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Welcome to JADE. JADE was launched two years ago by the Learning and Professional Development Centre. The journal was developed as a space to share practice for Keele staff and students that wished to write about their educational experiences as part of their scholarly practice. It was established to publish reflections on and inquiries into the acts of learning and teaching and to disseminate that work. Staff and students at Keele University act as writers, readers, reviewers, editors; and perhaps most importantly as learners and collaborators in the endeavour to improve student learning experiences and outcomes through their contributions to JADE.

JADE celebrates teaching scholarship, an act I have previously described as a journey of discovery and personal growth, and makes teaching scholarship public – open to scrutiny and sharing with interested others. Over the past two years, the readership of JADE has grown and broadened to include colleagues beyond Keele, and in 2015, we took two decisions that will further support JADE to grow and flourish. First, we have decided to accept submissions for published articles from staff or student members of other Universities and to publish these if they are deemed to be interest to our Keele and wider readership. In making this decision, we have expanded the potential community of scholars that can contribute to JADE’s future but hold steadfast the desire to sustain the journal as a place for scholarly discovery of both staff and students. Second, in support of encouraging submissions from student scholars, we also took the decision in 2015, to appoint a student Associate Editor to solicit for and encourage student contributions.

JADE continues to be a space that models innovation and creativity in the scholarship of teaching and learning. I sincerely hope you enjoy your experience of contributing to JADE, as a writer, reader, reviewer or editor, and as a learner and collaborator in scholarly endeavour.

Dr. Jackie Potter
Head of the Learning and Professional Development Centre

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Dr. Jackie Potter
Head of the Learning and Professional Development Centre

Katie Szkornik is Director of Learning and Teaching for the School of Physical and Geographical Sciences (SPGS). A Physical Geographer by background, she has over ten years of experience of teaching in higher education. She has completed the PGCert in Teaching and Learning with Technology and in 2012, following completion of an action-research based project to investigate pedagogic issues related to student performance in undergraduate dissertations, was awarded the MA in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

Katie’s pedagogic research interests include the development of computer-based formative assessments to provide rapid feedback, engaging undergraduate students in research, and supporting the international student transition. Katie is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

How can international teaching experiences enhance our scholarship of learning and teaching?

Within the context of the internationalisation of UK Higher Education (HE) many institutions have sought (and are seeking) to expand their research and education activities across international borders (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2007). This drive to ‘internationalise’ presents many opportunities and challenges for UK-based HE institutions, not least the opportunity for academic staff to enhance and reflect upon their own scholarship of teaching and learning.

In April 2014 I was given the opportunity to deliver teaching in China as part of a UK-China enhanced articulation programme with a Chinese partner institution. Prior to my first experience as ‘Flying Faculty’ (Smith, 2014), I was conscious of the fact that all of my past teaching experience had focussed almost exclusively on teaching UK students at UK-based institutions and, with the exception of small numbers of international students taking my modules, I had limited experience of, and engagement with, international students. My own initial perceptions supported the widely held belief in the literature that Western and Asian educational systems are ‘binary opposites’ (Ryan and Louie, 2007), with the former...
promoting a deep (student-focused) learning approach and the latter promoting a surface, rote learning, approach (Biggs, 1999). A key challenge for me therefore, was to facilitate the transition from surface (teacher-led) to deep (student-centred) learners without ‘problematising’ these students (HEA, 2014). As a ‘facilitator for change’ I needed to design and plan learning and teaching activities that took into account the way in which students in Chinese HE are taught and learn, alongside the need to increase the students’ exposure to a more student-centred Socratic approach to teaching and learning to help prepare students for transition to UK HE.

I found that teaching in an unfamiliar environment bought with it a plethora of challenges, such as the more limited access to information technology and resources (Google, YouTube and similar websites are all banned in China), the long teaching hours (six hours a day for two weeks, including weekends), the difficulties in contacting and liaising with UK-based colleagues (7-hour time difference and Google Mail is not accessible in China), the perception of the ‘teacher as king’ and ‘fountain of all knowledge’ and the language and cultural differences faced in everyday situations and decision making. For example, it is not acceptable to turn up to teach in China in your ‘field-work kit’ even when you are taking students out into the field in the afternoon!

Many of these challenges have been recognised by others (e.g., Smith, 2014), and I found that the key to survival was to be flexible, expect the unexpected and learn to work with, not fight against, the different systems and approaches. For example, I used the well-established ‘class monitor system’ to my advantage to disseminate messages to the rest of the class and ensure that all students had access to key resources and learning materials. I also made an effort to engage the Chinese students in helping me to learn some (very) basic Mandarin. The more limited English language skills of international students has been widely cited as an area of prime concern for the majority of TNE partnerships (QAA, 2013), but if the situation were reversed, how many of us could do the same in Mandarin? To what extent do we, as educational practitioners, have a duty to learn more about local culture, customs and language prior to embarking on such partnerships? Engaging the students to help me to learn key phrases of Mandarin, including the pronunciation of students’ names, helped me in breaking down teacher-student barriers and the perception of the ‘teacher as king’ and ‘fountain of all knowledge’.

Despite the challenges, I found my first teaching visit to China to be a very liberating experience, from both a personal and professional perspective. In turn, this experience has enabled me to reflect upon my approach to learning and teaching in the UK. I now feel more confident, as a UK HE practitioner, in challenging different learner groups and thus facilitating transformational learning (Entwistle, 1997). I am also more conscious of the cultural differences and diverse learning needs of international students who choose to study my UK-based modules. In some instances this has led to the adaptation of my teaching and learning materials so that, for example, the case studies and examples I present have less of a ‘Western’/Eurocentric focus.

During my time as ‘flying faculty’ in China I kept a reflective diary of my learning, teaching and cultural experiences. This has proved an invaluable source of information for evaluating the effectiveness of my teaching, and for the mentoring of colleagues preparing to teach in China. As I look forward to my third teaching visit to China at Easter, I reflect upon my own scholarship of teaching and learning, and continuing professional development, and how much this experience has helped me to develop as an educational practitioner. My involvement in this special edition of JADE has stemmed directly from these experiences.

With thanks to colleagues who have contributed to discussions on our collective experiences teaching in China.

References:


INTRODUCTION

Professor Richard Luther
Dean of Internationalisation

I am pleased this Journal’s first ever themed edition is devoted to internationalisation and happy to respond to Russell Crawford’s request to write a short introduction. The brief he gave me includes highlighting the overall importance of internationalisation and how it figures in Keele University’s institutional aims; outlining the main dimensions of Keele’s Dean of Internationalisation portfolio; sketching out the new internationalisation roles and structures I have introduced since taking up the new Dean position in January 2015 and identifying a couple of my internationalisation priorities.

Throughout most of the last 30 years, I have been closely involved in initiating and operating international networks of researchers, as well as numerous international teaching networks at UG, PGT and PGR level. That experience reinforced my passionate belief that a strong international orientation is essential if universities are to fully realise their arguably two most important irreducible core functions. The first is the advancement of knowledge via research. Especially nowadays, the frontiers along which such knowledge is generated are inescapably international and many of the great challenges the world currently faces require international research collaboration. Being a research-led university thus means striving to ensure academic staff are encouraged and enabled to engage in international scientific exchange and to build and grow international research partnerships. Universities’ second core function is providing excellent education, which requires them inter alia to ensure their curricula adequately reflect the internationally diverse sources of and approaches to knowledge. Since most graduates will have to operate in an increasingly globalised world, universities must also help students develop the knowledge and skills required to operate effectively in that internationalised and inter-cultural environment. Means to that end include enhancing study abroad opportunities, but also internationalising students’ on-campus, or ‘home’ experience.

As befits a ‘research-led and student-focused’ University, Keele’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan commits it to being ‘international in outlook and character and in the reach and impact of its education and research programmes’. Its specific aims include growing and diversifying its international student base; providing those students with a sector-leading learning and teaching experience; raising the
proportion of highly-qualified international students; increasing the number of students taught abroad; enhancing the University’s international research reputation and developing strong, high-quality partnerships that include teaching and research. Whilst finalising its Plan, the University created within the Vice Chancellor’s Office the new role of Dean of Internationalisation and in so doing, signalled the significance it attaches to the international and internationalisation agenda, as well as its commitment to having a senior academic leading the drive to enhance Keele’s global outlook and presence.

The Dean’s portfolio comprises three primary dimensions. The first is ensuring that the academic and pastoral/social needs of international students at Keele are met and that there is strong integration with the home/EU student base. This also includes oversight of needs and provision for those studying for Keele degrees overseas. The second dimension relates to developing a clearly internationalised experience at Keele of all students, including home/EU and postgraduate. This involves responsibility for a strategy that will ensure that international perspectives and experiences are built into all students’ experiences. The third portfolio dimension concerns international partnerships. The Dean is co-responsible for developing strong partnerships around the world that are the basis of collaboration in teaching and research, but also for performing academic and strategic oversight and development of the University’s suite of international partnerships. Some of the latter recruit international students, but responsibility for open market international recruitment remains with the Directorate for Marketing and Recruitment, with which the Dean constantly liaises.

To help deliver on this very broad-ranging and ambitious portfolio, I introduced the role of School Internationalisation Directors (SIDs). SIDs are tasked inter alia with providing leadership to assure the quality of the academic experience of the School’s international students; a clearly internationalised experience for all its students, as well as the development of the academic aspects of the School’s international recruitment and partnership strategies. In each Faculty, one SID is simultaneously Faculty Director of Internationalisation (FID) and represents the internationalisation agenda on the Faculty Executive Committee. The SIDs and FIDs collaborate with their counterparts to deliver the University’s broader international and internationalisation agenda.

At the star of the current academic session, I introduced four new university-wide groups to help drive forward the international and internalisation agenda (see figure). The strategy-focussed Internationalisation Steering Group reports to UEC and includes the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Internationalisation (as co-chairs), both Pro Vice-Chancellors, the Director of Marketing and Communication (MAC) and the three FIDS. There are three task-oriented sub-groups, with remits that focus on one or more of the above mentioned prime dimensions of the Dean’s portfolio. The Internationalisation Directors Group includes all SIDs, is chaired by me and focuses primarily on the academic aspects of international students’ experience and on teaching and research-related aspects of international partnerships. Membership of the International Operations Group is drawn from various professional services, but also includes the FIDs. Chaired by the Director of MAC, it focuses mainly on international admissions, the pastoral and social needs of international students, promoting on-campus activities intended to internationalise the experience of Keele students and on facilitating study abroad. I chair the International Partnership Group. Its remit is initially to take stock of the University’s myriad of existing partnerships. It will then develop more effective systems for monitoring, evaluating (and where necessary terminating) those partnerships and generate transparent and accessible protocols for the genesis and approval of new partnerships that meet the University’s above mentioned strategic objectives. In light of that remit, the Group’s membership includes Link Tutors of existing major international partnerships, colleagues from Governance and Quality Assurance, from International Recruitment and Development and...
from Academic Legal Services, as well as the FIDs.

These new roles and structures are of course not ends in themselves, but intended to be vehicles to harness the enthusiasm and engagement of the many Keele colleagues already contributing to internationalisation, to (re-)motivate others and to improve communication within and between Faculties, as well as between them and the relevant Directorates. They should also help identify and disseminate the many examples of good practice amongst those who are advancing the international and internationalisation agenda. This includes the work of colleagues who contributed to the ‘Internationalising the Curriculum Group’, of those supporting incoming and outgoing student exchange, of those involved in existing international teaching partnerships in places such as China and Malaysia, but also of many hard-working colleagues in the professional services.

