a lack of university policy for technology support. This was borne out by frustrations

voiced by staff. For example, the Faculty has two sets of iPads (a set of originals and a set of iPad minis) but the content of one did not match the other. Further irritation was caused by the inflexibility of the university system when it came to requesting new apps; it was seen to be an unnecessarily complex process which only occurred once a year.

Rossing *et al*, (2012) revealed that the effective use of tablets was compromised by specific technical issues, such as unstable apps and connectivity. Although the former did not prove to be a problem, the latter most certainly was. Two of the staff interviewed were computing specialists, and their sessions took place in computer suites, though ironically only one of these had a sufficiently robust wifi network for the Apple TV to be used effectively. However, those tutors who had to teach in non-specialist accommodation using the mobile Apple TV, found there were few adverse issues with connections.

In one lesson I observed, the technology worked seamlessly with most groups, though there were two groups which encountered problems. One was relatively minor; a presentation slide froze. However, one group was unable to connect their iPad to the classroom display and as a result the pace of the session slowed discernibly.

3. Fears about student distraction

The interviews revealed some mirroring of the findings of Wakefield and Smith (2012) where staff might be resistant to the use of tablet technology, as it could create a distraction, with fears that the students would prefer internet browsing and so would not give their full attention to the lecturer (Gong and Wallace, 2012) There was a concern expressed by one tutor that unless all students were involved:

"a lot of them will just switch off for the period of time that one person's work is being showcased. Also I've noticed a few on activities, but I have to keep an eye on them and make sure they're doing what they should be doing rather than what they're doing. There's a few that check their emails while they're doing it."

Despite some staff scepticism, from other tutors there was positive enthusiasm and the main benefits of Apple TV, from their perspective, were as follows:

4. Apple TV maximises the potential of iPads

One of the tutors interviewed, who only the previous year had been teaching in a primary school, spoke passionately about the positive impact of Apple TV in her school. She felt that when the school first bought tablets, they were "*laptop substitutes*". However, once an Apple TV was installed in every classroom, the use of the iPads:

"really started to fly...It completely changed how we were working in that the children became a lot more involved in their own learning and could see that they were expected to do research."

Apple TV was seen as being more flexible and convenient than the use of visualisers, which had been used previously to project the work of children in a classroom.

These views contrast starkly with those tutors. It would appear that begs the question why was the AppleTV more successful in the school rather than the university and this could be a focus for further research.

5. Benefits for staff pedagogy

For some tutors, having the AppleTV did enable a shift in pedagogy from the 'Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side' (King, 1993). This was found to be liberating as one tutor said:

"And so from your perspective, actually having the Apple TV is a benefit simply because it frees you from being at the front and being didactic."

6. Student engagement

If the tutor is less didactic, then correspondingly then more onus is placed on the students to participate in their own learning. It does not require technology to initiate this, but, for some staff, one benefit of the Apple TV was higher student engagement in group activities:

"I think it makes them focus more because they know they're going to have to talk about the work that they've created and demonstrated on screen."

Findings from Students

Extreme caution is required when interpreting the student feedback as the questionnaire was only completed by 24 students, though there were representatives from three different programmes:

undergraduate and postgraduate primary as well as postgraduate secondary.

The following tables summarise student responses to the survey of their experiences with the Apple TV:

Table 1: Statement which best describes engagement in the session	
I was more engaged in the session than usual	83.3%
My engagement was about the same	16.7%
I was less engaged in the session than usual	0%

Table 2: Statement which best describes belief about the use of <i>Apple TV</i>	
I believe it was beneficial to my learning	93.7%
I believe it had no impact on my learning	8.3%
I believe it was detrimental to my learning	0%

Discussions with third year undergraduate students in one group highlighted that 20% had already used Apple TV whilst on their school placement and they spoke enthusiastically about being able to share, and discuss, children's work. However, for others, there were no mobile device in their schools. Yet irrespective of prior experience, most wished to experiment with its use in their future professional practice (see table 3). One Postgraduate Secondary Student was hoping their pupils would be able to *"produce presentations and videos to share with the whole class"*.

Table 3: Statement which best describes use of <i>Apple TV</i> in future professional practice	
I am keen to try this in my teaching	62.5%
I would be willing to try this in my teaching	33.3%
I cannot see me using this in my teaching	4.2%

Although there was a willingness to innovate, this was not always aligned to confidence (see table 4). This may be because of limited exposure to best practice using the technology. As one undergraduate primary student (Year 3) said, *"This is the only the*

second time we have used iPads in a session during the 3-year course".

Table 4: Statement which best describes confidence using <i>Apple TV</i> in future professional practice	
I already would feel confident about using it	37.5%
I would feel more confident with more practice and/or support	50%
I would not be confident about using it:	12.5%

Others felt that what may work in a university setting would not be as successful in the more demanding environment of a secondary classroom:

"It took quite a long time for devices to connect and for different users to show their work. It was good for university to show our different ideas, but gave secondary school kids the ideal opportunity to mess or show inappropriate things."
(Postgraduate Secondary Student)

Conclusions

It would appear that in the case of this intervention, the technology was decided by the institution before a consideration of the pedagogy. Given this ran contrary to a key principle of Beetham and Sharpe (2007), it should not be surprising that the impact was compromised. However, this study may suggest that students do value the use of new technology in their learning, especially if it can benefit their own future professional practice. When staff are confident and enthused, there is some initial tentative evidence of positive impact. The staff who did use *Apple TV* were proficient in using technology; however, they represent less than 5% of the staff in the faculty. This underused potential could be realised with a greater focus on staff development and an opportunity to consider pedagogical, alongside technological, questions.

The nature of this study meant the focus was on student *engagement* and not *attainment*. I remind my own students that keeping their pupils engaged does not equate to learning, though clearly this cannot take place without that initial interest. Ultimately, the value of any teaching approach should be determined by the impact it has on learning and currently there is only limited research on this. Nguyen

et al (2015) concluded that the use of iPads was found "to enhance the learning experience but not necessarily lead to better learning outcomes", drawing upon evidence of those, such as Perez et al (2011) who could not find any evidence of the impacts of iPad use on students' final results. This contrasts with a survey of 209 students by Diemer et al, (2012) where there was a correlation between high level of engagement with iPads and a high level of learning. As gauging learning is so elusive, it can be difficult to ascertain the effect of one factor, whether positive and negative, when there are so many others which can make a contribution. Thus, exploring the impact of technology on student learning and attainment is an area where further research needs to be undertaken.

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"It was just too much": Exploring the learner's experience in Fine Art crits

Ella McCartney and Fiona Lake

Abstract

This study employs discourse analysis and showcases the voice of the learner to discover the experiences of the Fine Art critique (crit) in relation to Boud's (2001) approach to peer learning. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, the following questions are examined:

What is the experience of a crit from the learner's perspective?

What can be put in place by facilitators to improve crit participation?

The data illustrate that group size, the role of the facilitator and how various learning models are performed or resisted by the cohort can affect learner confidence.

Keywords: learner's voice, crit, group critique, participatory learning, discourse analysis

Introduction

The 'crit'¹ is a core component of the curriculum for most higher education Art, Design and Architecture courses. This paper investigates the group critique (crit) on Fine Art courses in Higher Education in the UK. It should be stressed that every crit is different and institutions have a range of approaches that can shape how the session will run. Broadly speaking, the crit will involve a group of learners and one or two facilitators coming together to discuss a selection of students' works. The student whose work is discussed is present. A crit session should provide an opportunity to receive (and give) feedback about current practice and concerns. In particular, our interpretation and analysis look at how learner participation is affected by session structure and group size. This study has provided an opportunity to interrogate how:

[p]eer learning represents a major shift in focus from what is being taught to what is being learned, and transfers greater

1 Different learning institutions also refer to the 'crit' as studio critique, convenor, group critique.

responsibility for knowledge acquisition, organization, and application from the teacher to the student. (Cooper, 2002: 54)

The voice of the learner is therefore central to this study, and the use of discourse analysis (Cameron, 2001; Gee, 2014; Tannen et al., 2015) differentiates this study from previous scholarly work on the crit. Gathering data directly from participants in crit sessions and interpretation of transcripts enabled us to gain a unique insight into the various barriers and motivators as experienced by them. The data we have gathered have helped us investigate the following questions:

- What is the experience of a crit from the learner's perspective?
- What can be put in place by teaching staff to improve participation?

Literature Review

Healy (2016) positions the crit used in design education in relation to the history of Western art education and analyses the crit structurally, which provides a useful overview. The crit session as a site for assessment and feedback is explored in the literature (Blair, 2007; Smith, 2011), however it is not the intention of this paper to focus on this aspect. Research on the crit as it is manifest in architecture and design courses has also been drawn on here as these disciplines have generated relevant literature. White (2000) and Sara & Parnell (2013) explore how the crit session heightens anxiety for students. The architecture crit model is different from the Fine Art sessions observed in this study. Day (2013) also investigates students' confidence (or lack thereof), emphasising the impact on students' experience which the crit can have. Language use in the crit is a focus of a report by Blythman *et al.* (2007). Their interviews revealed that crits can be experienced as tests of verbal skills, and anxiety can lead to learners being incapable of listening productively to feedback (2007: 4). Contributors to Rowles' anthology (2013) also comment on students' anxiety, in interviews with academics. Macdonald (2017) examines the structure of the crit, urging institutions to reframe it as a form of 'new criticality', a kind of gift that's shared (2017:196). Macdonald and Lee echo insights by hooks (1994: 39) on the value of the learner's voice and the potential for group learning to be non-hierarchical. Lee (2017) focuses on the operation of power. Seen through this lens, the institutionalized method (and language use) of the crit and hierarchical structures at play (who can speak, and how) are perpetuated and acted out in the crit. The same power structures

that exist in the art world are repeated within the dynamics of the crit (Lee, 2017:147). It is timely now to attend to the learner's voice.

Methodology

This study draws data from four crit sessions in the UK, across three different learning environments in formal Higher Education Institutions, and a non-formal alternative art course. The study had ethical approval from Manchester Metropolitan University in 2017. The observations took place between November 2017 and January 2018. Every crit session is different (Rowles: 2013), however we noticed aspects that each crit included. These were the presentation of artwork; a pre-arranged time and place for the session to take place; the attendance of the presenting learners' peers and a facilitator.

The participants, who are all anonymous, include undergraduate Fine Art students; learners from a non-formal arts course; postgraduate Fine Art students (learners), as well as lecturers, visiting lecturers and permanent members of staff, sessional lecturers and hourly paid arts practitioners (facilitators). In total, 31 participants took part in this study and we observed four crit sessions. The participants include a range of ages, ethnicities and genders. Their prior experience of crit sessions varied. Some of the participants had recently joined a course and had little previous experience, whereas some had already gained an undergraduate qualification and they had regularly participated in crit sessions. The crit sessions in this study ranged from one hour to one working day. The average length that a participant's work was discussed for was 45 minutes. Two of the sessions we observed were used by staff as a form of summative assessment. It is possible that when learners were aware that they were being assessed, their behaviour changed (Smith, 2011).

This study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data were collected through participant observation; note taking; audio recordings with detailed transcriptions of the sessions; and individual and group interviews. We gathered quantitative data with a participant questionnaire that was completed directly after each crit session (see Appendix 1, below). These questions focused on the relationship between the participant's confidence and group size; crit structure; and the amount of autonomy given in the crit.

The broad themes that have emerged from analysing our data are:

Pedagogy, structure and behaviour:

- learning models used (crit techniques and formats);
- the facilitator as expert and rule maker;
- the facilitator as lead interrogator;
- behaviours and beliefs that have been shaped by the institution such as session structure.

At the start of each session, the participants were asked if they would prefer the researcher solely to observe the session, or to observe and participate. As a result, the data have been collected using a combination of these two approaches.

Ella McCartney (EM) methodology:

Working as a fine art lecturer I frequently lead crit sessions with undergraduate art students. I also have personal experience of taking part in crit sessions as an undergraduate and postgraduate art student.

My approach in this study was to observe sessions (outside of my workplace), with a shift in focus away from the artwork being discussed and directly onto the conversation and behaviours within the group. I attempted to estrange myself from the situation in order to reflect on how the crit session operates (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007; Silverman, 2013).

Fiona Lake (FL): The analysis of discourse is concerned with the study of how language is used in the real world to communicate (Cameron, 2001; Gee, 2014; Tannen et al., 2015). This approach is applied here to the genre of the art crit, with its unspoken 'rules' of engagement. The close textual analysis of language can allow patterns and themes to emerge. Of course, meaning is also communicated when there are breakdowns in the orderliness of discussion, for instance when there is resistance to the (pre) established order, and expectations shift. The selections from recorded crit sessions included in this study follow transcription guidelines, using the orthographic method to indicate turn taking, intonation and pauses (Wray and Bloomer, 2006). The symbols can be found in Appendix 2. Interview quotes are in bold.

This collaborative approach gains insights from an artist practitioner and from discourse analysis to acknowledge the dependence on the verbal within the fine art crit.

Research Findings

The quantitative data have been collected with a written questionnaire ² and indicate the following:

- Group-sizes directly impact the learner's sense of confidence in a crit. Our data show that group size is the most significant factor in relation to what makes learners feel most at ease;
- Almost all participants prefer to work in group-sizes of 10 or fewer;
- Our data show that the majority of learners feel more confident when a tutor or facilitator is present, in comparison with a purely peer-led session. Almost all of the participants have stated that they prefer to have a tutor or facilitator present;
- When asked about which learning model they prefer, 95.45% of participants selected the model that their institution uses. The model that we observed being used the most was for the crit group to respond to the artwork before the (artist) presenter speaks;
- More learners find speaking with a tutor about their work after the crit more useful than speaking with a tutor before the crit;
- Knowing what to expect before the session starts is valued more than knowing the other participants;
- The data collected in the questionnaire and interviews suggest that confidence levels are not increased if the group members already know each other. To paraphrase, learners value getting feedback from people who are not already familiar with their work.

What Are the 'Rules' of a Crit?

The 'rules' of the crit can loosely be described as the 'crit model' or 'structure' and will determine the running order of the discussion, for example the group might respond to the work before the artist-presenter speaks. In most cases, the 'rules' have been implemented

2 The paper questionnaire included 9 questions with multiple choice answers and sections for additional comments. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather feedback directly from individual learners at the end of their crit session. Learners numbered statements in relation to each question, for example 'Please rank the following according to what would make you feel most at ease when participating in group-learning discussions'. In addition to the questionnaire, we conducted individual and group interviews. We have gathered data using a number of different approaches both quantitative and qualitative, which has generated individual comments for us to analyse but also helps us identify patterns across the entire study.

by the institution (Lee, 2017) and most crit sessions within the department will adopt a similar model. We also observed how the models imposed by the institution were reinforced verbally during the crit by the facilitator, and in some instances by the learner. Macdonald (2017) notes that it can also be the case that '[f]aculty fail to commit to words a clear rubric of the format and purpose of a crit.' (2017: 197).

There can be difficulties if there is little structure or forethought, as one participant group acknowledges:

Participant C: do you remember when we went to [place]↓
 Participant D: yeah that wa::s
 Participant C: and you and [participant] had crits(.)
 and like we didn't really feel like we got
 =anything done cos
 Participant E: =that was a mess
 Participant D: =yeah
 Participant C: what was the matter
 Participant D: we weren't sure what you wanted to(..)know
 about it so we were all just sitting and
 watching your lovely films [laughs]

This small group co-construct the short narrative (Cameron, 2001) of the crit that was a 'mess', ending nevertheless with the positive evaluation, 'lovely films'. Even a communicatively co-operative group of peers can fail to get across the 'point' of a crit when there has been no prior negotiation of a session shape.

What Is Learnt in a Crit?

Having a group of individuals present for the crit discussion has the potential, ideally, to produce various different perspectives on the artwork presented. As Macdonald (2017: 198-199), argues, however:

[m]eaning shouldn't be excavated by one person alone (i.e. teacher as authority figure) but rather take place at the time of the critique so all the requisite aspects of duration, location, and group dynamic, get included - in other words the 'site of the critique.'

There are demands put on the learner including: to present artworks to an audience; and to share their reflections about each other's work. There is an expectation that the learner can develop and perform a vocabulary in relation to their own (visual) artwork and the work of the other individuals in the group. However, not all learners

will have the skills required to meet these demands. For many, the crit session can be an anxious and stressful experience. This echoes a study conducted by Blair (2007:85) where the pressure of presenting was a recurring complaint from students:

[w]ithout exception, every student interviewed commented on how difficult they found the experience of standing in front of a large group and presenting work.

One participant in our study commented:

'It can feel quite brutal'

Vulnerability, we argue, is also demonstrated in this extract from a crit:

Presenter G: I was (.) I also wondered e::er
(3 second silence) now it's a
photo that I could print that
then could be as a (...) text but
that is not necessary that is
something ↑else or do I need
↓video (..)

Facilitator A: to me that's ↓not as ↓interesting (.)

Presenter G: ↓yeah

Stud peer B: and (.) to ↓me that's a little
too ↑obvious

Facilitator A: it's ↓not a criticism but it was
quite disjointed (. . .)

Presenter G: =dis

Facilitator A: =disjointed you know

The facilitator appears to close down the presenter here, with quite a brusque comment: 'to me that's ↓not as ↓interesting', emphasised by the repetition of 'disjointed'. The qualifying phrases, 'to ↓me' and 'it's not a ↓criticism but' announce that the Facilitator's negative evaluations are subjective. These softening phrases, however, may be read in the context of the facilitator's positioning as 'expert' in other responses during the crit. The facilitator has most of the turns and talking time throughout this session, and is the only one in the group who refers to the work of other artists from the canon. One has to feel sympathy for the presenting participant, arguably, when one of the peer

group immediately supports the facilitator with their critique of the presenter's work, albeit softened: 'that's a little too ↑obvious'.

The master and apprentice dynamic has perhaps persisted throughout the history of art school education (Swann, 1986; Flynn, 2005), although there was evidence in our data of the learner's experience being responded to with sensitivity too:

Presenter 1: I er (...) yeah I've been looking quite much quite (...) at masculinity↑ and erm but also er (4 second pause) in a way (...)it is for (indistinct) but then I looked for more erm kind of personal interest but not personal but to which can I relate myself through empathy (.) a::and er (...)and what I mean (.) not to say too much now about myself because I also don't know now (...)I wonder about ↑this er

Facilitator(F): mmm

Presenter 1: since this is the beginning and how much does it lack of (...)↑content and er to extent is it generic in the =sense

Facilitator(F): =mmmmmm

Presenter 1: of missing yeah the content or like a situation (.) or a erm reference not as reference like erm (...) a psychological dimension or something and er

The presenting participant (Presenter 1) appears to struggle to express himself here, as evidenced by the hesitations 'er' and pauses (...). This is even referred to with a meta comment by the presenting participant: 'what I mean (.) not to say too much now'. This form of hedging can be read as defensive (Cameron, 2001). It is noted that the group and facilitator allow this presenter a relatively long turn here, except for the short interruption to demonstrate understanding: 'mmm'. There is, perhaps, sensitivity to the evident difficulty of self-expression, as well as the real doubt expressed about the artwork on show. The presenter is vulnerable. As hooks (1994: 39) suggests:

[i]t is the absence of a feeling of safety that often promotes prolonged silence or a lack of student engagement.

Some students remained silent throughout the crit session. In every crit session, we observed that at least one learner was absent from their own crit. Not all of these absences were due to learners wanting to avoid the session, however from experience of working in higher education, many of the cohort feel unable to attend sessions due to the level of stress prior to the crit session. In many cases throughout this study the 'rules' of the session were not open for discussion. There is perhaps an assumption that learners are already aware of what is expected of them and in agreement about the structure or model that will be used. Two of the institutions in our study had provided their learners with a written guide or briefing about crit sessions at the beginning of the term. However, we found in interviews that from the learner's perspective the 'rules' of the crit are learnt through direct experience:

'you learn just through practice.'

'at the start we had a year meeting when they encouraged us to speak our mind and that the worst thing you can do is not say anything. You kind of get little bursts of input about opening up but it is just a learn by doing sort of thing.'

Lee (2017: 146) suggests that:

'Crits' and workshops, the staples of fine arts and writing programs, are part of larger sociopolitical arenas that regulate whose experiences are made legible and illegible.

The questions in this study are therefore framed to gain a better understanding of how confidence levels are affected in relation to group size, information provided, crit models used, and the level of autonomy given to the group. As Lee (2017:149) argues:

[w]e need to draw attention to what is left out of dominant pedagogical frames so that we can engage with power, privilege, and agency in all of its elusive and complicit forms.

Can absence or silence be re-evaluated as forms of resistance to the dominant frame? An extract from a crit session brings this question to mind:

This crit was opened and initiated by the facilitator with a markedly long turn:

Facilitator: so when you introduce this do think about is there anything (.) obviously giving us a little bit of context that you think will would be helpful for us to know about the work (.) do think about what I said (..) what am I hoping what am I trying to work out for myself with this project and so what can I put in our minds that we might then be able to help you with in terms of our feedback (..) in terms of what you're trying to figure out as well as (.) erm (.) you know what you think the work is↓ (3 seconds) or you don't need to say that much in the case of if you don't want to say =that much

Presenter 4: = ye::e

Facilitator: to let us look then that's fine (.) you know it's your time (.)

Peer learner: I'm just thinking about why is that pink↑

Presenter 4: so I prefer not to say anything before I show (..) ok↑

Facilitator: ok↓ [whispered]

Here the presenting learner (PP4) resists both the guidance outlined and emphasised by the facilitator and the short questioning commentary from a peer. This presenting learner continues to be silent for almost seven minutes under some pressure until she says:

PP4: I don't want to tell

It could be said that this resistance forms part of the performance of this crit.

We have placed an emphasis on the perspective of the learner in this study with an aim of finding practical aspects of the session that can be adapted by the facilitator and even the learners themselves. A minimum of 12.5% of the cohort did not attend their own crit session throughout this study. There are many complex and varied

reasons as to why learners avoid taking part, too many to attempt to outline here. Feeling unsure about the situation can lead to reduced participation or avoidance.

