Navigating with practical wisdom

Articles from the Learning and Teaching Conference 2018
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The annual Learning and Teaching Conference, organised by the Centre for Learning and Teaching, offers a window on the range of exciting and innovative learning, teaching and student engagement developments across a range of disciplines, and issues at the University of Brighton, and is augmented by keynote speakers and visitors. Navigating with practical wisdom, captures and develops some of the innovative ideas and research presented and discussed at the sessions.

In his opening keynote ‘Navigating high policy seas with practical wisdom’, Louis Coiffait of Wonkhe, provides a shipping forecast for the higher education sector. He charts the developments and initiatives that have brought us to this point and discusses the small policy gusts and prevailing winds currently being negotiated. Universities have the wheelhouse, crew and capabilities to survive and even thrive these choppy seas - but he asks, will it mean more change than ever, and how can an institution like the University of Brighton navigate through? These issues are discussed with useful, focused statistical underpinning, and opportunities are highlighted for the voyage ahead.

Following a renewed call to ‘decolonise’ the university curriculum, Dr Marlon Moncrieffe, Dr Yaa Asare and Dr Robin Dunford consider in ‘Decolonising the curriculum: challenges and opportunities for teaching and learning’, the marked shift in thinking about education and what should form the canon of curriculum content. Fresh approaches and opportunities for advancing practice in teaching and learning with an aim to diversify the university curriculum however, are not without challenges. Their paper reflects on the meaning of decolonising the curriculum and on attempts to do so at both institutional and subject-specific level. In this article of three sections, they use examples from their own practice to reflect on some of the challenges of decolonising the curriculum and opportunities for sharing good practices with colleagues.

In ‘Re-organising a problem-oriented project-based module in multi-disciplinary student groups’, Dr Styliani Papatzani addresses the structural changes that can be made to a project-based module in order to inspire engineering judgement, social responsibility, environmental and cultural awareness, whilst motivating and developing the skills of tomorrow’s engineers through project-based learning. The challenges faced in teaching two simultaneously running modules in a class of 170 Year 1 and Year 2 students, and the solutions developed are discussed. The module offered a great opportunity to demonstrate to students the importance of the profession they would soon be practising, and the difficulties they may need to overcome in the near future. Given the very positive critique of students the changes were well received.
Editorial introduction

Dr Robert Strick reports in ‘Evaluation and Policy Department’s believe it or not: survey secrets exposed’ on the nationally and internally run surveys that supply the University of Brighton with information on how our students rate and perceive their student experience. With the inclusion of National Student Survey (NSS) metrics in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), it has become all the more important to understand the student experience and how students reply in these surveys. His article investigates some of the lesser known analysis of the NSS and our internally run Brighton Student Survey (BSS), giving further insight into how students rate their experience at the University of Brighton.

In ‘Developing pre-professional identity by engaging with alumni and using LinkedIn’, Julie Fowlie and Clare Forder consider how engaging with alumni can develop students’ pre-professional identity and encourage undergraduates’ use of LinkedIn. Addressing why this is an important aspect of the employability agenda, they reflect on recent research on pre-professional identity; and on a small-scale research project where participants were supported in developing their identity by connecting with alumni from their course. LinkedIn was chosen as a form of social media most appropriate for career exploration and investigating the graduate attributes demanded by employers. They demonstrate how sharing alumni profiles with participants helped change their attitudes towards using this form of social media as a career tool, and outline how for some, this led to positive outcomes, including offers of work and creating new networks.

Julie Charles and Kim Donovan summarise their experience of creating a library induction initiative using ActionBound, in ‘A playful approach to library induction: bounding around the library’. Studies suggest that the current generation of students have a different way of processing information, a shorter attention span and are more easily bored and that ‘gaming is a powerful method for teaching ...’ (van Meegen and Limpens 2010). With this in mind, they instigated a project to create a more interactive library induction using game-based learning to improve student engagement with library resources. The resulting Actionbound activities allowed students to collaborate to complete various tasks and, through discussion and problem solving with sustained high level interaction, maintain their engagement with the learning process.

Ben Parsons explores the rationale, benefits and practical challenges of initiating experiential learning in an undergraduate curriculum in ‘Introducing experiential learning to the curriculum: a case study for journalism’. He considers the case of Newsweek, a multi-platform journalism exercise conducted within the curriculum in real time and resulting in real-world outcomes. Newsweek involved students from three related undergraduate journalism degrees, collaborating to run a live website and produce a print publication. The article draws on surveys and interviews with participating students and staff, as well as recent research in experiential learning and journalism education, to suggest key areas for tutors in all disciplines to consider if planning a similar activity. Particular issues include the balance of tutor involvement with student autonomy, the challenges of scheduling such activity within the timetable and across different modules, student participa-
Editorial introduction

In Developing the art of storytelling as a pedagogical tool for academics, Dr Kendall Jarrett considers storytelling as a social construct synonymous with learning, yet its use in more formal tertiary education settings is often viewed as problematic due to lecturers’ limited creativity, understanding of story suitability and/or pedagogical reluctance. Miller and Pennycuff (2008) remind us though that within formal learning environments, engaging in storytelling can be a way to motivate and engage even the most reluctant learners. Thus, the aim of the article is to showcase to readers four different modes of storytelling (for example, oral, written word, graphic representation, touch) used within teaching, with the aim of: helping learners with module content engagement, promoting the use of discussion as a primary pedagogical tool within the classroom, and encouraging critical reflection as a means for professional development.

— Professor Gina Wisker, Chair, Conference Organising Committee
Navigating high policy seas with practical wisdom

LOUIS COIFFAULT, WONKHE

Abstract

This article will provide a ‘shipping forecast’ for the higher education sector, including small policy gusts and prevailing winds. Universities have the wheelhouse, crew and capabilities to survive and even thrive these choppy seas - but it will mean more change than ever. How can the University of Brighton navigate through?

About Wonkhe

So what’s with the funny name? For the record, Wonkhe (www.wonkhe.com) is pronounced ‘wonky’, not ‘wonk-haitch-ee’ or ‘wonk-eh’. A polite definition of a ‘wonk’ is a studious or hard-working person who takes an excessive interest in the details of policy. For some reason, ministers always have wonks in their pockets to pore over the minutiae. Hopefully, by introducing Wonkhe and what it does, I’ll also introduce some of the current issues making the policy weather in the UK, before forecasting what might be ahead. Spoiler alert, you’ll need practical wisdom (University of Brighton 2016) to weather the storms ahead.

Wonkhe is the home of higher education policy, people and politics, with the aim of improving higher education policy and providing a platform for new voices. We’re somewhere between a think tank and a specialist press, but neither. We help hold the government to account, but also act as a critical friend to the sector. We publish a diverse mix of timely articles, send out weekly and daily email briefings to save people time and explain everything that’s going on, and run the best events in the sector. For example, we ran a spring conference about higher education regulation called ‘It’s Alive’, with a Frankenstein theme built around Michael Barber (the Office for Students chair) saying that the regulator would be so data-driven it would be ‘self aware!’ Our free Monday Morning Briefing goes out to about 35,000 people and we have a new free podcast you can listen to. We always welcome article pitches from new authors. We aim to showcase unheard voices and unsung topics, as well as the issues of the day. But rather than fitting a story to a pre-existing frame like mainstream outlets, we tackle them with non-partisan evidence and a range of opinions. I have a personal series of articles visiting different institutions and places around the country, telling the stories about the diverse higher education sector that the mainstream press doesn’t tell.
What’s the current weather for higher education?

So, what’s currently happening in UK higher education? We try to provide explainers of what’s going on, such as the latest (third) iteration of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (still known as ‘TEF’). As an aside, trying to work out a TEF score in one of the Learning and Teaching Conference workshops demonstrated the complexity of this process (see figure 1, below).

We also present (appropriately caveated and interactive) data, like the (in)famous chart opposite from 2017. It shows the sector against two ‘key metrics’, for teaching and research. This is as close as we’ll ever get to the murky world of rankings. We also highlight inconsistencies in regulations and metrics, for instance, the regional variation and lag-time in graduate earnings shown by the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data. Will institutions like the University of Brighton, in the relatively
high-earning south-east, be competing on a level playing field with institutions from the relatively low-earning north-west? Now LEO is part of TEF, the latter’s focus on ‘teaching excellence’ is even further reduced.

Sometimes at Wonkhe, we combine public data such as UCAS applications with exclusive data, such as that we receive through our partnership with Hotcourses. This shows interest in institutions as well as actual applications, indicating the future ‘pipeline’ of students.

Finally, it’s worth remembering how we got here, with the ‘major review’, £9,000.00 fees and all the rest. A summary of some of the reviews, papers and acts that got us to this point follows (Figure 3, over).

With HEFCE split asunder by HERA into Office for Students (OfS) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), it’s worth thinking about the current shape of the UK sector. Not only is it complicated, showing the alphabet soup of different bodies trying to get universities to do different things, but it also shows the risk that the sector’s two new masters will pull institutions in different directions. Apologies for the acronym bingo.
1992 Further and Higher Education Act
1997 Labour majority government
1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act
1999 Learning to Succeed (post-16 learning): white paper
2001 Labour majority government
2003 The Future of Higher Education: white paper
2004 Higher Education Act (top up fees)
2005 Labour majority government
2005 Foster Review (FE)
2006 Leitch Report (skills)
2006 FE: Raising skills, improving life choices: white paper
2007 Burgess Group Report
2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)
2008 Tomlinson Report (14-19 reform)
2009 Brown Review (fees)
2009 Teaching and Learning: white paper
2010 FE: Raising skills, improving life choices: white paper
2010 Further and Higher Education Act
2010 Fee divergence across three devolved nations
2011 Students at the Heart of the System: white paper
2012 Lingfield reports (professionalism in FE)
2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF)
2015 Conservative majority government
2015 Student number cap lifted
2016 Success as a knowledge economy: white paper
2016 Bell Review (agencies)
2016 UK votes to leave EU
2017 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) year 1 outcomes
2017 Higher Education and Research Act (OfS and UKRI)
2017 Conservative minority government
2017 Industrial strategy
2017 Prime Minister’s conference speech (fee freeze)
2018 Post-18 review launched
2018 OfS and UKRI replace HEFCE and OFFA
2018 Advance HE formed from three predecessors

**Figure 3:** Timeline of where we are now; reviews, papers and Acts, 1992-present

**Figure 4:** English higher education (in one chart). BEIS: Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; SLC: Student Loans Company; FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office; DfID: Department for International Development; HESA: Higher Education Statistics Agency; QAA: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education; OIA: Office for the Independent Adjudicator; DH: Department of Health; DfE: Department for Education; HEE: Health Education England; UKRI: UK Research and Innovation; UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.
Navigating high policy seas ...

**What’s the shipping forecast for higher education policy?**

To understand what might be coming up for the sector, let’s take a step back to consider what the government wants from it.

First and foremost, higher education is expected to help deliver economic growth post-Brexit by creating jobs, equipping graduates for work, and undertaking Research and Development (R&D). The government’s industrial strategy includes a commitment to increase the proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) devoted to R&D up to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 2.4 per cent by 2027. What’s not clear is how much of that money will actually come from government, or if the other OECD countries will stand still over that period. There are worrying rumours of it now being more of a ‘stretch target’.

Second, this government believes in the power of a higher education ‘market’ with choice, competition and new providers. What it hasn’t spoken about as much - until recently - is what will happen if a provider ‘exits’ the market, or what the downsides of all that choice and competition might be.

Third, the government has started to talk about value for money, which roughly boils down to what’s the ‘fair’ split of costs and benefits between taxpayers and individual students. It’s a slippery concept, on the face of it sounding like common sense. But of course, it’s important to consider what’s valuable, who decides, if money is the only valuable thing, and whose money are we even talking about? Influential think tank the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has published some helpful analysis showing how this split has changed over time (Figure 5, below).

![Figure 5: Value for (state/student) money (Institute of Fiscal Studies)](image-url)
In 2017, it was pressure from the fact that nearly two thirds of the money was coming from students (and their families) that led to the Prime Minister giving her Conservative party conference speech which froze tuition fees at £9,250.00 (wiping millions from university balance sheets), raised the repayment threshold to £25,000.00 (adding billions to the national debt), and launched the ‘major review’. Of course, she’s also trying to push back against Jeremy Corbyn’s offer of free tuition fees.

It’s important to remember that actual student contributions are typically smaller (though it’s complex to explain). Some students pay nothing, with their families footing the bill, as pointed out on Wonkhe by Danny Dorling (2017). And also, that significant parental contributions are assumed, as highlighted by Martin Lewis (2016) of Money Saving Expert.

To understand what might happen, it’s helpful to think about some of the actors in this little higher education policy drama. Jo Johnson, very much the reformer and architect of the current system brought us TEF, HERA, OfS and his parting gift, the knowledge exchange framework (KEF). No wonder we call him ‘Framework Johnson’ in the Wonkhe office. He and his former boss Justine Greening’s resistance to Theresa May’s ‘major review’ led them to be shuffled off in January, replaced by Damian Hinds and Sam Gyimah. The former’s said little on higher education yet beyond support for variable fees, while the latter was more a campaigner, taking the Conservative message to students through his #SamOnCampus tour. He was also a dab-hand at signalling his virtues in The Times, whether the issue is free speech or grade inflation. The Prime Minister seems to have been shaped by her time in the Home Office, walking a hard but solitary line in the cabinet on international students being included in immigration ‘targets’.

Another way to think about where the sector is heading is to see how it compares to other parts of the education system. An influential IFS chart (Figure 6, opposite) shows the sector is relatively ‘awash with cash’ compared with early years, primary schools, secondaries and further education. The latter now gets less money than secondary schools. This adds to the narrative that universities should be ‘doing more’ and have had it easy through austerity, which bears some truth given an eight per cent real-term cuts to (vote-winning) schools, and a 40 per cent cut to other services such as local authorities. By contrast, the NHS, the voter trump card, has had several multi-billion pound injections of funding.

At this point, I always ask how the audience feels on hearing all this, using the analogy of the perfect storm (and continuing my tenuous nautical metaphor). It really does feel like the sector is under constant attack, with new metrics and regulations, and negative headlines. This can have a big emotional impact on those of us working in and around universities.

**Small gusts and prevailing winds**

I’m now going to try and distinguish which issues are ‘small gusts’ and which are ‘prevailing winds’. This is in no way to diminish the work that goes into the former,

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1 Sam Gyimah resigned from the Government in December 2018 and was replaced by Chris Skidmore.
but rather to encourage people to step back from the day-to-day impact of policies and headlines, and think about the long-term trends. Here are the issues I think are the ‘small gusts’.

1. First, of course, is the Research Excellence Framework (REF), with the next exercise in 2021. This sees around £2 billion of funding allocated a year. The exercise in 2021 will be a similar game to last time, but with slightly different rules, for example, 25 per cent for ‘impact’ rather than 20 per cent.

2. Next, there’s TEF, and although it’s not a measure of ‘teaching excellence’, it is a bunch of quite useful approaches to quality assessment. It’s also started to achieve its main aim, of shifting some of the focus from academics and research to students and teaching. Subject-level TEF is in its second year of piloting.

3. LEO, as already discussed, is now part of TEF and shows historical graduate earnings, though it doesn’t predict the future and varies a lot by region.

4. The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), the newest excellence framework, aims to capture the hugely diverse range of activities that universities do beyond teaching and research (but which are underpinned by both). This includes commercialising research into new enterprises or intellectual property, transferring new technologies from lab experiments into practice, or the wider (and harder to measure) impacts of knowledge such as public-facing campaigns, professional development, or policy influence.

5. Although overall, the sector’s finances are healthy, borrowing is generally increasing and there are growing winners and losers in the higher education

Figure 6: The Institute of Fiscal Studies ‘Education spending squid’
Source: Belfield et al. (2018)
‘market’. There’s also growing interest in three types of cross-subsidies, from international to domestic students, from high-cost courses to low-cost courses, and from teaching to research. It’s hard to explain but universities need to try.

6 Pay, conditions and pensions, not just for vice-chancellors but others in the sector too, have attracted huge amounts of attention. This is going to continue, with big negotiations still underway and more ahead. The Universities Suprannuation Scheme (USS) strikes seemed to reveal deep dissatisfaction among some staff and fissures between them and management (Fleming 2018). This is a bad look for the sector, and there’s a risk it appears to the public as divided and out of touch.

7 Finally, last and very much least, is free speech. There’s just no evidence this is a real problem, certainly not worth the column inches some corners of the press devote to it. The shameful OfS board appointment processes at the start of 2018 (Phipps et al. 2018) signalled some inappropriately political meddling in a supposedly independent regulator. Let’s hope politicians and hacks don’t have an undue influence in future on this issue.

Although the above list of small gusts is in my proposed order of importance, it’s actually inversely correlated to the attention levels those issues get in the press. Read of that what you will.

Next, these are the issues I think are the ‘big prevailing winds’ for UK higher education.

1 We think the new market regulator (OfS) is big news. It’s still powering up but it looks like a very different beast to its predecessor. Expect more use of data and more public sanctions. It remains to be seen just how keen it will be to show it has ‘more teeth’ than HEFCE. It certainly has harder powers, and regulators tend to use what they have eventually.

