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by Dr Kate Cuthbert
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“COMING OUT OF YOUR SHELL”
Photo taken by Student Counselling & Mental Health Team, Newsome building
JADE
THE JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

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About
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I have worked across a number of health and social care educational initiatives (producing and delivering learning opportunities in clinically-led commissioning; interprofessional learning; patient safety; quality improvement skills and leadership and management). I delivered national learning programmes in patient safety as part of the NHSIII safer care initiative and headed up numerous validation and quality assurance activities in Higher Education Institutions, working to meet professional/regulatory body requirements and health sector needs.

I have also contributed to international learning developments in Zimbabwe with the British Council and more recently in Bahrain. My work at the Higher Education Academy has included whole organisational change programmes, curricula reviews and I recently led the development and delivery of the Teaching Excellence Programmes. I was part of the development team for the HEA toolkits. My PhD explored health beliefs in 8 Post-Soviet states.

My favourite part of my job as an academic is that I often have the opportunity to blend different epistemologies, knowledge bases or practices together to create something new. This alchemy is exciting; often helping challenge the notion of “this is the way we do things around here” and generate “what ifs” and even “why nots”. This could be considered the norm when it comes to devising research methodologies but are we as brave when it comes to creating curricula?

I am not convinced we have enough flexibility about how we create curricula not least because of necessary academic conventions, institutional processes or professional body requirements. Often the structure of the programme is in part “predetermined” with the institution’s notion of modularisation and credit weighting. Indeed there are often numerous pulls on what should be there; think content on personal development planning and a prescribed module for dissertations. Do these predetermined elements stifle our creativity and prevent us from...

...we need to remind ourselves that curriculum happens outside of the paperwork...

Dr. Kate Cuthbert | Higher Education Academy, UK
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Curriculum Design Learnings from Product Design

My favourite part of my job as an academic is that I often have the opportunity to blend different epistemologies, knowledge bases or practices together to create something new. This alchemy is exciting; often helping challenge the notion of “this is the way we do things around here” and generate “what ifs” and even “why nots”. This could be considered the norm when it comes to devising research methodologies but are we as brave when it comes to creating curricula?

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reaching a curriculum that is truly fit for purpose? There are also the situational aspects surrounding curriculum development such as the lonely programme leader without line management powers working to pull together a curriculum within three months without a dip in teaching hours. Being in this situation you are forgiven for getting the task done rather than finding the best way to get the task done.

A large proportion of academic literature is dedicated to the what of curricula, the content and the pedagogy but very little transformation has happened with regards to the development process. How can curriculum development activities be refreshed in such a way that results in a better outcome?

Just a pause point here; what is meant by a better outcome in the context of curriculum development? It is quite a big question but focusing on this helps recognise the importance on how we develop curricula. No doubt that at the forefront of your answer will be “successes for learners”. But as an outcome, that is heavily dependent on achieving an improved user experience, closer alignment to government stages and matching up support when needed and always teaching the right content in the right ways. These elements could be more attainable if, as academics, we borrowed principles and practices from the science and art of product design.

Within a recent blog1 I spent some time thinking about the possible learning from product design that could be applied to curriculum development activities. In the blog I describe how The Design Council distinguished four major phases of design observed in eleven global companies. The first two phases of Discover and Define have the responsibility of articulating the problem/need to be addressed by the eventual product. Both phases use convergent and divergent thinking to arrive at a problem definition. Only when this has been reached are design solutions considered. This restraint to solve the problem before the need is articulated is really powerful and often missing from our curriculum development activities.

On the opposite page are some questions for you as a curriculum developer, prompted by the practices observed in the eleven global brands.

### More inspiration to pinch from the design world

Whilst the principles of design that are outlined above offer a way into rethinking and questioning our curriculum development practices, sometimes a practical thing to try really helps. Following are a few design activities that you might like to adopt when sitting in the curriculum developer’s seat:

**Experience-based design & public value activities**

Prompted by the need to develop care services in partnership with patients, experience-based design takes forward a co-production approach. With some adaptations the toolkit from the King’s Fund2 would meet the needs of engaging students within curriculum

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1. [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/blog/can-curriculum-development-be-guided-product-design](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/blog/can-curriculum-development-be-guided-product-design)
2. [https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/ebcd](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/projects/ebcd)

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Design Principle</th>
<th>Curriculum Design Questions</th>
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<td>A user-driven mentality: An upfront exploration of needs, behaviours and perceptions of users</td>
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<td>Prototyping: Iterative design process using models to test a concept or idea. The prototype is reworked over time as learning about its effectiveness is gained by the design team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept visualisation: The outputs of early brainstorming are communicated across variety of media, often highly visual.</td>
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Table 1: Design Principles triggering curriculum design questions
design activities and forge a great sense of public value surrounding the curriculum decisions. See also The HEA Student Engagement through Partnership Toolkit.3

Process mapping
This activity has its roots in the manufacturing sector and its purpose is to illustrate the flow of a product through a system. Importantly it is a visual representation and when analysed can pinpoint decisions, value-added steps in the process and indeed where issues such as duplication of work is present. Think how effective this activity would be when working through your curriculum from admissions to completion. The use of process maps helps create a reliable user experience and a more collective understanding of the journey a learner will take when experiencing your curriculum. Process mapping is most effective when different teams and departments engage in the process so you end up with a shared vision and action plan. See also The Design Studio4 from JISC which recounts the use of process mapping in approval development.

The caveat to all of the above of course is to commit to the idea of curriculum design as synonymous with product design. If we see curriculum as a manufactured product with tangible and intangible elements I think we are part way there. Also we need to remind ourselves that curriculum happens outside of the paperwork; the experience of the product and the context in which the curriculum exists is very important to its success.

The purpose of this editorial? When you are looking over the wealth of innovations collated in this edition of JADE, think about how you might employ design principles to effectively apply the new ideas into your curricula. You can also add your curriculum design advice and experience to #Designcurr.

References

1. Hashtag: A searchable object that groups messages and conversations.
2. CSV: Comma-separated values (CSV) in plain text form.
3. Dialectic: A process of change in which a concept, or its realisation, passes over into, and is preserved and fulfilled by its opposite.
matters of concern/things", with relation to Marinetti’s aesthetic of deconstruction (cited in Benjamin, 1935, p. 15). This gives rise to heightened subjective experience in digital cultures, and leads to the problematic relationship between object and subject, extending Simmel’s (1910-11) understanding of nature as being represented by the way our intellect assembles and orders sense perceptions (physico psychical organisation). Simmel’s (1910-11) widening of the Kantian worldview (thought experiment) introduces the concept of ‘rejection’, in that objects reject representation because “coherences, regularities, appear as subjective, as that which is brought to the situation by ourselves, in contrast with that which we have received from the externally existent”. In light of Simmel’s understanding of nature, I would like to go on to suggest that the agency and ‘mythology’ of an artifact (or object) is not delivered by representation, but is delivered by experiment, assemblies, orderings and sense perceptions, described by Haraway (1985, p. 84; 2007, p. 57) as “powerful infidel heteroglossia”. This is perpetuated by the relationship between the apparent and the existent. Berger (2010, p. 9) telling us that “appearances are volatile” and that “technological innovation has made it easy to separate the apparent from the existent” indicating that the “system in which we now live has a mythology”. Berger extends Walter Benjamin’s ‘pre-world war two’ worldview, as set out in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (Benjamin, 1935).

To understand the nature (and abilities) of agency in relation to the objectification of information in culture and learning, it is necessary to further investigate the notion of representation, with the understanding that objects reject representation (Simmel, 1910-11). I define representation as “a hypothetical internal cognitive symbol representing reality” [appendix, 2] that can be shared among members of a group or community. I now introduce the notion of ‘mythology’ into my argument, defined as “idealised experience to establish behavioural models” [Appendix, 3].

I can then suggest that what I am looking for, the agency of the objectification of information, exists in established behavioural models (or patterns) within, in this case, empirical data that may deliver ‘idealised experience’, or what Pedersen (2010, p. 243) describes as a “preoccupation with the project of the human”. I understand that through ‘experience’ it is possible for objectification of information to mean many ‘things’ to many people, defined by Sheller and Urry (2005, p. 222) as “flickering combinations of presence and absence of peoples”. The portrayal of idealised experience that hopes to result in established behavioural models is not new; far from it. Early cultural artifacts to contemporary religious icons, or early forms of product (brand) advertising, to digital artifacts gone viral, all I

would suggest, attempt to deliver a mythology of a type. What is new is the social acquisition of media in the digital domain, in which populations in general appear to continue the apparent human condition of mythification of human experience (for one purpose or another). This is described by Berger (2010, p. 12) as living “within a spectacle of empty clothes and unworn masks”.

Cultivation, Icon and Iconography

In light of my understanding of agency, mythology and representation, how is the objectification of information on culture and learning made apparent in practice, and what are the abilities and effects of the agency objectification of information on culture and learning? I would suggest that the notions of agency in this instance are legion. It is hoped that #edcmooc data will uncover less obvious representations of idealised experience that influence digital education.

So, to begin what would be a more substantial study, beyond the remit of this paper, I would like to share my thoughts on #edcmooc participants’ representation of lecturer within the #edcmooc digital environment, and locate evidence of that representation in learning within #edcmooc data (Appendix 1).

The images above are a juxtaposition of objectification in the service of the cultivation of individuals. The first is taken from the initial edcmooc Google hangout; the second, a Christian artifact created in the first quarter of the 14th century. My interest in this juxtaposition of image is in how the massification of audience in educational experience represents lecturer (or educattor) as an arbiter or source of knowledge. Resulting from objectification, the artifact or object is becoming iconic, if only fleetingly, a representation of idealised
Below is a micro sample of #edcmooc participants’ ‘tweet’ comments that objectify the hypothetical internal cognitive symbol of the educator, as evidence of idealised experience:

“Watching live Hangout with profs in #EDCMOOC” “The #edcmooc is really fantastic. Terrific to hear all the profs, read the live-tweeting, see the highlighted content. http://t.co/NSpu5vU2” “RT @adarel: ‘The #edcmooc is really fantastic. Terrific to hear all the profs, read the live-tweeting, see the highlighted content. http:…’” “@cibilste me too - hearing from ‘the #edcmooc profs’ in real time really helps me lots :)” “Hearing from the profs is a great way to wrap up week 1! Loving it. #edcmooc” “Appreciate all 5 of profs in #EDCMOOC doing Hangout … Interesting example of “‘teaching presence’” w 40K students” “Agree! RT @bwatwood: Appreciate all 5 of profs in #EDCMOOC doing Hangout … Interesting example of “‘teaching presence’” w 40K students” “RT @flitteton: Agree! RT @bwatwood: Appreciate all 5 of profs in #EDCMOOC doing Hangout … Interesting example of “‘teaching presence’” w 40…” (B) “I think this #edcmooc hangout really conveys the personality of the profs & makes the course more fun & engaging than ppt-style teaching”. “Medcmooc Thankyou Sian, Christine, Jeremy, Hamish, Jen! Now I truly feel I have shared a class with thousands listening eagerly to our profs” (A) “#edcmooc Thank you so much profs very well done! It enhances motivation! motivation” “The twitter comments above represent an objectification of information in culture and learning, especially with relation to icon and iconography, may I believe, help to uncover the potential of digital education and enhance student learning experience. Iconic experience is guided by metaphor, with Lakoff and Johnson (1980) arguing that “speech, thoughts and actions are based upon metaphors” and that “we only understand reality through metaphor” (cited in Johnson, 2009). Hayles (2001, p. 144) supports this, stating that “Metaphor performs essential functions in orienting and guiding thought; it connects abstraction and embodiment”. This connects ideas and objects, making notion concrete. If heightened sense perception is located in idealised experience in the digital domain, resulting in more motivated, and inspired students, the notion of ‘virtual mythology’ may be able to be designed into the learning experience. I can then ask the question, how would a ‘virtual mythology’ become apparent in digital education? My discussion to this point, has in part, set out a theoretical argument to support a pedagogy for virtual mythology, helped by the identification of idealised experience in digital phenomena (#edcmooc), thus leaving my argument, to now describe a practical interpretation of pedagogy in virtual mythology for digital education.