Our data from interviews support this:

'the toughest one was when we had a crit in a gallery and there were around 20 students whose work we had to discuss, and it was just too much. You skim the surface and there's about 70% of the group that don't speak, because it is such a big group and it's harder to speak out in front of more people and it's just dominant people that talk the whole time, and people drop out. It's better to have a smaller group where everyone is invested in it'.

'if it was a big crit and there was loads of people then I would rather talk to someone about it beforehand, but if it was a smaller one and it was kind of relaxed, non- judgemental setting, then it's quite nice not to have that because you don't want to talk about it again and again. You can just hear what people think about it for the first time in the crit'.

There was also evidence from interviews of important ways of tackling pre-crit nerves, as these participants suggest:

'I used to get very anxious. The way the (visiting practitioner) did it when we had a chat and seemed so warm and open and that really set the tone. When we introduced everyone, the (visiting practitioner) was very positive and very down to earth, and also said this should be a constructive thing and that set the tone for the day.'

'it was quite a small group as well which lowers anxiety.'

'timings really affect the mood of the group, usually you are really exhausted and drained by the end of it and you have been traipsing around the studios but it didn't feel like that today because it was shorter and at the start of term as well.'

To summarise, there is a struggle to verbalise; and some learners show forms of resistance such as silence and absence. What may be being learnt is how to perform a crit.

Responsibility and the Learner

In many of the sessions we observed learners were not clearly informed about what the crit would entail and what is expected of them. We observed very few sessions that included an open discussion among the group about what would take place in the session or how it could be shaped. Our data show that learners value knowing what to expect in the session more highly than knowing the others in the group. Therefore, exploring the purpose of the crit with the group, from the perspective of the learner, can increase confidence levels and a willingness to take part.

Enabling the group to take part in the formulation of the 'rules' appeared to build confidence in the group and increase participation, but this structure must be approached with caution. The following transcript perhaps demonstrates how power and authority can be implicitly debated during a crit in which the introduction was made by the presenting participant (PP3):

PP3: erm this is my space erm (..) people
wanna like (.) shall we just look
Facilitator: yeah yeah
PP3: best just to look and I can talk maybe

Facilitator: yeah
PP3: okay

It may be important that the crit took place in the presenting participant's studio. Perhaps the status of being host supplied the confidence and the legitimacy to take the initiative. It is notable that the suggestions are modal ('shall we', 'I can talk') and thus open to challenge, and a sense of inclusive group work is communicated by the use of the plural 'we', contrasting with the earlier use of the singular 'my space'. It is the facilitator and not a peer, however, who, perhaps significantly, signals assent for this way of organising the crit: 'yeah yeah'. This perhaps re-establishes the authority of the facilitator. In the event, the facilitator appears to ignore the presenting participant's suggestion for the conduct of the crit by almost immediately asking a series of questions about the work. The facilitator, arguably, also attempts to wrest power from the presenter / host with a suggestion to the whole group, framed as a question:

F: do (.) people want a closer look (..)

This is followed by guidance aimed at the presenter:

Facilitator: maybe you should ask us if there are any
↑questions that you have

PP3: = erm

Facilitator: = that we could help =with

PP3: =yeah

The presenter attempts to re-establish herself with a proposition re-orienting the group to the artwork:

PP3: yeah so maybe we could start with this
one so this one is finished

Perhaps unusually, the facilitator's response is laughter, which is difficult to interpret.

For peer learning to function there is a shared responsibility that everyone in the room must be enabled to take (Boud et al., 2001; Cooper, 2002). However, as this transcript shows, when the student-presenter takes the initiative, the facilitator can undermine the peer learning process by reinstating their own position of power.

The Facilitator as Expert and Rule Maker; Student Involvement

Our data show, nevertheless, that learners place a significant value on the role of the facilitator; the majority of learners feel more confident when a tutor or facilitator is present in comparison to a purely peer-led session.

The data we collected through interviews with participants indicate that the role of the facilitator can provide reassurance that the conversation may be kept relevant to the work, remain constructive and prevent comments from peers from getting personal:

'if someone really starts going at your work, and being mean for no reason, the tutors are there, authority figures you know? They will probably be like – hold on a bit, slow down. They structure the sessions.'

In contrast, the behaviour of the tutors also received criticism from participants who felt the facilitator could dominate:

'sometimes they (tutors) direct the conversation too much' and 'sometimes they get into it and are just working off each other.'

Most of the sessions we observed had been pre-arranged by staff as part of the core timetable. In most cases, the selection of learners in each crit session had been put together according to their tutor group. In contrast to this, one session we observed included learners who had signed up for the group crit because of a shared interest in the research area of the visiting practitioner. The group members were not familiar with each other's work prior to the session. This method of grouping has a number of advantages because it brings together learners from a range of pathways and tutor groups. Each learner was invested in the session because they felt the discussion would be specifically relevant to their own practice and interests. As a result, the group showed more motivation to participate in the session compared to groups who had been allocated a session. We observed that all of the participants contributed to the discussion throughout the five-hour crit session.

'I was really excited to speak to (the visiting practitioner). I picked her from a long list and she might be the only one I get to speak to. That's the same for everyone, they wanted to be there whereas for example in other crits you don't have a choice and it was very long – all day.'

The role of the facilitator is important to the participants in this study. However, when learners have choice their participation increases.

Behaviours and Beliefs That Have Been Shaped by the Institution

Each 'crit' session was structured differently. We observed one or a combination of the following models being used: the learner showing their work does not introduce their work before the group discusses it; or the learner showing their work listens to the group discussion but does not speak throughout the session; alternatively, the learner showing work speaks after the group has discussed their work.

When asked which crit model they preferred, 95.45% of learners from a Higher Education Institution³ selected the model that their institution uses. We draw from this that learners are unlikely to adapt the session in a direction they think would suit their work or generate the feedback they need at a specific point in their learning. The group opt for the model they are familiar with. Many of the participants in our study had only experienced one model and only a small percentage had experience of more than two different crit models. Not having a

³ This statistic does not include participants from the peer led group because we did not observe a defined institutional model that could be used as a comparison.

repertoire of different approaches to select from may therefore impact their willingness to adapt the structure of the session.

Informal Peer Learning

Peer learning does not only take place in formal learning sessions (Boud, 2001:1). For example, in the majority of institutions where our observations took place, the learners were required to work together to install their artworks alongside each other in preparation for the crit. This activity is an example of peer learning that did not usually involve staff but provided an opportunity for participants to share ideas and gain informal feedback from each other. One participant commented:

'I speak about it (the crit) with my own circle of friends, there is never any formal after-session.'

The formality of showing and discussing their work as a group encouraged students to conduct their own informal and impromptu peer learning sessions before and after the crit session. Another comment from a participant suggests that discussing the experience of the crit afterwards could be useful:

'I want to know more about what it was about and what it actually means, (after the session).'

This suggests that the formalized conversation that takes place within the parameters of the crit need to be de-coded through a different use of language and context. The informal activities that stem from the crit session are an important aspect of peer learning that was observed but will not be extended further in this paper. It remains a potentially fruitful site for further discursive research.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The two main questions that this study aimed to answer were 'what makes a learner most likely to participate in the crit discussion' and 'how can the teaching staff improve a crit session'.

We believe it is important to continuously explore and reflect on our behaviours within learning contexts (both learners and facilitators) in order to better understand the processes and activities that take place, to question our role ⁴ within this and find a range of practical solutions that some groups may find beneficial. These principles

4 EM: This study enabled me to reflect on the behaviours that I have developed and the impact of the institutions where I have developed them.

inform our approach to the data we collected in this study and include aspects of ethnomethodology. Our approach has been to prioritise the voice of the learner in an attempt to understand the experience of those taking part in the sessions. We also acknowledge that what a learner prefers or finds less challenging may not be the kind of learning that is transformative.

Findings from this study can be applied beyond the discipline of Art and Design. Confronting hidden power dynamics within any learning context, as performed through language for example, has the potential to engage learners. Naturalised behaviours (also manifested within the institution) can be internalised and performed by both facilitator and learner, therefore it is the responsibility of the group to try to recognise, acknowledge and interrogate this. We argue that this may enable the learner to take more ownership of the learning process. For example, at the start of a crit session the group members may benefit from discussing their assumed roles and responsibilities. Time to reflect on the 'unsaid' rules and expectations may also act as a motivator to draw closer to a community model of learning (Macdonald, 2017).

In summary, crit sessions place a greater responsibility on learners than purely tutor led sessions. There is an expectation for learners to generate comments and feedback *in situ* that will contribute to each other's learning. Peer learning therefore places pressure on the learner. This study illuminates the crucial importance of language use in the crit as a potential site for a peer learning community. The negotiation of power is performed through the use of language and brings awareness of the struggle to verbalise in the crit context.

This study identifies two practical aspects that can be implemented that can increase confidence in the learner:

Firstly, the data clearly indicate that confidence is increased when group sizes are restricted to 10 learners or fewer and will likely lead to more participation by all members of the group. Secondly, provide the group with an introduction about what to expect in the session and what is expected of them.

The crit format inevitably suits some learners more than others. The majority of the groups opt to use the 'model' most frequently used by their institution. This provides a consistent framework that may help learners know what is expected of them. However, this risks pacifying learners and disengaging them from the process. Providing

learners with a wider set of approaches that can be utilised in the sessions may enable a greater sense of autonomy and increase motivation. Furthermore, involving learners in the process of defining 'the rules' for the session may make the experience more relevant. Most importantly, learners need to be supported throughout the (ongoing) process of exchanging knowledge.

- Learners may feel more prepared when session structure remains fairly consistent;
- Facilitators can engage the group with an introduction to the session, incorporating learners' intentions and expectations of the crit;
- Learners benefit from having a set time to reflect on the discussion after the session. A session after the crit can help 'decode' what was said and address aspects of the discussion that may have been misinterpreted. This could be peer led or facilitated;
- Crit sessions should be nuanced to benefit individual groups and their current objectives at different stages of their learning, for example establishing structures of conversation in year 1 or focusing on presentation and installation in year 3;
- Opting in to a crit session generates a different motivation and focus in the discussion. Additional 'sign up' crit sessions offered to learners could be specific to areas of research. Learners may also find common areas of interest by attending these sessions that can lead to further informal peer learning.

Future Development of the Research

- Broaden the research to include a wider pool of participants, taking into consideration factors such as gender, class and ethnicity which could be explored more in relation to the power dynamics;
- Further investigate peer learning internationally.

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Appendix 1

Data collected from individual questionnaire results:

What makes you feel most at ease when participating in group learning discussions?

(Most important factor, first preference)

Working in groups with less than 15 people: 34%

Speaking about my work individually with a tutor or a person outside of the group **after** the session: 29%

Speaking about my work individually with a tutor or a person outside of the group **before** the session: 21 %

The discussion group only includes students or peers (no tutors or staff are present): 17%

What makes you feel most confident when presenting work in a group discussion?

A tutor or someone outside of the group being present: 23%

The group discussing my work before I speak: 23%

Knowing what to expect before session starts: 22%

Knowing the other students: 17%

Introduce the work before the discussion: 15%

Appendix 2 Transcription symbols

Adapted from Wray & Bloomer (2006):

Turn taking is indicated by the (anonymised) initial of the speaker, to the left of the speech

↓ falling tone

↑ rising tone

(...) short pause

(3 seconds) a longer, timed pause

:: a word has been stretched out

= overlapping turns of speech

Barriers to Student Engagement in HE: revisiting concepts of alienation

Caroline S Jones

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to revisit concepts of student alienation in Higher Education (HE), as originally presented by Mann (2001). The paper considers Mann's (2001) theoretical ideas in the current HE climate through a brief review of existing and current HE literature, policy, legislation and practice. This review leads to the development and discussion of an additional theoretical concept of student alienation, which posits that the student's psychosocial self- concepts lead to mistrust or trust. The paper concludes that in the current HE sector barriers to student engagement could be reduced and success rates increased, if institutions were to consider developing practice aligned to theories of alienation.

Introduction

This paper explores the definition and concept of alienation as a potential barrier to student engagement in a bid to offer deeper understanding of its impact within current HE practice. The paper also puts forward an additional psychosocial theory to expand the concept of student alienation within HE.

Alienation in general terms is defined as, "*the state or experience of being isolated from a group or an activity to which one should belong or in which one should be involved*" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). Mann (2001, p7) discusses surface, strategic and deep approaches to learning, and highlights that within these learning processes students could be experiencing varying degrees of alienation between, "*...the subject and process of study itself*". She further explains that students could be undertaking both a passive and an active role to fulfil their desires for success, with a reliance on others that can affect the process of successful learning and lead to feelings of alienation. This suggests that students' "*... alienated or engaged experiences of learning..*". (ibid, p8) impact on their success; this is influenced by their interest in the subject of study, how embedded they are in the learning experience and by the relationships encountered as part of their HE journey.

Current Theories of Alienation

According to Crosling et al, (2008) student engagement is connected to the success and the retention of HE students. This indicates that both academic and social elements can lend themselves to students experiencing feelings of alienation. Key factors are communication and relationships with both staff and peers, which can be fostered and encouraged through the teaching and learning activities that take place both in and out of the classroom. Crosling et al (2008, p3) recognise that there can be a "*...mismatch between [students'] aspirations and interests and those offered by their course*". In these situations, having or creating a "*...climate that involves students and provides feedback on their study efforts means that they are more likely to study successfully..*". (ibid). This suggests that students who continue to engage, regardless of any mismatch between their aspirations and interests, do so as a result of positive relationships with teaching staff and peers. These ideas align and underpin Mann's (2001) theories of alienation; in particular, her perspectives on positioning, the student as the outsider, recognising students' existing knowledge and students being disciplined into docility by the assessment practice. Crosling et al (2008) highlight the importance of diversity within the HE environment, as each student brings with them differing perspectives, ideas and viewpoints on matters which contribute to and enrich the HE experience. By contributing, students are becoming embedded within the experience leading to stronger engagement and minimisation of alienation. Again, this could indicate some correlation with Mann's (2001) theory of the students' creativity being ensconced within the teaching and learning process, to again reduce the impact of alienation as a barrier to student engagement.

Clouder et al (2012, p33) explain that:

"Engagement is both a pre-requisite for learning to occur and a binding agent that allows learning to keep occurring. Assessment can, therefore, focus students' minds, but does not necessarily engender student engagement."

In this they agree with Mann (2001, cited in Clouder et al, 2012, p33) who suggests; that: "*...when students perceive assignments as outputs to be produced, they are more likely to be alienated than engaged*". This would indicate that student barriers to access and engagement in the assessment process can also lead to feelings of alienation.

Grace and Gravestock, (2009, p35) discuss students' prior learning and knowledge from an inclusion and diversity point of view, and highlight that:

"It has sometimes been the practice in UK HE to suggest to students that they forget whatever they have previously learnt of a subject because university approaches are very different to [sic] school ones."

They go on to explore the possibility of this approach being "unhelpful", suggesting that perhaps it would be more appropriate to attempt to use prior knowledge more constructively within the HE environment. They recommend that student transitions could be improved by building on this background knowledge to support the students, and embed inclusive practice in the HE environment (Grace and Gravestock, 2009). This idea sits well with Mann's (2001) suggestion relating to the student as the outsider where lack of consideration of prior student knowledge (or transitions) can produce feelings of alienation, which in turn can create barriers for student engagement. This could indicate the importance of the process of institutional initial assessments and the involvement of course leaders to identify student needs right from the outset of the students' HE journey.

A brief exploration of the seven alienation theories discussed by Mann (2001) is given below, drawing on an analysis of existing alienation literature. The introduction of an additional alienation theory (Theory 8 - Mistrust versus Trust) is subsequently presented for further consideration.

Theory 1 – The Postmodern Condition: The sociocultural context

This idea addresses students' motivation for entering into HE. It explores the concept that some students drift into HE as a pathway which is a socially constructed societal expectation, leading to alienation (Mann, 2001). This includes, for example, those who enter HE because of a family expectation rather than any sense of true vocation at that particular point in their lives. This issue is exacerbated by Government policy to promote widening participation (HEFCE, 2016) and yet provision to support students to succeed once they are accepted into HE is limited. This leads to the possibility of what Mann (2001) calls postmodern alienation.

If institutions had a better understanding of this concept they might respond more effectively to students' underlying motivation, with the prospect of reducing this form of alienation. However, the idea of postmodernism which "...signals the emergence of a period of multiple changes in society, involving information advances, consumerism,..". (Bloland, 2005, p123) needs to be taken into account here, especially with the changing landscape of HE. This now encompasses increased vocational and apprenticeship degree pathways to encourage student admissions (Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2016). The Government and political demand for the development of vocational degree programmes could offer new insights into the societal idea of the sociocultural context in relation to alienation.

Theory 2 – The Student Positioned as Subject/Object: The primary discourse

This theory posits that the student's identity is formed by the subject the student studies, and by the nature of the student's relationship to lecturers. This can create constraints based on discourse; that is, the student enters HE positioned as student, learner, competitor, debtor, consumer, whereas more powerful others (lecturers, more experienced students) have greater facility, knowledge and understanding of the discursive practices. As a result, first year students are more estranged from language, culture and practices than second year students who have gained this knowledge and experience.

Clouder et al (2012, p47) identify the theoretical concept of positioning within the assessment process:

"...assessment can act as a critical point to challenge the dissonance or discomfort in relation to power issues. And yet the difficulty for students is that they are expected to critically challenge the same context in which they are assessed. Assessment in this metaphor can act to disempower students and stifle the very nature that HE strives to create."

Therefore, it could be suggested that whilst the HE experience is intended to create critical thinkers, the very systems in place to evidence these abilities actually restrict the development and growth of learners.

Theory 3 – The Student as the Outsider: Knowledge, power and insight

This theoretical concept is considered by Mann (2001) to apply most strongly to non-traditional students such as those on low income, working class students, or those progressing from vocational backgrounds who have gained occupational experience from working within the field. This concept could also include mature students or those returning to study in later life. Students in these categories may experience a sense of being an outsider, or not having a sense of ownership of the HE system because they have been separated from academia up until this point. It should be acknowledged that this notion of alienation might also apply to the traditional student. However, it is perhaps considered more strongly by those who have not experienced the academic learning environment in the more traditional sense.

From this theoretical perspective, the student is entering a new land, in which they feel estranged in terms of their own culture, language and desires. The demands of learning the language of academic discourse and processes may require the student to repress their existing language, culture and desires, all of which they may need for engaging in learning (Mann, 2001). In respect of alienation, this suggests that the academic discourse, culture and language of the institution can contribute to the creation of potential barriers to engagement for HE students, with those most affected being the non-traditional students (Crosling et al, 2008).

Theory 4 – Bereft of the Capacity for Creativity: The teaching and learning process

If the student is reliant on more powerful others (lecturers, or more experienced students) and more powerful events (wider institutional and programme related, such as assessment types and submission deadlines) then being situated in a learning environment where individual student creativity is not authenticated by relationships and contexts, leads to a loss of a sense of self and desire, leading to alienation. This means that students' compliance within the teaching and learning environment can stifle their ability to be creative (Mann, 2001). However, it could be argued that individual student creativity within the teaching and learning process can take place, although this may be difficult to manage in terms of the current bureaucratic assessment processes. Institutions would need to be able to offer greater flexibility and choice for students which would allow for individual creativity and inclusivity. Furthermore, in HE for example, *"...the student's creativity can only be too easily stolen by a lecturer*

who knows too much" (Mann, 2001, p13). This suggests that more powerful others can create a climate of alienation due to the very nature of their knowledge and positioning. Similarly, a lecturer who knows too little can also impinge on the students' capacity for creativity, suggesting that the capabilities of the lecturers or more powerful others is another point for careful consideration. Again, this links to the earlier discussion of how student compliancy resulting from the relationships or the expectations of more powerful others and the HE environment can quash student creativity. Further, suggesting that the competency, skills and expertise of the teaching staff and bureaucratic institutional environment can lead to the suffocation of students' creativity.

Clouder et al (2012, p46) reinforce this argument identifying the challenge posed by, "*Assessment [which is] highly structured with no scope or credit for innovative or creative approaches*". Limiting students' capacity to be creative within the assessment process could theoretically lead to feelings of alienation. Therefore, it could be construed that the assessment process itself could contribute to student alienation by restricting opportunities for student creativity.

Theory 5 – Exiled from the Self: Loss of the ownership of the learning process

Here Mann (2001) examines the implications of emphasising outcome rather than process, such as summative assessment outcomes rather than the formative learning processes. This theory posits the risk of students' alienation from the product of their work, from the process of production of that work, from one's self, and from others. This leads to issues of distribution of power and ownership and the need to recognise the impact this can have on students as part of the educational process.

For example, in meeting the requirements set by the tutor and the institution, the essay (or other output) no longer belongs to the student; rather the student belongs to the essay, because it is a part of a system of exchange. To explain further, the ownership of the essay is that of the student until it is submitted, after which the essay belongs to the institution which exchanges it for a mark or other result, based on the essay's worth as judged in a process from which the student is detached (Mann 2001). Alienation results, as the student becomes embedded within that exchange process at the summative assessment point, rather than being a part of the formative process that led to it. The formative assessment process is lost within these institutional practices. However, it can be recognised

that within the assessment process, embedding practice and reflective practice tasks to meet learning outcomes could minimise this experience of alienation. Including practice and reflective practice tasks within the assessment processes could also lead to reducing the barriers to engagement that Mann (2001) identifies within this concept. However, implementing this integration across disciplines and faculties may be complex.

Theory 6 – Disciplined into Docility: Assessment practices

This theoretical concept positions students within a hierarchy based on judgements made by those in power, and is discussed by Mann (2001, p14) as *"the power of confession"*. This concept is manifested in a hierarchy of success and expertise, which then positions the student in terms of their judged worth. This hierarchy could be identified as being the institution, the assessment process itself and the teaching and learning requirements fronted by the more powerful teaching staff locating students at a lower level. This is where students' judged worth is then ordered into an expected 'norm' (ibid). This approach can, when linked to low marks or failure, contribute to significant feelings of alienation, thus creating barriers to student engagement. This concept could also lead to feelings of an inability to complete the course or insecurities in relation to competence and self-worth for the student. This is connected to some of the ideas discussed earlier – such as theory 4: 'bereft of the capacity for creativity' – as the processes are set within an institutional bureaucratic hierarchy. This idea may then lead students to the 'leave me alone' strategy, explored in theory 7 below. The point here is to highlight a domino and possible cumulative effect in relation to student alienation, whereby the impact of several of these theoretical ideas can become interconnected or interrelated, leading to increased pressure.