2 There continues to be a growing focus on metrics, with risks of data fundamentalism among some. Yes, data is always imperfect but it shouldn’t be shied away from, rather used by institutions as a tool to help them tell their story.

3 Related to the rise in metrics comes more transparency, accountability and scrutiny. This is uncomfortable for a sector used to being trusted and left alone, but those are not the times we’re in and the sector should embrace this attention as it has such good stories to tell. Don’t be shy shouting about the regulatory burden of such metrics, but consider your audience first.

4 Student recruitment (and the fees that come with it) remain high on every vice-chancellor’s to-do list. It’s a fiercely competitive market. We currently have a demographic bulge going through the school system, which will soon start to mean more 18 year-olds for a few years. However, longer term, we’re heading down the well-worn post-industrial developed economy path trodden by Japan and others, with falling fertility rates. Whatever Brexit ends up meaning, it will also mean fewer European students, only increasing the importance of other international visitors. Let’s not offer them a hostile environment.
Crucially, institutions need to follow, understand and influence changing student expectations, experiences, and outcomes. Students today are facing tens of thousands of pounds of debt, little chance of a job for life or a decent pension, and an inaccessible housing ladder without parental help.

As we've discussed, ‘fair’ value for money for the individual and the taxpayer will remain important in a difficult economic context.

BrHEXit boils down to three things: research funding, students, and staff.

Finally, there’s the American idea of ‘culture wars’ between universities and the rest of society. It’s not that bad here yet thankfully, but the trend is typified by Michael Gove’s comments about ‘the blob’ and the public being ‘sick of experts’. With some universities literally ivory towers on hills and founded on local people’s subscriptions, it’s important that every university engages and communicates locally and regionally, not just internationally.

Summary

I’d like to finish with an optimistic note, highlighting the many wonderful opportunities for institutions:

- There’s still huge global demand for UK higher education delivered in English; here, abroad, online, or a blend of the three.
- R&D funding is going up, to hit the target of 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027, and there are city deals and local industrial strategies that universities should take a leading part in.
- Tech, data, and analytics are never the silver bullets that some promise, but they are all allowing universities to innovate and be more efficient. Whether it’s subject-level TEF informing what happens at a more granular level, or spotting vulnerable students at risk of dropping out.
- We have a new mega-agency, Advance Higher Education, combining the Higher Education Academy, the Equality Challenge Unit, and the Leadership Foundation. We’ve never needed it more, we should support it as critical friends.
- Open publishing and research all offer the chance for universities to do more for less.
- The post-18 review is a chance to influence policy, with the interim report now delayed from Autumn 2018 to 2019. (Westwood 2018).
- There’s a chance to redefine ‘technical, vocational and professional’ learning, working with employers, further education colleges and others. There’s a false dichotomy between this type of learning and ‘academic’ that we need to get over quickly. Learners should be able to move between institutions far more easily.
- There’s an opportunity to integrate apprenticeships (including degree apprenticeships) into higher education course offers, attracting the unspent levy
funds available. But just as we’re adjusting to students as the ‘customers’, the sector should focus on them (rather than on research), now this means thinking about the needs of businesses too. Again, this space is ridden with false dichotomies and snobbery, with much of such activity already taking place, albeit with variations pattered by course topics.

- Accelerated (two year) degrees are periodically in vogue and offer opportunities to some learners and institutions though probably not many of either.

- With Brexit still fracturing the fabric of UK society, higher education institutions should be rapidly evolving their local civic roles: taking the lead in developing a strategy, working with partners (including each other), generating jobs, driving economic growth, and contributing to culture etc.

- But one thing will really help on the voyage ahead: staying focused on the passengers. Especially new types of students and study.

References


Biography

As Associate Editor at Wonkhe, Louis Coiffait writes, commissions, and edits articles, as well as producing daily email briefings. He also speaks at events and leads on some partnerships and consultancy. Louis is passionate about education policy and innovation, having researched topics such as: the school workforce, access to higher education, apprenticeships, selective schools, the impact agenda, employer mentor-
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ing, open data, education technology, careers advice, enterprise education, STEM skills, and school programme evaluations.

His career includes working with Reform, The National Foundation for Educational Research, Taylor & Francis, The Careers & Enterprise Company, NAHT Edge, Pearson, the Higher Education Academy, the Teacher Training Agency, for an MP and a Minister. Louis met Mark Leach, founder of Wonkhe, while editing the Blue Skies series for Pearson in 2012, and has been a fan of Wonkhe ever since.

He is committed to volunteering, including a decade as a school governor within a federation in Hackney which he now chairs, and joined a school in Tower Hamlets last year. He also spent three years as Chair of Westminster Students’ Union. He studied at York, UCLA, and Cambridge. He’s an RSA Fellow, amateur photographer, proud East London citizen, and Yorkshireman (really). He’s on Twitter @LouisMMCoiffait and at: http://wonkhe.com/staff/louis-coiffait/.
Decolonising the curriculum: challenges and opportunities for teaching and learning

Dr Marlon Moncrieffe, School of Education
Dr Yaa Asare, School of Applied Social Sciences
and Dr Robin Dunford, School of Humanities

Abstract

A renewed call to ‘decolonise’ the university curriculum has marked a shift in thinking about education and what should form the canon of curriculum content. It has been amplified further here in the UK by the ‘Rhodes must fall’ campaign. However, fresh approaches and opportunities for advancing practice in teaching and learning, with an aim to diversify the university curriculum for teaching and learning, are not without challenges. Our paper reflects on the meaning of decolonising the curriculum and on attempts to decolonise the curriculum at both institutional and subject-specific level. In this article, which is in three sections, we use examples from our own practice to reflect on some of the challenges of decolonising the curriculum and opportunities for sharing good practices amongst colleagues.

Introduction

This article outlines the need for decolonising the curriculum within and beyond the university. The call to decolonise the curriculum, made by students, social movements and academics in higher education, is a call to take seriously the legacy of colonialism in the curriculum. It is also a call to include a diverse range of experience, away from the white hegemonic world view and experience that informs much of our teaching.

This article highlights attempts made by the authors to reflect on and change teaching practice and course design. Moncrieffe identifies the ‘dominant’ Eurocentric perspective functioning as ‘epistemic violence’ in the Key Stage 2 (education for children aged between 7 and 11 years old) National Curriculum for history. He argues that it is a ‘traditional’ default position that should be reconceptualised by the ‘transformative’ perspectives of critical multicultural education. Asare writes reflectively on her experience of teaching about race and ethnicity in the academy. She suggests that in disrupting the present centrality of a White perspective, care needs to be taken not to frame Blackness and the Black experience in a way that is synonymous with ‘deficit’ or ‘victimhood’. Dunford presents on work in progress in decolonising
Decolonising the curriculum ... 

a first-year core globalisation module. He argues that courses need to be reframed, and not just diversified with different perspectives added in near the end. He also reflects on the challenge of teaching a ‘canon’ that is fundamentally West-centric. The chapter concludes with reflection on ways in which the university can support staff in attempts to decolonise the curriculum. Key, here, is support for staff who are engaged in this process, and attempts to gather best practices of theorised and applied approaches on curriculum decolonisation made by colleagues across the university and appreciated by students in their teaching and learning.

Eurocentricism as ‘epistemic violence’ in the National Curriculum for history. Marlon Moncrieffe

As a former primary school teacher, now working in Initial Teacher Education, my concern is with producing outstanding teachers that are equipped with critical skills for interpreting and delivering on the directives, aims and contents of the National Curriculum. This includes being able to reconceptualise policy, and where necessary, through innovative and inclusive approaches to practice. My examination and interpretation of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 2 history (DfE 2013) considers the motives and aims in teaching and learning the ‘master narrative’ of mass-migration and settlement to the British Isles (Moncrieffe 2014; 2017; Nichol and Harnett 2011). The concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ arrive through this teaching and learning. However, these are concepts depicted rather narrowly as occurring through cross-cultural encounters, i.e. ‘the 8th century Viking/Anglo-Saxon struggle’ and ‘Viking invasions’ (DfE 2013, p. 4). The Key Stage 2 National Curriculum for history stops at the year 1066. It provides no other significant narrative of mass-migration and settlement to the British Isles involving cross-cultural encounters between different ethnic groups for children to learn about. It is a National Curriculum for history framed by Eurocentric perspectives of ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’. Here is an example of how a statutory national policy directive for teaching and learning can whitewash and erase the potential of broader and more inclusive multicultural British histories of mass-migration and settlement for knowing about ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ (Kapoor 2016; Lander 2016; Moncrieffe 2017, 2018). In this sense, the National Curriculum for history is a framework of ‘epistemic violence’ (Spivak 1999), a political and educational tool that can obstruct and undermine non-Western experiences or approaches to knowledge.

Transforming approaches to practice

Critical multicultural education can be applied to challenge the doxa of Eurocentrism within the National Curriculum for history. Arphattananon (2018, p. 4) writes:

‘The transformative approach (of critical multicultural education) changes the basic assumptions of the existing curriculum and aims to help students understand concepts and issues from different ethnic and cultural perspectives ... to become aware that knowledge is not culture-free but rather constructed through the perspectives of those who have power. In the transformative approach, students learn the dominant narratives but also alternative narratives. In the end it is hoped that students will be able to think critically about whose narratives are used and the consequences of this. Changing the basic assumptions of the existing curriculum’. (Ibid).
The understanding here, is that reflection on the lives and shared histories of majority and minority groups in societies and communities, can produce innovation and advancement in teaching and learning.

There will be a plethora of narrative episodes and accounts unwritten by the National Curriculum for history concerning mass-migration and settlement by people in the British Isles over the ages. One example is that of the British citizens from the twentieth century African-Caribbean Windrush Generation (Moncrieffe 2018; Phillips and Phillips 1998; Sewell 1998). By reflecting on this moment of national history, I have made connections with how teaching and learning about ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ can be advanced through the statutory directive ‘the 8th century Anglo-Saxon/Viking struggle’ (DfE 2013, p. 4). As human encounters of cultural and ethnic differences, I placed these ‘struggles’ of the past in juxtaposition (see Figure 1) with the more recent ‘struggles’ faced by African-Caribbean migrants and their Black-British children contending with the oppressive and racist White-British led political system (Moncrieffe 2018).

Children in the Key Stage 2 primary school are already learning that ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ arrives from mass-migration and settlement involving ‘violent cross-cultural encounters’ between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings. When this is contrasted with twentieth-century Black-British citizens of the African-Caribbean Windrush Generation and their ‘violent cross-cultural encounters’ with oppressive and racist White-British led political system, congruent themes emerge to advance historical inquiry: power, control, order, equality, tolerance and mutual respect. By reflecting on these episodes of history, it shows that the making of ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ continues to be developed over the ages by a broad range of ethnic and cultural groups arriving in the British Isles from around the world. Therefore, the fixed Eurocentric perspective of ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ transmitted by the National Curriculum for history ought to be challenged. I also see great possibilities in how the statutory education policy of ‘fundamental British values’ (DfE 2014, p. 5) can be applied to teaching and learning through the nation’s multicultural history, and specifically, how the nation has come to learn, and re-learn the meaning of ‘tolerance’ and ‘mutual respect of those with different faiths and beliefs’. There is much currency of knowledge available when applying a broader range of historical narratives from a wider range of migrant groups who have come to settle in the British Isles over the ages.

In testing my theories of juxtapositioning on a sample of trainee-teachers, evidence has emerged to suggest that it had some impact in shaping their future approaches.

Figure 1: Eighth-century Anglo-Saxon/Viking struggles juxtaposed with twentieth-century British citizens of the Afro-Caribbean Windrush generation/White-British struggles
in practice. For instance, some moved from their fixed traditional ways of seeing, to more transformative perspectives on teaching and learning about mass-migration and settlement in Britain over the ages (Moncrieffe 2017). For example:

‘... the Viking raids and invasions. They are quite ... and then Anglo-Saxon laws and justice and invasions, death and resistance and all of those sorts of words might be associated with ... with riots and change and stuff like that and so you have got this chance to contrast’. (Diana).

‘It’s all migration I suppose isn’t it?’ (Catherine).

‘Yeah’. (Diana).

‘... and you can kind of make relations that way’. (Catherine).

By juxtaposing the dominant ‘master narrative’ of mass migration and settlement with the marginalised narratives, the past can be connected to the present for understanding future possibilities in teaching, learning, development of knowledge and understanding. This is a process of curriculum decolonisation occurring through the reconceptualisation of knowledge on a theme of teaching and learning. It will take ‘commitment’ and ‘action’ (Chilisa 2012) from Initial Teacher Education providers to support and encourage trainee-teachers in enacting these approaches.

Inside the curriculum. Yaa Asare

On reflection, over 10 years of teaching about race and ethnicity in the academy equates to an ethnographic experience of ‘what goes on’ when students grapple with questions of race in the classroom. The courses I teach explore the impact of race in society, addressing themes including how the education system fails Black students, identity in the context of post-colonialism, and how race and racism relate to the idea of British-ness. As such, they offer a point from which to offer reflections on the project of decolonising the curriculum.

Debunking the deficit model

Having reached university level study, it often becomes apparent that in previous sociological learning, students have learned about Blackness as being both problematic and a position of deficit. Many students use the term ‘disadvantaged’ to discuss Black people having learned that ‘the system’ oppresses people of colour. Black people are understood as having absorbed this oppression. The potential damage (for both Black and White students) was brought directly to my attention when a White student said, in a classroom discussion:

‘I was lucky enough to have been born White’

The idea of Black disadvantage had taken root in her consciousness to the extent that she interpreted white privilege as indicative of her own good fortune. From this position the notion of Black people as unfortunate and objects of sympathy has developed, a caricaturing of a genuine understanding of complex dynamics of race. What then are the implications of such a statement to how we need to teach about ‘race’? The suggestion is that this deficit model needs to be debunked and replaced, initially by studying discussions of the bi-racialisation (Ifekwunigwe 1999) inherent in British society. In his critique of the anti-racist project, Gilroy recognises the dan-
ger of this deficit model in discussing the damaging ‘ideological circuit which makes us (Black people) visible in two complementary roles – the problem and the victim’ (Gilroy 1992).

What’s going on in the academy in terms of achievement by race?

While Black and White students are admitted to the university with comparable A-level grades, on graduation, there is a clear statistical attainment gap further on in their studies, along racial lines. This year’s Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) student attainment gap at Brighton University, measured in terms of receiving a good degree, was 19 per cent lower than their white counterparts. There are no easy answers here; the complex interweaving of several factors will need careful investigation and discussion including with Black students themselves. This process of investigation is beginning with initiatives from the University’s Race Equality Charter Steering Group. The following factors, the final two of which will be discussed here, are likely to contribute to BME students’ underachievement:

- Unconscious bias from staff and students
- Stereotype threat
- Not feeling a sense of belonging
- Having few role models
- Institutional discrimination
- The curriculum carrying legacies of colonialism
- The centrality of a White perspective

Legacies of colonialism

Phoenix (2009) speaks about Black girls being positioned as ‘undesirable learners’ in schools in 1960’s Britain. This is due to the pervasive thought processes through which the colonial mentality understood racial difference. The subjects of Phoenix’s research recollect experiences of being subjects of a racist discourse in schools, which they resisted, but which was nevertheless damaging. The type of racism that university students today may experience is unlikely to be as blatant as it was for Black pupils in the 1960’s but it still exists. Racism is more likely to be experienced today as subtle and cumulative. Essed (1992) researches the detrimental effects of ‘everyday racism’ in which negative representations and stereotypical ideas of Blackness impact the lives of women of colour in higher education. Unconscious bias training is now given to try to address this more pernicious legacy of colonial thinking. But, before identifying unconscious bias training as the solution, we need to consider the extent to which this focus on personalising racialised reactions is able to impact on the more pervasive structural and institutionalised discrimination (Sivanandan 1985).

The centrality of a White perspective

What can we learn by considering the taken-for-granted normality of whiteness? As shown in the first section, assumptions of whiteness are equated with ‘normality’ in
Decolonising the curriculum ...

Curricular material. Pearce (2003) and Gaine (2005) suggest that children absorb this normality at primary school, learning to become distrustful of the racialised ‘other’. In considering how we might teach about ‘race’ in the university curriculum, we need to acknowledge that students might be unwilling to engage with interrogating such long-held assumptions. Mazzei (2008) interrogates the reluctance of White student teachers to even discuss race. This silence equates to an unwillingness of student teachers to see themselves as having a racial position; this lack of engagement is revealed to work alongside a patronising and stereotypical view towards Black pupils. In this way they problematise and victimise Black communities while simultaneously failing to acknowledge systemic racism.

Situated as ‘victims’ or ‘problems’, Black people’s position and influence in the racial power-play of white hegemony is often silenced and remains un-interrogated in the academy. Hall (2000) suggests that the histories of the colonised and the coloniser are interrelated, but these links are unspoken, not taught about. In order to better understand ourselves in the West, whatever our heritage might be, there is the need to acknowledge the legacy that the former colonialisation of much of the Global South continues to have on how we understand our students and teach about the world.