The new systems are still bedding in, but they are already focusing attention on a number of my key international and internationalisation priorities, only two of which I can refer to here. First, I have had some success in developing in both China and the USA high-quality strategic partnerships driven by genuine research synergies, whilst simultaneously starting to scope opportunities for higher quality articulation partnerships (if possible also with a research dimension). These should enable the University enhance not only its international reputation, but also the quality of its international student recruitment, with all the benefits that entails, including in respect of student attainment. Second, I have placed reducing the attainment gap between Home/EU students and international students at the top of the agenda of the Internationalisation Directors Group. SIDs have been generating reports on the nature of the gap in their School, its possible causes and proposed remedies. Those reports will be but the first step in placing international student attainment firmly on the agenda of programme design and delivery and ensuring that the efficacy of measures introduced to reduce the gap are regularly reviewed. I am committed to reducing the gap (which Keele shares with the UK HE sector) and to do so, will need to draw on relevant teaching and learning expertise, including the excellent insights of Keele’s own academic staff, a number of whom will be readers of and/or contributors to this Journal.

In sum, as someone with a long-standing genuine commitment to internationalisation I am delighted that Keele University has taken steps to drive forward that agenda. I am naturally also thrilled to have been appointed to a new university-level leadership role that not only provides an opportunity to help shape the University’s strategy, but also to work with so many excellent and dedicated colleagues who have a similar commitment. It is only by dint of the combined effort of academics and professional services that we will be able to deliver on the University’s ambitious international agenda.
Introduction

For almost a century after the first Flexner Report on medical education in the USA and Canada, classroom attendance was considered in many medical schools as a requirement to pass a course and was greatly enforced. To most medical and allied health professional schools this is a policy issue whereby the interaction with the professor, the role model, is essential and mandatory. Actually, in most medical schools, attendance still constitutes part of the grade and is considered by many as one indicator of professionalism (Cooke et al 2006). Nowadays, with the stress on learning outcomes, competencies and achievements, and the introduction of more and more advanced information technology (IT) and media dependence, advances in IT transformed radically the ways we teach.

Universities are often pressuring faculty to teach courses online (Smith et al 2002). This stress is being more and more on promoting self-learning with flexible schedules leading, as documented, to competitive effectiveness (Bloodgood 2012; Jurjus et al 2012; Bradley, 2014).

Both online and traditional classes require students to manage their time properly and wisely. Both methods also assess student participation. However, it is evident that the student and teacher relationship by face to face communication creates a different dynamic, more interaction, and allows a wider variety of assignments and tests (McConnel 2000; Black and Smith 2004).

Researchers have developed excellent comparisons between the online and classroom or face-to-face learning and important differences were noted. Such differences included group dynamics, time, access to others, openness of system and discussions, the amount of effort required for both types of learning, as well as the effectiveness and impact of both approaches (Ya Ni, 2013).

In the online approach, the instructors have less sense of control and it will be easier for students to ignore. On the other hand, the classroom teaching gives more a sense of leadership from the instructors through the strong physical context (Smith et al, 2002). The group dynamics are not also the same between the 2 approaches. In online learning, the technology has a significant impact on dynamics. The students have to learn how to interpret with slower-time delays in interaction and discussions. In this approach, there are fewer hierarchies with the possibility of the student being more of an active listener without participation and enjoying a less sense of anxiety. However, in online learning, the feedback is textual and permanently recorded allowing the group to look at all participants work at the same time, a better accession. In brief, the group will deploy a total effort that is greater with the online learning (Morgan, 2014).

As universities make greater use of internet resources, online classes have continued to grow in popularity and effectiveness. Online courses let students learn at their own pace, accomplish assignments on their own schedules and acquire almost the same competitiveness as they would in a traditional, classroom-based course. Just like traditional classes, online instructors use discussion, assignments, and community to educate students. However, their means of execution for these tools are quite different (Barbeau et al 2013; Bloodgood, 2012; Allen and Seaman, 2010).

Generations before the 80’s were still under the effects of the Flexner’s Report of 1904. They were used to a very classic approach of teaching; attending class every day and listening to the professor who offered, to a given audience, a certain amount of information. Such information was supposed to provide the student the basis of understanding and be knowledgeable about the topic studied. Accordingly, the teacher could use different types of tools, such as photos, drawing, and schemes to express concepts, theories etc… (Cooke et al. 2006). After 1980s, the new generation of teaching aids and approaches grew up surrounded by digital media, making learning much faster. By contrast, it looks like the new generation of students is getting easily bored, since they expect a quick accessibility of knowledge and faster feedback. On this basis, universities around the world have started to conceive different teaching methods. A Dental School in Ohio built a virtual replica of its campus to develop communications skills (Griffith, 2008). In this replica less faculty instructional time was needed. In addition, Maryland School of Dentistry created a virtual hygiene clinic to evaluate student knowledge of infection control (UMB 2008). The Dental School at Aristotle University in Greece developed a 3D educational simulation program called “virtual child” that used Second life (Papadopoulos et al, 2012). This program aimed at assisting dental students to deal with child behaviour management. Furthermore, many Universities published online all available learning materials which can be found easily in search engines like google. Furthermore, a heavily used application such as Moodle is for the student another means that makes the study of a particular subject more flexible in terms of time, access, interaction, as well as management and interaction (Rosenberg et al. 2006; Bradley, 2014).

Concerning student achievement, a few studies were conducted to analyse this aspect. Most results suggested that there were not significant differences between the work submitted by students from the online groups and from the classroom students. However, the methods of instruction, the clarity of the learning objectives
as well as the organization of the assignment, were considered as somehow more important than the delivery platform (Bernard et al 2004; Parsons-Pollard et al, 2008).

Nowadays, online learning is becoming a necessity, especially in institutions that have problems of space, staff shortage, and a large number of students; we can understand how the presence of online educational material is almost a pure necessity. Students who do not have a good economic situation and living far away from the university centres will certainly benefit from an ST using program educational materials available online. The aim of this study was to assess the effectiveness of the self-learning approach compared to the traditional face-to-face method, as well as students’ satisfaction in a class of histology and embryology to dentistry students.

Material and Methods

For two consecutive years, undergraduate dental students from the Dental School of Palermo, Italy, were invited to participate in an experiment comparing online versus classroom learning in Histology and Embryology.

The classical classroom method required students to attend face-to-face classes for 80 hours, one and a half hours a day for one semester (Fig-1). The online group did not have to meet in a room. They took control of their time.

The class of dental students in the academic year 2013-2014 consisted of 25 students. Twelve of them agreed to participate in the experiment. On the other hand, the class of the academic year 2014-2015 consisted of 40 students whereby 15 opted to follow the online learning. In both years, these students were compared to 15 students per year, following the traditional approach of lectures and laboratories. These students had no obligation to attend classes. They used only online educational material to study the histology and embryology program (Fig-2). Students were given the opportunity to develop their own creative study projects which would be used to teach future dental students including: Power Point presentations, scientific articles, You Tube videos, and any other source deemed necessary in order to achieve the learning objectives of the histology and embryology course, as shown in Fig 2.

Students following the online approach were given the opportunity to meet with the teacher after developing a topic for clarification and feedback if deemed necessary.
Planning and Implementing the Experiment

Twelve students in 2013-2014 and 15 students in 2014 – 2015 (Group 1) were given an online program developed independently. They could not choose their own topics, all oral histology and tooth development contents were requirements to be performed. Freedom in developing this program was only in terms of time and type of educational method to be used. Students in Group 1 were asked to prepare a Power Point presentation with a specific topic to be selected from the given program. On the other hand, twelve students in 2013 – 2014 and 15 students were selected for (Group 2). They attended classes regularly, following the traditional approach, hence developing the program in a face-to-face manner each day for 90 mins, from Monday to Thursday during the first semester of the academic years (2013-2014 and 2014-2015), as per the University of Palermo regulations. Group 2 students were also asked to set up a Power Point presentation over a specific topic they like, selected from the program carried out during the course. To implement the ST students were advised to keep in touch with the teacher via email and visit regularly what is called in Italy “ Scheda di Trasparenza” or Board of Transparency, where contents include a range of information about the course of histology and embryology.

At the end of the course and at the set time for evaluating the performance of the students, February 2014 and 2015, eight students from Group 1 and 8 from Group 2 in 2014 and 15 students in Group 1 and 15 students in Group 2 in 2015 underwent the examination. The exam consisted of an oral part and a written part. There were 4 questions in each of the oral exams: One on cytology and two on histology and one on embryology, reflecting the competencies to be acquired in order to pass the course. The passing grade was set before the exam as 18/30.

An orientation session was scheduled in which study objectives were explained and responsibilities outlined including tests and exams at the end of the course. At the end of the course, students were asked to fill a questionnaire in order to express their opinion about that experience and compare it with the level of satisfaction of the students who attended the face to face.

Results

In the 2 consecutive years, the two groups within each category behaved similarly. The two groups have made the assigned Power Point presentation. Both groups had briefly presented their work in front of the whole class; they have taken the place of the professor.

All students in a given group participated in the presentation. They have shown consistency in the presented data and a high-level presentation, thus demonstrating a deep understanding of the subjects and bringing new experimental ideas. The degree of satisfaction was good in both groups; however, Group 1 stressed the importance of some videos found on You Tube in understanding the mechanisms of development. These students have brought to class a video of tooth development where, in fact, the topic was explained in a very clear and precise manner.

Students in Group 1 have also shown a particular appreciation to the fact that they have been able to dedicate all time needed in order to perform a task. In the face to face traditional teaching this was not possible because, by contrast, the teacher had a certain number of hours to perform and to progress the whole program.

Group 1 students choose their own topics, planned and researched their projects, and then implemented the projects in interactive digital Adobe Flash files. In the first project, they created interactive case-based histology/molecular biology teaching files. In the second project, they integrated photographic images into the existing illustrative histology files. The experience of creating the files served as an opportunity for hands-on learning for the students, both of the material and of the practice of teaching. In the Power Point file, the Group 1 students described why they undertook these projects, what exactly they did, and the impact their creation had on them. The projects demonstrated that student-driven educational materials were both possible and beneficial. Furthermore, their experience has allowed them to conclude that faculty at other medical schools should consider providing students with opportunities to develop their own creative projects that contribute to the curriculum.

By looking thoroughly at the tabulated data, the results of the 2 consecutive years were comparable. However, in 2013-14 no one failed out of the 8 + 8 students. The performance was good with a slightly better performance in Group 1, 28.75± 1.58 compared to Group 2, 26.75 ± 2.81. However, the performance was not significantly different P < 1.01.

The same scenario was obtained with the double number of participants (15+15) Group 1 had an overall performance of 27.15±2.23 while Group 2 got an average of 2 26.85±3.11. In Group 1, 2 students failed while only 1 failed in Group 2. Again there was no significant difference between these 2 groups P<0.777. Such results showed that students can achieve the competency levels required in histology and embryology through self-learning. Such an online process depends highly on the individual’s motivation to learn
following clear and well delineated objectives and competencies to be acquired.

Feedback from the questionnaire data depicted that students considered both approaches as constituting useful experience. However, the satisfaction with the online was unanimous compared to only 70% for the traditional approach. Both studies provided enough depth and knowledge about the material being studied. Both approaches allowed the students to find a teacher when needed.