Theory 7 – Leave Me Alone: Alienation as a strategy for self-preservation

The notion of 'leave me alone' is about a student's sense of self arising from constant interplay between reflected images of 'self' and images of how others view them (Mann, 2001). Learning has the potential to distress or confuse, when students have to take steps into the unknown. In many ways, it is much safer not to engage at all but to stay in the ordered world in which learning is suppressed by the student. In this situation students may aim to conserve themselves by approaching the unknown using a tactical, superficial approach to teaching and learning, rather than entering into a deep or strategic learning mode (Marton and Säljö, 1976). For example, a

surface approach might be adopted by a student evidencing some level of engagement within the teaching and learning environment; when work is submitted or when the student appears to be taking an active role within the classroom. However, what transpires is a direct discourse between the formative and summative picture and students who appear to be coping in this new land, are exposed by the assessment process, they then enter into a 'leave me alone' self- preservation status. From this perspective, surface approaches to student learning could be seen to be a means of escape from the discord between the reality of the requirements of study, and the individual's attempts to escape them. It could be that the student is attempting to maintain their own individual identity besides that of being a student; the struggle to reconcile or come to terms with changes in and between identities.

Barriers to engagement aligned to this idea of 'leave me alone' alienation could take the form of withdrawal from teaching and learning, from the institutional culture, from the assessment process, and from taking part, as a way for students to preserve or protect their sense of self.

Proposed Theory 8 – Mistrust versus Trust: Psychosocial concept

This view is based on the psychosocial idea of self-concept (Hayes and Orrell, 1993) which can be associated with the idea of student alienation. This idea also sits closely with the previous discussion of the 'leave me alone' student alienation theoretical perspective. The notion of psychosocial theory is clarified by Howe (cited in Walker and Crawford, 2010, p28), as being *"created by the interplay between the individual's psychological condition and the social environment"*. Psychosocialists investigate human behaviour linked to the social environment and Howe explains: *"the term psychosocial describes an approach that considers both the individual psychology and the social context of people's lives on their individual development"* (ibid). According to Schaffer (2000) self-concept affects individuals based on their experiences, especially relating to accomplishment and failure coupled with feelings of capability or ineffectiveness.

The idea of self-concept is also linked to self-esteem which refers to an individual's feelings of his or her own worthiness and competence. Schaffer (2000, p164) explains it as:

"...the evaluative aspect of the self-system [which] is related to the image of an ideal self that we all have: where there is

little discrepancy between the ideal and the perceived real self the individual will experience high self-esteem; where the discrepancy is great, on the other hand, low self-esteem is the result."

Schaffer (2000) considers that individuals' self-concept can range from low to high with the ability to move up or down this continuum in response to the individual's changing conducts and evaluation of the magnitude of their own failed experiences resulting from self-set standards. Within a HE environment students' self-esteem depends considerably on the individual self-concept of a student and how they are able to regulate their self-concept continuum in response to their HE experiences. The indication of a changeable continuum leads to an assumption that there is scope for a student's self-esteem to be increased or decreased, depending on their own view of themselves, but also in response to evaluation by others. This leads to a link between the psychosocial idea of self-concept and the notion of mistrust (low) versus trust (high).

Erikson (1995, cited in Walker and Crawford, 2010, p28) - albeit in relation to early childhood - considered that 'trust versus mistrust' is, *"...based on the consistency of the caregiver"*; the caregiver in the HE context is the institution or its staff. He added that, *"I trust is developed successfully then this develops confidence and security in the world around them"*; again, in the HE context this aligns to the student (ibid). He proposed that once trust is established the individuals concerned are able to feel secure, even when feeling under threat, suggesting a high individual self-concept status. However, if this first stage of Erikson's 'trust versus mistrust' concept is not successfully established then this can result in an inability to trust and creates fear about what is seen as the inconsistent world. According to Walker and Crawford (2010, p28), *"this can result in anxiety, increased insecurities and an over feeling of mistrust in the world around them"*, and is classed as a crisis stage. The successful progression through this first stage of trust development within the HE context could lead students to positive outcomes including healthy and ongoing development. If this initial stage of development on the trust versus mistrust continuum is not successfully achieved, within the HE context, it may be that students' feelings of alienation based on their own individual self-esteem and self-concept could restrict their ability to move forward successfully. The result may be the creation of new barriers to student engagement. Awareness of the influences of this concept could enable institutions to consider practical strategies to address the impact of the trust versus mistrust

concept on the relationship between the internal world of the student and the social environment in which they are positioned as part of their degree programme.

Erikson's idea (1995, cited in Walker and Crawford, 2010, p28) of trust versus mistrust as a first stage of child development has been adapted here, in the context of HE students, and aligned with alienation theory. Whereas Erikson's idea was firmly set as a stage of development, it is proposed here as an additional eighth alienation theory, alongside Mann's (2001) seven theoretical perspectives.

This eighth theory of psychosocial alienation is based on the assumption that students whose self-concept is based on lower self-esteem appear more mistrustful of the HE experience and, therefore, suffer feelings of alienation which lead to barriers to engagement. Here mistrust versus trust is presented as a continuum that can change from low to high levels of trust according to the state of the student's self-concept. However, movement from one point to another either up or down this scale (for example, from a position of mistrust to one of trust) could be dependent on the influences of the institution and aspects of the HE experience.

According to Tarquin and Cook-Cottone (2008) the impact of relationships with teaching staff or more powerful others links to the self-concept status of the student, and this could be located along a mistrust versus trust continuum. For example, James (2000, cited in Carless 2006) discusses the idea of mistrust in relation to the feedback process, and in particular when students are dissatisfied with their results or feedback and how this can have a "*...potentially negative impact on students' self-perception and confidence*". This suggests that the impact of this process and how it is interpreted by the student can influence the student's feelings of alienation.

For example, students' gradation of the mistrust versus trust continuum could be based on teaching staff competency, assessment processes and institutional procedures. Furthermore, Tarquin and Cook-Cottone (2008, p16) identify a "*...correlation between self-concept and student alienation*". This further evidences the psychosocial impact of mistrust versus trust within an HE environment, which can lead to possible barriers to student engagement.

To reinforce this premise, Carless (2013, cited in Ashwin 2015, p103) defines trust as *"one's willingness to be vulnerable based on an investment of faith that the other is open, reliable, honest, benevolent and competent"*, acknowledging a system of exchange based on equality of positioning. This means that for successful exchange all parties who are a part of this system need to be willing to be *"honest, reliable, benevolent and competent"* (ibid). However, it needs to be acknowledged that students and teaching staff will determine their own personal levels of trust based on their experiences, their own self-concept status and their own level of investment within this exchange.

Ashwin, (2015, p104) suggests that:

"Trust appears to be one of the most crucial emotions that we need to develop as teachers, if we wish to extend agency and autonomy to our students and to see them as essential components in the teaching and learning process."

Although it has earlier been acknowledged that trust is part of a two- way exchange, students' feelings of trust could be considered by institutions in a bid to decrease barriers to student engagement based on this theory of alienation. There is clear scope to explore this theoretical perspective in more detail in the future and to strengthen the concept further. This paper proposes that development of understanding to seek strategies to minimise 'mistrust' and establish 'trust' as a way to decrease alienation and increase student engagement, retention and success should be further investigated.

Further Consideration

The alienation theories discussed above lead to the consideration that individual needs of students' personal, emotional and academic wellbeing must be taken into account by institutions if barriers to engagement are to be reduced. These approaches to HE can be aligned to a social pedagogical approach to HE. According to Smith (cited in Dawes, 2013, p477):

"A social pedagogical approach is concerned with the integration of the individual in society and with the promotion of social functioning, inclusion, participation, identity and competence as members of society with shared responsibilities to that society."

Smith goes on to explain that social pedagogy is, "...evident in a number of government-sponsored pilot projects...and in new degree programmes" (ibid). Whilst social pedagogy does not currently have a clear definition it has been interpreted as the, "...head, heart and hands" (Smith cited in Dawes, 2013, p477) of an individual, indicating that the student requires active participation in the learning process aligning with all three of these components. This proposes that if a social pedagogical conceptual framework is applied to student learning by universities then this could aid the reduction of student alienation based on the theories discussed earlier and could result in improved student outcomes.

This analysis of student barriers to engagement and alienation theory further leads to a suggestion of discourse between the institution's desire for the student to succeed and the student's need to feel a part of the HE experience. Mann (2001) presents this argument as student engagement being motivated by institutional outcomes rather than from the stance of a student's feelings of alienation. It could be identified that institutional needs are driving alienation, which in turn could adversely affect the student's learning experience by creating barriers to engagement. The theoretical perspectives discussed in this paper that appear to affect students most predominantly are the power positioning of the institution and of teacher roles or hierarchy, rather than the role of the student themselves. There are, therefore, several ways in which institutions and teachers can consider changing their practice to reduce barriers to student engagement by aiming to minimise student alienation.

Yorke and Longden, (2004, p124) discuss Tinto's (1993) model which explains that social and academic engagement are crucial factors in relation to student retention or success. They explain how some HE institutions are thinking creatively of ways to develop more interactive teaching and learning opportunities, to foster both academic and social engagement. This idea again aligns with Mann's (2001) theoretical perspectives, suggesting that should the 'social and academic' elements not be embedded deeply enough, then this will adversely affect students' feelings of alienation, and ultimately lead to an increase in barriers to student engagement.

The discussion of alienation raises the question of whether such alienation is inevitable or changeable, and how academic staff and institutions could influence the factors which cause it, in an effort to reduce barriers to student engagement. It could be that lecturers can empathise better with students and open up consultations about the

conditions of alienation discussed above. Attempts could be made as suggested by Mann (2001) to dissolve the estrangement experienced through the separation of 'them and us' (students and lecturers), to offer ways of lowering barriers and building better relationships between student and lecturer. The discourses here relate to the wide variety of teaching styles, subject discipline areas and institutional hierarchical systems that can add constraints to the success of embedding effective practice.

Institutions and policy do impose requirements on teaching and learning practices that could be viewed as an attempt to reduce student alienation. For example, involving students within the assessment process, offering a range of assessment types, organising freshers' weeks and student societies to help orientate new students into the new HE landscape. Institutions involve students in student committees and programme boards, as opportunities to hear the student voice. This provides some evidence of determination to embed student social and cultural involvement within the HE experience in an effort to reduce alienation. However, there is still some way to go if a stronger impact is to be made to reduce barriers to student engagement based on alienation theory and considering the current diverse student market.

Conclusion

This paper has revisited concepts of HE student alienation by reviewing alienation theory in the context of the current HE climate and has proposed an additional alienation theory (theory 8 - Mistrust versus Trust: Psychosocial Concept). The paper proposes that this additional alienation theory could be used to further inform ways of working to meet the diverse needs of the growing HE student population by reducing barriers in student engagement. There is much to be learned from the concept of alienation which could have a profound effect on educational practices to aid student success within HE. By taking multidimensional and flexible approaches to alienation theory, HE institutions could begin to further embrace holistic and social pedagogical approaches to student engagement. Institutional understanding of alienation theories in practice could also result in higher student satisfaction and success rates and greater diversity of student intake than hitherto. In times of institutional need to provide evidence and data to support student satisfaction and success rates aligned to funding (TEF, 2016), it would seem sensible to pay heed to developing practices that aim to reduce student barriers to engagement through deeper consideration of alienation theory within the current HE climate.

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'Think Aloud' Teaching

Christopher Jones

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the first year of a research project investigating the concept of think aloud teaching. Most research into think aloud teaching so far has focussed on language learning, but this project explores the viability of extending this style of teaching into a broader range of disciplines. In brief, think aloud teaching is where the tutor completes a task live in front of students, who will be privy to the thoughts and decisions of the tutor as they are spoken aloud. The major benefits are expected to be for students new to Higher Education. They will participate in a style of teaching and learning in which the barriers between tutor and students are broken down by creating an environment in which tutor and student alike will complete identical tasks. The tutor is seen as a knowledgeable guide who has explored certain terrain before - but not better than - the students, and is now leading them on a joint journey. Some conclusions based on the primary and secondary research are drawn, and – most importantly – recommendations for future research are included. In brief, there is a strong case to be made for considering the use of think aloud teaching in a wider range of disciplines, but more feedback from students is required.

Introduction

Several years ago I taught classes in aural summary writing. My final year students of German were assessed in their ability to comprehend 8 to 10 minutes of spoken German (around 1,300 – 1,500 words) and to condense what they had heard into a written summary in English of around 250 – 300 words. In order to provide guidance and examples, I ran several classes every year as think aloud sessions. This would involve my assuming the role of a student, in which I would produce my own summary live based on a previous year's examination text. Since we had a language laboratory equipped with headphones, I was able to switch between letting the students hear the spoken text in small sections and my own think aloud protocol. I would elaborate on the comprehension problems I was facing, and discuss the decisions I was taking. I would review what to include and exclude from my summary. Additionally, I passed on general tips and any strategies I had developed over the years. (There is a sample transcript in Appendix 1 below). This spoken input was supplemented with my handwritten

notes that the students could all see via a document camera. After the class I would then write up a finished version for posting on our VLE (Moodle).

Since the students responded well to these classes, I started to compile a list of the beneficial features – as I saw them – of this type of class. These benefits included the following:

- Students would hear the decisions that I took and understand the reasons that I had for making them.
- Students would see the links between those decisions and the finished product (in this case, a written summary).
- I could devote some of my think aloud comments to highlighting the relationship between what I was doing and our marking criteria. This quickly established links between the task that I was undertaking, the assessment that the students would be set, and the ways in which their performance would then be judged.
- There was a beneficial impact on working as a group. Since students could see me performing exactly the same tasks that I was expecting of them, there was a greater sense of all of us working together as practitioners rather than seeing me as a taskmaster.
- Our discussions as a group became less vague. It was no longer a question of students asking what I would do *if* a text contained a certain feature. Instead, they could ask about that feature in an actual text, and ask me about my actual approach to tackling it.

Encouraged by these positive experiences, I decided to explore the field of think aloud teaching further with a view to seeing whether it could be expanded into other areas.

Review of Previous Work in the Area of Think Aloud Teaching

Previous research into the uses of think aloud protocols in the classroom is divided into two main areas. On the one hand, students can be encouraged to voice their own thoughts whilst completing various activities, and this process will afford their tutor an insight into their approaches to a particular task as well as any difficulties they are facing. For example, Abas and Aziz (2016) undertook a study of EFL students:

"In this study, the think aloud protocol has been found to be a good data collection technique to obtain verbalized reactions towards the task at hand, that is, writing a composition. The writing process was described by the participants while writing the composition assigned." (176)

At the end of this study, the researchers had gained a much fuller understanding of how their students were approaching their tasks, and could react accordingly. For them, the use of think aloud protocols in the classroom functions as a highly effective diagnostic tool, allowing them a detailed and otherwise unobtainable insight into the step-by-step process by which a student completes a piece of academic writing in a foreign language. (See also Cowan, 2017 for a good overview of using think aloud techniques as a diagnostic tool.)

On the other hand, there are those teachers (such as myself) who focus on the benefits of the tutor – rather than the student – producing a think aloud protocol during their teaching. Within this category, it has been interesting to note that most of the research has taken place in two areas, namely the teaching of reading, and the teaching of translation. I would argue that the bulk of this research has been very positive, and has revealed several beneficial outcomes that I would like to group together under the following categories: student-tutor relationship; level of engagement; lasting impact.

Student-tutor relationship

The very nature of a think aloud teaching session creates a framework in which the tutor works on the same (or a very similar) task to the students; in my own case delivering a think aloud protocol whilst producing a written summary of a particular text. Davey (1983) describes this process as students seeing *"a mind responding to a specific passage"* (45). This has a direct influence on the ways in which students regard their tutor for several reasons. Firstly, students will be reminded that their tutor is not just someone who can teach but also someone who can do. Secondly, there is a strong element of democratisation since the tutor positions himself or herself in the role of the student. This problem of the expert status of a tutor has been well explored by Mouskatim (2007), who reveals that his students view him *"as an 'authority', a perception that I feel gets in the way of their meaningful involvement in critical dialogue"* (212). For Mouskatim, it therefore becomes vital to develop *"a democratic relationship between me and my students"* (217). I would like to

argue that this sense of equality is strengthened through a think aloud teaching session since this will deliberately dwell on any problems or obstacles, rather than ignoring them, meaning that students are reassured when even an expert practitioner admits to encountering barriers to progression on a particular task. Thirdly, a think aloud teaching session can easily involve students as co-producers of work. Li (2011) investigated the use of think aloud teaching in translation classes, demonstrating how jointly produced translations (from English into Chinese) generated numerous benefits for a group of learners:

"This 'joint-translating' mode will not only help to develop students' critical thinking and stimulate the bi-directional exchange, but also enhance the student-teacher relationship."
(119)

Not only does this contribute to the feeling of democracy highlighted above, it can also act as an induction into a peer group situation where students' own suggestions and solutions will be valued explicitly through their incorporation into the finished product, whether that be a summary, a critical commentary, or other piece of work.

Level of engagement

Research into think aloud teaching has made it clear that students can feel more motivated during these types of sessions. Block and Israel (2004), for example, carried out research into the teaching of reading and discovered that not only do students achieve greater understanding through the use of think aloud teaching, they also obtain more pleasure (167). Ortlieb and Norris (2012) also worked on the use of think aloud sessions to teach reading, and noted that *"students appeared engaged more than usual during the think aloud sessions"* (6). Finally, Li's previously discussed study of the use of think aloud teaching in translation classes identifies it as a route to creating interactive teaching (2011: 113). It is my view that any style of teaching that can result in greater pleasure for students, higher levels of engagement, as well as interactivity, deserves to be employed more broadly.

Lasting impact

The final benefit that has been highlighted by previous research is that learners are better able to retain what they have learnt during exposure to think aloud teaching. Ortlieb and Norris suggest that the reason for this is that, instead of merely learning facts or examples, students are actually acquiring a set of techniques that they can then

apply for themselves:

"The goal of the think aloud strategy is that eventually students will develop a similar thinking process when they are reading independently, thereby improving their comprehension." (2012: 2)

Block and Israel concur, concluding that: *"Students will also experience the benefits of think alouds long after they leave the classroom"* (2004: 167). This lasting impact was also crucial for my own aims, since I was preparing students for an assessed task and wanted them to take their newly-acquired techniques into the examination room.

These research findings give a clear indication that a think aloud teaching style can have a major beneficial impact on the student experience in the classroom, through a greater sense of integration, heightened engagement, and long-lasting influence. Encouraged by these results, I decided to develop my own project that give me the chance to explore whether think aloud teaching could have broader applications.

The Project

As a first step, I presented my initial ideas at the 2016 Festival of Learning & Teaching at Manchester Met, where they were well received. I then applied for, and received, funding via a Scholarship of Teaching & Learning grant awarded from CELT for the Academic Year 2017-2018. My major goal for this project was to explore the viability of extending this style of teaching into a broader range of disciplines. I decided to base my trial in one of our large Foundation Year units, 'Introduction to Language, Culture and Linguistics', where I am the Unit Leader. This unit seemed ideal since it is introductory in nature, and covers broad ground in its subject matter. Additionally, the coursework assessment of this unit is via a portfolio of two critical commentaries: one on a political speech and one on a newspaper article. This critical commentary was chosen as the basis for my research project, since this assessment is designed to test our students' ability to read critically and interpret style effectively. These two skills have strong links to the areas where think aloud teaching has already been identified as effective (reading / translating).

I devoted two particular classes to the project, one in Term 1 and one in Term 2. During these classes I employed a think aloud approach to tackle two assignments from previous years (one newspaper

article and one political speech). This gave me the opportunity to demonstrate how I undertake this kind of task, making sure to explicitly articulate my decision-making process (see Appendix 2 for a sample transcript of my think aloud protocol). Both of these sessions were followed up by opportunities for our students to undertake very similar tasks: a mock assignment in Term 1, and then the genuine assignment in Term 2. Another benefit is that this style of teaching lends itself perfectly to the creation of podcasts that can be made available to students who miss classes, and for revision purposes. Indeed, creating an additional session would also have the benefit of providing a 'cover class' in the event of a tutor being unexpectedly unable to attend.

I surveyed all the students who attended these two sessions to gather their views. These questionnaires used open questioning to allow students to represent their own views in an unconstrained fashion (see Appendix 3 for a full copy of the questionnaire). This was intended as an attempt to involve students as far as possible in the project, since previous research has shown that making students part of the research process can lead to better results (Arhar and Buck, 2000). Unfortunately, in spite of this, returns of my questionnaires was very low. Out of 40 students, 8 returned the questionnaire in November 2017. Out of 44 students, 1 returned the questionnaire in February 2018. These returns are too low to allow any conclusions to be drawn. However, it was good to see that students did use key words in their responses (*analysis, critical, structure*) in Section B of the questionnaire, which focussed on understanding of the requirements for producing good assessed work.

A review of the responses to the questionnaires reveals a great deal of overlap with previous research outcomes that highlighted the student-tutor relationship, level of engagement, and lasting impact. Looking at the responses that commented on the student-tutor relationship, it was clear that this style of teaching contributed to the atmosphere in the sessions in a positive way, with students writing *"creates a more informal feel which is more enjoyable"* or feeling *"comfort with the professor"*. The think aloud approach was also judged to be *"more interactive"*, with one student responding, *"I feel more engaged because I'm not just listening to a stream of general info"*. Another student appreciated the fact that there is *"more detail told to us whilst going through what we're studying"*, highlighting the explicit link to a genuine task. Finally, one student commented on the outcome beyond that particular session, writing: *"I now understand how to approach a text and the level of analysis expected"*. Overall,

although the number of completed questionnaires was small, it was clear that the reactions to think aloud teaching captured here did map onto previous findings and do also provide further evidence of the value of this type of delivery.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Having undertaken this project, reviewed the relevant secondary literature, and considered the responses of our students, it is clear that think aloud teaching has good potential to improve the student experience in a number of areas. In addition to the key areas of the student-tutor relationship, level of engagement, and lasting impact, identified by previous research, I would propose that think aloud teaching can provide added value as follows:

- As an explicit example of "this is how we do things at university", it can help new students manage the transition from school / college to HE, and ensure that assessment marking criteria are readily understood.
- It is in the very nature of the think aloud experience that students will perceive the passion of their tutors for their subject in a completely unfiltered manner.