Decolonising a year one globalisation course: reflections on a work in progress. Robin Dunford

The way in which the forgotten legacy of the colonisation shapes university curricula became apparent when I took on responsibility for a first-year International Politics/Globalisation course. The course: (i) contained almost no reflection on the way in which the long history of colonialism and enduring post- and neo-colonial forms of rule continue to shape the world; (ii) taught global challenges, notably environmental decline, from the confines of a very Westernised perspective, and; (iii) had an all-Western and, bar one female co-author, all-male reading list. The West-centrism of a course that addresses theories of international politics and global challenges is testament to how embedded Euro-American knowledges, and the epistemic violence of the erasure of other knowledges, are in university curricula.

Indeed, this West-centrism is embedded in the discipline, International Relations, that studies relations between different parts of the world. In its inception, people regarded as founders of the discipline were centrally interested in questions of ‘race development’, of how to ‘develop’ people that were considered to be inferior. Foreign Affairs, the flagship, public facing US international relations magazine, started its life under the name The Journal of Race Development, which ran from 1910 to 1919 (see Vitalis 2015). Woodrow Wilson (in Mishra 2017), then US President and regarded an ‘idealist’ on account of his desire to make the world a better, more peaceful place, claimed that states under colonial rule ‘cannot … rush into the light’ of self-government and freedom, but ‘have to go through the twilight into the broadening day’. In other words, those of apparently inferior ‘races’ need to be ‘developed’ in order to be able to govern themselves. It was on the basis of this thinking that the League of Nations, founded in 1920, introduced a system of ‘mandates’, where colonised countries would be ‘supervised’ until such a time that they were deemed ‘able to stand alone’ (League of Nations Charter).
These ignoble foundings went on to be forgotten. Instead of foregrounding colonialism, the discipline starts the story of International Politics with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. This treaty is perceived to have put into place a system of sovereign nation states, who have control over what goes on within their territory. ‘The treaty of Westphalia ... made the territorial state the cornerstone of the modern state system’, said Morgenthau (1965, p. 264), perhaps the most famous ‘Realist’ International Relations theorist. Even globalisation theorists who claim to move beyond the state-centric discipline of International Relations claim that Westphalia ‘entrenched, for the first time, the principle of territorial sovereignty in inter-state affairs’ (Held 1995, p. 77). With a world of sovereign states put at the centre, eliminated from view is the fact that, for hundreds of years since 1648, the world consisted of empires and their colonies (Bhambra 2014). Major theories of international politics and globalisation thus erase from view colonialism and its legacy in making the modern world.

The west-centrism of prevailing understandings of international politics and globalisation raises a difficult question: how to decolonise courses that introduce a ‘canon’ of thought that is west-centric? The project of answering this question with a revised course has only just begun, but three steps have been taken:

(i) The course has been reframed: The role of colonialism in constructing the modern world and the role of racism in shaping understandings of international and world politics are taught in the first week. This is a first step in an attempt to frame the course around the legacy of colonialism and the way in which it is forgotten in major theories. This is only a start. The middle-part of the course still introduces the ‘canon’ and continues to look like a more traditional course. Making meaningful changes without overloading students with reading is proving a difficult challenge, which might be partially solved by better text-book material, material that is absent in current text books that, as de Carvalho et al. (2011) show, tend to repeat Eurocentric myths. Even with improved teaching resources, these issues will not go away easily. The difficulties of decolonising curricula when a Eurocentric ‘canon’ continues to dominate have been observed across a range of subject areas (see University of Amsterdam Diversity Commission 2016). This has also provoked reflection. Would it be better to simply ‘de-link’ (Mignolo 2007, p. 452) from the ‘canon’, to ‘foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding?’.

(ii) Perspectives on global challenges have been broadened. Instead of exploring only Western understandings of environmental sustainability, the course studies Andean indigenous visions of Buen Vivir (Gudynas 2011) and peasant understandings of ecological food production (Vía Campesina 2009). Students also ask which knowledges can help address the climate crisis: a ‘Western’ canon that some consider complicit in ecological devastation, or the communities, including indigenous and peasant communities, who have lived sustainably for years and yet face some of the worst impacts of the climate crisis?

(iii) The reading list has been ‘diversified’, but only as a consequence of re-framing of the course. Decolonising the curriculum does not only mean diversifying it. It requires an understanding of how our thinking has been shaped by Euro-American lenses, by the neglect of colonialism in our analytical frameworks, and through epistemic violence.
Conclusion and recommendations

Our diverse attempts to decolonise the curriculum stem from a long engagement with our subject areas. This has allowed us to call for new approaches to teach about ‘nation’, ‘national identity’, ‘history’ and ‘race’ in a transformative manner that challenges the long-held assumptions of students, and change a year one course. A ‘tick-box’ approach which looks only to change the ‘race’ and gender of authors, or asks staff to indicate what they have done to decolonise the curriculum in validation processes, cannot substitute for this long engagement and fundamental rethinking of how we shape the curriculum. If a tick-box approach is prioritised, staff will spend their time justifying what they are doing in terms of any new requirements. This would not only encourage ‘creative accounting’, where otherwise unchanging courses are merely re-described to meet the new requirements. It would also take away from staff the time to do the substantive work that is required.

There are a number of ways in which universities can support attempts to decolonise the curriculum. Here, we make two recommendations which follow directly from our above analyses. Whilst important, these recommendations only scratch the surface of the changes, including changes to address a lack of racial diversity in the staff body, that need to be made in order to decolonise the university.

(i) **Time**: decolonising the curriculum involves work over and above the usual requirements for leading a module. It requires new learning, especially for academics who have been taught in Western frameworks. It takes time to find sources and to fundamentally re-shape (and not just cosmetically diversify) courses. Universities would gain a lot from allowing staff to request that work they do in decolonising the curriculum is recognised in their workload planning, with extra hours for course design allocated to staff with ideas for decolonising courses.

(ii) **Support networks and sharing ‘best practice’**: Given the difficulties in decolonising the curriculum, the more that can be shared in terms of resources, the better. Fortunately, there are moves towards sharing course design, readings and so on, and a growing number of workshops and events on decolonising the curriculum. Continued and extended university support for these schemes is vital.

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Biographies

Dr Marlon Moncrieffe (School of Education) is a former primary school teacher, now working in Initial Teacher Education. His research is framed by the theoretical lenses of critical multiculturalism and narrative inquiry.

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Dr Robin Dunford (School of Humanities) teaches globalisation and global ethics in the humanities programme at the University of Brighton. His research draws inspiration from decolonial theory.
Re-organising a problem-oriented project-based module in multi-disciplinary student groups

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Abstract

A module leader and participating teaching staff can only be gratified when the module is reflected upon as educational, rewarding, challenging and thought provoking. This paper addresses the structural changes that can be made to a project-based module from a project manager’s point of view, in order to inspire engineering judgement, social responsibility, environmental and cultural awareness, while motivating and developing the skills of tomorrow’s leaders through project-based learning in a class of 170 Year 1 and Year 2 students. The challenges faced in the teaching of the two modules (while running simultaneously) and the solutions developed are discussed. The module offered a great opportunity to demonstrate to students the importance of the profession that they would soon be practising, and some difficulties they may need to overcome in the near future. Given the very positive critique of students, the changes were well received.

Introduction

There is nothing more inspiring than passing knowledge and expertise to the new generations of engineers. But how can this be achieved in our rapidly evolving world and highly demanding societies, in which engineering students are expected to be professionally competent from the moment they graduate? Historical analysis on the teaching of engineering and learning trends in the past decades shows that project-based modules in the first-year of studies have been adopted as a means of connecting theory and practice for students (Dym et al. 2013). This opposed the 1950’s trend of devoting the first two years of the degree to general science and the later years to practical modules. The first-year, the ‘corner-stone (design) courses’, were then introduced to first years’ to expose them to real-life design processes. Adding to the ‘training for employment’ and critical thinking skills, project-based modules can also be designed to raise awareness of the social issues following a claim credited to Aristotle that ‘the things we have to learn before doing them, we learn by doing them’. Interestingly enough, another philosopher’s method, the Socratic method, which is fully adopted by humanitarian sciences, is absolutely applicable in project-
based modules, as well: systematic questioning, inductive reasoning and universal definitions (Overholser 1993). Modern scholars are currently investigating more options to instil knowledge, understand our world and complex phenomena, and to enthuse and inspire new generations of engineers. In a problem-solving oriented society, the other side of the project-based coin is problem-oriented learning. Indeed, problem-oriented and project-based learning (POPBL) has been considered as an ideal strategy for engineering education (Lehmann et al. 2008) and is strongly linked with engineering skills, team-based learning and multidisciplinarity. De Graaf and Kolmos (2003) have summarised the learning principles under three categories: cognitive learning (learning organised around problems), collaborative (team) learning and contents (interdisciplinary learning) as shown in figure 1.

![Figure 1: The three categories of learning principles (De Graaf and Kolmos 2003)](image1)

For POPBL modules to successfully enable engineering students to discuss, reason, and decide on solutions for complex situations, students and their teachers must participate in the process in a dialectic dynamic state that addresses not only the ‘know-how’ but also dimensions such as the ‘know who’, ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ (Lehmann et al. 2008). Furthermore, a strong link between the historical appraisal of the modalities of project-based learning and project management skills offers another pivotal characteristic for managing such modules effectively (Hanney 2018).

Drawing from the knowledge exchange as a learning strategy (Figure 2), the re-organising of a project-based module is presented, and a step by step approach to over-

![Figure 2: A modern learning strategy: Knowledge exchange and involved parties (Lehmann et al. 2008)](image2)
coming difficulties encountered along the way is demonstrated. This strategy and implemented adjustments were developed by the author in an effort to (i) optimise the student learning experience, (ii) increase the production potential, (iii) deepen understanding and (iv) raise awareness of global issues. It involved strong interaction between the community, university faculty members from different disciplines, all participating students and a background development of knowledge and skills.

The background: description of the module

Teaching started in a large class of 170 Year 1 and Year 2 students from two different courses (Civil Engineering and Building Surveyors). The module is connected with a UK national competition set by the non-governmental organisation ‘Engineers without Borders’ (EWB). The students are required to apply their knowledge to a practical situation and develop a project from conception to completion. The challenge is set in a developing country facing issues such as sanitation, energy, water, waste, transport, digital and built environment. This year’s project was based in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya. The students were divided into groups of a maximum of four and asked to define their preferred area of work from one of the above mentioned areas, and to design suitable, applicable and creative solutions. Some basic information was supplied by EWB on the current situation, initiatives already put forward, key elements related to each challenge area and the various social, environmental, ethical and political challenges encountered by the local population in Kibera. Possible solutions had to be reviewed and discussed after a thorough investigation of the resources. The aim was for students to acquire an understanding of holistic thinking and of multidisciplinary challenges while building up their research, communication and innovation skills.

Before the first lecture (week 1), the groups were randomly collated and guest lecturers were invited for weeks 1 and 2. The groups were also assigned an academic tutor.

Re-organising the modules and discussion on the objectives and achievements

Week 1: Setting the scene

The first lecture was given by the module leader (the author) with a case study that involved the collaboration of a number of different engineering principles (civil engineers, structural engineers, geotechnical engineers, building and land surveyors, mechanical and environmental engineers etc) as well as archaeologists, political entities, social groups and clubs. This talk introduced the students to the diverse challenges engineers are faced with, and the impact that their decisions can make to the environment, to our history and to future generations. The discussion was narrowed down by the EWB representative setting the scene of the 2018 competition. The class was taken through the competition website viewing all significant videos and scripts. Basic take-away points included the following:

- People everywhere deserve a world where they can achieve their potential and live healthy, happy lives but the reality today is far from this, and some of us still lack access to basic services.
• All of us are at risk from resource depletion, the effects of climate change, increasing urbanisation and a global population that is rapidly expanding.

• Engineering is key to addressing global challenges and enabling sustainable human development.

At the end of the first lecture, the module leader was approached by a number of Building Surveying students who were wondering how closely this module was related to their course. They mentioned that building surveying was only referenced in the first part of the session and expressed their wish to see their course more involved in the module. It was explained that all works start with a detailed building and land surveying plot, and that there would be more to follow over the course of the module.

**Week 2: Building the added values**

Before the start of the week 2 lecture, following a new approach, all Year 2 students were divided into groups of four, which were arranged to have two building surveying students grouped together with two civil engineering students. This avoided polarisation of groups in which civil engineering students could impose their ideas on a single building surveying student. Additionally, more lecturers on the Building Surveying degree were invited and assigned to groups containing building surveying students. Groups were announced before commencing the lecture.

It was soon realised that many students did not yet understand the mechanisms of suitable literature sourcing and responsible reporting. This created significant concern for some students during the first week and they visited the author’s office asking for further clarifications. Structured guidance has been suggested as a measure to relieve ‘unnecessary cognitive efforts in collaborative learning’ (Kim and Lim 2018). To address this, instead of our chief librarian giving a general talk on the available search tools, following discussion with the author, a number of focused examples were worked with key words such as ‘crime and pollution in Kibera’ in order to demonstrate to students the criteria we select for the most relevant and trustworthy sources.

The author also created a presentation on the usefulness of project-based courses, by relating them to the procedures necessary to obtain a chartership from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors or from the Engineering Council. Parallel lines between the aims and learning outcomes and employability skills within these modules and the skills that need to be proven for obtaining charterships were drawn. The five areas of competence and commitment required by the professional bodies were discussed and compared with the learning outcomes of the modules: (i) knowledge and understanding, (ii) design and development of processes, systems, services and products, (iii) responsibility, management, leadership, (iv) communication and interpersonal skills and (v) professional commitment. Furthermore, a number of worked examples were highlighted. This helped students to envisage the modules as one of the examples they would need to discuss in their future application for a chartership, providing another incentive to follow the project with enthusiasm.

Lastly, a short presentation of a case study (an older EWB project), was also given by another member of staff emphasising how engineering has an incredibly important role to play in overcoming the global challenges that we face as a species.
At the end of the second lecture students were happy with the material presented but had issues with the groups. The most serious problem was that some students did not make contact with their groups, leaving students singled out or just two students in a group that four students were supposed to participate in.

**Week 3: The ‘shadow groups’**

For the above reasons, the groups were re-organised before the commencement of week 3. Some students were enrolled but never responded to email and calls from fellow students or members of staff. The non-participating students were put together in two groups named ‘shadow groups’. The remaining students were grouped together in an effort to maximise the students’ potential and increase satisfaction and creativity in the module.

Further to this, the first building surveying lecturer was invited to give a talk to the class. The author asked a lecturer with African nationality to give a presentation on the technical and socio-economic climate of the area under discussion. The author and the lecturer had several meetings to organise the slides of the presentation entitled ‘Africa and beyond’. In addition to this, one very actively participating student came from Nigeria, and the author informed the lecturer and the student that she would initiate a live discussion between the two in the class, so that all the students would benefit from the insightful debate.

Lastly, the winning team of the previous year’s EWB challenge was invited to give a short talk on their experience overall and any decisions and actions they would take, had they the chance to participate again in the competition.

The lecture of week 3 ran very smoothly and enjoyably. Students were satisfied with their new groups and also found the initiated discussion between the student and the lecturer very constructive.

**Week 4: Meeting with the tutors**

For week 4, arrangements were made for all groups to schedule a meeting with their tutors ahead of the submission of the interim report.

From the start of the modules until the very end, studentcentral (Blackboard) was chosen as the main means of communication. All group changes were uploaded and updated, plus all timetables with respect to the groups and tutor meetings.

Skype and applications such as WhatsApp were also utilised for group meetings and to provide fast responses to students.

**Week 5: Further targeted guidance**

After the submission of the interim report, structured guidance was once again implemented for week 5 to relieve the stress from students. Another targeted talk was organised, entitled: ‘From the interim to the final report’. The presentation was aimed at highlighting the additional items that the students should work on to further develop their interim report to the final stage.
The author also gave a short presentation on the different citation software available and basic instructions on how to use them. Students found the session interesting and helpful. The marking criteria were also presented and discussed.

**Week 6: Feedback on the interim report**

This week was dedicated to the feedback on the interim report and further changes that should be made for the submission of the final report. Studentcentral was used as the platform for formative assessment, helping to build the understanding of the students. A number of group meetings were also scheduled.

**Week 7: Managing presentations**

After the submission of the final report all students give a presentation towards the last two weeks of the module (weeks 10 and 11). It was expected that Year 1 students would give a presentation and that Year 2 students would present a poster. For this, a targeted talk on presentation styles and stress management was given as many Year 2 students found preparing the poster difficult. The author prepared presentation and poster templates and demonstrated suitable software.