The twitter comments above represent an objectification of information in human experience (hypothetical idealised human experience) in learning culture. The culture and cultivation of #edcmooc participants is gained through experience of the agency of external forms (objects) as defined by Simmel (1910-11). I have highlighted in bold specific words in comments, that represent, in my opinion, subjective ‘experience’ which I would suggest hint at ‘idealised experience’ and the possible presence of a Mythology; an individual’s attempt at “control strategies” to “define boundaries” that are not based on the “integrity of natural objects” (Haraway, 2007, p 44). For instance the word ‘profs’ (as an example) gains traction throughout the twitter conversation, yet I understand that no Professors were present during the time period identified, possibly reflecting Berger’s point of view, that “we live within a spectacle of empty clothes and unworn masks” and thus defining a possible “virtual mythology”. Does the word ‘Profs’ denote an elevation of the objectification of information, through heightened sense perceptions in the massification of education, indicating “that reality is never present to us as such; rather, our sense perceptions are self-organising processes that construct the world we know from the unmediated flux, unknowable in itself” (Hayles 2001, p. 145)? If so, this gives credibility to the notion that the objectification of information within the digital domain is being raised to the status of icon, with relation to iconography; iconography being the interpretation of image (or object). If I accept this argument I can begin to understand a notion of ‘idealised experience’ located in an objectification of information within the digital domain as ‘agency’, as suggested by tweet comment (A) “#edcmooc Thank you so much profs very well done! It enhances motivation! motivation”, and Tweet comment (B) “I think this #edcmooc hangout really conveys the personality of the profs & makes the course more fun & engaging than ppt-style teaching”.

This interesting (possibly challenging) interpretation of the agency of information in culture and learning, especially with relation to icon and iconography, may I believe, help to uncover the potential of digital education and enhance student learning experience. Iconic experience is guided by metaphor, with Lakoff and Johnson (1980) arguing that “speech, thoughts and actions are based upon metaphors” and that “we only understand reality through metaphor” (cited in Johnson, 2009). Hayles (2001, p. 144) supports this, stating that “Metaphor performs essential functions in orienting and guiding thought; it connects abstraction and embodiment”. This connects ideas and objects, making notion concrete. If heightened sense perception is located in idealised experience in the digital domain, resulting in more motivated, and inspired students, the notion of ‘virtual mythology’ may be able to be designed into the learning experience. I can then ask the question, how would a ‘virtual mythology’ become apparent in digital education? My discussion to this point, has in part, set out a theoretical argument to support a pedagogy for virtual mythology, helped by the identification of idealised experience in digital phenomena (#edcmooc), thus leaving my argument, to now describe a practical interpretation of pedagogy in virtual mythology for digital education.

Note: It is beyond the practical remit of this paper to fully document and describe pedagogy in Virtual Mythology, but it is possible for this paper to begin to sketch out and propose a direction of travel.

What is key to pedagogy in virtual mythology? I would suggest that what is key is an “idealised experience to establish in behavioural models” in pedagogy, enhanced by what Urry and Sheller define as “sorting systems” a creativity that is found in the re-ordering
of a sequential ordering of thought. It is clear that the educator, whether lecturer, librarian, technologist etc., is, in part, responsible for developing those pedagogical experiential phenomena in the digital domain, and the critical design of aesthetic experience in ‘Interconnected Motions’ (Dunne and Raby, 2005). This indicates that the logo of educator, embedded within the logo of the institution, anchors cohort learning and teaching, and begins to map pedagogy, curriculum, learning and teaching, and (hypothetically) behavioural models. If I accept that logo, related to icon and iconography, can be designed to extend the presence of the educator (which in distance learning is a much needed progression), and pursue an educator’s idealised cohort learning outcomes, I can then see no reason why an educator’s logo/icon (knowledge, passions and personalities) cannot be acquired as representation of learning objects (information) to guide student subjective experience of learning objects, towards expected learning outcomes, and beyond. Cultivation of individuals, and idealised experience, in icon and iconography very much relates to an enlightenment of a sort, a religious enlightenment, a pathway, guidance or teachings that transcend matter (Pederson, 2010; Edwards, 2010). I would suggest that the agency of objectification of information in the digital domain (in the service of learning and teaching) resides in these same properties, properties that separate matter from meaning, and enhance meaning to identify potential in the student and connectivity of subjective (idealised) experience. That subjective experience may be located within the objectification of information in the digital domain, or the intellect of the individual, both in real terms being the same, an objectification of information. This increases the potential for experimentation in critical thinking (physico psychical organisation) that relates to the rejection of representation by objects in the service of the creation of new ideas made concrete in objects.

Conclusion

This aim of this paper has been to begin to explore, and uncover evidence of agency and mythology in the objectification of information in culture and learning within the digital domain, relating to “Cognisphere” (Hayles, 2006). I have explored the nature of the objectification of information, theoretically, through the writings of Hayles, Simmel, Berger, Edwards, Dunne and Raby, etc., and practically by an (minimal) interrogation of empirical data taken from #edcmooc Twitter feed (01.02.13, time period 17:00 to 18:00). In conclusion I would suggest that this ‘minimal’ investigation warrants further attention, and that agency in the objectification of information to enhance pedagogy in digital education, lies (in part) in a critical design of idealised (aesthetic) experience in ‘Interconnected Motions’ (Dunne and Raby, 2005). This creates a virtual mythology that could be seen to perpetuate idealised experience, possibly resulting in ‘Theta State’, where Theta State is identified as the gateway to learning and memory.

References


PHILIP DEVINE


Appendix
1. CSV data can be found at: http://www.kulacreative.co.uk/eddc/edcmooc.csv.

Glossary
mooc
Massive open online course
#edcmooc
Hashtag for e-learning and digital cultures massive open course Twitter feed

ARTICLE #2

A case study in large scale video recording using Opencast

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Abstract
Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV) is a 35,000 students’ higher educational institution in Spain, which has been interested for quite a long time in the application of technology into learning. Following that path, UPV applied as a member of the Opencast community for Lecture Capture and has used Opencast for several years. Opencast is an international community (Opencast, 2016), member of the Apereo network of institutions (Apereo, 2016), interested in developing systems and software related to Lecture Recording in education.

Opencast is also the name of the open source lecture capture and video management system which allows institutions to capture, process, manage and distribute video assets on a large scale. It plays with relevant academic systems and services and provides flexibility to meet the diversity of video management requirements we see today.

Thus, a university can have a working Opencast system deploying capture agents in the lecture halls to record simultaneously the teacher’s video, audio and the screen that the teacher shows in the computer in the classroom, creating a multi-track recording, which can then be ingested and published through the core system.

Context and Objectives

Opencast, being an open source project allows an enormous amount of flexibility in the components deployed and the way of using them, so there each installation is somewhat unique. Here are the main choices for an opencast deployment:

Capture agent: the capture agent is the computer that actually records the video and audio in the lecture hall. There are different brands and programmes, both commercial and open source that provide such equipment.

Sound system: The sound system is related on how you capture the audio from the teacher. Common choices are a lapel mic that the teacher has to wear and power-on before the lecture, a table mic or a mic array. This is a key topic in deployment. Lapel mics provide the highest quality if properly used. However up to 10% of recordings (in our estimation) are lost because of failure to power-on, incorrect placement, battery issues, etc.

On the other hand, a recording with bad audio quality is useless. A conservative choice is having two sound systems (e.g. lapel and table) and use the second as a backup system. Opencast don’t provide automatic selection, so manual intervention is needed.

Cameras: There are three
different setups, ranging from more expensive to less. You can use high-end tracking cameras, so teacher are automatically tracked in high size, high-end static cameras, focusing on the full podium and low end static cameras, with reduced quality.

Usually camera quality is heavily dependent on the lecture hall size, so better quality is required for larger rooms.

**Recording mode:** You can choose a manual start, where teachers have to start and stop the recording or make automated recordings for previous bookings or an external calendar system. For calendar-based systems, organisations may choose to opt-in (record upon request) or opt-out (record unless teacher complains).

Manual start allows teachers to control the recording, and also spontaneous ones, while calendar-based systems usually provide more valid recordings, since teachers don’t have to worry about anything.

**Publishing points and LMS integration:** Records have to be published somewhere for students to view. Opencast provide a local HTML portal, but provide a great flexibility in using external publishing points, like video portals or LMS integrations using LTI or Single-sign-on services.

**Video player enhancements:** One core feature of Opencast is the ability to enhance video content with accompanying material (slides, transcriptions, captions, etc.), and so requires a specialized content player. Currently there are two main choices for his: The official Theodul player and the alternative Paella player (Paella, 2016).

**Opencast deployment for fast in-studio recordings**

Together with the Opencast core, UPV installed 6 small recording studios for higher quality recordings. Those recordings are meant for the usage in Blended and Flipped teaching projects and also for MOOC production. The local nickname for that service is Polimedia (Turro et al, 2010).

Thus, the Polimedia service allow UPV lecturers to record pre-prepared mini lectures to be used by students as a supplement to the traditional live lecture or in any other pedagogical content. For the most part they consist of concise overviews of a given topic and have a typical duration of around ten minutes. They are also accompanied by time-aligned presentation slides, or a time-synchronous live screen capture.

The production process for Polimedia videos has been carefully designed to achieve both a high rate of production and an output quality comparable to that of a television production, but at a lower cost, being a key feature of that the live editing, so records are available just upon finishing (plus a small automatic processing time in Opencast).

A Polimedia studio consists of a 4x4 square meters room with a white backdrop, video camera, capture station, pocket microphone, lighting and AV equipment including a computer to capture and mix the video and audio noise gate.

Currently we have recorded more than 16,000 videos form more than 1,800 different teachers, and they are available in UPV’s media portal (MediaUPV, 2016).
Results and Discussion

In order to get an evaluation of the lecture capture experience we selected 10 courses of the first semester of the academic year (September to January) that have been using lecture recording in all or nearly all lectures. These 10 courses belong to different faculties and disciplines, ranging from an introductory course in Mathematics to different more advanced engineering topics. There are 3006 students enrolled on those courses.

The question that we try to solve on this analysis is if there is a measurable effect on assessment grades due to the use of the Lecture Recording tool. So we are going to divide the students in two groups: those that have viewed at least once any video and those that don’t. While further classification could be done, we believe that this simple separation address more clearly the question proposed.

Then, for those 10 courses we have 2034 students that pertain to the “viewers” group, and had accessed the platform to see at least one video, being 67.6% of the global group. It is also worth noting that students didn’t have any special pressure in viewing videos, it is completely up to them.

The details of “viewers” and “non-viewers” are depicted on table I. There are courses (5,7,8) with nearly full attendance where there are others (6,10) with quite low usage. The overall figure is related to the whole number of students.