However, there was a suggestion coming from the majority of students to have periodic and regular assessments and feedback during the course not just at the end. Among the suggestions emanated the issue of “blended learning” which was encouraged by many students. According to a good number of students, the best result can be achieved by blending the 2 methods.

Discussion

Online teaching compared to traditional classroom; are they really that different? Some educators argue that teaching in an online environment contains many of the same issues found in traditional classroom. Teachers must know their content area very well and be able to adjust the curriculum to best meet the objectives set for the course as well as the needs of the students and the competencies expected. The rapid growth of technology over the past decade or 2 created new delivery methods that can greatly enhance learning for students (Cooke et al 2006; Bernard et al 2004; Jurjus et al 2012).

It is becoming clear in the new trend of education that online college courses are in high demand these days. However, teaching online is still a relatively new concept for many professors and, therefore, many teachers wonder what they are getting themselves into (Smith et al 2002; Morgan 2014; Millis et al 2009).

In today’s era of increasing use of technology in medical education, the focus is on self-learning as the moto online education is expanding. Based on the fact that each student learns differently, the question might not be whether to offer classes online, but rather how to implement them properly. Definitely, a benefit to taking online courses is that they offer flexibility to the student. Online classes will mold better to the student schedule and style of life. Both types of education; online and face-to-face require discipline and motivation however; the online approach does require more discipline, organization and self-motivation. As online students will interact with instructors and peers through online video, they will focus more on learning independently and, probably, classes may go quicker without the distractions of a traditional on-campus model (Barbeau et al. 2013; Bernard et al 2004).

As technology continues to grow, teachers must spend time researching new technologies that may enhance student learning and be able to use them effectively. Online education to be efficient, as in this pilot study on dental histology and embryology, requires teachers to go beyond just traditional knowledge of their subjects, but to develop good resources, use the latest relevant technologies, communicate and organize information to best meet the needs of learning objectives set for the particular course, promote self-learning and help students stay focused on the learning process. However, the two very important issues to consider is an online learning approach are communication and organization. Lesson plans are critical and getting the message across to students is the ultimate goal. What the teacher says is as important as how it is organized and presented (Smith et al 2002; Ya Ni 2013).

Online college courses are in high demand these days, they are becoming very popular. Therefore, it is important for both professors and students to know how online classes work. Online course tools may vary depending on the online school and specific program; they include e-mail communication, podcasts, podcast material, message boards, live video classes, archived video classes, and more.

As a new teaching method, online learning has faced much criticism from many sources. They claimed it has devalued university education and will reduce the effectiveness of obtaining quality career positions by obtaining higher education. They also claimed the presence of many existing barriers of effectively learning complex subjects in an online-only setting. They also felt that it isolated the students from one another as well as their instructor, reducing the overall value of taking the course (Bernard, 2004).

Even though there is increasing interest in online teaching and research into effective online teaching methods, there are also major concerns regarding the quality of student performance and learning in both approaches (Parsons-Pollard 2008). In addition, there are also faculty concerns which may also include the fear of increased work load, the perceived lack of administrative support and the degree of technological knowledge still required of them (Millis et al, 2009). To some educators “methodology and pedagogy are more important than media in predicting achievement” (Bernard...
et al, 2004).

Another claim referred to the youth of online learning is that there has not been enough research conducted to evaluate the teaching methods or the effectiveness of student comprehension through an online only learning environment. Some programs offer a combination of online and classroom style teaching for the same course referred to as "blended teaching". This allows for the benefits of both types of learning to be realized. Such an approach is based on the comparable performance findings documented by multiple studies (Ya Ni, 2012) including this pilot study.

Many institutions were hesitant to follow exclusively one path or the other; they adopted the blended education which combines the intimacy and face-to-face interaction of a physical classroom with the flexibility and convenience of an online one (Allen and Seaman, 2010)).

Most schools, including dental schools, like the blended model because it provides students with cutting-edge artificially intelligent tutoring software while allowing instructors flexibility in planning their syllabi of courses. An assessment of effectiveness of such an approach was explored with multiple measures including grades, self-evaluation of achieving learning objectives, and student assessment of online interaction (Berbeau et al, 2013; McLean, 2001).

This pilot study compared the effectiveness of online and classroom learning and its results indicated that student performance was to a great extent independent of the mode of instruction. These findings could form the basis for a more comprehensive study covering many courses and using multiple evaluation measures. Such findings will have several implications for student learning, course development, and curriculum design in our institution and elsewhere.

In conclusion, the truth to the matter is that there are pros and cons to every type of learning approaches. Perhaps both options compared in this study are great options for the student. It is best to use the advantages that each method offers to the fullest extent. It would be also wise to consider a combination of online and classroom learning to convey subject matter to students, this hybrid or “blended” teaching would probably be the best teaching method. Actually, experience showed that students who are part of a blended education model performed better than those who exclusively followed one or the other. However, all approaches require students to manage their time wisely and to focus on the competencies required, however, student-learning style may play an important role in each format’s success.

**References**


The World Festival was a ten day programme of events, taking place from Monday 2nd March until Wednesday 11th March 2015, which included: a special menu of international food that was served in Keele University’s Atrium; a meeting by the HEA Internationalising the Curriculum group; an Action Research Network showcase; an Unconscious Bias and Transcultural Communication workshop and an event in which students shared their experiences of Study Abroad. The festival was launched by a party held at Keele University Students’ Union which was extremely popular with students. According to Keele International Student Support (ISS), the festival aimed to ‘celebrate the rich cultural diversity’ of the students and staff that study and work at Keele University(1). As there are staff and students from over 120 countries at Keele, the World Festival plays a crucial role in helping them to feel at home and enabling them to inform others about the culture of their home countries.

The World Festival Launch Party, held on 2nd March, was popular as students from at least 28 nationalities attended and 50% of the total number of guests were international students(2). Students and staff came to the event to sample the range of free international food that was on offer, to support a society, share their country’s culture or to watch fantastic performances by Bhangra, Jesus Jam, the Folk and Acoustic Society and Afro Caribbean Society. These performances represent the rich cultural backgrounds that are here at Keele. The majority of students who were informally spoken to after the event enjoyed the launch party and were generally impressed by the range of foods that were available to try. During the event it was noted that some students were curious about where they could buy some of the ‘Siu Mai’ (which is a type of dim sum) that was available on the Hong Kong society stall. This suggests that students of a range of nationalities are interested in Asian food and willing to try different things.

The society and charity stalls that were available for students to investigate during the launch party offered them the opportunity to take part in games that were local to individual countries, to sample even more food and to share information about a particular country, often through objects such as a Japanese Kimono or Korean silver chopsticks. However, a number of students felt that some stalls focused upon sharing their food rather than sharing information about a country’s culture. This balance could perhaps be redressed for events which take place in subsequent years. There was also a stall which enabled students to participate in KeeleSU’s International Student Experience research project. The launch festival proved to be an effective opportunity to canvas the views of students from a range of nationalities. Students also had the chance to take part in short video interviews which gave the research team a snapshot of their experiences of Keele. A particularly popular activity during the launch party was for students to dress up in the national dress of, or costumes from, particular countries and to then have their photographs taken. In future years this activity could be further expanded by the inclusion of different props and backgrounds.

It was felt that, in general, not as many students as possible participated in the programme of events because it was not widely publicised. For instance, only one post about the festival was placed on the ISS Keele Facebook page and a limited amount of information about each particular event was given. Promotion should also be aimed equally towards home and international students across the university. This would enable the festival to feed into the current #weareinternational campaign which was originally started at Sheffield University to promote the experience of international students and to raise awareness of the fact that the university is a global environment. The wider campaign now aims to ‘showcase the contribution that international students [make…] to the UK’ and to provide a ‘platform for them to share their stories with the rest of the public’(1). The World Festival Launch Party and the talk by study abroad students did relate to some of these goals to a limited extent because they gave students the opportunity to share their stories and culture with the public and to contribute directly to the university. More activities with this agenda would enable the festival to develop and to continue to be significant in future years.

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(2) This data is based upon students that swiped their Keele Card when they arrived at the event. However, it must be noted that not all students swiped their cards. It is significant that at least 63 students that attended the event were from the UK, which suggests a willingness to engage with international culture.

(3) The #weareinternational campaign originated at the University of Sheffield but has been shared with universities across the countries. See the supporter’ page: http://www.weareinternational.org.uk/supporters
It is well documented that people of all ages learn best when involved in meaningful experiences. ‘Blended learning’, loosely defined as a course of study which incorporates digital materials and encourages students to access these outside of formal classroom hours, allows teaching staff in higher education to “facilitate a simultaneous independent and collaborative learning experience” (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004. p.99). Although there is little evidence to demonstrate that technology in Higher Education actually enables students to learn in new ways, rather than replicate teaching, technological tools can effectively transform the learning experience (Littlejohn, 2012).

Use of technology in the assessment and feedback process can provide a means for students to transform the way in which they learn and I considered this appropriate for the groups of international students I taught in the English Language Unit (ELU).

Other factors I had noted when I began work at Keele in the ELU supported this. Firstly, students on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) modules submitted their work to the office, by hand before a deadline, and often at the last minute. Students would have to wait in the corridor while an administrator signed and returned the proof of submission/declaration of non-plagiarism cover sheet. As the work was not submitted via Turnitin, there were a number of cases of academic misconduct. Another factor was that feedback from student Module Evaluations indicated that not all students were entirely satisfied with the quality of feedback provided.

Many years ago, I worked with colleagues who considered audiotaped feedback to be more efficient for the tutor and also more valuable for the students than a written commentary (Boswood and Dwyer, 1996). Having used a form of Grademark and Turnitin in other Higher Education environments, I felt that providing online audio feedback for work on English Language modules would increase student satisfaction and make the assessment and feedback process more effective overall. In addition, it would enable international students to understand the process of submitting work using a Turnitin Dropbox (TAD) and help those still slightly confused by the concept of plagiarism by allowing them to see originality reports and make multiple submissions until the deadline.

Prevention of plagiarism through education is a theme identified by Badge and Scott (2009) who conclude that there is a lack of “investigation of the impact of these tools on staff teaching practices”. Although a number of more recent studies have considered the educational use of Turnitin, they tend to focus on individual programmes or subject areas rather than institutions as a whole and the relationship with policy. In addition to language support, EAP modules help students to recognise and adopt the conventions of good academic practice and it therefore seemed logical to use Turnitin as part of the learning/feedback process for students.

### Snagit Screen Capture and Grademark

The purchase of Snagit screen capture software was approved. Snagit appeared to be user friendly and allowed the marker to provide audio and video feedback, accessed by the student as an MP4 file. This works in tandem with Grademark and Turnitin, but whereas Grademark only provides a maximum of three minutes audio recording time, Snagit has no recording limit.

I decided to use the Snagit screen capture software to provide feedback to two groups of EAP 3 students I taught, for the duration of one semester. From the start, the EAP 3 students expressed enthusiasm for the feedback format and generally found it encouraging. At the end of the semester, students were asked to complete a survey. Feedback was very positive. Students commented that it was like having a one to one tutorial, it was easy to follow, and they could clearly see how to improve on their mistakes and so on. 100% of respondents agreed that they found the screencast/audio feedback very helpful. 87% of respondents agreed that it was motivating to hear the tutor discussing the work and 93% said they listened to the recorded feedback rather than just look at the grade. Although written comments were left using the quick mark labels, 67% selected “yes” for the statement that they would still prefer to have a percentage of written feedback on their work combined with audio feedback.