**Week 8: The ‘panel’ discussion**

Education is a continuous process and POPBL modules run the risk of focusing too much on the report generated rather than the ‘journey’ itself. To remind students of this, the author/module leader, planned a special panel discussion session three weeks ahead, simulating the discussion panels broadcasted on television. Members of the panel included the Head of School and other members of staff, including experts in waste, environmental governance, migration and social justice. This session resulted in:

- Advanced scientific dialogue, primarily between students and panel members but also amongst the panel members themselves. The students who had surveyed the literature, brainstormed and written reports had created a complete image about the case and had identified unresolved issues. They asked the panel members how they could tackle these issues based on the staff’s previous experience in similar cases. The discussion was challenging and fruitful since an in-depth analysis on interrelated issues was provoked.

- Independent targeted research: each panel member gave a very vivid description of case studies they were involved with. In the preparatory meetings that took place amongst the panel members and the lecturer before the panel discussion session, a list of all major challenges and legal, political, environmental, governmental issues etc. the local society was faced with were discussed, so that the case studies would be focused.

- Critical awareness of the global role of engineers and surveyors through the various case studies in different areas of the world were presented by the panel members.

- Self-management and communication skills were developed through the student discussions with experts. Furthermore, the experts discussed
the personal skills they deployed in an effort to offer original solutions to the communities to which they were invited.

**Week 9: Mock presentations**

Students were invited to present their part of the report in timed two-minute sessions. This allowed them to build experience in standing and talking, to overcome the fear of speaking in public, while helping students to realise possible weaknesses and areas for further development.

During this week the best reports were selected to submit to the national competition. Having received such good reports, selecting the top ones was a difficult task. Following discussions with the Head of the Department; instead of submitting two design projects for Year 1 students and three for Year two students the organisers were asked to allow three submissions for each of the modules. This brought further encouragement to the students ahead of the assessment of their presentations.

During weeks 9 and 10, students were offered further meetings with the author in an effort to further develop their presentation skills and use of presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint.

**Weeks 10 and 11: Assessing presentations**

During the final two weeks a total of 55 groups of students presented their design area and solutions.

Reports were marked and the best were submitted to the EWB webpage. Two groups were selected to enter in the semi-finals (see figures 3 and 4, pp. 38-39).

**Overall evaluative discussion and conclusion**

This paper has focused on changes and adjustments made to increase the learning process and student satisfaction in a POPBL module, narrating all the issues that arose and solutions implemented in a chronological order. All teaching staff involved were aware of the following:

- In interdisciplinary teams of students, group dynamics can be an issue. Balancing the number of members (for example, two civil engineering students teamed with two surveying engineering students) proved to be a wise decision.

- Teaching staff need to be more empathetic when students are trying to be more productive, for example, when students complain that a member of a group has never appeared and therefore their meetings are disappointing due to the lack of engaged members, **we must substitute that non-participating person as soon as possible**.

- For creativity to flourish we must narrow down and broaden subjects at the right time. In other words, given a broad area of research, we must teach students how to subdivide it into smaller areas of interest and how to focus on a single area in order to complete the task without feeling lost and disoriented. At the same time, it is important once the focus has been achieved, to bring back the broader picture to the students to show them how different
areas can be interrelated, and the various engineering specialisations and other scientific disciplines interconnected in an effort to tackle problems in an interdisciplinary manner.

- The module leader must be prepared to make changes while running such modules. The significant number of students involved in POPBL modules will always be challenging and therefore many unforeseen needs may arise.

Some requirements for future success were outlined:

- Running the modules in which students are put in teams is complicated. For this, the most essential feature that needs to come across to all students is that all involved lecturers DO CARE.

- These modules are best run by experienced project managers/engineers because the cases studied require professional experience for successfully running project-based modules. In addition to this, project managers must be capable of running a large number of sub-groups, which is a major requirement of POPBL modules.

Furthermore, some possible future improvements can be proposed:

- To allow students to select teams on their own during the first week.

- In the beginning of the second week all groups should be announced in order to trace missing group members. At the end of the second week the groups should be finalised and no further changes made.

- To schedule the experts’ panel discussion before the submission of the final report. Such initiatives teach students how to discuss dialectically amongst themselves, and the questions and answers section helps them to deepen their technical understanding, while enthusing social responsibility and an ethos relating to the engineering discipline they are studying.

The module learning outcomes upon successful completion of the course included:

- Understanding a range of issues related to the role of engineering.

- Explaining the impact of engineering projects within a global, environmental and societal context.

- Demonstrating an appreciation of the health and safety, environmental, economic and sustainability issues related to engineering projects.

- Applying knowledge and understanding through the practical application of sustainable development.

- Working independently, gathering and critically evaluating information about a chosen topic, and communicating the findings in groups through written technical reports and presentations.
Engineers Without Borders Finals – 20th June 2018

Abstract: This solution provides a cheaper alternative to the smokeless stoves already in market in Kibera, it should prove to be a long term solution where it will be able to self fund itself with the help of the locals.

Background

- Electricity is a major household expense, often it is unreliable, unsafe and inadequate
- Mud and tin houses become very hot throughout the day or whilst people are cooking. Fumes from cooking with charcoal indoors causes health issues.
- Charcoal is the main source of fuel but production causes deforestation, its use also linked to detrimental health impacts.

Idea that we came up for our design area were: consolidating an alternate links to the sources for material when briquetting, bio digester which also tackles the waste issue and providing organically generated electricity, and lastly smokeless stove that enables the dispersion of the smoke to be more controlled.

Our decision was smokeless stove due to its simplicity of its scale and financial reliability that it offers in comparison to our other ideas. As such, briquetting required consolidating multiple manufacturing sites and this could mean transporting materials would require large amount of time additionally CO2 emission would’ve been a set back. As with bio digestors it requires too much space as well large investment to even create a small scale bio digester for only few number of houses.

Consideration we took into account when designing the stove:

- The cooking system must have to be robust to withstand a vast amount of weather conditions like extreme heat and condensation.
- It must be simple with no complicated or fragile parts as recommendation is to last for years
- It also must be appealing to the users, so they would not prefer their habitual ways of cooking. If it is not useful they might revert to an older system worsening their health and hygiene.

Clay Chimney Cap Price: 215 KS
Steel Pipe Price: 430 KS
Pipe Set Up Holder Price: 110 KS

The stove is made of locally sourced materials and it’s built with easy-fit compartments. Therefore, the damaged or worn out parts can simply be replaced.

It’s cheap, affordable and sustainable.

The overall cost 1350 KS, Inc labour cost of roughly 215 KS & using manufacturing equipment should add 150 KS.

Obvious set back would be installing the 2 m pipe which means that the house must be physically attended, this is where we need a local specialist’s to tackle this issue without hindering the structure.

Filter (Iron) Price: 115 KS each
Stove Body Price: 0 KS (Local deposits)
(Mixed Ash & Clay) Insulating material Price: 0 KS (Local deposits)

What we hope to achieve

A scheme where the parties already involved in stove production and retailing are consolidated to introduce the smokeless alternative on a large scale.

The “Kenya stove” can produce the stoves for a profits in collaboration with community staff help groups.

Non-profit organisations can also be involved to provide trucks for transporting raw materials and finished products to market.

The involvement of the self-help groups will also create a sense of trust in the scheme from the residents.

Profits can be used to pay for fuel for trucks and the rest reinvested into the scheme to create sustainable livelihoods.

Figure 3: Poster by Bishal Thapa Magar, Isaac Mwendwa and Kenneth Ugel of winning team 1
Engineers Without Borders Finals – 20th June 2018

Using Kibera’s organic waste to reduce soil pollution and remediate Nairobi River and the Nairobi Dam

Ben Nicholson  Group 10

Abstract: This solution offers an overview of a long term alternative to the current waste management system. By converting the organic waste into Vermicompost and laying this along the river bank, the pollution of the riverbank will be reduced. This will give opportunity to plant trees and implement a forestry management scheme.

Inspiration:

Permaculture/Amritapuri site
Permaculture- a set of design principles that encourage self-sufficiency environment, capable of solving any

Forestry management schemes
Forestry Management involves the conservative, legal, economic and social aspects of a forest system.

Sustainable timber source: 
- Less pollution improved dam and river banks.
- Increased biodiversity.
- Organic Compost.
- Animal Feed.
- Job opportunities.
- Safer local environment for residents.

Animal Feed – Kibera has a culture of youths breeding pigs and chickens.

Sustainable forestry plan (Tailored to residents needs)

Sedimentation

Organic waste - separation and transportation:
Waste separation at home. To then be taken to drop points for composting. Religious centres and schools recommended for this.

Composting:
A windrow compost system.

Cost Estimates:
Separation and transport to drop points - £9
*Savings as less transport to Dandora.
Labour wage - £0.75/hour
*Volunteers/ Trainees encouraged.
Permaculture training (managers) - TBC
Vetiver grass slips – £0.37 each (100 per m²)
*Products to be made from mature grass
Tree saplings - TBC
*Precedent set from charities to assist

Figure 4: Poster by Ben Nicholson of winning team 2
Dr Styliani Papatzani

- Developing successful teamwork skills.
- Developing employability skills.

In addition, teaching the modules proved to be iterative, and results of changes happening in one week were reflected in the following week’s lectures. Students’ personal reflections included the following:

‘This project had good outcomes. I could say I feel proud about the progress’.

‘This problem-solving methodology would be crucial to the development of each member of the group in the professional civil engineering world’.

‘To conclude, I would say that I have enjoyed the module as it is certainly different to the modules I am currently undertaking. Design Without Borders gives us the opportunity to think of positive changes to those who are less fortunate which is a wonderful concept’.

‘This report helped me understand the greater purpose of Civil Engineering which is no other than making the life of people better and easier’.

Teaching under such demanding circumstances proved to be very rewarding and the adjustments made were worth the effort. Student satisfaction increased and some really interesting ideas were presented in the students’ reports. Furthermore, social responsibility, professional judgement, environmental and cultural awareness were promoted through the development of personal and interpersonal skills.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to take this opportunity to thank all involved lecturers for the creative discussions and insights. Special thanks should be addressed to Dr Hamid Isfahany for in-depth discussions and to Marion Curdy for supporting the use of Moodle and studentcentral.

Bibliography


**Biography**

**Dr Styliani Papatzani** has completed three master courses, a PhD on the effect of various nanoparticles in cement formulations from the University of Bath, UK and post-doctoral studies at the National Technical University of Athens. She has also been a lecturer in Civil Engineering at the University of Brighton. She has worked as an engineer and project manager, carrying out the structural design of new buildings and the structural assessments of existing buildings and monuments. Styliani is currently a senior engineer at the Greek Ministry of Culture and an adjunct professor at the Hellenic Army Academy, Department of Mathematics and Engineering Sciences. She has published more than 30 papers in journals, book chapters and conferences and is a consultant and technical expert on a number of professional committees.
Evaluation and Policy Department’s believe it or not: survey secrets exposed

DR ROBERT STRICK, EVALUATION AND POLICY DEPARTMENT

Abstract
There are a number of nationally and internally run surveys that supply the University of Brighton with information on how our students rate and perceive their student experience. With the inclusion of National Student Survey (NSS) metrics in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), it has become all the more important to understand the student experience and how students reply in these surveys. This article investigates some of the lesser known analysis of the NSS and our internally run Brighton Student Survey (BSS), giving further insight into how students rate their experience at the University of Brighton.

Introduction
The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) has become an integral part of the higher education sector. It is a national exercise to assess the teaching excellence at universities and colleges, and how well institutions ensure excellent outcomes for their students (OfS 2018). Three of the six metrics that make up the TEF are based on survey results from the National Student Survey (NSS), related to the themes of ‘teaching, assessment and feedback’, and ‘academic support’, each weighted at 50 per cent.

The NSS has been run annually since 2005 and asks full-time and part-time undergraduate students about their learning experiences during their final year of study. A study by Higher Education Academy in 2008 states that ‘students are notably less positive about assessment and feedback …’ and that this concern has been reflected in many institutional experience surveys that have been undertaken since the 1980’s. It is in fact no surprise to academics and higher education staff that this is still an issue today (Williams et al. 2018), some ten years since this study was written. The assessment and feedback theme is made up of four questions that are centred on the clarity of the marking criteria, the fairness of marking, timeliness of feedback, and the helpful nature of the feedback. Also, part of the TEF metrics are the themes: teaching and academic support. The teaching theme is made up of four questions that score a tutor’s ability to explain things, make the subject interest-
ing and intellectually stimulating, and to challenge students. The academic support theme has three questions that ask whether the tutor is contactable, gives sufficient advice and the quality of said advice.

It is therefore, imperative for institutions to understand their survey data, and the relationships between teaching and learning themes. Having this understanding will allow institutions to maintain or improve TEF related survey metrics, vital for securing a good TEF result. Concentrating on only the TEF metrics, or ‘game playing’, however, is not necessarily conducive for the student experience or for increasing teaching excellence at an institution. Therefore, to truly understand the student experience and make ‘real’ gains in the TEF, it is important to consider the whole student experience and the interrelationships between different learning and teaching themes.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the lesser known facts and relationships that have been analysed at the University of Brighton, in relationship to student survey data. This paper will draw analysis from the NSS, as well as the internally run survey, Brighton Student Survey (BSS), which has now run for its third year (as of 2018). Specifically this paper will:

- Describe the correlation between the teaching and learning themes from the BSS survey.
- Describe the distribution of themes within a school context from both the BSS and NSS surveys.
- Quantify the relationship between the score for ‘Overall satisfaction’ and the aggregate score for the other main teaching themes from the NSS 2017 results and the BSS 2018 results.
- Examine coded free-text results and how the psychology of writing a free-text comment may be reflected in these results.
- Investigate the relationship between the option of ‘neither agree nor disagree’ on the Likert scale, and the score of a teaching and learning theme from the BSS 2018 and NSS 2017 results.
- Use response data from a presentation of these results that gauged staff members perceptions of TEF and survey metrics, giving an insight into how the TEF is perceived by those who teach.

Methodology

The two main datasets used in this paper are from the NSS and BSS. Data from the NSS is provided by Texunatech, and can be subdivided by school, course, subject area, and various demographics. The BSS is an internally run student survey on the online surveys platform (formally BOS), the main question set of the BSS matches those of the NSS, allowing for some comparison. The BSS survey is open to level 4 and level 5 plus undergraduate students, filling the gap before the NSS, which surveys final year students. As it is an internally run survey this allows for analysis of the raw data, at student level, opening up greater levels of potential analysis. The statistics package SPSS was used to perform statistical analysis of survey data, perform-
Dr Robert Strick

...ing crosstabs and a Pearson’s correlation of questions at a 95 per cent confidence level. Otherwise, Excel was used to perform data manipulation and regression.

During the presentation element of this paper, the application PollEverywhere was used in conjunction with PowerPoint to allow for live responses to be recorded and displayed. Users sent text messages to a defined number, which were then displayed on screen in the form of interactive word clouds and answers to questions.

Findings

Theme correlation

Figure 1 shows the relationship between questions and themes from the BSS survey. A Pearson’s correlation was performed comparing students answers for questions and how well these are correlated to other questions within the survey. Table 1 has a question key for use in reference with Figure 1. If the colour in the chart is blue (Figure 1) then students answered similarly between the comparing questions and collectively for themes. For example, as one may expect, the answers from students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Opportunities</th>
<th>Assessment and Feedback</th>
<th>Academic Support</th>
<th>Organisation and Management</th>
<th>Learning Resources</th>
<th>Learning Community</th>
<th>Student Voice</th>
<th>OS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEF Themes</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlation

- Good
- Poor

Correlation

- Strong
- Moderate
- Poor

Figure 1: Theme and question correlation from the BSS main questions. Pearson’s correlation shows how well questions are correlated to each other, blue/green is a high correlation, red is a low correlation.
for the theme ‘teaching’ and the theme ‘learning opportunities’ are very closely related. This suggests that if the teaching is good on your course then you feel you have a good opportunity to learn and develop. The theme ‘learning resources’ does not seem to correlate well with any of the other themes and questions. This is likely because when learning resources such as IT equipment is working, then students have little opinion on it, whereas when it does not work, this theme then becomes low scoring. Student voice is also closely related to many of the other teaching and learning themes, this shows that when students feel as though their feedback is being listened to, they are satisfied with their course. This includes the three TEF metrics. Questions were also compared to ‘overall satisfaction’, with green indicating a correlation with questions. This can give an indication of which themes and questions are important for a student’s overall experience at the University of Brighton.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Key</th>
<th>Theme/Question</th>
<th>Question Key</th>
<th>Theme/Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Q 7-3</td>
<td>Good advice is available when I need to make study choices on my course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 4-1</td>
<td>Staff are good at explaining things.</td>
<td>Q 8</td>
<td><strong>Organisation and management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 4-2</td>
<td>Staff make the subject interesting.</td>
<td>Q 8-1</td>
<td>The course is well organised and is running smoothly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 4-3</td>
<td>The course is intellectually stimulating.</td>
<td>Q 8-2</td>
<td>The timetable works efficiently for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 4-4</td>
<td>My course challenges me to achieve my best work.</td>
<td>Q 8-3</td>
<td>Any changes in the course or teaching are communicated effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5</td>
<td>Learning opportunities</td>
<td>Q 9</td>
<td><strong>Learning resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5-1</td>
<td>My course provides me with opportuni-ties to explore ideas or concepts in depth.</td>
<td>Q 9-1</td>
<td>The IT resources and facilities provided support my learning well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5-2</td>
<td>My course provides me with opportuni-ties to bring information and ideas together from different topics.</td>
<td>Q 9-2</td>
<td>The library resources (for example, books, online services and learning spaces) support my learning well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 5-3</td>
<td>My course provides me with opportuni-ties to apply what I have learned.</td>
<td>Q 9-3</td>
<td>I am able to access course-specific resources (for example, equipment, facilities, software collections) when I need to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6</td>
<td>Assessment and feedback</td>
<td>Q 10</td>
<td><strong>Learning community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6-1</td>
<td>The criteria used in marking are clear in advance.</td>
<td>Q 10-1</td>
<td>I feel part of a community of staff and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6-2</td>
<td>Marking and assessment are fair.</td>
<td>Q 10-2</td>
<td>I have the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6-3</td>
<td>Feedback on my work is timely.</td>
<td>Q 11</td>
<td><strong>Student voice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 6-4</td>
<td>I have received helpful comments on my work.</td>
<td>Q 11-1</td>
<td>I have the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 7</td>
<td>Academic support</td>
<td>Q 11-2</td>
<td>Staff value students’ views and opinions about the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 7-1</td>
<td>I am able to contact staff when I need to.</td>
<td>Q 11-3</td>
<td>It is clear how students’ feedback on the course is acted on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 7-2</td>
<td>I receive sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course.</td>
<td>Q 15-1</td>
<td>Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Question/theme and question key for reference for Figure 1.*
There are some interesting question specific relationships (see Table 1 for the list of questions) that can reveal more intricate relationships. For example; question Q8-1: ‘my course is running smoothly’, is correlated with nearly every question. This indicates that if a student feels as though their course is running smoothly, they typically are content with other aspects of their course and scores highly in those. This is again a non-TEF related question that clearly impacts the TEF metrics. On the other end of the spectrum, question Q7-1: ‘I am able to contact staff when I need to’ does not correlate well with any of the other questions. Members of staff being contactable, though important, does not seem to impact students perceptions of other themes, nor their overall satisfaction.