Now we are going to focus on the actual marks of the students at the end of the semester. Marks are also given on Table 1 and run from 0 to 10, being 10 the highest.

On the following page we see that there is some disparity between groups, but on the overall sample we have a 9% difference in terms of using the Lecture Recording system, that given the size of the sample can be considered like a positive indicator of correlation.

While this correlation is interesting, we can get a better knowledge of what is happening by looking at the distribution of marks. On Figure 1 we show a histogram of the marks over the full sample of students.

Looking at that figure we see that there is a displacement of the peak of the graph between viewers and non-viewers, while the left and the right side keep pretty similar. Our explanation on that is that Lecture Recording usage helps more to middle level students than to high and low level students, probably because high level students already know the topic enough and low level students are too far on

<table>
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<th>Course</th>
<th>Viewer Students</th>
<th>Non-viewer students</th>
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<th>Non-viewers’ marks</th>
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<td>98.15%</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>22.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55.88%</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>7.78</td>
<td>-1.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>21.64%</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>9.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>2034</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>67.66%</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>9.91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Results of the Lecture Capture experience

Figure 1: Academic results of Opencast Lecture Recording
In the 2015-2016 academic term UPV moved a step forward in applying Flipped Teaching to its courses, by planning a large-scale deployment of more than 100 courses with around 200 teachers involved. Teaching is done on two semesters, and for the first semester 45 courses were flipped.

In our case we define the flipped classroom as an educational technique that consists of two parts: computer-based individual instruction before the lecture session and interactive group learning activities inside the classroom in the time that was set up for lecturing in standard courses. It’s worth noting that we don’t restrict this definition to employ videos as an outside of the classroom activity.

Teachers that apply for the flipped teaching project have a learning session in which they get the directions to apply the methodology in their courses. However, while they are encouraged to use videos they are allowed not to do it and rely in more conventional techniques like HTML content on the University’s LMS platform or even PDF files. Nearly half of the teachers decided not to use videos and stick with that semi-traditional approach.

So we can classify the courses because of why they are distributing the previous content in 5 different groups, belonging to two main families: video and non-video. Usually video supported courses also include HTML and PDF content.

Video family includes three types: Screencasts (Homemade recordings made by the teacher commenting the slides and teacher’s computer desktop), Polimedia and Other Videos, and Non-video family includes courses with only HTML or PDF content.

The 2015-2016 experience, in the first semester, got evaluated 45 Flipped Teaching courses, with 2668 students involved.

In order to evaluate the experience we did an anonymous survey to the students of those courses, divided by courses. The survey included a broad number of questions, some related to the a priori learning beliefs of the students, some to the overall structure of the experience and finally on the students’ perception on the value of the Flipped methodology.

While there is quite information in the survey, we use a question (Q8: I’m very satisfied with this experience/methodology) as a proxy estimator for students’ satisfaction.

This can be compared perceived value of the students, the results that we get from that by type of content is depicted on Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of courses</th>
<th>Enrolled students</th>
<th>Mean (1..5)</th>
<th>Sigma</th>
<th>Median (1..5)</th>
<th>Mean (1..100 value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>Screencast</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studio recordings (Polimedia)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1308</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other videos</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non video</td>
<td>Only HTML content</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only PDF files</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2668</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Perceived value of Flipped Learning

This table clearly shows a great difference between video and non-video supported Flipped Teaching. Acceptance rates for non-video are just fair, that means that video should be a must in considering these experiences.

Also there are no significant differences between the videos recorded by the teachers themselves and the studio recordings. Our guess is that while the recorded videos are of more visual quality, they lack the capacity of be changed during the learning course, so in the Screencast paradigm, teachers can adapt faster to students’ needs. In any case, this is a topic that calls for further investigation.

In some courses of the experience we had the situation that we have some groups using Flipped Teaching and some not, because they had different teachers. However, the assessment was common, so we can compare the assessment in using Flipped Teaching and not using it. Such results are depicted on Figure 2 and show better assessments from the Flipped students.

Conclusions

We have presented a case study on how the Opencast lecture capture system can be applied to enhancing teaching in a higher educational institution. Results show that having lecture recording available is not only an opinion of the students, but it carries out better performance.

Opencast also can be used to help teachers to create content for other methodologies, as is our case regarding the Flipped Teaching experience we are carrying on.
For the past six years Keele University’s Research Institute for Science & Technology in Medicine (ISTM) has hosted visits from groups of undergraduate medical students from Saudi Arabia. The developing interest in research within Saudi Arabia has emerged over the past decade, particularly being strong within the medical field. The initial concept of the programme, which has remained central to the development of the programme, was to bring the very best academic medical school undergraduates and give them a taste for research within a leading UK framework. The steady growth and success of the programme has led colleagues to ask for some reflections on how it started and how it has been led. An update (Clarke J, 2016) appeared in a recent edition of JADE which focussed on international activity at Keele. That issue also contained a perspective on a teaching initiative with China (Robinson ZP et al, 2016) and it may be useful to hear from an international programme that is continuing and growing. Next year marks a change of direction in the Saudi visiting medical student programme, due to Dr Paul Roach, one of the leaders from the start, moving from Keele to Loughborough in December 2016. The formation of a new Research Institute for Applied Clinical Sciences within the Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences also means that in future the visits might span more clinical areas of activity. So now seemed to be a good time to take stock of what has been achieved and the experience gained through offering the programme. Initially Keele was one of several UK universities contacted through an independent agent for higher education, on behalf of their client, an unspecified medical school in Saudi Arabia. The specification called for: “...interested universities that would like to undertake a four week research training program from 1st July–31st July 2011 [for] 1st and 2nd year undergraduate medical students in groups of 10 to have exposure to the basic skills required for biomedical research (a maximum of 20 students per university). The core topics of the course should be:

1. Understanding disease mechanism
2. The discovery of disease biomarkers
3. The discovery innovative therapeutic approaches
4. An introduction to research on one or more of the following subject areas:
   a. Obesity
   b. Diabetes
   c. Cancer
   d. Infectious diseases
   e. Neurological disease
   f. Traditional medicine

[...] a number of key requirements for participating universities. These are as follows:

References
It was clear that Keele could deliver on all these criteria, including several of the listed subject areas, but ISTM was only offering summer research placements to UK students at that time. Expansion to international students was seen as a potentially profitable international activity, both financially but more so for the Research Institute to increase its international profile. So, in conjunction with Professor Gordon Ferns (the Director of ISTM at the time), the authors drew up a specification and submitted it to the agent in May 2011. On working out the projected costs and setting the price it was clear that the optimum number of students to come to Keele was between 16 and 20, so the pricing structure was scaled to encourage a group of that number from year two onwards. The students all come from the College of Medicine, Al Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Being initially founded in 1974 and now having approximately 24,000 students and 1,300 faculty staff, the medical school at this University was still relatively new and was looking to enhance its external visibility via the development of a research profile. The long-term goal of the international programme from their perspective was to nurture their top students into research active clinicians.

After some rapid negotiation on terms and price, the first students arrived on Keele campus on 3rd July 2011. Being a Research Institute focussed on PhD/DM/MPhil and hosting some Masters level courses, largely being based off-campus at the Guy Hilton Research Centre hospital site, this was the first time ISTM had hosted any undergraduate student groups. The learning curve was steep and the young men who arrived found the European culture-shock acute. Likewise staff within the ISTM had a culture shock when dealing with this first cohort. Unfortunately it was too late to find sufficient campus accommodation that year and they stayed in a small local hotel. It has been crucial to reserve campus accommodation for every year since then, and this has become an important part of the Keele experience that has ensured the student groups return year after year.

There have been several other key features of the programme that have emerged and may be useful to others who have the opportunity to host visitors from the Middle East.

1. **Capacity:** Sufficient lecturers and tutors for the students’ projects need to be identified and signed up well in advance, as the visits occur in July or August when many colleagues can be away on leave. Sometimes members of their teams have stepped in to cover for a week or two, but the students do need and expect input from an experienced member of research-active academic staff for their projects; that is what they are paying for. The hierarchical social aspects of Saudi Arabia are quite firm, with respect of the highest degree for those higher up this societal ladder in terms of age and experience. The leader of a group is seen to be the main person from whom these students can learn, and be networked with in terms of helping with their future career. This was a very important aspect from the visiting students’ perspectives, and echoed entirely by their accompanying Academic Tutors. ISTM has opted for a 1:2 basis of supervision rather than the specified 1:4. The choice of projects needs to be done well in advance. Allocation is done by the Al Imam University Director of Visits as there is often a hierarchy also within the student cohort – this we found was based on student performance in examinations with the highest achieving students allowed first choice of the projects.

2. **Gender and culture:** ISTM offers an entirely mixed-gender, culturally diverse medical research environment which the students have to accept and adapt to. But culture-shock in coming to the UK can be acute, as many of the students have not been outside the Middle East before, where gender, class, religious and nationalistic divisions are often very entrenched. The only concession to this is the booking of an entire floor of en suite campus accommodation to meet cultural requirements.
ensuring the students have a safe space such as kitchens in which they can relax as a group in the evenings.

3. **Professionalism**: Many of the students seem comparatively immature and so sensitive guidance is given around the conduct that is expected in lectures, when contacting members of clinical and research staff, and the self-directed learning for their projects. A tutor from Al Imam University has accompanied the students for at least part of their stay and can assist in broaching any difficult issues. Timekeeping and punctuality can be a cause for concern, the students need occasional reminders about attendance, so registers have been kept for key sessions.

4. **Cultural activities**: A part of the original brief, some cultural activities have always been provided so the students get a broader idea of what life and work in the west is like, not just the typical tourist’s view. In the first few years, weekend visits included a museum or a castle, and a church, as well as a tour of Keele Hall as a typical English country house to explore a little about history, architecture and class. More recently this has varied to include visits offered through Keele’s International Office, and a social evening of traditional fish and chips at the home of one of the authors. The latter has been an experience of different foods, eating and socialising habits, and a chance for the students to see ISTM staff alongside their families, with children and partners brought along to the social evening to further broaden student’s interaction with western culture. This has been very well received and is always a point of reflection during student feedback sessions. The students have gained in confidence over the years, based on the experience of those who visited Keele in past years and also the recognition of Keele’s programme within Al Imam. Students now tend to organise their own excursions, including Old Trafford, Alton Towers, Manchester, Chester, Liverpool and London, being a mix of fun and adventure, alongside those who want to learn more about English culture.

A long-term objective of running the Saudi medical student visit programme here at Keele has always been to encourage some of the students to return to Keele for a Masters level course or a PhD. While there have been many very bright and well-motivated students, and some visits from individual students in their later years for deeper research or clinical experience, so far none have opted to come to Keele for a higher degree. But several have produced posters and journal articles, the visiting Saudi tutors have explored research links with Keele, and in all other respects the programme has met its objectives. There has been interest in the new Keele MMedSci in Oncology to suit those students finishing their medical degree and with an interest working in medical research before specialising.

So far there have been a total of 92 Saudi undergraduate students visit Keele under this programme with a total of £180,000 income generated. Of this, direct payments are made to staff who supervise their individual projects, this money is then used to fund research projects in ISTM’s laboratories so Keele’s research has benefited by at least £50,000. Once all staff costs and overheads have been accounted for, the clear profit made by the programme is over £25,000, which ISTM has re-invested into new initiatives, including the encouragement of international links. In addition the students and the accompanying tutors have brought accommodation bookings to the University exceeding £45,000, creating clear benefits for the local economy.