However, given the low number of returns to my survey there is a real opportunity for future research into this field to add substantially to the evidence base. Ideally, this would mean surveying students who are drawn from a broader range of disciplines, and who are exposed to a greater variety of assessment tasks. I remain confident that this additional evidence will also support the desirability of promoting this style of teaching more widely.

Appendix 1: Transcript

(Partial transcript of a think aloud summary class)

OK. Here we are at the very beginning of the recording. I think the beginning of a recording can often be a mine of very useful information. For example, there might actually be a title or maybe if there's an interviewer then he or she might actually say what the interview's about. More usefully, even, tell us what the key questions are going to be that they're going to be posing. Or perhaps divide their little report into different sections. Unfortunately, that's not the case here. Nonetheless, this opening section does give us a lot of information. What sort of things am I flagging up? (NB: on

my handwritten notes that the students can see via the document camera) Well, something about 18 months ago, so we're going to learn something about 18 months ago. We'll hear that again, obviously, in a minute. In Boston as well. Locations are also very important things. Then there was this guy's name. Jed Mardisch ... Mordisch ... Jett ... Jatt. I'm never going to spell that to be honest. Do I need to? No. Obviously, I can just refer to him as the scientist. He was referred to as a *Mediziner*. But I think scientist is fine. Medical scientist, maybe. I've also learnt that ... something about 10,000 members. But the important thing is this was 18 months ago. Now, judging from the way it's structured I get the feeling that it's going to, you know, that number is going to have increased because we're going to hear about how Research Gate has grown up. So we'll listen on a bit and see if I'm right.

Appendix 2: Transcript

(Partial transcript of a think aloud class for the Foundation Year unit 'Introduction to Language, Culture and Linguistics' in 2017-2018)

From a stylistic point of view he ends with what? He ends this paragraph beginning with 'I'. And yet he then diverts attention away from 'I' to 'the people' which is, you know, clearly the electorate. And he ends with an image. It's not been, you know, stuffed full of images. But there have been some strong ones. And the first one we picked up on was an image of light. Do you remember? This notion of a beacon. And here how does he end? Again with this notion of light. Of America as having this potential to shine that light more strongly. So what sort of things would I want to dwell on then when I come to write my commentary? I think, personally, this use of the personal pronouns. Very interesting! The use of the individual and individual family history as representative of the history of a nation. The journey that he takes from America as this great place to a place that's still in need of attention, still in need of political intervention. And I think, you know obviously, there's this sense of, you know, quite a subtle sense of imagery, this notion of the light, the beacon. Looking at it from a language point of view ...

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

(Copy of the questionnaire issued to students taking the Foundation Year unit 'Introduction to Language, Culture and Linguistics' in 2017-2018)

Please answers the following questions as fully as you can. This is a genuine opportunity to influence the ways in which you are taught here.

Section A (Term 1)

Did you notice any differences and / or similarities between the teaching in this class, and the styles of teaching that you are used to?

If so, can you make a list of the top three differences / similarities?

Please comment on how these differences / similarities have affected your enjoyment of this class.

Section B

This lesson covered producing a commentary, which will be part of your assessment.

How has this lesson affected your understanding of what the task involves?

Please list the key things that you believe your teachers will be looking out for in your own work.

What would you now say are the top three things needed to do well in this assessment?

Please describe your own feelings now towards tackling this assessment for yourself.

Section C

How would you rate your own understanding of the assessed task now?

List any areas that you feel were not covered in this class.

Would you look forward to this type of class again in the future?

Can you think of any ways in which this style of teaching could be improved?

Section D (Term 2)

Did you fill in a survey questionnaire in Term 1?

If you answered NO, then please go to Section D1

If you answered YES, then please go to Section D2

Section D1

Did you notice any differences and / or similarities between the teaching in this class, and the styles of teaching that you are used to?

If so, can you make a list of the top three differences / similarities?

Please comment on how these differences / similarities have affected your enjoyment of this class.

This lesson covered producing a commentary, which will be part of your assessment.

How has this lesson affected your understanding of what the task involves?

Please list the key things that you believe your teachers will be looking out for in your own work.

What would you now say are the top three things needed to do well in this assessment?

Please describe your own feelings now towards tackling this assessment for yourself.

How would you rate your own understanding of the assessed task now?

List any areas that you feel were not covered in this class.

Would you look forward to this type of class again in the future?

Can you think of any ways in which this style of teaching could be improved?

Now go on to Section D2.

Section D2

You wrote a mock assessed commentary in Term 1, and are working on the real assessment now.

How well do you understand the task now?

Can you list your top tips for how to do well in this assessment?

Can you describe the common mistakes that need to be avoided with this type of task?

Is there anything else that would have helped you prepare for this task?

Many thanks for participating in this survey!

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Institutional Support for ESD in the Curriculum: A case study from the School of Science and the Environment, Manchester Metropolitan University

Hannah Matthews and Valeria Ruiz Vargas

Abstract

Manchester Metropolitan University has a number of institutional priorities and resources associated with embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within the curriculum. These include the University's Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment ¹, the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, professional development workshops and a designated ESD coordinator. In an effort to assess staff awareness and engagement with this agenda, semi-structured interviews were carried out with coordinators from 24 separate units in the School of Science and the Environment. The study examined both inter and intra disciplinary responses in the divisions of Biology, Chemistry and Forensics, and Environmental and Geographical Sciences. The findings suggest that there is a lack of awareness of internal drivers (for example the inclusion of requirements for ESD in University Strategies), resources, and additional external drivers (for example, HEFCE/QAA, REF, and TEF requirements). Whilst most agree that ESD is an important student employability factor, there is less uniformity in agreement concerning the subject specific relevance of ESD. The barriers to the uptake of ESD observed by this study are largely consistent with those presented in the literature. Recommendations from this study to increase engagement in ESD at Manchester Metropolitan University are mainly focused on awareness raising and professional development of staff in a sector/subject specific context.

Introduction

One of the most commonly used definitions for 'Sustainable Development' is that taken from the 1987 'World Commission on Environment and Development' report 'Our Common Future' (also known as the 'Brundtland report'). Sustainable development is defined in the report as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to*

¹ Since this article was written, the Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment has been superseded by the education strategy for Manchester Metropolitan University, which builds upon the principles of the SLTA.

meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987).

However, the fundamental principles have been a constituent of the discourse for international priorities as far back as 1969. The Tenth General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) called for the preservation of natural resources (including soils, water, vegetation, forests, wilderness and wildlife) and for any future exploitation of said resources to be carefully managed in a way that was *"conducive to the future peace, progress and prosperity of mankind"* (IUCN, 1970, p84). It also recognised that both nature and natural resources have multidimensional value in environmental, social, cultural, educational and economic terms.

A commonality of international policies and declarations on Sustainable Development (SD) has been the recognition that education, especially of young people, has an integral role to play in the promotion of the ideals of SD; and the fostering of conservation and environmental protection (Lozano et al, 2015).

Education for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was formally recognised as a pedagogical approach in Agenda 21, the official document of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio (Barth and Rieckmann, 2012). Chapter 36 of the Agenda described the need to reorient education and embed the principles of sustainable development into mainstream curricula (UNCED, 1992). It stated the need to address socio-economic and human issues alongside that of the physical and biological environment (UNCED, 1992). Previous declarations and charters (e.g. the Talloires Declaration in 1990) had tended to focus on raising the awareness of environmental education, with less emphasis on the wider aspects associated with SD.

ESD has been defined by UNESCO (n.d.) as:

"a learning process (or approach to teaching) based on the ideals and principles that underlie sustainability [which] is concerned with all levels and types of learning to provide quality education and foster sustainable human development – learning to know, learning to be, learning to live together, learning to do and learning to transform oneself and society."

Many policy drivers, declarations and initiatives have driven the ESD agenda, most notably The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable

Development (DESD) - 2005-2014 (UNESCO, 2004). This was established as an outcome from the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in South Africa in 2002 (UN, 2002). The main aim of the DESD was to integrate both the principles and practice of ESD into all facets of learning and the education sector. The final report (UNESCO, 2014) states that whilst the DESD helped to lay a solid foundation for ESD, ESD has yet to be fully embedded in the education systems of most countries.

ESD policy in the UK is being led by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA). They have formed the 'QAA/HEA Education for Sustainable Development Group' with a view to incorporating ESD in UK Higher Education Curricula. They have produced a guidance document in which they set out a framework for curriculum design, delivery and review, with a focus on graduate outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment (QAA, 2014). The guidance is intended to support all educators attempting to embed the principles of SD in their discipline.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has also published a framework outlining its support for ESD and how it will influence future funding (HEFCE, 2014). In the report HEFCE states its intention to support further research on carbon reduction, the Revolving Green Fund, and the Catalyst Fund for sustainability projects. It also analyses the inclusion of SD in multi- and inter-disciplinary Research Excellence Framework (REF) submissions, and more specifically, how the REF has influenced research into ESD (HEFCE, 2014).

Notwithstanding the presence of policies and frameworks in place to assist Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the embedding of ESD in the curricula, uptake is not guaranteed or by any means uniform. Resistance or common barriers to the integration of ESD in HEI include a lack of knowledge or awareness of the principles of SD, a lack of senior management support, SD being seen as irrelevant in some disciplines, perceived threats to academic integrity or freedom, resistance to change, lack of resources (time, funding, information) and an already overcrowded curriculum (Lozano et al, 2013, Verhulst and Lambrechts, 2015).

Research Aim and Approach

The principal aim of this paper was to investigate institutional support, provision and uptake of ESD at Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Met.) To this end, a case study approach

was adopted in the School of Science and the Environment. High level strategies and the availability of resources relating to ESD within the faculty were documented. The uptake and awareness of these resources amongst staff were then assessed through a series of semi-structured interviews. The School of Science and the Environment was chosen for this study as it provides a range of courses and staff in different disciplines: Chemistry and Forensics, Biology, Environmental Science, Environmental Management and Geography (including Physical and Human Geography). This context provides the grounds to analyse a number of inter and intra disciplinary perspectives.

Mapping Institutional Policies, Plans and Programmes for ESD

An audit of the University's policies and strategies was carried out to identify institutional support for the ESD agenda. In addition to this, the role and responsibilities of the University's ESD Coordinator were mapped, as this is a specific resource provision in terms of ESD.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A series of semi-structured interviews were carried out with coordinators for 24 units in the three Divisions across the School: Chemistry and Forensics (n=7), Biology (n=6) and Environmental and Geographical Sciences (n=11). Of the 24 units analysed in the research, 11 were female led and 13 were male led.

Interviews were based on a set of predetermined questions with a Likert-type 5 scale response measurement, and additional open-ended questions to allow the conversation to unfold and issues to be explored (Longhurst, 2010). Likert-type scales represent a range of ordinal responses (Jamieson, 2004) from one extreme to another e.g. from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Robinson, 1998). Whilst simplistic in form, Likert-type scales have been shown to be an effective measure of self-efficacy (Maurer and Pierce, 1998).

Coding

Free-form responses from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis through an inductive approach (Byrne, 2016). Codes were assigned to the data from the interview transcripts in order to develop themes and subthemes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) using QSR International's NVivo 10 software package.

Results and Discussion

The following section sets out the findings of this study and discusses the results in association with the literature.

Institutional support and provision for ESD

At Manchester Met. there are a number of strategic initiatives that support ESD. The University has a designated Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). CELT offers a wide range of workshops, accredited units and bespoke support for staff in relation to the ESD agenda. The University also has a dedicated ESD coordinator whose primary role is to:

"provide support and act as a point of reference to academics across the University, and to co-ordinate activities for initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)."
(Manchester Met, 2013)

The University's Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Manchester Met., 2014) states that:

"All programmes must identify the ways in which their curriculum incorporates concepts of internationalisation, global citizenship, sustainability and social responsibility."

One aim of the strategy is for it to act as a driver across the University to embed ESD within the curriculum.

Manchester Met. worked with the NUS and other selected Universities to develop the National Union of Students Responsible Futures accreditation mark. Manchester Met. was consulted, as it was perceived to be a leader in the field of ESD. Manchester Met. was awarded the Responsible Futures accreditation mark in 2015 and retained the award in 2016. One of the criteria of the award is to demonstrate *"a desire to develop a whole-institution approach to embedding sustainability and social responsibility across the curriculum"*.

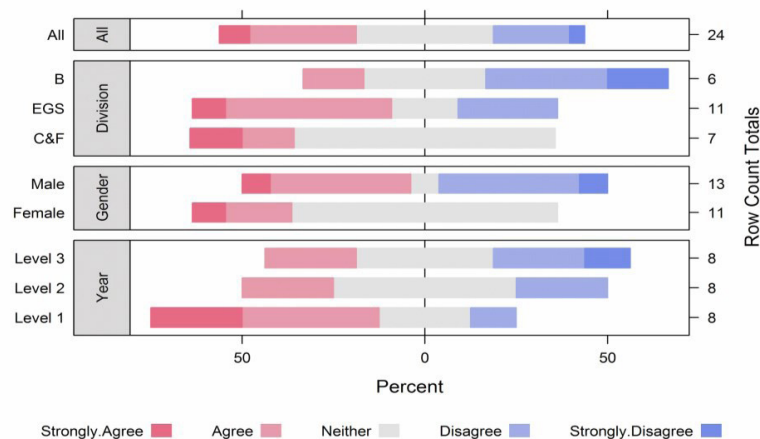
Manchester Met. also has an externally certified Environmental Management System (ISO14001:2015). There are commitments in the system, most notably in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Policy, to support the ESD agenda in all areas relating to student experience (Manchester Met., 2014b).

It is clear that at a strategic level, the University has aligned itself with the principles of ESD in line with the recommendations from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA). However, it is also clear from the responses recorded in Figures 1-3, that a high percentage of staff surveyed were unaware of either the University’s strategic direction in this area, or of the resources available to them to support the embedding of ESD within their teaching.

Staff Awareness of Manchester Met. Priorities and Provision for ESD

The responses to the question *"Manchester Metropolitan University has clear institutional priorities in respect to embedding ESD in the curriculum"* are shown in Figure 1. Staff opinions on this question were polarised with 37.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing, 25% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, and 37.5% stating neither.

Figure 1: Response to the question - *"Manchester Metropolitan University has clear institutional priorities in respect to embedding ESD in the curriculum"*



By division, Biology were the least likely to agree to the statement in Figure 1 (83% either disagreed or stated neither, 17% agreed). Comments to support these findings included [the university should] *"Inform staff more clearly that this is something the University tries to achieve"* and also that [ESD is]:

"Not actively promoted anyway. I do incorporate it in the unit, it is part of what we teach but not because Manchester Metropolitan University says so."

One unit coordinator in Environmental and Geographical Sciences suggested that academics:

"need to understand if it is a real priority of the university, so they can make time to do it... It is an already tight and cramped teaching scheme because of constructive alignment... Does it need to be in the learning outcomes? Clarity needs to be provided on that as well."

Another unit coordinator from Environmental and Geographical Sciences highlighted a potential issue with the communication of institutional priorities on this agenda:

"It doesn't need improving. We have a free hand to do it if we think it enhances. I never had any line manager saying to me what needs to be in the curriculum and we have freedom over this."

Similar opinions have also been expressed by unit coordinators in Chemistry and Forensics:

"Academics do [include ESD] but for it to be driven by the university that is not happening" and "if they don't make it compulsory, it's difficult because you don't have time to do it."

Whilst the University does have both strategies and resources in this area (including the aforementioned ESD coordinator post), the barriers to uptake reported here that are similar to those reported in the wider literature. For instance, inefficient communication and shared information, an overcrowded curriculum, and a lack of time to make the necessary changes (Verhulst and Lambrechts, 2015).

There was a clear split in male responses to this question, with 46% agreeing (one strongly) and 46% disagreeing (one strongly). Only 8% stated neither as their preference. Conversely, none of the female interviewees either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The majority of female respondents reported neither (73%), with only 27% stating that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

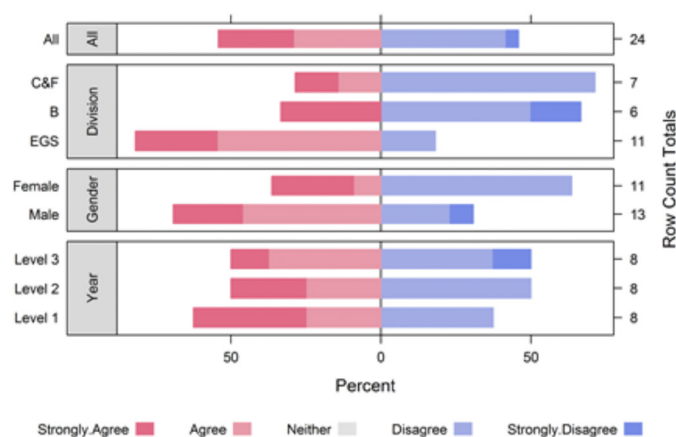
Unlike in the divisions of Biology or Environmental and Geographical Sciences, no negative responses were recorded in Figure 1 from Chemistry and Forensics. This could be an artefact of the interviewees all being female from this division. However, the literature suggests that there is little evidence to support a significant

difference regarding attitudes towards organisational change (in this instance, strategic decisions to incorporate ESD within the curriculum) based purely upon gender (Iverson, 1996; Cordery et al., 1993; Vakola et al., 2004). In order to determine if there is a correlation with gender, this pilot study would have to be extended across other Schools within the University.

From the results of the coding, it became apparent that a top down (n=17) approach was preferred in the School when it came to establishing and communicating ESD as an institutional priority (Table 1). Less support for a bottom up approach was recorded (n=3). Chemistry and Forensics demonstrated the greatest preference for a top down approach of any of the divisions (n=12). Lozano (2010) recommends top-down managerialism as one solution to overcoming a slow adoption of ESD. However, it has been noted by Hoover and Harder (2015) that in order for a top-down approach to work, the message needs to be streamlined. Too many policies and strategies can add to confusion and dilution of strategic principles.

The responses to the question *"Academic staff are sufficiently supported in respect to embedding ESD within their units"* are shown in Figure 2. Overall, staff were almost equally split in their response to this statement. 25% strongly agreed, 29% agreed, 42% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. No interviewees reported neither.

Figure 2: Response to the question - *"Academic staff are sufficiently supported in respect to embedding ESD within their units"*



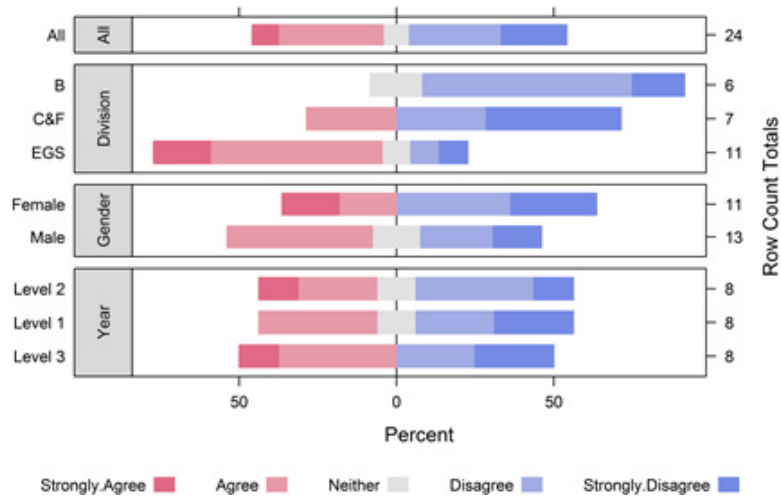
However, there was less uniformity when the responses were considered at divisional level. The patterns of agreement and disagreement were similar in the division of Biology and in Chemistry and Forensics, with the majority disagreeing (or strongly disagreeing)

(n=67%, n=71% respectively). Unit coordinators in Chemistry and Forensics also made more references to a lack of available resources in this area (Table 1), double that from colleagues in Environmental and Geographical Sciences (n= 6 to 3). Interestingly, there were no references to a lack of resources in Biology, despite the perceived lack of support recorded in Figure 2.

There was a marked contrast in the division of Environmental and Geographical Sciences, with 82% broadly in agreement as opposed to 18% in disagreement. This result is in part supported by the findings in Figure 3, where staff from the division of Environmental and Geographical Sciences are more likely to be aware of the resources available to fulfil this agenda.

The responses to the question *"I am aware of the resources available to me to fulfil this agenda"* are shown in Figure 3. Overall, responses were fairly even split with 42% either agreeing or strongly agreeing, as opposed to 50% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (8% neither).

Figure 3: Response to the question - *"I am aware of the resources available to me to fulfil this agenda"*



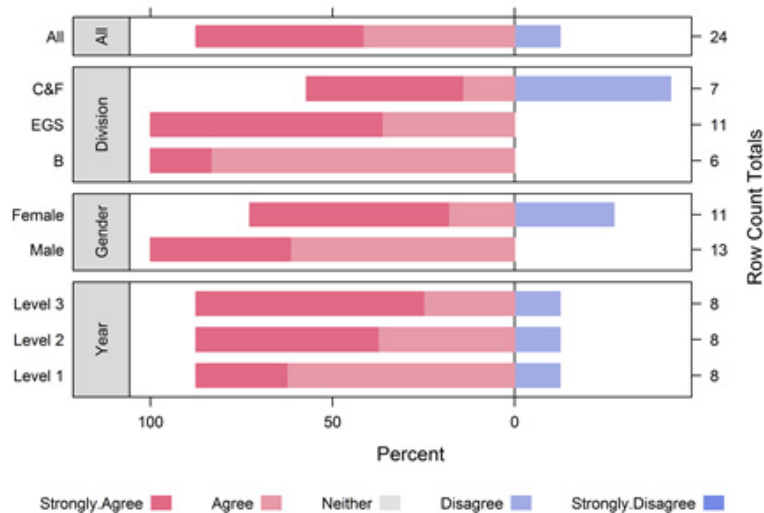
There are however noticeable differences between the three divisions. In Biology, no staff members stated that they were aware of the resources available to them to fulfil the ESD agenda. Whilst 17% stated neither, the remaining interviewees all disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (83%). Whilst there was some support for this statement in Chemistry and Forensics (29%), the majority were also opposed (71%).