**Distribution of themes**

Viewing the teaching and learning themes distributed by school (Figure 2) can give an indication of which themes score well and badly across the institution, and then also which schools do not follow this trend. Figure 2 also shows the range of scores for each school, which can give an indication of consistency in scoring for that particular school. A number of non-surprising themes are commonly at the bottom for each school, assessment and feedback, student voice, and organisation and management. This is also true for themes that are at the top end of the scale, learning resources, learning opportunities, and teaching.

The results are also similar for the NSS results (2017), though there are slight variations in the range and distribution of themes. Charts such as Figure 2, are useful for picking up institutional trends but also where certain schools are different from the general trends, which could highlight good or bad practice.

![Figure 2: Theme distribution for the 2018 Brighton Student Survey (BSS)](image-url)
**Total score vs overall satisfaction**

The following analysis investigates the relationship between how students rate how satisfied they are with their course and how this relates with the aggregate score of the main themes. Figure 3 shows the relationship between the scores of ‘overall satisfaction’ against the total score, or aggregate score.

If a school plots on, or very close to the green line (SOAD), then there is a very close agreement with the overall satisfaction score and the total score. If it plots below (UBH) then is shows the overall satisfaction is lower than the combined score. This would suggest that students may be quite happy with certain themes/aspects of their course, but have an overall dissatisfaction with the course, or potentially their standing in the university as a whole.

The majority of the data, as well as the University of Brighton relationship plots above the ‘perfect line’. This suggests that despite some areas of the course that students may find themselves unhappy with, they have an overall good perception of their course when thinking of it as a whole. The schools that plot above the University of Brighton trend line have this relationship at an institutional level. The equation of the line reveals that the gradient is very close to perfect, only 0.01 out, whereas the intercept is at four per cent (0.04 on the equation). This shows that the overall satisfaction is four per cent higher than expected given the levels of satisfaction for the constituent parts. This difference could either be a function of student perception as a whole, or an institutional relationship. To be able to establish this, other institutions would need to be investigated.

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**Figure 3: Total score (aggregate score) vs Overall satisfaction for BSS 2018**

\[
y = 1.01x + 0.04
\]

\[
R^2 = 0.72
\]
Free-text results

Coding of free-text comments can reveal trends in student’s comments as a reflection of the themes they are most concerned about. The two free-text questions used in the following analysis asked students what were the most positive and negative aspects about their course (Figure 4). Comments were coded into various themes related to teaching and learning, university facilities, and university experience. The two themes that had the largest proportion of comments are around teaching and course delivery.

The ratios between the negative and positive comments gives an indication of student perceptions of certain aspects of their course, showing which themes they feel most strongly about and hence are willing to write an optional free-text comment about. When thinking about TEF related measures it is interesting to see which teaching has a higher proportion of positive comments, academic support has a much higher percentage of positive compared to negative, however, assessment and feedback is the opposite to this. However, one should consider the psychology of making a free-text comment, and the phrasing of the questions.

The questions ask what were the most positive and negative aspects of their course. If a student has achieved good marks and is happy that they have received this feedback in time and that it is fair, it is unlikely to be one of the most positive aspects of their course. As this sort of practice is ‘what one would expect’, however, if teaching has been exemplary, or academic support has gone above and beyond, this is a much more tangible concept to have a lasting positive impression. This concept is also likely the cause for the sector-wide poor performance in the NSS and other student surveys in the theme of assessment and feedback.

Some conflicting and interesting results are that the free-text comments for learning community are mostly positive (six per cent of overall comments compared to two per cent negative), whereas, this theme performed quite poorly in the BSS for 2018.

Figure 4: Positive and negative comments from the BSS 2018
Neither agree nor disagree

On a Likert scale of survey questions, there is a non-comital answer in the form of ‘Neither Agree nor Disagree’ (NAnorD), which sits between agree and disagree. The NSS and BSS surveys use the percentage agree rating, which is the amalgamation of ‘Definitely agree’ and ‘Mostly agree’, therefore a response in the NAnorD category could be considered towards a disagree percentage. The OfS strongly advice against institutions ‘game playing’ and informing students that this is considered a disagree category. Therefore, care should be taken when interpreting these results. What these results can tell us however, is what themes are student’s most/least engaged with, which themes they have the strongest opinions about.

Research from Baka et al. (2012) investigated NAnorD in voting advice applications in the Greece 2010 elections. One of their resulting conclusions is that there are three general categories of respondent motivations in picking the NAnorD category. Their first category refers to respondents that have a lack of knowledge or indifference to the subject. The second category includes respondents that justify their midpoint choice through ambivalence or indecisiveness, while the third group comprises respondents that argue against the main assumptions and/or formulation of the posed question. These categories could account for some of the motivations for students at the University of Brighton for choosing the NAnorD option.

Figure 5 shows the relationship between the percentages agree and the percentage of NAnorD for each of the main themes for the BSS 2018. There are two distinct groups of themes with one group having lower levels of NAnorD, associated with higher percentage agree scores, and then opposite with higher levels of NAnorD. It is

![Figure 5: Neither agree nor disagree (NAnorD) vs per cent agree score for the BSS 2018](image)
interesting to note when there is a deviation from this relationship, such as with the student voice theme. With a percentage agree score of 70 per cent for student voice, one would expect the NAnorD score to be around 18.6 per cent, whereas it is over 20 per cent. The research from Baka et al. (2012) could indicate that rather than students having indifference and indecisiveness, the high percentage of NAnorD could be a result of respondents arguing against the questions within the theme.

**Staff perceptions of TEF**

The results presented thus far in this article were the basis of a presentation at the 2018 Learning and Teaching Conference, University of Brighton. During the presentation there was an interactive polling element that quizzed members of staff that were present and also asked their perceptions about what the TEF means to them. The following two word clouds (Figures 6 and 7) show what the TEF means to them and then what teaching excellence means to them.

![Figure 6: Word cloud asking members of staff 'What does the TEF mean to you?'](image)

The first word cloud has a number of interesting words included within, but some of the most recurring words were, benchmark, data, students, and the most abundant word, metrics. This shows that staff are very concerned over their metrics, how they are benchmarked, and the data that feeds into it, with little mention of teaching excellence.

When asked about teaching excellence however, staff produced very different sets of words with very little overlap. Technology appeared highly in the results, indicating the importance of keeping up with technological advances in teaching technologies to enhance and improve teaching.

The lack of overlap between these word clouds indicates that the perceptions of members of staff on the TEF, which is meant to be a measure of teaching excellence, is very different to what they consider teaching excellence to be. It is this disparity between framework and practice that is often a criticism of the TEF and similar metric driven frameworks.
Discussion and conclusion

The results discussed within this article indicate some of the lesser known analysis of the student surveys conducted at the University of Brighton. What it reveals are some important inter-relationships between survey themes that can help to inform decisions and strategies for improving TEF metrics. More importantly, it could also drive improvement of the student experience as a whole. This article then, suggests that focusing on the TEF metrics alone is not a good strategy, rather, there should be consideration of all parts of the student experience.

Figure 1 (p. 44) highlights the importance of the whole student experience, with many themes having relationships with other aspects of university life. It would suggest that improving the overall student experience will have knock-on benefits for the three metrics currently used to assess teaching excellence, derived from student surveys. The significance of the student voice is apparent when viewing Figure 1. Those who rated their student voice highly also rated nearly all other aspects of their surveyed experience highly (with the exception of learning resources). This is supported by research from Laux (2018) that concluded that allowing students a voice in the classroom can lead to a feeling of empowerment, and greater levels of motivation in their studies. Including a student voice in curriculum design encourages an ethos of listening to, and acting upon the student voice across the course (Brooman et al. 2014). Therefore, incorporating student views and letting students know that their voice is heard can help promote their overall perception of their course, leading to improvements in the NSS and ultimately, the TEF.

Understanding how students perceive certain aspects of their course, from dissecting free-text comments to understanding motivations behind choosing the option NAnorD, can lead to a better understanding of what a student regards as good teaching practice. The NAnorD is not necessarily chosen due to a lack of opinion (Baka et al. 2012), which then circles back to the importance of the student voice and encouraging students to want to have their ‘voice’ heard. Whether it is positive or negative. Current literature in regards to NAnorD is light, but this article provides some results
showing the relationship between choosing NAnorD and the theme of the questions. As ultimately, what a student believes is good practice, will inform their decisions when filling in student surveys such as the NSS.

The article also reveals staff perceptions of the TEF and what they perceive to be excellent teaching, showing a distinct dichotomy between the two charts. What would be interesting is to follow up this study, asking the same questions of students, to see whether they also have a disconnection between the TEF, a framework for rating teaching excellence, and the perception of excellence itself.

References


Biography

**Dr Robert Strick** started his academic life in the University of Brighton as an undergraduate studying environmental science. He then stayed with the university, completing his masters in environmental assessment and management, and then his PhD in fluvial geomorphology. After completing his PhD he worked in the School of Environment and Technology as a postdoctoral researcher before joining (what was) the Strategic Planning and Projects Office (SPPO) in 2018. He is currently the senior data analyst with a focus on the TEF in what is now the Evaluation and Policy Department (EPD).
Developing pre-professional identity by engaging with alumni and using LinkedIn

Julie Fowlie and Clare Forder, Brighton Business School

Abstract
In this article we consider how engaging with alumni can develop students’ pre-professional identity and encourage undergraduates’ use of LinkedIn. In addressing why this is an important aspect of the employability agenda, we reflect on recent research on pre-professional identity. We then report on a small-scale research project (funded by a scholarship awarded by the University of Brighton’s Centre for Learning and Teaching) where participants were supported in developing their identity by connecting with alumni from their course. LinkedIn was chosen as a form of social media most appropriate for career exploration and investigating the graduate attributes demanded by employers. We demonstrate how sharing alumni profiles with participants helped ease their reluctance to use the site. We conclude by examining changes in participants’ attitudes towards using this form of social media as a career tool, and outline how for some, this led to positive outcomes, including offers of work and creating new networks.

Introduction
Throughout the literature there does not appear to be a ‘one size fits all’ definition of employability (Pegg et al. 2012). As such, the concept is open to different interpretations by different stakeholders. Employers largely view it as ‘work-readiness’, believing universities are responsible for producing graduates who can hit the ground running once they enter the workplace (Archer and Davison 2008; Mason et al. 2009). Conversely, others have taken employability to mean the likelihood of students securing a job (Harvey 2001); the ability to gain employment and be successful (Knight and Yorke 2003) or the skillset and wider attributes required for one to be satisfied and successful at work (Dacre Pool and Sewell 2007). As a result, higher education institutions (HEIs) face competing demands: they need to meet the demand for competent graduates (Pollard et al. 2015) but also to respond to students’ needs for opportunities through which they can develop the necessary skills and experience that make them employable (Helyer and Lee 2014).
Pre-professional identity

A key argument emerging from the discourse surrounding employability is that students need to take responsibility for their work-readiness (Baker and Henson 2010; Tymon 2013). One way of facilitating this is to focus on the development of undergraduates’ pre-professional identity (Jackson 2016). Daniels and Brooker (2014, p. 68) argue that because students are very often ‘shaped to fit an institutional concept of work-readiness,’ the end result is passive acceptance of an identity they have had little chance to explore or define themselves. Consequently we argue that taking responsibility for their own employability can be generated amongst students once they are encouraged to start thinking about their pre-professional identity.

Wenger’s (1998; 2011) definition of communities or landscapes of practice supports the idea of pre-professional identity development. The higher education context provides numerous communities of practice with which students can engage and interact, including study cohorts, academic staff, societies, careers and employability services, professional bodies, and employers. Not only does active participation in these communities aid in the formation of a pre-professional identity, but it also helps students to hone important career management skills (Jackson 2016).

However, although these communities of practice exist for students to engage with, we have so far made assumptions that students do actively participate in them. Taking employability as a broad landscape, the following review of the literature suggests that not all undergraduates take advantage of the communities available to them. As career knowledge is built upon interactions with a variety of people (Piazza 2011), if those interactions are minimal, forming a pre-professional identity becomes more difficult.

Employability

Employability is widely promoted in most HEIs. Students can: access careers and employability services (Watts 1997; Rowley and Purcell 2001); encounter the concept in the taught curriculum (Cranmer 2006; Jackson 2014); engage in extra-curricular activities (Clark et al. 2015) and participate in work-based learning, internships and industrial placements (Andrews and Higson 2008; Hall et al. 2009; Lowden et al. 2011).

With a vast array of opportunities through which students can develop their employability on offer, it is often assumed that they are aware of them and have made the connection that participation can lead to improved work readiness. However, a review of the literature reveals the opposite, with researchers indicating, for example, that students may choose not to make use of careers and employability services (Greenbank 2011), or that they may even try to avoid embedded employability activities (Atlay and Harris 2000). Stevenson and Clegg (2011) also find that participation in extra-curricular activities is not predicated upon enhancing employability but rests on making the most of current opportunities. As a result, it is easy to question whether or not students understand that the employability-related services and activities available to them are there to help support their work-readiness (Rae 2007).
Alumni as a community of practice

If we view employability as an active social process involving the creation of new identities (Tomlinson 2010) and something which is supported through the promotion of graduate identity (Hinchliffe and Jolly 2011), students should therefore be encouraged to interact as regularly as possible with the people, activities, and resources that form their landscapes or communities of practice. Smith et al. (2017) also argue that the social process of identity formation involves role models (academics, family members) in that they enable observation of prototypical behaviours. However, in existing research, reference to alumni as viable role models or communities of practice is rare. We aim to increase understanding of identity formation in the employability context by demonstrating the positive effect of engaging undergraduates with alumni from their course.

LinkedIn for career exploration

LinkedIn is a social media platform designed to support online direct client communication and professional networking (Ryan and Jones 2009). Growing numbers of students also use the site (Garcia 2017) but despite its value as a career exploration tool (Gerard 2012) or as a means of showcasing graduate attributes sought by employers (Peterson and Dover 2014), research has shown that undergraduates very often view it as a website intended for those already in the workplace (Florenthal 2015). This means that a helpful resource, particularly for job searches (Breitbarth 2016) is often disregarded (Bridgstock 2016; Sloane and Gaffney 2016). This set the scene for our study as we aimed to discover if our participants also viewed LinkedIn this way.

Research design

Local qualitative analysis of the 2016 National Student Survey (NSS) coupled with further quantitative evaluation of four years’ of data (2012-16) from the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, revealed that students following our institution’s Finance and Investment degree were the most dissatisfied in terms of career guidance, and that graduates from the same course experienced above-average levels of unemployment (12.7 per cent compared to sector average of 9.5 per cent). Our research project was therefore designed to examine these issues.

To support our research and to explore a potentially under-used community of practice as identified above, we used LinkedIn to connect with Finance and Investment alumni from 2015-17, asking them to complete a short questionnaire about their career. Over 100 alumni were contacted, and 43 connected with us on LinkedIn. Eleven (eight male/three female) answered the questionnaire and with their consent we used this data to create profile sheets to share with participants.