87% answered that they preferred audio feedback to traditional written feedback.

Snagit is very easy to set up and use. I am able to personalise the feedback and I feel there is more opportunity to provide more complete feedback than if I am writing. I can make encouraging comments, make suggestions from the general to the specific and provide pointers for future improvement. Even with the comments using Quickmark, for the tutor, the process seems to be less time-consuming than with only full written feedback. The fact that the document with my comments is “captured” the student can see the part of the text I am highlighting as I talk.

The main drawback is that the software licence is restricted to my home computer at work, so I am unable to mark work in this way from home.
Grademark and Audio feedback

I taught two of the three EAP 4 groups during the same semester. I felt it would be easier to work in a standardised way with other tutors using the familiar Grademark and the audio feedback facility already provided with this.

For both modules I uploaded marking criteria rubrics for the assignments and ensured the other tutor was familiar with Quickmark comments and the audio facility. Feedback was also positive but the survey questionnaire indicated that a number of students were confused as to how to access the feedback on the KLE. The link to feedback comments did not always appear immediately when the grade was entered. This meant that some students attended a tutorial with their tutor without having seen the feedback on previous assignments. 93% of respondents agreed that they found the audio feedback very helpful. 86% of respondents agreed that it was motivating to hear the tutor talk about the piece of work and 83% said they listened to the recorded feedback rather than just look at the grade. Although written comments were left using the quick mark labels, 69% selected “yes” for the statement that they would prefer to have a percentage of written feedback on their work combined with audio feedback. 41% answered that they preferred audio feedback to traditional written feedback.

From the perspective of a tutor, the Grademark audio facility works very well, and is easy to use. However, the three-minute recording limit means that comments have to be complete and concise. For a number of assignments this would not be sufficient and would be best complimented with written comments, as well as with Quickmark.

Reflections

It is clear that for international students, online audio feedback has a direct impact on motivation and on the level of attention paid to formative comments. For the latter, screen capture is more effective than the Grademark Audio facility. I have continued to integrate this in all modules I teach. The fact that students overwhelmingly display an interest in the feedback comments rather than take notice only of the grade, is reason enough for this form of feedback to be used on a wider scale. This transforms the learning experience for students and allows them to view feedback on their work in a positive way. To conclude, although there are some issues to address, this short study has convinced me that the use of technology to provide feedback to international students has an overall positive effect on learning and teaching.

References


Introduction

Recent years have seen rapid growth in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) taking part in transnational education initiatives (TNE) (Hill et al., 2014). Such initiatives take many forms including overseas campuses and distance learning programmes, the franchising of degrees, and joint and dual degree awards (Tang and Nollent, 2007; QAA, 2013). One important model of transnational education is through ‘flying faculty’, who ‘fly in’ to an overseas institution to deliver intensive short blocks of teaching which may be supported by local tutors and delivery of course materials through distance learning (Tang and Nollent, 2007; Smith, 2014).

There are increasing pressures on HEIs to access the international student ‘marketplace’. However, the spread of TNE initiatives is not equal across countries and subject areas (Janelli and Huang, 2014). Many initiatives have partnerships in SE Asian countries, predominantly China and there is a concentration of students within business-related (42%) and engineering (19%) subjects (QAA, 2013). This historically narrow geographical and discipline focus in the TNE activities of any one institution poses a risk to institutions as they are vulnerable to changes within the international student marketplace. As such, these factors have contributed to a pressure to develop new TNE initiatives, including those institutions and subject areas which may have less experience of such activities.

This paper reflects on the establishment and subsequent termination of a teaching collaboration between a Chinese university and an English university, in an environmental-related subject area where staff had limited previous experience of transnational initiatives. We focus on the perspectives from the English University, and reflect on the benefits and challenges of the initiative and explore the solutions put in place to address some of the challenges faced. Whilst some of the challenges discussed may be institution and/or subject specific, many might be applicable more broadly and will provide insight for other HEIs or subject areas engaged in establishing and delivering international teaching programmes.

The Rise: Setting up and designing the programme

The process and decisions relating to the initial establishment and choosing of a partner institution are beyond the scope of this paper and the immediate experience of its authors. The environment-focused collaboration discussed in this paper was initiated following a visit to a Chinese institution by a member of the English University’s senior management team. This led to the establishment of a 3+1 style collaboration between the two universities, with the students from the Chinese University studying in China for their first three years and completing their final year at the English University.

2.1 Designing delivery in China

One of the aims of Chinese-foreign cooperation in higher education is said to be to help graduates from the Chinese institution develop ‘soft skills’, such as communication, critical thinking and team working (QAA, 2013). The development of such attributes requires a greater adoption of Western approaches to teaching and learning typically characterised by independent learning, research projects and academic discussion between students and tutors as peers (QAA, 2013). As part of the 3+1 collaboration the English University contributes to teaching in the 2nd and 3rd year (FHEQ Levels 4 and 5) of the degree in China, before students take the fourth year (FHEQ Level 6) of their degree in the UK. Initially, two face-to-face modules delivered intensively over a 10-day teaching period and supported by distance learning, and one wholly distance learning module were delivered in each of Levels 4 and 5 (Table 1). Five years into the collaboration a further face-to-face module was delivered in both years. These eight modules taught by English University staff are termed ‘bridging modules’. The first cohort was accepted into the programme in 2010/11, and teaching by flying faculty in China commenced in 2011/12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching in China by Chinese University</td>
<td>Module 1 (flying faculty)</td>
<td>Module 1 (flying faculty)</td>
<td>Teaching in UK (modified version of ‘home’ programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2 (flying faculty)</td>
<td>Module 2 (flying faculty)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 3 (distance learning)</td>
<td>Module 3 (distance learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 4 (flying faculty)</td>
<td>Module 4 (flying faculty)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching in China by Chinese University</td>
<td>Teaching in China by Chinese University</td>
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Table 1: A summary of the structure of the 3+1 collaboration. Module 4 in years 2 and 3 were added to the programme in 2015/16.
The ‘bridging module’ model was designed to serve several purposes, including:
1. Preparing students for study in the UK higher education system, including experience of different teaching and assessment styles (covered in more detail in section 3.1 and Szkornik et al., 2015).
2. Preparing students for their Level 6 modules at the English University by providing background and skills covered by home students at Levels 4 and 5, therefore ensuring consistency in content between degree routes and readiness to study at Level 6.
3. Practice of using English language skills for academic study.
4. Easing the stress of transition to study in the UK through familiarity with tutors.
5. Meeting requirements for contributions to teaching in China as part of regulations from the Chinese Ministry of Education (who approve all bachelor’s degree level international collaborations), and suggestions of areas of contribution from the Chinese University.

The design of the bridging modules taught by the English institution was influenced by these requirements and by existing areas of staff expertise. The Level 4 modules were designed to be foundational, covering basic material to bring the Chinese class up to a similar level of understanding as the UK students, and focus on skills development in a similar way to the design of Level 4 modules in the English institution. Skills development was both subject-specific, for example basic fieldwork and laboratory skills, and also included generic study skills, with a particular emphasis on issues such as critical thinking, referencing and plagiarism. The Level 4 modules were designed to be taught by any staff member on the teaching team in order to allow the rotation of staff teaching in China. In contrast, the Level 5 modules are more specialist in nature, with increased focus on subject-specific knowledge development and research skills, in order to prepare students to carry out their independent research project (dissertation) in their final year at the English University. This mirrors the experience of ‘home’ students at the English University, who start to prepare for their dissertations during their second year (Level 5).

As this was a new model of collaboration for the University, certain key decisions about progression into the final year at the English University were required. It was decided that students could progress with one failed module but had to have shown engagement with all the modules (i.e. they still had to attend the final module even if they had passed all the others). Students who did not meet the entry requirements to study at the English University were able to complete their degree at the Chinese University. A decision also had to be made on the level of English language ability, measured through the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The English University staff on the environmental programme team involved in making this decision had limited prior experience of the IELTS system and what the grading meant in terms of actual language ability. There was also a tension between needing students to study at the English University to make the programme financially viable (this was the only income associated with the programme after the outlay of English University staff teaching in China) and ensuring the ability of students to study successfully in the UK. An overall IELTS score of 6.0, with reading and writing at 6.0, was agreed, which was the University’s minimum requirement. Students who did not attain the required IELTS scores of 6.0 but who gained 5 or 5.5 were able to attend a pre-sessional language course (12 weeks or 6 weeks respectively) at the English university to reach the required English language standard.

The timing of the delivery of the modules was also a key decision. The flying faculty also taught on ‘home’ university programmes and therefore delivery in China could only take place outside of core UK teaching periods while also fitting around Chinese semester times, which limited available teaching windows. Another important factor in timing, particularly of the Level 5 modules, was the finalisation of marks to confirm that students had met the requirements for study in the UK in time to apply for visas. As a result the teaching windows were established in September (before commencement of the UK academic year) and April (covering the English University’s Easter holiday period).

A major challenge of designing the collaboration was the difference between the two educational systems. Coverage of topics by the Chinese institution was described simply in terms of teaching hours which varied significantly between topics, making it difficult to ascertain equivalence of a 15 credit module (the standard module size at the English university) within the Chinese structure. Using teaching hours as an equivalence to credits is extremely problematic because of the difference in teaching and learning styles between the UK and China; the Chinese higher education system is typically more teacher-led and requires significantly more contact time (and therefore ‘teaching hours’) than the UK system, with its greater emphasis on independent learning and study. The nature of the intensive 10-day teaching period in China for the bridging modules did significantly increase the number of contact hours above the contact hours for the majority of equivalent modules for ‘home’ students. A summary of the decisions made in designing the programme are detailed in Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision made</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Outcome / evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Inclusion of distance learning modules as part of delivery at FHEQ Levels 4 and 5 | • Reduce dedicated staff time in China  
• Create engagement with Keele staff over a longer time period | + Reduced amount of staff hours in China  
reducing impact of reduced staff numbers at English University  
- Difficult to get Chinese students to engage.  
Triied many types of communication.  
- Easy for staff to ‘forget’ the distance learning module, due to immediate and present pressures of teaching in home institution  
- Time difference between England and China limits synchronous communication | |
| Choice of modules to deliver as ‘bridging modules’ | • A compromise over the areas originally identified by the Chinese institution for the programme and available staff expertise at the English University (from those willing to contribute to the programme).  
• Trying to address similar subjects to those covered by ‘home students’ where there were gaps in the Chinese programme, including field and research design skills | + Rationale was met in all cases  
- Did not have staff expertise to address all areas originally identified by the Chinese university  
Inclusion of social science research training is new and still to be evaluated | |
| Number of bridging modules to pass               | • Ability to progress to final year at English University with one failed module allowed some flexibility | + Increased number of students able to progress compared to having a 100% module pass rate  
- Pass rate (40%) could have been set higher to ensure students able to tackle the academic challenge of studying at the English University, however this would have significantly decreased the number of students progressing, with significant financial implications to the English University.  
Once agreement in place difficult to change ‘goalposts’ for students | |
| Level 4 modules designed so they could be taught by a range of staff, therefore allowing flexibility in staffing | • Inclusion of social science research training (when additional modules added) to better mirror the ‘home’ programme and generate a wider range of dissertation projects | |
IELTS scores

- Set at 6.0 overall and 6.0 for reading and writing
- In-line with University minimum requirements
- Greater number of students able to progress to study the final year at the English University
- A higher IELTS requirement would have reduced language difficulties, potentially improving attainment, but would have significantly decreased the number of students progressing, with significant financial implications to the English University. Once agreement in place difficult to change ‘goalposts’ for students.