Overall, the success of the programme has been the internationalisation of our research teams, the stimulation of having new students in the labs over the summer, and the generation of ideas for new international postgraduate programmes to tap new markets. The Dean of Medical & Health Sciences, Prof Andy Garner, flew out to Riyadh in 2015 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Dean at Al Imam University, which cements the relationship. It is hoped that in the future the programme can be expanded to bring female undergraduates from the same medical school too.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to acknowledge to following colleagues without whom the Saudi visiting medical student programme would not have flourished:

- All the lecturers and tutors in the Faculty of Medical & Health Sciences who took part in the programme, members of the Royal Stoke University Hospital who helped with tours of hospital clinical and research facilities (with special thanks to Prof Josep Sule-Suso for his unfailing enthusiasm)
- Faculty Dean and Directors of ISTM: Prof Andy Garner, Prof Gordon Ferns, Prof Alicia El Haj, Prof Nicholas Forsyth
- International Office team: Elissa Williams, Sian Colley and Mark Coates
- Facilitators: Mrs Paula Marsh and Mr Joseph Clarke, plus the technical and reception teams at GHRC who have helped maintain a high standard for our visitors
Figures

1. Saudi Arabian medical students and tutors group photo at a social evening at “Lowlands House” in August 2014, with Mark Smith and Josep Sule-Suso (left), Andy Garner and Paul Roach (right). (photo by Ruth Dann)

2. Saudi Arabian students taking part in rehabilitation research experiments at Keele in July 2013, watched by Dr Sami Aldaham, their Academic Tutor and Director of Visits at Al Imam University College of Medicine. (photo by Mark Smith)

References


Introduction

Students who seek an education in a foreign country are, in fact, carrying on a rich tradition that extends back many centuries (Furnham, 2004). In a wider sense, transitions between different cultural communities have been chronicled and included in myths and legends since the early stages of civilization (Chirkov, 2009). However, international education is not without its challenges relating to cultural differences and adaptation (Shafaei and Razak, 2016; Baklashova and Kazakov, 2016), cross-cultural management (Li et al, 2016), differences in language and accents (Acar, 2016), different learning styles and participation (Straker, 2016), and diverse national standards (Hefferman et al, 2010; Hill et al, 2014). Nevertheless, for HEIs engaging in international education, these issues, are usually perceived to be outweighed by the concomitant benefits, as it can produce increased revenue, enhanced global profile, and a strengthened international reputation for a university (Mellors-Bourne et al, 2014). Furthermore, students who travel can benefit from good quality education (Lin, 2006) and all students, domestic as well as international, benefit from an enriched educational experience (Luo and Jamieson-Drake, 2013) arising from the development of intercultural competencies and a broadened perspective (QAA, 2015). Moreover, in a rapidly globalising world (Eken et al, 2014; Wild et al, 2010) Sip (2014) postulates that the international perspective is an absolute necessity to overcome issues associated with nationalism and the trend to travel overseas in order to study what has become known as educational tourism (Sotijova et al, 2016). Indeed, of the 2,266,075 students enrolled on Higher Education courses in the UK during 2014/15, 437,352 (19.3%) were from overseas (HESA, 2016). This was a significant increase from 1998/99 when the total number of students enrolled on Higher Education courses in the UK stood at 1,845,757 and just 219,285 (11.9%) were from overseas (Ramsden, 2009).

For individuals who opt to study abroad the implications can be literally life-changing and all those involved in the process need to take their responsibilities very seriously (Spencer-Oatley, 2004). It is gratifying, therefore, that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reports that most UK universities are aware of this responsibility as well as the magnitude of the issues involved, and have adopted strategic approaches to the provision of support for overseas students (QAA, 2008). In addition, while there are complex and wide-ranging issues relating to foreign students and international study (Altbach, 1989), the importance of the subject has led to considerable research in to overseas students and the
regulation is onerous (British Council, 2013), China is supportive of TNE as a means of capacity-building especially with regard to the professional development of teaching and research staff (British Council, 2013). There are now more than 1,000 TNE programmes formally registered with the Chinese Ministry of Education. 800 of these are based on undergraduate courses and with 25% of these involving UK universities (HEFCE, 2014b) it would appear that UK universities are often a partner of choice.

With international collaboration and overseas students demonstrably so important to UK universities and TNE the preferred form of international engagement for many, it would seem apposite to consider some of the lessons learnt from a long-standing and successful TNE collaboration between Harper Adams University (HAU) and Beijing University of Agricultural (BUA) that was initially established with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement in March 2004. The TNE collaboration is based on two courses: BSc / BSc (Hons) International Business Management and BSc / BSc (Hons) Food Quality and Retail Management which have now collectively produced around 740 graduates. The structure of the two courses is very similar (see Figure 1) and is based on a 3+1 model (ie 3 years are delivered in China and one year is delivered in the UK). The entire four-year programme is formally recognised by the Chinese Ministry of Education while years 1-3 constitute the HAU validated course. Students who meet all the normal entry criteria for HAU relating to academic attainment, language proficiency and visa requirements may transfer to HAU at the end of Year 2 so that they may study for the final year at HAU. Students who do not meet the entry requirements complete their studies on other courses at BUA. The Year 1 and 2 modules are delivered in China by BUA staff supported by a HAU Link Tutor and online material that is made available via a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). In addition selected modules receive direct teaching input from HAU through the use of flying faculty. The modules supported by flying faculty change year-on-year to reflect student need, staff availability, and a desire to keep the curriculum fresh. The program received a very positive review by the QAA in 2012 (QAA, 2012).

Methodology

The study was based on action research which is “a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives” (Stringer, 2014). Unlike more traditional approaches to research it seeks to combine an understanding of specific complex situations with transformational action through intervention of the researcher. It is particularly relevant to the professional practitioner who has a desire to improve their own practice (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) and so it is becoming increasingly popular as a method of enquiry in professions such as education (McNiff, 2013; McCoy, 2015; Keskin and Kuzu, 2015; Norton, 2009; Dajani, 2015). The general approach involves the action research practitioner in planning, acting, observing and reflecting (McNiff, 2013) or a sequence of cycles (McNiff, 2013) and in many instances where the cycle is repeated the process is referred to as either a spiral of cycles (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) or a sequence of cycles (McNiff, 2013).

In the context of this study, preliminary research undertaken to investigate apparent culture shock (Lyssgaard, 1955) in the early days of the TNE collaboration identified various issues which required attention and so the work was quickly reframed within the action research paradigm. A questionnaire was developed from the literature on acculturation as well as discussions with staff and students, and since 2007 this has been completed by all students on the two courses four times during their final year of study in the UK. The data generated by this regular surveying of students is used to identify issues which are then addressed as soon as possible in order to achieve increasing levels of student satisfaction. It is tempting to think of each year or cohort as being the action research cycle but this would be inaccurate as the cycle is actually completed with each and every survey round.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 0 Taught at BUA in China</th>
<th>Year 1 Taught at BUA in China</th>
<th>Year 2 Taught at BUA in China</th>
<th>Year 3 Taught at HAU in the UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module 1 (Flying faculty)</td>
<td>Module 1 (Flying faculty)</td>
<td>Module 1: Honours Research Project (HAU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2 (Flying faculty)</td>
<td>Module 2 (Flying faculty)</td>
<td>Module 2 (HAU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 3 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 3 (HAU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 4 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 4 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 4 (HAU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 5 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 5 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 5 (HAU)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 6 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 6 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 6 (HAU)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Module 7 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 7 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 7 (HAU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 8 (Link tutor)</td>
<td>Module 8 (Link tutor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Course Structure
It is particularly interesting to note how the results obtained from the first survey of the first cohort of students differs from the first survey of the latest cohort and so comparative data for selected variables relating to induction, integration and learning is presented in Table 1. The data is collected on a six point scale where 1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree, and 6 = No Opinion. A mean score has been derived for each cohort on each variable after No Opinion and missing data has been accounted for. A Difference score between the two means for each variable has then been computed to establish the magnitude of the change in scores between September 2007 and September 2015. With these Difference scores a positive means that there is increased agreement with the statement and a negative means that there is less agreement.

**Results**

The biggest improvement on criterion in the survey relates to the helpfulness of BUA and this may very well underpin many of the improvements perceived by the students. Indeed, as time has progressed BUA has gained significant experience of TNE and actively sought to build capability to the point now where many of the staff, HAU as well as BUA, consider that preparation to study in the UK really begins for the students right at the start of the programme and that everything that the students are asked to engage with, from the teaching programme, through the assignments and even the teaching provided by the flying faculty, is designed with this in mind.

It is apparent that the 2015 cohort agree more strongly with the statements that the two week induction period was both good and valuable. This would suggest that there has been an improvement in the student induction possibly because there has been a concomitant increase in the amount of information provided and this is reflected in the improved scores regarding what to expect of the British, finance, accommodation, careers, doctors, and insurance as well as knowing where to get non-academic advice and the support provided by the Students’ Union.

It was also clear right at the start of the initiative that while the Chinese students had travelled to the UK with the intention of meeting new people and making friends with them, they were having difficulty integrating with the UK students. While this could be explained to some extent by the challenge of communicating in a foreign language it was apparent that it was also due to their Confucian culture and reserved nature. However, once identified as an issue staff at BUA were encouraged to adopt more of a Western approach to their teaching in order to encourage participation.

### Table 1: Changes in student experience to Transnational Education experiences 2007–2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sept 2007</th>
<th>Sept 2015</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Induction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUA is very helpful</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+1.10</td>
<td>4.20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SU is very supportive</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>+0.49</td>
<td>2.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on financial support is good</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+0.48</td>
<td>1.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on careers is good</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>+0.51</td>
<td>1.98*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know where to get non-academic advice</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>+0.52</td>
<td>1.96*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received good information regarding Doctors</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>+0.48</td>
<td>1.85**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2-week induction was good</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>+0.43</td>
<td>1.76**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The induction period is very valuable</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>+0.32</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The British are just as I expected before I came</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>+0.31</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received poor information regarding insurance</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on accommodation is poor</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>-2.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are good opportunities to participate in sports at HA</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>+0.80</td>
<td>3.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are good opportunities to participate in social activities at HA</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>+0.70</td>
<td>3.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life around HA is boring</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>-1.97*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I regularly make use of the English Language support staff at HA</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>+0.46</td>
<td>2.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main aim of HE should be to teach students to think for themselves</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+0.33</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lecturers are very helpful</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>+0.24</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures are a good means of teaching</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>+0.24</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn a lot in tutorials</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>+0.22</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better at multiple choice questions rather than open-ended</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not help friends with their assignments</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>-1.95*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant 95%, ** Significant 90%
among the students from early days on the programme, and along with the inclusion of overt opportunities for the Chinese students to integrate with UK students during the two-week induction, there has been a resultant improvement in the way that the latest cohort sees opportunities to integrate via sport and social activities which has meant a significant decrease in those reporting that life at HAU is boring.