Table 1 suggests that many of the types of resources requested by staff are already available in the organisation. However, a lack of communication or knowledge amongst staff of these resources has presented a barrier to uptake. More effective communication about available ESD resources at School level is therefore recommended. There is an opportunity to incorporate ESD in the School's curriculum review, as lecture materials for the new units have yet to be written. One member of staff commented however that *"this has to be an action plan with necessary support and examples. Not just a tick box exercise"*.

ESD as a Multi-Disciplinary Approach

The responses to the question *"ESD is relevant to my subject area"* is shown in Figure 4. Many of the staff interviewed either agreed or strongly agreed that ESD was relevant to their subject area (88%). All staff members were decisive on their feelings for this issue, with no instances of *"neither"* elected. The findings from the coding (Table 1) also recorded more references (n=13) concerning the relevance of ESD to units, than a perceived lack of relevance (n=7). This indicates that if a more targeted approach was taken in the School, there would broadly be cross divisional support to include ESD in all disciplines.

Figure 4: Response to the question - *"ESD is relevant to my subject area"*.



There were differences in opinions between the divisions, with all staff from Biology and Environment and Geographical Sciences in general agreement with the statement (Figure 4). An Environmental and Geographical Sciences unit coordinator stated that *"sustainable*

Theme	Subtheme	Detail	Number of staff				Number of references				
			C&F	EGS	B	Total	C& F	EGS	B	Total	
Coverage	Covered in the unit		3	8	0	11	4	37	0	41	
	Not covered in the unit		2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	
	Partially covered		0	3	1	4	0	3	1	4	
Relevance	Relevant to the unit		2	3	1	6	3	7	3	13	
	Irrelevant to the unit		2	1	1	4	3	3	1	7	
Preferred approach	Top down approach		1	2	1	4	12	1	3	17	
	Bottom up approach		1	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	
Willingness	Willing to change units		3	5	0	8	7	7	0	14	
	Not willing to change units		1	3	0	4	1	5	0	6	
Resources	Resource presence		2	4	1	7	2	15	2	19	
	Lack of resources		3	2	0	5	6	3	0	9	
	Lack of use of resources		0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	
	Use of resources		0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	
	Resource types	Bespoke support*†		0	2	0	2	0	6	0	6
		Support for unit design*†		0	2	0	2	0	7	0	7
		Support for assessment*†		0	2	0	2	0	6	0	6
		Peer learning*		0	2	0	2	0	5	0	5
		Advice sheet*†		1	1	0	2	1	4	0	5
		Case studies‡		1	2	0	3	2	6	0	8
		Run the tool on units†		0	2	0	2	0	5	0	5
Staff development sessions*		2	2	1	5	5	8	3	16		
Short courses*		1	1	0	2	1	5	0	6		

*offered centrally

†offered at School level

‡partially offered centrally

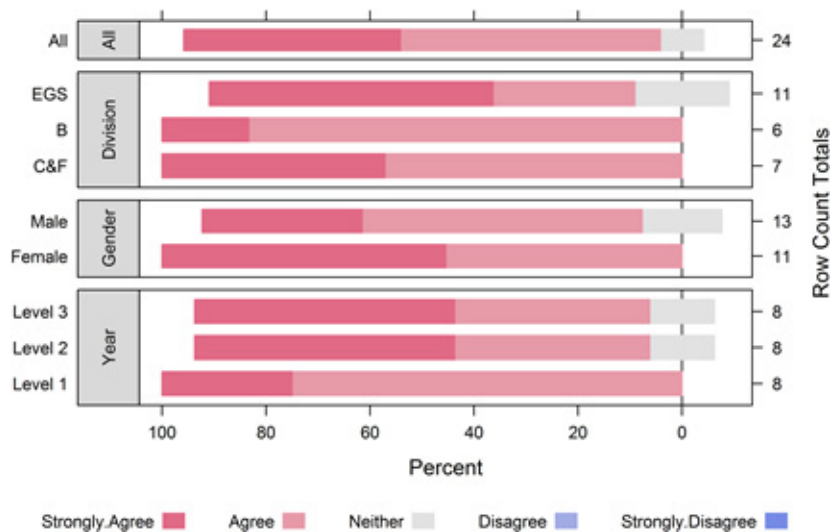
Table 1: *Thematic (coding) analysis of semi-structured interviews in the School of Science and the Environment (C&F= Chemistry and Forensics, B= Biology, EGS= Environmental and Geographical Sciences)*

development is at the core of all we teach". In Biology, one unit coordinator reported that "sustainable development is essential for education in general for society, it is however irrelevant to this unit - but not to the field".

In Chemistry and Forensics, attitudes were more divisive (43% strongly agree, 14% agree, 43% disagree). A comment from one unit coordinator was that *"I can see how it's important, but it's not what I would emphasise to my students"*. There is a perception amongst some that embedding education for sustainable development in the curriculum depends upon the context. However, the subject benchmark statement for Chemistry includes a requirement that BSc (Hons) degrees must equip their students to *"develop knowledge and understanding of ethics, societal responsibilities, environmental impact and sustainability, in the context of chemistry"* (QAA, 2014b).

Borg *et al* (2012) suggest that collaborative work between staff from different disciplines has the potential to help overcome this barrier as some disciplines tend to integrate ESD more easily than others. This is something that may become more common due to a greater focus on this area in the REF (for example, support for the inclusion of SD/ ESD in multi- and interdisciplinary submissions (HEFCE, 2014)). Inter-disciplinary work related to this area might also provide an approach to explore and promote the relevance of ESD in all programmes (and units) across the School.

Figure 5: Response to the question - *"Teaching students about ESD will help to meet requirements of future employers"*



Although inter or multidisciplinary teaching can present a range of challenges (for example, it can take longer to plan and write materials), Pharo et al (2012) state that a multidisciplinary approach has the potential to enhance teaching for real life applications. In addition, education focusing on one discipline only is becoming less appropriate to address the complexities of sustainable development (Schmitz et al, 2010).

The responses to the question "*Teaching students about ESD will help to meet requirements of future employers*" is shown in Figure 5. There was a general consensus in support of this statement as the majority of staff either agreed or strongly agreed (92%) with the remaining stating neither (8%). No negative responses were recorded.

All of the responses from the Chemistry and Forensics division either agreed or strongly agreed that a student's knowledge of ESD would help to meet the requirements of future employers; this is despite a proportion previously stating that ESD was not relevant to their subject area (Figure 4). The teaching of ESD as a key employability skill was in some cases disassociated from the teaching of core subject materials "*if careers can embed it in their training it would be quite useful*". Research undertaken into employers' expectations of graduates, found that employers consider not only a candidate's core knowledge, skills and values; but also their awareness of sustainable development (Cade, 2008). SD as a key employability knowledge factor, can and should be taught in the context of the discipline; something that should also be considered in response to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

Table 1 displays the number of references by division associated with the identified themes and subthemes (i.e. the number of times each reference was recorded). The themes and subthemes were developed through the coding analysis of the free-form responses from the semi-structured interviews. In the 'detail' column, there is a list of resource types requested by interviewees. The footnote shows if the suggested resources are already fully or partially offered, and whether this is at school level or a centrally provided resource.

Conclusion

Despite University wide strategies and support for the ESD agenda, this study has found that ESD is currently far from being embedded in the curriculum across the School of Science and the Environment.

The barriers to uptake include a lack of knowledge of institutional priorities and resources, lack of knowledge and skills to deliver subject specific ESD, and a perceived lack of relevance in some disciplines.

External factors including the requirements of employers, and also those of the HEFCE, QAA, TEF and the REF may go some way in providing extra incentives to further promote ESD across the School.

The resources for ESD available to teaching staff need to be clearly identified and effectively communicated, preferably via senior management. Furthermore, training for individual staff needs to be in a sector specific context to bypass any concerns regarding the relevance of ESD to the subject material.

Recommendations

- To widen the remit of this research to capture the views of staff within other Schools and Faculties in the University.
- To raise awareness of the findings of this research with the Heads of Division in the School of Science and the Environment.
- To identify how the communication of ESD priorities and resources can be improved within the School.

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Global Citizenship Education – A Live Project: One Year After. Reflections of Seven Participants

Edda Sant, Chris Hanley, Jay Henry, Chris Chambers, Pura Ariza, Marta Costa and Bobbie Dutton

Abstract

We reflect on our experiences as participants/organizers of the 'Global Citizenship Education – A live Project'. 'Live projects' are real-live educational activities in which students collaborate with other participants to generate new ideas. In this article, we examine the possibilities of 'live projects' as a democratic approach to global citizenship education in the context of higher education. We argue that 'live projects', when time and staff resources are guaranteed, offer great opportunities to challenge assumptions and to generate new forms of knowledge.

In late 2016, the authors of this article and other academics from the Faculty of Education at Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Met)¹ organized an event entitled 'Global Citizenship Education – a live project'. The project brought together seventy participants including Manchester Met undergraduate and postgraduate students, national and international researchers, teacher educators, newly qualified teachers, representatives of official and non-official councils, school pupils and their teachers to discuss their practical and theoretical understandings on global citizenship and global citizenship education. In this article, we would reflect on our experiences on this event as a potential approach for global citizenship education in the context of higher education.

Background: Global citizenship and higher education

This project is contextualized in a globalized educational landscape where the education of the global citizenry has become a key feature (Torres, 2015). The concept of 'global citizenship' is, nevertheless, ambiguous. In Higher Education institutions, (at least) two main understandings of 'global citizenship' coexist: the "*neoliberal global citizen*" and the "*democratic global citizen*" (Camicia & Franklin, 2011). "*Educating*" a "*neoliberal global citizen*" implies guiding

¹ We would like to thank CELT for the SOTL grant that funded this project and all the participants including our colleagues David Menéndez Álvarez-Hevia, Jane McDonnell, Karen Pashby, Jonas Thiel and Mark Sackville-Ford. Without their support, this project would have not been possible.

students to gain a number of "*global citizen competences*" or "*attributes*" such as communication skills, knowledge about other cultures and social responsibility (Oxley and Morris, 2013). In contrast, 'democratic' frameworks for global citizenship education emphasize the need of providing students with spaces to interact with others and reflect on their own knowledge and assumptions (Andreotti, 2006). This project was framed by this second understanding.

The project took place in the Faculty of Education at Manchester Met where students, as prospective teachers and/or educational professionals, might need or want to be prepared to 'educate' others in the global dimension of citizenship education. Indeed, not only are higher education institutions expected to engage with the discourse on global citizenship, but schools have also been identified for their significant role (UNESCO, 2014). National and international policies recommend that teachers should not only teach specific subject areas but also educate a citizenry prepared for an increasingly globalized world (e.g. UNESCO, 2014; OECD, 2016). Previous research indicates that teachers are committed to global citizenship education but they lack the conceptual and pedagogical resources to perform their role as civic educators (see e.g. Osler, 2011; Rappoport, 2010). Studies often highlight the need for a clearer commitment from teacher educator and other educational programmes to the education of the global citizenry (e.g. Reilly & Niens, 2014; Schweisfurth, 2006).

In the case of our Faculty (the Faculty of Education at Manchester Met), our previous work with Education Studies students and secondary teacher trainees suggests that Manchester Met students still perceive the education of the global citizenry as something disconnected from their experiences in higher education and their professional future (Sant & Hanley, 2016; Sant, 2017). Secondary PGCE students, regardless of their specialism, often lack space to discuss their prospective role as civic educators (Peterson et al., 2015). Education Studies students, who study a theoretical course on education and who might or might not work as teachers, appear to challenge the relevance of global citizenship education and are particularly committed to more 'local' forms of citizenship (Sant, 2017). The aim of the 'Global Citizenship Education – a Live Project' was to investigate a novel approach to engage future teachers and other educational professionals on a democratic forum on global citizenship education.

In this article, we first discuss the educational project, examining our approach to 'live projects' and describing the educational activities we created and the participants of those. We then reflect on our experiences as participants/organizations of this project. We conclude by discussing the possibilities and challenges of a 'live project' as a democratic approach to global citizenship.

A live Project

According to Sara (2006), a 'live project' can be defined as one where:

"Students are taken out of the studio setting, and repositioned in the 'real-world'. This external involvement tends to result in students producing something that is of value to the client/user group, which might range from ideas, feasibility reports, or research, to a completed design scheme, a construction or other intervention." (2006, p. 1)

In the 'Global Citizenship Education – A Live Project' we took Sara's (2006) definition as starting point but we felt challenged by some of the features of this definition. Camicia and Franklin (2011) define 'democratic global citizenship education' as the situation in which:

"In their communication with each other, global citizens aim at reaching an understanding of other global citizens rather than adhering to strictly strategic communication such as that found in the economic sphere." (p. 314)

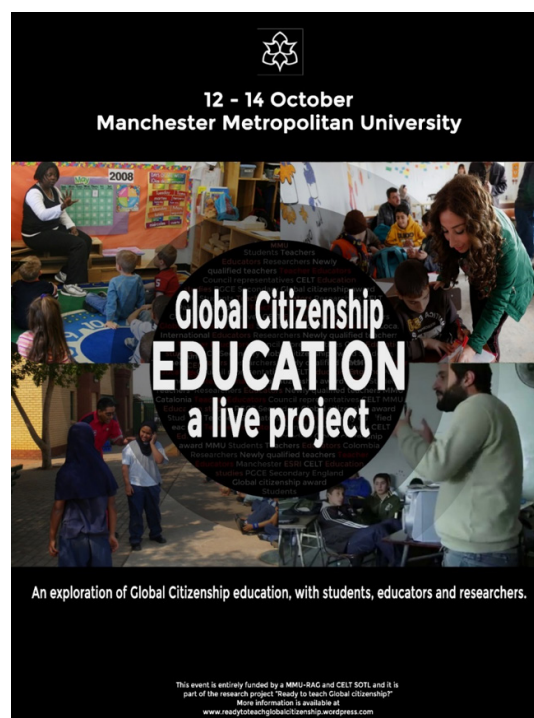
In this respect, the notion of 'client', used by Sara (2006) was antagonistic to our understanding of 'democratic' education. For us, the 'live project' was not an opportunity to bring together students with potential 'clients/users' but rather with participants with different forms of theoretical, practical and personal educational expertise. Further, more than aiming to produce 'something', our aim was to create a situation for educational experiences to happen through the exchange of different forms of knowledge. Thus, we decided to adapt Sara's definition and we defined 'the Global Citizenship Education – a live project' as a project in which *"students work in 'real-world' situations with other participants to generate new forms of knowledge"*.

The project was organized in two different sessions. The 12th of October 2016 volunteers from BA and MA Education Studies students worked together with Manchester Met lecturers, primary

school students and their teachers, invited researchers from Spain, Pakistan and Colombia, a representative of the British Council, and the authors of this article. After a brief introduction of the project, the participants were organized in mixed tables of discussion involving (at least) primary school pupils, undergraduate and postgraduate students and Manchester Met and international academics. Through different activities, participants were requested to discuss their views on the meaning, possibilities and challenges of global citizenship and global citizenship education. The discussion on the tables was followed by a plenary discussion in which participants manifested their agreement or disagreement with different understandings of global citizenship and education.

The 14th of October volunteer PGCE students from the PGCE English, Foreign Language (MFL) and History course(s) worked together with Manchester Met teacher educators, secondary school students and their teachers, invited researchers from Spain, Pakistan and Colombia, a representative of a society for global citizenship education, and the authors of this article. Participants were organized in mixed tables of discussion. A total of two tables of PGCE English, two tables of PGCE MFL and one table of PGCE History were formed. In each table, participants were first requested to discuss the views on global citizenship and later make some proposals on how they could include global citizenship education in their subject-area teaching practices.

Figure 1. Poster advertising the Global Citizenship Education – Live Project



Reflections 1: Edda Sant. principal investigator of the project

I participated in the event as organizer and participant both days, the 12th and the 14th of October 2016. On the 12th, I took the leadership of the event (introduced the event and the activities) and I was involved in the discussions on one of the tables as participant. On the 14th, my role was more flexible, and I was able to observe the dynamics in the different tables of discussion.

Figure 2. Presentation of activities on the 12th of October 2016



My memories of the event can be classified into two distinct categories: as organizer and as participant. Organizing the event was an extremely demanding task, both in time and economic resources. Thanks to the CELT SOTL grants, we had secured funding covering travel, hospitality, accommodation and research assistance expenses. Without this funding, the event would not have been possible. Not only was funding necessary, but also time. The two principal investigators of this project (Chris Hanley and myself) are both working as Full Time Senior Lecturers with strong teaching commitments. In our case, we did not have additional hours to carry on this project and we had to coordinate/organize the event simultaneously to our teaching commitments. We worked with participants from a range of ages and origins, having to provide distinctive support in each case. We coordinated/organized hospitality, travel and, in some occasions, accommodation for most groups of participants. Although we could not have done this without the help of the other academics and our two research assistants, there were some tasks (booking catering, accommodations, rooms, budget, etc.) that our research assistants, in their contract as temporary employees, could not lead. In my experience as organizer, bringing all these people together required a break in teaching commitments or a clear administrative support that we were not able to secure before the beginning of the project.

As participant, I believe the project was extremely valuable for two main reasons. First, the project created an open forum in which all approaches were welcomed. There was space for different understandings of global citizenship including those supporting 'anti-globalization' views. Although we have chosen the topic (global citizenship) in advance and therefore we could not talk here about an entire 'democratic' forum, we felt that considering this starting point, the project was almost as 'open' as it could have been. Second, the project was in itself of great educational interest. Education is one of the fields in which theory and practice interact in a very particular and complex way. Trainee teachers and Education students often struggle to see the links between one and the other. The 'live project', I argue, was a unique experience in this respect. Our undergraduate and postgraduate students worked together with primary, secondary students and in-service teachers in what could be defined as a 'practical' environment. Simultaneously, they engaged in theoretical debates (on the meaning of global citizenship and education). In discussions with Manchester Met and international researchers, pupils, practitioners and others, our students engaged with different forms of knowledge (theory, research, practice and policy).

Reflections 2: Chris Hanley, principal investigator of the project

I found the conference memorable for the diversity of people involved. We were able to create a platform for a unique blend of participants with important perspectives to share. There was an incredible sense of purposefulness in the conference rooms throughout its duration; we attempted to capture different dimensions of this in the research data (visual images, voice recordings, etc), but its true effect was immersive – one felt fully present in a series of dynamic exchanges and continually learning in contact with different people.

All our participants contributed enormously to the events, but my sense with the primary school children was that they had spent time previously exploring the purposes of education, alongside questions of fairness, justice and so on. It is incredibly refreshing to debate such matters with young people informally. In one of the activities, the participants at each table had to manifest their agreement/disagreement with several sentences around the topic of global citizenship (see figure 3). I felt the activity was really useful, from a future teaching and learning perspective, for scaffolding individual responses and enabling debate. Later, we left some time for an 'entanglement' activity, in which participants were free to engage with others and with the resources available, also featuring the primary

school participants, is indicative of the enthusiasm for alternative research forms in our Research Institute (ESRI) – and was fascinating for me as a new approach to capturing data.

Figure 3. Resources for the agreement/disagreement activity in one of the tables of discussion



Reflections 3: Jay Henry, senior lecturer in Education Studies and co-organizer of the project

I was involved in the live project on an organisational level. I identified pupils from a local primary school that I felt could have benefitted greatly from involvement with the project. In order to raise the status of the project in the eyes of the pupils, I asked them to take part in a writing competition. Here they were asked to comment on any global issue that they had concerns about. They produced some wonderful scripts that highlighted some surprisingly deep thoughts about issues such as war and poverty. I was struck by the level of worry, but equally by their hopes for a better future. These pupils were ethnically and socially diverse. I felt it was important to ensure that this was the case given the nature of the project. Some of the pupils have refugee status or are unaccompanied asylum seekers. In addition, the school had defined these selected pupils as 'academically gifted' Year 6 pupils. Their levels of participation revealed that this was indeed the case. The pupils participated fully in the project and did not feel academically intimidated. They even challenged ideas presented to them and they felt incredibly comfortable presenting in front of peers and academics alike. I was touched by the levels of idealism amongst these primary students. Despite the fact that some had witnessed horrors in their own lives,

hope was something that lived in them. I wondered whether the secondary school children were equally idealistic on their project day. These primary school pupils saw themselves as global citizens. I wonder how many adults do.

Reflections 4: Chris Chambers, senior learning and teaching fellow for PGCE History and co-organizer of the project

I was involved in the live project as a participant on both 12th and 14th October. It was a privilege to be involved and to see how primary and secondary aged children were able to discuss global citizenship issues with undergraduates and postgraduates. As a teacher educator, my interest was more focused on how the school children responded compared to the university students. I was impressed by how the young children were able to participate on equal terms with older adults and this was exemplified in their confident and articulate presentations.

Figure 4. The forum of participants



The tasks devised for the two days were excellent, and were very successful in stimulating open discussion. Although the tasks were identical, it was interesting to reflect on the differences between how the groups, with whom I worked, addressed them. For example, one of the tasks required the group to consider the purpose of education and schools. On my table, the primary aged pupils prioritised values over knowledge and skills whereas secondary pupils had a more

utilitarian view of education, seeing its main purpose as preparing them for the world of work or further study. It would be interesting to note whether the differing ethos of the two sectors has any bearing on this, or whether it is reflection of their different ages.

All the children appreciated the value of global citizenship education. The tables were multi-cultural and this enabled us to have fruitful discussions around the value of different cultures, but the tensions these may create. They displayed an empathy for humanity and an idealism which is refreshing in these cynical times. It was encouraging to note the children espoused values wholly consistent with being a global citizen.

Reflections 5: Pura Ariza, senior lecturer in PGCE MFL and co-organizer of the project

I was very pleased to be a member of the project team, and very much enjoyed the discussions we have had as academics, researchers and participants. My field is foreign languages, and we generally feel it is natural for us to be looking at the international world in everything we do. Learning a foreign language is one of the best ways to build a bridge to that wider world, so my interest was partly about exploring the concept of citizenship from a range of perspectives, not limited to the UK.