Timing of teaching

- Staff availability to prevent clashing with teaching commitments at the English University
- Avoiding Chinese) holidays
- Timing of assessments for visa requirements
- Worked, but restricted available teaching time and only allowed intensive block teaching which has its limitations (see QAA, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Outcome / evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed option modules rather than self-selected.</td>
<td>Allows students to be treated as a single cohort providing better support.</td>
<td>+No complaints about lack of choice +Greater chance of success +Greater goodwill of staff, and sensitivity to specific issues for Chinese students</td>
</tr>
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Table 2: A summary of some of the decisions made in designing the programme, the rationale for the decision and an evaluation of the decision

2.2 Designing delivery in the UK

While the final year undertaken at the English University by the Chinese students was not identical to that followed by ‘home’ students taking the entirely UK-based equivalent programme, the overall structure was the same, comprising a mix of independent research project, compulsory modules and ‘optional’ modules. The differences and the supporting rationale are shown in Table 3.
### Bespoke module (for Chinese students only)

- Allows time to see students as a single cohort, providing additional opportunity for pastoral and academic support
- Opportunity to address gaps, that had been covered by home students in previous years, in particular, field work
- Worked well as support for students
- Tended to concentrate questions on module leader rather than personal tutors
- Further limits interaction with home students

### Do not take bespoke module for home environmental students

- Bespoke module is run from a different School not involved in Chinese collaboration - lack of awareness, and financial implications
- Small number of home students would be overwhelmed by Chinese cohort affecting success of module for home students
- Module has significant component of summatively assessed group work at Level 6. This often poses problems of mark allocation which would likely be exacerbated by high numbers of overseas students
- Similar learning outcomes covered by bespoke module for Chinese students
- Reduces complaints from home students about group work with non-native English speakers
- Chinese students don't benefit from group work with native English speakers, limits integration opportunities
- Limits internationalisation experience of home students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional ‘English for Academic Purposes’ module</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Non-credit bearing but compulsory, to give further language support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making it non-credit bearing gives greater consistency with home student portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bespoke for environmental students, helping provide specific language support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adds to student workload</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3:** Summary of the rationale and evaluation of the decisions made in designing the final year of the collaboration

#### 2.3 Managing the programme

The collaboration with the Chinese University was managed using similar procedures as required for standard programmes at the English University. A separate course management system and exam board were established due to the number of specific issues relating to the collaboration, and different timescales required regarding progression decisions to enable the visa process for students to study in the UK. Representatives from the Chinese cohort studying at the English University were included as part of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee in order to give a formal voice to their particular perspectives. Level 5 and 6, and latterly Level 4, work was examined by the external examiner for the equivalent home programme.

The students were allocated across a small number of personal tutors rather than across the entire teaching team. This ensured a consistency and greater efficiency of support, as personal tutors would be experienced at dealing with similar issues, some of which would be more specific to these students.

Plagiarism is a more prevalent issue for Chinese students, due to educational cultural differences and also due to English language challenges (Chan and Yan, 2009; Li et al., 2010). Acknowledging this, an additional Academic misconduct system was established for the collaboration, which included a Plagiarism Officer who was the central point for handling plagiarism issues. This system was then integrated with the English University’s formal academic misconduct processes.
Another aspect of managing the programme was delegating teaching duties in China to UK staff. For several staff, this was an explicit part of their job description, and there has been a general willingness and interest in teaching in China. Nevertheless, staff did not want to feel that they were ‘trapped’ into going to China every year, and attempts were made to rotate the teaching where possible. If the collaboration was to continue long term, it is likely that finding staff with the willingness to teach in China would become more challenging as the novelty of the experience and therefore immediate personal benefits wore off. Keeping academic staff on board is reported as one of the key difficulties with TNE (Tang and Nollent, 2007). Elsewhere in the English University similar models of collaboration have been subsequently adopted, however staff teaching abroad have been given additional incentives beyond their simple work allocation. This unequal situation would no doubt start to create resentment across academic Schools and provide further challenges to the management of staff to teach in China.

Delivering the programme: Challenges and solutions

None of the ‘flying faculty’ had taught in China prior to this collaboration, and for many this was their first experience of a non-UK educational system. While all staff found elements of the experience rewarding and personally enriching, many also experienced challenges from teaching in a different environment and educational culture. The specific teaching challenges can be categorised as i) language and cultural differences in the teaching environment and differences in learning behaviours; ii) technological and resource issues; and iii) specific issues relating to the delivery of field and laboratory classes. It should be noted that different challenges, and different levels of challenge, were faced by different staff and different solutions were also adopted.

3.1 Language and cultural differences in the teaching environment between the UK and China

The differences between ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ teaching, learning and assessments are well documented (e.g. Chan & Yan, 2009; Kember, 2009; Li et al., 2010). However, these binary distinctions and generalisations, such as students from Confucian Heritage Cultures (e.g. China) being perceived as passive, dependent, rote-learners prone to plagiarism and lacking critical thinking, are also criticised (e.g. Ryan and Louie, 2007). The bridging modules were in part designed to bridge between what some see as fundamentally philosophically different educational approaches, thereby helping students to adjust to the western model of education. Problems in the classroom were compounded by language difficulties, an area of prime concern for the majority of TNE partnerships (QAA, 2013). Students had only had conversational English classes and had no experience of academic English up until their second year when the first member of flying faculty visited the Chinese University.

Practically, these background issues have led to the following challenges on the ground (although not experienced by all staff):

- Difficulty in engaging students in classroom discussions
- Difficulty in getting feedback from students
- Difficulty in getting students to independently research a topic (compounded by the short intense teaching periods and access to learning resources)
- Limited understanding of material and instructions

The flying faculty have adopted various solutions to these challenges. For example, in order to encourage students to take part in classroom discussions some staff reward students with chocolates for answering questions, thus serving to make the learning environment feel less formal and break down barriers to participation. Each module is supposed to be supported by a ‘shadow teacher’, a local member of staff who assists in classes. In some instances this has worked well with shadow teachers reading through lecture slides in advance and providing students with a short summary in Chinese before the session began, and then assisting in students’ comprehension of questions, instructions and core material. However, the success of this approach is dependent on the availability of a shadow teacher, their English language skills and their willingness to engage in these ways. Not all shadow teachers have contributed to the same extent and the level of support has not been consistent across years from the same shadow teachers.

The use of student feedback questionnaires to evaluate teaching is commonplace (Kember and Wong, 2000). However, the standard evaluation form from the English University was not suitable for the Chinese students due to the large number of questions and the unfamiliar language used. Therefore, some staff developed very simple evaluation forms comprising three simple questions: ‘Stop doing?’, ‘Start doing?’ and ‘Keep doing?’ and this led to more written feedback. In the Chinese classroom, a system of ‘class monitors’ is commonplace (Kember and Wong, 2000). The use of student feedback questionnaires to evaluate teaching is commonplace (Kember and Wong, 2000).
One further initiative aimed at addressing language issues is to provide a glossary of key terms for each module, and developing this idea further, the development of a talking glossary, where key terminology is spoken and defined by different teaching staff. Where students were provided with a written glossary they regularly used this. The idea of a talking glossary aims for students to get used to different accents and spoken English at the same time.

The students in China have more experience of content-focussed assessments such as multiple choice questions and less experiences of extended writing assignments requiring a greater level of critical thinking and independent research (Szkornik et al., 2015). The final year assessments that students undertake when studying in the UK include oral and poster presentations, technical reports and journal articles based on the synthesis and interpretation of data, unseen exams typically requiring two essay-style answers in two hours, and a 10,000 word dissertation. The assessments in the bridging modules were therefore designed to prepare students for these assessments that they would encounter during their studies in the UK. The bridging module exams sought to incrementally develop the skills required to write two essays under timed conditions. Level 4 exams were designed to include a mix of very short answer questions, and questions requiring a paragraph of writing. Level 5 exams were designed to require a greater degree of free writing. Initially students were given a large choice of questions but this was subsequently reduced as staff realised that it took students a significant amount of time to read and understand the question answer (see Szkornik et al., 2015).

Some staff experienced aspects of classroom behaviour they found challenging, such as students talking and using mobile phones during teaching, and several students appearing completely disengaged. Considering the reason for these behaviours provides a different perspective and potential solutions. Often students were talking and using phones in class to aid their comprehension, through discussing in Chinese the class material and using mobile phones for translations. Rather than ban these behaviours some staff have used them effectively in their teaching, providing specific breaks for students to discuss the material together, and to look up things on their phones. It is hardly surprising that some students disengage where they have six hours of classes in which they are struggling to follow the material and have little opportunity to catch up, a significant disadvantage of the intensive 10 day teaching block.

Overall, teaching in the Chinese classroom required the flying faculty to adopt different approaches to their teaching in an English classroom, requiring sensitivity to the students’ situation and background, and acknowledgement of the journey for them to transition to the UK HE system. This requires staff to reduce the amount of material from that normally covered in a given period of time to provide additional time for students’ comprehension and for them to support each other, and where possible to use the systems and conventions of the Chinese classroom to achieve the flying faculties’ needs (such as using class monitors).

3.2 Technological issues and access to resources in China

There have been significant efforts to position information and communication technology as central tenets of university teaching and learning (Selwyn, 2007), through the ubiquitous use of Virtual Learning Environments in UK institutions, voting technologies, or the use of video and audio for delivery, assessment and feedback. In addition, distance learning, facilitated by Virtual Learning Environments has seen significant growth (Baxter and Haycock, 2014). Two distance learning modules were incorporated into the collaboration in order to ease the pressures on flying faculty staff resource delivering face-to-face modules in China. However, China’s censorship of the internet, the so called ‘Great Firewall of China’ (Branigan, 2010) generates technological obstacles, preventing access to certain internet services which are a key component of western society, for example Google (used commonly as an email server as well as search engine).

Several of the flying faculty on the programme experienced various technological challenges in their teaching, although these were not necessarily experienced to the same extent by all staff, and had different scales of impact:

- Limited or no internet access in the teaching rooms - limiting web-based demonstrations.
- No access to Google (used by the English University as the email server) and no access to Google Translate to check plagiarism from Chinese sources not indexed by Turnitin.
- Older and slower computers and slower internet connections in specialist IT labs than staff were used to, meaning that the English University’s Virtual Learning Environment was slow and difficult to utilise within classes.
- Reduced access to electronic resources - some e-books provided by the English University were not accessible in China.
- Commonly used software packages used by the Chinese students had menu systems in Chinese, making it difficult to
support students using these packages.

• Early versions and Chinese versions of Office on teaching computers meaning that fonts on PowerPoint slides prepared in England became corrupted requiring changes prior to teaching.
• Slow internet connections, increasing time to do additional research, respond to emails and download work from the VLE for marking.
• Issues with access to the VLE where templates automatically embedded YouTube which is not accessible in China. This required modification to the template in order to access the VLE.

In general, the staff who suffered less from technological issues affecting their teaching were those who adopted a ‘back to basics’ approach, minimising their use of technology (including removing computer-based practical exercise sessions from bridging modules). Although this may present the easiest teaching environment for the staff member, it limits the preparation of students for the use of technology in the classroom during their final year in the UK.