Following ethical approval, all final year Finance and Investment students (n=23) were invited by email to participate. A low response rate (n=4) prompted us to include second-year students, increasing the final number of participants to ten (nine male/one female, reflecting the demographic of the cohort).
Over a four-month period we conducted four focus groups and set additional tasks for participants to complete and reflect upon. Broadly, the focus groups focused on the following: perceptions of career and employability advice provided plus career plans; reviewing alumni profiles and discussing the use of LinkedIn to develop a professional identity; reflective questions and discussion plus review of revised career plans; final reporting of the use of LinkedIn, including review of newly established profiles.

Findings

Our focus groups revealed results consistent with existing literature. Only two participants reported attending any employability-related events. None had made use of the Careers Service, with the majority not realising this was separate from the department’s Employability Hub. Three of the ten participants had never used LinkedIn and four had set up a profile but had not continued to use the site. Two stated occasional use, but only one reported they were a regular user with an active profile. Four of the ten participants had no plans for after graduation even though two would be graduating only four months later. None had plans or ideas for how they would work towards their desired career, and all agreed they would probably ‘go for anything to open the door and pay the bills’. None of the group had any alumni connections.

Responses to using LinkedIn included:

‘I do not see the point of LinkedIn’ (final year).
‘I don’t understand LinkedIn’ (final year).
‘LinkedIn is of no importance to me at the moment’ (final year).
‘The site is not as professional as it makes out to be’ (final year).
‘Social media is meant to be fun – LinkedIn doesn’t sound fun’ (final year).
‘There is no need for me to use LinkedIn’ (second year).
‘LinkedIn has only just come on to my horizon’ (second year).
‘I am not confident enough to connect with others’ (second year).

However, following a review of alumni profiles, attitudes began to change somewhat:

‘I feel more positive about networking’ (final year).
‘I feel encouraged to be more active and less hesitant’ (final year).
‘I’ve realised just doing my degree is not enough’ (final year).
‘The alumni profiles were really helpful’ (second year).
‘The alumni profiles have highlighted things I have not considered’ (second year).
‘I have added more things to my profile after looking at others’ (second year).

After setting up profiles, connecting with alumni, and beginning to develop a wider professional network, participants revealed:
‘I no longer ignore notifications about alumni at companies but I look at their profiles to see the skills and experience they have’ (final year).

‘I feel more confident in using LinkedIn to look for jobs’ (final year).

‘I have contacted everyone in my network to ask for endorsements’ (final year).

‘LinkedIn helped me secure my placement as someone I connected with gave me some detailed advice and he turned out to be my interviewer!’ (second year).

‘I have started to look more closely at company profiles’ (second year).

‘I am starting to add more contacts but I still don’t feel confident connecting with people’ (second year).

Discussion

Bridgstock (2009) notes how pre-professional identity creation is inherent in the use of LinkedIn. Asking students to create a LinkedIn profile necessitates some consideration of how they want to portray themselves professionally. In line with other studies (Chen and Bryer 2012; Florenthal 2015) we discovered, however, that participants were reluctant to make active use of the site.

We also found amongst our participants a limited understanding of how LinkedIn works and a connected lack of confidence in using it. Participants also did not see the importance of doing so. Contrary to Cooper and Naatus (2014) who find LinkedIn users are comfortable making connections with new people or casual acquaintances, our students felt the opposite. Although not generalisable, this may indicate that students at such an early stage of their career do not comprehend the value LinkedIn can offer, and consequently may unwittingly deny themselves a means of developing their identity and exploring or interacting with numerous communities of practice.

Unsurprisingly, LinkedIn’s use in the business world is extensive and increasing (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Aral et al. 2013). Companies use it to build connections and develop business (Qualman 2010); whilst recruiters and job-seekers rely on the platform to search for candidates and opportunities respectively (Rienties et al. 2012; Zide et al. 2014; Adler 2016). Social networking is essential but new graduates are seen as unequipped to use it (Benson et al. 2012) despite their oft-held status of ‘digital natives’ (Wankel 2016). With students avoiding making connections that may help expand their networks (Gerard 2012) it is imperative that this gap in graduates’ skills is addressed.

On the basis of successful sharing of alumni profiles with our participants, measured through the change in attitude towards LinkedIn and professional identity creation, from cautious and disinterested to motivated and experimental, we argue that encouraging students to engage with alumni before asking them to use LinkedIn goes some way towards closing the gap in their social networking competencies. Involving alumni creates two positive drivers: examples of professional identities to which students can aspire, and a ready-made network for new users of LinkedIn to connect with and later develop into communities of practice.
In addition to enhancing social networking competencies, we also contend that such an approach, at least locally, is beneficial for Finance and Investment students in terms of their career exploration. As noted earlier, at the beginning of the study participants’ career plans were somewhat limited. Having explored and reviewed alumni career profiles and moved towards doing the same via LinkedIn, some of the students have broadened their career search and learned what employers in their field might be looking for in terms of skills and experience.

Findings from the latter part of our study also indicate the success of our approach. Not only did all participants complete the study with new and active LinkedIn profiles and expanding networks, but one participant also secured a work placement after making new contacts on LinkedIn. While this again cannot be generalised, it is an outcome which suggests the positive effects of introducing alumni to support pre-professional identity development and the use of LinkedIn.

**Limitations**

Findings from a small-scale study are not representative. We recognise our results may have varied if we had included students from different courses or who held more positive views of career guidance or LinkedIn. However, our findings do offer some useful indicators for how to encourage students to develop their pre-professional identity and to overcome reluctance of using LinkedIn.

**Conclusion**

We contend that alumni, by demonstrating the ‘... qualities, conduct, culture and ideology ...’ (Jackson 2016) of undergraduates’ intended professions, are the missing link in the development of students’ work-readiness. Connecting students with alumni encourages pre-professional identity development, and through networking allows for exploration of communities of practice. This can broaden what it means to be employable, and also contributes to instilling in today’s undergraduates a better comprehension of the need to be responsible for their own employability.

**References**


Developing pre-professional identity...


**Biographies**

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A playful approach to library induction: bounding around the library

Julie Charles and Kim Donovan, Information Services

Abstract
This is a summary of our experience of creating a library induction using Action-Bound, an interactive scavenger hunt app. Studies suggest that the current generation of students have a different way of processing information, a shorter attention span and are more easily bored and that ‘gaming is a powerful method for teaching ...’ (van Meegen and Limpens 2010).

With this in mind, we embarked on a project to create a more interactive library induction using game-based learning. Our aim was to improve student engagement with the library and increase the use of essential learning resources. The resulting Actionbound activities allowed the students to collaborate to complete each task and, through discussion and problem solving with sustained high level interaction, maintain their engagement with the learning process.

Introduction
An investigation follows into the use of game-based learning for library induction at the University of Brighton. Traditionally, library inductions have been delivered using PowerPoint presentations, but studies indicate that the current generation of students are more easily bored than previous generations (Van Meegen and Limpens 2010) and so our aim was to move to a more interactive mode of delivery. Library inductions are an important part of delivering key information to support the development of information literacy skills, which are defined by the Higher Education Academy (HEA 2017) as ‘the skills needed to find, evaluate and use information effectively’.

Our study focuses on the use of game-based learning at two University of Brighton libraries (Aldrich and St Peter’s House), with an analysis of our experience and ideas for future developments. Evidence from this study suggests that game-based library inductions are an effective method of teaching information literacy skills, and Actionbound has since been used by other University of Brighton libraries.

Play, games and gamification in libraries
The use of game-play and gamification as a means of teaching information literacy to students within a library context is widespread. The literature details how librar-
ies are experimenting with gamification (Walsh 2014), Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) (Chess and Booth 2013) and Augmented Reality Apps (Hobbs et al. 2016). There is evidence to suggest that interest in game-based learning within the academic community has peaked in recent years. Danforth (2011) attributes this to a rise in the prevalence of smart phones and social media. ‘Playful Learning’ (2017), a conference exploring fun, play, games and engagement in adult learning is now in its fourth year, and attracts attendees (academics, librarians, learning technologists) from across the country; the 2017 Librarians’ Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC 2017) included contributions from practitioners using play and game-based learning activities in their libraries. Game-based learning activities take a variety of different forms, including interactive treasure hunts, library reward schemes, card games, and augmented reality trails. The literature also deals with the distinction between play, games and gamification. Play ‘steps ‘outside’ of normal or ordinary life ... [it] is something that may not have an obvious purpose or destination’ (Walsh 2015). Games are a form of play, but are ‘often used to describe a more structured form of play’, i.e. they have rules (ibid).

Gamification is the ‘use of game design elements in a non-game context’ (Brigham 2015), and is not a new concept. Danforth (2011) argues that ‘while the word gamification is new, the principle is not’. Marketing companies in particular have used gamification principles for many years, early examples include supermarket reward schemes and frequent-flyer rewards.

Participating in a game not only increases engagement but also provides a learning opportunity and creates a positive environment for learning to happen. The end result of gamification is to ‘improve intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, engagement and to change behavior’ (AdvanceHE 2017). Introducing the element of gameplaying in an academic environment follows up the argument posited by Piaget (Phillips 1981) that ‘play is an important mediator for learning’ (Rieber 1996).

What we wanted was lasting student engagement, for students to leave a seminar room with an enduring memory of the library learning space, both physical and virtual. Experience has shown us that PowerPoint presentations left students with a vague idea that there were resources for their use, but because there was no sense of meaning or relevance to them at the time of the induction, they would often forget that the library service was there for them at the point of actual need.

Why use game-based learning for library instruction?

The literature indicates that there are strong pedagogic reasons for using games within higher education. Smale (2011) argues that game-based learning is successful in ‘engaging and motivating students, as well as increasing student learning’. Chess and Booth (2013) cite three major benefits of using games in the classroom. The first is that games allow failure: ‘play is useful pedagogically because of the psychological freedom it permits for students to experiment, to develop, and to learn from not succeeding’. Walsh (2014) states that ‘play’ can help us feel we are in a safe environment to experiment and to learn new things that we may otherwise be reluctant to do’. Thus, by bringing play into the library environment, we are creating a safe space for students to fail. The consequences of failure within the Actionbound game are limited, an unhappy face on the screen and the sound of a negative buzz-
er indicate that the answer is incorrect. The reward for a correct answer, a graphic showing money going into a piggy bank, complete with a gratifying ‘kerr-ching’ is often met with triumph, enough to elevate any previous feelings of failure brought about by the game. Another of the benefits of play, as described by Chess and Booth (2013), is an increase in ‘social abilities’: game-based learning provides an excellent opportunity for students to work together to solve problems. Cooper (1996) states that play is especially important during transitional stages (the move from further to higher education being a prime example of the type of transition where play may become even more beneficial), thus making the timing of our Actionbound induction activity particularly timely. For Chess and Booth (2013), the final benefit is the introduction of new media literacies, bringing technology that students engage with outside of formal learning environments into the classroom. This highlights an important attribute of digital game-based learning; educators are able to use the types of technologies that the current generation of students have grown up using: computers/ smart phones and similar technologies. As Van Meegen and Limpens (2010) argue, this generation of students have a different way of processing information, have a shorter attention span, and are more easily bored.

Exploring the use of new technologies for teaching is something that is supported and encouraged by the University of Brighton, which has a policy on Digital Literacies (Centre for Learning and Teaching 2016). Policies such as these support research that indicates that students require a more interactive mode of delivery to aid learning, which is also one of the reasons that the university invests in new, and sometimes experimental technologies, such as Actionbound. Encouraging student attendance and maintaining engagement at library inductions/workshops is challenging at times, so developing new modes of delivery that interest students is vital.

These are by no means the only advantages of game-based learning, Brull and Finlayson (2016) argue that it ‘works’ because it helps people ‘learn by doing’. They state that ‘games are also appealing due to their application to all types of learning styles, from auditory to visual and kinaesthetic’ (Pettit, McCoy, Kinney and Schwartz 2014 cited in Brull 2016). Studies during the 1980s and 90s on ‘Learning by doing’/‘Active learning’ found that ‘students must do more than just listen; they must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems’ (Bonwell and Eison 1991).

Challenges are also discussed: getting the balance right, the difficulties of creating a game that ‘feel[s] ‘doable,’ but challenging’ (Gee 2005). Also widely researched are the links between games and different forms of motivation. Nicholson (2012) argues that if we rely too heavily on game-based learning/gamification, we run the risk of reducing ‘the internal motivation that the user has for the activity’, as games may replace internal motivation with extrinsic motivation. The concern here, is that, if you take away the extrinsic motivation, i.e. if you stop the game and the prizes and the leaderboards, the participant will lose motivation, and their engagement may wane (Walsh 2014).
A playful approach to library induction ...

**Actionbound at the University of Brighton**

At the University of Brighton, we were aware that we were only catering to one main learning style (i.e. auditory with visual prompts) and knew that we were limiting the impact of the information delivered by not having a holistic approach to the varied needs of our student audience. We wanted to add another dimension to our inductions and presenting them in a game/playful format would allow us to encompass as wide a variety of learning styles as possible (Kolb and Kolb 2005).

The visual and kinaesthetic nature of some Art, and Architecture and Design courses led us to the assumption that arts students would be more willing to engage with our inductions if we had a more experiential approach. ‘Experience-based learning is interactive and relational and uses instruction technologies such as simulation, games, role-plays, case studies, scenarios, multimedia presentations …’ (Hromek and Roffey 2009). It has also evidenced that a higher proportion of art students will have dyslexia than those in other academic fields (Wolff and Lundberg 2002; Holgate 2015), and will therefore be less inclined to engage with a word based presentation.

This assumption was supported by the increase of research in this area. Kolb and Kolb (2005) use a data set analysing the learning style preferences of management students and art students, to demonstrate the differences between them, and state that ‘art education emphasizes integration of theory and practice’. More recently, Moseley and Whitton (2015) have explored the use of play in higher education environments, and have a belief that games ‘can provide a flexible option that has the ability to engage students, and create active learning experiences’. With all this in mind, we developed interactive learning sessions using Actionbound as a tool to encourage active learning for first-year students based in the University of Brighton’s Schools of Art, and Architecture and Design.

The university purchased an institutional licence for Actionbound in 2015, with the intention of adding it to the range of teaching and learning tools available to academic and library staff. Actionbound (2017) is a digital interactive scavenger hunt app which allows the creation of online ‘bounds’, using a diverse range of game elements and tools. Players download the app to their smart phones and tablets and then join their bound to explore the local environment and complete a range of tasks. The university’s learning and technology staff include within their remit the research and deployment of various digital tools. Staff are actively encouraged to investigate and make use of these tools to aid learning and teaching. Actionbound’s broad range of features put it ahead of other software packages and tools. Similar tools, such as Wallame and Aurasma (both augmented reality apps) were capable of one thing, whereas Actionbound could create interactive learning objects, treasure hunts (using GPS features) and was perfect for orientation exercises.

Librarians teach information literacy skills throughout the academic year across all levels, and with the help and advice of the university’s learning and technology staff, we started to develop Actionbound activities. We set the tasks to vary in difficulty: from ‘taking a selfie’ to database searching. One of our aims was to improve the level of new student engagement at library inductions (generally delivered at the start of the academic year). We hoped that Actionbound could be used to encour-
age a higher level of interest, which would ultimately improve students’ ability to navigate not only the physical library environment, but also initiate the beginnings of an awareness of how to access and search our electronic resources. Actionbound activities were designed and deployed at two of the university’s five libraries: Aldrich Library (which supports the School of Architecture and Design) and St Peter’s House Library (School of Art). We had a different approach at each library, as activities were planned to support learning outcomes and were designed in liaison with academics from the courses we were supporting.

**Aldrich Library**

Our approach at Aldrich Library was to meet the first-year student cohort in the School of Architecture and Design, where we explained how their induction would work. They were given game joining instructions, and with the assistance of library student helpers (second and third year students, trained in helping students with basic enquiries within the library), we saw the students in groups of 20 throughout the day. The first part of the game was to get them to leave the building they were in and find the Aldrich Library (using the GPS function of the app). Once in the library, students continued to play the game, which led them through the physical library (searching for and then scanning QR codes) while engaging with facilities (for example, finding and learning how to use photocopiers) and electronic resources (library catalogue, eBooks and key databases). Students’ reactions initially ranged from unamused to bemused, but while working in teams of five, they quickly engaged with the game. Student helpers were on hand to ensure pace (we only had the students for 45 minutes) and participation from the entire group. The last activity ended in the library seminar room where we could deliver results, feedback and prizes.

Written feedback was very positive, although we acknowledge that there is a recognised lack of empirical data within the academic community on the effect of games on learning. However, the Connolly et al. (2012) review of the literature on the positive impact of games on learning and engagement provides a useful gathering of evidence and demonstrates ‘the twin strands of engagement with games and learning with games’. Our ultimate aim, of course, was to see engagement with learning.

**St Peter’s House Library**

We had a different approach at St Peter’s House Library. We branded our sessions ‘Resource Trails’ as our intention was twofold: to introduce students to library resources and to orientate them around the physical space of the library. We began the sessions with a demonstration of the library resources, and then asked students to complete the Actionbound activity. The bound was split into two sections, the first taking place in the library training room. The students were split into groups, and used laptops to engage with the library resources and to answer a series of questions (for example, ‘find XXX book on the library catalogue: what loan type is it?’). Librarians were on hand to answer questions during this half of the bound. Part two was intended as an orientation exercise: the students explored the four floors of the library, answering questions, taking selfies and locating QR codes as they went.

