

SRHE welcome & opening remarks

09:00 - 09:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Dr Clare Loughlin-Chow (SRHE CEO) and Prof Pauline Kneale (SRHE Chair)

Plenary: Creating Effective Connections between Higher Education Research and Educational Policy and Practice

09:15 - 10:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Plenary speaker: Prof Dame Nicola Dandridge

Higher education research and educational policy and practice often have different objectives. This is perhaps inevitable as a reflection of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, but it does also mean that the research ends up having little or no impact on policy development. Nicola will draw on her experience of working at both national policy level and within the higher education sector, to consider where the division is inevitable and necessary, and where it is unhelpful, and for the latter what we could or should do about it.

Parallel Session 1:1

10:00 - 11:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Clare Loughlin-Chow

69 How do past feedback experiences influence the use of feedback in postgraduate coursework students

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

A sociocultural view casts feedback as a process that is influenced by context and prior experiences. Yet few have investigated how past feedback experiences shape current student engagement in feedback.

The aim of this paper is to interrogate the feedback histories of students to find out how prior experiences with feedback frame their attitude to and use of feedback in current postgraduate courses. To do this, reflexive thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative data gained from interviews and longitudinal audio diaries.

Early results suggest that: 1. In the past, teachers were the first point of contact for feedback which stays the same in future courses. 2. Students lacked peer feedback in their past degrees, resulting in distrust in this form of feedback. 3. Absence of education on feedback literacy in previous courses leads to other sources of information, e.g. self-feedback, being rarely considered.

Full paper

Background: Concerns about student failure to use feedback information are prominent in the literature (Esterhazy & Damşa, 2019). Students often do not make sense of feedback information from multiple sources, interpret and apply it to their subsequent work (Carless & Boud, 2018).

In this paper, we focus on one aspect of this by showing how past feedback experiences (students' feedback histories) frame current expectations of and actions upon feedback information from various sources, such as teachers, peers, unit forums, self.

Aim: This paper examines how feedback histories shape students' utilisation of feedback information. Our conceptualisation encompasses previous feedback experiences from various contexts (formal study, work, family, volunteering/internships), using various sources of information (teachers, peers, self, work managers/colleagues, friends), and different processes (peer review, self-feedback, learning conversations).

Literature review: Through a sociocultural lens, feedback is considered as a process influenced by previous experiences and context (Esterhazy, 2019). Few studies explore the impact of learners' feedback histories on the feedback in new contexts. Malecka et al. (2022) emphasise that learners adjust to new contexts by comparing their past feedback experiences with current environments. The presence of context and culture specific skills gained in prior education might hinder learning of international students if their prior experiences differ from what is expected from them in a new context (Rovagnati & Pitt, 2021; Rovagnati, Pitt & Winstone, 2021).

Participants: Participants were ten postgraduate coursework students from various Master's courses (Teaching, MBA, IT, Business, Sport Management) at a large Australian university.

Research design: The study uses three guiding theoretical frameworks: sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and the concept of learning lives (Erstad, 2012, 2013) and learning careers (Bloomer & Hodkinson, 2000) to examine spatial and temporal aspects of feedback histories.

Primary data from a qualitative study was collected over a trimester. Participants completed an entry interview, a series of longitudinal audio diary entries, and a final interview. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2019) was used to generate themes.

Results and discussion: Early results suggest that prior feedback experiences influence students' future actions on feedback from various sources. Below, we present the generated themes.

1. In past feedback experiences, teachers were the first point of contact.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of feedback histories were about feedback from teachers. Despite the spread of student-centered approach to learning, traditional views on teachers as providers of knowledge dominated students' prior

education experiences. In their Bachelor's degree, students reported to be less engaged with feedback. If they needed some input, they expected to approach teachers, which they rarely did. More active learners sought formative feedback from tutors only.

In postgraduate courses, this tendency remained unchanged. However, Master of Teaching students stood out in their perception and evaluation of feedback information. They tended to look at comments from teaching staff more critically. Concerns were expressed because teachers were expected to serve as role models but sometimes failed to provide effective feedback.

2. Students rarely experienced peer feedback in their past degrees.

Despite broad support for peer feedback in the literature (eg. Tripodi, Vaughan & Wospil, 2021), reports of peer feedback encounters were infrequent. If some feedback with classmates took place, it was typically in the context of an assigned group project where they discussed each other's contributions.

The absence of previous peer feedback experiences appeared to contribute to students' reluctance to seek feedback input from classmates. Some students expressed doubts about the effectiveness of peer feedback as they do not know their peers well and do not trust the reliability of their comments. Other participants struggled with online communication, so they did not reach out to ask for assistance.

3. Lack of reflective tasks and no education on feedback literacy in previous courses.

No reflective tasks or feedback literacy interventions that are pivotal for learning (Winstone & Winstone, Little et al., 2023) were reported by participants, resulting in students not seeing value in alternative sources of information or in their adopting an active role. When asked, learners mentioned situations when they received comments from friends, family members or work colleagues. However, they did not recognise this (or self-feedback) as a valuable element of their learning.

Conclusion: This paper shows how feedback histories of postgraduate coursework students shape their perception and behaviour in current feedback processes. The implications from this are: scaffolding students to increase their engagement with feedback by incorporating relevant tasks into courses, feedback design to promote reflection, educating teaching staff on providing productive input and designing appropriate feedback processes.

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11 Supporting students with resits and interruption: Challenges for student engagement

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Resits provide 'a second chance' for students. Consequently, it is essential that we support students to make the most of this chance. Students with resits may lack academic confidence and become 'disengaged'. Similarly, students who have interrupted may also lack academic confidence, having been away from the University. Resits and interruption are a significant problem and barrier to continuation.

Learning is dictated not only by the external environment but also internally through self-belief. Self-efficacy is related to a student's emotional state and self-confidence and is an important asset for students to develop. Improving self-efficacy may be one way in which students can improve their engagement and help themselves.

This presentation outlines work (focus groups & questionnaires) conducted to consider the methods and strategies used to engage students during resit preparation and following interruption. We explore recommendations for good practice and considering way to help students to improve their self-efficacy / engagement.

Full paper

Resits provide 'a second chance' for students (Ricketts, 2010, p.351) and it is essential that we support our students to make the most of that chance as part of an inclusive approach to teaching and learning. Having failed the original assessments, students with resits may lack academic confidence, they may find it difficult to admit failure, they may not seek advice on how to turn failure into success and hence they may become 'disengaged'. Similarly, students who interrupt their courses, typically have assessments that they need to catch up on and obstacles to overcome before they can continue their academic study. Thus, students who have interrupted also often lack academic confidence, having been away from the University and the academic environment. Here the challenge is support students to become 're-engaged' with their studies. Resits and interruption are clearly a significant problem and barrier to continuation, and we need to consider ways to best support and engage our students.

From an individual perspective, social cognitive theory draws attention to the importance of self-belief and efficacy in an individual's learning and development (Bandura, 1999). Students are seen as powerful agents who can see an improvement in their academic performance, because of their own self-reflection and confidence to act. Learning is therefore not dictated only by the external environment but also internally through self-belief. Indeed 'there is evidence (Bandura, 1997) that self-efficacious students participate more readily, work harder, persist longer, and have fewer adverse emotional reactions when they encounter difficulties than do those who doubt their capabilities' (Zimmerman, 2000, p.86). Self-efficacy has been related to a student's positive emotional state (that helps engagement) and self-confidence (belief they can do it) and is an important asset for students to develop. Improving self-efficacy may be one way in which students can improve their engagement and help themselves.

This presentation will outline work (from focus groups & via questionnaire data) conducted at the University of Manchester, as part of an Institute of Teaching and Learning Fellowship awarded to Karen Lander. The following issues are explored (i) to consider the methods and strategies we already use - and optimally could use - to engage students during resit preparation; (ii) to explore the challenges and barriers for student re-engagement following interruption; (iii) to explore possible recommendations for good practice in terms of student involvement and support, considering ways to help students to improve their self-efficacy and engagement. We present potential differences in student engagement levels across course level, course topic content and via on-campus and blended delivery modes. Finally, we outline mechanisms that are currently working well for students, providing them genuine gains in learning effectiveness, support and/or the community through student engagement.

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80 Balancing challenge with care: Students' perceptions of classroom-based experiential learning in vocational postgraduate degrees

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Experiential learning activities in vocational post graduate degrees typically combine theoretical and practical content to ensure that graduates are 'practice-fit' and ready for essential aspects of professional life. These classroom activities can include scenario-based role plays and demonstrations where learners engage with peers to emulate real-world practice contexts. While retrospective studies highlight positive learning outcomes associated with experiential learning, relatively little is known about the in-vivo student experience. Students currently enrolled in four vocational postgraduate degrees at the University of Melbourne answered quantitative and qualitative questions designed to understand their perspective of the value of experiential learning activities in the classroom. Findings from the mixed methods analysis indicate that relational pedagogies should be central to the design of experiential learning tasks. The main theme, 'Balancing challenge with care', was informed by subthemes connected to cohort factors, individual student qualities, and pedagogical aspects related to being clear, collaborative and constructive.

Full paper

Background: This project aimed to evaluate and better understand the student experience of engaging in small-group, experiential learning tasks in online and on-campus environments. Experiential learning activities in vocational post graduate degrees typically combine theoretical and practical content, and therefore aim to simulate practice to ensure that graduates are ready for various aspects of professional life. These learning tasks include activities such as scenario-based role plays and demonstrations (Kolb, 2015). In classroom contexts, these non-graded learning tasks are often constructively aligned with graded assessments or core competencies that are relevant to work placement and future employment requirements.

Classroom-based experiential learning tasks are centred around the principle of 'learning through doing'. Despite literature highlighting that graduates of vocational courses look back on these classroom activities and see value in their contribution to learning, relatively little is known about the in-vivo student experience of associated challenges or risk of harm through their engagement. Risk is in fact considered to be inherent in these learning activities as students are deliberately placed out of their comfort zones, challenged and destabilised (Morris, 2020). Experiential learning can therefore elicit strong emotional responses in some students, which can either enable or be a barrier to learning and achievement (Taylor, 2018).

However, an increasing number of young people in Australia are reporting high levels of anxiety. The most recent report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicates that 15% of young people aged between 18 – 24 years old experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress. Psychological distress is defined as an individual's overall level of psychological strain or pain and is highly correlated with the presence of depressive or anxiety disorders. Surveys of young people in Australia during the first year of the pandemic reveal that psychological distress rose to 26% (Brennan et al, 2021), while other reports indicate that 74% of young people considered that their mental health was worse since the outbreak of the COVID-19 (Headspace, 2020). Teachers are increasingly taking the mental health of learners into consideration during curriculum design. Anecdotally, teachers within at this University observed a growing trend for post-graduate students to 'opt out' of experiential learning activities and request to just observe their classmates instead.

Various learning theories are relevant when considering the learner experience, effectiveness, and suitability of experiential learning activities. For example, cognitive disequilibrium is a state of imbalance when encountering information that requires learners to develop a new schema or modify an existing schema. However, disequilibrium is often an uncomfortable state for individuals, and therefore some learners seek to quickly return to a state of equilibrium (D'Mello & Graesser, 2012). When faced with applying new knowledge to an active learning task in a small peer group, the discomfort of learning may become too great for students with anxiety or learning disabilities resulting in them choosing not to participate.

Hattie and Ziere (2018) consider that learning task design should follow the 'Goldilocks Principle', where the task should not be too easy/boring, not too hard, but 'just right' for the learners' stage of education. Teachers should therefore tailor learning experiences to the needs of the learner and their learning stage to both promote engagement in learning and foster learning environments that support wellbeing. Teachers and tutors who facilitate experiential learning tasks would benefit from a deeper understanding of what 'just right' means when considering the intersection between learners' stage of education and their health and learning diversity.

Method: Students from four vocational postgraduate degrees at the University of Melbourne answered quantitative and qualitative questions designed to understand their perspective of the degree to which experiential learning activities are considered valuable to their learning, and the challenges and/or benefits they identify.

Findings and conclusions: Findings from the convergent mixed methods analysis indicate that relational pedagogies should be central to the design of experiential learning tasks. The main theme, 'Balancing challenge with care', was informed by subthemes connected to relational qualities of the cohort/group, individual student qualities, and pedagogical aspects related to being clear, collaborative and constructive.

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Parallel Session 1:2

10:00 - 11:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Sam Illingworth

96 Imaging the pandemic: Higher Education tutors' narratives and photographs of precarious online living and learning

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Abrupt transitions to online-only teaching during the uncertainties of the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK exacerbated precarities in the role of HE teachers which are only now being considered. This study uses narratives and photographs to reveal a series of emotionally-charged responses and ensuing behaviours at the micro-level of teaching during the first phase of lockdown life. Extending frames of liminality and extremity, we draw upon visual and narrative methodologies to explore individual perceptions of the challenges, ambiguities, and opportunities in digital teaching and learning practice. Three themes of precarity and security, perceptions of time in pandemic life and work, and communication between lecturers and their university are investigated. Our paper reports on the outcomes of changed routines, enforced autonomy and possible new independencies with an emphasis on perceptions of precarity in the sector during this liminal phase.

Full paper

This case study focuses on a UK faculty of Business and Law with participating academic staff experienced in face-to-face, hybrid and online teaching. Data was collected in real time during the first phase of lockdown in March-May 2020. Widespread confusion and the disruption of the pandemic crisis saw a 'momentary crumble' (Goffman, 1959) of social expectations at the macro level. Micro-level included rapid adaptation of routines and roles for teaching staff, the abandonment of assessment strategies with communication noise between the University and teaching staff, and fading management control as we all rapidly pivoted online. This is counter to pre-pandemic HE contexts where gradual moves online had produced diminishing conditions and freedoms for digital roles (Collins et al, 2020).

Whilst respondents had digital and pedagogical expertise for this pivot, abandonment of existing, long-standing prescriptive work delivery and expected assessment schedules were a major element in provoking significant emotional responses. This study explores the varying reactions and behaviours through the lens of respondent generated narratives and photographs. We used these to capture everyday encounters of value (Kelly, 2020) during the initial 'critical period' of lockdown crisis (Stein, 2004). The narratives provide important insights capturing a liminal moment of change and contextualise impacts of managerial decision making on pedagogic strategies and delivery.

The data was collated into three themes; the first of which was precarity and security. Respondents all experienced forms of precarity and emotional vulnerabilities as they pivoted online, despite previous 'assimilation' (Littlejohn, 2023: 367) with digital teaching methods. Fear was invoked through unpredictability and the 'socially constructed chaos' (Ettlinger, 2007: 322) of the stay-at-home order and crisis footing. One participant stated that 'Early March was categorised by worry.... what alternatives and possibilities were being put in place', while another reported 'quickly' being 'at breaking point'.

In terms of perceptions of time, analysis of photographs and narratives showed time manifesting in unexpected and challenging ways; what Turner describes as a 'moment in and out of time' (1969: 360), as 'normal' social expectations ceased. Alongside Reitan et al (2022: 10) we noted recurring ambiguities in and around how time was

experienced, both generally, in relation to impact as days became (un)structured, and specifically in relation to management 'ownership' of academic staff time. Respondents adopted coping strategies through a 'temporal template' (Ybema, 2010: 483). One respondent reported that 'perceptions of control reappeared'. This supports Ybema (2010: 484) who posited that we 'construct a linear sense of self-continuity' during a 'precarious, ill-defined context'. This was evidenced through active measures of 'trying to stick to work hours' and even deliberate scheduling in what would previously be considered extreme hours. One participant commented on altering their work pattern 'from 3am to 9am...when no one else was up'. Respondents' photographs, such as one of garden design, also asserted control, illustrating mitigating work stress in 'exchanging commuting hours' for 'little projects' of value.

In relation to communication, Pradies et al (2021: 155) explore pandemic tensions. Their discussion investigates difficulties for leaders 'tasked to provide a clear vision...while themselves immersed in fog'. This was borne out in our respondents' comments where they highlighted that messaging on cancelling classes, exams and meetings was seemingly 'not-thought-through' and often contradictory. One emotionally-charged example of such communications was when notification of assessment changes were sent out at 5pm on a Friday, 'who else was going to be there for the students...!'. This resulted in 'angst, panic, frustration and consternation' from students as online forums 'buzzed' with questions in a way 'never' previously experienced. Line management from faculties was considered by some as 'invisible or at least inconsistent', they described 'a world off kilter' as evocative of the confused and noisy communications characterising early lockdown life and work.

Findings evidence a nuanced picture of multi-dimensional responses. Whilst some participants found work in lockdown challenging or damaging, others welcomed the becoming of alternative selves through new independence, responsibility and release from tired teaching routines and managerialism. In these cases, positive identity framings emerged, encouraging the development of future resilience.

Reflecting on pandemic teaching, these findings contribute to understandings of our journey to where we are now. At the micro level we consider this through the lens of Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly, (2014: 68) who define a liminal period as a self-constructed time with a sense of 'who I was' moving to 'who I am becoming'. In some senses academic engagement has been refreshed because of this phase of 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1969: 359) as tutors grasped the reins of teaching.

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139 Academic resistance in higher education institutions during times of precarity

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The global COVID-19 pandemic imposed significant upheaval upon higher education institutions around the world, heightening neoliberal institutional responses and academic precarity. However, while much of the literature assumes that academics have been passive during this upheaval, this paper analyses the forms of resistance of teacher education academics from Australia and New Zealand (n=13) that emerged during lengthy pandemic lockdowns. Drawing on feminist, post-structural and critical pedagogy theoretical understandings of resistance, we propose and illustrate three framings of resistance: 'public opposition as resistance', 'education as resistance', and 'everyday activism as resistance'. Participants described how they resisted changes individually and collectively by working to maintain quality education, collegiality, criticality and care. Such diverse forms of resistance created a 'crack' in the hegemonic logic and the precariousness of daily academic life, creating new possibilities for critical consciousness, creativity and collegiality even during pandemic times when what academics held most dearly was under threat.

Full paper

An emerging body of literature suggests that for many academics, the neoliberal conditions of higher education have been further heightened since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Blackmore 2020; McDougall 2021; McGaughey et al. 2021). However, much of this literature assumes academics have been passive during this significant upheaval of their institutions, and that the neoliberal project is all-encompassing and totalising. Much less attention has been given to how academics have resisted these changes and worked to maintain quality education, collegiality, criticality and care. In this paper, we consider the experiences of teacher education academics from Australia and New Zealand (n=13) who were interviewed during the height of the pandemic lockdowns. What emerged from these interviews was a sense that the capacity to resist the forces of neoliberalism became very important to our participants at this precarious time for the academy, and that this took multiple, and often unseen, forms.

Our focus on academic resistance is contextualised by questions about the role of the university in contemporary society and by the degree to which neoliberalism in higher education is a totalising force. Drawing on feminist, post-structural and critical pedagogy theoretical understandings of resistance, we understood that 'domination is always partial and leaky' (Giroux 2000) and that resistance is much more than 'fighting' or 'objecting' and can include multiple forms of action and non-action, including refusal (Zembylas 2021), re-inscription, adaptation and subversion (Manathunga and Bottrell 2019; Thomas and Davies 2005; Webb 2018).

Our research involved semi-structured interviews with 13 teacher education academics who were employed within a university faculty or school of education at recruitment. As our research took place at a time when most of the research team and participants were in lockdown scenarios, our methodological strategies were restricted to online interviews rather than face-to-face or more embodied options such as observations. Nine academics were recruited from eight Australian universities while four academics were recruited from two New Zealand universities.

Our analysis revealed three framings of resistance: 'public opposition as resistance', 'education as resistance', and 'everyday activism as resistance'. While resistance is most commonly understood as an oppositional act that is publicly expressed and viewed (Johansson and Vinthagen 2014), our interviews found few examples of this, in all likelihood reflecting the precarious times of the pandemic when public displays such as protests were relatively rare (Pleyers 2020). However, all participants gave examples of using education as a form of resistance in Freirean and critical pedagogical styles – by drawing on a strategic selection of critical knowledge to expose their students to and strategies which enhanced their critical consciousness (Freire, 1973) as well as advocating for utopian pedagogies which encouraged alternative ways of being that humanised deeply neoliberal spaces. Finally, participants gave examples of everyday acts of resistance that sought to build caring collaborative relationships within 'uncaring' institutions that at times refused to accept policies which undermined both education and each other.

While our study was conducted at a very specific point in time of precarity for the academy and revealed some of the significant constraints under which academics continue to act and work, it also pointed to the 'conditions of possibility' (Manathunga and Bottrell 2019, 2) that still persist in the contemporary, post-colonial university for critical resistance. Our study helped to develop a three-fold framing of academic resistance during the pandemic that is theoretically infused and empirically substantiated. We propose this generative framing could support future research and understandings of resistance which support and advocate for connection, creativity and the promotion of the pedagogies of hope and enable the construction of alternative identities and meaning for educators as well as for the future practitioners they seek to produce.

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279 Reflecting on educational leadership during COVID-19: Experiences of Finnish higher education leaders and lessons for future crises and emergencies

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Research Domains

Abstract

Crisis leadership research has a long history in business, but less so in higher education. Crisis leadership pre-COVID generally focused on acute crises, which raises the questions: what lessons can be learned from the experiences of higher education leadership during COVID, and how does existing crisis leadership theory align with the experiences of leaders managing a chronic crisis?

I conducted a qualitative investigation into leadership at a Finnish university during COVID. Nine leaders varying in institutional hierarchy and unit participated in semi-structured interviews; transcripts and documents were analyzed descriptively (to identify which groups directed campus discourses) and thematically (to identify how leadership was conducted).

Results supported the core concepts of existing crisis leadership theory, but identified new elements potentially important for successful leadership during chronic crises. The identified themes have been integrated into a model of crisis leadership featuring culture and context, preparation, information flow, adaptive leadership, and time.

Full paper

Crisis leadership research as a field has a long history in business, but less so in education, and even less so in higher education. Core elements of existing crisis leadership theory include dividing crises into phases (early-, in-, and post-crisis; e.g., Wu et al., 2021), and existing educational crisis leadership research has highlighted the importance of adaptive leadership, collaboration, communication, complex decision making, context, and well-being (Striepe and Cunningham, 2021).

The SARS-CoV-2 virus's arrival in 2019 caused a resulting multi-year global pandemic. Unfortunately, nearly all crisis leadership pre-COVID focused on acute, short-term crises, which raises the questions: what lessons can be learned from the experiences of higher education leadership during COVID, and how does existing crisis leadership theory align with the experiences of leaders managing a chronic crisis?

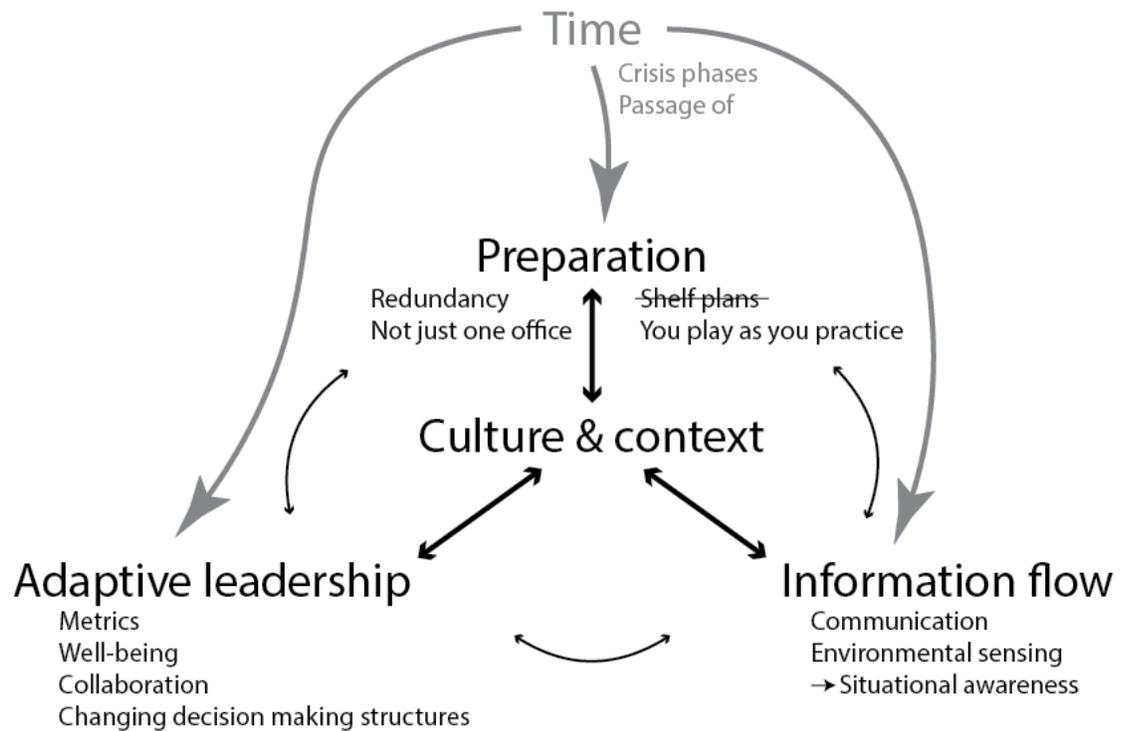
In this paper I report the results of a qualitative investigation into leadership at a Finnish university during COVID. Nine leaders varying in institutional hierarchy and unit participated in semi-structured interviews; transcripts and collected documents, including university press releases, were triangulated and analyzed descriptively (to identify which groups directed campus discourses) and thematically (to identify how leadership was conducted).

Between March 2020 and April 2022 the university alternated between periods of campus closures and openings, with the first closure in mid-March coming as a surprise to many leaders. During closures, most teaching and research was conducted remotely, and during openings activities could take place with COVID-related restrictions limiting on-campus activities, with progressively fewer limitations as time went on. By April of 2022 functionally all COVID-related restrictions at the campus had been removed and on-campus operations were prioritized.

Overall, results supported the core concepts of existing crisis leadership theory, but identified new elements potentially important for successful leadership during chronic crises. Newly identified themes include time,

information flow, metrics, and culture. These themes were integrated into a model of crisis leadership, which highlights the importance and interaction between culture and context, preparation, information flow, adaptive leadership, and time (figure 1).

Perkins
May 3, 2023



The importance of thoughtful use of metrics was highlighted. Before the Omicron variant emerged in November 2021, leadership had clear, frequently-reported metrics that guided decision making at many levels: the number of infected and quarantined staff and students in each unit. Post-Omicron these data were no longer collected, and no replacement metrics were chosen, which coincides with a lack of clarity and focus in discussions of leadership decision making in the Omicron phase of the crisis (late 2021 and onwards).

The university dramatically altered its leadership practices during the crisis. An existing committee consisting of the heads of all faculty/division-level units on campus became the center of crisis discourse, meeting frequently and strongly influencing the rector's final decisions. Other groups on campus, especially those that met less frequently, were less involved in leadership discourses, and questions were often preferentially routed to the more frequently meeting group.

While decision making was essentially top-down at the highest levels, when rapid decision making was required leadership appeared to revert from a managerially-influenced system to a more collegial system that prioritized

organic networks of contacts over formal meetings. This organic system has great potential for efficient, adaptive, and rapid crisis decision making, but requires formalization and community awareness to ensure equity and fairness in application.

While leadership was overall successful at mitigating the effects of COVID in the pre-Omicron phase of the crisis, two missed opportunities emerged from the analysis. The pre-crisis phase, wherein the campus had multiple weeks between the start of lockdowns in other countries and the beginning of campus closures in Finland, was not used optimally. This left campus leadership, especially at the dean level and below, almost completely unprepared for the campus closures in mid March. The second missed opportunity was a near complete lack of discussion among interviewed leadership regarding enhancing equity in the return to campus operations in the Omicron phase of the crisis. Campus leadership pushed a return to campus operations for both staff and students without appearing to discuss the possible inclusivity costs of such decisions (e.g., to those unable to be on campus or those at high risk of negative outcomes from infectious disease).

The study resulted in two policy recommendations being identified. First, continued support for the development of, and expansion of the guidelines for, nationally-required university contingency plans would likely facilitate successful management of future crises. Second, reconsideration of funding models during crises could help prevent misalignments between leadership's fiscal motivations and the needs of the university community during a crisis.

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Parallel Session 1:3

10:00 - 11:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Chris Millward

91 European Spatial Imaginaries or Geopolitics? Higher Education Actors' Responses to the Ukraine-Russia Conflict

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Research Domains

Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, on 24th February 2022, was met with widespread condemnation across Europe, with a large number of universities and higher education-focussed national and supranational organisations all issuing their own statements about the invasion and subsequent conflict and, in some cases, taking specific action in relation to one or both of the nations. This article draws on an analysis of 55 such statements to examine what they reveal about how higher education organisations conceptualise the European HE space, and the position of Russia and Ukraine within it. Specifically, the article considers what spatial imaginaries – pertaining to higher education – are evident in the statements about the Ukraine conflict issued by higher education organisations across Europe, and the extent to which the statements provide evidence about the role of these organisations as normative policy actors.

Full paper

Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, on 24th February 2022, was met with widespread condemnation across Europe. This was evident with respect to higher education (HE) as much as any other sector, with many universities and HE-focussed national and supranational organisations issuing their own statements about the invasion and subsequent conflict and, in some cases, taking specific action in relation to one or both nations.

In this paper, we analyse these statements as they provide an important lens through which to understand more fully how HE organisations conceptualise the European HE space, and the position of Russia and Ukraine within it. This is important in relation to broader debates about the ‘Europeanisation’ of HE across the continent, and the extent to which reforms have resulted in shared European perspectives (or what we refer to in this paper as shared ‘spatial imaginaries’). We answer two specific research questions: (i) what spatial imaginaries are evident in the statements about the Ukraine conflict issued by HE actors across Europe? and (ii) what do these statements reveal about the role of HE actors as normative policy actors, shaping spatial imaginaries?

Methodology

We draw on 55 public statements, specifically web pages, announcements or open letters from a broad sample of national and regional HE organisations responding to the outbreak of conflict between Russia and Ukraine in early 2022. The statements are derived from a broad, non-representative sample of HE actors across national and regional European organisational spaces. These include national actors and universities from six European nations selected on the basis of their geopolitical positioning within Europe and the relative weight of their HE systems: France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Spain and UK. We also sampled statements from cross-European organisations with either a regional remit for HE, or that are umbrella organisations, or networks of European universities.

Findings: European Spatial Imaginaries as Geopolitical Act?

First, in relation to spatial imaginaries, our evidence suggests strongly that it is only organisations with a specifically European remit that drew on explicitly European spatial imaginaries in their statements about Russia and Ukraine. For national organisations, the war is not seen as a threat to Europe specifically but, rather, bilateral relationships or international norms and/or the global academic community. In some cases, the same values were seen as under threat by both European and national organisations, but these were typically framed as ‘European’ only by the cross-European actors. These data suggest, then, that below the discourse of Europe and a European (HE) space circulated by regional bodies, is a traditional framework of a bilateral, nationalist ‘we’ standing with ‘them’. There is very little sense, from these statements, of a collective ‘we’ under attack. This national focus is broadly in line with previous work that has shown, for example, how various European HE initiatives have often been used for largely national purposes; and how European ‘spatial imaginaries’ have been taken up, by HE actors across Europe in a very piecemeal fashion, with national perspectives often retaining a strong hold. Thus, the evidence presented above can perhaps be seen more accurately – not as evidence of a recent retreat into a national frame of reference – but as a manifestation of the underlying national orientations of an incomplete Europeanisation process.