I think my first point of interest (as a linguist), was that although we were using the word 'citizenship' in a number of languages, it was very clear that the meaning of the word differed, and sometimes significantly (see figure 5). This was very apparent for me in the international meetings. Translating words is not the same as translating meanings, and the weight of the different education systems, their philosophies and drivers, were apparent in the

Figure 5. Summary of the PGCE MFL table of discussion



meanings, not in the word. Some of our discussions had to deal with the semantic differences of the translated word, and to the political context to which they responded.

I think my second point of interest was seeing how teachers and pupils relate citizenship to school subjects, and how they would mould the concept of citizenship into another discrete subject for a lesson. The division between subject areas differs from one country to another, according to historical approaches and the philosophy of learning which has influenced the education system. It was interesting to discuss how Citizenship can be integrated into the learning of all pupils in all areas, recognised as a part of all subjects and all learning. In other models, it is addressed as a discrete school subject, possibly with drawbacks of fragmentation and lack of coherence.

Like all school subjects, Citizenship responds to national priorities and policies, although as a relatively new subject for schools there are perhaps more opportunities for innovation and development. I cannot think of a better way to do this than in an international context.

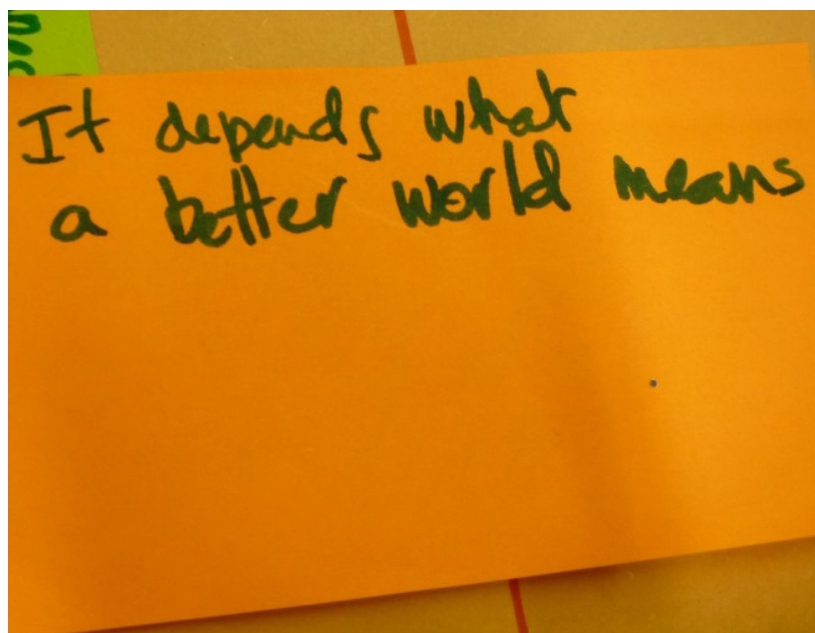
Reflections 6: Marta Costa, former MA Education Studies student, Research Assistant of the project and present tutor of Education Studies

I was involved in this project as a Research Assistant, responsible for collecting data from the event. During the activities on 12th October that is exactly what I did – through photography (see Figures 2-7) and note taking, I captured key moments of the day, the surrounding environment, arguments and outputs from the discussions. However, on 14th October I had the chance to participate in the activities, which was a completely different experience. During the course of both days, I was able to have an outsider and an insider perspective, allowing me to reflect not only on the process, but also on its experience.

I remember paying somewhat more attention to both Primary and Secondary school students, at the start of each day. I was wondering how they would be affected by the environment and contact with the older participants. I was also concerned that the discussions would be dominated by the adults on each table. It was interesting to notice the differences between the age groups. Primary school students seemed to come in with quite open expectations about what the day would bring and what their role would be. On the other hand, secondary school students showed a lot more awareness

and intention at arrival, looking to establish contacts that could be useful to them in the near future, and start building networks. In the latter case, the 'neoliberal' understanding of global citizenship seemed to inform the start of the day. However, the activities carried out were developed in order to promote the 'democratic' conceptualisation of global citizenship, and I feel they were very effective in doing that. Once the activities started, both age groups got deeply involved in the discussions – there were students standing up to make their points to the group, others so involved in reflection they were completely leaning on the table, in order to be closer to the resources being used. Primary and Secondary school students were as present in the discussion as PGCE students, lecturers and other professionals taking part. There was a genuine dialogue, with strong arguments put forward by all participants, which I felt affected everyone, influencing re-conceptualisations of Global Citizenship Education, and indeed provoking a personal reflection on the purposes of education. For instance, some of the participants start problematizing some ideas (e.g. what a better world means) that they have initially taken as granted (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Participants' ideas in a post-it



I would argue that for PGCE students this activity had an added value. Not only did they have the opportunity to reflect, discuss, and negotiate understandings of global citizenship, they did so in cooperation with Secondary school students (representing the group of students trainee teachers will be working with), and their Teacher Training lecturers (specialists on the trainee teachers' specific subject). What is more, the discussion was not

limited to understanding of different concepts and functions of global citizenship; the groups considered and discussed practical implications to teaching and learning, in the context of their different subjects (English, History and MFL). Following the 'Live Project', students seemed to have enjoyed the experience, and find it useful. The trainee teachers expressed how important they thought the discussions were, not only at a personal but also professional level, with some of them suggesting the teacher training programme should include activities along the lines of the ones developed in the 'Live Project'.

Reflections 7: Bobbie Dutton, BA Education Studies student (presently graduate) and research support

I took part in the Global Citizenship Education Live Project on the 12th and 14th of October 2016. My role in the Project was Research assistant, which on the 12th of October was my primary function, including taking photos, voice recording participants' views on Global Citizenship, and making notes. On the 14th of October however, I was able to play a part in the day, taking part in the activities arranged and was able to share my own personal opinions of Global Citizenship.

Although it was only on the 14th of October that I was able to fully interact with the other participants and the activities of the Project as a contributor, I feel that whilst acting as a Research Assistant on the 12th I was still mentally engaged with the day. Going into the project my mind was more concerned about collecting data correctly and doing a good job as a Research Assistant rather than focused on the topic of Global Citizenship. However, once in the swing of things I was able to take in the discussions happening around me, which got me thinking not only of the views and opinions of the participants but also of my own.

What I noticed more than anything else were the very individual responses to the discussions of Global Citizenship and how individual views and responses were shaped by personal life experiences. Rather than viewing the participants as groups (Primary School Pupils, High School Pupils, Undergraduates, etc.) and expecting their responses to the activities to be similar based on these groups as I originally expected, I experienced individuals coming to conclusions based on personal life experiences or their own individual understanding of the world. During the agreement/disagreement activity, for instance, the views of the participants appeared not to be conditioned for the groups they belong to. Quite

often the primary pupils, the university students and the academics sitting in the same table disagreed on their understandings on global citizenship (see Figure 7). This was especially delightful to see in the Primary School pupils, who I did not expect to have such well-formed, individualised opinions on a topic that was so contemporary. It was good to see everyone, from such diverse backgrounds, coming together to share and experience one another's understanding of Global Citizenship, a topic that can be quite divisive.

Figure 7. Group of three participants (primary pupil, undergraduate student and international researcher) sharing the same view on global citizenship



Final Remarks

Our reflections illustrate some of the possibilities and challenges of a democratic approach to global citizenship in the context of higher education. Our experiences suggest that it is not easy to challenge the neoliberal assumptions often underlying discussions on global citizenship. As some of us expressed in our reflections, competitive and instrumentalist approaches appear to be the dominant discourses among university (and even secondary) students. But we found that these discourses can also be (at least to a certain extent) challenged when face to face discussions and disagreements take place. In our case, neoliberal understandings of global citizenship were on some occasions questioned by the personal experiences of others. Primary students, bilingual and non-British participants were more likely to challenge the dominance of the neoliberal discourse providing space for alternative discourses to appear. All participants were able to recognize that the way they would understand and know about the 'global' was not universal and rather was only one possibility among others.

More widely, these reflections might also be helpful to those willing to organize similar activities to the 'live project' here discussed. On one hand, bringing together different people demands economic, staffing and time resources that need to be guaranteed before the project takes place. These resources might need to be proportional to the number of people involved as well as the different type of participants. Without this support, live projects might be - as in our case - a one-time activity rather than an activity that can be easily integrated within the curriculum. On the other hand, 'live project' activities can be, in our understanding, worthwhile educational experiences. 'Live projects' are often organized considering employability purposes (see our examination of Sara's (2006) quote in the beginning of the article). However, our experience suggests that live projects might be an excellent opportunity to create forums of dialogue between those having personal expertise (students, patients, etc.) and those having - or gaining - professional expertise (teachers, nurses, etc.). Live projects, we argue, might simultaneously allow knowledge exchange and the creation of new forms of knowledge.

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Games in the Curriculum

Paul Wake and Sam Illingworth

Abstract

This paper reports the outcomes of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project 'Games in the Curriculum'. The project focussed on the use of 'off the shelf' tabletop games in Higher Education. We examined the use of games in six different settings, working in three faculties and with four year groups (levels 3, 5, 6 and 7). Our findings suggested that the strength of tabletop games lies in the creation of a 'safe space' in which to engage in discussions of complex, and at times contentious, topics and in enabling students to take control of their own learning. At the same time, the project findings suggest that 'game literacy' amongst students and staff should not be assumed, and that it is important to not overestimate the level of enthusiasm engendered by 'playful' activity. Finally, issues of cost (in terms of staff time and materials), while low in comparison to digital games, remain a significant factor.

Introduction

Nadolski et al. (2008:338) argue that "*societal changes demand educators to apply new pedagogical approaches*", suggesting that the use of games might provide one way to address these challenges. Nerantzi and James advance a similar argument in the introduction to their special issue of *Creative Academic*, 'Exploring Play in Higher Education' in which they argue that "*play is a very sophisticated way humans of all ages learn, develop and grow*" (2015:5) before going on to note a certain resistance to play within a Higher Education (HE) setting. Whitton and Moseley have made a case for using play in education, but note the difficulty educators face in finding "*games that meet their exact pedagogic needs, and cover the required curricular goals*" and indicate "*a need to move beyond the typical model of high-end computer games for learning*" (2012:19). Our research project 'Games in the Curriculum' responds to these suggestions and challenges, through an exploration of the ways in which tabletop board games might enable learning of subject-specific skills in the HE sector, advancing the argument that the affordances of non-digital games indicate a potential for alternative – or supplementary – modes of game-based learning.

Parlett notes that:

"Board' derives from a word originally meaning 'plank', and secondarily 'table', as in the phrase 'bed and board'. So, in a broad sense, a board game is any that can be played on a flat surface such as a table or floor." (1999:5)

Our project begins with a similarly broad definition, which is useful for both its inclusivity and for the emphasis it places on the setting (which for us is educational), in which these games are played. As discussed by Lean et al. (2018), tabletop games offer a degree of sociability, adaptability and tactility that is not always present in videogames, and provide a form of interaction (with the games themselves and crucially with other players) that differs in several ways from the experience of playing videogames. Perhaps most importantly, tabletop games create a shared space in which complex topics can be discussed and debated, and it is this capacity to create dialogue that makes them such a productive means for learning.

The key aim of this project is to explore the possible benefits of using tabletop games in a HE setting. Specifically, we are interested in their use in small group work, and the ways in which they might enable students to engage with complex ideas related to their chosen area of study. In responding to this brief our objectives are:

1. To examine the possibility of meeting subject-specific learning outcomes using commercially available tabletop games;
2. To identify a range of tabletop games suitable for use with undergraduate and postgraduate students.

These objectives relate closely to the first two of the six Principles of Manchester Metropolitan's Education Strategy (CELT, 2018). In setting out to develop innovative ways of engaging our students, this project arose from a commitment to provide *"an academically rigorous curriculum that places students at its heart"* (1.1). It is a contention of the project that engaging with tabletop games, when based in rigorous academic principles, has the potential to promote *"interactive and creative teaching"* (1.2) and enhance the classroom experience. Derived in part from the growing body of research on games and gaming, and responding directly to student interest in this area, the project also aimed to integrate *"teaching on courses with research"* (2.2) to provide an experience that enables *"students to develop their intellectual powers, creativity, independent judgement,*

critical self-awareness, imagination, and personal skills" (2.3).

In addition to focussing on the student experience, this project responds to Principle 6 of the Education Strategy, that "*Staff are lifelong learners, fully engaged with their own professional development*" by bringing together academics with a diverse range of skills to collaborate in the "*development of teaching and assessment practices with peers*" (6.3). In adopting this approach, this project aims to build on the work of Herro and Clark (2016), in regarding game-based learning in HE as promoting interdisciplinary teaching and research.

In exploring the use of tabletop games in HE, our aim was to establish the role such games might play in engaging and empowering our students, while delivering an academically rigorous curriculum. The hypothesis we set out to test was that playing games, and playing with games, affords students the opportunity to interrogate the ways in which knowledge is constructed, regulated, and communicated.

Methodology

In order to test the hypothesis outlined above, we worked with unit leaders from across Manchester Metropolitan University to develop a series of seminar activities for delivery during their units in the academic year 2017/18. In total, sessions were developed for six different units:

1. 'EdLab – Practice and Innovation' – Level 3 students from the Faculty of Education, studying for a BA in Education
2. 'Fantasy' - Level 5 students from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities studying for a BA in Film and Media
3. 'Natural Resources and Pollution' – Level 5 students from the Faculty of Science and Engineering, studying for a BSc in Environmental Science
4. 'Reading and Writing Games' – Level 6 students from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities studying for a BA in English
5. 'Practical Science Communication' – Level 7 students from the Faculty of Science and Engineering, studying for an MSc in Science Communication

6. 'SciArt' – Level 7 students from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities studying for Masters level degrees in Arts related subjects.

For each of these units a similar approach was adopted. We began by working with the unit leader to discuss the desired learning outcomes for the seminar; based on these discussions we then selected a range of commercially available games that had the potential to facilitate subject-specific learning outcomes. With the exception of one of these sessions (see Case Study One), commercially available (off-the-shelf) games were chosen, as these are games that any educator could potentially acquire, would mean that this approach could theoretically be adaptable to other learning environments, which would not be the case with bespoke 'edu-games'. After a shortlist of games had been identified, we worked with the unit leaders to pick a single game that could be used for the seminar. Our rationale for using multiple copies of the same game was to ensure that students would be able to participate in meaningful discussions after playing the games. This decision was made following our first project (delivered on the 'Fantasy' unit) in which the use of a wide selection of games appeared to have a negative impact on the coherence of the post-game discussions. Moreover, the use of a single game has a positive impact on the logistics of the session; increasing the likelihood that different groups will complete their games a roughly the same time, and reducing the demands placed on the facilitator.

After the game for the session had been selected, we again worked with the unit leaders to design lesson plans that centred around playing these games, and which included time for pre- and post-game discussions, to ensure that the learning outcomes for each of the sessions could be highlighted and responded to by the students.

Case Studies

We now present a series of three brief case studies, each of which serve to highlight the work undertaken in this project. We chose these out of the six different sessions that we developed, as we found them to be the most revealing in terms of the two main objectives for this study.

Case Study One: Catan and global warming

This case study involved Level 5 Environmental Science undergraduate students, and was delivered as part of the 'Natural Resources and Pollution' (NRP) unit. The purpose of this session was to enable a better understanding of global climate impacts,

and in particular how environmental change can produce negative and positive feedback mechanisms in the global climate system. Furthermore, it presented students with opportunities for skills development and independent thinking around the natural environment. In order to achieve these objectives, students played *Catan: Global Warming* (Figure 1), a tabletop game that was developed by the authors to communicate Global Warming to varied audiences. This game represents a new scenario for the commercially available tabletop game *Catan*, with rule changes introduced to encourage cooperation and generate dialogue around resource production and global warming.

Prior to the session, the students were provided with the rules to the *Catan: Global Warming* scenario, and were asked to watch a short video explaining the rules of the original version of *Catan*. Students were asked to complete these tasks so that during the session more time could be spent on discussions rather than explaining how to play the game. These resources were made available to the students via Moodle several weeks before the session, and an announcement was sent to inform them about the session and its proposed contents.

Prior to playing the game, a discussion was facilitated to introduce the students to the authors, and to determine their knowledge and understanding around the subject of global warming. Similarly, after playing the game, an extended discussion was planned which enabled the students to evaluate the effectiveness of the game in terms of its representation of global warming and the physical environment.

Figure 1: students take part in the *Catan: Global Warming* game.



The session was delivered during the usual three-hour time slot for this unit, to a total of 11 students. Given that the class size for this unit was normally 35 this represented a very low turnout, which according to the unit leader was not the norm for these students. The students attending the session were very engaged, and contributed meaningful and insightful comments during the pre- and post-game discussions. Through observing and talking to the students it was clear that they enjoyed both the game and the structure of the session, and all of them managed to achieve the specific learning objectives. However, none of them had either watched the video or read the rulebook, despite confirming that they had access to them on Moodle, and were aware that they should have done so. Combined with the low attendance of the session, this lack of pre-engagement indicates an issue that clearly needs addressing. It was clear, as has been noted by Whitton (2014:92-3), that the motivational aspect of 'play' should not be overestimated in educational contexts, and that work must be undertaken to convince students (and educators) that playing games is meaningful and can have genuine value to their learning and development.

The notion that games are a 'distraction' has a long history that sees games (and more specifically, play) aligned with childhood and set apart from the 'real' world. As Huizinga, whose description of play's 'magic circle' has had a lasting influence, puts it, "*play is distinct from 'ordinary' life both as to locality and duration*" (2016:9). Games, in such a reading, might be regarded, as Caillois puts it, as "*unproductive*" (2001:10). More recent work on games challenges the notion that games operate in isolation from society as a whole (Salen and Zimmerman 2004; Mäyrä 2008; Bown 2018). Accordingly, when Salen and Zimmerman ask, "*just how permeable is the boundary between the real world and the artificial world of the game that is circumscribed and delimited by the magic circle?*" (2004:96) our answer is necessarily twofold. On the one hand, we would argue that the nature of play as being "*an act apart*" (Huizinga 2016:10) is what makes games such a productive space in which to explore complex, and often contentious, issues (see also De Koven, 1978). On the other hand, we wish to argue that the intersection of players, games, and their contexts makes possible meaningful (productive) educational activity.

One recommendation to address the potential issue of a perceived lack of productivity as it relates to play, would be for game facilitators to attend prior sessions for the selected units. This would enable those delivering the session to discuss the pedagogic benefits

of using tabletop games, and the potential that they have to enhance the teaching and learning experience. A more meaningful intervention, and one that was beyond the scope of this project, would be to embed games more clearly in course design, linking their use directly to learning outcomes and assessment. In such a model, it might be beneficial to invite students to join the process of creating game-resources, perhaps following a 'flipped learning' model (Bergmann and Sams, 2012) and/or models of 'peer instruction' (Crouch and Mazur, 2001), as games designers and reflective learners.

Case Study Two: Narrative and remediation

This case study took place as part of the Level 6 unit 'Reading and Writing Games', which is delivered in the Department of English and which is open to students studying BA(hons) degrees in English, English and Creative Writing, English and Film and English and American Literature. The objective of the session was to introduce the students to three key terms: 'adaptation', 'remediation', and 'transmedia', and to develop an understanding of the unique affordances of different gaming and storytelling platforms.

The key example used in the session was the video game *Dark Souls 3* (FromSoftware, 2016), a game that is part of a long-standing series that began in 2009 with *Demon's Souls* (PS3), and then ran to three *Dark Souls* instalments published in 2011, 2014 and 2016. The most recent iteration, *Dark Souls 3*, was selected for use in the session as it has been produced on a number of platforms (PC, PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One) as well as a tabletop game (Figure 2; Steamforged Games, 2017) and a graphic novel (Mann and Quah, 2016).

The session, run in a single room over a period of three hours, combined a brief interactive lecture (approximately 30 minutes) outlining the key terminology, before breaking down into a workshop in which the students were divided into three groups, each tasked with analysing a specific version of *Dark Souls 3*. The three versions used were the console version, the tabletop game, and the graphic novel.

Each group worked on a single 'text' for 45 minutes before moving on to the next version. The groups were asked to "*list the qualities that best describes each of the three versions of Dark Souls 3*" and to consider the ways in which the similarities and divergences they identified allowed them to reflect on (a) the specific affordances of the

three media, and (b) their understanding of adaptation, remediation and transmedia.

Finally, each group was required to write a short analysis (adapted from: Mäyrä 2008:50) comparing the ways in which game elements such as controls, game mechanics, visuals and possible social interaction are similarly or differently handled in the digital vs. non-digital versions of *Dark Souls*. The aim of this analysis was to help students develop an awareness of the possible unique affordances that digital and analogue technologies contribute to games.

The session, which one student described as the best seminar of their academic career, was demanding in terms of resources, necessitating the use of a PlayStation 4 console, a specifically designed version of the tabletop game, and copies of the graphic novel. That student numbers were relatively low (c. 15) and that we were able to get Alex Hall, one of the designers of the *Dark Souls: The Board Game* to attend the session, mitigated against the potential challenges of running the workshop.

While the lecture and workshop achieved the academic aims of the session, alongside delivering some industry-facing work pertaining to employability, it would be hard to replicate without specialist knowledge of the core materials and an interest in games and games design. Of the three case studies this is perhaps the most difficult to replicate and/or scale up for larger groups.

Figure 2: Dark Souls the tabletop game (Image Credit: Steamforged Games)



Case Study Three: Collaboration and the imposter syndrome

This case study concerns Level 7 MA students from the Manchester School of Art, and a session that was delivered as part of the 'SciArt' unit. Sciart is the intersection between the arts and science, and whilst it has a somewhat contentious history we take it here to mean an interdisciplinary exploration of both disciplines and the liminal spaces in between. The game that was chosen for this session was Jun Sasaki's *A Fake Artist Goes to New York*, in which players take it in turns to contribute to the creation of a collaborative drawing. The 'twist' is that one of the players does not know what they are supposed to be drawing. The identity of this 'fake' artist is unknown to the other players, and they win the game if they manage to bluff their way through two rounds of collaborative drawing without revealing their identity. The purpose of using this game was to stimulate discussion for the students in relation to the role of the artist, and how SciArt and their individual practice fit into the wider society, in particular focussing on the unit learning objective of "Communicating ideas, knowledge and concepts using a variety of modes". In playing the game, and in the discussions that followed, students were required to demonstrate decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations, whilst making sound judgements in the absence of complete data and communicating their conclusions clearly.