Staff experienced difficulties communicating with students when not in face-to-face contact. In the Chinese University, classes had a ‘Form Tutor’ who passed on messages through face-to-face contact, phone calls or instant messaging. However, email is a key form of communication between staff and students at the English University, and the students in China were given email accounts at the English University from the start of their course. Despite staff highlighting the need for students to regularly check email accounts, the Chinese students were reluctant to monitor their email and consequently important messages about teaching and assessment were not always picked up by students. Therefore a system was established, with all email communication to students copied to two staff contacts at the Chinese University, who would ensure that students received the message. Some flying faculty also experimented with linking students’ UK university account to QQ, a Chinese instant messaging system, where students were advised to forward mail from their University account to QQ.

The difficulty in engaging the Chinese students with electronic communication was experienced to the greatest degree by staff running the distance learning modules. Staff tried to encourage student engagement and provide support for students through both asynchronous (such as discussion boards) and synchronous (such as Skype) communication tools. The timing of synchronous communication opportunities were set up with the seven hour time difference in mind, yet no student took advantage of these.

Only a small minority of students engaged with asynchronous communication tools. Even when these formed part of the assessment strategy for a module, there was poor engagement. Reviews of distance learning models in China have shown students’ desire for more face-to-face contact with academic staff, suggesting that online systems may not be a sufficient or desirable substitute for face-to-face teaching (QAA, 2013).

3.3 Conducting fieldwork and laboratory work in China

An important element of environmental degrees is the development of field and laboratory skills (Fuller et al., 2006). The Chinese students have limited experience of carrying out guided and independent fieldwork and although there is a greater core science component in the early stages of their programme in China than is common for environmental programmes in the UK, they appear to have relatively limited laboratory skills. Although there was not a major discrepancy in the equipment available to the students on the environmental courses in China, their limited skills suggest that they were either shown instruments, or walked through demonstrations, limiting their hands-on experience of laboratory techniques. Fieldwork and laboratory work was incorporated into the bridging modules in order to i) ensure that the Chinese students developed similar skills to students on the full English equivalent programme that could be used in their independent research projects, and ii) to train them effectively in the skills of an environmental professional. Delivering fieldwork presented a number of challenges including:

• Lack of flying faculty familiarity, or opportunity for detailed reconnaissance, of suitable field sites (although support was given by the Chinese University in accessing suitable field sites).
• The need for negotiation with the Chinese University for transport to field sites (where outside the university campus).
• The interaction between the English and Chinese teaching staff in the field, where in some cases the Chinese staff significantly influenced the direction and discussions on the field day.
• Requirement to carry suitable field equipment to China for the whole student group.
• Student unfamiliarity with fieldwork and working in outdoor environments, for example lack of experience of taking field notes, lack of awareness of suitable clothing and footwear, and difficulty walking on rocky terrain, with associated risks.

Fieldwork can be a potentially hazardous activity and requires careful risk assessment and effective communication of the risks and appropriate behaviours to the students. This has the potential to be affected by language issues, meaning flying faculty were
not always clear of students’ comprehension. In the event of an incident in the field, the flying faculty were not aware of procedures to be followed, potentially leaving staff vulnerable to issues of legal responsibility.

Conducting laboratory sessions involved similar challenges, including a lack of clarity on the available laboratory resources, a lack of familiarity for UK staff with equipment that was available, the need to negotiate access to the facilities, and the need to ensure understanding around laboratory safety, risk assessment and management protocols. This lead to some flying faculty staff scaling back, or even abandoning, laboratory sessions in favour of conducting field sessions using equipment brought over from the UK. Although where staff put in the extra time to set up laboratory work they did experience significant support from the Chinese University.

Even though problematic in terms of logistics and students’ unfamiliarity with fieldwork, the field and laboratory work carried out in China did achieve the intended learning outcomes of the bridging modules and helped to prepare students for their independent research in the UK. Some staff felt it saved time later on in the dissertation process as the students did not need training in routine water and soil processing of samples where necessary for their projects. However, the intensive 10-day teaching block made it difficult to find the time to adequately prepare students to enable them to engage in a more critical way with the field activities.

3.4 Delivering the programme in the UK

Over the course of the collaboration the numbers of Chinese students progressing to the final (UK) year of study has increased from 13 to around 25, adding significantly to total student numbers on certain modules and in some cases exceeding the number of home students, significantly changing the class composition. This shift in the make-up of classes has led to several teaching staff reflecting on their existing teaching, modifying their modules to increase accessibility to a diverse student cohort, and thinking critically about the national/European focus of the material covered. Several staff report making adaptations to their modules on account of the Chinese cohort, such as reducing the pace of delivery (leading to less material being covered) and introducing more breaks (to allow Chinese students to catch up, aid comprehension, and discuss material amongst themselves). Such modifications have been useful in considering the learning environment for other non-native English speaking students and students with learning disabilities, and also reflecting on content-focussed delivery styles.

Benefits of the programme

This section focuses on the benefits of the programme from the perspective of the English University. Despite the challenges of setting up and delivering the programme it has brought several benefits to the staff and academic School involved, and to the University. The collaboration, now in its third year of students studying their final year in the UK has brought almost 60 overseas students into an area of the University where student numbers are relatively low. This has supported student numbers on the environmental programmes, and allowed the growth of staff numbers in this area of strategic importance to the University. The collaboration has also provided a ‘feeder’ to a postgraduate Masters programme at the English University, further enhancing the financial benefits of the collaboration.

This venture has also increased the experience of international collaborations in a different part of the University, and thus spread the risk for the University of overseas students being concentrated in a few subject areas. The establishment of this new style of collaboration has significantly enhanced institutional learning relating to the establishment of such projects.

Many of the staff involved with delivering the collaboration (including administrative staff) have expressed its usefulness in their own personal and professional development. For some staff, this has spurred an additional strand of pedagogical research, seen as important for improving the student experience, teaching and learning, as well as staff promotion. The experience of teaching a culturally different group of students has been useful for many staff in reflecting on their teaching on the UK programme, with an increased awareness of the diversity of learners, leading to considerations to make teaching more inclusive. For many staff, teaching in China has increased their confidence, through the experience of tackling some of the challenges faced, making them feel more flexible and adaptable as university professionals. Involvement in the programme has also increased the awareness, particularly for new staff, of higher level university strategy and how their day-to-day teaching is influenced by university decision making.

The ‘Internationalisation agenda’ includes the internationalisation of the educational experience for home students (HEA, 2014). Involving a significant number of overseas students within an
area of the University which traditionally has lower numbers of international students also has the potential to internationalise the home programme and the experience of the home students. However, there are challenges in the two-way integration between the Chinese students and the home students, therefore much further work must be done for these benefits to be felt fully.

The Fall: Reasons for terminating the agreement
In early 2015, a decision was made by the English University at a strategic level (rather than a programme level) to terminate the agreement for the environment-focused collaboration and the two other subsequent agreements set up on a similar model. This section outlines some of the factors contributing to the eventual ‘fall’ of this collaboration.

5.1 The changing institutional contexts
In 2015, the English University was asked to contribute two additional modules to the programme in China placing increased pressure on the English teaching team, and impacting the financial payback for the collaboration, while raising concerns of potential future increases in requirements from the Chinese university. A review of TNE in China has shown that many UK institutions have had to adapt to changes in circumstances driven by a changing regulatory environment in China (QAA, 2013). TNE initiatives are seen as desirable for UK institutions as an important source of income generation, while Chinese institutions are more interested in trying to build capacity and competitiveness internationally (Tang and Nollent, 2007), generating potential tensions in purpose. A tightening of TNE regulations from the Chinese of Ministry of Education has been observed, encouraging some models of TNE and discouraging others (QAA, 2013). Horizon scanning of a potentially changing market place by the English University may have contributed to the decision to terminate the agreement.

During the time this agreement has been established the funding landscape within English higher education has significantly changed. Home student fees in English Universities have risen from £3,000 to £9,000 in 2012, significantly reducing the difference between home and overseas fees. A cap on student numbers (for students with A-level grade equivalents lower than AAB and subsequently ABB) was abolished in 2015, allowing greater recruitment of home students and potentially reducing the immediate demand for international students. At the same time, increasingly stringent and frequently-changing immigration and visa controls are deterring from a welcoming climate in the UK for potential international students (QAA, 2013).

5.2 Student attainment
The Chinese students on the 3+1 programme and UK home students on the equivalent environmental course both study towards a degree of the same name from the English university. However, the Chinese students typically attain significantly lower degree classifications, impacting the attainment metrics for the programme as a whole, particularly as the number of home students is proportionally small compared to the number of Chinese students entering the final year of the programme (Fig. 1). Attainment, in the form of degree classifications, is a contributor to several national league tables of degree programme and university standing in the UK, thus the impact of lower degree classifications on league tables may in turn have an effect on home and overseas student recruitment to the course. The English University has ambitions of becoming a higher ranking university, hence a desire for higher proportions of 1st class and 2.i degrees. No Chinese student on the programme has attained a degree classification higher than a 2.ii degree. Szkornik et al.(2015) report (based on one cohort of students) that the mean mark for UK-based students was on average 15% higher than for the Chinese cohort in semester one and 10% higher in semester two. This lower attainment by Chinese students is in line with studies of degree attainment by Chinese students in UK universities (Ianelli and Huang, 2014). Exam assessments in particular produce a greater difference in grade between the Chinese and home students (Szkornik et al., 2015). Studies show that international students perceive significant differences between the exams they experienced in their home countries and those in the UK which shape their expectations and impacts on how they prepare for, undertake and make sense of exams (Pilcher et al., 2013). In contrast the dissertation, initially seen by the Chinese students as a major challenge, is typically the highest achieving module at the English University. Despite an initial lack of independent study and research skills, students typically engage with the dissertation process demonstrating a real development in independent learning, and good communication without the time-limits and language issues exams can present. The next highest achieving module is the bespoke module delivered just for the Chinese students, where significant additional support is available. Research shows that language barriers are one of the major issues for the comparatively low achievement of Chinese students (Ianelli and Huang, 2014). The students have only had conversational English classes until they
start the bridging modules, and have to have reached a standard to write essays under timed exam conditions in less than three years. A detailed discussion of student achievement on this collaboration is provided in Szkornik et al. (2015).

For many of the Chinese students simply getting to University, completing the course and achieving a degree constitutes a significant achievement, particularly since Chinese degrees do not have ‘classes’ (Ianelli and Huang, 2014). However, low degree class attainment by a substantial cohort of students on a programme may also have future implications for reputation and income under the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which the UK government intends to be an assessment of education provision at universities across England but for which the details and metrics involved are yet to be declared. There are, however, ways of protecting the reputation of the home course. The two other similarly-structured collaborations subsequently set up at the English University both have a separate degree title to the cognate home programme. This means that results are reported separately and thus programme metrics are not impacted, and it also ensures easier monitoring of the collaboration.

5.3 Negative impacts of the collaboration on the home programme

In the case of this programme, the recruitment of proportionally significant numbers of overseas students impacts on the experience of home students, affecting the learning environment and classroom dynamic. The Chinese students tend to sit as a single block in the classroom, are less likely to contribute to class discussions, and are more likely to talk (which has had time led to complaints) or be seen using their mobile phones in class. Although phone use may be for learning purposes (see section 3.2), this signals a sense of disengagement to the rest of the student cohort, and makes the Chinese cohort appear more like ‘passengers’ in the classroom, potentially reducing the engagement of the home students.