Second, in relation to HE actors' roles as agential, normative policy actors shaping spatial imaginaries, the discursive strategies mobilised in actors' statements varied widely, from vociferous and explicit to passive and pithy, and in limited cases absent entirely. Material strategies, such as enacting or calling for specific, targeted policies also varied, from calls to eject Russia from the European Higher Education Area and discontinue academic and research collaboration to more nuanced positions distinguishing existing partnerships or Russian students and staff as distinct from the interests and aims of the Russian government. One on hand, the findings conformed with what we might anticipate based on national actors' geographical and relational position within the European Union and the European regionalisation project, with France and Germany issuing the sharpest criticism and targeted responses, Hungary and Poland more muted and at times self-preserving stances, and Spain and UK somewhere in between these groupings. On the other, however, we see evidence of heterogeneous positions among the variously sampled national actors, pointing to the agency of organisational actors in discursively and materially shaping geopolitical positions which are not necessarily harmonious with the positions of national governments.

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347 Peeling the Multiple Layers of Inequalities in Higher Education: The Case of Syria

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

It has long been debated as to whether HE is a site of social mobility that promotes meritocracy or social reproduction that creates and exacerbates inequalities in societies. In this paper, I argued that HE, even when democratised and provided free to everyone, reproduces inequalities unless coupled with an inclusive sectoral design, an expansion of funding, and a wider strategy to reduce socio-economic inequalities. To do so, I studied the case of Syria, which has always claimed to have a meritocratic HE system that is designed to achieve equality in society by providing free HE. I analysed the database of the Ministry of Higher Education for 15 academic years (2001-2015). I unpacked four types of inequalities, namely HE provision mode-based inequalities, specialisation-based inequalities, city-based

inequality, and gender-based inequalities. Finally, I show how gender dynamics and roles are changing in the HE sector as a result of the Syrian conflict.

Full paper

The debate around the role of education in society is a very old one amongst sociologists. In Western sociology, this debate around the role of education in society has been addressed by the work of functionalist sociologists such as Émile Durkheim (Durkheim, 1956, 1997, 2002). In Sociology, the concept of social stratification and its relationship with the social order is of fundamental importance (and debate). Functionalist thinkers perceive that societies embody both competitive elements and social solidarity features. They tried to answer a fundamental question about how society can design an efficient and fair system of stratification that balances the competitive elements within it while at the same time maintaining social stability/coherence. Education was perceived to play this role (and others) by functioning as a meritocratic and achievement-based stratification system that selects and allocates people to roles in society based on their merit only. In this way, people will be fairly sorted and progress (achieve social mobility) into social positions based on their capacity. However, structuralist sociologists, such as Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 1998), perceive education as a tool which reproduces social stratification and the cultural hegemony of the elite. Accessing and finishing education could be dependent on the “forms of capital”. Also, the “field” of education is designed to fit the middle-class “habitus” (tastes and attributes) which limits working-class individuals’ ability to enter the field and makes them feel out of place in HE, and as a result, struggle/drop out of education (Lee & Kramer, 2013; Reay et al., 2010). In particular, Bourdieu conceptualised HE as a “sorting machine that selects students according to an implicit social classification and reproduces the same students according to an explicit academic classification” (Naidoo, 2004, p. 459).

The latter argument that students’ socio-economic background has a lot of influence on HE access, decision, and attainment is quite documented by recent empirical research (Ball et al., 2002; Bukodi et al., 2021; Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2013; Crawford & Greaves, 2015; Reay et al., 2010). To disconnect the influence of socioeconomic background on people’s chances in education, there is a line of research and activism that extends from South America to Africa to the Far East demanding that HE should be free (Bellei & Cabalin, 2013; Cini, 2019; Samuels, 2013). While it could be an important first step, free HE is not a magic wand that solves the inequality of access or the influence of socioeconomic backgrounds on education attainments. In this paper, I argue that free HE, if it is not coupled with an inclusive sectoral design, an expansion of funding, and a wider strategy to reduce socioeconomic inequalities, will continue to exacerbate inequalities. I argue this by analysing the case of Syria which, for over fifty years, has followed a socialist model of HE that is free to everyone.

Following Jones & Goldring (2022) and Williams et al. (2021) archival analysis strategy (data exploration, migration and merging, organisation and cleaning, checking, analysis and visualisation), I analyse the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) archive. This database covers the years from 2001 to 2015 and includes data for the students’ access and graduation divided by the type of education (public, private, higher institutes, and technical institutes), level of education (undergraduate and postgraduate), gender (male and female), faculty, specialisations, city. There is also data for the number of academics in each university and faculty divided by gender.

The data analysis unpacked four types of inequalities, namely HE provision mode-based inequalities (private/public universities, higher institutes, virtual learning, etc), specialisation-based inequalities, city-based inequality, and gender-based inequalities. The inequalities manifested themselves in the rate of access to the sector and academic specialisations, graduation rates, and student-teacher ratios. Using academic literature, grey reports and students’ testimonies, I then interpret the data and show that these inequalities were the results of inefficient sectoral design. In particular, the Syrian admission system created a hierarchy of specialisations that has been reflected in society and created a hierarchy of prestige for disciplines and careers. The distribution of universities across cities disadvantaged, in particular, rural areas and female students. The unequal development of academics and staff led to huge discrepancies in the quality of courses, which was reflected in huge discrepancies in the graduation rates. Finally, findings show how gender dynamics and roles are changing noticeably in the HE sector as a result of the Syrian conflict, which is quite common for women to become the breadwinners in conflict and post-conflict contexts in the absence, death, or migration of males (Petesch, 2017).

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303 Inclusive Global Educators for the 21st Century: from challenges to advantages

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Academic debate highlights the need to develop inclusive teaching practice and faculty professional development to accompany the implementation of inclusive higher education policies. This study addresses this need by investigating the factors that determine the degree of implementation of inclusive pedagogy through a comparative US-EU study. The research is based on the analysis of original data from an international survey, conducted within the framework of a Fulbright-Schuman research in 2022. The study reveals that overall US faculty have reported a higher level of inclusive teaching practice than their European counterparts. No other individual characteristic, classroom specifics, faculty international profile or institutional profile matters in explaining the utilization of inclusive pedagogy. Further cross-regional comparison shows that in the European Union professional development training is a particularly effective lever to promote inclusive teaching, while in the USA it is formal institutional level discussions that promote the implementation of inclusive pedagogy more effectively.

Full paper

In the post-COVID19 era, inclusive teaching represents a key issue facing higher education research, policy, and practice. Academic debate highlights the need to develop inclusive teaching practice and faculty professional development to accompany the implementation of inclusive higher education policies to ensure successful student learning (Addy et al., 2021; Carballo et al., 2019; Landorf et al., 2018). Considering new global developments, inclusive pedagogical approaches have the potential to shape the future of internationalisation of higher education by addressing the challenges linked to COVID19 pandemic, financial or geopolitical crises, as well as contribute to the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Europe 2030 Strategy.

Inclusive education, understood as equal access and opportunities, has become a guiding principle of higher education agendas in the United States and the European Union in recent years. However, the practical implementation of this principle requires inclusive teaching and, more broadly, inclusive pedagogy – understood as the beliefs and knowledge underlying inclusive teaching practices (Florian & Kershner, 2009).

There is an increasing scholarly interest in exploring the relationship between inclusive pedagogy and global learning in the changing context of the Internationalisation of higher education (Mittelmeier & Yang, 2022; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). Current global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-racist movements, displacement crises and climate change provide strong impetus for inclusive teaching approaches to prepare competent graduates that can learn, live, and thrive among diversity and address global problems collaboratively. Scholars tend to agree that inclusive pedagogy is key for leveraging the benefits of diversity within the classroom and society and ensuring the success of global learning for all (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Landorf et al., 2018).

This study addresses the above-mentioned needs by exploring the question of what factors determine the degree of implementation of inclusive pedagogy. The analysis applies a comparative approach, investigating higher education policies and practices from the United States and the European Union. The research is based on the analysis of an original data from an international survey, conducted within the framework of a Fulbright-Schuman research project in 2022. The survey was designed based on mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative).

The significance of this research is twofold. Firstly, the topic of inclusive teaching represents a salient subject for higher education policy, practice and research in both the EU and the US. Also, inclusive pedagogy addresses key needs and challenges of contemporary international education, such as growing student diversity and non-traditional learners (e.g., working students, life-long learners), multicultural education, and international students and refugees (Clifford, 2011; Unangst & Crea, 2020). Moreover, understanding how to design policy and practice for achieving scalable implementation inclusive higher education is vital for embracing the post-COVID opportunities for internationalising higher education through innovative approaches, such as collaborative online international learning, addressing the inequitable and pernicious consequences of previous internationalisation strategies within higher education (Leask, 2020). This would allow, therefore, to move forward the academic and policy discussion from challenges to advantages of inclusive education, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations.

The study reveals that overall US faculty have reported a higher level of inclusive teaching practice than their European counterparts. No other individual characteristic, classroom specifics, faculty international profile or institutional profile matters in explaining the utilization of inclusive pedagogy. Also, we evaluate four levers that institutions employ to promote the implementation of inclusive pedagogy. Out of these we see that incentives and online resources do not affect the implementation of inclusive pedagogy significantly, while formal discussion and professional development are effective. Further cross-regional comparison shows that in Europe professional development is a particularly effective lever to promote inclusive pedagogy, while in the US it is formal discussions that promote inclusive pedagogy more effectively.

Further cross-regional comparison shows that in the European Union professional development training is a particularly effective lever to promote inclusive teaching, while in the United States it is formal institutional level discussions that promote the implementation of inclusive pedagogy more effectively.

Therefore, we argue that higher education institutions must invest in increasing faculty understanding and practical implementation of inclusive teaching. Institutional level policies must be accompanied by practical actions promoting faculty development training as well as various discussions on values, beliefs and practice of inclusive teaching to achieve its scalable implementation. This will contribute to tackling new developments in international education, such as ensuring inclusive and equitable education for an increasingly diverse student body and preparing students for engaging in social justice and positive global change, in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

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Parallel Session 1:4 - Symposium

10:00 - 11:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

12 A multiplicity of student voices: an intersectional exploration of structural inequalities in international mobility experiences

Research Domain

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Rationale

Against the backdrop of a volatile geopolitical landscape it is increasingly important to critically interrogate a prevailing narrative depicting international students as a uniform group of transnational elites. Shifting global mobility flows and the emergence of regional higher education hubs in the 'Global South' progressively contest our understanding of the academic, cultural and social experiences of international students. Concomitantly, new forms of structural inequality in higher education need to be circumnavigated by international students. This symposium aims to critically deconstruct the notion of 'international student experience', acknowledging its subjective and highly individualised nature and foregrounding the lived experiences of internationally mobile individuals, whose voices remain largely absent from the higher education literature. Intersectionality is adopted as an analytical lens to provide a basis for understanding the multiplicity of experiences of international students. The 'critical turn' in the internationalisation of higher education is still to fully conceptualise and reflect upon the development of inclusive higher education practices and policies which are context-specific.

In response, this symposium brings together research from a range of higher education contexts with diverse international student mobility flows. An intersectional lens is needed to address how individual pathways of mobility experiences are influenced and shaped. Through an exploration of the lived experiences of international students in the UK, Portugal and Australia, the changing landscape of internationalisation in higher education is considered. The intersectional analyses under discussion deliberate upon the interplay between socio-economic status and gender, alongside geographical considerations of countries of origin and study destinations, in order to foreground a multiplicity of international student voices from varied contexts. The lived experiences of international students from diverse backgrounds (socioeconomically, geographically and gendered) are rarely considered comparatively across different countries in both established and regional hubs of international higher education. Therefore this symposium offers nuanced intersectional accounts of lived mobility experiences, in order to capture the complex ways in which social capital is exchanged across transnational fields. The papers in this symposium examine factors such as

cultural homogeneity, language and colonial legacies to understand how intersectionality can compound or challenge structural inequities within higher education.

The papers reflect upon the increasing diversity of international student backgrounds and how the amplification of heterogeneous student voices is needed to (1) understand experiences of structural inequality in higher education and (2) to inform the development of context-specific inclusivity-focused educational policies and practice in an internationalised higher education sector.

Chair

Alina Schartner

Newcastle University, Newcastle, United Kingdom

Sam Shields

Newcastle University, Newcastle, United Kingdom

Discussants

Sam Shields

Newcastle University, Newcastle, United Kingdom

Alina Schartner

Newcastle University, Newcastle, United Kingdom

97 “Maybe in Portugal this is the correct way to ask the question, but in Angola you cannot do it like that”: International doctoral students’ perspectives on the qualities of supervisors

[Pinto Susana](#)

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Although there is a greater diversity of international doctoral students (IDS) enrolling in PhD Programs worldwide and the role of supervisors in doctoral journeys is crucial, research on IDS’ perspectives on the qualities of supervisors remains an understudied area. This contribution explores the perspectives of IDS from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, attending the PhD Program in Education at the University of Aveiro (Portugal), regarding the qualities of a good supervisor. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 IDS from Angola, Brazil, East Timor and Mozambique. Results from thematic analysis show that IDS value intrapersonal, interpersonal and communicative qualities associated specifically to pursuing a doctorate overseas. Within those, they underline: knowledge of their origin contexts (cultural characteristics, research traditions); acknowledgment of the influence of those contexts in learning/research approaches; and flexibility regarding students’ variety of Portuguese language. Findings highlight the importance of supervisor professional development for intercultural doctoral supervision.

Full paper

The greater diversity of students enrolling in PhD Programs worldwide has posed several challenges to supervisors and institutions. Although research has been addressing international doctoral students' (IDS) journeys focusing on their motivations/expectations (Xu & Grant, 2017) and challenges in taking a PhD overseas (Pinto, 2021), IDS' perspectives on the qualities of supervisors remain an understudied area, namely in Portugal.

Doctoral supervision is a complex task requiring a set of disciplinary and transversal qualities: discipline knowledge, research skills and methodological expertise, communication skills, interpersonal and intrapersonal competences, digital skills, management skills and contextual knowledge (Baptista, 2013; Buirski, 2021; Chiappetta-Swanson & Watt, 2011; Dimitrova, 2016; Fillery-Travis et al., 2017; Halse, 2011; Holmes et al., 2020; Wang & Byram, 2019). The qualities put forward in the literature seem adequate to supervising IDS, but as highlighted by Adrian-Taylor et al. (2007) supervisors are central in IDS' journeys since these "tend to have fewer social supports to help them cope with the many challenges they face while studying abroad" (p. 92). Challenges are related to adjustment to a new social/academic reality and to the encounter of different academic, research, epistemological and communicational cultures (Pinto, 2020). In this context, supervision arises as an intercultural contact zone "... where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt, 1992, p. 4). Intercultural doctoral supervision has been defined as a social and relational space where different cultures meet and where supervisors acknowledge students' prior intellectual, cultural and personal histories (Manathunga, 2014).

In Portugal, HEI have received a growing number of international students from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). The increase of CPLP students is visible not only at graduation and master levels but also in doctorate Programs (DGEEC, 2021). This trend is perceived at the University of Aveiro, one of the Portuguese HEI in which CPLP doctoral students have a higher weight. In 2021, the PhD Program in Education, ministered at the Department of Education and Psychology, was attended by 87 IDS (53% of the total number of students) and of those 78% were from the CPLP, especially from Brazil, Angola and Mozambique.

This study aimed at understanding the perspectives of CPLP IDS, attending the PhD Program in Education, regarding the qualities of a good supervisor. Participants were 11 IDS (aged between 33 and 60 years) from the CPLP: six Angolan, three Brazilian, one East Timorese and one Mozambican. Their mother tongues were: Portuguese (five students), Kimbundu (two), Nhungué (one), Umbundu (one), Kikongo (one) and Indonesian (one). The interviews were submitted to thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013) and the following overarching themes concerning the qualities of a good supervisor emerged: intrapersonal qualities; interpersonal and communicative qualities; academic and research qualities.

Results show that IDS value intrapersonal, interpersonal and communicative qualities associated to their condition of "foreign students" such as: acknowledgement of the influence of their cultural, linguistic, educational, professional and personal backgrounds in research development, flexibility regarding their variety of Portuguese language and their integration in the host institution. Specifically, IDS underline that their supervisors should know their origin contexts as to cultural characteristics, research traditions, and educational backgrounds, requiring supervisors to acknowledge the influence of these in approaches to learning and research. In this context, being flexible, available, emotionally supportive and empathetic are crucial supervisors' qualities which highlight the importance of personal supervisory interaction, especially if we consider IDS' feelings of solitude and distress (Pinto, 2021). These feelings are often sharpened by a sense of invisibility in the host institution which makes IDS value supervisors' ability to promote their integration and help them to develop a sense of belonging. Another important issue is the need for supervisors to be flexible regarding IDS' variety of Portuguese language. For many of them, Portuguese is their second language and they speak different varieties of Portuguese. This poses challenges as to oral and written interaction with supervisors and as to thesis writing.

Findings emphasize the need for institutional reflection and discussion on the intercultural dimension of doctoral research and supervision. It is up to Portuguese universities to promote this, involving their management structures, doctoral schools, directors of doctoral programs, supervisors, and students. A shared reflection-action can enhance the creation of "dialogic spaces" (Robinson-Pant, 2009) where the encounter of different ways of thinking, learning and researching can empower all those involved. This reflection-action has to encompass an institutional responsibility in the investment in supervisors' professional development as to intercultural communicative skills and skills to supervise across languages and cultures.

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212 Privileged mobilities? The complexities of class in Chinese women's international education projects

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This paper draws on an ongoing longitudinal study that began in 2012 and charts the experiences of 50+ women who travelled from China to Australia to undertake tertiary education. In general terms, Chinese students in western nations come from middle-class backgrounds; indeed, international study has been posited as a defining characteristic of middle-class lives in urban China today. However, both the concept and reality of "the middle class" in contemporary China are distinct in notable ways from understandings based on Euro-American contexts. By presenting selected participant stories, this paper will illustrate the wide range of socio-economic backgrounds represented among Chinese women who study in Australia, and will draw out the multiple vectors of financial, academic, political and cultural capitals that intersect to position individual students in complex and heterogeneous ways within the broad category of China's transnationally mobile middle classes.

Full paper

This paper draws on an ongoing longitudinal study that charts the experiences of 50+ women who travelled from China to Australia for university (Martin 2022). Here, I will sketch out the broad background of participants' classed experience in historical context. In the version presented at the conference, I will also present two to three participants' stories to illustrate the complexity and heterogeneity of their classed experiences.

Following the death of Mao Zedong, from 1979 the Chinese Communist Party initiated a series of market reforms that, four decades later, have thoroughly transformed the structure of class in China, both by intensifying social stratification and by complicating its underlying logics. Whereas under high socialism, access to resources depended almost wholly on one's political and institutional relationship to the party-state, in the reforms era a hybrid of market and reconfigured state forces has enabled increasing numbers of professionals, managers, and entrepreneurs across private, collective, and state sectors to accumulate unprecedented levels of private wealth (Bian et al. 2005; Goodman and Zhang 2008; Li Zhang 2010; Goodman 2014). Today these groups may be characterized as constituting China's new middle classes.

The central place of academic achievement in China's middle-class imaginary is well established (F. Liu 2008). A number of factors have combined in recent decades to extend the geographic range of educational credential seeking among China's middle classes to a transnational scale, producing student outflows of unprecedented size and with them a new, education-based economy of Chinese transnationalism. The upsurge in privately funded Chinese young people traveling overseas for education has been fueled, on the most basic level, by rising wealth and the Chinese middle classes' belief that standards of tertiary education in Western nations and Japan are in general higher than those in most Chinese universities. "Study-abroad fever" is also fed by the middle classes' anxieties about the reproduction of their social status in light of an ever more marketized, inequitable, pyramid-shaped, and competitive secondary education system at home.

But the cultural capital students hope to attain is not only the direct result of educational credentials that would help them land desirable jobs. It also connects to transnational mobility and cosmopolitan habitus as themselves carriers of value. As in Johanna Waters's Hong Kong example, students and parents hoped that Western education would "inculcat[e] [students] into the mores of a cosmopolitan and hypermobile middle-class lifestyle" (Waters 2008, 10). In China today, Western education has become a commodity that indicatively expresses and consolidates middle-class social status (Xiang and Shen 2009).

The family backgrounds of the core participants in my study reflect this background. Most of the students' families belonged to the professional, entrepreneurial, and managerial middle classes. They mainly lived in larger cities on the wealthy eastern seaboard and in central and southwestern provinces, although about a quarter were from smaller, less developed cities in these areas. The parents worked in state or private enterprises as managers or in a range of professional roles, including as engineers, editors, designers, teachers, doctors, accountants, and media workers;

many were also entrepreneurs running their own trading, manufacturing, or other small businesses. Some were government cadres; a smaller number—largely mothers—were nonprofessional employees.

But although all participants' families could be classified at the broadest level as belonging to China's middle classes, they demonstrated a spread from the lower to the upper segments of this diverse and fragmented class formation. At one extreme, one or two families subsisted on income from small-scale family businesses that involved parents in hands-on manufacturing and retail activities; at the other extreme, some parents were high-ranking cadres and wealthy professionals with significant investment holdings. The class history of participants' families was also diverse, including some parents with only basic levels of education who began life as smallholding farmers and struck it rich as entrepreneurs in the manufacturing and construction sectors during the 1980s and 1990s, alongside other parents who were born into far more privileged situations and held postgraduate qualifications.

In light of this background, the live version of this paper will present individual stories that illustrate the complexity and heterogeneity of the deceptively simple "middle-class" status of Chinese women students in western study destinations, and the ways in which financial, academic, political and cultural capitals intersect to produce the particularity of their classed experiences of education mobility.

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234 “It’s not easy”: Amplifying voices of ‘Global South’ international students in the UK

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Research Domains

Abstract

The dominant discourse of international students characterised homogenously as socially, culturally and economically advantaged is increasingly contested as international student mobility (ISM) flows are changing. However, empirical analyses of the experiences of international students from diverse backgrounds remain limited. This paper seeks to offer a contribution to this lacuna through a consideration of the structural inequalities in higher education experienced by Global South international students in the UK. Twelve semi-structured interviews were undertaken with international students from the Global South using a narrative inquiry approach. The thematic analysis drew upon 'intersectional consciousness' and identified gender, economic precarity and familial commitments as shaping participants' experiences of studying. In highlighting the heterogeneity of international students' lived experiences, it is recommended that their voices are utilised in the university sector to develop more supportive policies regarding equality, diversity and inclusion.

Full paper

Context:

The literature on international student mobility (ISM) has tended to focus on this group of learners as privileged, transnational elites who are able to 'convert different capitals across borders for the ultimate purpose of maintaining and maximizing social advantages' (Yang, 2018: 698). However, internationally mobile students are a heterogeneous group, and their experiences are multidimensional and highly stratified (Glass et al., 2022; Mittelmeier et al., 2022; Ploner, 2017; Schartner & Shields, 2023). A growing number of students from a wider range of geographical areas and socio-economic backgrounds are seeking international student mobility (Deuchar, 2022), for example the estimated upturn of outwardly mobile students from sub-Saharan Africa is projected to double by 2050 (Kigotho, 2023). Therefore, this paper seeks to critically interrogate and deconstruct the notion 'international student experience'.

Global South international students are likely to be impacted by pre-existing inequalities – with hidden costs and risks to student mobility with the potential for social and economic inequalities being reproduced rather than challenged (Malet Calvo et al., 2022: 384). The term 'Global South' emphasises geopolitical relations of power and 'references an entire history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained' (Dados & Connell, 2012: 12-13). Countries within Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania are typically defined as part of the 'Global South'. One impact of pre-existing inequalities for Global South students may be their dependence upon precarious paid employment whilst studying (Malet Calvo et al., 2022). Arguably, Global South international students may encounter particular challenges as part of ISM due to the status of their country of origin and they may need specific types of support during their period of study abroad (Malet Calvo et al., 2022: 383). There are likely to be economic and emotional challenges experienced which have to be balanced against individualised success stories of social mobility.

Main research question:

How do gender and socioeconomic background affect the identities, experiences of university life and understandings of mobility of international students from the 'Global South' studying at UK universities?

Research Design:

Narrative inquiry was adopted as the methodological approach in this study. As Clandinin & Connelly (2004:19) contend 'stories are powerful, we all tell stories in our everyday life'. The semi-structured interviews with the twelve international students lasted approximately 50 minutes with the length of interviews lasting between 30 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. The intersectional thematic analysis acknowledges that stories are shaped by the social,

economic and historical context that we are situated in. The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts drew upon the concept of 'intersectional consciousness' which highlights participants' understandings of the advantages and challenges related to how their multifaceted intersecting identities influence their educational experiences (Nair & Vollhardt, 2020; Curtin et al., 2015).

Ethics:

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee at the institution at which the researchers both worked. The ethical guidelines of both the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL, 2021) were also drawn upon. The study is mindful of confidentiality and anonymity and consequently pseudonyms are used for the names of participants and the names of higher education institutions.

Findings and discussion:

Similarly to Pásztor (2015: 833) our findings query if universities have entered a new era of 'widening participation' or if HEIs continue to act as 'transmitters of privilege'. The study findings revealed that our Global South participants' lived experiences did not 'fit' with the dominant narrative of 'privilege' typically attributed to international students. Furthermore, 'privilege' was understood comparatively with their lifestyles in their country of origin. Paid employment was needed to manage living costs and/or tuition fees in the UK and to send remittances. Scholarship funding from countries of origin was not generally sufficient for covering the cost of living in the UK. Both men and women students engaged in transnational caregiving providing both emotional and financial assistance. The challenges encountered by Global South international students meant that competing demands were managed alongside studying, highlighting that there are gaps in our understanding related to programme outcomes for students from the least developed countries (Campbell & Neff, 2020). This paper amplifies and pluralizes the voices of international students from the 'Global South', with the intention of providing 'narrative story data' for universities wishing to improve their support services in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

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383 Developing a global translation of Widening Participation to support international HE students

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

The Office for Students (OfS) set out a range of criteria emphasising the importance of making Access and Participation Plans more accessible and easily comprehended for students, parents and other stakeholders. However, these criteria relate specifically to domestic students while the large cohort of international students in the UK are overlooked. Higher education institutions (HEIs) will fail to achieve their goals to support their entire student body when a partial understanding of the student experience is considered. This proposed study conducted focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews to explore how international students understand the concept of 'widening participation', what terms and language are used globally, and how they might be recognisable across appropriate global equivalents. This proposed study can help HEI staff to gain more comprehensive knowledge about

their international students, and thereby minimise barriers, navigate dilemmas, establish inclusive approaches and support a more sustainable development in the institutions.

Full paper

Do understandings of educational equality in higher education 'stop at the border' (Tannock, 2018)? Despite the United Kingdom's large numbers of international students, language and policy of widening participation in the UK context often explicitly and implicitly excludes international students. Yet as of 2022, the UK had the second highest number of international students in the world (HESA, 2022), having climbed dramatically from a total of 450,835 undergraduate and postgraduate students in 2016/17 to 605,130 in 2020/21, an increase of 24%.

International students, while commonly homogenised in the contemporary research as young, privileged, and consumerist, are nevertheless a diverse population. International students choose the UK as a study destination for diverse and complex reasons, such as its educational prestige, diversity, culture and career opportunities, many of which are associated with complex dynamics of diaspora, coloniality, and soft power (Lipura and Collins, 2020). Previous research has demonstrated that many international students experience economic disadvantage (Choudaha, 2012), racism and marginalization (Zewolde, 2022), persistent attainment gaps (Reilly, et al., 2019), and indeed access international HE differentially (Van Mol, 2022). This suggests that considering equity in relation to international students is an important and underdeveloped area of research. Yet there are currently significant lacunae within the data that many HEIs hold on international students (Hayes and Cheng, 2020), and a limited understanding from student perspectives of how this marginalisation may be experienced (Heng, 2018).

This gap is glaring when the new priorities for access and participation for HE providers are examined (2022) as the definition for widening participation does not include international students. Indeed, many widening participation categories as set out by the Office for Students (OfS), cannot be assessed with existing sector-level data on international students. The translation and understanding of these OfS categories in relation to international students are more problematic. Since such a significant proportion of the student population is comprised of international students, there is pressing need for HEIs to establish how domestic widening participation criteria relate to the international context.

As of 2022, The University of Manchester has the second highest number of non-UK International students in any UK HEI, with over 17,000 of its 44,000 students coming from abroad. This makes it a uniquely apt context to explore the intersection between widening participation efforts and international student populations. In a pilot study, we conducted focus groups and semi-structured interviews, comprised of undergraduate and postgraduate international students from diverse economic, national, social and linguistic backgrounds.

The aim was to explore how widening participation was understood by individual students, how they perceived the OfS criteria, and how they might be translated into appropriate global equivalents. Students volunteered through a variety of recruitment methods, including via the Student Union, student societies, and email communication through programme and course administrators. Recruitment materials specified that volunteers were sought from a range of economic, social, national, and linguistic backgrounds, and gave examples in accessible language. However, student volunteers from all backgrounds were eligible to contribute. Confidentiality was assured, and participants were offered the option of participating in either focus groups, or online individual interviews. Questions focused not on personal experiences, but on students' understandings of the concepts of widening participation, and the associated criteria. Through discussion with the researcher, and in the case of focus groups, with other participants, shared understandings of the specific challenges associated with translating these criteria and concepts were developed, and alternative, transnationally accessible language and terms proposed. Template analysis, a form of structured content analysis, was applied to build up a synthesis of understandings.

The results will support the development of phrasings and framings that can be adopted and examined in future research projects as well as to inform institutional data collection and practice. This pilot project can inform practice, helping HEI staff to gain more comprehensive and holistic knowledge about their international student cohorts, and thereby minimise barriers, navigate dilemmas, and establish inclusive approaches across institutional practice, from recruitment, to teaching and curriculum, to graduate outcomes.

This workshop seeks to bring colleagues from UK HEIs together to discuss the early findings of this research, solicit responses, and discuss implications for their own research and practice. It aims to generate critical discussion around existing practice and barriers to better understanding this complex and under-researched area (Mittelman et al., forthcoming).