A Fake Artist Goes to New York is a straightforward game that can be explained in under a minute, takes 5-10 minutes to play (depending on the number of players), and whose main components are simply

Figure 3: the components of *A Fake Artist Goes to New York* are very minimal, which helps to make the game easy to explain and so quick to play (Image Credit: Oink Games)



paper and pens (Figure 3). After a brief introduction to the game, the students (16 out of a possible 18 attended this session) split into two groups and played the game several times, after which they led group discussions on issues that they faced in their practice with respect to 'authenticity' and 'imposter syndrome'. They also discussed the challenges and opportunities brought about by collaboration, and how this impacted their individual work and practice.

As discussed by Parkman (2016), imposter syndrome (or the imposter phenomenon) is an issue that affects many higher education students and can lead to the fear of failure and high levels of stress. The discussion of imposter syndrome amongst peers can help to address some of these issues and lead to positive changes in student morale, and in facilitating these conversations this session enabled a dialogue around these topics to be developed in a safe space. Throughout this session the students were very engaged with both the game and the subsequent discussion, and wanted to continue playing the game beyond the end of the session. In addition to achieving the learning objectives, the use of tabletop games in this session also had a lasting impact on at least one of the students, who was inspired to design a game for the summative assessment attached to this unit. This session demonstrated how tabletop gaming's 'magic circle' can create a safe space which can enable meaningful dialogue around academic topics, as well as those that are beneficial to a student's health and wellbeing.

Beyond HE

In addition to the objectives of this project, we were also able to develop learning materials for use outside of HE in informal learning environments. We are currently working with the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society for Applied Microbiology to use commercially available, off-the-shelf tabletop games to develop dialogue around key topics in each of these fields, and the experiences of 'Games in the Curriculum' have helped us to consider the importance of agency, game literacy, and scalability in developing these resources. Furthermore, we have used this experience to help develop and deliver a series of tabletop game workshops aimed at 5-8-year olds that use Jean du Poël's dexterity-based game *PitchCar* (Figure 4) to teach participants about friction and Newton's laws of motion.

Figure 4: Pitchcar can be used as an effective learning tool to discuss the basic principles of Newtonian dynamics



Conclusions

Following the delivery of these seminars we met with the unit leaders to discuss the opportunities and challenges that the use of tabletop games had presented. Whilst in every instance it was felt that our two main objectives had been achieved (i.e. we had used tabletop games to achieve specific learning outcomes and had identified tabletop games that could be used to facilitate learning with undergraduate and postgraduate students), there were several limitations that need to be addressed when using tabletop games in an HE setting:

- 1. Agency** – as demonstrated by the results of Case Study 1, it is necessary to work with students prior to any sessions that involve tabletop games. Doing so will help to inform the students of the potential value of tabletop games to the teaching and learning experience.
- 2. Game Literacy** – in choosing tabletop games for use in a HE environment, it is also important to listen to the needs and experiences of the students so that games selected that are appropriate to the specific groups. For example, *Dark Souls: The Board Game* is a complex tabletop game that would not be suitable for groups of students who were not reasonably experienced gamers.
- 3. Scalability** – whilst using commercially available, off-the-shelf games aids in the scalability of their use, it might be necessary to have several different tabletop games in order to achieve the learning outcomes for different sessions and cohorts of students. This could

make the use of tabletop games prohibitively expensive, especially given the challenges that stocking tabletop games would pose for academic libraries. This being said, tabletop games arguably provide a low-cost alternative to their digital counterparts (Mayer & Harris 2010).

In summary, tabletop games offer the potential for engaged teaching and learning in Higher Education, and as this project suggested, they can be used to meet subject-specific learning outcomes, to engender meaningful dialogue amongst students, and to facilitate learning in relation to employability and student engagement. However, in order to utilise commercial off-the-shelf tabletop games effectively in an HE setting it is important to consider the game literacy of the audience, and to take steps to ensure that the audience is aware of the value that they offer to the teaching and learning experience.

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Exploring Social Identity and Group Membership Changes During Adulthood: How do they influence self-perception?¹

Tracey Williams

Abstract

Social identity research suggests that being part of a group which we perceive to have high value is vital for our self-esteem, and that how we view our social identity ultimately influences how we view ourselves. Identification with smaller social groups has been shown to have psychological importance and influences levels of stress and well-being. It is understood that changes to social identities occur throughout the life-span but much of the research into the effect of these changes focuses on adolescence and old age. In addition, the methods used are often quantitative with an aim to measure an overall population. With reorientation of work and family life, along with migration, becoming increasingly common, insight into the impact of these changes is important. The present study explores how changes to social identity and group membership during adulthood influences self-perception, using thematic analysis of a semi-structured interview. Three emerging themes are identified as; 'desire for intimacy group', 'effect of social identity' and 'Influence on self-perception'. Implications of these findings and limitations of the study are also discussed.

Introduction

Social Identity can be defined as the way an individual perceives themselves based on their membership of particular groups (Burr, 2002). Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory involves three fundamental processes, which serve to maintain or enhance a positive social identity and therefore influence self-perception and self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Firstly, they argue that, as humans are inherently driven to organise and structure our perceived world, we create classifications or categories for ourselves as well as others (Wetherell, 1997). This categorisation process involves placing ourselves within certain categories or groups which can be large

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scale (such as race, gender or nationality) or small (such as sports groups or occupation), and then distinguishing these groups from others by accentuating intergroup differences and intragroup similarities (Capozza & Brown, 2000). The social identification process involves the individual's knowledge of the emotional and value significance attached with their membership of a particular group (Wetherell, 1997). In order for the high value which we place on our group membership to appear significant, it is often necessary for the third process of intergroup comparison to take place, in which the value attached to an 'out-group' is lessened (Burr, 2002).

Groups that we associate ourselves with are often simply social categories, of which not all members are known to us personally and therefore, the value attributed to them comes from culturally and historically formed stereotypes (Gross, 2010). However, smaller face-to-face groups may emerge from the wider group membership (for example, students of a large university coming together to form a study group), and these have been shown to have more psychological importance, even when there is no objective reason for the group formation (Wetherell, 1997). For example, Bettencourt and Sheldon (2001) suggest that an individual's identification and their psychological well-being was related to: how much they perceived that they could act authentically and be accepted; how much they felt they contributed in a way that was valued by other members; and how meaningful they perceived their intra-group relationships to be. Similarly, high levels of identification with small social groups has been linked to lower levels of personal stress and increased life satisfaction (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetlan, Varmedal & Penna, 2005). It is suggested that this positive impact may be a result of the opportunity to benefit from the support of fellow group members (Haslam, 2004; Haslam et al., 2005).

While the literature reviewed suggests that social identity and group membership are important for maintaining positive self-identity and self-esteem, much of the research into the effects of changes to social identity has used quantitative and statistical methods, focusing on an overall measure of a population (Amiot et al., 2010). The findings from these types of studies have suggested, that when faced with a life change (such as a transition into university), individuals are more likely to report positive health, well-being and self-esteem if they identify as a member of a social group (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Haslam, Cruwys, Haslam, Dingle & Chang, 2016). In addition, research is often concerned with the social identity changes of adolescent or elderly people (Tanti, Stukas, Halloran &

Foddy, 2011), due to critical psychosocial development stages and mental health implications (Erikson, 1968; Newman & Newman, 2001; Tarrant, MacKenzie & Hewitt, 2006; Stephens, Alpass, Towers & Stevenson, 2011). The current study explores how changes to social identity and group membership influence self-perception. It achieves this using thematic analysis of a semi-structured interview with an adult student who has experienced changes to social identity as a result of relocation.

Method

A female participant aged 30-40 was recruited from the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) population. A semi-structured interview guide was developed (Appendix 1), informed by a review of literature relating to social identity theory and group membership. This form of interview was used as it allows for modification to questions and probing based on responses from the participant (Smith, 2015). Examples of interview questions are; (Q2) 'How have you found the experience of relocating and making new friends?', and (Q6) 'To what extent do you feel these social groups influence how you see yourself?'. The interview took place in a quiet area on university grounds and was audio recorded for later analysis. A 'playscript' style transcript (Appendix 2) was created from the audio-recording and served as the data set for thematic analysis, this transcription was done by the researcher to allow familiarisation with the data (King & Horrocks, 2010).

While interview questions were broadly informed by the literature relating to social identity, an inductive analysis of the data was carried out with an aim to ensure the original meaning of the data was captured (Smith, 2015). In order to ensure a solid foundation for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), familiarisation formed the first step of this process. A second phase of 'coding' took place, identifying and labelling any features of the data which appeared meaningful. Following this, themes were identified, reviewed for relevance to the coded data, leading to the final stage of defining and naming of themes (Appendix 3).

Analysis

Three themes emerged from the data which have been labelled as; 'Desire for intimacy groups', 'Effect of Social identity' and 'Influence on self-perception'.

Desire for intimacy groups:

The participant has moved home, changed address and also moved from a self-led degree course to enrolling in a 'brick' university.

She suggests that her change in studies was informed by a desire for contact with others, particularly face-to-face, as despite having support available via email and telephone there is still a sense of being alone:

"It was hard 'cause you're [pause] working on your own and the fact that we were on the [location anonymised] meant that I couldn't, there are groups and stuff like that, but, erm [pause] they're all located in mainland so I came over a couple of times to Southampton for a couple of like revision seminars and revision days and stuff like that but generally speaking I was on my own over there." (Line 25-29)

The experience of relocating and forming new friends has been difficult, as friendship groups are already established, and the participant expresses feelings of loneliness and isolation as a result. Previous friendships appear difficult to maintain from a distance, despite their long duration, with the participant expressing the need for regular contact in order for these friendships to continue. There is an assumption that without maintaining regular and close contact, friendships will deteriorate:

"people that I'd been friends with for a very long time that I thought I would always maintain friendships with, it's not that I've fell out with them or I'm not friendly, but over the years the contact that was once every, well beginning with once every week and then it's once every month and then suddenly." (Line 53-156)

Despite this difficulty, and the fear and anxiety that the participant associates with being 'new' and trying to make new friends, there is still a desire, if not a need, to belong to a group. There is a consistent acknowledgement that forming and maintaining friendships is difficult and requires effort, yet the participant considers this something that she 'has to' or 'needs to' do;

"it's something that I do need to, and I will need to address, not that my life's, I feel empty without groups of friends, but it's nice to have people around, locally." (Line 229-231)

Effect of social identity:

The friendships and social groups described by the participant are all informed by her social identities of either 'student' 'professional' or 'mother'. Each of these friendship groups have developed out of opportunity and the perceived similarities between group members, based on their categorisation and identification as a member. In addition, the shared social identity within each group, remains the foundation of such friendship, with conversation and friendship rituals being structured solely around social identity which is active within the group. For example, when with '*student*' friends, time is spent with them only within university and conversation is structured around studies. While, when with 'work' friends, time is spent with them in work, discussing work issues:

"Be able to discuss what we're learning, and amongst other things, y'know but discuss what we're learning, what they're doing for their, erm projects and assignments and revision for their exams." (Line 187-189) [...]

"I've got my work group, erm [pause] and that's not dissimilar in the fact that it's nice to have people to talk to about what work we're doing and about different cases that we're working on." (Line 193-198)

The opportunity to make new friends appears to be attached to the social identity of the participant. She discusses her difficulties in forming new friendships now that her children are getting older, as she no longer spends time in the playground with the "*other mums*".

"there's no playground anyway to stand in, and [second child] very much the same it's kind of "drop me off" and all the other parents of that age do that they're all, lots of them are working or they're doing their own thing they literally drop them at the gates, they run into school and, they don't stand around in the playground and have a natter and so, I've found that quite difficult." (Line 108-112)

Influence on self-perception

The social identities adopted by the participant have influenced the way in which she perceives her personal identity and her abilities. Even more apparent though, is the influence that her group membership and the exclusion or isolation that she feels from other groups, has on the way in which she views herself. Having other students around at university and being included within the small

social group of mature students creates a sense of belonging and appears to confirm or validate this sense of identity as a student.

"I'm part of this group of mature students that are in my degree programme, so yeah I suppose they kind of [pause] don't know would you say [sighs] validate it? In the fact that, I know I'm a student 'cause im coming in doing it but they make it more [questioning tone] real?" (Line 281-284)

However, the difficulty experienced in forming new friendships has created a sense of insecurity and self-doubt:

"when I struggled to make friends when I first got here, before I started uni, you kind of look at yourself and think why, why are people not being that friendly? I'm trying really hard here and they're not, kind of is there something about me." (Line 269-272)

Discussion

It's unsurprising that the theme of social identity is apparent throughout the data set, as the semi-structured interview was informed by social identity theory and research literature. Nevertheless, the findings appear to support Tajfel and Turner's (1979) suggestion that social identity influences our self-perception. Social support as a benefit feature of smaller social groups is also evident in line with previous research (Haslam, 2004; Haslam et al., 2005). In addition, there is support for the desirability of 'intimacy group' membership throughout the emerging themes and the difficulty of gaining membership to these already established groups supports the idea that they are impermeable (Lickel et al., 2001; Madler & Hanon, 2013).

Limitations of the present study should be considered when interpreting these findings. Firstly, with only one participant, while the data collected provides a real insight into the lived experience of someone trying to break into new social groups, it is not possible to generalise this insight to any wider population. Despite efforts by the researcher to ensure that the analysis conducted was grounded in the data, it is reasonable to observe that all analysis will be shaped, to some extent, by theoretical assumptions (Smith, 2015). Similarly, the process of thematic analysis is complex and interpretive, therefore the final themes are not the only ones evident throughout the data, rather they are perceived to be the most relevant to the research question. Interestingly, the three themes identified within

the study are not mutually exclusive themes, instead they overlap and inform each other. For example, the desire for intimacy group membership appears to inform the individual's self-perception, as does her social identity and group membership.

Overall, the study provides an insight into the complexity of social identity, particularly in the context of a generation experiencing reorientation and migration more than any before. Forming new social identities and friendships during adulthood is an experience that many of us may indeed face, with very little understanding of how to go about it.

The full length article can be found on the website www.sajjournal.co.uk from February 2017.

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Working Together Collaboratively and in Partnership to Explore 'I ♥ Learning' Creative Approaches to Motivate and Inspire Students

Marcin Wozniak, Susan Cobb, Helena Kettleborough, David Leathlean

Abstract

This paper reports the outcomes of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)¹ funded Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project 'I Love Learning'. Our project focused on encouraging creativity in our learning support and teaching to motivate and encourage students. In this paper, we examine how we worked together collaboratively and across different disciplines. We each contribute in our different voices, so that the contrasting facets of our joint journey can be explored. We explore our methodology, joint working to improve teaching, active learning, storytelling and use of social media. We demonstrate through practice that collaborative working is an important part of developing creativity in learning.

Keywords: Creativity, Action Research, Co-operative Inquiry, Story, Metaphor, Environment, Collaboration, Inspiration, Social Media

Creativity and Learning:

Changes in education and society, the uncertain nature of the future and the fast changing nature of the economic challenges are driving the need to be more creative in our learning and teaching (Jackson 2012). Sharples et al (2014) explored how universities can be more creative from learning through making, developing approaches such as citizen inquiry and using social media.

We found that the following exploration of the idea of creativity helped clarify our thinking:

"Beghetto and Kaufman (2007) argued that in addition to the study of 'Big C' (eminent creativity) and 'little c' (everyday creativity), it is also essential to explore what might be termed 'mini c' creativity, or the creative processes involved in the construction of personal knowledge and

¹ Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at Manchester Metropolitan University (CELT)- <http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk>.

understanding." (Hennessey and Amabile, 2010: 572)

We sought to explore creativity both as a 'little c' and a 'mini c' and sought to understand how students can be more creative in their approach to learning and how we as staff, could enable creativity in the course of our teaching and student learning support processes.

Setting the Scene for Our Journey

Our project consisted of four participants, who have co-authored this paper: Susan Cobb, Student Experience Support Tutor at the Cheshire Campus (until spring 2017); Helena Kettleborough, Associate Lecturer, Business School; David Leathlean, Foundation Year Programme Leader in the Manchester Fashion Institute (MFI); and Marcin Wozniak, Student Experience Support Tutor (SEST) at the Manchester Met Business School (previously SEST at Cheshire campus)



We met on the 'Creativity for Learning' continuing professional development course provided by CELT, which helped us to wake our creativity and develop innovative creative approaches in our practices.² During the CELT 2015 Conference, we presented our creative innovations developed on the course and ran our first '*I Love Learning*' workshops, which invited other staff across Manchester Met to explore what it means to be creative in teaching and learning. The keynote speaker at the conference, Manchester Met's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Malcom Press, spoke of developing creativity in learning. In addressing the audience of staff, he raised a number of questions, which were very pertinent to the questions we had identified in applying for the CELT Scholarship in Teaching and Learning 2015/2016.³ These questions we paraphrased from our notes as follows:

² Our experiences on the 'Creativity for Learning' Unit and on creativity in our practice are recorded on a CELT MMU video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKVcqzkrCD8>

³ CELT Scholarship in Teaching and Learning Research Scholarship 2015/16: '*I ♥ learning*': What gives life to *student and staff learning?* - *Explorations in creative approaches to motivate and inspire students.*

- How can we motivate students to help them be successful in their studies?
- How can we build on the advantages of MMU?
- How can we be an innovative and creative university?
- How can we create space for students to be creative?
- How can we deliver a curriculum for students in a particular subject, which enables them to be successful for life?
- How can we support learning in creative and imaginative ways?
- How can we deliver the value of education which is not just about money, i.e. how can we inspire our students?
- How can we provide learning, which can help transform our student's lives?

We felt, therefore, that the questions we were exploring in our 'I Love Learning' project had a wider resonance to the University as a whole. In this paper, we each examine an aspect of our teaching and learning support: how we developed creativity in our work through collaborative and inter-disciplinary working.

Story: our means of travel

In sharing what we did together, we have decided to use the medium of story. This was both from practical experience and as a way of sharing our learning. The use of story as an educational tool, was introduced during 'Creativity for Learning'⁴ course and further developed by Sue in her practice (see below). Helena had used story as part of action research, both the creation of stories as explored by Mead (2013) and the understanding that stories help bring the reader into another place and experience (Reason and Bradbury, 2006 and Sikes and Gale, 2006 cited in Bold, 2012). In *Stories of the Great Turning* (Reason and Newman, 2013), story was used to illustrate change, a practice we sought in this project. In this paper, we create a number of stories (Table 1).

Once upon a time

The theme of story was explored in the first of three co-operative inquiry groups run in 2016 (see below: 'What is action research anyway?'). As a group of four, we decided to use story to explain how we learnt to work together collaboratively and across different disciplines: "*there is a great potential for the uses of story in higher education*" (Moon, 2010:10). This approach was informed by Sue's use of story in the innovative workshop she developed, to encourage

4 CELT, Creativity for Learning <http://tinyurl.com/zavk7qb>

Table 1: Stories created to illustrate practice

Author	Story	Purpose served by the story
Sue Cobb	Once upon a time	The use of story to help us learn from each other
David Leathlean	The Royal Exchange session	To unleash sideways thinking by removing learners from their habitual areas of work
	Out of our comfort zones...	To pull learners together across disciplines by providing the necessary structure
Helena Kettleborough	What is action research anyway?	To achieve joint and collaborative working across disciplines through a shared methodology
	You do it first and I'll imitate	To improve classroom teaching through collaboration and learning across disciplines
Marcin Wozniak	If you go down to the woods today	To enhance creativity through collaboration and trust
	Reflections on practice	To enhance student involvement in creative projects, through the use of metaphor and social media

students' to be more critical in their thinking: the 'Critical Thinking Murder Mystery'⁵. This creative take on the study skills workshop, turned a rather dull topic (as often perceived by students) and tackled it from a different point of view (Cobb, 2015). James and Brookfield (2014:9) suggested that 'nothing wakes up attention to learning more than being asked to do something unfamiliar'. In the workshop, students drew together witnesses, facts and images into a story, which used the evidence to explain how a murder took place and the reasons behind it. The creative and fun aspect of the development of the stories acted as a means to get the students more engaged

5 'Critical Thinking Murder Mystery' https://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/good_practice/gpentry.php?id=80

with the process of developing critical thinking and writing skills. Moon and Fowler (2008:232) suggest that *"Stories can work in the mind of students in the way that traditional lectures do not"*. Fisher (2008:72) pointed out that *"stories have long been seen as a natural stimulus for discussion, investigation and problem-solving in schools"*. Working collaboratively as a team, writing a story or building a case, the students were encouraged to consider their case from all angles and, while developing their arguments, to critically analyse the evidence and consider how to support it to make a strong case. Before running the workshop, Sue had concerns about the reaction of the students to using pretence and storytelling. These proved to be unfounded, as the students launched themselves into the activities enthusiastically. They enjoyed the storytelling aspect: actively discussing the scenario, writing surprisingly detailed stories and using the evidence in inventive ways; changing a dull topic into an enjoyable and engaging activity.

Students presenting their case.



Sue also used student stories in a different way, to help new mature students to settle into university. Using two existing mature students as Peer Mentors, Sue encouraged communication with new mature students via a closed Facebook group prior to the start of the academic year. Moon and Fowler (2008:234) refer to this as 'known' stories, where *"...stories are about events or experiences that relate to the common interests of the tellers or those who listen"*. The Peer Mentors answered questions and shared their experiences, including the highs and lows, and their own insights into life as a mature student. Shared stories offered incoming students the opportunity to find out about the reality of student life from the perspective of someone who had experienced it. It also encouraged them to discuss their concerns and ask questions that they considered 'silly', which

they were unlikely to ask a member of staff (for example, concerns about relating to the younger students).

Sue encouraged our I love Learning group to use stories at all points of the project, in feeding back to each other on a weekly basis, in the co-operative inquiry sessions and when reporting on our project to others. The use of story gave a richness to how we visualised our work together and how we worked together creatively.