It is also very interesting to note that there has been a general improvement in student perceptions regarding teaching and learning on the programme. While much of Chinese education, both at school and university, is based on rote learning (Wang and Greenwood, 2015), it is pleasing to note that over time the students on this programme are now more engaged with the Western pedagogic aim of producing independent thinkers. They are also much more inclined to acknowledge that lectures are a good means of teaching, they learn a lot in tutorials (which are not part of the normal Chinese system), they make regular use of the English language support staff, and the lecturers are very helpful. It is also interesting to note that while some literature (eg Wang and Greenwood, 2015) suggests that Chinese students prefer multiple-choice type assessment and are quite willing to engage in cheating and plagiarism the latest cohort of these students are less inclined toward multiple choice type questions and collusion with their friends when working on assignments, perhaps reflecting their improved confidence in being involved with the culture and reduced insecurities regarding their performance. It can only be hypothesised that the work undertaken by the BUA as well as HAU staff in China has inculcated the students with something much more akin to a Western philosophy toward teaching and learning on this programme and prepared them better for their experiences overseas.

Finally, and as a result of the changed perceptions identified above it is possible to develop a series of lessons for others involved in the design and management of TNE programmes (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Ten Lessons for TNE Design and Management**

1. Engage in TNE for the right reasons i.e. the student’s education.
2. Ensure that colleagues at the Partner institution fully understand the operation of the programme by engaging in regular and frequent communication with staff at both universities and encourage academic and support staff visits to the Partner institution to teach, share materials and develop relationships.
3. Be sympathetic to the style of teaching that the students have been exposed to at school but adopt Western teaching practices and provide staff development opportunities at both universities which address teaching and learning issues in cross cultural programmes.
4. Work to prepare the students for coming to the host country from the day they register on the course.
5. Don’t underestimate the value of a formal Induction Programme when the students first arrive in the host country.
6. Ensure that the Induction Programme is of sufficient length to allow for the students to properly acclimatise and take-in what is likely to be a large amount of information when they first arrive in the host country.
7. Provide all the necessary information but do so little-and-often rather than in one big hit that may overwhelm the students to the extent that they simply ignore it. It may also help to provide the information in writing so that the students may return to it later to ensure their understanding.
8. Work closely with the Student Course Representatives as these students will disseminate information to the rest of the cohort. These students are also invaluable in providing guidance and support for the following cohort.
9. Use the relevant social media (e.g. QQ) to maintain regular communication with the students and also to informally monitor their views and feelings toward the programme.
10. Use a formal system of Action Research to monitor the students and take action to remedy issues as soon as they become apparent.

**Conclusion**

TNE is an important component of many universities internationalisation strategy. It not only generates financial revenue but it provides a means of broadening the perspectives of both students and staff. However, not all TNE initiatives are successful and it is useful to consider key aspects arising from an action research project that focuses on what may be deemed a successful TNE programme. The findings highlight the pre-eminent importance of the institutional relationship, the advantages of acculturating the students as soon as they register on the programme and of the benefits arising from a formal Induction Programme when they arrive in the UK. This research also highlights the importance of monitoring and continuous improvement of TNE programmes.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Sandra Turner is Associate Head of Department, Senior Lecturer and Course Manager for courses run jointly with Beijing Agricultural College and Huazhong Agricultural University. Her research interests focus on international students and in particular their acculturation, the management of culture shock, and the use of Communication and Information Technology (CIT) in their learning, support, and assessment.

Dr. Gillian Wright is Professor of Marketing and Director of Doctoral programmes at Manchester Metropolitan University Faculty of Business and Law. She was also Director of the Research Institute for Business and Management from 2004-2013. She is an experienced teacher and has considerable commercial experience having worked as a market analyst in the electronics and pharmaceutical industries and engaged in consultancy with major clients in both the public and private sectors. She has published extensively in journals ranging from Industrial Marketing Management, to the Journal of Strategic Marketing and the Journal of Marketing Management.

Mr. TAN Feng is Professor in Food Science and Food Supply Chain Management and International Programme Director at Beijing University of Agriculture. He has thirty years’ experience of working with organisations operating in the Chinese food industry. He has published in a wide range of food management journals in China, including Science and Technology of Food Industry, China Food and Food Science and Technology. His current research interests include food safety management in fresh produce supply chains, food microorganisms and food biotechnology.

References


Introduction

“Do you often come across people for whom, all their lives, a ‘subject’ remains a ‘subject’ divided by watertight bulkheads from all other ‘subjects’; so that they experience very great difficulty in making an immediate mental connection between, let us say, algebra and detective fiction, sewage disposal and the price of salmon or more generally, between such spheres of knowledge as philosophy and economics, or chemistry and art?” (Sayers, 1948 in Burleigh 1973, p. 235).

Funding bodies (e.g. Natural Environmental Research Council, NERC) are increasingly promoting and funding interdisciplinary scientific research as society strives to solve ‘real-life’ complex questions and problems which need different disciplines to meet and cross-over (e.g. Donovan et al., 2011), i.e. research and education become ‘problem-orientated’ (e.g. Rhoten & Pfirman, 2007). As Popper said “We are not students of some subject matter, but students of problems. And problems may cut right across the borders of any subject matter or discipline” (Popper, 1963, p. 88). Increasingly, there is a changing emphasis towards multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary departments across the University sector (Thomas, 2008). Despite this, the standard and common approach to the teaching and learning environments is one of segregation; a distinctive feature of Keele University is its dual honour system. Aiming at the lowest levels of teaching and enduring with enhanced acceptance is the idea of a subject or discipline (e.g. Becher & Trowler, 2001 and Kreber, 2009). Subject areas, whilst often broad in scope, focus on attributions, values and educational goals often deemed as unique to that particular discipline, learners are provided with a particular framework through which they assimilate, categorise and understand knowledge. In higher education settings, teaching and learning can be viewed as a means of creating subject specialists. This article investigates the connectivity between what we interpret as disciplines and how subject specialism, particularly in a combined curriculum (Keele Universities dual honours is used as an example, with experiences drawn from teaching within Earth Sciences), may influence effective teaching and learning. The division of knowledge into disciplines (as seen by society) has often been regarded to generate “academic tribes and territories”, with each discipline having unique identity and cultural attributes (Beecher & Trowler, 2001, Amaral 2008 and Kreber, 2009). We hope to catalyse the discussion about academic tribalism, and the associated positives and negatives, in a broader context (including the views from other cognate disciplinary groups, e.g. neuroscience and psychology, marketing and media, business management and finance, etc.).

The dual honours system at Keele University was spear-headed by Lord Lindsay, a philosopher with experience of 4-year-long degrees at Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, which encompassed broad knowledge bases. Lindsay’s vision was for a new type of university; a university which aimed to break down specialisation and encourage cross-disciplinary teaching and research. Here we share our experiences of the dual honours system (specifically Earth Science teaching in a dual honours system) and the inherent academic tribalism associated with staff and students. The authors of this contribution are both from the School of Geography, Geology and the Environment (GGE); one a geologist, the other a physical geographer and both are members of several course teaching teams in GGE, including some shared courses such as Geoscience and Environmental Science.

Academic Tribalism and Discipline Specialism: the Geography/Geology love/hate relationship

Teaching and learning relies heavily on the concept of discipline, particularly in higher education. Teaching within subjects is often (and expectedly) undertaken by subject specialists, these specialists most often being past students of the particular subject themselves. The result is a cohort of students and teachers committed to their idea of what their subject is i.e. subject specialists. Disciplines have no “set in stone” divisions and are mostly traditional groupings of interest (Abbott, 2001, Becher & Trowler, 2001 and Kreber, 2009) the values and attributes of each discipline has been observed to change, both historically and geographically (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Both academics and students often identify with their department/ discipline rather than their university (e.g. Fanghanel, 2012) and Amaral (2008) stated that “University education could, therefore, be regarded as an introduction into a disciplinary community and as socialisation into its norms, values and ways of constructing the world...”. Within our subjects and disciplines we acknowledge the importance of the accumulated knowledge, values and attitudes that are coherent to our idea of what our discipline is but can often fail to acknowledge the same of other disciplines, even those closely related. Amaral (2008) views higher education (specifically university level) as an introduction, and subsequent socialisation of an individual into a disciplinary community’s norms and values. Abbott (2001) has suggested that within disciplines we are guilty of the same attitudes, with teachers and learners from sub-disciplines being dismissive of each other. The strong sense of discipline identity
Does the integration of subjects in the dual honours system provide a positive or negative effect on teaching and learning? Does the integration of subjects in the dual honours system provide a positive or negative effect on teaching and learning?

Academic Tribalism and the Impact on Learning in Geography, Geology and the Environment

The discord between Human Geography and Geosciences (including Physical Geography) is somewhat understandable—the subjects are from two very different disciplines (social versus natural sciences). However, fundamentally Geology and Physical Geography (as well as Environmental Science, other physical sciences and some aspects of social science) are intrinsically, tightly, linked disciplines, there are many similarities, as well as a fair share of differences. As physical geographers and geologists, we often are using the same ‘toolbox’ (sedimentology, micropalaeontology, geochemistry, mapping) but we’re using it to answer different research questions. As geography and geology are by definition separate (by name, by course, by the University, by social understanding and most often, by programme team), the study of one, with little conscious, signposted, knowledge of the other is completely possible—indeed this is the norm—single honour degrees in geography or geology are commonplace at many institutes. At Keele University, the availability of dual honours has offered an opportunity for both students and teachers to learn more about the connections between these inherited disciplines, and the linkages between them. Disciplinarity can be important to the success of an academic (Fanghanel, 2012) but in terms of student learning, academic tribalism can create a passion that borders on close-mindedness and can result in barriers to learning.

The following are some qualitative observations made whilst teaching within this ‘tight’ cognate GGE discipline group. Observations have come from lectures, encourage students to critically evaluate within and across the disciplines but over time a ‘wedge’ can set in. Sometimes this can be part of the ‘culture’ of a discipline, especially if there is a perception that a discipline is construed to be ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ (e.g. Biglan, 1973 in Fanghanel, 2012). This academic tribalism can also be evident between some staff members and this is not unique at Keele; Donovan et al., (2011) commented that ‘To geologists, I was a geographer and to the geographers, I was a geologist’. This academic tribalism amongst staff can occasionally trickle down and pervade the student consciousness. Despite this sub-discipline ‘rivalry’, it’s interesting to note that when our subject of specialism (or importance thereof) is questioned or challenged by individuals outside of the discipline we put aside any sub-discipline rivalries and unite in defence (Abbott, 2001).

Does the integration of subjects in the dual honours system provide a positive or negative effect on teaching and learning?

Academic Tribalism and Subject Specialists as a Challenge to Teaching and Learning in Dual Honours Systems

• Students often build up separate and distinct ‘scaffolds’ (Wood et al. 1976, Bruner 1978, Vygotsky 1978, Murtagh and Webster 2010) for the individual subjects. They can often be unwilling or unaware that they can, and should be, synthesizing different sources of knowledge into an individual ‘skill-set’ or ‘knowledge silo’ (e.g. Morrison, 2006). It has become apparent that many students struggle to integrate their existing knowledge generated within their subject across the disciplines; showing unwillingness or inability to implement Constructivism (Piaget, 1950).
• Some members of a cohort express boredom with the aspect of their dual honour which they perceive as the less important, or which they identify (the disciplines norms and identity) with the least. This has on occasion resulted in disruption of teaching activities or attitude problems. It can also result in poor grades in the subject they favour the least.
• Cohorts from different disciplines can become dogmatic in their approach to teaching and learning; being unwilling to approach different learning styles.
• Lack of cohesion between students of different subject groups. This is particularly noticeable on field trips.
• The attitudes of staff toward their discipline is likely the origin to some of this behaviour. Whilst the vast majority of staff are capable (and do!) make cognitive links between disciplines, in both research and teaching, the behaviour and environment created by some staff and students arguably enhances disciplinary dogma.
• The dual honours system encourages subject specialism and disciplinary identity. Indeed, these identities, and the experiences students receive of different discipline attitudes are possibly what makes some of our students such great geographers and geologists!
We can consider academic tribalism in terms of the impact it has on student learning (not just grades). Table 1 shows the three main modes of learning. Ideally we want our students to adopt a deep approach to learning, thinking critically and linking up thought and ideas from different subject areas (e.g. Brockbank’s paradigm) and for them to address threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (Meyer & Land, 2003). However, academic tribalism can often lead to a surface approach to learning for the subject that they favour the least. What we need to work towards is a transformative learning approach (e.g. Taylor, 2008) for our dual honours students where they are encouraged to critically reflect on their assumptions and beliefs about the subjects and actively draw upon experiences and knowledge to transform the way they synthesize and appraise their academic approach to physical geography and geology. Better links between the subject areas, maybe through the use of case studies or collaborative fieldtrips (or for other disciplines, seminars) may help facilitate the cultural change needed to break down those ‘tribal’ barriers.