The historically relatively small numbers of students on the environmental programmes at the English University had meant that oral vivas were held as part of the assessment for the dissertation. These vivas were felt to be a very positive experience for both students and staff. However, the significant increase in numbers on the environmental programmes due to the recruitment of the Chinese students has meant that running vivas is no longer feasible in terms of workload management. Therefore, a significant and detrimental change has had to be made to the home course as a result of the Chinese collaboration.

Conclusion

The experience of seeing through the rise and fall of an international collaboration in a part of the university with limited prior experience of such international ventures has led to significant learning and reflection within the programme team. The collaboration has brought many benefits including personal and professional development, additional staff numbers, an increase in student numbers and overseas numbers on courses with otherwise relatively small cohorts, increasing internationalisation as well as programme resilience. However, the 3+1 model with flying faculty delivering bridging modules in China, combined with distance learning modules, and Chinese students completing their fourth year of study in the UK, has presented a number of challenges. The extent to which these challenges have been experienced has varied between staff members depending on their approaches and expectations, and staff have developed a series of individual solutions to tackling these challenges. Although there are many reasons for the termination of the agreement, the end of the collaboration brings risks of losing this institutional learning. TNE initiatives will always have challenges, but there are also significant benefits to UK-institutions beyond the financial benefits which are often prioritised (Tang and Nolent, 2007). It is important therefore that these wider benefits are acknowledged by UK institutions, and that in order to benefit from staff experiences and learning and to continue to engage academic staff in the international agenda, institutions should provide support for staff engaged in TNE and provide opportunities to develop further initiatives in line with the university’s aspirations.
References


My name is Lavinia Ioana Udrea and I am a Philosophy PhD Student in the School of Politics, International Relations and Philosophy at Keele University. I am a Romanian national and came to the UK to do research in the field of environmental policy and governance. The PhD thesis I am working on at the moment is titled ‘Is there a shared morality that can be deployed in the context of environmental protection?’ and I am planning to submit it in September 2016.

Studying a PhD degree is a difficult decision to make, because as a student, you need to consider a variety of aspects before actually starting it. I am talking about a long process to help you decide the subject that you are interested to study for the following three - four years. Finding a supervisor with expertise in the subject you want to research and who is willing to become your mentor (if you find the most suitable supervisor, you will also know the university you will be applying at) is not an easy task and you also need to ensure funding to pay the tuition fees and living costs while studying for your PhD degree. There are other choices future PhD students can have in order to make their life easier like: applying for a PhD degree paid position advertised by a certain university. However, I will not discuss about this option here, as I chose to do it the ‘manual’ way, and I can only talk about my personal PhD experience. 

Getting help from a suitable supervisor to guide you during the PhD journey is essential. Once the university accepted me to come and carry out research at Keele, my lead supervisor put me in contact with a Romanian academic (to become my second supervisor) who was part of the same department. It was reassuring to have the opportunity to talk to both supervisors and express my expectations and fears and making together the final arrangements (set the PhD degree start date, decide to live on-campus, discuss about the UK Higher Education system) before coming to England.

Prior to my arrival at Keele, I started to read more about the University, learn where it is located and understand what makes a campus university so distinct. I read different forums to learn about Keele student community and used Google Maps to see how the campus is set up.

Adapting to the UK Higher Education System was one of the obstacles that I faced in the first year at Keele, because of the big differences that exist here in comparison to the Romanian (traditional) academia where I obtained my Bachelor and Master degrees. The differences that I noticed immediately were in regard to the teaching methods used, students’ approach to studying, marking criteria and the academic writing style. I needed to come up with a strategy to adapt faster to the current...
surroundings and so, decided to attend all Learning and Personal Development Centre (LPDC)’s trainings and workshops available were I would learn more about the rules and responsibilities in place in the UK Higher Education and start to feel more comfortable with Keele’s learning environment.

Another obstacle I had to overcome was getting to know people and make new friends. When I arrived at Keele the only two persons I knew here were my supervisors, with who I only talked via e-mail. I decided that the best way to meet new people and adapt faster to my new context was to join the postgraduate student association (KPA) and become their Environmental Officer.

With the help of KPA, I emerged in the Keele community and started to get noticed through the projects I worked to implement. One of my first initiatives at Keele was to organise a Keele in Spring Photography Exhibition and invited undergraduate and postgraduate students to share their passion for photography with the student community.

Because I have always enjoyed being part of student organisations, I decided to run for the elections as an Environmental Student Representative candidate for Keele Students’ Union (Keele SU) and won. The role required me to identify different resources and organize projects in order to meet students’ varying needs. I was committed to prove that I am an efficient representative and a dedicated facilitator of student-led environmental and sustainable initiatives. Moreover, I encouraged environmental initiatives within KeeleSU, by pointing out the importance of Keele students’ contribution for the wellbeing of our green community. As a result of my volunteer activity at Keele University, in May 2014 I received the Platinum Volunteer Award for 200+ volunteer hours at the KeeleSU Awards, organized by Keele Students’ Union.

I chose to get involved in all these extracurricular activities (on top of my PhD degree) because they helped me feel comfortable with the new educational environment and discovered further opportunities for my personal and professional development, being able to organise projects and different activities for the student community.

Meanwhile, I did not stop learning about the UK Higher Education and went to different orientation programs in order to understand better Keele learning context. LPDC helped me improve my knowledge and skills and initiated me into teaching at university level, offering me the safe space to build the confidence to handle small and large groups of students. The Research Centre advised me to take the ‘Introduction to Teaching at Keele’ course held by LPDC to be able to facilitate seminars in the School of Politics, International Relations and Philosophy. The 2015/2016 academic year is my third consecutive year teaching political thought and philosophy modules at university level. I have already been nominated for two awards by my level one and two students for excellence in teaching as a Sessional Teacher.

As I mentioned earlier, financial security is a matter of great importance for PhD students. I have been offered a partial scholarship by Keele University to pay my tuition fees for three academic years however, I took the responsibility to find the means to cover my living costs. Hence, in my second year, I applied for a Residence Support Assistant (RSA) position in Keele Student Services Centre. My role is to give immediate support (during unsocial hours 5:00 PM - 8:30 AM) to students living in Keele Halls of Residence. A Residence Support Assistant is trained to get a greater knowledge, and awareness of how to deal with most situations (fire, mental health issues, emergencies, alcohol and illicit drug use, violent residents, first aid, students with disabilities, conflicts related to living in communal spaces) that students might face while living on campus. In March 2015, I was offered two awards: Students’ Residence Support Assistant of the Year 2014/2015 Award and Senior Residence Support Assistant of the Year 2014/2015 - Above & Beyond Award at 2015 Student Engagement Awards organized by Student Services Centre. This role keeps me close to the student community and helps me engage more with English native speakers and so, improving my English speaking skills and pronunciation.

Being a RSA for Keele Student Services Centre also recommended me when I decided to take casual work as a Keele Student Ambassador (SA). As a SA, I was selected to represent the institution and hold short sessions on topics surrounding UK Higher Education to students in school, colleges and on Keele campus, providing young people with the knowledge they need to make informed choices about their future.

The variety of roles I had the pleasure to have at Keele helped me develop presentation and networking skills that are essential at national and international conferences and other research events I have attended in order to widen my career horizons. The latest international conference I had the chance to participate at, was The Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris in November 2015 and at The 11th Conference of Youth (COY11), I gave a conference talk about my current research work titled ‘Values and frames for motivating young people to act responsibly and adopt more sustainable lifestyles for the future’. At these research events, I took the opportunity to bring...
to attention that many topics of public debate should be discussed under the critical, analytic approach characteristic of philosophy, while concentrating on questions of value and ethics.

As a PhD student, you are often encouraged to write as much as possible and publish in academic journals. Last academic year, I became an associate editor for JADE – The Journal of Academic Development and Education at Keele University. My role is to carry out dissemination, research and administration tasks associated with the JADE project within the Learning and Personal Development Centre. I have the pleasure to write for JADE and be surrounded by wonderful people that are willing to help me develop my knowledge and skills further. The latest article I published was titled: ‘13th Keele Annual Teaching Symposium 2015 - Flexible Learning at Keele University’ in the Journal of Academic Development and Education, Year II nr 4, Keele University, August 2015, pp 85-91. In June 2015, I have also got involved in writing a full-length novel Walking Through The Ashes, during Keele University Be More Creative – Collaborative Fiction Student Writing Project, that have been published by White Water Writers.

All in all, I think every PhD student will experience differently his/her doctoral degree and I do not say by all means that my way is the best way possible. In these three years, I just tried to make myself happy and stay active while doing research. I needed to be in permanent contact with the community I came to discover at the price of a slower doctoral progression, but I was aware of all the risks involved. At the moment, I am writing up my thesis to be submitted in September 2016 and trying to juggle my other roles. It is really important to find balance in your life and have the courage to go for the things that you think will enhance your doctoral experience. I did not wait for the others to tell me what I should do or not do (on different occasions, my supervisors told me that I getting too distracted from my research work), but it was my choice to discover the knowledge and skills I needed to improve and try to make the best of my PhD life.

I followed my instincts and prove to myself that I can do more than I thought I am capable of. There were times when I got tired and needed some time to rest or give up some projects that I really loved, and other times when 24 hours/day were not enough for me to do all the things I planned for the day. But in the end, I am sure all PhD students will agree with me when I say that a doctoral degree pushes your limits and helps you discover bits of yourself that you did not have the courage to explore.
It is well documented that the changing environment in Higher Education in recent years has had political and financial implications for universities as well as a direct effect on student numbers and the student experience (Cheri, 2010). There has been a move towards internationalisation: increasing numbers of international students while embedding globally relevant content in discipline specific courses.

In line with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) description of internationalisation as “holistic” and “inclusive”, university education encourages diversity by providing equal opportunity to both home and international students. However, some studies reveal a sense of isolation felt by international students while others discuss the lack of interest or involvement displayed by some international students in their participation in university life (Mak et al., 2015).

A case study (conducted at Keele as part of a HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme) identified a sense of dissatisfaction among international students related to involvement in global and other communities on campus. This was based on a very small sample of students but does demonstrate that international students feel the need to be part of internationalisation initiatives.

Discussions and forums throughout the sector on Internationalisation (HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme on Internationalisation), tend to perceive a large international student body as an indicator of how successfully the institution has “internationalised”.

Students from different cultures may have different communication styles and a great deal of literature has concentrated on differences between east and west, still surprisingly, citing Confucianism as the reason why students from mainland China do not speak up in class. Thankfully, this has been disputed in other studies (Kennedy, 2002) which have shown that communication style is not solely dependent on the origin or culture of the student. While culture may have an influence on learning style (and there is definitely no “one cap fits all” international student profile), students from all backgrounds are receptive to new “modes of learning” and are able to adopt new styles in action learning contexts. Factors such as personality, confidence and level of adaptation to a new environment play a part for all students, irrespective of background. Nevertheless some international students might have communication, cultural or other barriers which could inhibit them from participating fully and benefitting culturally from their period of study in the UK.