The response from students was mixed, some seemed to engage well with the session, others found it difficult for a number of reasons. Some asked if the Actionbound
part of the session was ‘compulsory’. This poses a problem around game-based learning, as Walsh (2015) argues that play should be voluntary. Library sessions are often embedded within courses, making attendance (and participation) compulsory. Whilst bearing this in mind, it is important to remember that game-based learning will not appeal to everyone. Some students were also reluctant to form groups. We believe that this was down to the timing of the sessions, most occurred very early in the Autumn term, before students had time to develop friendships and feel comfortable working in teams with their peers.

Feedback, challenges, and observations

What follows are our observations of using Actionbound in place of ‘traditional’ library inductions, including the challenges we faced and feedback received.

As already discussed, there were some challenges: a reluctance from students to join teams and to take part in the game. There were also challenges around organisation and time: organising large groups of students to be in the right place at the right time needs strategic planning before the event, and we found that this type of session required extra staff time (a minimum of two members of staff per activity was necessary). We also needed to build in sufficient time at the end of the session to meaningfully debrief the students.

At St Peter’s House Library, we lost some students along the way: some groups chose not to complete the second half of the bound (the library orientation). On reflection, this was probably due to the fact that teams were not asked to meet at a central point at the end of the exercise, and prizes were not offered. Combined, this led to students losing interest before completing the bound, and also meant that we were unable to see the results of the first part (Actionbound only prompts players to upload results at the end of their bound) or gain written feedback from students. This suggests that there is a need to provide some element of extrinsic motivation (i.e. prizes, praise for completing the task). This is something that will need to be considered when designing later iterations of the game at St Peter’s House Library.

The library team who ran the sessions at Aldrich Library did provide extrinsic motivation. Students were asked to meet in the library seminar room at the end of the exercise and were given prizes and asked for feedback about their experiences of using the game-based format. Feedback was gathered using a paper based questionnaire.

All librarian teams across the five University of Brighton campuses asked students to complete feedback forms following information literacy sessions. Data collected from participants about library training helps inform decisions for future training developments. All students are asked how satisfied they are with each of the sessions we run, and data measuring overall satisfaction is benchmarked against the 90 per cent target set in the Information Services’ service standards (Information Services 2017).

Ultimately, feedback received for the Actionbound sessions was positive. All students who completed the feedback form said they were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with the sessions. When asked why that was, their answers included:

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1 Target for the 2016-17 academic year. This target has increased to 95 per cent for the 2017-18 academic year.
‘Fun, interesting, fast paced’
‘Fun way to explore the library’
‘Took us to parts of the library [we] haven’t been’
‘It helped me understand the lib[rary]’
‘It was a very good way to learn while having fun’

When asked how they would use what they had learned, replies included:

‘By not being afraid to use the library’
‘I can do research’
‘Will help me complete assignments’

But the format didn’t appeal to everyone, other general comments included:

‘It was a bit boring’

Both the session content and feedback received were evaluated at the end of the induction period, and the following observations were recorded:

- **Scheduling**: we found that running the sessions later in the term worked better, as by this time, students were happier to work together in teams.

- **Advance communication is important**: if students can be encouraged to download the Actionbound app before attending the session, a lot of time is saved at the start of the session. Support from academics in encouraging students to do this was fundamental.

- **Pre-testing is vital**: test the bound on as many different devices as possible. Recruit colleagues to help with the process.

- **Think about practicalities**: some students won’t have enough space on their devices to download the Actionbound app. Some won’t want to download it. This highlights one of the benefits of asking students to complete the activity in teams: at least one person should be able and willing to download the app onto their device.

**Further feedback**

We shared our experience of creating interactive library inductions with our peers, presenting at the LILAC and Arclib conferences, Sussex University Library (at their request, following enthusiastic feedback from their LILAC delegate) and the University of Brighton’s Centre for Learning and Teaching Conference. Delegates at all events agreed that the idea of using a ‘playful’ learning technology would add to the student learning experience; see over for a small sample of tweets about our sessions.
A playful approach to library induction ...

Emma Illingworth @wigglesw... 11h  
#lilac17 good, energetic start to the day with action bound for inductions @AldrichLib :-(

Tracy Dix @TracyTS Dix 11h  
Is that a thunderstorm upstairs or is the #Actionbound session well underway? #lilac17

Bethan Davies @BethanDavies9  
It's amazing how quickly you get into the game and want to win! #lilac17

Allie Taylor @allieblogging 11h  
We won some sweets at #lilac17. Gratefully received!

Pip Divall @pipdivall 11h  
Using Actionbound at #lilac17

Debra Humphris @debrahumphris  
Great to hear about our innovative librarians using @Actionbound_EN for library induction- really creative @uniofbrighton #brightlearn17

Beth Hewitt @bethenyhewitt  
Fantastic session on @Actionbound_EN by @Aldrichlib librarians Kim and Julie. I'm all inspired to be creative now! #brightlearn17
What happened next ...

Overall, the sessions worked well and, despite the challenges outlined, we decided to develop them further at both sites. Over the past two years, we have expanded the sessions to cover additional subject areas, including Product Design and Humanities. Our work in this area has inspired other library colleagues within the university to experiment with Actionbound, and it is now used for induction activities designed to support other schools taught on the Moulsecoomb and Falmer campuses.

Following the major refurbishment of St Peter’s House Library in the summer of 2018, we used Actionbound to create an orientation exercise to help new and returning students familiarise themselves with the newly designed library space.

The successful use of Actionbound inspired us to look at other ways of gamifying aspects of our information literacy provision. In 2018, we designed a text based adventure game inspired by Ready Player One. The game, Ready Reader One, was designed to mirror the layout of one of our libraries, and was offered as an alternative to a physical tour of the library space for those who preferred a virtual tour.

These projects have encouraged us to be more experimental in our approach to information literacy as we have found that gamification has the potential to enrich the student learning experience.

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Biographies

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Introducing experiential learning to the curriculum: a case study from journalism

Ben Parsons, School of Sport and Service Management

Abstract

This paper explores the rationale, benefits and practical challenges of introducing experiential learning to an undergraduate curriculum. It studies the case of Newsweek, a multi-platform journalism exercise conducted within the curriculum in real time and resulting in real-world outcomes. Newsweek has involved students from three related undergraduate journalism degrees, at levels 4, 5 and 6, collaborating to run a live website and produce a print publication. This presentation (focusing on November 2016) draws on surveys and interviews with participating students and staff, as well as recent research in experiential learning and journalism education, to suggest key areas for tutors in all disciplines to consider if planning a similar activity. Particular issues include the balance of tutor involvement with student autonomy, the challenges of scheduling such activity within the timetable and across different modules, student participation and engagement, and the fundamental question of what constitutes ‘learning’ in this context.

Introduction

In 2016, University of Brighton Journalism and Sport Journalism lecturers challenged their students to run a live website and produce a 24 page print publication in a week. Contact time on eight practical modules was devoted to the tasks, with students from different degrees and levels of study involved in populating the website, conceptualising and designing the print publication, and in writing and editing its contents.

The author instigated the project and conducted this research to monitor its execution against module, course and broader pedagogical aims, drawing on the body of literature concerning experiential learning in higher education and journalism education in particular.

An element of practical publication has been available to Sport and Service Management students since 2011. Overtimeonline.co.uk was founded as a virtual learning environment in which students could practise and publish journalism outside curricular assessments (McEnnis and Parsons 2016). That resource, and the experience of engagement with it, was therefore already available to tutors and students. Further,
Newsweek’s printing costs were supported by the school. Journalism students also had continual access to a dedicated work space, the Priory Square Newsroom, with computers equipped with relevant professional packages.

Sport Journalism and Journalism students at levels 4 and 5 acted as contributors to the website and paper, with module contact time from four modules at each level dedicated to it. Sport Journalism and Travel Journalism students at level 6 formed the editorial team on an extra-curricular basis.

This paper aims to illustrate the potential benefits and challenges involved in introducing experiential learning of this sort to the curriculum.

**Literature review**

Experiential learning is espoused as a pedagogical framework for the introduction of real-world practical activity into the journalism curriculum (Brandon 2002). Kolb (2015) describes the experiential learning process as comprising concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Suggested elements of experiential learning activities include the need for initiative, decision-making and accountability for results on the part of the learner, for reflection, and for the task to be authentic (National Society for Experiential Education [NSEE], 2013; Association for Experiential Education [AEE], 2014). Requirements of ‘authentic’ tasks synthesised by Reeves, Herrington and Oliver (2002) include that they match real-world practice, contain ill-defined problems, allow competing potential solutions and culminate in a polished product.


For journalism educators, such methods answer a need for courses to go beyond the compartmentalisation of knowledge and skills into ‘silos’ (St Clair 2015). Graduate careers website Graduate Prospects (2015) lists (in addition to technical and occu-
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Transferable skills sought by employers of journalists as critical analysis, self-management, interpersonal skills, leadership, flexibility and independence, meeting deadlines, communication and teamwork. Bronstein and Fitzpatrick (2015) call for the integration of leadership into teaching programmes, highlighting a particular area of potential benefit for female graduates. The authenticity criteria above are relevant to research suggesting that students need to prepare for the ‘liquid’ (Baumann 2000), uncertain (Barnett 2012), ‘permanent white water’ (Vaill 1996) of the working world.

In published accounts of the introduction of experiential learning activities to journalism curriculums, students covered elections (Steel, Carmichael, Holmes et al. 2007), produced individual blogs (Stoker 2015; St Clair 2015), launched magazines (Rhodes and Roessner 2009), published online news reports (Parks 2015; McEnnis and Parsons 2016) and produced radio programmes (Baines 2012).

Those studies illustrated perceived benefits, including improved confidence (Steel, Carmichael, Holmes et al. 2007; Stoker 2015; St Clair 2015), pride and a sense of responsibility (Steel, Carmichael, Holmes et al. 2007; Parks 2015; Rhodes and Roessner 2009). Stoker (2015) reported qualities of ‘self-starting’, an ability to initiate change and cope with uncertainty. St Clair (2015) noted an increased readiness for the workplace. The adoption of professional identity and values was reported by Simon and Sapp (2006) and Stoker (2015).

Several of the cited projects included reflective activity by students (cf Kolb 2015), ranging from exit interviews (Rhodes and Roessner 2009) to informal discussion among students (Parks 2015) and interviews and surveys conducted in lecturers’ research activity (Stoker 2015; Simon and Sapp 2006).

The published research has also identified some challenges in successfully delivering the activities. Experiential activities are time and resource-intensive (Steel, Carmichael, Holmes et al. 2007; St Clair 2015; Parks 2015). Steel, Carmichael, Holmes et al. (2007) recognised the need for longer preparatory lead-in time; Parks (2015) included five weeks of orientation. Stoker (2015), St Clair (2015) and Kanigel (2014) suggested activity should be aligned with curriculum intended learning outcomes to allow module time to be dedicated to it.

Several of these researchers encountered challenges to tutors in judging the extent of their intervention in projects, for example, to correct error (Parks 2015; Steel, Carmichael, Holmes et al. 2007). McEnnis and Parsons (2016) suggested tutors should accept a varying level of quality to preserve student ownership of a project. These experiences echo observations in pedagogical literature (for example, Conklin 2012), that while tutors provide the scaffolding for a project, they need courage to give up control over the outcome. Reeve and Jang (2006) suggested eight approaches tutors can use to support autonomy: these include offering praise and encouragement but allowing error, and offering hints but not answers or ‘truth’. Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli et al. (2014) set out a profile for an ‘experiential educator’, identifying four roles for tutors: coach, facilitator, standard-setter and subject expert.
The benefits of experiential learning and student autonomy are contested by some pedagogical researchers. Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) concluded ‘minimal guidance’ is less effective than direct guidance in instruction. They cited Roblyer, Edwards and Havriluk (1997) in suggesting that ‘discovery learning’ is only successful when a certain amount of knowledge is already in place. Seaman (2008) suggested tutors should move on from adherence to a learning cycle as a sole means of understanding the delivery of experiential education.

The Newsweek project goes beyond those in the extant academic literature in its scale: it involves students at all levels, and involves more than one degree course. This research has the potential to extend knowledge not only by evaluating the delivery of this experiential learning activity but also by further considering practical issues faced in introducing experiential learning to the curriculum.

**Methodology**

To evaluate the impact and implementation of the project, the November 2016 Newsweek was followed by a quantitative survey of level 4 and 5 students, and qualitative interviews with level 6 student editors and with lecturers involved in the project (not including the author).

The aim of the survey was to establish whether students felt the activity matched the intended learning outcomes of the modules from which time was drawn, and identify potential improvements in the design and delivery of the project.

The survey listed all the intended learning outcomes for each of the practical modules associated with the activity, and asked students to indicate on a Likert scale if they thought they had had the opportunity to demonstrate those outcomes.

For example: ‘Do you agree with the following statement? ‘During the Newsweek I had the chance to show an understanding of digital platforms and audience demands’.

Students were also asked for free text comments on what went well, what could be improved and for any other remarks.

Qualitative interviews were then carried out with four student editors, and with three tutors, to gather opinions about the perceived benefits and challenges presented by the project, and reflection on the course curriculum and on individuals’ own practice (whether as teachers or learners).

The researcher subjected the free text comments and interview data to a framework analysis and open coding process, grouping comments thematically.

**Findings**

‘You don’t really know what you know until you’re put into a situation where you have to figure it out’. (Student interviewee).

A total of 27 students from levels 4 and 5 of the Journalism and Sport Journalism degrees responded to the survey, from a combined total of 70 students.
We asked students if they felt the project had enabled them to work towards the learning outcomes of the modules associated with the project. In 23 out of 30 cases a majority agreed that they had that chance. There were no modules for which students felt fewer than half of learning outcomes were engaged with during the project.

The project is thus considered a valid use of module time, contributing to the learning outcomes of modules involved.

The framework analysis of responses to interviews with tutors and students, and of survey free comments, identified findings under the broad themes of employability, learning, and project structure.

**Employability**

The project provides an opportunity to develop transferable skills associated with employability. Tutors recognised the development of students’ transferable skills; student editors commented they had the chance to work under deadline pressure, collaborate, develop self-reliance and practise leadership. In both interviews and free comments, students identified autonomy and self-direction as beneficial, for example, enjoying the opportunity to write about subjects they had not covered before.

Reflection enabled students to evaluate the deepening of their understanding of the occupation and their direction within it. Students in both interviews and free comments described feeling better oriented towards the occupation. One typical remark was, ‘Newsweek showed me what it would be like to work in a newsroom and what it takes to be a journalist’. One editor spoke of developing an unexpected interest in news, rather than sport; another recognised an ‘improved work ethic’ and feeling part of the industry.

**Learning**

The experiential learning activity was a useful diagnostic exercise for lecturers to inform course content and delivery after observing students’ performance. Students appreciated the chance to practise ‘hard skills’, with free comments referring to page design, match reporting and interviewing, particularly by phone. Student editors felt the curriculum had prepared them for their task. However, tutors and student editors identified learning needs including interviewing, finding sources, editing, and differentiation between news and comment. Lecturers felt knowledge ‘silos’ persisted in student practice. For example, some students had taken a module and passed exams in media law, with a particular focus on defamation risks and the defences available to journalists, but when they were reading articles submitted for publica-
tion, in a working newsroom rather than a lecture hall, did not spot potentially defamatory content in the text. Tutors considered curriculum changes including enhanced interview training, a greater role for reflection in assessments, and opportunities for students to coordinate each other in class activities.

Engagement may be affected by a tension between non-assessed projects and module assessment, creating conflicting priorities for students. Participation was perhaps unsurprisingly felt to be better among students whose class time was attached to the project. Tutors and students were pleased with the energy displayed by students and the positive engagement from first and second years. Third-year students, who did not have module time attached, participated in smaller numbers. Students speculated on whether some students were prioritising assessments over participation.

Structure

The authenticity of the project was recognised, and thought open to improvement; lead-in activity was identified as a means to improve the structure of the week. Lecturers and students described the task as authentic to real-world publishing. However, tutors identified that traditional roles in the newsroom had become blurred, and workflow was not managed in standard ways. Students remarked in interviews and free comments that, for example, editors had become too involved in page design.

The structure or ‘scaffolding’ (Conklin 2012), involving a published rota of tasks, an assumption of roles by third year volunteers and planning of stories, was deemed beneficial by tutors and students. However, in free comments, participants called for more choice in assigned roles and commented on a lack of direction in undertaking some roles. One read: ‘Writers and editors should meet before Newsweek as many things were changed at the last minute and page layouts, and consequently plans, were not respected’.

Tutors identified potential to extend the ‘lead-in’ phase so students could familiarise themselves with the processes required in running the project. They suggested advertising job descriptions (written by tutors) to delineate roles, and asking students in preparation sessions to develop a production schedule to spread work over the week.