**Discussion: where now?**

It is clear from our experiences that academic tribalism can occur within the dual honours system in the GGE subjects. Considerations should be given to the causes for this and whether it is a positive or negative feature to the teaching and learning environment. Does this also impact on the employability of students? Theoretically, Keele’s dual honours degrees can produce graduates who can help facilitate a societal need for an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving and its potential to put our students in a good place for employability has been noted (e.g. http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/a-dual-degree-means-double-your-chances-in-a-tough-jobs-market-8656183.html). Indeed, in 2016, Keele University was ranked first for Graduate Employability by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA. Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education, 2016). Could this be attributed to students with strong discipline identity, or with experience of working across different discipline boundaries?

Using Keele’s dual honours system (and comparing dual honour with single honour students, of Keele and other institutions, if possible) the context and rationale of academic tribalism could be investigated further. Discussion with both students and staff, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of a combined curriculum is needed. Would better understanding and appreciation of physical geography from geologists and vice versa, and encouraging more interdisciplinary teaching, lead to more synthesis and learning potential between both staff and students in these tight cognate disciplines? Or is academic tribalism ultimately responsible for the identities and attitudes that make a person a discipline specialist?

We would welcome thoughts and experiences from other staff working across the dual honours system, and we hope to explore student and staff perceptions of academic tribalism in the future.

**Acknowledgements**

The main bulk of this work was carried out as a discipline-specific group project on our TLHE training at Keele University. The authors would like to express their thanks to Dr Sally Findlow for constructive feedback and critique during the TLHE project.

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**References**


Table 1: Characteristics of different learning approaches (reproduced from Maguire et al., 2001; adapted from Entwistle et al., 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Approach</th>
<th>Characteristics of Learning approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep approach</td>
<td>Relating ideas; relating ideas between courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Related motives:</strong> Interest in ideas and topics Ability to discuss and collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental (surface) approach</td>
<td>Lack of understanding; reliance on memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of purpose and clear goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus-boundness; focus on bare minimum to pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Related motives:</strong> Fear of failure Reliance on courses/tutors who dictate information to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic approach</td>
<td>Organised studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management; ability to organise time effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring effectiveness; checking work against aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Related motives:</strong> Motivated, achievement orientated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Throughout academia, students are typically drawn from a diverse range of geographical and cultural backgrounds; each with their own unique circumstances, and each potentially bringing with them an individual set of requirements. In recognition of this diversity, universities have a moral and legal obligation to "protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all" (Equality Act, 2010). Accordingly, at the heart of Keele University's mission, is the core value of Equality and Diversity. In line with the Equality Act (2010), this value takes account of the nine protected characteristics (i.e. age, disability, gender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation), though morally, it extends far beyond this to anticipate issues relating to the individual learning needs of students; their expectations; and how their previous experiences may influence these. The desired outcome is to create "a diverse, inclusive and professional academic community that respects individuals and enables them to strive for success..." (Keele University, Our Vision 2020).

The aim of this article is to explore how the concept of plagiarism raises an issue relating to student diversity, particularly with respect to international students. In order for such a student to adapt to—and develop their understanding of—Western academic conventions, they must first reflect on, and challenge, their own cultural values and previous educational experiences. From the perspective of a teacher, this can be a daunting process to facilitate; it requires a great deal of sensitivity and a clear pedagogical approach.  

"Unintentional" plagiarism and cultural concepts

Plagiarism is an example of academic misconduct, that is recognised throughout higher education in the UK (HEA, 2014), and at Keele University, is defined as "the unacknowledged use by a student of someone else’s work being presented for assessment as if it were the student’s own" (Keele University, Regulation 8). Within some disciplines, such as my own in Postgraduate Medicine, for example, the consequences of academic misconduct may extend beyond the University, and constitute a breach of professional conduct; the outcome of which could, in its most serious form, result in the School informing the student’s employer and/or professional regulatory body. Given the potentially devastating consequences, we, as a department, are particularly keen to develop ways in which we can apply pedagogical approaches to prevent plagiarism. This is by no means a straightforward task, however, because plagiarism is a multifactorial phenomenon, and the lack of a universal consensus around its definition and clear, universally-accepted guidelines for the process of plagiarism detection, begins to offer a glimpse into potential problems around student expectations (Gu and Brooks, 2008; Hayes and Introna, 2005). It should perhaps be no surprise to learn, therefore, that published reports (HEA, 2014), and our own anecdotal observations at departmental level, indicate that the majority of plagiarism cases seem to be attributed to a misunderstanding, rather than a deliberate act of cheating. This raises an important issue relating to student diversity because there is a growing body of literature to suggest that the rates of plagiarism without intention to deceive are higher among international students (e.g. HEA, 2014; Pecorari et al., 2005).

As an undergraduate student in the UK in the 1990s, plagiarism was not a concept that I can recall being introduced to explicitly in my taught classes, though I did experience a rude awakening that helped to shape my understanding in a less direct way! During a group discussion, the course tutor read out a sentence from my assignment submission that he “was very impressed with”. Much laughter ensued before he finally explained that the “joke” was on me; I had paraphrased the sentence from an article that he had written, without referencing the source material! This was by no means an intentional act of plagiarism, and though paraphrasing of one short sentence may not be sufficient grounds upon which to trigger a formal academic misconduct process, it serves to illustrate how a lack of understanding about academic writing conventions has the potential to manifest as an incident of plagiarism.

In the Western World plagiarism is accepted to be morally wrong (Kolich, 1983), but in some other parts of the world, plagiarism is ill-defined, if at all. One could easily imagine, therefore, how the concept of appropriate attribution might be even more confusing for an international student with very different, or little, expectations about “what plagiarism looks like”. There are anecdotal reports, for example, of students from cultural backgrounds in which it is thought to be complimentary to copy sections of work (i.e. “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery”) (Chuah, 2010). It has also been suggested that, in some cultures, students may feel that it would be disrespectful to cite a well-known source because it would suggest that their professor is unfamiliar with the work (Divan et al., 2015). Similarly, upon receipt of formative feedback on her written work, an international Masters Dissertation student once told me that she was anxious about referencing sections of her work that offered critical insights into limitations of the studies in question. She felt that in her culture, this would be viewed as a direct insult to the author, and that this practice would not be encouraged. In order for such a student to adapt to—and develop their understanding of—Western academic conventions, they must first reflect on, and challenge, their own cultural values and previous educational experiences. From the perspective of a teacher, this can be a daunting process to facilitate; it requires a great deal of sensitivity and a clear pedagogical approach.
With careful design, however, it seems that this can be achieved via an inclusive approach to academic writing development: by providing guidance to all students about how to formulate written arguments in an objective way; by explaining our expectations about attribution and referencing from the outset; by providing clear and timely formative feedback; and by using specific examples to illustrate key concepts. By explaining and discussing these points with the master’s student described above, I was able to allay her concerns about referencing (the final outcome was pleasing too; she passed the module with a high grade). I now take a much more inclusive and proactive role in plagiarism prevention by embedding the pedagogical approach to academic writing development within a series of dissertation writing workshops.

Academic literacy and plagiarism

In addition to incomplete paraphrasing, another form of plagiarism can arise from the use of a writing strategy termed “patch writing”, which Howard (1993) defined as “copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes”. This strategy is thought to be synonymous with the novice writer who may be able to assimilate information but who hasn’t yet developed techniques to express the concepts in their own words (Pecorari, 2003). This raises a particular issue of diversity for international students for whom English is their second language, as some may lack the confidence and/or competence with their English language skills to express ideas in their own words. Subsequently, such students would be at a much higher risk of defaulting to patch writing, and potentially falling prey to accusations of plagiarism. Indeed, there are references to this issue in the literature (e.g. Howard, 2000), and I understand that we have encountered several instances of plagiarism in our own department that were attributed to this cause. In this case, it would usually be necessary to look beyond an inclusive pedagogical solution, towards one that offered a reasonable adjustment to teaching and support, to address this issue.

At Keele University, such adjustments would typically take the form of individual tutorial sessions via the English Language Unit, and would sometimes include additional support with academic writing, including plagiarism awareness, referencing, vocabulary and grammar. This approach, however, would typically be generic in that it would lack subject specific content. It is generally noted that, whilst students usually find this somewhat useful, they will commonly return to the subject tutor for more specific guidance (e.g. Gorska, 2013). In response to this conundrum, Divan et al. (2015) suggest that an academic writing development programme that is embedded early on within the subject discipline might be the solution (indeed, their report suggests a reduced rate of plagiarism among their international students following this intervention). To this end, we have recently developed, and are running a trial, of a similar programme within one of the Master’s degree programmes in Postgraduate Medicine. The programme is open to all students and involves them undertaking a short, (non-assessed, optional) online module, when they first enrol, that is supported by an online resource containing study skills material, and involves submission of a short literature review for formative feedback. This process not only permits the formative use of Turnitin for developing plagiarism awareness (a “top tip” suggested by the HEA, 2014), but it also enables the tutor to provide formative feedback that addresses the individual needs of UK and international students on the programme. Ultimately, it is hoped that this proactive approach will not only help to develop academic literacy but will also result in reduced numbers of international students inadvertently falling prey to allegations of plagiarism. It also has the potential to be used as a remedial tool, later on in the programme, should a student find themselves referred for academic misconduct for plagiarism.

Conclusions

There is a strong suggestion from the literature and my own observations described above, that an early pedagogical approach to academic writing might offer an inclusive solution for plagiarism prevention, particularly for international students with differing cultural expectations and/or linguistic requirements. Until the incident arose with the master’s student that I described above, I had never considered how culture could impact on a student’s perception of plagiarism. It is possible that other colleagues do not either; at least not until an incident of plagiarism arises and is referred to the academic conduct officer. Should we (do we?), as a University, offer staff development training for prevention of plagiarism, that includes an element of cultural awareness?

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Keele University—Regulation 8, www.keele.ac.uk/regulations/regulation8/ (accessed 26/11/16)

**Title**
“A bone of contention”: reflections on the experiences of mature learners in social work education

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**Abstract**
Research has found that mature, female social work learners often face barriers to achieving success in higher education due to the demands of managing work, family and personal responsibilities. This paper explores four issues that may affect learning and career development: the demands of managing work and family responsibilities, the impact on learning and career outcomes, and the importance of support mechanisms. The findings suggest that mature learners face unique challenges and require tailored support to achieve their educational goals.