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Web pages

Office for Students: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/our-approach-to-access-and-participation/>

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA): <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students>

Parallel Session 1:5

10:00 - 11:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Fiona Christie

203 Digital Educators: Figuring an identity in the world of Higher Education

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Research Domains

Digital University and new learning technologies (DU)

Abstract

This presentation provides an insight into how academic and professional services staff have engaged with digitally enabled pedagogies across a range of modes of delivery in a UK university. The overarching aim of the research was to understand the opportunities and challenges digitally enabled technologies had afforded them. The study is framed through sociocultural theories of identity and agency, specifically Figured Worlds (Holland et al, 1998). Utilising photo elicitation as a research tool, staff perceptions of their digital capabilities and the factors that had informed their perceptions were explored. We outline how the findings from the study have informed the development of a self-evaluation professional development model based on seven typologies of digital educators. Additionally, we reflect on the role of the university in creating the appropriate conditions that provide staff with the capabilities to influence their own professional development and transformation into new figured worlds.

Full paper

Twenty first century university educators are increasingly utilising digitally enabled pedagogies (DEP). The Covid 19 global pandemic accelerated this shift, requiring them to enter new virtual and digital territories. For some, this was a welcome opportunity to explore the 'possibilities and potentials' that digital technologies afford (Markelj and Sundvall, 2023), whilst for others it was a 'disorientating' and unwelcome experience (Watermeyer, Crick, Knight and Goodall, 2021). Post pandemic, the HE sectors face a 'fork in the road' (Emerge Education and Jisc, 2020) regarding the future of digital learning. If the sector is to capitalise on the increased digital capabilities remote learning has afforded, regardless of the mode of delivery, then there needs to be personalised support and professional development that is relevant to the confidence and competence of the individual.

This paper provides an insight into how academic and professional services staff have engaged with DEP across a range of modes of delivery in a UK university. The overarching aim of the study was to understand the opportunities and challenges digitally enabled technologies had afforded them. By exploring individual experiences, it enabled us to identify how individuals perceived their digital capabilities and understand the factors that had informed their perceptions. Findings from the study informed the development of a self-evaluation professional development model based on seven typologies of digital educators.

The theoretical framework for this study was based on sociocultural theories of identity and agency, drawing specifically on Figured Worlds. Figured worlds are understood as "socially produced, culturally constituted activities (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte and Cain, 1998: 40-41). Through day-to-day social activity, individuals come to 'figure' who they are through the 'worlds' that they participate in and how they relate to others both within and outside of those worlds (Urrieta, 2007:107). This perspective resonated with our research intentions, as we recognised that each participant in the study inhabited multiple, often competing worlds that influenced how they engaged with DEP.

The study utilised the methodological principles of photo elicitation (Pink 2007). This approach aligned with a figured world perspective, as it allowed for the exploration of how individuals interpret and assign meaning to abstract concepts to form their own 'figured world'. Participants from the university's teaching and professional services staff were invited to join hybrid focus groups. A range of fifteen abstract images were offered as a stimulus for discussion. The participants were asked to select images that were representative of their experiences of DEP. Using images in this way created a 'space of authoring' (Holland et al, 1998) to help them make sense of how they were perceiving themselves. This also helped to 'sharpen' their ability to reflect upon and explain their experiences (Auken, Firvold and Stewart, 2010) and perceptions of DEP, as well as encourage collaborative knowledge production.

Analysing the participants responses to the photo elicitation activity through a figured world lens enabled us to understand how relationships, practices, people and cultural resources informed their perception of themselves and others as digital users. Factors that contributed to their responses aligned to such aspects as confidence and

expertise in the use of digital pedagogies as well as their position and time served in a Higher Education context. Through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) patterns in perceptions and experiences were grouped into what we have termed as typologies of digital educators. The typologies have been developed as images with accompanying descriptions. The participants choice of images from the photo-elicitation activities, and their narratives informed the illustrations.

In the conclusion to our presentation, we outline our intention for the typologies to act as artefacts which can be used as a reflexive, agentic tool to support digital users self-evaluation and professional development. Additionally, we reflect on the role of the university in creating the appropriate conditions that provide staff with the capabilities to influence their own professional development and transformation into new figured worlds.

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141 (Re)Discovering the research on online music assessment: A systematic review

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Prior to COVID-19, studies indicated a limited use of education technology and online learning in music education across Australia. How music was taught and assessed online during, and after the pandemic pose potential solutions to known issues (i.e., sound quality, latency, technology skill requirements, etc.). In today's teaching environment post-COVID, tertiary music academics need a working-understanding of online music assessments and identification of their direct links to learning outcome achievement. Using Systematic Review, this project explored multiple databases to identify global online music assessment practices with primary focus at the higher education level. This presentation will address the key themes rising from the results of the systematic review --including challenges and opportunities Key recommendations for future research and recommendations for integrating online music assessments as sustainable practices will be considered.

Full paper

As we look to the future of higher education music teaching, online learning and its integral counterpart of online assessment have potential to be key pedagogical tools for continuing to enrich music teaching and learning by way of technology-enhanced learning experiences. It specifically addresses the sustainability challenge facing the conservatoire wherein "music will no longer be able to sustain its place in the curriculum in a world that sees technology as the elixir for international competitiveness" (Mantie, 2017, p. 24). Therefore, this Systematic Research investigated the topic of online music assessment to evidence the potential, as well as the limits, for integrating online music assessment into higher education music teaching.

Background

With the required shift to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many music instructors experienced online teaching for the first time, especially in Australia (Johnson & Cheok, 2021). Various technology challenges and curriculum planning issues were identified by those new, and not so new, to teaching music online (Cheng & Lam, 2021; Biasutti et al. 2021). However, rising above the challenges of the pandemic and emergency remote teaching, music academics also experienced positive teaching and learning outcomes to suggest online music learning allowed for improved performance feedback (Habe et al, 2021), increased student self-efficacy when submitting online performance assessments (Ritchie & Sharpe, 2021) and "important changes in approaches to rehearsal and time management, setting career goals, and establishing novel collaborative interactions with peers" (Schiavio et al., 2021, p. 175). With the field of online music learning increasing, it is timely to advance the corpus of research of online music assessment.

Scholars in the area of online music learning identify that the online music learning experience can better support music students with differentiated learning through the use of asynchronous and synchronous online learning tools (Pike, 2020). Further, it can decrease anxiety due to its flexible nature of access (Blackburn & McGrath 2021) and support "potential in online music education to leverage technologies more to decentralize the teacher, engage more of the learner, and adapt to the specific needs of each" (Johnson & Lamothe, 2018, p. 203). Overall, online music learning can use a Learning Management System (LMS) for presenting learning materials and resources, provide asynchronous and synchronous music lessons (see King et al, 2019; Pike, 2020), upskill students' integral software towards their professional music career (Schiavio et al., 2021), support scaffolded curriculum resources (Johnson, 2022) and encourage novel activities for music student learning (Schiavio et al., 2021).

Together, these online music learning opportunities can activate constructivist and participatory learning experiences (Johnson, 2022; Keast, 2009). Yet, during the pandemic, some online music instructors refrained from teaching "pitch, resonance, pedal use fingering, embouchure and timing" (Vaizman, 2022, p. 161). Known research in online music teaching and learning needs to be located, and shared among researchers and practitioners. This builds upon Biasutti's 2015 call for "the effectiveness of the online tools, and resources needs to be tested, and the pedagogical and didactic approaches to the online learning activities need to be assessed" (p. 49). To date, there is still limited thorough investigation of the research surrounding online music assessments at the higher education level.

Therefore, a Systematic Review of the literature on online music assessment was completed. Three databases (i.e., JSTOR, ERIC and ProQuest) were used to identify research within the specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results indicated a limited amount of research in the discipline-specific topic (i.e., online music assessment in tertiary learning). Further, it suggests that we cannot assume that research conducted in other disciplines are not directly applicable to online music assessment. Finally, the results suggest that there are secondary items (i.e., research regarding online music assessments in middle and secondary schools, and informal online learning) that pose potential for further research and implications for online music assessments at the tertiary level. These areas will be explored in the presentation along with recommendations for future research. From the small amount of research within online music assessment located, we suggest that there is potential indication for it to contribute to the sustainability with higher education teaching and learning to promote accessibility, financial feasibility, and inclusive learning for all.

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336 Feeling like a rabbit in headlights – Experiencing and dealing with imposter phenomenon in Higher Education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Whilst the expansion of entrepreneurial education programmes globally places emphasis on developing and nurturing the talents of students and researchers, we focus on the need to attract and develop enterprising talents to teach the subject and guide learners in realising their potential. Enterprise and entrepreneurship education in UK Higher Education teaches and supports learners with a diverse spectrum of those taking the role of 'educator' (spanning various practitioner and research-focussed 'career types') from entrepreneurs and industry professionals, to academics, often from very different disciplinary backgrounds.

This paper draws on qualitative data situating the prominence of 'Imposter Phenomenon' voiced in the dialogues of educators from different career types in this field, and their strategies to manage a sense of disjuncture and struggles for (self-perceived) legitimacy. As such, we emphasise the complexities in educator identities in 'becoming' an entrepreneurial educator, suggesting professional development opportunities suitable to address feeling like an imposter.

Full paper

With the expansion of entrepreneurial education programs across universities (Winkel, 2013; Jones et al., 2018; Kiškis & Kiškienė, 2021) the need for enterprising talents teaching the subject has increased. Yet, the EEE's profile and perspectives have been left largely unexplored (Steiner, 2014; Neck & Corbett, 2018; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020; Wraae et al., 2022). Specifically, whilst Imposter Phenomenon (IP) has a strong resonance within academia (Addison et al, 2022; Breeze, 2019; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2016), the role of this often-debilitating phenomena in the experiences of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Educators (EEEs) remains relatively unexplored. In a burgeoning field of enquiry and a teaching subject/approach, professional practitioners and entrepreneurs often take on the role of educator in entrepreneurship and enterprise education, and academics from other disciplines such as marketing or economics are drawn upon to teach the subject (Bennett, 2006, Finkle, 2007; Schleinkofer & Kulicke, 2009; Trivedi, 2014). We argue that those working within this context offer particularly interesting perspectives on the processes of 'becoming' EEEs and enable a critical reflection on 'legitimacy' in academia for educators more broadly.

Data examined in this paper draws the competencies EEEs must develop to perform the role, highlighting a typography of EEEs as 'professional' or 'academic', career types. The data exploration specifically around the theme of IP was thematically analyzed across 19 semi-structured interviews with EEEs based in England. Originally, the term 'Imposter phenomenon' is rooted Clance and Imes' (1978) psychological exploration of high-achieving women who expressed a sense of 'intellectual phoniness' and a palpable sense of 'not being good enough'; and over time the more medicalized/individualized term of 'imposter syndrome' has gained prominence. In this research however, we conceptualise the phenomenon sociologically, as 'imposterism'; as shared, context-specific phenomena enacted in practice. Academia, broadly speaking, is represented with strong associations of intellectualism, situating 'the university' as a space for intelligent, confident individuals who know 'the rules of engagement' in a sociocultural and embodied sense i.e. they know how to 'do', 'act' and 'behave' in these contexts (Addison, 2016; Mountford-Brown, 2022). However, EEEs' experiences troubled this sense of 'confidence' and of 'knowing' the 'rules of engagement' and furthermore, detailed strategies to help to manage the phenomena.

One of the key experiences of EEEs in both academic and professional services roles was feeling like an imposter during their initial employment period, or in their 'becoming' stage. The phase of becoming is conceptualized as encompassing the period of entering the profession and the first few years on the job. Despite rich antecedent experiences including those as an entrepreneur, working in industry, or completing a PhD, the sense of not quite fitting or being 'enough' became palpable across different EEE experiences over the course of the first year on-the-job. During this period, many EEEs realised that their antecedent competences had a 'shelf-life' (Eggers et al., 2012; Pierce et al., 2015; Škrinjarić, 2022) and while useful to get the job, the same skills are insufficient to perform the job. To build legitimacy, professional EEEs emphasized their entrepreneurial experience to show 'they have walked the talk' and to show they are qualified to deliver entrepreneurial education. Academic EEEs tended to rely more on sharing educational achievements (doctorates) to achieve legitimacy, not having the 'real world' entrepreneurial experience. However, if they had antecedent professional or entrepreneurial experiences, they also assetise them.

As EEEs perceived limitations of their antecedent capabilities, they identified specific learning needs and professional development opportunities to address these. All participants focused on the development of teaching and learning skills and the most frequently identified was the need to enhance their socio-cultural or contextual knowledge (Zuboff, 1988), i.e., their understanding of the processes, politics, and practices in HE, and their theoretical subject knowledge of entrepreneurship (education). For all EEEs, peer learning with immediate colleagues (Marsick and Watkins, 2001; Moraes and Borges-Andrade, 2014; Watkins et al., 2018) and non-formal learning by immersion in the wider EEE community (traversing disciplinary and institutional boundaries) are crucial competence – and confidence – development opportunities. For academic EEEs, immediate disciplinary colleagues were important for informal peer-learning and in creating a sense of belonging and forming pedagogical content knowledge through conversations, observations, and sharing of materials (Orlander et al., 2000; Tovar et al., 2015; Beaton, 2021). Contrary, professional EEEs, emphasised the importance of attending short peer-learning events external to the organisation but similarly working across different disciplinary boundaries that exist institutionally. These results regarding the competence development of EEEs at this stage confirmed a social view of learning (Cseh et al., 1999; Scheeres et al., 2010) is crucial.

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Parallel Session 1:6

10:00 - 11:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Pauline Kneale

215 How you teach and who you teach both matter: lessons from learning analytics data

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

To investigate the impact of disadvantage on student engagement and achievement under different teaching and assessment methods, this study compared the effects of pedagogic changes implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic on the performance and engagement of students from diverse backgrounds using a cohort-study approach. The study analysed learner analytics and academic performance data of first-year undergraduate students across three learning scenarios: (i) in-person teaching and assessment, (ii) in-person teaching with online assessment, and (iii) online teaching and assessment. Findings revealed that the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers was widest when education was conducted entirely online, resulting in poorer

outcomes for disadvantaged students. In light of these results, Higher Education institutions should monitor and assess the potential consequences of their chosen educational strategies on different student groups. Both the teaching methods employed, and the demographic composition of the student body are significant factors to consider.

Full paper

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the shift to online teaching and assessment in higher education, raising concerns about the impact of digital poverty on education. Studies have reported varying effects – both positive and negative - of this transition. This study used learning analytics to examine the impact of three teaching and assessment approaches on disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students (categorised using IMD: Index of Multiple Deprivation), investigating attainment, engagement patterns, and their interactions with different modes of teaching and assessment.

Our findings (see Figures 1 and 2) indicated that students from disadvantaged backgrounds experienced poorer outcomes compared to their peers during online teaching and assessment. This was evident in both the percentage of credits obtained and the marks achieved, aligning with previous studies (Bird et al., 2022; Kofoed et al., 2021).

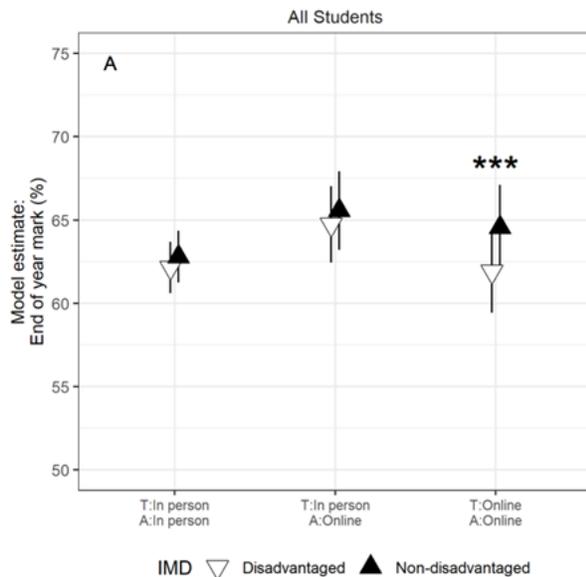


Figure 1: Estimated marginal means of the linear mixed-effects model for end-of-year mark (y axis), (T)eaching/(A)ssessment mode (x axis) and IMD (different symbols). Error bars indicate 95% confidence interval. Asterisks indicate significant differences in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students for the relevant teaching/assessment mode (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$).

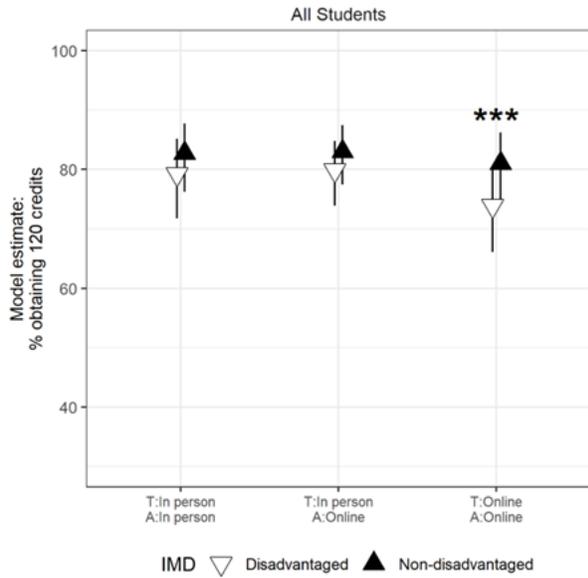


Figure 2: Estimated probabilities of students obtaining 120 credits (y axis) from a logistic mixed-effects model of the relationship between credits obtained (120 credits or <120 credits), (T)eaching/(A)ssessment mode (x axis) and IMD (different symbols). Error bars indicate 95% confidence interval. Asterisks indicate significant differences in credits obtained between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students for the relevant teaching/assessment mode (* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001).

Cluster analyses showed that while disadvantaged students displayed higher engagement levels than their peers in the in-person teaching and assessment scenario, this association disappeared in online learning (see Figure 3).

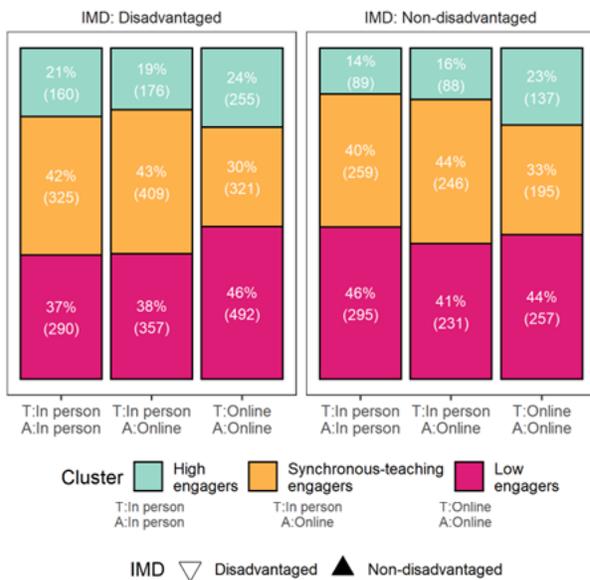


Figure 3: Relative proportions of students in each cluster by IMD (left panel=disadvantaged, right panel=non-disadvantaged) and (T)eaching/(A)ssessment mode (different bars). Numbers in brackets are the count of students in each cluster and IMD.

Further analyses were conducted to investigate attainment in each engagement cluster (see Figure 4). The attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers was greatest in the low engagement cluster and when teaching was online.

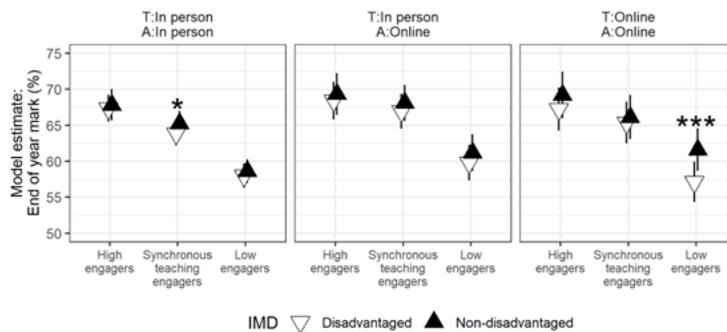


Figure 4: Estimated marginal means of the linear mixed-effects model for each (T)eaching/(A)ssessment mode (different panels), end-of-year mark (y axis), cluster (x axis) and IMD (different symbols). Error bars indicate 95% confidence interval of the mean. Asterisks indicate significant differences in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students for the relevant cluster (* p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001).

Despite similar engagement patterns between the two groups, the attainment gap therefore widened significantly during online teaching and assessment, particularly among students in the low engagement cluster. Consequently, disadvantaged students faced a combination of challenges, including a higher likelihood of being in the lower engagement cluster (linked to lower attainment), overall lower attainment associated with their background, and reduced achievement under the online teaching and assessment conditions compared to in-person teaching and online assessment. Who you and how you teach both matter.

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225 What does simulations of the Office for Students b3 regulations tell us about how fair and effectively it can identify areas below specified thresholds.

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

Increasing participation has led to increasing debts for students and government in funding higher education which has led to increase focus on assessing the 'value for money' higher education. In England this culminated in the b3 regulation where 60% of full-time first degree undergraduate need to be in positive outcomes 15 months from their course end. This study uses a simulation methodology to explore how effectively the OfS can identify the true population value of positive outcomes, the precision of those estimates and accuracy with which it can classify courses/universities below the 60% threshold. We find that whilst the OfS can accurately estimate the true population value it cannot do it with sufficient precision to enable correct classification below the 60% threshold when sample sizes are small and/or the percentage of the population is small nor when the true population value approaches the 60% threshold.

Full paper

Around the world participation in higher education has increased leading to increased debts for students and governments culminating in a focus on the value for money of universities (Bondar et al. 2020; OECD 2017). In England the Office for Students met that call by introducing the b3 regulation and in particular the progression metric which requires 60% of full-time undergraduate to have a positive outcome by 15 months of their course end (Office for Students (OfS) 2022). This study sought to evaluate how effectively the proceed metric could identify the true population value, how precise its estimates were and crucially how well it could identify courses below the 60% threshold. The consequences to universities of falling below this metric are severe not just with reputation damage but also with financial fines or even the cessation of degree awarding powers.

This study uses a simulation methodology where synthetic data for a virtual population is repeatedly generated and sampled from under specific conditions which can be varied across specific factors (Morris, White, and Crowther 2019). We varied three factors, first the percentage of graduates in the population with a positive outcome which went from 20% to 95% by 5% increments. Second, the population size was manipulation from 40 students up to 1000 student increased by 10 students each iteration. Third, we varied the percentage sampled from 30%, minimum threshold set by OfS, to 90% each time increasing by 5%. The simulation procedure followed three phases: data generation, sampling of the data and calculating statistics from each of the sample. We focussed on four main outcome measures bias, coverage probability, precision and misclassification. Bias is the mismatch between population and sample estimates. Coverage probability refers to the proportion of true population values inside a confidence interval. Precision is the width of the confidence intervals and misclassification is the likelihood that a population above or below the 60% threshold is accurately identified as being above or below the threshold.

The results showed that generally the level of bias i.e. the sample estimates of positive outcomes roughly matched the true population estimate and as the sample size and percentage of the sample increased bias reduced as the variability in the bias estimate. Both points highlight the importance of a) maximising response rates to the graduate outcome survey from which the B3 regulations are calculated and b) ensuring comparisons are not done at too granular level like courses where result will vary widely. The coverage probability was good for both 95% and 90% confidence interval indicating that around 95% and 90% of the time the sample value did indeed fall within the confidence interval as would be expected. Third, the range of confidence intervals, precision of confidence intervals, could vary widely which would make it difficult for the OfS to correctly identify areas below the 60% threshold. For example, sample size of 50 or less students had confidence interval that had an average range of 26% for the 95% confidence interval and 22% on average for the 90% confidence interval. Even for samples of 100 or less the 95% confidence interval varied by 14.93% on average and 12.55% for 90% confidence interval. Finally, as the population percentage in positive outcomes become closer to the 60% threshold it becomes increasingly difficult to accurately show it is below the 60% threshold. For example, in a sample size of 50 or below with a true population value of 55% in positive outcomes in 94.5% of samples the upper confidence limit of the 95% confidence interval was above 60% suggesting not enough certainty in that course being below the threshold. This highlights that judgements about what

are above or below the threshold using 95% or 90% confidence interval becomes increasingly difficult with small samples or small percentage of the population being surveyed.

This simulation powerfully shows the very serious challenging of trying to regulating at a micro-level like course or an area where sample sizes are less than 50 or even less than a 100 as the sample estimates or the true population value will vary more, the confidence intervals will be far large and therefore discerning who is above or below threshold will be exceptionally challenging especially as the population value approaches the threshold. Another important but perhaps hidden assumption of using a 95% or 90% confidence interval is the in-built acknowledgement that means sometime areas above particular threshold will incorrectly be identified as below.

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210 The Successes and Challenges of Implementing Assessment Plans in Japanese Higher Education: Using Student Learning Data within a New Quality Management Framework

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

In line with international trends, Japanese higher education (HE) has recently emphasized the importance of assessing educational learning outcomes and making such learning "visible." Specifically, the Japanese government has encouraged universities to implement institutional-level Assessment Plans that specify different indices to document and evaluate student learning attainment. This attention on learning assessment is occurring as new HE educational governance and quality structures --broadly known as "Learning Management"--are being dramatically reformed within Japan. To understand how Assessment Plans are being implemented and used at the institutional level in this context, this study conducted a nationwide survey. On the one hand, the results suggest that Japanese HE has broadly succeeded in adopting institutional-level assessment of student learning outcomes within a relatively short time. On the other hand, evidence suggests that issues remain, both in how such assessment data is used and in the different ways organizations implement such plans in practice.

Full paper

Introduction

In line with the outcomes-centered approach emphasized by the Bologna Process, Japanese Higher Education (HE) has recently recognized the importance of articulating student learning outcomes at the institutional level (Chukyoshin, 2016). As with other HE systems, Japan's shift to outcomes-based education has increased the need to make learning "visible" (Hamana, 2018). Universities have been asked to create "Assessment Plans" that capture student learning attainment and convey these results to campus leadership (Chukyoshin, 2020). Japanese institutions, however, face an additional challenge: the simultaneous reform of quality governance processes –known as "Learning Management"-- focused on making educational leadership more efficient and coordinated (Chukyoshin, 2018). Given the lack of a "decision-support" tradition in Japanese HE, Japanese Institutional Research offices confront new assessment demands while negotiating an evolving administrative landscape wherein this data is used.

By exploring the intersection of organizational management and learning practice, this study also contributes to the scholarship (e.g. Ruef and Nag, 2015) analyzing the interrelationship of university category-type and institutional behavior. Contextualized within Japan's dramatically declining college-age population, the meaning and nature of universities' Assessment Plans could vary significantly. A large, internationally ranked research institution such as the University of Tokyo, for example, could conceive of its assessment needs quite differently from that of small, tuition-dependent private schools. The Japanese government has encouraged this thinking by urging private institutions to consider pursuing one of four future "types" of HEIs that it feels possess the best chance of surviving. (MEXT, 2022). By analyzing the assessment practices of both research-oriented national universities, community-oriented municipal/prefectural universities and tuition-dependent private universities, this paper will provide new insight into how organizational imperatives and quality assurance demands interact in complex ways.

Methods

This research conducted a nation-wide survey of accredited 4-year Japanese universities during 2022-2023. An online survey questionnaire was sent to the academic affairs vice-president of all 787 accredited 4-year institutions. The survey's goal was to inventory, at a national level, both the assessment content of these Plans, and to explore how such data is used within Japanese HE institutions in practice.

Results

The survey received 240 responses, or a 30.5% response rate. Approximately, 71% of responses came from private institutions, with the remaining survey responses coming equally from national and municipal/prefectural universities. This is in line with the national ratio.

In terms of results, two-thirds of respondent universities reported that they had adopted Assessment Plans at their institutions, suggesting widespread adoption at the national level. **(See Table 1)** Nonetheless, challenges inhibiting the effectiveness of these Assessment Plans were visible. Only 14% of university vice-presidents who implemented such plans said that their assessment data was "often" used by their organizations. **(See Table 2)** Additionally, only 24% of these universities reported "regularly auditing" their assessment plans, raising the possibility of Assessment Plans becoming routinized and losing their original dynamism. **(See Table 3)**

Survey results of universities implementing Assessment Plans likewise suggest that the meaning and function of these plans differ greatly by institution category. National universities appear to have approached these plans as longer-term tools of curricular reflection, while private institutions seem to use plans as immediate, external feedback mechanisms to gauge student satisfaction and performance. The indices most used by private schools, for example, were enrollee satisfaction scores and job-placement performance (79% and 80% respectively versus only 60% and 52% respectively for national universities). Along these same lines, private school Assessment Plans were about twice as likely as national universities (64% vs. 32%) to use 3rd-party credentials and qualifications to demonstrate program learning attainment. In contrast, national universities' most popular assessment indices were the attainment of learning outcomes as defined by their own academic programs (i.e. 68% for national institutions vs. 51% for private ones). **(See Table 4)** The contrast between the reflective orientation of national universities and the consumer satisfaction emphasis of private schools is also seen in how different universities approach the assessment process. In contrast to 40% of national universities "regularly auditing" their assessment plans, only 22.3% of private universities did likewise. **(See Table 3)**

Discussion

Given that the government has promoted institution-level Assessment Plans for only a decade, the overall adoption rate within Japanese HE is impressive. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that challenges remain, both with regards to how the data is used, and in the frequency with which assessment indices are themselves reevaluated. Finally, more attention must be paid to how institutional category informs the adoption of Assessment Plans, as the nature of these plans appears to vary greatly between private and national institutions.

Table 1:

Respondent # : 240		University Category			
Answer		Total n=240	National n=34	Municipal- Prefectural n=34	Private n=172
Assessment Plan Formulated		66.7%	73.5%	41.2%	70.3%
	Plan Made Public	41.3%	44.1%	32.4%	42.4%
	Partly Publicized, or Plan to Publicize	10.8%	11.8%	5.9%	11.6%
	Not Publicized	14.6%	17.6%	2.9%	16.3%
Assessment Plan Not Formulated		33.3%	26.5%	58.8%	29.7%
Totals		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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Table 2:

Respondent # : 160		University Category		
Response	Total	National	Mun-Pref	Private
Results Used Often	23 14.4%	5 20.0%	1 7.1%	17 100.0%
Results Used Somewhat	90 56.3%	15 60.0%	8 57.1%	67 100.0%
Results Not Really Used	32 20.0%	5 20.0%	2 14.3%	25 100.0%
Results Not Used At All	4 2.5%	0 0.0%	1 7.1%	3 100.0%
Other	11 6.9%	0 0.0%	2 14.3%	9 100.0%
Total	160 100.0%	25 100.0%	14 100.0%	121 100.0%

Table 3:

Does your university review/audit its Assessment Plan's implementation and content?				
Response # : 160				
Answer	Total	University Category		
		National	Mun-Pref	Private
Regularly Auditing Plan	39	10	2	27
	24.4%	40.0%	14.3%	22.3%
Not Regularly Auditing, but sometimes review it	68	9	5	54
	42.5%	36.0%	35.7%	44.6%
Not really Auditing Plan	32	5	5	22
	20.0%	20.0%	35.7%	18.2%
Not Auditing Plan at All	5	0	0	5
	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%
Other	16	1	2	13
	10.0%	4.0%	14.3%	10.7%
Total	160	25	14	121

Table 4:

What indices/data are included in your university's Assessment Plan?		
Response : 160		
項目	合計 n=160	Natio n=2
GPA	91%	6
Student Satisfaction Surveys/Sense of Growth	74%	6
Graduate School/Job Placement Rate	74%	5
Degree Attainment	67%	3
Retention Rate	62%	4
Acquisition of 3 rd Party Credentials/Qualifications	57%	3
Amount of Time Spent Studying Out of Class	54%	4
Learning Goal Attainments in Courses	54%	6
Results of Admission Test Results	49%	3
Percentage of Students Who Study Abroad	48%	4
Amount of Time Learning in Class	47%	2
Results of Placement Tests	45%	1

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Parallel Session 1:7

10:00 - 11:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Tracy Scurry

28 Skills and employability: Convergence of doctoral experiences in the global transformation of doctoral education

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

In recent decades, doctoral education has grown in strategic importance for the knowledge society and economy. This resulted in the massification of the doctorate and its related professionalisation, with a focus on doctorate's ability to develop skills beyond research competences and to enhance employability outside of academia.