Part of the role of provision of academic language skills in the form of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) modules is to help students develop the skills to fit in with the learning environment at Keele and to become independent, autonomous learners. Incorporation of relevant and stimulating content and tasks to the module syllabus, and adoption of an eclectic approach, which encompasses active learning (Krashen, 1982) and sensory stimulation theory (Laird, 1985, Scannell and Newstrom 1980) has resulted in positive student feedback. This focussed on the organisation of sessions, how they valued that they were able to actually communicate with each other, and how that authentic communication differed from modules in other subjects. The students responded well to working in small groups and many students commented that the atmosphere allowed them to feel at ease and benefit from feedback from peers. Other positive comments were related to what Montgomery (2009) calls a “developing intercultural learning environment”. Students noted the international composition of the groups, and that the design, content and approach to facilitating learning created an environment in which they were able to work on tasks in class and become friends with people from countries they had never previously heard of. The positive impact, measured by student responses in module evaluations and in discussions, provides food for thought in the context of international/intercultural issues.

While it is obvious that an integrated, internationalised student body is beneficial for the university as a whole, it is assumed that international students are by rights internationalised. The extent to which skills for cultural adjustment might be enhanced, is not fully considered. Nevertheless, the content of the EAP modules (EAP 3 and 4 in particular) and the form in which it is transmitted, address this to some degree and contribute towards helping students to adapt as international students on an internationalised campus and in other diverse cultural environments.

References


Dear Editor

The Science without Borders scheme is designed to place Brazilian undergraduate students in UK universities for a year, mainly in STEM subjects. They take 60 ECTS credits of modules in the autumn and spring semesters, followed by a placement, which can take the form of a university-based research project, or an internship at a government or industrial laboratory.

The scheme has been running for 4 years. It is funded by two Brazilian Higher Education agencies, CNPq and CAPES, and is managed in the UK by the UK HE International Unit on behalf of Universities UK. Keele has participated in the scheme from its inception and 13 students have so far come to Keele, taking modules from a wide range of programmes, but particularly (so far) from Environmental and Forensic Science. In our experience, the students that have come to Keele have been very positive, engaging with their modules, and getting involved in some interesting placements.

The scheme is currently going through a renewal process, and we look forward to continuing to welcome students from Brazil to Keele in the years to come.

Yours sincerely

Robert A Jackson
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Biomedical Engineering (BME) is by its very nature a multidisciplinary occupation. It reaches from basic research into human physiology, through the development of devices and novel treatments for disease, to the translation and sustainable use of medical devices in the healthcare arena. An important area of BME is clinical engineering and the management of medical devices. Technology plays an increasingly important role in the delivery of healthcare services, and the proper management of medical technology is essential for ensuring the safe and efficient use of medical devices.

The BME programme at Keele enjoys close links with the University Hospitals of North Midlands (UHNM), a relationship that has been built over the last 15 years that the course has been running. In recent years, the course has seen a growing interest in BME from students from a number of African countries including Uganda, Ghana and Nigeria. Many African hospitals now have substantial inventories of medical equipment, allowing them to deliver advanced patient care, and are realising the importance of properly managing that equipment to ensure the long-term viability of their clinical services.

Last year, a high-level delegation from Usman Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital, in Sokoto, Nigeria visited Keele. They came to see the facilities we have to offer at the Institute for Science & Technology in Medicine (ISTM) and the Medical School, as well as the close links with UHNM and the support provided by the Clinical Technology Department led by Mr David Butler. This visit was initiated by a former student of our BME Masters programme, Mr Umar Mohammed, who impressed his managers with his ability to implement the skills he had learned here at Keele on his return to Sokoto.

A memorandum of understanding was subsequently signed between the Nigerian Hospital and Keele University to provide a customised, three-month training programme in Biomedical Engineering through ISTM, the School of Medicine and the Department of Clinical Technology at UHNM.

The first cohort of visiting engineers from Sokoto in Nigeria completed their training in Biomedical Engineering in December 2014. The trainees followed modules in Physiological Measurement and Medical Equipment Management, and spent four weeks on clinical placement at UHNM with a short training visit at our other hospital partner, the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RJAH) in Oswestry. The first four trainees to complete the programme, Aminu Sani Sokoto, Garba Ladan, Abdullahi Mu’azu Gigane and Kabiru Abdullahi, are shown below receiving their certificates with Dr Ed Chadwick, Program Lead, Mr Joseph Clark, Programme Administrator and

Mr Dave Butler, Head of Clinical Technology at UHNM.

Building on this solid start to our relationship with Usman Danfodiyo, the hospital has sent another student to study for the MSc this year, and is currently discussing options for PhD studies and staff exchange. Keele is proud to be playing a role in the development of BME services by supporting educational provision in Nigeria.
For the fourth year, a group of students from the College of Medicine at Al Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University in Saudi Arabia visited the Research Institute for Science & Technology in Medicine during August.

The fourteen students and their tutor learned about the latest research carried out at Keele and the University Hospital of North Midlands (UHNM), including plenty of hands-on experience learning techniques and how to use the latest scientific equipment for their individual lab-based projects. Lectures included a visit to the Keele Active Virtual Environment (KAVE) and Anatomy Suite, and tours of UHNM departments such as the Cancer Centre and Obs & Gynae which host significant research projects involving UHNM patients.

The first day of the students visit was an induction by Keele’s International team, held in the Old Library in Keele Hall, and then one evening during the first week they enjoyed a traditional English fish and chip meal at the home of Mark Smith, ISTM’s Research Manager.

The academic programme has been developed and managed by Dr Paul Roach, and this year the students were accompanied by Dr Waleed Al-Shaqha, Vice Dean for Research at Al Imam University. Dr Al-Shaqha took the opportunity to meet Professor Andy Garner, Dean of Health, and other key staff in the University and UHNM to discuss future collaborations, undergraduate medical student placements and research degrees.

I would like to use my editors prerogative and traditional epilogue to offer a brief event report from an international conference at which Dr. Yvonne Skipper (School of Psychology) and myself were invited to speak about our Keele Teaching Innovation funded research project examining the psycho-physiological effects of feedback at the 2015 Biennial conference for European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) which ran from 25 – 29th August 2015.

It did not hurt that this conference was held in Cyprus at the hottest time of year and we resigned ourselves to endure this hardship for Keele. Our talk went down very well and garnered a great deal of interest in both the relatively untapped potential of cross-faculty collaboration in educational research and more specifically, it put Keele on the radar of a number of EARLI delegates as a place to watch for educational research....whilst this was great for Dr. Skipper and myself as researchers, the rest of the conference was equally interesting from my perspective and I wanted to capture and share my reflections from the best of the sessions I attended that week in this epilogue.

For a full list of the breadth of what was on offer, check out: http:/ /www.earli2015.org/

One of the first of the parallel sessions I decided to attend was based on something called “Gesture-based Learning” which linked neatly with an interest I have in exploring the “pedagogy of gesture” in both learning (from a student perspective) and instruction (from a teachers perspective). In the session, gesture was looked at from an evolutionary perspective as being our interface with the world via our bodies, and it was postulated that it is through this embodiment that we engage our cognitive processes to enable interaction with our environment for survival (Reed, Grubb and Steele, 2006). From my reading of the literature, there is suggestion that involvement of the hands in any task involving communication (especially teaching) speeds up learning considerably and that this is also linked to longer scrutiny of the task at hand. Specifically, declarative pointing (as frequently happens
in the classroom or lecture hall) to manage and direct attention was shown to a powerful way to increasing success in learning instruction. In essence, the take-home message was that including gesture in teaching decreases cognitive load for the learner and thus improves the speed and success of learning and instruction by making it easier for the learner to engage and that memory improves when gesture is used, especially when problem solving (Chu and Kita, 2008).

As you might imagine, I spent the bulk of my time attending sessions in the Higher Education (HE) strand and one session that impacted on me greatly offered a selection of talks exploring transition to HE and the impact of self-efficacy (confidence in yourself), effort and academic performance as students adjust to the HE environment. This work showcased promising research exploring the types of routes that learners take into and then through HE. Other work about early predictors of 1st year student academic achievement, neatly showing that effort, self-efficacy and the reasons to attend university in the first place (career aspirations, location, social expectation etc.) all play critical roles in academic success (Kember, Hong, Ho, 2008). This work also presented a range of social initiatives, such as in-house journals, educational blogs etc., most of which we already have at Keele, as great ways to encourage excellence in scholarship of learning and teaching.

A research method that currently seems popular in educational circles is eye tracking. I went to a few sessions on using eye tracking software to measure the online process of learning. Specifically, showcasing educational psychology case studies and research on eye movement as a way to inform educational research, tapping into core ideas such as recognition and time spent looking at specific words/marks (termed, fixation). These cases were very illustrative and showed eye tracking data exploring information differently presented; either normally, in a comic book layout, with complex transitions between images and it all left me even more convinced that the art of teaching is very much in the realm of the delivery and has perhaps less to do with the nature of the information itself (Crawford, 2014).

There were some fantastic jargon-heavy terms flying around, like “saccade direction” (the direction in which eyes move) and some imaginative ways to report this information (the best example was a radar-like histogram made from circular statistics)…at which point my educational methods spider-sense started tingling!

This was indeed hard-core stuff, but it all came into focus for me with a talk looking at a study where eye tracking was used to investigate how high level students approach exam questions and systematically compare alternative answers in multiple choice questions…let that sink in…these people were saying that potentially, training students how to better pay attention to MCQ’s could improve performance without the need for additional revision…their theory being that it is all about directing attention coupled with better exam technique! Taking this idea one step further, the power of teachers to direct learners gaze (consciously or unconsciously) to slides, by gesture, by tone and body language is extremely convincing that the teaching “performance” is vital in aiding and terrifyingly, can also be a distraction from, learning. The sessions moved to looking at expertise development using eye movements in medically orientated settings, especially histopathology. Terms like reduction (detection only) and simplification were common here, where the “practice expert” tracks for the relevant info, visually sorting the available into field-relevant vs. not needed. Clearly eye tracking is a useful method for educational research and although it can be technically difficult to perform and analyse, the results it can generate are very convincing indeed.

The final piece of this educational puzzle came to me in a session linking a “teaching nexus” (a fancy term for their KLE) and digital technology with student performance. Quite convincing qualitative work from Horta et al explored student perception of their learning based on whether their teachers were (educationally) research active (Horta et al, 2011). One aspect of their “teaching nexus” work was an idea that resonated with me distinguishing between students as an audience and students are participants in their own learning. Obviously, this idea is nothing new in educational circles (passive vs. active learning) but the novel point was their finding that use of digital technologies had a positive influence on enhancing student perception of teaching quality and…shock….value for money (Healey and Jenkins, 2009).
Following off the back of this session was a controversial presentation asking “How trustworthy is student judgement in HE?”. As you might imagine, there was quite a bit of interest in this one and it quickly established clear battle-lines within the audience as the presenters tried to make the point that their research showed a significant bias towards use of humour, ease of subject and reduced (real or perceived) workload as being biased and unreliable positive variables in student judgements such as the National Student Survey (NSS). At which point, the room erupted into a full blown argument on the validity of student evaluation as a tool to measure “quality” in HE and after some pointed discussion (read: aggressive) the room came to tentative agreement that the take home message was that there were key aspects, common to many student opinion evaluations, that are subject to bias and, in some cases, these may invalidate aspects of common student evaluation analysis.

In summary, this international education conference was not only a great way to keep Keele prominent among the European educational networks, but it brought home to me a thing I had heard colleagues from around the institute say, but had not really experienced myself...when someone from Keele goes out into the world to share our work, we typically come back convinced that we are very much at the leading edge of that work. What do you know, it’s true!

We in the JADE Team do hope that you have enjoyed this special international themed edition and look forward to doing another in the future...if my heart can take it!

Dr. Russell Crawford
Managing Editor
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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