**Keywords**
Mature learners, care, social work, education.

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**Introduction**

Social work degree programs in the UK have historically attracted mainly mature female learners. In 2014/15, 59% of enrolments on UK social work programs were aged 24 or over, and the majority of enrolments were female (Skills for Care, 2016). Although statistics that describe the caring responsibilities of social work students are not available, I have noticed anecdotally in my role as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at Keele University that many mature female social work students have caring responsibilities and often financial considerations that impact on their learning experiences. Studies have indicated that mature female social work learners face a number of barriers to success in higher education, including lack of information about services and support, difficulties managing academic and personal responsibilities and financial concerns (Lester, 2003). Additionally, mature social work students begin their degree program with diverse personal, professional and learning experiences and they may have roles as carers, employees or employers and community leaders. Social work educators need to consider how these experiences and roles interact with the academic environment which is largely organised around the traditional young learner in higher education (Kasworm, 1990).

Universities in the UK have a legal duty to promote equality of educational opportunity for all learners with particular regard to a set of protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, marriage and civil partnership, and sexual orientation (Equality Act, 2010). This national duty has been translated into Keele University policy, which emphasises the duty placed on staff members to value difference and to promote a learning environment defined by respect and responsibility (University Strategic Plan 2015-2020). This paper explores my attempt to fulfil this duty and my failings with respect to mature female social work learners with caring responsibilities.

**Critical incident**

The critical incident that forms the basis of reflection in this paper occurred prior to an undergraduate social work seminar with an all-female group of social work learners. The seminar was focused on dissertation writing. In preparation for the session, I asked learners to bring a paragraph of their written work to the seminar to use during an activity designed to support learners to practice editing writing. Prior to the seminar, I received an email from one learner about the preparatory task. The learner expressed concerns about the task, stating “a few of the class are not at this point as yet for one reason or another and feel this may be a bone of contention, as when others who are ahead discuss this [their written work], it can lead to an atmosphere and induces stress and panic”. A follow-up discussion with the learner revealed that several mature learners in the group felt that the “younger” students were making progress with their dissertation projects at a faster rate due to having fewer personal and professional responsibilities to manage alongside their studies. This contributed to a competitive and tense classroom atmosphere for several mature female learners in the group.

The concerns raised by the learners’ comments appeared to reveal four issues:

1. Learners were concerned about the progress they were expected to have made on their dissertation projects. Indeed, studies have found a considerable gap between the academic expectations of social work educators and student social workers’ views about their own progress in relation to assessments and the type of support required (Worsley et al., 2009).
2. Learners felt anxious about completing their dissertation project. This experience supports the findings of social work education literature in the US where social work students were found to be extremely anxious about conducting research and engaging with research methods modules (Harder, 2010, Macke and Tapp, 2012).
3. Mature learners’ anxieties were increased by comparisons with younger students in the group who were perceived to be progressing their dissertation projects at a faster rate. Although the aim of the dissertation module within the undergraduate social work programme is to develop learners’ research-mindedness in preparation for practice, assessment has been found to lead to competition among groups in social work education (Singh, 2001).

My response to this critical incident was implicitly guided by the principles associated with adult learning in Knowles’ (1968) theory of andragogy. According to Knowles, andragogy, separate from pedagogy, is “the art and science of helping adults learn” (1980, p.43). The theory of andragogy assumes that adult learners: 1) have...
3. I applied the issue raised to social work practice by explaining that all members of the group are likely to have
three key points:

1. I acknowledged that many learners in the group, regardless of their age, have family and professional responsibilities that affect their learning. By acknowledging learners’ non-academic responsibilities, I was accepting the principle that an adult’s learning needs change in accordance with their changing social roles (andragogy principle 3).

2. I explained that all members of the group are likely to have different learning styles and approaches to assessments. I stressed that these approaches are non-hierarchical and encouraged the learners to have confidence in their own approach which had already brought success. In this respect, I was appealing to the learners’ independent sense of self and their ability to direct their own learning (andragogy principle 1).

3. I applied the issue raised to social work practice by explaining that practitioners, too, have different approaches to case work and comparing these approaches can lead to anxiety in the workplace. This was an attempt to emphasise the importance of managing comparisons with others in a situation applied to practice (andragogy principle 4).

Evaluation of my response

In the short term, the open discussion at the beginning of the seminar appeared to reassure the group about my expectations of their progress and to reduce mature learners’ anxieties. Although mature and young learners were physically divided on two sides of the classroom during the seminar, I observed positive and cooperative class dynamics between both groups of learners and most students contributed ideas and raised questions. Mature learners in the group were open about their progress on the dissertation project and the difficulties of managing their research projects alongside practice placements, continued employment and family responsibilities. Younger learners also appraised their own progress honestly and discussed which aspects of the project they found challenging. In sum, my response and my use of the principles associated with andragogy appeared to resolve the immediate feelings of anxiety and the potential competition between mature learners and young learners in the group.

Conclusions & implications

This critical incident relating to mature female learners in social work education has highlighted several areas for development within my own teaching practice that may be applicable to other social work educators. First, the incident has underlined the importance of recognising the challenges that mature learners with caring responsibilities may face when enrolled on social work programmes that are designed around traditional academic structures which fail to account for mature learners’ wider responsibilities. Secondly, the incident has revealed how an understanding of mature learners’ “bone[s] of contention” can help to improve group dynamics.
between young and mature learners and reduce anxieties about assessments. Knowles’ theory of andragogy provides a useful structure to address mature learners’ concerns about their progress and their comparisons with others. Finally, the incident has revealed that a full understanding of the experiences of mature learners on social work degree programmes must involve consideration of the wider structural issues that affect their experiences of social work education. Although individual educators may not be able to resolve these wider issues alone, discussion of the issues with learners creates opportunities for the traditional structures of academic social work programmes to be challenged. Given the importance attributed to developing student social workers’ ability to challenge social structures in social work discourses in the UK (Dominelli and Campling, 2002, Thompson, 2016). It seems logical that social work educators should also be involved in understanding and challenging the structural barriers that affect mature learners. Rather than addressing mature learners’ “bone[s] of contention” in isolation, the incident has revealed that educators must consider the whole skeleton of issues that can affect mature female social work learners in education.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the mature learner who raised the “bone of contention” and inspired this critical reflection. Discussions with the learner about her experiences of social work education at Keele University have helped to shape the ideas conveyed in this paper.

References

Skills for Care. 2016. Social Work Education in England


HIGHLIGHT #4

Title
Reflections of the Annual Learning and Teaching Symposium 2017

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Abstract
This highlight contains the reflections of two individuals who attended the 2017 Annual Learning and Teaching Symposium and volunteered to offer their thoughts here.

The focus for the annual teaching symposium this year was “Teaching International Students” and the intention, through collaboration and dialogue, was to generate new understandings and develop confidence in professional teaching practice among the event participants. The event showcased two prestigious keynote speakers:

- Dr. Rachel Berkson
  Lecturer in Bioscience
  Keele University School of Medicine, Keele University

- Dr. Megan Lawton
  University of Wolverhampton

Reflections from a Lecturer in Bioscience from the School of Medicine

Like all the best internationalisation events, this year’s teaching symposium on ‘Teaching international students’ was really about teaching all students. Overseas students have no monopoly on issues, and anyway all students are international students, destined to live and work in a globalized world.

Prof. Sally Brown and Dr. Megan Lawton have very different styles, but put across a common message: inclusion needs to be built in from the beginning. It's no good reacting to a problem by trying to change something in an inflexible course or make a special exception for a given student. Inclusion in the sense of not just having one assessment tool (typically a long written exam), or one style of feedback (marginal notes in an essay), and not making teaching a slave to one particular element of technology. A positive approach to inclusion could involve designing learning activities around methods and outcomes rather than being fixed to particular examples that only draw on one cultural context.

Prof. Brown talked very compellingly about the idea of cultural humility. When teaching in an international context, or rather, when teaching in a university full stop, asking students to provide examples from their own contexts may mean discussing examples that as teachers we are not fully familiar with. But we still have discipline expertise to guide the students through analysis and discussion of the examples they bring. At the same time, students from different backgrounds may have very different expectations of the relationship between student and teacher, and the idea of student co-creation of learning which is fashionable in UK HE can itself be a barrier to many. These cultural differences can be approached respectfully and incorporated into a flexible teaching system.

Dr. Lawton explored further the idea of how student knowledge and even expertise can be incorporated into teaching. For example, students may come up with some examples related to a given concept that are specific to their home country, and these can be reused for a course offered in the UK or via a different international partner—now the whole curriculum is more diverse without having to be rewritten top-down. Or a cohort of students who struggled with self-assessing their level of ‘digital literacy’ prepared a visual essay about what they understood by the term. That helped those particular students to get to grips with the idea, but also provided material for future classes to use as a starting point. Students don’t just have one identity, and want to be respected as individuals but not singled out as a person from a particular group.

The discussions sparked by these two keynote talks also had some good insights. Of course, we talked a lot about pedagogic problems we’ve encountered teaching very mixed groups, but we tried to be solution-focused and bring up practices that help. Very few of the suggestions were specific to overseas students, of course. Better explanations of everything from the meanings of academic terms of art, to information about what is expected in a course or assessment item and being transparent about the reasoning behind educational choices are helpful to students from any background. Existing students may be best placed to explain the subtleties of UK academic (and general) culture, and institutions can encourage and support this rather than trying to push students into official channels while losing any control over what students may be learning from their peers.

There are big challenges here but the symposium was taking a very encouraging stance around encouraging better teaching, based on both research evidence and personal experience. Rather than trying to fire-fight and address problems that arise when students only draw on one cultural context for whatever reason can’t engage with education as we would want them to.
Drawing on her international experience, working around the globe in usually 7 or 8 different countries each year, Sally pulled out issues identified with international students and how they are applicable to the whole student body. Students in different countries come from different contexts of expectation, for example. In some countries, the expectation is that learning is passive and not at all like the construction of knowledge and understanding expectation in the UK and at Keele. Would it offend your professor to talk to them afterwards and ask questions because that implies they failed to teach you properly in the lecture? Is it unacceptable to disagree with your tutor? What are the barriers to learning for a student with that frame of reference when dropped into a seminar where discussion is key? That's relevant to the diversity of UK students too—and for individual students, not just considering groups like Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) and Widening Participation. Is explaining our expectations, for example of a seminar, something we talk about doing for international students and should we not be doing that for UK students too?

Sally asked “do you make it possible for students to draw on their own subject, cultural and country backgrounds and experience?” Isn’t that what we should be doing to enable higher taxonomic levels of understanding, developing relational and then extended abstract learning, for all students?

Megan Lawton built upon this by asking us to think about a current module we teach and imagine we were asked to head to a university overseas and teach it there. What would you need to change and how? Megan used an example from her own experience of taking a module to Sri Lanka—discussing what went wrong and why inclusivity by design rather than reacting to individual needs would both avoid this issue teaching abroad and enable access to learning for international students here in the UK.

How accessible would my own environmental science modules be taught in Sri Lanka if I use a UK reference framework for, say, biodiversity conservation and environmental assessment? I could instead make the learning content draw, as Sally Brown says, on the students’ own country experience. So why not use that approach here at Keele by default when I am designing a module taken by international students and a wide diversity of UK students?

Megan stressed that you need to be comfortable as a teacher that you do not know things in order to draw on students' own subject, cultural and country backgrounds and experience. An inclusive curriculum should be transparent so that students see why it is designed as it is—and why independent learning and drawing on...
your own experience is valuable. We have the frameworks such as constructive alignment and outcomes-based teaching and learning to structure this communication with students.