We examine how this context influences doctoral candidates' experiences and perspectives of the doctorate, using interview data obtained between 2000 and 2022 in Portugal, Germany, and Australia. Five narratives emerged in candidates' perspectives on agency, precarity, hope, demands and value of the doctorate.

Findings reveal that regardless of their national, institutional, and academic contexts, candidates see the doctorate as a place for professional and transferable skill development, making it relevant not only to academic research but also to work-settings beyond academia. This suggests that candidates are actively redefining the doctorate, with the global doctoral education transformation becoming the cornerstone of the doctoral experience.

Full paper

Introduction and context

Driven by several factors doctoral education has undergone a deep transformation in the past few decades. Massification of higher education has impacted doctoral education, resulting in increased enrolments, greater number of doctorates awarded (Carvalho & Cardoso, 2020; Nerad, 2014), and more diverse doctoral candidates' profiles, backgrounds and expectations towards the degree. Such factors affect the career prospects and future employment of PhD holders (Bernstein et al., 2014; McAlpine, 2020). Simultaneously, changes in the academic profession e.g., greater precariousness, deterioration of working conditions (Deem, 2020), have contributed to the expansion of doctoral graduates' career paths beyond academia, including in public, private and non-profit sectors (Bernstein et al., 2014; McAlpine, 2020). This emphasises the link between employability, attainment of competences and doctoral education (Balaban, 2020; Carvalho & Cardoso, 2020) in a context where it further emerges as a fundamental

resource for the knowledge society and economy. Such forces influence the 'definition' and 'design' of doctoral education, in Europe and worldwide targeting its organisation, delivery, funding, and quality.

Higher education contexts of each country vary in its structure, governance, funding, scale, etc. National, regional and local governments often shape the institution and the doctoral program on offer. The academic socialisation processes in turn shape and form the candidate, their doctoral experience, their identities, and ultimately their personal and professional futures (Gardner et al., 2014).

In this study we examine how the dimensions of doctoral education transformation, which relate to skill development and employability, are perceived by doctoral students from different countries, hence, situated in varying higher education contexts. In the presentation we will provide an overview of skill and employability related aspects of doctoral education transformation, report on our study, elaborate on and discuss the findings.

Methodology

In view of doctoral education transformation across the globe, particularly the focus on employability and skill development, we were interested to examine how this effects the doctoral experience, the way candidates navigate it, their behaviours and actions. We drew on three sets of interview data, collected in three different countries: Portugal, Germany, Australia. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 42 candidates were conducted in these three countries in 2020-2022 and data was thematically analysed. While the interviews addressed various research foci pertinent to skill development during candidature, five themes emerged where doctoral experiences were similar despite national differences.

Findings

Regardless of the national, higher education, and doctoral education contexts, doctoral candidates' experiences, perspectives, and behaviours appear to be surprisingly similar leading us to believe that global doctoral education transformation has indeed become the cornerstone of the doctoral experience. Specifically, our PhD participants' perspectives suggest that doctoral education worldwide is experiencing a move to 'professionalisation', as candidates recognise the need to prepare for careers outside academia while simultaneously fulfilling the requirements of academic research training. This is evident in the five narratives we identified in our data:

Agency: Doctoral candidates demonstrate significant agency in driving their skill development in both areas, research competencies and transferable skills, because of the need to possibly work outside academia.

Precurity: Doctoral candidates perceive academic careers are precarious across the world and keep a firm focus on developing their employability, through seeking non-academic work experiences, preferencing applied research, networking, etc.

Hope: Doctoral candidates engage and invest considerable time in additional activities outside their PhD research in hope to enhance their chances in and outside academia that might lead to opportunities, career capital, etc.

Demands: Doctoral candidates expect more support from the university in employability and career development

Value: Doctoral candidates see value of PhD training beyond academia whereas non-academic employers do not.

Discussion and conclusion

Despite different national higher education and doctoral education contexts, doctoral candidates' expectations and perspectives in three different countries appear to converge. Doctoral candidates in Portugal, Germany and Australia share similar experiences, perspectives and behaviours in relation to skill development and employability for diverse careers. This study provides qualitative evidence for the transformation of doctoral education in the context of the knowledge society and academic capitalism (Cardoso et al., 2022). The doctoral degree while traditionally presented as training for academic careers is actively reshaped by candidates as a site for professional and transferable skill development. As such, doctoral education is experiencing a shift in purpose as training for academic and non-

academic careers. Aside from offering qualitative evidence on the shifting purpose of the doctorate, the study seeks to spark further debate on what can be learnt from multinational comparative insights on the subject.

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262 Critical Perspectives on Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Showcasing lessons from doctoral studies

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

This presentation showcases a collection of work by recent UK education doctoral graduates (Waller, Andrews & Clark, forthcoming (2024)). It demonstrates the unique contribution of 'insider', practice-based doctoral studies in aiding understanding of the rapidly changing professional and policy contexts confronting doctoral candidates and the wider practitioner/researcher community. Addressing questions regarding impact and progression for practice-based doctoral graduates (McSherry *et al.*, 2019; Boud *et al.*, 2021), the collection's innovative curation process provides an example for developing early career researchers (ECRs) and maintaining supervisory mentoring relationships in post-doctoral spaces.

The volume's 14 chapters are co-authored by the ECR and an experienced academic. The process offers a supported pathway into publication; a series of workshops and writing retreats scaffolded their development and production.

The presentation concludes with a contributory author (Laura Manison-Shore) reflecting on her experience of participating in the process, and an assessment of its value for developing ECRs.

Full paper

This presentation, which showcases an edited collection of work by recent UK doctoral graduates from one English university's education department (Waller, Andrews & Clark, forthcoming (2024)), begins with a short introduction setting the scene for the wider project. It demonstrates the unique contribution of 'insider', practice-based doctoral studies in aiding our understanding of the rapidly changing professional and policy contexts confronting education doctoral candidates, their peers, and the wider higher education-based practitioner researcher community (Burnard *et al.*, 2018). In the context of discussions regarding impact and progression for practice based doctoral graduates (McSherry *et al.*, 2019; Boud *et al.*, 2021), the innovative process of curating the collection is an example for developing doctoral graduates into early career researchers (ECRs), maintaining supervisory mentoring relationships, and enhancing scholarship and research practice in the post-doctoral space.

The volume under discussion features original, cutting-edge, contemporary work in a range of educational settings from graduates of our Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) and Education PhD programmes. The collection itself includes 14 chapters, each co-authored by the ECR and an experienced academic, usually someone from their supervisory team. The doctoral graduate is lead author in all instances, with this process offering ECRs a supported pathway into academic publication; a series of workshops, seminars, guidance videos and focussed writing retreats scaffolded its development and production. The pairs of authors were also matched with another to act as a sounding board for the development of ideas for their chapters, and as critical readers for one another's writing.

The forthcoming collection concludes with a chapter from a leading academic in the field, Prof Meg Maguire (KCL), who discusses the contribution of the edited volume in furthering our understanding of the interplay between educational policies and professional identities and offers reflections upon the potential of doctoral studies to explore topics across various educational contexts.

This presentation includes a brief contribution from a lead author of one of the chapters (Manison Shore & Rosenberg, forthcoming), who will outline the process and procedures they undertook to complete the chapter, arising from their EdD research (Mansion Shore, 2022). The study explored how Bourdieu's (2001) notion of symbolic violence impacts the perceived choices of young women training to be primary school teachers. They will discuss how they selected the part of the thesis they wanted to develop in their chapter and how they worked with a member of their supervisory team to extend the discussion in the thesis from their own perspective to also embrace their supervisor's, and how this process was a 'journey' for them both, hopefully spawning future collaborative projects.

The lead author will reflect in the presentation on the successful (and the less successful) aspects of this innovative writing process.

We hope that the discussion following the presentation will focus on the potential for such collaborative ventures in enhancing Postgraduate Scholarship and Practice in university departments and other professional settings.

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121 International student fee-reliant higher education systems: A literature and policy review of the British case

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

In 2020-2021, 17% of income at UK universities came from international student tuition fees. At some institutions, over 50% of tuition fee revenue comes from international students (HESA, 2023). Over-reliance on international student fees is a risk across the higher education sector in the UK as well as in other countries. This presentation will share findings from two reviews: (1) an international literature review on system- and institutional-level preparation for

funding loss; and (2) a policy document analysis of relevant UK higher education system-level policies and guidelines on institutional funding and higher education funding sustainability. Together, these reviews will inform a discussion of research and policies that may enhance the resilience of higher education institutions in the UK in the event of revenue loss.

Full paper

In 2020-2021, 17% of income at UK universities came from international student tuition fees. That same year, 22% of students at UK institutions were international according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2023). But at several universities in the UK, international students represented over 50% of the incoming student body (Walsh, 2022) and brought in more than 50% of the tuition fee revenue. For example, in 2021-2022, fees from international students represented 65% of the total tuition fee revenue of University College London. Over-reliance on international student fees is a risk across the higher education sector in the UK as well as in other countries. Part of this risk is because international students overwhelmingly come from a few countries. In 2021-2022, in the UK, 27% of international students came from two countries: China and India (HESA, 2023). The recruitment of international students often relies on recruitment agents, a practice that has been problematised (Nikula et al., 2023). In the UK, the diversity of international students has decreased following 2020-2021 (HESA, 2023), in part due to the reduction of students from the EU following Brexit (Amuedo-Dorantes & Romiti, 2021), with the number of EU students dropping by 53% from 2020/2021 to 2021/2022 according to data from HESA.

Over reliance on revenue from overseas international students (in part to compensate for the loss of EU-nationals) is a newer system characteristic, partially driven by decreasing public funding for higher education institutions as well as the growth of the higher education sector and geopolitical factors (Dobson, 2021; Scott, 2012). To date, funding from international student tuition fees has been growing in the UK. But this might be a temporary phenomenon. As the UK engages in system-level conversations about sustainable university funding (Universities UK, 2023) and promotes policies that may affect international flows to the UK (e.g., through changing visa policies), research on preparation for potential revenue losses from international tuition fees is timely and strategically important for the higher education system.

This topic is of practical and immediate significance, yet it has received little attention in the academic literature. Previous research has documented the loss of revenue from international students in Australia and New Zealand (Gao & Ren, 2020), discussed the implications of this loss of revenue for the business model of universities (Ross, 2020), analysed the lack of financial risk disclosure in 2019 annual reports (Carnegie et al., 2022), and emphasized the impact that funding loss from international tuition revenue had at Australian universities, especially in terms of layoffs among university staff (Doidge & Doyle, 2022). But existing literature primarily relies on the Australian context and there is little research in the UK context.

To address this gap, our presentation will discuss results from two reviews. First, we will present results from a literature review on higher education system- and institutional-level preparation for funding loss. This literature review will map what is known about how higher education systems and institutions prepare for potential loss of funding from international student tuition fees. Yet because we know that the body of literature on this topic is underdeveloped, this literature review will also include system- and institutional-level preparation for funding losses regardless of the type (e.g. loss of government funding, decrease in domestic students etc.). This literature review will have an international scope, encompassing publications beyond the specific case of the UK higher education system. Second, we will conduct and present results from a policy document analysis of relevant higher education system-level policies and guidelines in the UK.

By presenting findings from both the literature and policy reviews, we hope to shed insight into the financial risk deriving from the overreliance on overseas students' tuition fees from specific destinations, whilst outlining possible pathways for higher education institutions to deal with such risk and harness classroom and on-campus cultural diversity. The authors also hope to use the SRHE presentation as a forum to discuss their plans to collect empirical data on preparation for and responses to losses in higher education funding and gather valuable feedback from SRHE attendees.

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Break

11:30 - 11:45 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Parallel Session 2:1

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Sam Illingworth

21 Learned Words: A Poetic Content Analysis of 'Belonging' in Higher Education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This study utilises poetry as a unique medium for investigating perceptions of 'belonging' among higher education staff. By applying poetic content analysis, we delve into an intricate examination of belonging within the lens of individual intersectional identities. Eighteen poems, contributed by professionals from the higher education sector, were subjected to scrutiny, which led to the discovery of four primary themes: 'Community', 'Exclusion', 'Transformation', and 'Self'. These revelations have prompted a series of proposed strategies that could potentially enhance the sense of belonging for all personnel within higher education institutions. The recommendations and emergent narratives pivot on an aspiration for the higher education industry to acknowledge more fully and foster the inherent dedication prevalent among staff towards the promise and potential of higher education in the present and beyond.

Full paper

I. Introduction

This paper highlights the novel approach of using poetic content analysis to explore the concept of 'belonging' within the context of higher education. Building upon intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1989), we focus on the experiences and emotions of university staff members, and how these intersecting identities play into their sense of belonging within their institutions.

II. Methodology

Our study employs poetic content analysis, a qualitative research method that engages with the textual intricacies and emotional richness of poetry (Illingworth, 2022). 18 poems were collected from staff across different institutions, demonstrating a spectrum of experiences. This sample size was guided by the principle of thematic saturation (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Our selection process was inclusive, as only duplicate submissions were excluded. The interpretive lens was grounded in our positionality as researchers and educators (Berger, 2015).

III. Analysis and Results

Four major themes were unearthed: 'Community', 'Exclusion', 'Transformation', and 'Self'. Each theme was resonant with past literature in higher education, adding depth and emotional nuance to our understanding. The theme of 'Exclusion' for example, echoes research on marginalised identities within academia (Mayhew et al., 2006).

IV. Discussion and Recommendations

While the sample size is recognised as a limitation, our study underscores the richness of the data that can be extracted from poetic analysis, and the power of such narratives in guiding institutional change (Prendergast, 2009). Recommendations, grounded in the emergent narratives, encourage institutions to foster a culture of inclusion and recognition.

V. Conclusion

Poetic content analysis provides a nuanced perspective on belonging in higher education. Future research should further delve into this innovative method, considering the varied contexts of different educational institutions.

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53 Belonging, agency and purpose in the digital university

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Belonging is increasingly understood as important for students' success at university; however, in this presentation we examine the value of thinking in new ways about this elusive idea. Our research evidences how learners often enact belonging in ways that challenge institutional expectations of the essential nature of belonging, or of the fixed nature of 'belonging spaces'. Drawing upon empirical data from interviews, and video blogs with students, we foreground the relational and multiple ways in which students create and enact belonging, and how belonging is entangled with material spaces and artefacts. We consider how challenging dominant discourses around belonging is particularly important at this pivotal moment in higher education, where, as we emerge from a global health crisis, the very purpose of higher education is being reframed. We argue that interrogating the nature of belonging is needed if we are to understand students' diverse experiences in more meaningful ways.

Full paper

Recent research, policy and practice has begun to engage the complex concept of belonging in ways that are having significant impacts upon higher education (Gravett and Ajjawi 2021; O'Shea 2021). Recognising the urgent need to support diverse populations of students, belonging has become a term that appears to promise a great deal – if we can just support, or 'build' it effectively. However, belonging is a complex concept, and a troubling tension exists between sectoral desires to fix and foster an abiding 'sense of belonging', and the relational ways in which individuals

experience both belonging and space. In this presentation, we share our research from a SRHE funded project that sought to discuss and navigate the concept of belonging with students themselves, in order to learn more about how students experience, create and conceptualise belonging. We tease out some suggestions for more nuanced ways in which we might understand students' diverse experiences, to avoid belonging joining the 'encrustations of buzzwords' (Maclure 2010, 278) that pervade contemporary education discourses.

Emerging from the pandemic, there is renewed scrutiny of the purposes of higher education. And yet, against this background, notions of belonging continue to be individualistic and with the university positioned as 'subject' of this belonging. Despite the diversity of the student body and the dynamic and temporal nature of belonging, a relatively homogeneous perspective that focuses on positive and uniform narratives of belonging, dominates. These discourses that inform 'best belonging practices' elide both the diversity and the politic of belonging. Belonging is often tied to notions of power in terms of who has the power to define who belongs and how belongingness is conveyed (O'Shea, 2021). In this paper, we contend that we need to handle notions of belonging and non-belonging with care, to understand both when non-belonging equals exclusionary practices that are harmful, and equally, when non-belonging is either a choice or just a natural experience as we evolve between connections (Gravett, Ajjawi and O'Shea under review).

Our research was conducted in two universities, in Australia, and in the UK. Thirty students took part in semi-structured interviews and/or a video-blog. Vlogs are a 'participant-directed method' (Sutton-Brown 2014, 170) which captures the material and affective aspects of participants' everyday lives. These short video narratives are made with the video function on a mobile device and accompanied by brief self-narration. In their vlogs, students were invited to show themselves or simply their spaces and objects of belonging. The conversation prompts provided in the interviews and vlogs included:

1. Tell us what a 'typical' day of study might look like for you?
2. Tell or show us your learning spaces? What specific objects do you need when studying?
3. What does belonging look and feel like in these spaces?
4. Who / what helps you to belong to the course, university.

Reflexive thematic and visual interpretation methods were used to inform data analysis.

Our research shows that students define, enact and experience belonging in diverse and sophisticated ways. Our data identified the ways in which students actively curated their experiences of belonging. Students described actions that were purposeful and strategic, and that created spaces and practices that were meaningful to them. Some of the actions that were described included: seeking purposeful connections, emotionality and taking risk, and curating safe and personal spaces from which to connect with self and others. For many students, the connecting from a sense of safety was important. Crucially, students showed agency in creating and curating multiple and flexible experiences of belonging, in different times and spaces. Belonging was shown to include multiple sensual, affective, and material dimensions.

As a result, while belonging still holds significant value as a concept for informing contemporary theory-practice in higher education; this concept needs to be handled with care. Given recent overuse, there is a real danger belonging will simply be reduced to a buzzword that functions as a shorthand for simplistic ideas that do not resonate with the granular lived experiences of contemporary students. Our research showed belonging to be a concept that was flexible, situated, multiple, evolving, purposeful, experienced in both micro practices and as a sense of something larger. We suggest that educators consider how belonging operates as a nuanced and complex concept: as 'a matter of concern' (Latour 2004) as opposed to a 'matter of fact.' In such a framing, belonging needs to be considered as

something we are concerned, curious and care about, as opposed to something that can be easily fixed, fostered or measured.

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61 'It has such a huge impact on a person's identity and sense of belonging': Saying Students' Names Right – Practices and Policies in Higher Education in England

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Given that names signal people's socio-cultural identities, including ethnic heritage of race, language and/or nationality, there must also be a trend toward greater cultural diversity of students' names in UK higher education. In this article, we position the cultural diversity of students' names, and particularly the pronunciation of students' names, as key issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity. We present findings from our study of the pronunciation of students' names in institutions of higher education in England and show how student-facing staff in higher education manage students' names when they are unsure how those names should be correctly pronounced. We conclude that, to better support the pioneering 'identity work' already undertaken by individual staff, policymakers in higher education should develop and implement 'whole institution' initiatives in recognition of the pronunciation of students' names as a key equality, diversity and inclusion issue.

Full paper

In the UK, growth in the number of international students and students of minoritized ethnicities studying in higher education suggests that student populations have become less monocultural, mononational, and monolingual than previously. Ethnicity is linked to names (Pilcher 2016), and so it can be surmised that these changes in the socio-cultural profile of student populations also mean that there is a wider diversity of names amongst students. However, there is a paucity of evidence about the significance of names and naming in education in the UK, including for experiences of higher education, and for the development and operation of institutional equality, diversity and inclusivity practices and policies.

In this talk, we draw on findings from our British Academy-funded study of the pronunciation of students' names in institutions of higher education in England (Pilcher and Deakin-Smith 2022). In this exploratory study, we surveyed undergraduate degree-awarding institutions in England to gain a snapshot of existing policy and practice. Our survey captured responses from 31 institutions. Only two reported that they had a formal policy/guidance on the pronunciation of students' names, and both of these related solely to graduation. This finding suggests that higher education in England is not engaging systematically with the issue of the pronunciation of students' names. We also held qualitative interviews to better understand how students experience the (mis)pronunciation of their names and how staff manage students' names when they are unsure how those names should be correctly pronounced. Our focus in this presentation are the practices used by student-facing staff when they are unsure how to pronounce a student's name.

Staff participants in our studies reported being motivated by equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) concerns to engage in a range of innovative practices of their own devising. These included directly asking a student (on a one-to-one basis, not in a group setting) the correct way to say their name, Googling correct pronunciations, and writing phonetic 'cheat sheets'. In our analysis of these activities, we adapt Goffman's (1959) conceptualisation of identity work as being undertaken in different locales, including 'front stage' in public settings where there is an audience, and 'backstage', where preparatory rehearsals take place before a public 'show'. Whether undertaken in preparation for graduation ceremonies, daily in encounters with students, in front stage and/or in backstage locales, the various identity work activities described by staff in our studies in relation to the pronunciation of students' names were evidently ad hoc, and improvised, the result of their own individual motivation and efforts, and oftentimes, not entirely trusted to work. These findings point to a lack of training, resources, guidance and/or policy about the pronunciation of students' names at an institutional and/or national level or, at least, a lack of knowledge about its availability.

Our findings enable us to identify actionable ways (some suggested by our staff participants themselves) that practice and policy in higher education can better engage with this important EDI issue. We recommend that institutions of higher education develop and implement 'whole institution' solutions. Holistic and potentially transformative strategies might include: the incorporation of names and identities including in relation to pronunciation within EDI training for all staff (tailored to meet the differing needs of e.g., academics and professional services staff) and within induction activities for all students, whether domestic or international; the adoption of and the integration with existing digital students' records systems of fit-for-purpose software specifically designed to aid the correct pronunciation of names through capturing audio-recordings of individuals saying their own name (e.g., NameCoach 2023); the implementation of policy to encourage all staff and all students to include an audio-name recording (created, for example, through NameCoach) in their email signature as a route to normalising declarations of the pronunciation of names; the development at both local and national level of resource banks to widely publicise and distribute guidance and tools to aid the correct pronunciation of names.

Whole institution' strategies incorporating multifarious solutions would shift the work of correctly saying students' names more firmly to the 'backstage' and would help rebalance the significant identity workload currently borne by individual student-facing staff - and, of course, by students themselves. Such solutions would systematically engineer into the whole duration of a student's period of study and across all aspects of a student's day-to-day interactions with staff an embedded recognition of the importance of names for their embodied identities, for their experiences of higher education and for issues of equality, diversity and inclusion more broadly.

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Parallel Session 2:2

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023
Chair Alexander Bradley

7 Disabled Student Experiences in Higher Education

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Disabled students remain systematically disadvantaged compared to their non-disabled peers. It is essential that educational practitioners and policy makers appreciate the complexity of the disabled student experience in order to address this issue. In the present study, we identified 60 online forum posts (and 31 replies to the posts) discussing personal experiences of disability and Higher Education. Online posts (and their replies) were subject to inductive thematic analysis and six themes were extracted from the data. These themes were (i) Impact on education, (ii) Isolation from peers, (iii) Seeking advice and support, (iv) Barriers to assistance and accommodations, (v) Impact of accommodations, and (vi) Providing guidance and support. Recommendations for practice focus on the practical and social support required to ensure that disabled students are neither marginalized nor disadvantaged.

Full paper

Despite an apparent commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment, disabled students remain systematically disadvantaged compared to their non-disabled peers. For example, it may be more difficult for disabled students to access information during lectures (e.g., taking notes), participate in class activities (e.g., group-work), and complete assessments (e.g., oral presentations, written examinations) compared to non-disabled peers (Fuller et al., 2004). It is essential that education practitioners and policy makers appreciate the complexity of the disabled student experience in order to address this issue. For example, disabled students may be concerned that a request for accommodations makes them 'extravagant' (Goode, 2007) in an environment where disabled students are more likely to experience isolation, self-consciousness, fear of stigmatization, bullying and rejection (Shaw & Anderson, 2018). The present study investigates disabled student experiences of Higher Education through analysis of online

forum posts. We identified 60 online forum posts (and 31 replies to the posts) discussing personal experiences of disability and Higher Education. Posts (and their replies) were subject to inductive thematic analysis.

We identified six themes relating to disabled students' experiences of Higher Education. Theme 1: Impact on education (67% of original posts, 23% of responses). Students feared falling behind with their studies and were aware of the impact that disability had on their grades. As a consequence, a number of posts described suspension or a reduction in the number of classes taken. Students were aware of the additional challenges they experienced compared to their non-disabled peers. In particular, disabled students were aware that they needed to work harder than non-disabled students and were often underestimated or dismissed. Theme 2: Isolation from peers (18% of original posts, 3% of responses). Posts described an isolation from peers. In part, this reflected avoidance and othering from non-disabled peers. Isolation was also a consequence of the challenges posed by disability, especially in relation to the limited energy and time available to disabled students. Theme 3: Seeking advice and support (62% of original posts, 0% of responses). Posts often requested guidance from other forum users. Students were especially interested in advice related to engaging with disability services and advice was particularly valued by those in similar circumstances or with relevant experience.

Theme 4: Barriers to assistance and accommodations (47% of original posts, 16% of responses). The challenges experienced by students seeking assistance and accommodations were clear. For example, posts outlined the length of time required to arrange accommodations and denial of appropriate support. Where accommodations had been provided, some students reported a reluctance to use them. This reluctance reflected a range of issues including concerns that they were not 'disabled enough' or that they would be perceived 'differently' to their non-disabled peers by academics. Theme 5: Impact of accommodations (23% of original posts, 29% of responses). Posts often discussed the impact of accommodations. These included both the benefits afforded by accommodations and the limitations of these. The accommodations received did not, however, fully address the challenges experienced by disabled students. In part, limitations of the accommodations provided were a consequence of unsupportive disability services. Theme 6: Providing guidance and support (0% of original posts, 81% of responses). Responses to posts were typically focused on providing guidance and support. Guidance addressed both general health issues and academic studies and placed particular emphasis on engagement with disability services or academics and obtaining accommodations. Responses also provided emotional support and solidarity. To conclude, themes demonstrated the manner in which educational achievement and the broader student experience were affected by disability. Recommendations for practice focus on the practical and social support required to ensure that disabled students are neither marginalized nor disadvantaged.

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47 Beyond resilience: Exploring transitions to and through higher education of care experienced students and graduates.

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Whilst care experienced young people are one of the most under-represented groups in higher education in the UK, some care experienced young people do make successful transitions to and through university. Research in this field has routinely drawn on the concept of resilience to understand why some care experienced young people succeed in higher education despite experiencing considerable adversities and inequalities (Cotton et al., 2014). Drawing on the voices of 10 care experienced students and graduates from UK universities, the paper highlights the role of their learning identities, positive experiences of education during their time at university, supportive adults and social capital as key to the formation of their resilience. The data provides an opportunity to critique the concept of resilience which is often used to explain care experienced students' success in higher education by highlighting the role of wider circumstances in their successful transitions to and through higher education.

Full paper

In recent years there has been a burgeoning interest in care experienced students' transitions to higher education (Jackson and Ayaji 2007) and their experiences of it (Cotton et al., 2014; Cotton et al., 2017; Ellis and Johnston 2022). Research in this field has made significant progress in illuminating both the multifaceted challenges faced by care experienced students (Jackson et al., 2005; Jackson and Ayaji 2007; Ellis and Johnston 2022), as well as the positive outcomes and 'successes' of those who do make it to university and progress through it (Cotton et al., 2014; 2017). Given that care experienced students are amongst the most under-represented group of students in higher education (Harrison 2020), the recent focus on those who successfully transition to higher education and their experiences of it, is a valuable and welcome addition to research in this field.

As researchers have sought to understand care experienced students' successful transitions to and outcomes in HE, they have highlighted the numerous factors which help to explain why some care experienced students are successful in transitioning to HE and progressing in it. These factors include good prior educational attainment, supportive and encouraging adults (Driscoll 2013), stable and supportive school and care placements and good financial support (Jackson and Cameron 2012). In addition, young people's resilience and self-reliance has been identified as important in supporting young people's transitions to HE (Driscoll 2013). Indeed, the notion of resilience has become a widely used concept to explain why some young people with experience of care do well in and progress through HE, despite experiencing considerable adversities and hardships (Cotton et al., 2014; Pinkney and Walker 2020; Ellis and Johnston 2022). Researchers working in this field have been keen to emphasise that resilience is not an intrinsic characteristic, but rather, is enabled by environmental factors such as having supportive and caring adults (Driscoll 2013; Cotton et al., 2017). With respect to care experienced young people in higher education, Cotton et al (2017) argue that institutional and wider environmental factors are crucial in young people's university experiences and outcomes. Pinkney and Walker (2020) also reveal how care experienced students' success in higher education can be explained by a myriad of factors, including the presence of supportive adults who are able to provide practical, emotional and financial support, as well as students' own resilience, drive and determination. Collectively, these studies highlight the role of social environmental factors such as supportive relationships with key adults to students' resilience. In doing so, this body of research has countered individualising narratives embedded in resilience discourses in policy and public discourse.

Notwithstanding these important insights, there is a need to better understand the roll of young people's wider social and educational circumstances in their transitions to HE and progression in it. Drawing on data from qualitative interviews with 10 care experienced UK students and graduates, this paper reveals that a myriad of factors helps explain their successful transitions to university and progression in it. These include their positive learning identities and enjoyment of learning prior to and during their time at university. They also include supportive adults, social capital, chance opportunities and luck. These factors are socially structured by circumstances beyond the students and graduates' own making. Thus, the resilience shown by these students and graduates was deeply bound up with and had emerged from their wider circumstances, including their positive learning identities which had begun to form at earlier stages of education and prior to embarking on university. The paper reveals therefore that whilst the concept of resilience may have value in illuminating the determination and drive shown by individuals, we should recognise that resilience is always forged in the context of wider circumstances. The paper also argues that the over-reliance on the concept of resilience can mask the deep and enduring inequalities, experiences of adversities and trauma, which powerfully shape care experienced young people's experiences of higher education.