Alternative Learning Environment of the Royal Exchange: How Manchester Met staff (across varied job roles and disciplines) worked collaboratively to develop new and exciting learning and teaching strategies

Whilst teaching at Manchester Met it has always been a priority for David to consider the importance of promoting the use of creativity and innovation, within the students' learning, in both the content and delivery of teaching material to enrich the student experience. CELT's 'Creativity for Learning' continuing professional development unit for staff was a perfect fit with the university's progressive strategy to nurture and develop creativity and innovation within the student curriculum. Activities from the first week of the course challenged our perceptions of how we could further develop our learning and teaching strategies. These activities gave us the confidence to be brave and to try something new. As students, we quickly developed a new vision of how exciting and thought-provoking learning could be. Within dynamic learning sets, we proactively discussed our perceptions of what develops good student learning. Over subsequent weeks, this manifested itself into our small breakaway group of Manchester Met staff from varied job roles and disciplines, allowing us to plant the seeds of the 'I Love Learning' research group.

The key driver for the shaping of the group was undoubtedly the environment of the Creativity for Learning session, which took place in the city centre, where we played the 'Sell your bargains' game (Nerantzi, 2013). Prior to the session, we were asked to think about a concept, which we struggle to explain to students, or a problem that we face in our teaching practice. During the session in groups, we collaboratively explored ways of solving the problem and were given a budget of £1 - £3 to find items which could offer a solution. We were also encouraged to consider the surrounding environment, to stimulate our thinking process and to find free items or ideas that would offer a solution. Nerantzi (2013:133) suggests that:

"Learning in the game happens through collaboration and having fun but also on creating novel and immersive learning experiences in multiple locations."

We chose the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester for a space for discussion and as a cohort of learners. We quickly identified that this magnificent venue was a wonderful environment to be inspired in, which created an energy that would not have been achieved on the University campus. According to Warger and Dobbin (2009:4), education has changed dramatically with a need to take *"a fresh focus on what constitutes effectiveness and efficiency in learning"*. Supporting this notion of change, Clark (2002:9), comments on *"the positive impact [on learning] of changing the environment"*. This simple change in offering students a different location has quite simply revolutionised our teaching. With the use of new and varied environments, student engagement has increased and given further value to the 'Joy of Learning'.

Subsequent developments within David's MFI Foundation Year Programme have enthused and engaged the students. With the introduction of 'Active Learning Weeks', students are encouraged to participate in their learning outside of the classroom. Visits to Styal Mill (National Trust), The Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester City Centre's retail district and a study trip to London ⁶, have created experiences perceived by the student cohort to be fun, interesting and exciting. Such an understanding of the value of environment in learning came to the group as students on the 'Creativity for Learning' Unit through direct experience.

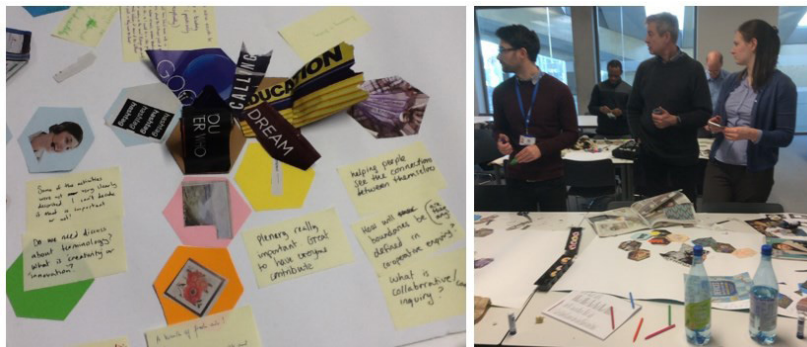
Out of Our Comfort Zones....

The experience of playing the game in the city centre gave us an opportunity to consider how we might develop new and exciting learning activities from a small investment of up to £3. With differing approaches from different learning sets, a variety of purchases made from a diverse mix of locations, including some free items, clarified that either with a low or non-existent budget, working creatively, anything is possible to use, to make learning more interesting. The purchased, or collected resources, such as chalkboards and chalk, plant seeds, maps, postcards and post-it notes, have contributed to our students participating in innovative learning activities, (such as

6 Manchester Met News & Events: Fashion students meet designer Sir Paul Smith <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/news/news-items/5475/>

Growing Social Enterprise Ideas workshop ⁷ run by Marcin, where planted seeds acted as a metaphor of growing skills, see below). Such approaches made learning more playful and fun, increasing student engagement and enhancing the student experience. David used this approach to enhance engagement and interaction during the Foundation Year induction, to encourage students out of their comfort zones. Resources such as free museum, music and theatre flyers were used to discuss the cohort's individual interests, and maps highlighting the student's home locations encouraged conversation and bonding during the session. Further on, in the year similar resources were used to engage student learning, outside of their everyday study. Exhibitions, presentations, theatre productions and all things cultural were promoted via the use of flyers, to highlight the importance of finding extra-curricular activities to engage with and to extend students' 'Joy of Learning'.

'Creative Patchwork' Project, Co-operative Inquiry 1



The 'Creative Patchwork' project, first used within the I Love Learning co-operative inquiry, provided an opportunity for further development when working with Foundation Year students. It enabled them to visualize their thoughts of creativity and innovation in the form of a group artwork. With the use of coloured crayons, an inexpensive resource (£1) purchased during the Manchester city centre activity, students communicated their thoughts brilliantly through this underused medium. The use of artefacts found in the everyday environment and the use of simple creative techniques to engage students in expressing their ideas and thoughts creation, was informed by Papert's Constructionism theory explored by (Ackerman, 2001). Here, knowledge is actively constructed by people's interaction with the world, hands on exploration, expressing ideas through making them physical and allowing, them to become tangible

⁷ Marcin Wozniak (2015) 'Creative Innovation - Growing Social Enterprise Ideas' <https://cpdmarcinwozniak.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/marcin-wozniak-creative-innovation-growing-social-enterprise-ideas.pdf>

and sharable which further inform them. Self-directed learning is encouraged by a conversation based around created artefacts, imagining new environments and bringing new tools, media and technologies into learning. At the end of the academic year, David created an interactive exhibition, which included the work of the students created during the academic year, displayed at the CELT 2016 Learning Festival.

What Is Action Research Anyway?

Our first collaborative task was to agree our methodology of working together. Helena was keen to use action research in our joint project together, as she had used it (particularly first person action research) in her PhD focusing on ecology, cosmology and sustainability. In the PhD, the many values of action research with its forms of first, second and third person inquiry emerged. As a group, we debated whether we should use the action research methodology or not. In the end, we agreed to explore together. From the 'big tent' of action research, we choose to use the definition offered by Reason and Bradbury:

"A participatory, democratic process, concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview... it seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally to the flourishing of individual persons and their communities." (Reason and Bradbury, 2006:1)

Together, we engaged with some of the characteristics of action research, particularly extended ways of knowing (Heron, 1996) and cycles of action and reflection (Bradbury, 2015). Extended ways of knowing allows for different types of knowing to work together. For Heron (1996), there was the *experiential* knowing of living; the *presentational* knowing of story, art and creativity; the *propositional* knowing of academic research and policy; and finally *practical* knowing in the world, which was the culmination of all three types of knowing (1996: 56).

Structuring the CELT 'I Love Learning' Teaching and Learning Project

We decided to have a number of small, regular project meetings, where we would explore our practice together as co-researchers, and three wider meetings in which we would include others. We

decided to use elements of a 'co-operative inquiry' methodology from action research as the framework for our project and wider meetings. Following elements of 'co-operative inquiry' (Heron and Reason, 2008) method we saw ourselves as first, identifying the inquiry question together, then exploring through regular cycles of action in our teaching and student support roles, and finally coming back together and reflecting on what we had done. We also saw ourselves as each inquiring individually (*first person inquiry*), followed by inquiring together in a participative way (*second person inquiry*); as co-researchers and not as subject and object (Torbert, 2001). Participants in the co-operative inquiry group were recruited through CELT Greenhouse ⁸ and staff recruited by SESTs at Cheshire campus.

In the end, using action research proved fruitful for us in a number of different ways. Sue reflected on how using this methodology worked for us; she observed that we managed to reflect individually and together in our project group, also in our larger co-operative inquiry meetings. Such an understanding was important, as it showed that the action research methodology had real benefits when exploring how creativity can be introduced into teaching. Helena explained the action research methodology in both the project and co-operative meetings. We found continuing cycles of action and reflection beneficial to the development of our teaching and learning styles (Marshall, 2016:54). Moreover, the opportunity to inquire into our daily practice in teaching and supporting students through regular cycles, in a supportive and reflective atmosphere, proved to be a fruitful source of ongoing creativity.

You Do It First and I'll Imitate

As an Associate Lecturer, Helena's meetings with the team were punctuated with the reality of teaching on a weekly basis. Helena found it extremely beneficial to work together to collaborate on the small steps to improve her practice; she illustrates this through the following two examples.

Helena wished to support the active engagement of students who attended tutorials and encourage students to maintain attendance. A potential solution to this issue and an early improvement to her teaching was suggested by Marcin, who suggested that Helena start each session with a piece of music. As a Student Experience Support

⁸ The Greenhouse is a regular monthly session open to all staff at MMU, which explores creativity. Contact Chrissi Nerantzi at CELT to get involved.

Tutor Marcin often worked with small groups in large rooms and that the students could feel intimidated by the space or overwhelmed and inclined not to talk. To get round this he regularly used music in his sessions, to provide an atmosphere, help students to relax and get involved with the tasks in the session. He found this worked very well, it also helped with 'breaking down the ice' when meeting new group of students. This seemed a good idea and the project team reflected on how similar approach could be incorporated in their practice. Helena started with pieces of music with a space theme. As Helena has a keen interest in space this was a topic she felt she could talk about with the students. Later, Marcin suggested going on to ask the students for their favourite piece of music, which Helena did. The point was not to relate the theme of the music to the tutorial, rather to enhance the atmosphere in the room. Helena then started the tutorial with the students' choice of music as they were coming into the tutorial, ending when all students were present and the tutorial started. The idea was favourably received.

Another improvement, which came out of collaborative working, was in 'making' as part of learning. In the first co-operative inquiry sessions, David facilitated a session where he asked participants to 'make' a response to the idea of creativity in learning. For this exercise, David provided old newspapers, hexagon shapes (which he had cut out), and scissors, pens and glue. David also provided water and a few nibbles. In working with colleagues on this exercise, the making proved great fun. It inspired Helena to take the risk to ask her students in the next tutorial to work together to describe a sustainable supply chain: cutting things up and drawing as well as using words on their poster. Through the use of creative approaches in her sessions Helena aimed to generate a light bulb moment in her students, to engage students with the topic explored, not just as something they learn about, but something they will potentially take away from the sessions and embed in future practice and lives. The students responded well resulting in a more creative response from them to the challenging theoretical question of how we make a supply chain sustainable from the beginning (the 'resources' or animals and plants) to the end, when we eat, consume, or use the food or product:

"When I drew a poster I managed to visualise the idea."
(Student feedback, 2015/16)

"Drawing the posters and interacting with one another has helped us become a learning community." (Student feedback 2015/16)

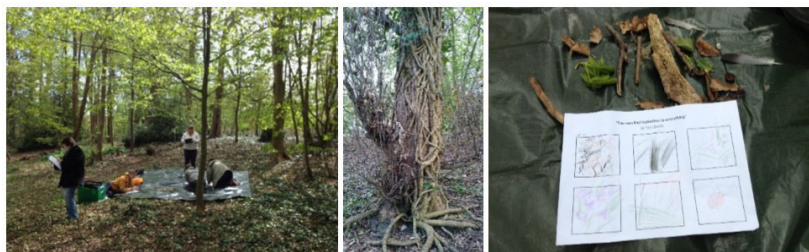
The making process used in both instances engaged participants with a creative act, use of metaphorical language, visual expression of thoughts and making them alive and sharable with others (Nerantzi, 2015). Such making process can be equated with the use of metaphor in Education, to expand the mind, develop critical thinking, encourage problem finding and aid categorisation and memorisation (Low, 2008).

If You Go Down to the Woods Today: 3rd Co-operative Inquiry at Cheshire campus

Building on the experience of 'new environments for learning', experienced by the I Love Learning collective at the Royal Exchange Theatre, the third co-operative inquiry, run at Cheshire campus, invited staff and students to experience the ancient woodland located on the campus. The purpose was to introduce participants to a new inspiring environment, use creative activities to generate energy and connection to the surrounding environment and to gather feedback on the use of such environments in enhancing engagement, motivation and curiosity within the learning process. Jackson (2005:17) suggests that:

"learning processes to foster creativity must develop self-efficacy, encourage risk-taking in safe environments and help students to engage with messy/complex and unpredictable situations, where there are no right and wrong answers."

3rd Co-operative Inquiry at Cheshire



So, off we went to the woods... everyone was set for an adventure, in the exciting location full of textures and sounds - especially in spring time - with flowers blooming and birds tweeting and lots of room for interaction.

Helena started the session with a talk on the importance of the protection of the natural world and invited participants to listen to the sounds of the woodlands. This allowed the facilitators to check how the participants reacted to the new environment. At first, participants found it difficult to relate how such experience could be linked to their practice. To resolve this, David encouraged everyone to find inspiration in their surroundings: to notice elements of the environment and express those elements through saying aloud what we see. This interactive activity helped participants to relax and encouraged a creative attitude. We continued to observe and find elements of nature that fascinated or grabbed our attention; we took pictures and later repeated the exercise, but this time focused on one chosen element of the environment and recorded that element with simple drawing techniques. Participants' feedback suggested that active observation and encouragement to produce their own creative output, through recording of the surrounding and switching between different media, helped them connect with the environment, creating their own meanings and interpretations of the environment and prompting discussion of those with others during the session. According to Papert's Constructionist view (Ackermann,2001:4):

"projecting out our inner feelings and ideas is key to learning. Expressing ideas make them tangible and shareable, which in turn, informs, shapes and sharpens these ideas, and helps us communicate with others through our expressions."

Greenhouse at Cheshire campus, creative space for collaboration, growing seeds of ideas and skills



Participants suggested that the use of creative tasks to record and interpret the environment helped them to realise that we often fail to use effectively the vast amount of data and information which surrounds us, and that creative approaches such as visualisation and sharing ideas with others can help us analyse such information more effectively. Dewulf and Baillie (1999) define creativity as "*shared imaginations*", which involves awaking our own imagination, sharing it with others through action, creation and encouraging others to use their own imagination.

Reflections on Involving Students in Creativity

Within his role as Student Experience Tutor, Marcin has seen the importance of sharing ideas, and collaborating on projects with staff and students: working together across different disciplines to share skills and to work alongside students on projects, to enhance the student experience. To this end, he has used creative approaches and Action Research methodology to engage students in projects at the Cheshire campus. His aim was to give the students involved an opportunity to collaborate with other students and staff and to develop new transferable skills. During the 'Creativity for Learning' course, he developed *the metaphor of a growing plant* as an innovation to enhance his teaching. The innovation was used to engage a number of students in extracurricular social enterprise projects, or collaborating with students and staff on the development of the Greenhouse on campus. *The metaphor of a growing plant*, nurturing and cultivating its roots was used in a 'Social Enterprise Ideas Workshop' to help students understand the importance of the active development of their skills: the regular nurturing and attention required for a growing plant, links to active engagement with opportunities, development of skills and creation of their own opportunities. Owen (2001:xvi) suggests that metaphor can help to "*externalise abstract thinking and translate it into a sensory-based tangible representation*". Such creative approaches are effective tools for enhancing students motivation, empowerment and engagement. The use of metaphor was supported by the making process to enhance the memorisation (Low, 2008) of this activity, which involved not just educational aspect but also enhanced students' motivation for self-development. Students' planted a seed of a selected plant representing their developed idea, which they took away with them to nurture their growing plant/idea and document the process and share with others via social media. Students' who participated in the 'ideas workshops' and engaged with metaphor have since been actively involved with the campus life. Collaboration with other students' and staff, encouraged by the I Love Learning group and

the use of creative approaches to learning, has led to the formation of the learning communities at the Cheshire campus, such as the *Enterprise Society*, *The Sustainability and Growth Society* and the *Student Academic Innovation Journal*⁹ and has contributed to extracurricular activities offered at the campus. Beachboard et al. (2011) argue that student-learning communities allow for the development of belonging and relatedness, which leads to student motivation, confidence and interest in learning. The use of interactive spaces such as the Woodland, full of bright colours, noises and textures, or other locations, which offer a new and stimulating environment to students, can enhance interaction between students and staff, create energy in the class room and campus to motivate and involve students. Places such as the Greenhouse restored and developed by students and staff at Cheshire Campus in collaboration with Manchester Met's Environment Team - Big Impact project¹⁰, can serve as an example of how creative spaces, can be created within an educational setting. Engaging students in not-straight forward learning, experimentation, play, rest, work, reflection and encouraging a co-operative process helps to develop brighter ideas, mutual support, sharing of skills and the development of wider perspectives.

Technology Can Help Us in Being Creative

It could be argued that creativity can only happen when we have a room full of resources. Our answer is to embrace every day technology in simple ways. During the trip to the Woodland, we recorded a video of the environment and played it at the beginning of a following co-operative inquiry session involving participants who did not attend. Participants were welcomed by the tweeting of birds and a 'window to the woodland' via projection using standard class room technology, similar to Helena's use of music during tutorials, making the room more exciting and bringing participants' attention to the everyday environment. This creative approach aimed to stimulate participants' engagement and creativity, to encourage them to think about the nature of the ideal learning experience and to discuss creative ways of enhancing the student experience.

The use of new technologies and social media within teaching can expand the possibilities for creativity in supporting student engagement and the development of independent research skills and transferable skills. Such approach was highlighted by David's use of

9 Student Academic Innovation Journal www.saijournal.co.uk

10 Manchester Met, Big Impact <http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/bigimpact/>

social media platform Instagram on The MFI Foundation course: where students, alongside academic staff, participated in learning outside of the classroom and collecting research that links to fashion. The use of social media, fun and new way of communication familiar to most students, allowed an easy way to share information between staff and students, to have fun while working on the research task and to create a link between the studied subject and the professional environment. Scales (2008) suggests that students need to see their skills developed within the context that they find interesting or that they are passionate about. The sharing of different creative approaches within 'I Love Learning' has helped Marcin to enhance his practice with the use of Social Media and the use of social media hashtags - a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#). During the new student Induction he has introduced an activity 'The Cheshire campus Selfie Game'. Students took 'selfie' pictures with other new students in different locations on the campus and uploaded images using the hashtag #mmucwelcome allowing them to find images, which were taken on the day. This helped students to get to know the campus and each other and gave an opportunity for students to exchange contact details and to follow each other on social media and further support their social integration to the university.

The idea of the use of hashtag as a sharing platform was first used in the 'ideas workshop', where hashtag #mmusocialenterprise was used by students and staff to upload the images of a growing plant, which was planted during the workshop and which acted as a metaphor for a growing idea. This simple, creative approach was designed to motivate students to act on their ideas but also offer a space or platform that connects staff and other students involved in the workshop, to offer each other support with developing projects and to encourage collaboration. Here the hashtag offered a space that can be easily accessed from various locations and social media platforms. Marcin offered support for students and staff who are not familiar with the use of such technologies. The uploaded growing images also helped to create digital stories, that were easily accessible and that could be shared with other students and staff, to showcase students' contribution and engage others in taking part in similar activities. Use of social media can generate interest, attention and motivation for the 'digital generation' of students. The creation of a digital story, through the use of social media, can enhance students' communication skills by helping them learn how to organise ideas, ask questions, express opinions, and construct narratives (Digital Storytelling, no date: online).

Table 2 - Outputs of collaborative and partnership working

Outputs	Collaboration and partnership	Outcomes
Regular project sessions on a 3 weekly basis	Discuss practice through ongoing cycles of action and reflection	Worked out joint ways of working together to deliver outputs; delivered practice and then reflected on it again
Collaborating with others	Jointly delivered 3 sessions of co-operative inquiry Delivered one Greenhouse session on creativity and social media (Autumn 2015)	Around 20+ participants (2 sessions on Manchester campus, 1 on Cheshire campus) Eight staff participants reflected on creativity in learning together
Delivered stall at CELT Learning festival June 2016	1 Interactive Exhibition Collection of creative posters made by students	We estimate that we talked to upwards of 50 staff members on our project, demonstrating ideas through the creative posters and interactive Exhibition. The posters were made during teaching sessions on Responsible Enterprise during 2015/16.
Publishing:	Learning how to jointly reflect on practice and co-author papers	Creative Academic Magazine Cobb et al (2016) CELT Learning and Teaching in Action Journal (forthcoming).
Influenced teaching	Helena awarded Outstanding Teacher in sustainability from MMU Students Award (May 2016) https://www.theunionmmu.org/your-voice/teachingawards/2016-winners/	
Presentation at national conference	David	The Foundation Year Network Conference 2016, Southampton Solent University
Presentation to Dept. of Management team meeting	Helena (September 2016) Participative session to over twenty full time staff members. Personal feedback includes staff using creative ideas in practice.	

Outputs

One of the challenges of working collectively can be achieving the outputs and outcomes together. We felt that we demonstrated a number of outputs out of collaborative and partnership working across disciplines. These are set out in Table2: (page 171).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to draw out how we worked collaboratively and across disciplines to develop creativity in our teaching. We feel that the lessons learned from this project can be used to explore how creativity can be easily adapted in teaching and support practice. Although it is not common to work across faculties and disciplines there is no reason why this should not take place to a greater extent than is currently the case. More collaborative and inter-disciplinary working would help develop a more creative learning environment at Manchester Met. How did we feel that we responded to the Vice-Chancellor's questions on creativity and learning? We feel that we addressed several of these. In particular we sought, through the CELT 'I Love Learning' Project, to see how we could support learning in creative and imaginative ways as demonstrated through our stories. In our initiatives, such as going to the Royal Exchange and the Ancient Woodland, we were learning to think about learning, as a creative experience, which might transform students' lives. We explored practical approaches to creating the space in which to be creative. We believe that we contributed in a positive and direct way to the discussion about how to be an innovative and creative university through collaboration and partnership.

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