The annual Keele Teaching Symposium is not just about that one day in June when academics across the university gather for enlightenment by invited external speakers. Rather, it focuses our thoughts and gives a forum for transformational concepts to take root. This year, the 2017 symposium fitted within a wider week of pedagogical development sessions that formed the core of Keele University’s first annual Digital Festival—a week of collaborative activities focused on digital tools and exploring how to incorporate them in your own practice to benefit student learning. Sally Brown followed up her symposium keynote with a seminar the next day on streamlining assessment as part of the Keele “DigiFest”.

The symposium and related activities have been a refreshing emphasis on pedagogy and scholarship rather than the “research first, and teaching naturally follows” still too common in the Higher Education sector. A timely seminar one week later with The Higher education Network Keele (THiNK) wrapped up my experience of the Teaching Symposium and its ripple effects. External speakers Professor Glynis Cousin and Professor Gurnam Singh brought us a seminar on “Critical Explorations of Differential Degree Outcomes: through and beyond race”, addressing the structural reasons for the attainment gaps of both BME and international students. They stressed the social relationship of teaching and learning, how trusting relationships with all learners is key to overcoming barriers, and that we need to recognise the singularity of the individual within “groups” such as international students. Bringing us full circle, homogenising individuals as group members does a disservice to “white British” students too.

Lots of talk but what do we actually do about it? Following the Teaching Symposium, my frame of reference for engaging with my next year personal tutees from China has shifted and my practice with it. As Sally Brown explained, “the students who are experts in country X are the students from country X”. What do my tutees consider to be the environmental science issues and career opportunities in China? How can I take advantage of their knowledge to develop my teaching for them? What do they think is important for them to be able to do when they return to China next year? What do they want from one year in the UK Higher Education context?

The challenge now is putting these pedagogical discussions into practice.
Capture taking the spotlight as contentious issues he admitted had still not been solved at Aberystwyth. Regardless of these occasional political hand grenades, he had dealt with other issues broadly by ensuring consistency across his institute, which he admitted was an aspirational goal rather than a realistic one. He was extremely open with the NSS data from his own institute, showing its less-than-stellar track record over the last few years and the positive impact his changes towards improving staff morale had on the latest figures—a significant upturn for their NSS scores. One of his tactics had been to fund and politically support seventeen different academic-led projects aimed at troubleshooting their historical NSS performance and use the outputs of these projects to inform institutional learning and teaching strategy. He also detailed a “tell-us-now” student voice mechanism which boasted a 24 hour response policy to queries. Prof. Grattan was brutally honest and slightly dismissive of what he termed “autopsy data” referring to action after an issue had taken place and postulated that his 24 hour service, whilst initially opposed by many of his colleagues, produced results in terms of student satisfaction.

His point was that many of the easy or quick fixes to “hygiene factors” (ie, todays problems fixed today) translated into enhanced satisfaction and enhanced inter-school consistency of student experience across his institute. This was shown to be directly responsible for the upturn in their NSS scores in 2016 resulting in staff engagement with his plans moving forward.

Whilst listening to this interesting talk, I was thinking that this was an idea that Keele could modify with relative ease. Given our size, existing good communication infrastructures and general Keele supportive environment, we might consider how we could do these things “smarter” rather than “better” which might be the definition of an impactful quick-win for us.

Questions from this Keynote centred on noting that this change in Aberystwyth’s leadership ethos required a great deal of confidence and trust in colleagues, shifting firmly to a quality enhancement (QE) model of management away from their pre-existing quality assurance (QA) model. Again, this is pretty much where Keele is already and it would be relatively easy to enhance this by looking for ways to further empower our own staff towards even greater excellence.

A Fireside Chat

The next keynote was a very unusual “fireside chat” with Prof. Thirunamachandran facilitating (Paxman-esque!) a three-way scripted conversation between three guests who were already familiar with each other (Dr. Peter Chatterton, Education Management Consultant; Prof. Susannah Quinsee, University of London; and Prof. Gunter Saunders, University of Westminster). In the plus column, this stylised session allowed the guests to share volumes of their opinions in a 360 degree discussion of teaching practice. In the minus column, it was difficult to follow at points and one of the three speakers was consistently overshadowed by the other two. The emergent points from the “chat” were as follows:

• The relative benefits of novelty value vs. incremental improvement of teaching practice and which leads to the best outcomes for learners with a view that it was a balance that is most effective “on the ground”.
• Necessity as a driver of excellence in teaching, where teachers are self-selecting pedagogic methods based on their strengths and weaknesses, framed using flipped classroom pedagogy as an alternative for teachers who struggle to give “good” lectures.
• Institutional logistics and cultures as a barrier or an aid to dissemination of best practice and innovation. This one led to a fantastic debate about the paradoxical reduction in student satisfaction that sometimes come after a particularly innovative module once the less-exciting status quo is re-exerted in the classroom… an interesting argument against too much early adoption and a convincing reason to develop these innovations at the “whole institute” level rather than in pockets.

His points all converged on the idea that institutional centres of learning and teaching should be themselves innovating but even more critical, he thought they should have an active role to play in transferability of others innovations from the individual and school level outwards to the whole institute level. Many centres already do this and I think his point was that they should feel empowered to do more.

The overall message from the various discusssants was that technology enhanced learning solutions needed to be simple and quick in order to have the widest impacts and greatest benefits at the big picture level.

The questions from this session focussed on the barriers to these various ideas, the most prominent of which was “time”. There is an adjustment period for teachers new in HE, where subject experts are required to become pedagogical practitioners “on the side” and compounded when “innovation” is perceived as a way to smooth this requirement. The emerging agreement within the room was that “incremental improvement” rather than sweeping drastic changes were a safer and more pedagogically-informed way to develop innovation in an institute.

The agreement from the audience was that technology for its own sake
did not equal innovative practice because it opened these ideas up as a pedagogic afterthought rather than the core driver for the technology... perhaps a little obvious not to put the cart before the horse, but some of the examples in the room from other institutes experiences with learning technology suggested this was a point worth voicing.

**Excellence and Strategy**

The first of the break-out sessions I attended was delivered by Prof. Julian Rawel (University of Edinburgh Business School) on excellence and strategy as keys to success in HE. Prof. Rawel postulated that we, as practitioners, were constantly trading on our reputations, be that innovation, excellence or success. These were all being applied towards creating the “great student experience” and one of the points he brought up was that the quality of “live” performance in teaching was a key factor and he suggested it was possible to value this skill and aspect more. From a personal perspective listening to him speak, it was clear to me (in a good way) that Prof. Rawel is a master of positive self-promotion by using wider points and context to constantly exemplify the very teaching skills he was emoting... a very meta experience when the audience realise they are being immersed in a multi-layered deliver style, something I intend to try to develop myself having seen how successful this can be in practice. This is a situation that teachers and learners on some post graduate certificate programmes can easily identify with, when your colleagues are the learners they are observing more than just your subject knowledge, they are experiencing a meta-perspective of your delivery style as well. The upshot from his presentation was to share that students want to be inspired and that they also want their materials well delivered. This raised the topic of “non-discussion of teaching style” in some practitioners due to self-awareness, perceived vulnerability or other worries. At an institutional level peer support or peer observation schemes (note to everyone; these are NOT the same thing) go some way towards addressing this, but Prof. Rawel was quite clear that he views “live” teaching performance as the critical factor in excellent teaching, where student are most definitely impacted on by this.

He pointed out that there is still some way to go in equalising the perception of teaching importance in comparison to research and to make this point, he had researched various institute webpages about teaching and learning only to find them taking either about research or core basic teaching skills sets rather than excellence per se. He seemed to think this was a curious issue of practitioners having exposure to a glut of teaching support resources but very little in the way of actually “how” to do it well... in his words, a case of action vs. rhetoric.

His next tack was quite controversial for this audience, when he postulated that in many institutes and departments, the minority of innovative excellent teachers were in fact “carrying” their colleagues that this still resulted in good “satisfaction” ratings for many places, which he suggested was leading to apathy in pursuing excellence in teaching as institutes silently and tacitly approve of this by focussing on research rather than teaching excellence. As you can imagine, in a room of teachers this idea was not well received but the discussion threw up some interesting ideas of what constitutes excellence in the first place and how to motivate colleagues to strive for excellence in their teaching rather than a “good enough is good enough” ethos. He suggested that the key to achieving this rested at the level of the in-house/departmental champions and institutional celebration/reward of excellence... all aspects that Keele already invest significantly in.

An extension of this idea stemming from the group discussion was the empowerment of the individual practitioner to innovate and experiment without “interference” (it was unclear what he meant by this) through devolution of what constitutes best pedagogic practice to the expert teacher to select the “right tool for the right job” in their methods and that the onus on the institute was to back them up rather than direct them down pre-set paths. The example that many kept coming back to was institutional directives to use specific learning technologies such as audience voting clickers, regardless of their pedagogic merits/risks until the pedagogic literature can catch up to inform these decisions with rigor. It was an interesting discussion that raised many questions and put forward relatively few solutions.

The group agreed upon a literature-based core of attributes that were valued in expert teachers, linked with success:

- Training and Experience
- Brevity
- Creative Delivery
- Empathy with the individual learner
- Confidence when outside their comfort zone

What struck me was that this is mostly a list of personal skills rather than subject knowledge and that in the audience I was in, this was accepted as a given. If that is the case more generally, then institutes might consider development of these skills for excellence as a priority (as we do at Keele).

The next discussion was over terminology and what was inferred by “research-led” vs. “research-informed” teaching, with the group preference for the latter because they felt that it re-framed and...
equalised the perceived divide between research and teaching in the sector.

The final major keynote for the day was Dr. Geoff Stoakes from the HEA project division. His talk focussed on TEF level 3 (discipline level) and chalked up the recent extension of the national deadline as an indicator of the complexity of moving in this direction from an institutional level and allow breathing space for a “lessons learned” ethos coming out of TEF level 2. This seems to be bouncing between the Houses of Lords and Commons, which is leading, in his opinion, to the 2 year delay we now face.

There was a feeling within the audience that discipline-level TEF could identify pockets of poor practice as an unintended outcome, which seemed like a difficult idea to embrace for many. The discussion inevitably turned to metrics for measuring “quality” at TEF level 3, with arguments all-round about the sustainability and reliability of any measures that emerge. There were significant concerns over the exclusion of international students from metrics, especially post-degree metrics, which many felt were subordinating international students unfairly.

The parting points of this presentation was raising awareness of an interesting feed-in mechanism that various HEA projects exploring “learning gain” might have on this extended TEF timetable, which he hoped would increase the validity of measurement metrics selected at TEF level 3 to actually measure what they set out to measure (an issue within that audience that concerned many colleagues).

In all this, the final message (framed more as a caution) was that it will be critical to communicate all of this complexity to our students to allow them to make a real informed choice and he finished on a more positive note suggesting that TEF was a key opportunity to increase the profile of Learning and Teaching and, by extension, higher education research.

Thank you all for joining us for another edition of JADE and remember, keep writing!

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Open Call for Submissions

The Learning and Professional Development Centre is pleased to announce an open call for submissions on any aspect of teaching, learning or assessment for the next issue of J.A.D.E.

For those interested in publishing their educational research in J.A.D.E there is a short video introduction to the journal and full instructions for authors available at:

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