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32 Context Matters: How Human and Material Forces Shape Approaches to Targeting in WP

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Inequalities in who accesses and succeeds in English higher education persist. A key feature of policy aimed at 'widening participation' to HE has been the idea that targeting should be used to reach the most in need, under-represented groups. Through interviews with nineteen WP practitioners working across England, this research explores how national policy is translated into local settings when it comes to targeting. With a focus on professional contexts (the values, beliefs, and experiences of WP practitioners) and material contexts (resources, budget, staffing), it examines the degree to which variations in practice can be explained by context. Importantly, it also sheds

light on how context shapes the prioritisation of target groups and facilitates or impedes individual young people taking part in these activities.

Full paper

There remain stubborn inequalities in who enters and thrives in the English HE sector. For over two decades, government policy and regulation have directed HE institutions to deliver measures to widen participation and to target these efforts at students from under-represented groups. Practitioners working in discrete departments within universities which deliver WP outreach activities have been subject to shifting messages about targeting, with the conception of 'WP target groups' reconfiguring over time. Understanding how targeting policy is translated into practice within WP departments matters, because these decisions ultimately determine who is included, and who is excluded, from participating in potentially life-changing initiatives.

Taking a view of policy as enacted through a process of struggle, mediation and recontextualization involving a range of policy actors (Maguire et al., 2015; Ozga, 2000), this research explored the extent to which variations in targeting approaches are a product of the contextually-contingent nature of WP policy enactment. While a small body of research has examined the ways that English HEIs translate national WP policy into their local settings, this has tended to draw on institutional documents (McCaig, 2015; McCaig & Adnett, 2009) and interviews with university leaders and senior management (Butcher et al., 2012; Greenbank, 2006, 2007). Rarely have approaches to policy enactment been explored from the perspective of practitioners; policy actors situated 'on the ground' of WP (McCaig et al., 2022; Rainford, 2016, 2021).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nineteen WP practitioners working in HEIs across England, featuring a diverse sample of regions, institution types, and job roles. Transcripts were thematically analysed, guided by a framework of four contextual dimensions developed by Braun, Ball, Maguire, and Hoskins (2011) in theorising policy enactments within secondary schools. I focus here on two of the dimensions: professional and material (see Benson-Eggleton (2022) for a discussion of situated and external contexts).

The shaping force of the professional contexts that WP practitioners bring to their roles – their values, identities, and experiences - varied by the size of the WP team and its resources, the nature of their position within it, and their skills and knowledge related to targeting – but were always present. Practitioners were very rarely agency-less implementers of targeting policy; while heads and deputy heads of departments had more obvious roles in developing official strategies, those in non-management roles described ways that they nudged the execution of targeting to better fit with their personal ethics and beliefs about the aims of WP and which young people are most in need, as well as being informed by earlier experiences of delivering programmes. While this context was more subtle, there were multiple examples of practitioners shaping the prioritisation of different target groups, such as pushing for students outside of London to be eligible for programmes or making particular efforts to include more boys.

The material contexts of a WP department – its available budget, staffing and resources – reflected the institution's market position and student intake. Less diverse, high-tariff universities generally had much larger teams which included dedicated evaluation staff, who appeared to have a significant role in shaping the enactment of WP targeting policy, providing the 'interpretations of interpretations' that steer a team's approach. For some smaller WP departments, time and cost implications drove a reliance on postcode measures and school-level data. For all kinds of institutions, the quality of data available to carry out targeting policies – in particular the high degree of self-reporting for individualised measures – was a significant constraint. In some cases, this appeared to have consequences for the selection of target groups, as practitioners were dissuaded from data that was challenging to verify such as FSM and parental occupation, and more inclined to use 'quantifiable' postcode metrics. In addition, the level of demand for places on a WP programme relative to available resources also shaped targeting by necessitating a more or less strict approach. Effectively, those applying to popular programmes at high-status institutions are often required to meet a much greater number of WP criteria to be successful; this is likely to exclude young people who experience real disadvantage, but who don't tick every box.

While the interlinked contexts of an institution's position within the marketized HE sector, makeup of its student intake, and nature of its relationship with the regulator were found to be the primary forces shaping WP policy enactment, findings in relation to professional and material contexts suggest that a number of other factors inflect the

interpretation of targeting and that these contextualised interpretations have clear implications for the target groups that are taken forward.

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Parallel Session 2:3

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023
Chair Charlotte Verney

169 Exploring the Multidimensionality of Student Experience in Australian Higher Education: A Comparison between Domestic and International Students

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This paper investigates the key factors impacting the student experience in Australian higher education (HE) institutions, for international and domestic students. Drawing on data from the 2019 Student Experience Survey (SES) with a sample of 208,734 undergraduate and postgraduate students (54,613 being international students) from 39 institutions, this research provides empirical insights into the impact of various factors on the student experience. Results reveal that international students' experiences vary based on their region of origin. Being an international student moderates the effects of each aspect on the overall educational experience. Teaching quality, student support, and skills development have weaker effects on international students' overall experience compared to domestic students, while learner engagement and learning resources have stronger effects. These findings have significant implications for research, practice, and policy in HE, emphasizing the need to invest in the international student experience for improved university performance and an equitable education system.

Full paper

Introduction

The student experience in higher education (HE) is increasingly recognized as a crucial aspect, with its impact on the quality of education delivery being widely acknowledged [1, 2]. Although the term 'student experience' is often used, its definition is still unclear [3]. The concept has evolved to include not only teaching and learning, but also student's engagement with administrative and support services [1, 2, 4, 5, 6].

Furthermore, the larger cohort of international students in HE reinforces that the concept of a unidimensional student experience is no longer valid and a thorough assessment of the HE experience is required [4, 7, 8]. Most studies, however, focus on specific aspects of the HE experience and specific set of student demographics, failing to capture the multidimensionality of the HE student experience and the interactions between the various aspects of the student experience. This paper aims to address the gaps in the literature by offering a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensionality of the HE student experience in Australia.

Analytic approach

The study utilizes data from the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) surveys [9], more specifically from the 2019 Student Experience Survey (SES) dataset (n=208,734 undergraduate and postgraduate students from 39 HE institutions in Australia; with n=54,613, or 26.16%, being international students). The SES provides insights into five focus areas, including skills development (SD), learner engagement (LE), learning resources (LR), student support (SS), and teaching quality (TQ); as well as the overall educational experience (OE).

Firstly, we investigate the key factors impacting student experience and compare the experiences of domestic and international students by fitting multiple linear regression models of the following form:

$$E = \alpha + \beta_1 \times Int + \beta_2 \times C + e$$

Where E denotes a measure capturing one of the aspects of student experience or the overall educational experience (OE), α is the model's intercept; Int denotes the binary variable capturing the international status of the student, C is a set of control variables including student factors; β are coefficients (or vectors of coefficients) to be estimated; and e is the regression error.

The models are then used to examine how experiences vary for international students from different regions of origin.

We also investigate how international and domestic students differ in terms of the drivers of their overall educational experiences. The models include interaction terms between measures of various aspects of student experience (Exp) and international student status (Int). The models are of the following form:

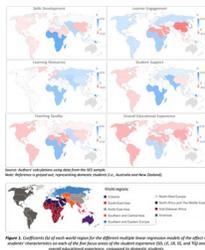
$$OE = \alpha + \beta_1 \times Int + \beta_2 \cdot (Int \times Exp) + \beta_3 \times Exp + \beta_4 \times C + e$$

Findings

The findings indicate that international students report a worse OE than domestic students. However, international students tend to report more positive experiences than domestic students with SD, LR, SS, and TQ, while they report worse experience with LE. The patterns for student citizenship/residence status and English-speaking background were comparable to international student status. The results also indicate that having positive experiences in all five focus areas is associated with a better OE. Furthermore, this relationship was more pronounced for TQ, which is in line with trends observed in the literature.

Compared to domestic students, international students from Oceania, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southern and Central Asia tend to have better OE and better experiences in all five focus areas (Figure 1). International students from other regions tend to have an inferior OE than domestic students, with students from North-East Asia reporting the worst experience. International students from North-East Asia also report the worst experience with SD and LE, while international students from North Africa and the Middle East report the worst experience with TQ. While international students from most regions have a better experience than domestic students with LR and SS, international students from North-West Europe have marginally inferior experiences with LR, and international students from the Americas and North-East Asia have slightly inferior experiences with SS.

Furthermore, this study found that being an international student moderates the effects of each of the aspects of student experience on the OE. The effect of LE and LR on the OE is stronger among international students than among domestic students. While the effect of SD, SS, and TQ on the OE is weaker among international students than among domestic students.



Implications

This research offers valuable insights for theory, policy, and practice in HE, contributing to the goal of transformative education for an interconnected and equitable world. The results suggest that policy initiatives aimed at improving international student experience across multiple dimensions can enhance overall educational experience, emphasizing the importance of investing in the international student experience as it is linked to university performance.

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207 More than food and fun: a systematic review of higher education orientation programs

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Orientation and transition programs are intended to introduce a student to their university environment, physical and cultural, and traditional include key elements. Despite this, there has not been comprehensive sector-wide consideration on the impact of these programs on student's wellbeing and academic outcomes at university. Therefore, we undertook a rigorous systematic literature review of orientation programs and their impacts to provide universities with a clearer understanding about what elements would support a student's positive wellbeing and academic outcomes.

Full paper

Introduction

For almost as long as university orientations have been standard practice, there has been questions regarding the value of such practices (for example: Chandler, 1972; Grier, 1966). In spite of this, orientations are run at higher education institutions around the world and are considered a fundamental event to support student's transition into the institutions community. Over the years, researchers and practitioners have highlighted the importance of participating in orientation, with impacts on retention (Krause et al., 2005), wellbeing (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), engagement with the university (Kift, 2009; Krause & Coates, 2008; Tinto, 1994), and successful completion of a degree (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). There appears to be consensus that orientation activities are indeed worthwhile for institutions to spend the time and money to run.

Previous researchers have indicated the value of orientation programs, bringing together theory, best practice, and research examples to support practitioners and researchers alike understand and support first year students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Upcraft et al., 2005) and are considered foundational documents. Included in Upcraft et al. (2005) is a study that was undertaken to understand how higher education institutions in the US organise, structure and evaluate the curricular and cocurricular elements of first year (Barefoot, 2005). This includes consideration for the orientation programming and noted that while most institutions conduct evaluations, insufficient information was found on the methods, and outcomes. Ultimately, many institutions were utilising measures of satisfaction as the basis of their program evaluation. Another chapter in Upcraft et al. (2005) recommends best practice considerations when designing orientation programs (Mullendore & Banahan, 2005). Even with these seminal documents, there appears a lack of consensus regarding which elements of orientation, including timing, length, and inclusions, have the greatest potential for impact.

Undertaking a systematic approach, this study seeks to synthesis key elements from 139 documents evaluating undergraduate orientation programs from the United States of America, Australia and the United Kingdom to gain a broader understanding of the overall effectiveness of orientation programs. Through this, I attempt to gain a clearer understanding of the intention of these programs, how they are evaluated, and determine if there are potential links between key program elements and outcomes, which could be recommended for inclusion in orientation programs more broadly. This paper also seeks to be of use to future researchers and practitioners, by identifying and synthesising key research to assist in identifying key priorities for future research.

Method

To identify existing evaluations, I conducted a systematic search informed by Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). This process of review was undertaken with the intent to provide a comprehensive analysis of orientation evaluations across a key section of the higher education sector. There has been increased recognition of the value of utilising the systematic review process as a research process within higher education (Bearman et al., 2012), with a number of systematic reviews and meta-analysis emerging in recent years (Berry, 2014; Franzoi et al., 2022; Matus et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2016; Tight, 2020; van der Zanden et al., 2018; Younger et al., 2019).

The intent of this review was to identify empirical, quantitative examinations that investigated the outcomes and impacts of orientation programs. To be included in this review, documents had to report quantitatively measured impacts of higher education orientation programs, located within the US, Australia and the UK. Quantitative studies were selected as we need to move beyond participation numbers and satisfaction ratings and consider tangible impact. This will ensure we can demonstrate the value of these programs to students and institutions alike.

Additionally, documents were from 2000 onwards due to changes across the sector in relation to technological, social and economic changes that have influenced participation in higher education (Baik et al., 2015; Mullendore & Banahan, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These changes have resulted in government led policies intent on increasing participation, particular for students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education (Australia. Department of Employment & Training, 1990; Gale & Parker, 2013; Thomas, 2017; Wood & Breyer, 2017).

Results and discussion

The analysis of this systematic review is still underway but will be finalised prior to the conference. This analysis seeks to answer the following questions: what is the intention of orientation programs; what is included in said programs; what is being measured; and how long does participation have an impact.

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389 Precarity and privilege: exploring international early career researchers' experiences in Chinese universities

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In the context of rapid development of internationalisation in Chinese higher education, as well as the increasing mobility of academics across country borders, more and more international early career researchers (ECRs) are seeking career opportunities in Chinese universities. Using 32 in-depth interviews, we investigated international ECRs' acculturation strategies at Chinese universities through Berry's theoretical tools. We find that the adaptability of experienced international scholars are key indicators that have successfully led participants to achieve integration strategy, and we demonstrate how a lack of response and feedback from the institution might lead participants to the status of marginalisation and separation. Moreover, we emphasise that the individual strategy is not always freely chosen, but largely impacted and constrained by the contextual feature of institutional culture. We highlight the importance of notifying the dynamic nature of cross-cultural adaptation, and recognise the fluidity ingrained in this process.

Full paper

In the context of globalisation and knowledge economy, the competition for talents with internationally recognised expertise has spread around the world (Brown and Lauder, 1996; Altbach, 2015). Many nation-states have launched policy and funding schemes to promote international mobility of university academics (Fahey & Kenway, 2010). Moreover, the internationalisation of higher education has significantly promoted the academic mobility across nation borders, and sometimes across different cultures. China has actively joined the positional competition in the global battle for world-class excellence (Hazelkorn, 2009; Huang, 2015). As the rapid development of internationalisation in Chinese higher education and the growing uncertainty in global HE sector, the number and scale of international scholars, particularly Early Career Researchers (ECRs) working in China has significantly increased. However, existing studies about international scholars working in China has been focusing on the policy and practices of internationalisation at the institutional level (Huang, 2007; Yang, 2005; Ma et.al, 2012). Only few research paid attention on international ECRs' individual experiences. Their real encounters in the Chinese academic context are far from being fully studied.

As part of a larger project on international scholars' working and living experiences in China, this article focuses on the exploration of international ECRs acculturation strategies and how their choice of strategies were affected by their unique encounters with the social and cultural context of Chinese universities. We adopted a qualitative research method and conducted in-depth interviews in 2016 and 2023 in top research universities in Shanghai. We collected more than 400 international scholars' profiles from universities' official websites and recruited 32 international scholars through email contact or snowballing. To achieve a more representative and balanced group of participants, we also adopted purposive sampling method to incorporate participants relatively underrepresented in the profile analysis stage, such as female academics and those from non-Western countries.

In this article, we revisit Berry's influential theory on acculturation and utilise it as a conceptual tool to identify international ECRs' strategies and unpack the hidden contextual determinants that take a significant role in generating their unique pathways towards cross-cultural adaptation (Berry, 1997; 2005). We suggest that international ECRs are generally caught up in the nexus of precarity and privilege. Both their career status and international background act as essential roles in shaping their unique pathway in Chinese academic milieu. In regards to the integration strategy, we find the inclusiveness of the institutional culture, and the adaptability of experienced international scholars are key indicators that have successfully led participants to achieve mutual accommodation in a plural cultural environment. In assimilation strategy, we explain why early career researchers are more likely to apply

the assimilation strategy, which entails a high degree of compliance with the dominant culture. Moreover, we demonstrate how a lack of response and feedback from the institution might cause an enduring sense of disappointment and emotional suffering, and eventually lead participants to the status of marginalisation and separation. We emphasise that the individual strategy is not always freely chosen, but largely impacted and constrained by the contextual feature of institutional culture and social milieu in general. According to the dynamic interactions between the individual and the dominant group, one's adopted strategy might subject to changes at different stages of the adaptation phase. We suggest that the categorisation and identification of acculturation strategies are helpful to understand international scholars' situation at a given point, but it is of necessity to notify the dynamic nature of cross-cultural adaptation, and recognise the fluidity ingrained in this process.

The results of this study provide detailed discussions on international scholars' encounters in the context of Chinese higher education system, which complicate the current linear understanding of this group's cross-cultural adaptation process and further contribute to the application of Berry's theory with rich and nuanced empirical data. This paper is also intended to contribute to the current literature, policy, and practice in the context of the limited attention that has been paid to international scholars in China. This study focused on providing novel and detailed accounts of international ECRs' real-life challenges in Chinese academia, with an intention to facilitate mutual understanding between Chinese academia and international academics, and to provide useful implications for practitioners involved in international higher education.

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Parallel Session 2:4

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023

317 'I would probably still be sort of floundering a little bit now if I didn't have the Foundation year and the skills that it afforded us.'

Louise Webber

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Foundation Year programmes enable students, who had not considered university level study, to embark on a four-year degree programme (Webber, 2023,a,b). This conference paper and presentation will share initial findings from a small-scale longitudinal research study in the UK, focusing on the lived experience of five students during their degree with Foundation Year programme (Webber, 2020, 2023a, 2023b). Initial findings reveal how well the Foundation Year prepared students for university level study including the development of study skills, self-belief and academic confidence (Webber, 2023a, 2023b) . Factors that have led to these findings will be explored during the presentation.

Full paper

Introduction

In the UK, Foundation year programmes provide a stepping-stone into Higher Education for those believing it is not accessible to them (Prospects, 2023). They promote widening participation by accepting students with low UCAS tariffs, students with non-traditional qualifications, mature students and those who have been out of education for a long time. Foundation year programmes are viewed as a pathway to promote equal opportunities for disadvantaged and mature students (Nathwani, 2019). A Foundation Year programme enables students to become accustomed to the field of study and develop study skills needed for university level study (Prospects, 2023).

Research aims and methods

We introduced the BA Hons Early Childhood Studies or Education with Foundation year programme at the University of Plymouth in 2019 . We were curious about whether this course prepared students for university level study, and how successful these students would be during the duration of their four-year degree (Webber, 2023a, 2023b). We felt the best way to measure this was through a longitudinal project to track the experiences of the new students on our Foundation year programme, from their first year to the end of their degree studies.

Research into the extent to which Foundation year programmes successfully prepare students for degree level study is limited (Curtis et al., 2017; Nathwani, 2019). Therefore, this longitudinal project offered an opportunity to collate narrative data to develop the body of knowledge from a student perspective.

Ethical approval was granted through the University Ethical Committee. Five mature students volunteered to be part of the longitudinal research study, names have been changed to preserve anonymity. Interviews took place twice a year, during their four year degree programme, to capture their changing experiences and perceptions of their university journey.

Findings

For the purpose of this paper, I am going to focus specifically on how well the Foundation Year prepared students for university level study.

The students were glad that they had the opportunity to complete the Foundation year and felt it gave them the necessary skills to embark on year one of university with confidence:

'I think the Foundation year massively prepared me for it [Year 1]. I think if I had gone straight into this, I think I would not be okay.' Flo

'...so pleased that I'd done that year [Foundation Year], and I would suggest anybody, who, you know they might have been out of education for a while, raised a family, gone to work, maybe they've left school but are not quite sure that they've got the skills to jump straight into a first year, I would recommend it.' Diana

'I'm really glad that I did it. I think maybe that year allowed me to sort of park my old career and get a bit of confidence that I could do something different... it was just a comfortable experience and I think...I might not have made it through this year if I didn't do that.' Kate

Many students, initially lacked confidence in their ability to study and felt they needed to prove themselves, they also struggled with imposter syndrome (Chapman, 2015).

'I've got impostor syndrome enough as it is. To know whether or not that was the right step to take at the time [starting the Foundation Year], I was a bit confused, but now I'm sort of like loud and proud I did it and I'm pleased I did.' Diana.

'Foundation for me has been great and it's shown me that I am capable of certain things that I would have said, no, no, she can't do that. Because I've been told my whole life you can't do that.' Stephanie

Being able to develop their study skills enabled their academic confidence to develop:

'I think Foundation ... sets you up as a student more than anything.' Flo

'I feel like all of the work done in Foundation year is a huge help for the first year because you get that head start ... whereas I am more confident in my coursework than a lot of my colleagues are.' Tony

Conclusion

Initial findings from this small-scale study suggest the value of Foundation year programmes in developing the confidence and academic skills of students who may not have considered university level study before. Foundation year programmes have the potential to transform student self-belief and open up opportunities that they had not thought possible. These themes will be explored in more detail in future papers and at the SRHE conference to analyse good practice and factors that may have led to these findings.

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274 Transferring a Mathematical Problem-Solving Experience across contextual borders: A case study of an international educational transfer collaboration between Egypt and the UK

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

This paper is situated in an ongoing curricular transfer collaboration project between NewGiza University (NGU-Egypt) and University College London (UCL-United Kingdom). Using the Integrated Learning Curriculum framework (Mitchell et al., 2019) as an underpinning theoretical framework, consultants from UCL have designed a challenge-based curriculum that aims to equip undergraduate engineers with problem solving skills enabling them to confidently approach the job market in the 21st century. Over two years, researchers from both institutions have worked closely together to explore best administrative, academic and policy practices for transferring curricula across borders. Using reflective journal logs as the data collection point, this paper adopts pattern matching to identify enablers and barriers to the curricular transfer. Findings indicate interesting perceptions of the learning ethos across both cultural identities. The study discusses implications to these findings along with opportunities for future research and policy engagements.

Full paper

Introduction

In this study we present our research-informed understanding of international contexts of curricular transfer in Higher Education. We identify contextual barriers and challenges embedded in the exchange policy and enacted in the instructional practice. We briefly explain the research design, articulated to address the question: "How can on-site research practice inform the administrative policy of curricular transfer of educational practice across international cultural borders?" We conclude with a discussion of the implications of findings for research, policy and practice.

International Contexts of Practice: The Global Classroom Dilemma

Given the growing precarity around the educational world, which has partially been caused by the pandemic, the growing numbers of displaced learners and other forms of distress, the post-COVID world is experiencing a very rapid move towards the new trend of the 'global classroom' (Makramalla, 2022; Wiek et.al., 2013; Mason, 2002). This means that across borders of culture, time zones and societies, learners can engage together and individually with any instructional platform that is made available to them. We argue that this expansion into the 'global classroom' presents itself as a challenge to local practitioners, as an underexplored area for researchers and as an opportunity for policy makers.

International Contexts of Practice:

Across contextual borders, local practitioners are now adjusting themselves to the growing trend of a diverse and heterogeneous virtual and in-person learner body, made up of local, displaced and foreign learners. Each of these groups of learners carries with them a cultural baggage of expectations from the teaching and learning experience (Makramalla & Stylianides, 2019).

International Contexts of Exchange and Legislation

Across contextual borders, local practitioners are preparing the aforementioned heterogeneous learner body to be part of a growing globalised community of practitioners, where cultural heritage and societal trends are mostly disregarded (Makramalla, 2022). As a result, practitioners in the Higher Education sector target the standardisation of their practices and of their learning experiences, often disregarding the uniqueness of each contextual culture (Makramalla & Tilley, 2022). While this standardisation policy does have its advantages, it often overlooks the importance of considering locally contextual voices and footprints of culture. This paper reports on an attempt to foster this culturally sensitive contextual exchange.

The research question that guides this paper is hence: “How can on-site research practice inform the administrative policy of curricular transfer of educational practice across international cultural borders?”

Research Design

This study presents analysis of a longitudinal collection of reflective journal logs written across two years by a member of NGU. This facilitated comparative analysis between (1) the reflective entries related to the administrative policy of curricular transfer and (2) the reflective entries related to the contextual culturally sensitive practice of the cross-border exchanged curriculum. This longitudinal analysis adopted pattern matching (Yin, 2009) as a main methodology. Identified patterns have been cross coded and further examined to uncover how they inform international policies of academic exchange in the Higher Education sector.

Because of the word limitations, we will focus on presenting one main pattern in the findings. Throughout the reflective journal entries, it was apparent that the nature of knowledge was perceived differently across the two exchange parties. We will report further on this multi-layer investigation as part of the findings of the larger study from which this work is derived. Regarding the nature of knowledge, we mean the perceived static versus dynamic nature of mathematical content knowledge (Schoenfeld, 1992).

Implications on complexities of cross-border practice

In their work on the nature of knowledge, Schulmann et al. (1987) make a distinction between content and pedagogical knowledge. While the first refers to the perceived nature of the content area itself, the second refers to the perceived approach to teaching it. For the case of mathematics, our analysis identified interesting cultural variations.

While one context considered mathematics to be a dynamic body of knowledge that drives the problem-solving investigative practice, the second context considered it to be a static body of practice that needed to be mastered in order to equip students to use it for other technical courses. As a result, the pedagogical practice of mathematics was very procedurally oriented on one side and was envisioned as very challenged based on the other. This finding acts as one lens to better understand the resulting complexities of practice, research and policy.

Discussion

The presented findings constitute a small part of our ongoing effort to explore how curricula have been enacted in the cross-cultural transfer. Our target is to identify ideal ways to transfer a learning experience across borders, while respecting the local culture.

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126 Purposeful and unintentional greenwashing in Higher Education.

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

HEIs are making commitments to greenhouse gas reduction and adopting sustainable practices with increasing vigour. But might their progress be jeopardized by greenwashing? This paper argues that both purposeful and unintentional greenwashing are a potential threat to HEIs' engagement with the sustainability agenda. It reports on a pilot research study which engages with a UK HEI's marketing and sustainability departments and finds evidence of unintentional greenwashing influenced by a lack of sustainability literacy and collaborative orientation. It articulates a plan for future research with UK HEIs to enable us to challenge purposeful greenwashing and avoid unintentional greenwashing within the HE sector, and develop policy relating to greenwashing to inform marketing departments' activity. We aim to support sustainable behaviours within HEI communities, building green trust within the sector, and providing our students with exemplars of good practice to inform their future professional endeavours (Cownie, 2021).

Full paper

Understanding Greenwashing.

Whilst the origins of greenwashing are environmental claims and practices, Pizzetti, Gatti and Seele (2021, 23) claim that greenwashing can be conceived as a multi-faced phenomenon encompassing both environmental and social issues. Falsehood is the kernel of greenwashing and Pizzetti et al. (2021) offer a neat summary ‘the discrepancy between ‘responsible words’ and ‘irresponsible walks’’. Greenwashing has a wide range of negative consequences including reduced trust and brand reputation and increased negative online word-of-mouth (Jahadi and Acikdilli, 2009; Guo et al., 2018).

Greenwashing is the purposeful or unintentional disconnect between sustainability-related practice and communication. Purposeful greenwashing can be conceived as opportunistic behaviour, the deceitful pursuit of self-interest (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) embracing the violation of implicit or explicit promises (John, 1984, 279). Miller, Munoz & Mallin (2021, 138) define opportunism as ‘behavior where candor or honesty is non-existent’.

If greenwashing can be purposeful or unintentional, communication strategies and artefacts which knowingly seek to misrepresent practice would be examples of purposeful greenwashing. Such approaches might comprise selective disclosure of positive information with manipulative intents (Pizzetti et al., 2021, 23). An HEI might highlight its move to solar PV panels but purposefully omit to mention its investments into fossil fuels, displaying the lack of candor highlighted by Miller et al. (2021). However, practices which do not live up to the agreed claims of an organisation, or put undue focus on relatively unimportant activity could comprise unintentional greenwashing. Such practices could be uninformed, imprecise or lazy.

Learning from a pilot study

This exploration of greenwashing in HE commenced with a pilot study aiming to:

Understand experiences of creating sustainability-related marketing content within HE.

It sought to explore whether intentional or unintentional greenwashing was evident within the marketing practices of a UK HEI. The research sample comprised ten employees within the institution’s marketing and sustainability departments operating at a range of roles and levels. Ethical approval was secured to include informed consent. Online semi-structured interviews were chosen to understand participants’ experiences of working in this area and explore the possible evidence of greenwashing. The research tool included open questions around participants’ experiences of working with the sustainability agenda, developing messages around sustainability and the challenges participants experienced in developing messages around sustainability. Greenwashing was explicitly introduced towards the end of the interviews.

Participants acknowledged that greenwashing was evident within HE – even suggesting that greenwashing was normalized. Little sense of purposeful greenwashing – as deceit-based opportunistic behaviors (Morgan and Hunt 1994) – emerged. However unintended greenwashing was evident, reflecting a discrepancy between responsible words and actions (Pizzetti et al., 2021).

Three key themes emerged which may help us to understand unintended greenwashing: sustainability literacy; collaborative orientation; and authentic sustainability messaging. Figure one shows how together they may contribute to unintended greenwashing within HE.

Insert figure one

The central greenwashing concern expressed by the HEI sustainability team was a combination of over-simplification within communication messaging, with a focus on light, happy stories about activities with low impact. A lack of sustainability literacy within the marketing team resulted in emphasis placed on aspects of sustainability practices

which ultimately are not very significant (e.g. recycling). This was further undermined by patchy collaboration between the sustainability and marketing teams. One participant commented “Oh no, that’s not at all what we meant; it’s come out a bit wrong”. In short, they recognised unintended greenwashing. Key barriers to the creation of authentic sustainability messaging were a lack of a collaborative orientation compounded by low levels of sustainability literacy within the marketing team. A disconnect between authentic sustainability messaging and sustainability activity comprised unintended greenwashing which may reduce trust and sustainability behaviours.

Moving forward

Drawing from the learnings of the pilot study and initial evidence that unintended greenwashing is relevant to HE, future research is proposed, extending its scope to UK HEIs within Times Higher Impact Rankings (2023). The research project aims to examine the nature, drivers and implications of unintended greenwashing behaviours within UK higher education. Its focus will be staff and student focused activity, including recruitment of prospective students and internal communications. Mixed methods will be adopted, embracing survey and semi-structured interviews amongst marketing managers and executives within HEIs’ marketing departments, sustainability teams, students and university staff.

This research can inform the development of policy relating to greenwashing within higher education. As universities press forward on sustainability, unintended greenwashing threatens their success. This study suggests that universities must attend to unintended greenwashing to influence the trust and sustainability practices (current and future) of our students and staff.