At times, too much tutor involvement diminished students’ autonomous decision-making and leadership of the project. Students pointed out both contradictory advice from staff, and a confusion among participants over whether students or lecturers had more influence. Tutors interviewed were aware in hindsight that they had risked a negative impact on the autonomy of the students through intervention, and that contradictory advice from different members of staff could cause confusion.

Discussion

The use of time from modules was justified because the students’ activity applied to the learning outcomes of those modules. This aspect of the project built on recommendations of St Clair (2015), Parks (2015) and Kanigel (2014). Lecturers introducing experiential activity should note that Newsweek required the participation of the leaders of those eight modules, and coordination within the curriculum to avoid
disrupting assessments. Lecturers and students also had access to their own work-space and funding to print the product.

The transferable skills identified matched several of those listed as sought-after by employers, including leadership (Graduate Prospects 2013; Bronstein and Fitzpatrick 2015). This, combined with the ill-defined nature of the task and the self-direction of the student, can provide within the curriculum a preparation for the uncertainty of working life suggested by Barnett (2012).

However, student self-direction, autonomy and leadership can plainly be disturbed if tutor interaction becomes tutor intervention. It is tempting to try to prevent shortcomings in the final product (cf Steel, Carmichael, Holmes et al. 2007; McEnnis and Parsons 2016). The educational role of lecturers in this project could be described as helping students learn by creating the product, rather than by helping them create the product itself; as facilitator (cf Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli et al. 2014), rather than co-creator. Reflexivity is required of lecturers in their interactions with students, adhering to the standards of Reeve and Jang (2006), to achieve this - and courage of the sort referred to by Conklin (2012).

Recognition of the potential to improve the structure of the task using lead-in activity recalled Steel, Carmichael, Holmes, et al. (2007) and Parks (2015). Tutors designing a project of this sort need to be mindful of what students are expected to learn. In this case, students learning and practising the skills involved in producing a print publication do not have to develop for themselves the production process, which in industry is based on settled norms. The lead-in phase is arguably where the tutor can have a direct impact while enhancing, not diminishing, autonomy. Hmelo-Silver, Duncan and Chinn (2007) suggested that students need the clay of prerequisite knowledge to throw their pot: this project suggested the tutor should provide the wheel and the kiln, too. Specific suggestions from tutors included setting job descriptions for editors, convening preparatory meetings to invite them to consider workflow, and preparatory in-class activity with participants in relevant modules’ contact time.

Reflection is one of the four stages of Kolb’s learning cycle (2015); it is also among the components of experiential learning suggested by the NSEE (2013) and AEE (2014). The survey invited students to reflect on progress towards learning outcomes; interviews invited students to reflect on their own practice. However, reflection could be further directed towards learning, rather than towards activity during the project or the functioning of the project itself. Reflection can be focused forwards, as well as back. In this project and other published reports, reflection has been a way of rounding off an experience; however, Kolb’s experiential learning cycle conceives reflection as part of a process which is followed by conceptualisation and action. While Seaman (2008) disputed the need for a ‘cycle’, it would strengthen the learning value of reflective activity if it were oriented towards future activity by the student, inviting them to consider how they would develop their own practice as a result of the experience.
Conclusion

Academics considering the introduction of experiential learning can draw from the findings and discussion in this research to strengthen their design and delivery. To justify allocating module contact time, the activity must contribute to students’ progress towards associated module learning outcomes. To add to student learning, organisers could benefit from clearly identifying learning aims and ensuring that students have sufficient prerequisite knowledge to fulfil the tasks they are set. The research suggests that time should be allocated for focused preparatory activity, to enable effective learning during the task, and, if organisation and management are not part of the curriculum, leaders should be provided with an appropriate model and structure within which to work. Reflective activity might be more effective if it is not conceived as a backward-looking exercise on activity, but as a forward-looking exercise focusing on learning progress. Finally, despite the emphasis on the learner’s experience in experiential learning, there are clear observational opportunities for tutors to appraise and improve the non-experiential curriculum.

Bibliography


**Biography**

Ben Parsons is a senior lecturer in journalism at the University of Brighton. He joined the School of Sport and Service Management in 2013 after a career as a daily newspaper journalist and became the founding course leader of BA (Hons) Journalism. Ben teaches practical journalism, media law and the political philosophy of media, with research interests in public sphere theory and journalism education. He is a member of the National Council for the Training of Journalists’ Media Law Examination Board and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.
Developing the art of storytelling as a pedagogical tool for academics

Dr Kendall Jarrett

Abstract

The significance of storytelling to the development of human knowledge and understanding should never be underestimated. As a social construct storytelling is synonymous with learning, yet its use in more formal tertiary education settings is often viewed as problematic due to lecturers’ limited creativity, understanding of story suitability and/or pedagogical reluctance. Miller and Pennycuff (2008) remind us though that within formal learning environments, engaging in storytelling can be a way to motivate and engage even the most reluctant learners. Thus, the aim of this article is to showcase to readers four different modes of storytelling (for example, oral, written word, graphic representation, touch) used within teaching with the aim of: 1) helping learners with module content engagement, 2) promoting the use of discussion as a primary pedagogical tool within the classroom, and 3) encouraging critical reflection as a means for professional development.

Introduction

This article was developed from the workshop (entitled: ‘From occasions of learning in Sri Lanka to experiences of teaching in the inaka: the art of storytelling as a pedagogical tool’) that I delivered at the 2018 University of Brighton Learning and Teaching Conference. The primary focus of the workshop was to extend attendees’ pedagogical toolkits through consideration and use of storytelling in the classroom. Through the creation and sharing of story the workshop offered attendees a space for collaboration and conversation, as well as having the secondary purpose of assisting the development of a more supportive and connected pedagogical community. Workshop design and content was influenced by two prominent storytelling texts; namely McDrury and Alterio’s (2002) Learning through storytelling in higher education and Moon’s (2010) Using story: in higher education and professional development, both of which offered significant insight into the art of storytelling as a pedagogical tool.

The use of storytelling in everyday life helps us to communicate ideas, translate private experience into public discourse, bridge social divides and pass knowledge from generation to generation (Bruner 1986; Miller and Pennycuff 2008). Indeed, McDrury
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and Alterio (2002, p. 7) sum up just how prevalent storytelling can be on a daily basis: ‘We hear them, we read them, we write them and we tell them’. Prior to investigating how we might utilise and improve the act of storytelling in our classrooms to support student learning, though, it is important to explore the concepts of story and storytelling so that more informed determinations of their practicality and use in the classroom may be made.

**What is story? What is storytelling?**

McDrury and Alterio’s reluctance to offer a definition for story in their 2001 text (instead focusing on storytelling), coupled with Moon’s (2010) dedication of an entire chapter to the definition of story offers some insight into the apparent challenges of defining such a broad term. For me, two ‘features of a story’ outlined by Moon (2010) resonated as starting points for my own definitions; that being ‘story is a form of representation of the products of human mental functioning’ and that ‘there may or may not be a listener’ as the purpose of a story may be to make ‘personal sense of something’ (Moon 2010, p. 27). This led me to consider the view that without story there is no storytelling, and without storytelling there is no story. What this realisation offered me was justification for my workshop to solely focus on the act of storytelling and its place in the support of tertiary student learning and to move beyond the more basic structural definitions of story, such as having a beginning, middle and end or containing reference to a character, an issue and a response.

Just like story, storytelling has been described in a multitude of ways. McDrury and Alterio (2002) describe it as a way to knowing, Van Manen (1991) as ‘a form of everyday theorising’ (p. 204), and Reason and Hawkins (1988) as a mode of inquiry involving cooperative activity. McDrury and Alterio (2002, p. 31) suggest that the act of storytelling ‘enables us to convey aspects of ourselves and others, and the worlds (real or imagined) that we inhabit’ whilst at the same time helping us to understand, reveal and transform our lives (Sandelowski 1991). Moon (2010) suggests that there are eight different media that may carry story: sound; drama and dance; the written word; graphic representation; music; touch; mime; and various altered states (for example, daydreaming). In relation to this, this article will focus on how my use of three of these modes of storytelling within my classroom teaching (i.e. oral, written word, graphic representation) were used to stimulate student engagement and knowledge generation. Furthermore, this article will also detail my use of a fourth mode (for example, touch) within the delivered workshop to provide attendees with an experience of story creation for academic purposes.

**Workshop stories shared**

Shank (2006) posits that the social effect of storytelling is educative and that ‘telling stories is a means for making sense of everyday experience’ (p. 713). It makes sense then for educators to encourage students to tell stories about events they have experienced and to make links between stories of the world and their own stories (McDrury and Alterio 2002). As Pagano (1991) writes ‘when we teach we tell stories about the world. Some stories are scientific, some historical, some philosophical and so on’ (p. 197). As educators then our use of story becomes pivotal in students’ learning journeys and thus requires ongoing assessment and development. Sharing my own
I shared three stories within the workshop. The first was a written word story from my time teaching in rural Japan (the *inaka*) entitled ‘The nowhere school’. An extract from that story is included below and is followed by comment detailing how I have used this story in my classroom teaching.

**The Nowhere School**

Have you ever wondered where all the really bad students go to school? Well let me tell you about the Nowhere School. Located in the inaka, the Nowhere School provides directionless education for students unlucky enough not to have placed in the upper quartiles of the High School Entrance Exam. They are type-cast from the moment they are reluctantly accepted to become nothing more than forgotten statistics of an education system that supports its achievers and hides its strugglers. The Nowhere School is for students who are going nowhere in life because the education they receive is not modified for their level of learning. So if you are a nowhere student at the Nowhere School, what would you get up to to pass the time away? Let me share with you some sad, but true, tales from the School of Nowhere ...

**Miss Coffee Table 2000**

One of my first-year students is an arsehole. His main aim in life is to get under my skin. The lesson began as usual, students wandering in late, yelling, stinking of cigarette smoke. The classroom was filthy, desks facing different directions, papers scattered everywhere ... So in walks Dickhead (the name I secretly call this airhead) yelling ‘sex machine’ at the top of his lungs. Despite continued attempts by my Japanese teaching colleague to get him to stop yelling, my lesson proceeds with the same phrase launched every 30 seconds. Obviously this is a natural part of school life as my teaching colleague continues to walk around the room smiling. As I turn to write on the decrepit, stained blackboard, I am confronted by the Dickhead yelling my name, ‘Hey, hey, hey’. I turn around to see a large pair of glossy breast thrust towards me. The Dickhead was holding up a centrefold of an adult magazine and proceeded to ask me what I thought ...

As explained in the workshop, I have used this written story when teaching third year teacher education students to highlight and discuss topics ranging from education system deficiencies and inclusive pedagogy requirements, to the pitfalls of being a newly qualified teacher and the maintaining of professional teaching standards. Each sharing of this story also affords me the opportunity to reflect on my role in students’
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educational experiences and how much my understanding of the role of the teacher (and my skill set) has altered since this event occurred some 18 years ago.¹

The second story related to my use of photographs taken at the Asgiriya Cricket Ground in Sri Lanka depicting: 1) a team of touring cricketers left speechless as they peer out over the back of an international cricket ground into the contrasts of a large shanty town; and 2) the groundswoman painting white lines on the cricket pitch. I have used these photos when working with educational leadership postgraduate students to develop stories aimed at challenging perceptions about ‘who might hold the knowledge’, the importance of recognising ‘a more knowledgeable other’, and the importance of offering students an ‘internationalised curriculum’.

The third story was me relaying a verbal account of a student behaviour issue I witnessed as a supply teacher at a large London academy. A written overview of that story is included below.

I was supply teaching one day at a large London academy and had been given responsibility for a Year 7 music lesson for which I had been given no lesson plan nor class list. With only very limited musical background I developed some semblance of a plan, but frustratingly the students soon realised this was not my forte. With students having permission to use a range of percussion instruments the noise level began to escalate. My efforts to limit this noise were mostly in vain but it meant addressing separate groups of students at a time. As I turned around from one group to the next, I was confronted with the image of a Year 7 boy standing over a Year 7 girl, his arm outstretched towards her neck and shouting ‘get back in your place bitch’. Amazingly and sadly, the girl did not flinch at the boy’s aggression, and proceeded to simply look up and laugh.

I have shared this oral story with BEd and MEd students during pre and post school placement visits as a catalyst for sharing thoughts about, and experiences of teaching, as well as the role of the school community in supporting its staff in general.

Storytelling pathways

Prior to attendees engaging with the main ‘You as the storyteller’ activity within the workshop, storytelling pathways were discussed as a framework that could be used by educators to develop their story usage in the classroom. Developed by McDrury and Alterio (2001), pathways are made up of different combinations of key story characteristics identified as: 1) the setting (formal or informal); 2) the listeners (one or many); and 3) the story (spontaneous or pre-determined). When different combinations of characteristics are utilised a different storytelling pathway is created (see Diagram 1, over). For academics an understanding of which storytelling pathway is being utilised is important in order to enhance the story’s reflective potential (McDrury and Alterio 2001).

¹ Indeed, each time I share this story and revisit what I wrote, I am struck by how limited my capacity was at the time to appreciate the nuances of that unique learning environment, as well as how judgemental I was of students who did not hold the same view of education as I did.
McDrury and Alterio (2001) posit that pathways 1-4 are more aligned to cathartic release, whereas pathways 5-8 are more likely to result in greater opportunities for reflective learning. Hence, storytelling aligned to Pathway 8 offers with it the most learning potential.

‘You as the storyteller’ activity

The main storytelling activity offered within the workshop required attendees to use different artefacts (randomly chosen items from home and office and placed on each workshop table) to create a story that related to a concept/issue each individual taught within their discipline area. Five minutes were allocated to the task followed by the sharing of story with a colleague. At the conclusion of story sharing, attendees were asked to consider which pathway their storytelling most aligned with and how this understanding might influence their future use of storytelling within the classroom.

My inclusion of this activity reflected my desire to, in some way, emulate the outcomes reported by Shank (2006) in her study into the use of teacher storytelling as a means to develop collaborative and collegial communities of practice. Thus, I envisaged that engagement in a cross-disciplinary storytelling activity would help create a collaborative learning space and enable attendees to ‘reflect on their teaching’ as well as ‘co-construct a shared understanding of good pedagogy’ (Shank 2006, p. 711).

To further assist attendees invest in their own pedagogical development and ‘see themselves in new ways’ (Shank 2006, p. 714) with respect to their own pedagogical confidence, three storytelling activities adapted from McDrury and Alterio (2002) were then showcased within the workshop (see Table 1, over.) These three activities were chosen based on their relative simplicity and ease of use for academics new to using storytelling in their classrooms.
The final portion of the workshop was a discussion around the main challenges perceived in relation to the use of storytelling in the classroom. The three main challenges perceived were: 1) educators' perceived limited creativity; 2) understanding of story suitability; and 3) pedagogical reluctance. A ‘why not try it and see’ approach was offered as an immediate suggestion in response to said challenges, as well as the suggestion of peer trialing of storytelling amongst academics teaching in the same discipline area.4

**Conclusion**

This article gave details of a workshop delivered to educators interested in learning more about storytelling and its use as a pedagogical tool in higher education. Through the showcasing of four different modes of storytelling (for example, oral, written word, graphic representation, touch) attendees were also given the opportunity to create and share their own discipline specific stories applicable to their own current teaching. This sharing of story enabled the creation of a collaborative and collegial learning space for attendees to invest in a community of practice keen to be involved in ‘good pedagogy’. Storytelling pathways and activities devised by McDrury and Alterio (2002) were also promoted as tools that might help educators to develop stories applicable for use in the classroom, as well as introduce students to storytelling as a part of everyday learning. The use of my own stories and discussion with attendees around how I have used these stories within my teaching, was a key feature of the workshop and provided me with the opportunity to once again critically reflect on my understanding and use of story in the classroom.

4 For those keen to trial storytelling with their students the ‘Learning through storytelling’ resource on the HEA website offers a step-by-step guide designed to assist academics. Available at: https://heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/learning-through-storytelling-0.

**Table 1: Storytelling activities, adapted from McDrury and Alterio (2002)**

| **Jump Starts** | The educator reads out six sentence beginnings, then asks students to complete all sentences using endings which involve (real or imagined) professional practice situations, for example: ‘She arrived late …’; ‘The door opened…’; ‘It was a mess …’ |
| **Add-ons** | The educator makes a verbal statement related to a predetermined topic. Students contribute an add-on to the statement. There are no set rules about sentence length. |
| **Newspaper** | Stick enlarged newspaper headings around the room. Students choose a heading and write a 50-word story. Each student reads out another student’s story. |
References


Biography

Dr Kendall Jarrett is a lecturer in Higher Education and Academic Practice at the University of Kent (UK). His teaching and research, which predominantly relates to the exploration of instructional pedagogies and applied educational leadership, is informed by global experiences of teaching and studying in Australia, UK, Japan and New Zealand. As such he is regularly asked to review articles and proposals for a number of pedagogy focused journals and publishing houses. As a Senior Fellow of HEA he is committed to working with colleagues from all discipline areas to advance their teaching, learning and curriculum design capabilities.