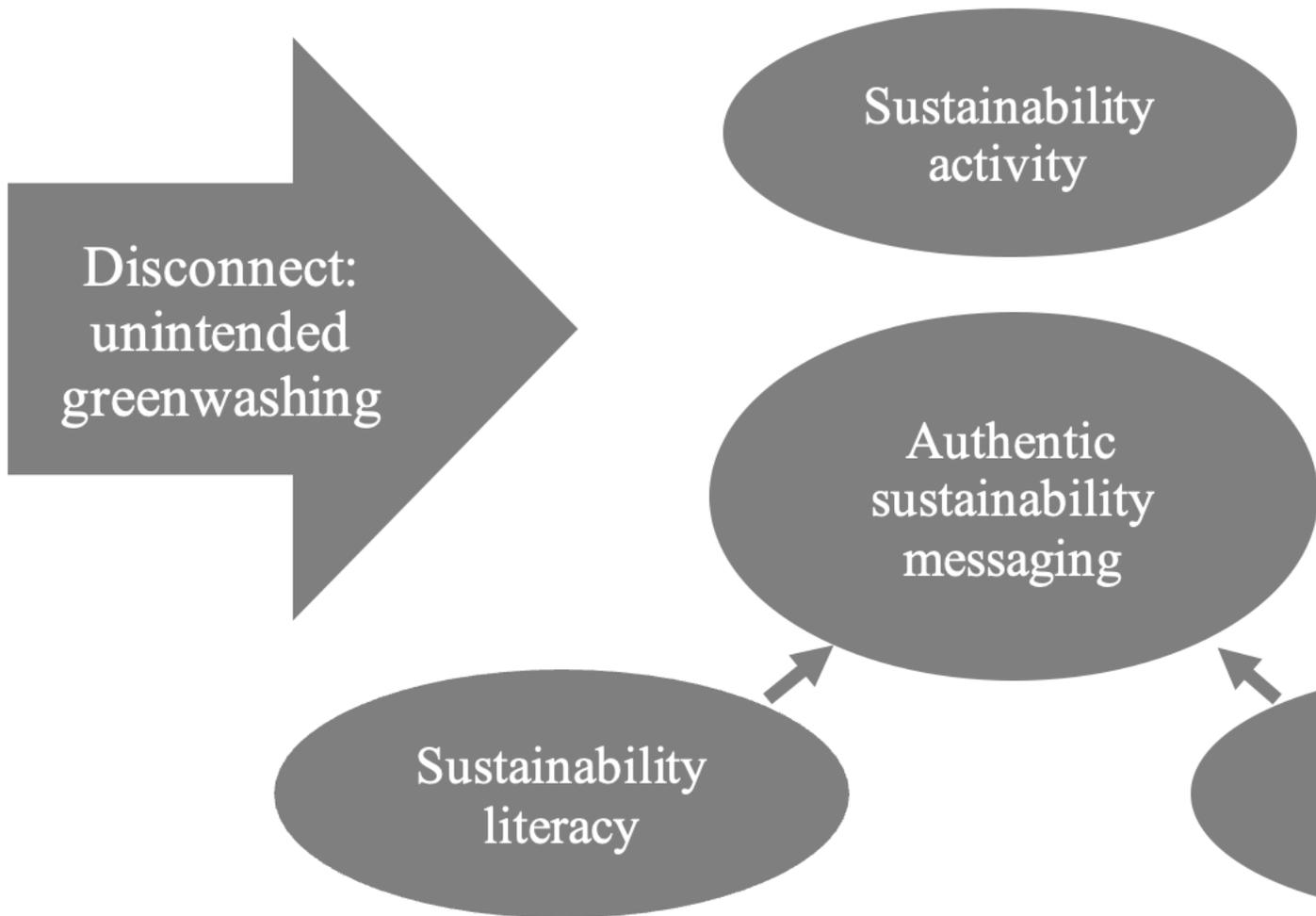


Figure one: Emerging conceptual framework

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Parallel Session 2:5

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Karen Mpamhanga

12 Meeting Sustainable Development Goal 4 – A Case Study Of the Innovation Processes of Challenger Universities in Africa

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Introduction. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Africa is hampered by several demographic, historical, and economic challenges in the incumbent Higher Education system. Recently, new disruptive innovators, so-called 'challenger universities' emerged. This paper explores and compares challenger universities' innovation processes to provide accessible, affordable, and quality Higher Education.

Methodology. A qualitative multiple case-study research design is applied. Unit of analysis are two challenger universities operating in Africa: Nexford University and the African Leadership University. Document analysis was used to collect data, and O'Leary's (2014) 'interview technique' was used to identify connections and differences between cases.

Findings. Five critical innovation practices were identified: financial innovation, the Hub and Spoke model, competency-based online education, a focus on employability, and the use of emerging technologies.

Value: Results offer insights into how to achieve SDG 4, and also add nuances to the innovation debate, which is dominantly situated in the Anglo-Saxion context

Full paper

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal ('SDG') 4 outlines that by 2030 all women and men should have equal access to affordable and quality tertiary education, including university. Moreover, such education should "increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (United Nations, 2023a). This target specifically "emphasizes that higher education must be globally accessible to all and of high quality" (United Nations 2023b).

However, two key barriers prevent SDG 4 from being achieved in the context of Higher Education. Firstly, although student enrollment in tertiary education has grown substantially over the last decades, Africa has the lowest tertiary gross enrollment ratio globally. Existing universities in sub-Saharan Africa cannot absorb the growing demand (UNESCO, 2010), leaving millions of eligible students unable to enrol in incumbent institutions of Higher Education. Secondly, Africa's existing public higher education system is hampered by several political, cultural, historical, and economic challenges (Teferra and Altbach, 2004; Nyangau, 2014; Chipperfield, 2016; World Bank, 2017), such as overcrowded classrooms, rising student-teacher ratios, and deteriorating infrastructure (World Bank, 2017, p.46). Innovations are needed to address incongruities in the existing Higher Education system in Africa and achieve a further substantial increase in student enrollment set out in Africa's Agenda 2063 (African Union, 2023). However, there are many barriers to innovation in incumbent universities, which, while not change-averse, are slow to change (Cooley and Towers, 1996).

However, in recent years, new disruptive innovators in Higher Education, so-called challenger universities, are emerging and growing (Marcus, 2021; Barosevcic, 2020, 2020a). Challenger universities are "moderately to extremely innovative new institutions that offer a combination of new student experiences and unique outcomes

propositions all the way through to highly targeted and tailored offers with huge potential for scale” (Barosevcic, 2020a).

This paper explores the innovation processes challenger universities apply to contribute to SDG 4. The research question posed is: *How are challenger universities innovating to provide accessible, affordable, and quality Higher Education that prepares graduates with the relevant skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship?*

Methodology

A qualitative multiple case study research design (Stake, 1995) is applied. Unit of analysis are two challenger universities operating in Africa: Nexford University and the African Leadership University. Document analysis was used to collect data, and O’Leary’s (2014) ‘interview technique’ was used to identify connections and differences between cases.

Findings

Results suggest four key innovation practices. Firstly, to make Higher Education accessible and affordable, both universities are engaged in process innovation in the form of financial innovations, including innovative pricing structures and Income-Sharing-Agreements. Utilizing the Hub-and-Spoke model also substantially reduces per-unit costs. Rather than constituting incremental innovations to help students pay fees without altering the business model of the university, collective efforts implemented by both case universities constitute radical innovations, significantly changing how the universities deliver value to their students, i.e., how they provide affordable education at scale (Christensen, 1997; Du Plessis, 2007).

Secondly, to provide quality Higher Education, both case universities implement product innovations (competency-based online learning) and business model innovations (Hub-and-Spoke model). Competency-based learning answers the call for more career-oriented education (Mintz, 2022) and more flexible education (Mintz, 2022) because students can shape their educational experience either by influencing who and what they learn (ALU) or by choosing a specific future-oriented degree and deciding upon the speed of their study (NXU). The Hub-and-Spoke Model furthermore allows both universities to offer a student experience distinguishable from incumbent universities, address the many challenges inherent in delivering online education in Africa (Bayusuf et al., 2021), and encounter the shortage of Ph.D.-level educated lecturers (Aduda, 2016; Chipperfield, 2016; Chuks Mba, 2017; Nganga, 2010, 2017).

Thirdly, both universities significantly improve educational outcomes by embedding students’ career readiness and workplace competencies across the learning experience. As a result, while graduate employment rates remain low in most of Africa (Omolo, 2010; World Bank, 2017), 85 percent of ALU graduates are placed in jobs within six months of graduation, and 90 percent of NXU alumni achieve a 3-5x return on their investments.

Finally, utilizing new technologies constitutes the necessary infrastructure to establish affordable, scalable, quality education models.

Value

Hence, by drawing upon emerging theories from innovation management and Higher Education (challenger universities), this paper contributes practical examples of managing disruptive innovations and theoretical suggestions for further study. It also adds geographic nuances to the innovation debate, which is dominantly situated in the Anglo-Saxon context. Finally, results also offer new, practical insights into how to provide affordable, accessible and quality Higher Education.

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79 Higher Education Is A Scam: A Critical Media Analysis of Value Construction for Higher Education In Nigeria

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Coupled with its postcolonial and contemporary challenges, the discussion about the role and value of Higher Education (HE) in Nigeria has gained traction among its stakeholders. This research critically explores how the value of HE in Nigeria is being constructed in public discourse. Media analysis, coupled with a discourse approach, was used to reconnoitre the value construction and narrative hegemony of the role of HE. The finding shows three dominant frames for constructing HE in Nigeria: (1) labour market value-driven model of education; (2) vocational-oriented education, (2) and neoliberalisation of education. Also, there was a power imbalance and social inequality in the discourse around HE, where the government and academics have more discursive power and control over this

discourse in the media. This study recommends exploring the perspectives of underrepresented voices in the discourse around HE in Nigeria and the impacts of neoliberalisation of education on student experiences and outcomes.

Full paper

The discussion around higher education's challenges and transformational value has gained purchase among its stakeholders (Jaja, 2013; Uduk, 2016; Oni et al., 2010; Ogunode and Musa, 2020; Asiyai, 2013). Some have attributed these challenges and "value naming" to the inability of higher education to cater for the exponential increase in yearly enrolment and the country's population (see Chukwurah, 2011; Kanyip, 2013). Other researchers have identified issues such as policy rigidity and repudiation, inequity in access and participation, western-centric curriculum, poor funding, uncanny lecturer-student ratio, incessant strike actions, gaps in skills, knowledge and value provided and demands of labour markets and workforce, and implicit and explicit exclusion because of individual makers of differences or identities (see Okebukola, 2006; Uduk, 2016; Arowosegbe, 2016; Ogunode, 2020).

While there has been extensive empirical and positional research on the challenges facing higher education in Nigeria (see Okebukola, 2003; Uduk, 2016; Arowosegbe, 2016; Ogunode and Musa, 2020), none of these studies employs a media analysis and critical discourse analysis as a theory and method to examine how the value of higher education and its challenges are being constructed in public discourse; This pilot study fills this gap and hopes to make meaning stride to the prevailing debates on higher education research in Nigeria.

The discourse analysis methodology involved the selection of two (2) Nigerian newspapers (Punch and Daily Trust) published between 2021 to 2022. These two media outlets were chosen because they are ranked top among the rest for wider coverage of audiences and their consistency of publishing education and policy issues; they have excellent editorial standards and are go-to for education officers and policymakers in Nigeria (Adeyemo, 2015). The time horizon (2021-2022) was also considered because of the small-scale nature of this inquiry and to ensure the rigour of the finding of this study. Besides, this period could be regarded as Post-lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was when different alternative schooling emerged, and the value of education was massively questioned in Nigeria, where access to the internet for online learning was foreboding.

The study built on prior literature that has illustrated various constructs for students and HE, such as students as consumers rather than learners, neoliberalisation of HE, and students as future workers. The analysis found a similar construct of HE in Nigeria, primarily as a 'factory' for future workers, leading to three framing ideologies: a labour market value-driven model, a shift to vocational-oriented education, and the commodification or marketisation of education.

The findings indicated a prevailing narrative within Nigerian HE institutions about the ideal university model, suggesting that the 'common sense' approach for universities is to prioritise entrepreneurship and labour market readiness for students. The discourse emphasised the role of universities in workforce development and economic growth, signalling a shift from traditional academic-centric approaches to a more market-oriented model. This shift aligns with broader global trends towards the commodification and neoliberalisation of education.

The discourse analysis also revealed that the perspectives of academics and government officials dominate the educational policies and practices discourse, potentially sidelining the valuable input of other stakeholders. The underrepresented voices of students, parents, non-academic professionals, and non-governmental organisations could result in a mismatch between the education provided and the practical needs of students and the job market.

Additionally, the use of images of government officials and academics accompanying their statements in the media can lend authority and credibility to the discourse, potentially endorsing the presented views as 'official' or 'correct.' This finding parallels strategies in political discourse used to legitimise positions and actions, presenting them as beneficial, necessary, or inevitable.

Overall, this research uncovers a significant ideological shift in higher education, as portrayed in Nigerian media. The dominant perspective frames universities as labour market-oriented institutions, emphasising vocational skills, and promoting marketised education. The study emphasises the importance of including multiple perspectives in shaping education policies and practices, which currently overlook the perspectives of essential stakeholders.

Further research is recommended to explore these underrepresented perspectives in the discourse around HE in Nigeria. Also, it would be valuable to investigate the impacts of the marketisation and neoliberalisation of education on student experiences, career aspirations, and transitions into the job market.

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204 Teaching Practice Experience and Professional Skills Development in Student Teachers: A Case of Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This case study investigates the influence of Teaching Practice (TP) on the professional skills development of education students at Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria. Seventy-five 300 and 400 Level education students were purposively selected for the study, and a Likert rating scale questionnaire was used for data collection. Findings reveal that students' TP experiences positively contributed to the development of various professional skills. Interactions with colleagues, co-operating teachers, and university supervisors were identified as significant factors influencing the enhancement of these skills. The study underscores the importance of co-operating teachers and university supervisors in facilitating the development of students' professional skills during TP. These individuals bear the vital responsibility of mentoring student teachers and proactively addressing any negative perceptions or attitudes they may hold towards teaching. The study made recommendations on how teaching practice exercise can be improved.

Keywords: Colleagues, co-operating teacher, professional skills, student teachers, teaching practice, university supervisor

Full paper

Background

Teaching practice is essential for preparing student teachers through practical training to become effective and competent classroom teachers (Khalid, 2014). Nigerian universities, including Lead City University, have made it mandatory for education students to undergo teaching practice for a minimum of twelve weeks before graduation, recognizing the importance of work experience in developing professional skills. However, previous literature (Ukoh, 2016; Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017) questions the effectiveness of the program. Issues such as students not giving it enough importance, limited engagement between supervisors and students, and uninteresting co-operating teachers have been reported, resulting in a lack of interaction and learning opportunities. These challenges contribute to concerns about the quality of teachers produced and their classroom performance in Nigeria.

To address these concerns and improve the teaching practice program, it is crucial to assess its effectiveness, particularly at Lead City University, Ibadan. This study aims to examine the influence of student teachers' teaching practice experiences on their development of professional skills, focusing on education students at Lead City University. To achieve the aim, one research question and one hypothesis were raised.

RQ: To what extent does the TP exercise enhance the development of student teachers' professional skills?

Ho: Student teachers' experiences with different individuals (colleagues, co-operating teachers and university supervisors) they interacted with during TP will have no significant influence on their development of professional skills.

Student Teachers' experiences during TP and their development of Professional Skills

It is expected that teaching practice would enhance student teachers acquisition of professional skills (Aglazor, 2017). These professional skills are the expertise, personal qualities and competencies that a teacher needs to possess and display in order to be effective on the job as a teacher. Such skills that were considered in this study include lesson plan preparation, self-confidence, effective classroom management, communication skills, selection of instructional materials, time management, evaluation of students' performance, selection of appropriate teaching methods and student-teacher relationship (Ukoh, 2016). Student teachers experiences during TP have been found to have influence on the development of their professional skills (Aglazor, 2017; Ikitde, & Ado, 2015; Khalid, 2014). Several factors, which contribute to experiences of student teachers during TP have been identified in literature. However, the focus of this study is on student teachers' interactions with colleagues, cooperating teachers and university supervisors.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive case study research with Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria as the case study university. In Lead City University, students go for their first teaching practice at the end of their 200 level second semester and the second one at the end of the 300 level second semester. Therefore, the respondents (n = 75) were purposively selected from 300 and 400 level education students during the second semester of the 2021/2022 academic session. A Likert rating scale questionnaire was used for data collection (r=0.79) and descriptive analysis and simple regression were employed for data analysis.

Results and Discussion

The weighted mean of student teachers' development of professional skills during TP was 3.33 (SD=0.58), indicating that the majority of student teachers agreed that TP enhances the development of the listed professional skills. The most developed skill, according to the students, was self-confidence in effective lesson delivery (x=3.44, SD=0.66), followed by communication skills (x=3.41, SD=0.76), lesson note and lesson plan preparation (x=3.39, SD=0.73), evaluating students' performance (x=3.35, SD=0.69), selection of appropriate teaching methods (x=3.32, SD=0.76), relationship with students (x=3.32, SD=0.64), selection of instructional materials (x=3.31, SD=0.68), improvisation of teaching aids (x=3.29, SD=0.67), effective classroom management (x=3.28, SD=0.81), and time management (x=3.23, SD=0.83) in that order. This finding aligns with previous research acknowledging work experience as an effective method for developing professional and transferable skills (Tymon, 2013; Marais & Meier, 2014; Pitan & Muller, 2023).

The results of multiple regression analysis indicate that student teachers' experiences with colleagues, co-operating teachers, and university supervisors significantly and positively influence the development of their professional skills ($R^2=0.203$, $F(1,73)=19.8$, $p<0.0001$). This suggests that experiences with these individuals explain 20.3% of the variance in student teachers' professional skills development. This result is consistent with Khalid (2014) who found that students, colleagues, co-operating teachers and supervisors (in that order) contribute significantly to student teachers' professional development.

Implication

Given the importance of student experiences with colleagues, co-operating teachers, and university supervisors during TP as found in this study, universities should orientate faculty of education Lecturers about the significance of their roles in TP's success. Partnering schools should also be informed about the responsibilities of co-operating teachers.

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Parallel Session 2:6

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023
Chair Fran Myers

246 Working class women on Access to HE courses two decades apart - A comparative analysis of risk, opportunity and (re)constructing identities across a 20 year period.

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Widening participation (WP) in higher education (HE) remains a significant component of UK education and wider social policy landscapes. It aims to create a university system addressing the under-representation of particular social groups. Mature working-class students are one such group, yet they have recently largely disappeared from this agenda. The journey for those entering university via an Access to HE course provides valuable context to the WP agenda. This paper presents a comparative analysis of two narrative studies conducted 20 years apart. It evidences the ongoing value of progressing into HE for mature working-class women taking an Access course. The research makes visible the realities of class-based inequalities, highlighting how they are experienced and continue to shape educational and employment trajectories. The women participants were motivated yet constrained by their classed consciousness. We present practitioner-led enquiry as a valid epistemology which provides important insights into mature students' journeys into university.

Full paper

Introduction

Widening participation (WP) to higher education (HE) remains a significant component of UK education and wider social policy (McCraig, Rainford & Squire, 2022). WP refers to activities and interventions that increase the number of students from under-represented social groups (Jones and Thomas, 2005), including those from less advantaged backgrounds, and mature students (DBIS, 2011). Mature working-class students have recently become largely invisible in this agenda (Fraser & Arman, 2019). This is consistent with the significant decline in the number of mature learners entering HE over the past decade (OFS, 2020), and problematic since if access and participation in HE is to be increased and widened, the barriers facing this group of students need to be understood. The significance of progressing into university via an Access to HE (Access) course provides valuable context to the WP agenda.

Access to HE courses have long made a worthy contribution to the widening participation agenda by providing a pathway for entry into university for non-traditional students (Hubble & Connell-Smith, 2018). Mature working-class women students face specific barriers to success when taking an Access course as their lived experience of class is shaped by gender, and constrained by systemic inequality (Reay, 2003; James et al., 2013).

This paper draws upon two practitioner-led, narrative enquiries, carried out 20 years apart, to consider whether aspects relating to mature female student journeys have changed over that time. It applies the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu to explore issues relating to the (re)construction of class identity and risks and costs involved in embarking on an Access course.

Class and identity (re) construction

Both studies considered here explored the changing classed and gendered identities of the women participants. They had often left caring roles and/or lower status, poorly paid work behind, work that was frequently precarious, particularly for those in the later study. Part of their rationale for returning to education later in life was to enhance their employment opportunities. In many cases this was expressed as a wish for a more secure 'professional' role, one necessitating further study to achieve the necessary entry qualifications, and which would confer a middle-class status upon them. The tensions and challenges this involved are explored within this presentation.

Other aspects of identity (re)construction include the women's developing learner identities and, in many cases, a change in their family roles and other aspects of gendered identities. As Brine and Waller (2004: 97) noted, this transitional process of adopting new classed and gendered identities is not a simple linear one of shedding old identities and unproblematically adopting new ones, but rather a period of 'of reflexivity and risk, confusion and contradiction'.

Financial risks

A significant difference in the two studies related to the detrimental changes to student funding for both FE - and, particularly, HE courses. The financial risks for the 2022 women further compounded the obstacles they already faced along their journey into university. The FE and HE funding landscape had significantly changed. Access

courses were no longer free as they effectively were at the time of the 2002 study. Increases in university tuition fees, the abolition of maintenance grants and NHS bursaries, had placed further financial and psychological burdens upon the women. Access students therefore took on debt even before entering HE, despite not being guaranteed a university place when first embarking on their Access course. Additionally, welfare benefit eligibility rules did not encourage their return to study, potentially accentuating inequalities and injustices.

Despite these extra risks, participants narrated their journeys through neo-liberal discourses placing responsibility upon themselves to improve their lives. This agentic approach placed further pressure upon the women.

Conclusion

This paper presentation evidences the continuing reflexivity and risk, confusion and contradictions experienced by mature students during their Access to HE course. The findings of the 2022 research echo that of the 2001 project and further challenges the assumption that a changing learner identity necessitates a corresponding shifting class identity. Moreover, a classed consciousness was ever more prevalent and restricting. Concerningly, the increased financial risks further compound the students' class positions more recently, especially for those who are parents. This is significant to the WP agenda because it highlights particular barriers for this group of students and suggests that getting into, and engaging with HE, remains challenging and presents specific risks for mature students.

This paper presentation makes a timely contribution to understanding of mature working-class students. Policy commitments to widening participation will remain empty rhetoric without practical strategies to support students who struggle under the significant material constraints faced.

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186 Leadership style and intra-university knowledge transfer in German higher education: making complementary use of administrative and disciplinary expertise in organizational development

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

Intra-university knowledge transfer in state higher education institutions (HEIs) is under-researched (Beutel 2015). Expertise within an HEI is not necessarily identified as a useful resource for organisational development, e.g. bringing subject-specific knowledge from within the scientific disciplines into administrative processes, and, in the other direction, transferring administrative knowledge back into research. The German BMBF-funded project AGICA - Agile Campus - University Internal Knowledge Transfer between Science and Administration (2022-2025) addresses this research gap and investigates aspects of and opportunities for knowledge transfer between university administrators. In our research we combine theories of leadership styles (Chen et al. 2016), which focus on the mindset and habitus of professors, with social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which concentrates on workplace behaviour (here: administration). We propose that the realisation of mutual ‚benefit‘ of knowledge transfer within HEIs can enhance and support leadership and organisational development, in particular in association with a transformational leadership style.

Full paper

Universities are considered the most important producers of knowledge (Boaz et al. 2008). Equally, they are described as supercomplex, multiple hybrid organisations (Barnett, 2000; Kleimann, 2019). In terms of their third mission, they transfer this knowledge to society and, via project funding and contract research, increasingly into the political arena (Berghäuser 2020; Hölscher 2015). Inhibiting and facilitating factors for knowledge transfer from universities to the outside world have already been discussed (Hachmeister et al. 2015; Henke et al. 2017). Administrators have not been considered as recipients of knowledge transfer and have generally been overlooked in studies of HE governance (Banscherus, 2018). Along with the increased expectations of teaching and research staff, the demands on the performance of university administrations, transparency, flexibility, and a holistic approach have increased (Mergel et al., 2021). Buzzwords such as innovation, digitization, agile working, and other approaches to a future-oriented institution are now in strong focus (Bartonitz et al., 2018; Nickson, 2019).

Knowledge transfer within state higher education institutions (HEIs) remains under-researched (Beutel 2015). The German BMBF-funded project AGICA - Agile Campus - University Internal Knowledge Transfer between Science and Administration (2022-2025) addresses this research gap and investigates aspects of and opportunities for knowledge transfer between university administrators and researchers.

At many universities, knowledge about the effective, modern and future-oriented design of administrative processes and organization, communication strategies and management measures, such as those used in agile administrations, is being generated as part of the research activities of professors and specific research projects, in particular those in the Management, Business and Social Sciences with a focus on leadership and governance. The AGICA project addresses the fundamental research question as to how university administrations can benefit from the research, methodological know-how and knowledge that is being generated within any individual higher education institution (HEI). To what extent is knowledge transfer between science and university administration already taking place? Which structures are conducive to this, and which are obstructive? In this paper, we specifically want to explore the extent to which different leadership styles of the respective university leaders (chancellors, presidents and rectors) influence this intra-university knowledge transfer.

HEIs are particular environments that internally display a range of different working and organisational contexts. Professors and researchers enjoy fairly high degrees of autonomy, whereas administrators are predominantly located in hierarchical and more controlled working environments. It is therefore possible to identify (at least) two different main mindsets within one and the same institution. In our research we combine theories of leadership, which focus in particular on the mindset and scope of professors, with social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which concentrates on workplace behaviour (here: administration). Social exchange theory argues that human interaction is a form of marketplace, where there are mutually rewarding „transactions“ or „exchanges“ (Emerson, 1976: 336). We propose that the realisation of mutual ‚benefit‘ of knowledge transfer within HEIs can enhance and support leadership and organisational development. In particular we reflect on different leadership styles (Chen et al. 2016) and the influence and interplay of different leadership styles on the organization (Khan et al., 2020; Raja et al., 2018).

In the first phase of our empirical work (2022-2023), AGICA has completed more than 20 semi-structured interviews with different groups of stakeholders, including HE administrators, administrative staff, scientific employees and professors at four universities in one German federal state (16 in total). The state in question is representative, as it is one of the largest German states, and has a wide range of different types of HEI. The online interviews (60 minutes each) were completed in June 2023, recorded, transcribed, coded in MAXQDA, and analyzed.

We are already able to provide tentative thematic first statements about the relationship between the (transformational) leadership style behavior of university leaders in the context of externally funded projects (such as innovation labs) and intra-university knowledge transfer. This first qualitative stage is now being followed by a large N-study (2023-2024), which will take up emerging trends from the first empirical phase. This will finally be followed by a second round of qualitative interviews (2024-2025).

The interviews are already suggesting that the leadership style of university leaders does appear to have a significant impact on intra-university knowledge transfer. For example, a transformational leadership style creates an "atmosphere of trust" (research associate) within which knowledge is willingly shared across hierarchies. A more authoritarian leadership style, however, may lead to hierarchies and responsibilities being at the forefront of organizational communication, which can restrict knowledge transfer and organizational development.

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245 Degree Apprenticeships in England: What can we learn from the experiences of apprentices, employers and HE providers?

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Research Domains

Technical, Professional and Vocational Higher Education (TPV)

Abstract

Degree Apprenticeships (DA) were introduced in 2015 as an alternative route to obtaining a degree. Their number has been growing over the years. DAs offer a debt-free, vocational pathway into higher education, through the integration of off-the-job (university-based study) and on-the-job training. Most degree apprentices have been existing employees rather than new recruits, that is young people just finishing their level 3 qualifications. There have been clear expectations of DAs such as skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling young people and existing employees, supporting the local and national economy, and supporting social mobility of the disadvantaged groups. This paper aims at revisiting these expectations and reporting through the lens of apprentices, employers, HE providers and policy makers.

Full paper

Degree Apprenticeships (DA) were introduced in England in 2015 as an alternative route to obtaining a degree (UK Government, 2015). DAs offer a debt-free, vocational pathway into HE, through the integration of off-the-job (university-based study) and on-the-job training. The rationale behind DAs is to support national economic growth, address levels of low productivity and, meet higher-level skills shortages by establishing a pipeline of skilled entrants into the workforce (DfE, 2020). DAs include Level 6 programmes, leading to bachelors' degrees, and Level 7 programmes, leading to masters' degrees. However, it is important to distinguish between other Level 6 and 7

apprenticeships often described as 'degree-level'. Such courses may involve equivalent levels of training but do not lead to the awarding of full degree qualifications. This paper focuses specifically on degree awarded apprenticeships.

In 2023 there are 161 apprenticeship standards approved for delivery at L6 and L7 (IfATE, 2023). An evaluation into the Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund (a £8.8 million fund designed to support the HE sector in developing internal infrastructure) suggests DAs will expand as institutions develop capacity, but also as employers gain greater clarity and familiarity with the process of spending levy funding (OfS, 2019a). DAs are noted to provide a pathway for recruiting, retraining or upskilling staff with skills tailored to specific industries.

However, concerns have been expressed that DAs focus heavily on future skills shortages and less on current skills (Policy Connect, 2019), while HEIs may develop courses that fail to meet the pace of change within employer's skills needs (Mulkeen et al., 2019). DA courses are in theory developed through collaborative partnerships between HEIs, employers and professional bodies. Although research has highlighted issues around employer engagement in programme design. Some employers expressed discomfort in taking the lead, often deferring to academics, or generally lacking experience in academic course development (Mulkeen et al., 2019).

DAs are argued to offer a route towards improving levels of upward social mobility. It is suggested that DAs may attract disadvantaged school leavers who may have previously been deterred by university study because of concerns related to the cost of studying as a traditional HE entrant (OfS, 2019b, 2019c). However, there is currently less evidence to assess whether DAs are a mechanism for social mobility amongst marginalised groups (Lester & Bravenboer 2020) and whether DAs are widening participation. It is suggested (OfS, 2019b) that in general apprenticeships attract lower proportions of disadvantaged learners the higher their level, with the majority of Level 6 and 7 apprentices being from areas with higher levels of HE participation already (Polar 5 and 4).

Given the potential benefits and opportunities DAs may offer in theory, it is necessary to investigate the claims made in relation to economic growth, skills development, and social mobility. In addition, the perspectives of apprentices, employers and HEIs on the opportunities and challenges in recruitment, delivery and experience are necessary to capture as the pathway is expected to expand. More specifically the research aimed to answer the following questions: What are the motivations of different stakeholders for engaging with DAs? How do DAs align with the needs of local employers and the national economy? How do DAs support social mobility, widening participation and diversity in the workplace?

To answer the research questions we conducted semi-structured interviews with 99 stakeholders, including employers, university representatives, degree apprentices and policy makers. Each interview was transcribed and anonymised. We used thematic analysis to develop themes and sub-themes and entered all interview data into NVivo. Discussion of data has started early and has been an on-going activity for the research team. The project started in February 2022 and the findings are being finetuned now.

Examples of findings: Analysis to date indicate that each stakeholder group had specific reasons to engage with degree apprenticeships. This included institutional reasons, such as someone recognising that '[DAs] was going to be a big thing' (Provider_B1) and saw both development and business opportunity in DAs. For employers, DAs offered the opportunity to use the levy and simultaneously further develop their existing staff. Some interviewees had their personal motivation to engage and promote DAs. These individual reasons linked to social values are included, such as supporting a young person from disadvantaged backgrounds or opening up education and training opportunities to local residents. In addition to the well-known reasons, apprentices expressed learning preferences a motive for taking DAs, some found the work aspect motivational, and existing employees noted professional development and gaining a degree in their locality. The presentation will cover selected themes.

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Parallel Session 2:7

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023
Chair Martin Gough

345 Internationalisation of research and the shifting geopolitics of higher education in the European Union

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

This paper identifies the European Union's (EUs) shifting approaches towards internationalisation in research between 2012-2022 and distinguishes between two periods. We argue that these periods represent shifting geopolitical environments that shaped the EU's agendas and priorities. We suggest that the EU's perception that its economic interests, global position and normative values were threatened, resulted in a shift in its approach to internationalisation in research from a liberal agenda which espoused openness, towards a more pragmatic and political agenda with a focus on ideological differences, regional interests and protectionism. As academic science becomes increasingly multipolar and nationalistic in nature, this periodisation sheds light on the connections between the shifting geopolitical environment, higher education and internationalisation in research.

Full paper

In recent years, higher education scholars have argued that the architecture of neoliberal globalisation has deteriorated (Pan, 2021a), nationalism, populism and protectionism have resurfaced (Brøgger, 2022) and geopolitical tensions are intensifying (Marginson, 2020). Recent studies perceive tensions on university campuses, as extensions of these geopolitical tensions (c.f. in Australia and USA, Lau, 2020; Ross, 2020; Yao, & Mwangi, 2022) and the literature is already shifting towards a greater focus on geopolitics in higher education analyses (Moscovitz and Sabzalieva, 2023).

This paper will examine the impact of geopolitics on higher education (HE) and particularly on internationalisation as this is an educational arena where national priorities often collide (Lee, 2021). We aim to understand shifting approaches to international research collaboration in a period of geopolitical upheaval. We focus on research because there is rather less scholarship which focuses on internationalisation in this domain (Bedenlier et al., 2018; Woldegiyorgis et al., 2018). Our empirical entry point is an analysis of European Union (EU) research policies towards internationalisation. The EU, a political and economic union, has championed internationalisation in research through the creation of the European Research Area (ERA), which aims to create a single market for research, innovation and technology (Chou, 2014); and the EU Framework Programmes (FPs), its main instrument to finance collaborative research. We focus on the EU for three reasons: firstly, it administers the world's largest cooperative science programme, Horizon Europe, with a budget of €95.5 billion. Secondly, the EU strives for transparency, and thus provides public access to a large number of documents for analysis. Thirdly, less is known about the approaches of regional organisations towards higher education and international research collaboration (Robertson, 2016), thus a study of the EU's shifting approaches towards internationalisation in research, has potential to shed light on a less understood level of international research collaboration.

We analysed official documents on EU international research collaboration from 2012 to 2022 and identified two periods. These periods represent the EU's shifting approaches to internationalisation in research, from the pursuit of a liberal agenda promoting open research and international cooperation towards a focus on competition, ideological differences, regional interests and protectionism. We revealed the antecedents and geopolitical conditions which triggered this shift. We argued that this shift in approaches from openness and international cooperation to selective closure and foreign interference was spurred by geopolitical tensions, which resulted in the EU's perception that its economic interests, global position and normative values were threatened. We suggested that the EU began with utopian visions about the possibilities of neoliberal globalisation, open societies and economic collaboration and ended up withdrawing to a more closed and protectionist position, as perceived threats to its interests escalated. Over time, the rationales for international research collaboration, dominated by economic prosperity and global influence, broadly remained unchanged; thus we demonstrated that similar rationales under shifting geopolitical conditions, resulted in different approaches (openness; protectionism).

This study contributes to a growing interest in the geopolitics of higher education linking it to one of the most salient issues in the field: internationalisation. It contributes to understanding the intersections of higher education, interests, geopolitical environments, and agency at the regional level (Moscovitz & Sabzalieva, 2023). Our periodisation provides a base for those analysing the shifting geopolitics of and approaches to internationalisation in research in other contexts, particularly at the regional level, contributing to comparative understanding of the effects of geopolitical environments on international research collaboration. This study can be useful for future research on the EU, which may take a longer historical perspective or include future FPs. The EU has likewise promoted internationalisation at the student, staff and institutional level through mobility programmes (e.g. Erasmus), the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Bologna Process and more recently the European Universities Initiative (EUI) (Charret & Chankseliani, 2022; Rensimer & Brooks, 2023). While this paper focused on research, we posit that geopolitical tensions are likewise affecting these programmes and thus, the shift that we have identified in research, may shed light the shifting geopolitical environment of internationalisation in cross border teaching and student mobility. As the infrastructure of neoliberal globalisation continues to deteriorate, nationalisms and populisms are reignited, authoritarian governments proliferate, supply chains decouple and the world becomes increasingly multipolar, we affirm the need for attention to the geopolitical environment of higher education. We anticipate that internationalisation strategies will be further aligned with national/regional interests and ideological positions, with far-reaching effects on individuals, societies and higher education systems.

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165 The Representation of Internationalizing HE in the Omani Policy Documents

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

IHE has been constructed in different ways over time, largely in Western contexts. In the early 2000s the focal point of internationalization efforts moved from student mobility to 'internationalization at home' (Watcher, 2003; Mestenhauser, 2006; Beelan, 2007).

This paper explores how the national, institutional and school policy documents in Oman represent the concept of internationalization. By using two analytical approaches, namely thematic mapping and Bacchi's WPR, the paper unpacks the construction of internationalization. The result reveals that the documents hold a multiple construction of internationalization. Mobility is still low in Oman, but remains at least a rhetorical priority and the benefits of an

internationally diverse faculty as regards 'internationalisation at home' compensate the low numbers of incoming exchange students. Yet, Underneath this composite construction of internationalization, drawn from Western institutions, lies a division between a national desire to preserve Omani values and the desire for Western-style "progress".

Full paper

The paper's primary aim is to answer the research question: "How do national and institutional policy documents in Oman represent/construct internationalization, particularly in relation to the curriculum and teaching & learning?". The definition or meaning of internationalization is not addressed directly in any of the documentation. The thematic mapping approach toward the policy document analysis revealed several topic nodes through which the documentation offers glimpses of the representation and construction of internationalization; and it is around those topic nodes that this paper is structured.

Methodology:

Each section of this paper starts with a qualitative thematic analysis of a topic-node identified through thematic mapping to explore the contents of the documents. Through this thematic analysis, the paper will contribute my first understanding of how ideas such as national identity within internationalization, collaboration, quality assurance and student development are presented at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and specifically within the College of Economic and Political Science (CEPS) in Oman. It will also build on the existing limited understanding of how these themes are understood within Oman at a national level.

The final subsection of each section moves from the analytical discussion of the data within these documents to their broader context to address the research question in the paper regarding how internationalization is represented and constructed. In order to achieve this in a consistent manner, Bacchi's WPR analysis (2012) is drawn upon within each section, drawing on the following question set (Bacchi, 2012, p.21):

- Question 1: What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal? (hereafter referred to in this chapter as Q1)
- Question 2: What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem"? (Q2)
- Question 3: How has this representation of the "problem" come about? (Q3)
- Question 4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the "problem" be thought about differently? (Q4)
- Question 5: What effects are produced by this representation of the "problem"? (Q5)

Outline:

Section 1.2 explores the tension between a desire to promote and embed Omani values and the process of internationalization in higher education. The study highlights the importance of national pride and core values, religious and social values in the Omani educational system. The Oman Vision 2040 and the Oman Philosophy of Education emphasize the need for preserving Omani identity, culture, and Islamic principles in the face of globalization. However, internationalization requires the adoption of English as the language of instruction and the alignment of Omani higher education with global norms.

Section 1.3 examines the intersection of internationalization, institutional profile, and ranking at SQU. In response to the 2009 UNESCO report, SQU and Oman prioritized providing "quality education", which involved improving the global perception of the education provided at SQU. The university continues to focus on collaboration with renowned institutions, developing partnerships, exchanges, research collaborations, and participation in international conferences

Section 1.4 turns explicitly to “quality” as discussed in the documents, focusing on quality enhancement and assurance from three perspectives: international accreditation, benchmarking, and faculty diversity.

Section 1.5 examines the centrality of employment in education in Oman. Omani education has shifted towards producing graduates capable of filling senior roles in the private sector, which has traditionally been dominated by Western expatriates. This includes integrating internationalization at the curriculum level. The main goal of higher education institutions like (SQU) is to develop graduates who are academically qualified and ready to meet the challenges of the labour market and society.

Section 1.6 turns to pedagogy as addressed in these strategic documents, particularly at school level with CEPS. International instructional aids and materials are seen as helping students develop the skills and knowledge needed for global employability.

Section 1.7 brings together these thematic threads to discuss the adoption in Oman of a mixture construction of internationalization, drawing together Western discourse around internationalization at home and internationalization of the curriculum.

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65 Conceptualising and assessing non-technical skills in simulation-based medical education and training: an integrative scoping review

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This presentation focuses on 'transferable' or 'non-technical' skills (NTS) development in medical education/training. NTS - teamwork, communication and decision-making - are widely acknowledged as central to workplace practice and hence important to HE. Simulation-based learning (SBL) is increasingly used to enhance NTS but little is known about its effectiveness. The field lacks robust outcome measures and clarity about educationally relevant conceptual and operational dimensions of NTS to support instrument development. We synthesise findings from two analyses: a Scoping Review of outcome measures used in research on SBL's effectiveness (funded by SRHE), and a content analysis of NTS-related learning objectives (LOs) in UK medical curricula. A comparative analysis demonstrates that while the outcome measures used in SBL-research address many of the identified curricular LO-dimensions, there

are significant gaps relating to assessing evidence-based reasoning and inclusive practice. This study contributes to our understanding and evaluation of learning outcomes in NTS-focused SBL in HE.

Full paper

This presentation brings together two current topics in Higher Education (HE): transferable or 'non-technical' skills (NTS) skills and simulation-based learning (SBL). It focuses on the conceptualisation and assessment of NTS in HE, using medical education as an example. One of the perceived key tasks of HE is preparation for workplace practice and learning. NTS – communication, interprofessional teamwork and decision-making - are widely acknowledged as central to this (Römgens et al., 2020). NTS are well-established in medical education curricula internationally, but they are of wider relevance in HE: there is increasing acknowledgement in the field that all graduates need a range of non-technical competences, or 'employability skills', for effective professional practice (Kornelakis & Petrakaki, 2020).

SBL is increasingly used to enhance NTS in medical education (Anon1) and other areas of HE, such as teacher education (Anon2). Simulations are partial replications of professional practice situations which enable the practice of professional competences in an authentic setting without the issues of access, scalability and real-world risk (Chernikova et al., 2020). However, little is known about the effectiveness of many simulations (Anon1; Anon3). In particular, the field lacks robust outcome measures required for the systematic assessment of learning, and evaluation of learning interventions. More fundamentally, there is lack of clarity about educationally relevant conceptual and operational dimensions of NTS, required support the development and testing of assessment instruments.

To address this gap, this presentation addresses the following Research Questions:

RQ1. What measures of learning outcomes assessing NTS have been used in recent research in SBL-interventions targeting these competences in the field of medical education?

RQ2. How have the competences been conceptualised in UK undergraduate and postgraduate medical curricula?

RQ3. To what extent do the outcomes sought in SBL-research address the learning objectives in the curricula, and what are the gaps?

To address these questions, a multi-component study focusing on three key NTS (communication, interprofessional teamwork and decision-making) was undertaken. Firstly, a Scoping Review (ScR) methodology (Peters et al., 2017) was utilised to synthesise instruments used in recent publications on medical/clinical simulations targeting NTS. The ScR identified 225 studies from 2018–20 of which 72 met the inclusion criteria. 31/72 studies' abstracts referred to a named instrument, including 27 unique instruments. Most studies used their own instruments, and when validated instruments were used, the same instrument was rarely used by two studies (4 times in total). This demonstrates a significant lack of consistency in the field, hindering the development of cumulative evidence. Full-text analysis identified a sub-set of robust instruments for further analysis which were analysed for their conceptual dimensions.

Secondly, a systematic qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2019) of learning objectives (LOs) in UK medical education curricula was conducted. This analysis identified and synthesised the conceptual dimensions underlying the three NTS. Finally, a comparative analysis was undertaken, systematically comparing the identified measures' dimensions with the dimensions of curricular LOs to establish the extent to which instruments used in current SBL-research address desired learning goals, and to identify relevant measures and gaps. This analysis found that the outcome measures used in the SBL-studies addressed many of the identified curricular LO-dimensions. However, significant gaps were identified. These related to evidence-based reasoning and inclusive professional practice. Moreover, the comparison revealed there is little conceptual overlap between the numerous instruments used in the field, highlighting the need for further research to ensure comparability of different studies.

This study contributes to our understanding and assessment of learning outcomes in NTS-focused SBL, by describing conceptual and operational constructs of NTS-learning outcomes in medical education and identifying appropriate validated assessment instruments to evaluate SBL-interventions. It hereby also contributes to the readiness to generate a rigorous evidence base for using SBL to develop NTS in medical education, which could inform a development of learning interventions and assessments for NTS in HE more widely. Finally, in explicitly conceptualising non-technical skills as the key soft skills widely considered important in graduate employment based

on both research and HE curricula, it contributes to a shared language in and across HE and HE policy to discuss ways of preparing graduates for the challenges of the labour market.

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Author references anonymised for review

Parallel Session 2:8

11:45 - 13:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023

73 Imagined academic futures: connections and complexities in the move to online teaching

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper shares emerging findings from a 2023 study which has sought to understand what collective imaginaries may be shaping the move to online teaching in Australia and the United Kingdom, where universities have been subject to rapid changes in the use of learning technologies since the advent of the pandemic, and what future practices and policies may be produced by these imaginaries. Drawing on interviews with senior academics in both nations, the paper reinforces previous concerns about the impacts on academic practice, labour and identities of the rapid move to online teaching but it also reflects on its transformative potential and considers what investments may be needed to maximise this potential. In particular, it considers the possibilities, as described by the interviewees, for academics to act in connected and collective ways in the present to first imagine, or re-imagine, and then to construct desirable academic futures.

Full paper

Digital tools and educational technologies have brought new teaching practices and policies as well as 'rapidly expanding information and an increasingly dynamic view of knowledge' (Bearman et al. 2020:7). Their ubiquity within higher education has been heightened by institutional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and shows little signs of reversing. This is in turn associated with 'the potential to foment massive changes' in higher education teaching and learning (Guppy et al. 2022:1751).

The digitalisation of higher education may also be subject to a set of 'collective imaginaries or shared stories' (Bearman et al. 2022:3): sociotechnical (Matthews 2021) or 'educational imaginaries' (Rahm 2023:51) that shape and are shaped by the culture of the academy. This raises questions about what collective imaginaries may be shaping the move to online teaching in Australia and the United Kingdom, where universities have been subject to rapid changes in practice since the advent of the pandemic, and what educational practice and policy are produced by these imaginaries.

Recent studies have examined the move to online teaching from the perspectives of academics with a range of roles and positions (e.g. Fox et al. 2021; Naylor and Nyanjom 2021; Watermeyer et al. 2021). A smaller number of studies have explored this move from the perspectives of senior academics who are involved in the production of teaching practices and policies or otherwise positioned to influence the work of other academics at a pivotal time for the current and future academy (Ivancheva et al. 2020; Guppy et al. 2022).

This paper adds to the understanding of these perspectives by sharing emerging findings from 2023 interviews with senior Australian and United Kingdom academics conducted with funding by Deakin University's Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE). Drawing on the interview data, the paper reinforces previous concerns that 'technology has dominated discourse on the future university' (Matthews 2021:204) but it also reflects on its transformative potential. It considers what investments may be needed to maximise this potential and to support academics in navigating increasingly complex forms of labour. It considers the possibilities, as described by interviewees, for academics to act in connected and collective ways in the present to construct desirable academic futures. It also reflects on the conditions that might support what Eringfeld calls 'imaginative storytelling around possible futures' for higher education (2021:147) and the 'productive force of imagination' and 're-imagination' in shaping those possible futures (148).

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151 Trajectories of merit: Re-viewing leadership in elite universities

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

Vice Chancellors, Presidents, or Rectors occupy elite public positions in universities. A cursory glance of the roll call of names across the top 100 universities globally reveals the dominance of white males. Our theoretical disquiet in this article is linked with an enduring unease that processes of formal and informal merit work to reproduce, not eradicate, deep inequities in the recruitment and appointment of Vice Chancellors, Presidents, or Rectors at the world's elite institutions. We argue that underpinning rhetoric of meritocracy works as a visible and audible performative tool that offers an appearance of a just, fair, and neutral process.

Full paper

The blurring of boundaries between higher education, business, and politics as well as pressures to remain globally competitive have had a cumulative effect on ways in which universities are governed, managed, and led (Burkinshaw, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2020; O'Connor, 2014). What has occurred is a serial restructuring, re-purposing and rebranding as universities have sought to exert themselves in the global education market, and particularly in post-pandemic times. A powerful institutional logic identifies leadership as the core component to successful organisational transformation (Lipton, 2020; Whitechurch and Gordon, 2017). Accordingly, it is the leader who is identified as possessing the required personal qualities, skills, behaviours, and dispositions to recalibrate institutions, provide strategic direction and address indifference and resistance (Coates et al., 2021; Burkinshaw and White, 2017; White and O'Connor, 2017). However, as we argue, a more nuanced approach to understanding the career profiles and trajectories of those chosen to lead is overdue. Thus, this conference paper contributes to the literatures on higher education leadership in its interrogation of what we refer to as the façade of diversity that underpins leaders and leadership in elite institutions.

Advertisements for elite roles such as VC, President or Rector frequently cite that “women and minority groups” are encouraged to apply. These roles are seen to require a distinctive set of abilities, traits, and skills that assume individual merit or worth can be quantified, separated from social or institutional context, and assigned to an individual irrespective of gender or other protected characteristics (Kumra, 2014; Sommerlad, 2012). In effect these advertisements are deeply problematic. On the one hand there is recognition of a fixed, objective, and stable set of attributes (qualifications, skills) that are linked with individual performance and talent deemed to be merit-worthy (Betts, 2023; Sommerlad, 2012). Yet on the other, there is scant understanding or recognition of the illusion of merit and meritocratic principles that are embedded in these discourses.

What continues to occur is that equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) discourses have become commodified in order that those “encouraged to apply” satisfy recruitment, rather than appointment policies. Despite the rhetoric about the importance of an inclusive and diverse workforce, the reality is that gendered and racialized organisational cultures in higher education continue to be an institutional norm (Arday, 2018; Bhopal, 2018; Maylor, 2018). This, as we outline, is a global, complex, and intractable issue.

In this conference paper we propose that a different set of questions need to be asked about performative understandings of merit and meritocracy. We suggest that despite well-intentioned and merit-based recruitment, appointment processes and targeted intervention strategies to diversify applicant pools, inequalities persist. Hence, we interrogate the inevitable bias of recruitment practices precisely because trajectories of merit serve to reinforce, not displace, the status quo. We suggest that recruitment discourses that call for a litany of competencies, experiences and skills are underpinned by unwritten assumptions/implicit biases that require candidates to demonstrate their potential assimilation to the ‘cultural fit’ of the institution. It is this cultural fit and the underpinning framing of what constitutes ‘merit’, that create new forms of bias that reinscribe what is valued and rewarded by access to public power and position and primarily enacted by bodies which are male, white, and middle class in Western contexts (Acker, 2006; Connell, 2005). Research related to ethno-racial privilege largely analyses the relationship between a ‘white’ population and racialised ‘other’. Attention equally needs to focus on how ethno-racial privilege operates in different contexts (Hasmath and Solomon, 2021). If universities claim that they are global institutions, this ought to be reflected in the demographic profile of their students, staff/faculty as well as leadership. Thus, we trouble these discourses of merit that promote a level of performance of meritocracy yet, as we suggest, reinforce the sameness of leadership. In querying discourses of merit and troubling the façade of diversity we take an intersectional approach. Our framing moves beyond singular and conventional forms of discrimination by adopting a more holistic analysis. Here Sandel’s (2020) argument that the neoliberal discourse on merit has negative consequences for democracy and the common good will be considered within the context of higher education leadership, EDI, and the sociology of elites.

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285 What does it mean to belong in the physical sciences?

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In recent years, professional societies have acknowledged the impact of belonging in science and pledged commitments to foster a more inclusive and representative academic culture as a means of addressing the lack of diversity and underrepresentation. The Royal Society of Chemistry concluded that a sense of belonging led 'to better science outcomes'.

Humans evolved to seek out and maintain close personal relationships. However, the sense of belonging felt by an individual is fluid, and belonging cannot be perceived as an absolute value that an individual may or may not possess. On the contrary, it is a sense of self that may be built and damaged depending on the cues we receive from our environment. In this paper we draw on our lived experiences to explore feelings of belonging and exclusion within the physical sciences – specifically chemistry - as three academics working within the field specifically around EDI.

Full paper

There is a long history of studying scientific epistemology and places of work to understand the creation and conflict of scientific knowledge (B Latour, 1999; B Latour & Woolgar 1986; Barnes et al., 1996). Historically, the emphasis has been on the production of knowledge and truth rather than an exploration of who scientists are and their lived experiences as researchers inside and outside of their physical workplace.

In recent years, professional societies have acknowledged the impact of belonging in science and pledged commitments to foster a more inclusive and representative academic culture. The human need to belong amongst our peers and community is innate. Humans evolved to seek out and maintain close personal relationships. Strong social ties were and arguably remain, critical to survival (Tomasello et al., 2012). We scrutinise our belonging status for subtle signs of change or threats (Gardner et al., 2005). Those who suffer an unmet need for belonging become more proficient at monitoring the social clues around them, though ironically, their capacity for non-social complex cognitive tasks may weaken (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). It is not difficult to imagine why this is especially problematic for academics and researchers, specifically those who are marginalised or underrepresented in their discipline who are less likely to feel as though they belong.

Science is not known for its diversity, and the landscape in chemistry is particularly problematic (RSC, 2018). The Royal Society of Chemistry released a report on 'Belonging in the Chemical Sciences' (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2021) which concluded that a sense of belonging led 'to better science outcomes' (ibid. p12). Area-specific work by WISC (the International Women in Supramolecular Chemistry Network) highlighted the need to facilitate sharing of stories and feelings of belonging, particularly for those in underrepresented groups: 'If the stories and experiences of those who do not fit the stereotype are not visible, then it is harder for those outside the majority group to feel they belong' (Caltagirone et al. 2021, 11577).

The sense of belonging felt by an individual is fluid, and it would be expected that people experience varying levels of belonging over time. This fluid nature is not well studied, however it is clear that belonging cannot be perceived as an absolute value that an individual may or may not possess. On the contrary, it is a sense of self that may be built and damaged depending on the cues we receive from our environment. In this paper we draw on our lived experiences to explore feelings of belonging and exclusion within the physical sciences – specifically chemistry as three academics working within the field specifically around Equity/Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

Mariam is a doctoral student exploring how to revolutionise research culture in chemistry and the physical sciences. Her first degree was in biomedical science, and she worked for a year as a film producer with a particular passion for science communication. Her PhD is shared between chemistry and sociology, and her in-depth insider ethnography includes laboratory-based work and skill development. She is part of two research groups and two research cultures, and has mixed feelings around where she belongs.

Panagiota identifies as a chemist. She completed her first degree in chemistry, has a PhD in chemistry education, and works specifically around inclusion, climate change, and increasing equity and diversity in the chemical sciences. However, she regularly experiences feelings of 'not belonging', and feels that other chemists perceive her differently as she does not conduct laboratory-based research, and instead utilises social science methodologies and approaches.

Jennifer is a full member of the Royal Society of Chemistry. Like Panagiota, she has a first degree in chemistry, and continued on to a computational chemistry PhD. She left after 2 ½ years when pregnant with her second child and worked as a somatic movement therapist and yoga teacher before finishing a different PhD in education. For many years she did her best to expunge her time in chemistry from her CV and memory. Since late 2019 she has used her

lived experiences to work with chemists within WISC around various aspects of marginalisation to raise awareness and effect change (Caltagirone et al., 2021; J. Leigh, Hiscock, et al. 2022a; J. Leigh, Hiscock, et al. 2022b; Slater et al. 2022; Leigh, Busschaert, et al. 2022; J. Leigh, Smith, et al. 2022; Egambaram et al. 2022; J. Leigh, Sarju, and Slater 2024). Although she has publications in Q1 chemistry journals and is perceived by chemists as one of them she is reluctant to identify as a chemist (or sociologist).

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Break

13:15 - 14:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

International Research and Researchers Network Session

14:00 - 14:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Drop in at this informal session to meet some of the convenors of the IRR network – Cora Xu and Sazana Jayadeva – and other researchers working on topics related to international higher education and student mobilities. The convenors will tell you all about the IRR events they are planning for the coming year, and would be very interested in hearing about your research, and the kinds of events you would like to see the network organise. Everyone is very welcome!

Higher Education Policy Network Session

14:00 - 14:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Come along and meet the convenors of the Higher Education Policy (HEP) Network, Professor Colin McCaig, Sheffield Hallam University and Professor Karen Mpamhanga (formerly Smith), University of Hertfordshire. Hear more about what the network has been doing this year, and contribute to our session planning for next year by sharing your thoughts on potential future HEP network topics.

Postgraduate Issues Network Session

14:00 - 14:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Postgraduate Issues Network: a chance to raise issues of interest with the Convenors

The Postgraduate Issues Network was established in 1995 to help interested parties find out about new developments in the field of postgraduate education and to interpret these for their own use and benefit, by means of seminar and workshop events, variously online or face-to-face. This growing network has many members (researchers, supervisors and research supporters of many kinds) including a number from around the globe, by virtue of participating in events.

The network offers its members more than a series of meetings: it aims to be a true network of mutual support in which ideas, concerns, materials and help are shared in a collaborative, collegial way, amongst all interested parties.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Network Session

14:00 - 14:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Network (LTAN) launched in October 2019 and its primary aim has been to highlight, discuss and share current issues, trends and debates in research supporting learning, teaching and assessment. In the network event on 4th December, the Network conveners, Professor Alex Owen, Dr Emily Danvers and Professor Namrata Rao intend to reflect on the activities of the network till date and will be sharing their plans for this year. This year the events have focussed on/will focus on Leadership in Learning and Teaching, Artificial Intelligence and its impact on learning and teaching and Academic Freedom and its impact on learning and teaching.

The LTA Network conveners would also be keen for the attendees to help shape the agenda of the network's activities and hear from them how the LTA network can support the researchers/practitioners in the field.

Employability, Enterprise And Work-Based Learning Network Session

14:00 - 14:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Come along to our network roundtable meeting to connect with convenors and others interested in this area of research. It's a great opportunity to hear about upcoming events and input into the development of future sessions.

Newer Researchers Network Session

14:00 - 14:30 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Our Newer Researcher network convenors will introduce the network and reflect on its activities to date, and how they are shaping plans for our schedule next year. This will be an opportunity to meet fellow newer researchers and to share your own ideas for NR network sessions.

Parallel Session 3:1

14:30 - 16:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Pauline Kneale

288 Understanding Wellbeing: The Affective Response of Writing Retreats in Academics and Postgraduate Students

[Rowena Murray](#)¹, [Gillian McLellan](#)², [Michelle Smith](#)³, [Morag Thow](#)⁴

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Writing is a core skill for academics and postgraduates. Working online may increase productivity, but, for some, it increases stress and negatively impacts on their ability to write. Writing retreats provide a means to escape these stresses, and this study is investigating their impact on participants' wellbeing. We explore the affective response of two cohorts of academics and postgraduates who attend writing retreats, online or in-person. Participants complete the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) at the start and end of a writing retreat. Questionnaire data are inputted in SPSS and analysed using paired samples t-test. Semi-structured interviews will be offered to participants. This study aims to identify if attending a writing retreat impacts the affective domain: reducing stress and improving wellbeing. We will explore the implications for improving academic wellbeing environments, specific to the core task of writing.

Full paper

Introduction

Writing is a core skill for academics and postgraduate students, but many struggle to write. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic many academic activities, including writing, moved online. While this improved productivity for

some, others struggled with independent variables that negatively impacted on their ability to write (Janz & Murray, 2021; Van Der Feltz-Cornelis et al., 2020).

Writing retreats can enable changes in writing behaviours, leading to increased productivity (Murray, 2015; MacLeod et al., 2012; Murray & Kempenaar, 2018; Murray & Newton, 2009). However, productivity is not the only benefit. Participants regularly report that they feel more positive and less stressed during and after writing retreats, although they struggle to sustain these benefits in other environments. This study focuses on emotional changes experienced at writing retreats because these are important for sustaining their positive impact.

Methods

Ethical approval was provided by the University of the Highlands and Islands. Participants will be recruited from writing retreats run by collaborators in this project. Residential and online participants will receive information about the project, including why they were selected, what they will be asked to do and how their data will be used. A pilot study is underway in June 2023 and the main study will take place at three subsequent retreats.

The questionnaire is based on the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988), originally developed as a twenty-word schedule that generally described feelings and emotions. We have adapted the PANAS for the writing retreat context. First, we integrated the words into sentences that aligned to writing retreats. For example, instead of asking participants to identify how interested they were generally, we asked them to identify how interested they felt in progressing their writing at the writing retreat. All twenty-words were adapted in this way and are available on request. Additionally, we removed the word jittery from the PANAS, as this emotion was captured in the question asking participants to identify how nervous they felt about writing. Furthermore, to understand differences in environmental spaces during residential writing retreats, two additional questions were added: participants were asked to identify how inspired they felt about their writing environment, and how motivated they felt to engage in writing due to their writing environment. Finally, we changed the wording of options for defining how participants were feeling. For example, instead of using very slightly or not at all, a little, moderately, quite a bit, and extremely, we used not at all, slightly, moderately, and very.

Participants will complete the online questionnaire at the start of the retreat, participate in the retreat and at the end of the final day complete the questionnaire again. Participants will also be offered the opportunity to take part in an individual interview. PANAS data will be analysed using SPSS and interview transcripts analysed using Nvivo and Microsoft Excel.

Discussion

This is a work-in-progress empirical study. We expect participants to express reduced negative affect and increased positive affect. This will provide evidence of the positive emotions that are often expressed informally at retreats.

If writing retreats can foster wellbeing, even in relation to one of the most challenging aspects of academic work, writing, then they can provide healthy environments for this aspect of academic work, particularly if they are held in places where participants have access to 'green and blue spaces' (McDougall et al., 2021). However, if positive affect is to foster sustained wellbeing, one-off writing retreats will not offer the long-term exposure to green spaces that can improve health and wellbeing (Gascon et al., 2018). Furthermore, while Ahern-Dodson and Dufour (2023) argue that we need a new model of faculty writing support to counter the normalization of escalating standards in academic work, our study could provide new insights into how we might create a wellbeing model of academic writing.

Conclusion

Health and wellbeing have become the focus of higher education research in response to the intensifying stresses and lack of support in contemporary workplaces. Writing retreats can be a haven from these stresses. This study will provide us with insight into participants' emotional responses when attending writing retreats. Positive affect is important for sustaining academics' and postgraduate students' health and wellbeing, and, in turn, is likely to sustain productive writing behaviours. There are many implications for academic institutions: for positive affect to be sustained, institutions should adopt and invest in the writing retreat model. This is one way to enhance staff and student wellbeing.

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316 Moving from responsibility learning inaction to ‘responsibility learning-in-action’: A student-educator collective writing on the ‘unnoticed’ in the hidden curriculum at business schools

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

We are a student-educator writing collective that have come together outside the formal classroom to experiment with ‘writing differently’, imbued with a desire to enact collective resistance against ‘unnoticed’ and intentionally hidden aspects of the business school curriculum that condone, normalize, and reproduce social injustice and inequalities. As students and educator in the Department of Organizational Psychology at a UK-based business school, we see our non-traditional writing as a form of resistance against hegemonic scientific norms of knowledge production that dominate our discipline. We evoked Freire’s problem-posing education through a collective enactment of ‘responsibility learning-in-action’ by participating in regular ‘writing as resistance’ sessions, where we wrote around our lived experiences of the ‘unnoticed’ and intentionally hidden curriculum and responsibility learning in the same virtual space and time and then read aloud to one another. Our coming together through this practice (re)claims relationality and solidarity in the student-educator relationship.

Full paper

We are a writing collective made up of four people – three students and one educator from the Department of Organizational Psychology of a UK-based business school – that have come together outside the formal classroom to experiment with ‘writing differently’, imbued with a desire to enact collective resistance against ‘unnoticed’ and intentionally hidden aspects of the business school curriculum that condone, normalize, and reproduce social injustice and inequalities, and against the hegemonic scientific norms of knowledge production that dominate our discipline. Our initiative is an exploration of the possibilities such a collective can create to develop responsibility learning, defined as “the implicit and explicit learning and unlearning of and about responsible and irresponsible practices” (Laasch, 2018: 12), related in the business school curriculum to ethics, corporate social responsibility, sustainability, inequality, diversity, and governance (Padan and Nguyen, 2020).

The catalyst for our ‘writing as resistance’ experiment was our mutual experience of ‘an unsettling’, described as “an insecurity regarding the basic assumptions, discourse and practices used in describing reality” (Cunliffe, 2002: 38). The unsettling process occurred when we were confronted with learning material in the business school curriculum that perpetuates the irresponsible practice of white supremacist scientific racism through the promotion of general cognitive ability testing (Andrews, 2021; Kendi, 2019) as “one of the best predictors of performance on the job” (Nye et al., 2022: 1119) that fails to acknowledge and redress its eugenics roots and legacy. We embarked on our collective writing with a deep desire to call out the role of the ‘unnoticed’ (and at times, intentionally) hidden-in-plain-sight aspects of the business school hidden curriculum (Blasco et al., 2012) in perpetuating social injustice and inequalities and the implications for business schools in developing leaders and professionals with(out) a clear sense of their responsibility to the world.

We evoked Freire's problem-posing education through a collective enactment of 'responsibility learning-in-action' by participating in regular 'writing as resistance' sessions, where we wrote around our lived experiences of the 'unnoticed' and intentionally hidden curriculum and responsibility learning in the same virtual space and time. The 60-to-90-minute writing sessions all followed a similar structure: initial discussions on the themes and direction of our respective writing, followed by 30 minutes of individual writing (while remaining connected online to the rest of the group with our microphones muted), and then the reading aloud of our individual pieces at the end of the sessions. We recognize and embrace the intersubjectivity enabled by the sharing which took place before and after our individual writing, adding an element of collective and relational sensemaking into our individual reflections. After three months of weekly writing sessions, the individual raw texts produced by each member of the collective during the writing sessions were compiled into one single document, and subsequently analysed by each member to identify key themes. The analysis of this collectively generated body of individual writing constituted an exercise in reflexive dialogical practice (Cunliffe, 2002), to build our collective voice, by agreeing on the final themes, their characteristics, and the most relevant extracts to illustrate them, through collaborative discussions. This practice continued through the development of a journal article sharing our movement's output through chosen extracts and their analysis (Chatrakul Na Ayudhya et al., 2023).

This output can be summarised through three contributions. Firstly, our work introduces the concept of 'responsibility learning-in-action' into the conversation and literature around responsibility learning and the hidden curriculum, using our own reflections and lived experiences to expose practices of responsibility learning inaction, by creating a space and time to explore and enact our common ambition. Secondly, by introducing our collective writing as our "vibrant activism of thinking as doing" (Diversi et al., 2021: 303), we open the possibilities of knowledge production through student-educator relationality and solidarity inside and outside the formal classroom (Cunliffe, 2003; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018). Thirdly and finally, through our reflexive dialogical practice, we offer a methodology and a model for co-authorship and co-production that reimagines what is normatively practiced within Organizational Psychology and more broadly, in business schools, aiming to develop students' power as active, central, and legitimate knowledge producers.

This act of collective writing is our way of enacting Freire's problem-posing education, where "people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1970: 56). It encourages others in higher education to exercise this power.

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297 Mental Health Problems in First Generation Students at UK Universities: A Comparison with Continuing Generation Students

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

There is little UK-specific research on first generation university students (FGS; those whose parents did not achieve a university degree) and none which has focussed on mental health. The aim of this study was to compare the prevalence and types of mental health problems experienced by FGS and continuing generation students (CGS; those whose parents did achieve a university degree) at UK universities. Participants were students aged 18 years or older from any UK university and were recruited to the study via advertisements on social media. A sample of [target N = 200] UK university students comprising both FGS [target n = 100] and CGS [target n = 100] completed an online survey containing measures of mental health problems. In this presentation I will report the results of the data analysis and discuss the implications of the findings for FGS mental health, widening participation and future research in this field.

Full paper

First generation students (FGS; those whose parents did not achieve a university degree) now constitute almost half of the UK university student population (Henderson et al., 2020; Office for Students [OfS], 2022). Existing UK research has established that "being first in family is an important barrier to university participation and graduation, over and above other sources of disadvantage" (Adamecz-Völgyi et al., 2020, p. 1). Moreover, the UK University Mental Health Charter (Hughes & Spanner, 2019) recognises that FGS may face greater challenges to their mental health than continuing generation students (CGS; those whose parents did achieve a university degree). Hence the UK OfS recommends that universities consider the intersection of mental health problems and FGS status so they can improve understanding and support (OfS, 2019). Despite this, there is no published empirical research on the mental health of FGS at UK universities, as confirmed by a scoping review of the international literature (Smith & McLellan, 2022).

The aim of this study was to investigate mental health in FGS at UK universities, specifically to compare the prevalence and types of mental health problems experienced by FGS and CGS. The study was designed to collect empirical data to address the following research questions: (1) Are FGS at UK universities more likely than CGS to experience mental health problems? (2) What mental health problems do FGS at UK universities experience and are they different to those experienced by CGS? It was hypothesised that FGS would experience more mental health problems than CGS and that the types of mental health problems experienced would differ between FGS and CGS.

The study design was cross-sectional and data collection was carried out via an online survey. Participants were students aged 18 years or older from any UK university and were recruited to the study via advertisements on social media. A sample of [target N = 200] UK university students comprising both FGS [target n = 100] and CGS [target n = 100] completed a questionnaire containing demographic questions (age, gender identity, level of study, parental education) and the Counseling Centre Assessment of Psychological Symptoms scale (CCAPS-62; Locke et al., 2011; McAleavey et al., 2012) for mental health problems. Total scores for the CCAPS-62 and individual scores for each of the eight subscales (depression, generalised anxiety, social anxiety, academic distress, eating concerns, family distress, frustration/anger, substance use) were analysed and compared for FGS and CGS.

In this presentation I will report on the findings of the study (work in progress – data collection currently ongoing) and discuss the implications for FGS, widening participation and future research in this field. This study makes a significant contribution to knowledge about FGS in UK universities and facilitates future research about mental health interventions which aim to ensure that widening participation encompasses FGS getting on, not just getting in.

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Parallel Session 3:2

14:30 - 16:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Karen Jones

19 The reconstruction of Swedish doctoral education over the past 50 years

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

This paper presents results from a study on changes in Swedish doctoral education over a period of 50 years (Apelgren, Lindblad & Wärvik, 2022). Here we explore the restructuring of doctoral education through a review of Swedish national policy documents and a content analysis of twelve Swedish syllabi for a PhD in Education. Of particular interest is how governance and structure of doctoral research studies have changed and transformed the roles of supervisors and doctoral researchers. We identified three themes in this development: 'schoolification', increasing interest in stress management, and relevance in terms of professional competences. It was concluded that Swedish doctoral education is increasingly regulated at the cost of doctoral researchers' individual autonomy.

Apelgren, B-M., Lindblad, S. & Wärvik, G-B. (2022). Restructuring doctoral education in Sweden. In M-L. Österlind, P. Denicolo, & B-M. Apelgren (Eds.). *Doctoral Education as if People Matter - Critical Issues for the Future*. Brill Publishers.

Full paper

Doctoral education is about how knowledge and certain codes of conduct are carried over from one generation of researchers to another. In this sense, doctoral education is vital for the formation and stabilisation of academic disciplinary traditions and for the training of university teachers and researchers who will be responsible for these in the future.

This paper presents some results on historical changes in doctoral education in Sweden (Apelgren, Lindblad & Wärvik, 2022). We have analysed changes from the 1960s leading to the doctoral research system we have today (see also Hamilton et al, 2003). Our object of study is the doctorate and its governance where doctoral researchers, and their supervisor are agents/performers/executers.

Doctoral education in various countries exhibits both similarities and differences (Cardoso et al, 2020; Yudkevich et al, 2020). The Swedish context is therefore both akin and dissimilar to changes in other regional settings. One major trend around the world is the way in which the knowledge society and the huge expansion of higher education have transformed doctoral education and increased societal demands, on policymakers, research funding agencies – and the doctoral researcher body itself. Economic incentives through funding and quality assurance are steering doctoral education in a way that was not common some thirty years ago. The globalised trend to regulate, systematise and evaluate doctoral education seems to have intensified during the years. Further, there has been a shift towards doctoral employment in some countries (i.e., the Nordic countries) which has led to doctoral researchers legally being public employees with salaries, legal rights, and duties.

Also Swedish doctoral education shows increasing numbers of regulations and formal procedures. Changes that have gone in parallel with the expansion of higher education. The developments in Swedish doctoral education follow the international transformation from an elite university to a mass university. This transformation can be traced in several public Higher Education inquiries during the post-World War II period and onwards, including the doctorate. In

1969, a doctoral degree was introduced and turned the informal doctorate into a formal four-year doctoral education (Government Bill 1969:31), resulting in a substantial increase in Swedish PhD examinations from less than 200 in 1960 up to more than 2 800 in 2020. Over some decades, doctoral education was transformed from being mainly an academic affair with rather loose forms of governing towards a highly regulated education and a target for policy making and university management.

Through a content analysis of twelve General Syllabi for Degree of Philosophy of Doctor in Education 1979-2021 at one Swedish major university, we explore (1) the regulations and structures of the doctoral studies, and (2) the role of the doctoral candidate and the role of the supervisor. We have mapped the transformation of the Swedish doctorate by exploring how the thematic areas of 'regulation', 'funding', and 'independence' emerge in the documents. By 'regulation' we indicate to what extent the syllabus is overtly regulated, for example, through obligatory courses, seminars, and supervision. 'Funding' relates to if and how the funding of the doctorate is included in the syllabus, and 'independence' adheres to the individual doctoral researcher's autonomy and independence to decide on his or her research project and studies. In our results, we can see how in the 1970s, regulation and funding were not mentioned or given focus in the syllabi. However, the more regulated the doctorate becomes, the more formal, school lookalike, the education becomes, with highly regulated rules for courses, seminars and supervision. Funding is aligned with increased regulation, indicating that although the doctoral researchers are employed, there are today stricter rules and regulations for their doctoral research and studies, which results in less autonomy and independence for the doctoral researchers.

The three themes that we have identified as transformative aspects of the Swedish doctorate during the past 50 years are (1) "schoolification", (2) increasing interest in stress management, and (3) relevance in terms of professional competences outside the academy, indicate that regulation, funding and autonomy are intertwined in complex ways, having both intended and unintended effects on the doctoral researchers and doctoral education on institutional and departmental levels. Conclusions of these analyses that can be drawn are that regulation of doctoral research and the doctoral researchers' wellbeing are increasingly being emphasised in public discourses. Hence, there is a risk that the academic intellectual contributions are less focused. We argue that the tight string of learning objectives and rules and regulations may, in fact, hinder autonomy, creativity and individuality – which are at the core of an academic doctorate.

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39 More than a checkpoint? Exploring the pedagogical role of doctoral progression assessment

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

There is an expectation that all doctoral programmes in the UK will include a form of progression assessment (QAA, 2020), with individual institutions having autonomy to determine specific processes and criteria. Yet, despite the potential significance of this assessment to the doctoral journey (Smith McGloin, 2021) it has previously received very limited empirical attention (Dowle, 2023; Sillence, 2023), particularly in relation to its pedagogic, rather than pragmatic, role. Supported by theory relating to the concept of assessment for learning (William, 2011) the present study sought to utilise narrative event-focused interviews (Jackman et al, 2022) to investigate student experiences of doctoral progression assessment at one university. The study framed the assessment as a potential learning event and considered perceptions of its impact on personal academic development. The findings highlighted the role of written and oral examination within this process and explored student perspectives of the pedagogic aspects of these processes.

Full paper

There is an expectation that all doctoral programmes in the UK will include 'some form' of 'clearly defined' progression review system (QAA, 2020), however there are no standardised assessment criteria for this and individual institutions have autonomy to determine their own processes. As a result, there is significant variation in progression assessment design, terminology and guidance (Sillence, 2023). For example, assessment may include a desk-based review of a written report and/or an oral examination with an independent panel. This variation is reflected in guidance for doctoral students, which conceptualises progression assessment as ranging from the production of a 'mini thesis' (Cryer, 2006) to engagement in a 'mock viva' (Trafford & Leshem, 2008). Driven by the positioning of doctoral completion rates as a key performance metric for institutions (HESA 2023), the primary, pragmatic, purpose of progression assessment appears to be grounded in an assumption that it plays a key role in improving continuation and completion rates (QAA,2020, Dowle, 2022). However, whilst progression assessment has been framed as a potentially significant factor in the doctoral journey (Smith McGloin, 2021), as an aspect of doctoral education it has received very little empirical attention (Dowle, 2023; Sillence, 2023).

Whilst QAA reports have previously highlighted concerns regarding clarity and consistency of doctoral progression assessment (Clarke, 2013), it has not been until very recently that examples of small-scale empirical research have begun to investigate progression assessment in more detail in an effort to generate learning to inform design. This work has explored aspects including perceptions of effectiveness (Dowle, 2023), academic staff perspectives on design (Sillence, 2023) and impact on student mobility (Smith McGloin, 2021). Whilst some additional studies have been undertaken in wider international contexts (Mewburn et al, 2014; Barlett and Eacersell, 2019) and progression monitoring has been addressed in some studies concerned with broader questions relating to doctoral completion (Vidak et al, 2017), evidence to inform design and practice in this area remains limited. Furthermore, where progression assessment has been the subject of academic discussion, this has often centred on predominantly pragmatic, rather than pedagogical, considerations such as consideration of its role in completion rates (Clarke, 2013; Vidak et al, 2017) and/or the framing of progression assessment as primarily functioning for purposes such as institutional quality control (Sillence, 2023).

The present study aimed to complement and develop this existing pragmatic focus by investigating aspects of the progression review process from a primarily pedagogical perspective. The study sought to investigate the experiences of a small group of doctoral students who had recently undertaken a progression review stage at a post-1992 UK university. The university's progression process includes a progression examination as the first stage of assessment, occurring 12 months after registration for full time doctoral students. The assessment process includes a requirement to submit a written progress report and then sit an oral examination with examiners who are independent of the supervision team. Students must pass the progression examination in order to continue with their research degree. The study utilised narrative 'event-focused' interviews (Jackman et al, 2022) to elicit detailed accounts of students' experiences of undertaking their progression assessment. Theory relating to the concept of 'assessment for learning' (William, 2011) was then used to develop an analytical framework which supported deductive thematic analysis of the students' individual accounts. The study did not seek to identify generalisable information about student experience, but rather to illustrate, explore and provoke consideration of the pedagogic potential of progression assessment.

The findings of the study frame the doctoral examination assessment as a potential learning event and consider students' perceptions of its impact on their academic development. Within this the role of written and oral examination as part of the assessment process is explored alongside student perspectives of the pedagogic aspects of the process and examiner practice. Implications for practice, design and future research are outlined.

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128 A provocation to precarity: Reimagining the role of doctoral supervision in challenging precarity in academic careers

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Whilst there is increasing acknowledgement of precarity being effectively “baked-in” to academic careers, there has been limited examination of the role of doctoral supervision and supervisors in relation to this. Applying an institutional habitus lens (Reay, et al., 2005) we question the role of supervision in normalising, legitimizing and reproducing precarity as the ‘rules of the game’ and encouraging strategies of ‘hope labour’ to navigate precarity. Hope labour is unpaid or under-compensated labour undertaken in the present, usually for exposure or experience, with the hope that future work may follow (Mackenzie and McKinlay, 2021). In this conceptual paper we critically explore the potential implications of supervisors encouraging hope labour for academic careers and argue that hope labour disguises the long-term exploitative and ruinous effects of unpaid or under-compensated work on academic careers. We present the possibilities for a reimagining of doctoral supervision which moves beyond the legitimization of precarity.

Full paper

The higher education labour market is characterized by high levels of precarity. Recent research by the University and College Union reported that 67% of research staff and 49% of teaching only staff are on fixed terms contracts, with 42% of those teaching only staff being paid hourly rates (Megoran and Mason, 2020). Despite worsening conditions, coupled with increasing high profile higher education sector wide strikes, there are growing numbers of doctoral students in UK universities (Hancock, 2020). While there have been calls for a broader range of employability options (Bryan and Guccione, 2018; Diamond, et al.), for many doctoral graduates’ academia is the preferred/expected employment pathway (Cornell, 2022; Young, et al., 2020; Wellcome Trust, 2013). The doctoral journey is a pivotal period in the development of a doctoral student’s professional identity, with the supervisor acting as gatekeeper and increasingly giving career guidance (Elliot, et al. 2020; Golde and Walker, 2006).

Whilst there is increasing acknowledgement of precarity being effectively “baked-in” to academic careers, there has been limited insight into the role of doctoral supervision and supervisors as part of this process. Recognizing supervision as part of a wider political context (Bastalich, 2017), we address doctoral supervisors as key stakeholders who both ‘govern’ and are ‘the governed’: as both subjects of power and vehicles through which power is exercised (Foucault, 1982). Our paper considers the pedagogical tensions between supervision/teaching of post-graduate researchers and the imperative to support the employment prospects of doctoral candidates for a precarious labour market. Conceptually, we explore how post-graduate research teaching/supervision addresses the higher education labour market in terms of precarity and is a key expectation within a university’s expressive order – the expectations and character of an institution’s habitus (Reay, et al., 2005).

In this conceptual paper we apply an institutional habitus lens (Reay, et al., 2005) to question the role of supervision in normalising, legitimizing and reproducing precarity as the ‘rules of the game’. In doing so we consider how doctoral supervision transmits a symbolically violent narrative that encourages doctoral candidates to acquiescence to precarity in alignment with the market. Echoing Bourdieu (1992), resistance to neo-liberalism is fraught with danger as there is always a reserve army of labourers willing to take a dissenter’s place. As such, supervision which legitimises precarity and articulates the benefits of activities such as “hope labour” could arguably be seen as ‘realistic’, pragmatic employability support. Hope labour, unpaid or under-compensated labour undertaken in the present, usually for exposure or experience, with the hope that future work may follow (Mackenzie and McKinlay, 2021) presents as a strategy to navigate precarity, yet we propose that this common sense, individualistic coping strategy exacerbates insecurity by driving down the value of labour, whilst continually replenishing labour markets. We argue that in encouraging strategies of hope labour, supervisors are paradoxically supporting ‘hope labourers’ to become the gravediggers of their own and their peers’ careers. Hope labour may prove individually satisfying – including gains in new skills and experiences – but collectively self-defeating in the long-term. A second paradox of encouraging hope labour through doctoral supervision is that while networking is essential to this strategy, it remains

largely divorced from any wider sense of responsibility for the career prospects of peers. Hope labour thus animates a highly individualistic and instrumental sense of collectivism, where sociability is valorised within an employment context governed through insecurity and anxiety. Hope labour thus disguises the long-term exploitative and ruinous effects of unpaid or under-compensated work.

We present the possibilities for a reimagining of doctoral supervision which moves beyond the legitimization of precarity. Through identifying alternative approaches (for example, Hooley et al's (2017) social justice careers framework and Elliot et al's (2021) doctoral learning ecology model) we propose that a model of doctoral supervision embedded in social justice may support the development of new forms of collective agency to challenge and move beyond the status quo of precarity.

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Parallel Session 3:3

14:30 - 16:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Rachel Brooks

310 No Country for Young Engineers: student migration from India to Germany as a second chance at success

Sazana Jayadeva

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

The number of Indians studying in Germany has sharply risen between 2015-2016 and 2020-2021 and the majority are enrolled on engineering postgraduate courses. Drawing on interviews with 45 Indians who were applying to, currently pursuing, or had recently graduated from engineering Master's degrees in Germany, this paper discusses how the affordable cost of study in Germany had made overseas study an accessible escape from the unfavourable job market for engineers in India. I argue that the reason my interlocutors sought to study in Germany was not because they believed a German degree would give them a positional advantage in the Indian job market. Rather, what they sought to acquire through study in Germany was work experience at a German engineering company. The paper draws attention to alternative place-based markers of distinction beyond institutional prestige which motivate these student flows, and joins scholarship exploring socio-economic diversification among internationally-mobile students.

Full paper

Introduction

The number of Indians studying in Germany has more than doubled between 2015-2016 and 2021-22 (DAAD 2021, DAAD 2022), making India the second largest source country of international students in Germany (DAAD 2022). The majority of Indians studying in Germany are enrolled on postgraduate programmes in engineering. In contrast to the 'traditional' study destinations for Indian students, such as the US, the UK, Australia, and Canada, Germany is a relatively accessible international study destination in the Global North. German public universities – which constitute the majority of the provision of higher education in the country – charge low to no tuition fees, even for international students and, in recent years, have been offering a growing number of English-taught postgraduate courses.

In this paper I will explore the aspirations underpinning the student migration of Indian engineers to Germany, and consider how Master's degrees from Germany were valued by these students. I will illustrate how the vast majority of the Indian engineering students in Germany I interviewed had struggled to find desirable employment in India upon graduating from their engineering Bachelor's degrees. In this context, postgraduate study in Germany had come to be experienced as an accessible and attractive escape from unemployment and unhappy employment and an

opportunity for professional advancement. Following this, I will offer an analysis of my interlocutors' post-study aspirations and how study in Germany was perceived as contributing to the realisation of these aspirations.

Methods

This paper will draw on interviews I conducted with 45 Indians; the vast majority (37) were current students in German universities (studying at a total of 17 universities across the country), 3 had recently graduated from German universities, and 5 were in the process of applying to study in Germany. All had engineering Bachelor's degrees from India and were pursuing, planning to pursue, or had graduated from engineering Master's programmes in Germany. The interviews explored my interviewees' reasons for wanting to do a Master's degree in Germany and how they had or were navigating the process of going to Germany for study. Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants. All interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed in full. I analysed the interview transcripts using ATLAS.ti, drawing on both inductive and deductive approaches.

Contributions

The paper will intervene in two bodies of scholarship. Firstly, it will challenge a dominant perspective in existing scholarship on international student migration: that international students seek to study abroad in order to acquire overseas education credentials, which are portable and will improve their career prospects back home (Waters and Brooks 2021; Beech 2019). In contrast, this paper will illustrate how the Indian students in my study sought to pursue a Master's degree in Germany primarily in order to acquire work experience in their fields of specialisation at a German company. It was such work experience, rather than education credentials from German universities, that my interlocutors believed would be portable and valued by employers in India and elsewhere, thereby enabling them to advance in their careers. Moreover, I will discuss how imaginings of Germany as an engineering superpower underpinned the value associated with gaining engineering work experience in the country. In so doing, the paper will contribute to research that has examined alternative markers of distinction linked to place of study — rather than to education quality and/or institutional prestige — which might be driving some international student flows (Prazeres et al 2017). The paper will also raise a broader question about the importance of relevant international work experience for international students to get a return on their investment in study abroad.

Secondly, while a long-standing assumption in the scholarship on international student migration has been that international students are privileged actors seeking to reproduce their class status, this paper will join an emerging body of scholarship that has documented how this type of educational mobility is also becoming a strategy for less privileged groups to acquire capital they perceive themselves as lacking (Waters and Brooks 2021; Sancho 2017; Robertson and Runganaikaloo 2014). The paper will explore how affordable English-taught postgraduate courses in Germany have expanded the space across which, and the ways in which, a new demographic of Indians — who had previously not viewed study abroad as part of their trajectories — seek to navigate university-to-work transitions. The article will thus also contribute to scholarship on international student migration from India, which has so far largely focused on those students who study in Anglophone countries with highly marketized higher education systems.

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256 Refugee inclusion in higher education: the nexus of barriers and the digital

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Research Domains

Digital University and new learning technologies (DU)

Abstract

This presentation will discuss the lived experiences and challenges refugee students face in participating in higher education in Uganda. The project sought to identify what refugees and those who worked with them in universities thought of the barriers and opportunities in higher education, what types of social capital was needed to succeed, and what role digital learning had in this process. Data were generated through desk research identifying policy language, a survey and 25 semi-structured interviews with students and staff at universities and staff at support organisations.

Findings surface how institutional policy can prohibitively frame the refugee experience. Non-academic structures, such as clubs and social networks designed to meet the students' social welfare, are critical in offsetting these framings. In this presentation, we will note the subtle tensions that emerge from the expectations of participation in university life, and Ugandan life more broadly, amidst digital structures that complicate inclusion.

Full paper

This presentation will explore a research project (2020-2022) designed to surface the lived experiences and challenges refugee students face in accessing and participating in higher education in Uganda. The project sought to identify, in their own words, what refugees and those who worked with them in universities thought of the barriers and opportunities in higher education, what types of social capital was needed to succeed, and what role digital learning had in this process. Data were generated through desk research identifying policy language, a survey and 25 semi-structured interviews with students and staff at universities and staff at support organisations.

Findings surface how institutional policy can prohibitively frame the refugee experience. Non-academic structures, such as clubs and social networks designed to meet the students' social welfare, are critical in offsetting these framings. The increasing use of digital technologies for refugee inclusion in higher education is problematic insofar as it complicates this move between formal institutional policy and non-academic structures. In this presentation, we will note the subtle tensions that emerge from the expectations of participation in university life, and Ugandan life more broadly, amidst digital structures that complicate inclusion.

Findings have significant relevance to all higher education institutions in their efforts at refugee inclusion, but educational inclusion for traditionally marginalised groups more broadly. We argue it is critical to interrogate existing institutional policy and practice, to note the lived accounts of these students through these institutional structures, and to be mindful of the power asymmetries that may exist in digital learning.

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182 University Rankings in Nordic Higher Education: A Scoping Review

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

University rankings play a significant role in higher education (HE) policy in Europe, including the Nordic countries. This scoping review examines their relevance in Nordic HE by analyzing 86 studies published between 2003 and July 2022. The findings indicate a focus on universities' structural and governance reforms to achieve world-class status in a competitive environment. Themes such as educational affairs, funding, research policies, and internationalization received varying attention. A potential discrepancy emerges between global ranking criteria and Nordic scholars' research priorities. The evolving discourse reflects a shift from narrow international competitiveness to a critical perspective. The implications highlight the need for further research and understanding of rankings' evolving role in HE. This review contributes to the existing literature, serving as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in the Nordic HE context.

Keywords: University rankings, Nordic higher education, scoping review, structural reforms, research policies, internationalization.

Full paper

Introduction

In Europe, rankings have become a crucial element in formal policies at various levels, driven by initiatives such as the Bologna process and the European Union's (EU) focus on enhancing Europe's competitiveness through knowledge and research. U-Multirank, considered the European response to global rankings, has received particular attention (Loukkola, 2016). The Nordic countries, despite their distinct relationships with the EU, have experienced the effects of Europeanization and the Bologna Process, with a strong emphasis on egalitarian values and open access to higher education (Sørensen et al., 2019; Schmidt, 2009). However, little research has been conducted on the role and relevance of university rankings in Nordic higher education. Therefore, it is important to explore this topic further by analyzing the existing scientific literature (Elken et al., 2016).

Materials and Methods

To address this gap, a scoping review was conducted to analyze studies on university rankings in the Nordic countries published between 2003 and July 2022. The review included 86 studies, comprising peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, theses, and conference papers, with a focus on Finland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Iceland. Qualitative content analysis was employed to identify themes and categorize the content of the studies.

Findings and Discussion

The scoping review revealed that a significant portion of the studies focused on universities' structural and governance reforms aimed at achieving world-class status in a competitive environment (Aula & Siltaoja, 2021; Lundin & Geschwind, 2021; Thun, 2020). Other prominent themes included educational affairs and funding and finances (Tange, 2021; Lundin & Geschwind, 2021; Niska, 2021; Griffin, 2022; Jokila, 2020). However, research policies and internationalization, despite their importance in global rankings, received less attention in the reviewed studies (Verbytska & Kholiavko, 2020; Bégin-Caouette et al., 2020; Himanen & Puuska, 2022; Tange, 2021).

The emphasis on structural and governance reforms can be attributed to the significant institutional transformation required to achieve world-class status (Aula & Siltaoja, 2011). It is possible that this focus is influenced by government policies and higher education authorities in the Nordic countries (Aula & Siltaoja, 2021). The discrepancy between the rankings' emphasis on research policies and internationalization and scholars' research priorities suggests different foci or the influence of other factors on institutional performance and higher education development (Verbytska & Kholiavko, 2020).

The discourse on university rankings in the Nordic countries has evolved over time, shifting from a narrow focus on international competitiveness to a more nuanced and critical perspective (Aula & Siltaoja, 2021; Lundin & Geschwind, 2021; Thun, 2020). While rankings continue to be considered, there is an increased awareness of their limitations and potential unintended consequences (Aula & Siltaoja, 2021). Discussions now encompass a broader understanding of institutional quality, including various dimensions of higher education excellence and the societal role of universities (Aula & Siltaoja, 2021; Lundin & Geschwind, 2021; Thun, 2020).

Conclusion:

This scoping review contributes to the existing literature on university rankings by mapping the relevant scholarly works onto the Nordic countries. It serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers interested in understanding the evolving role of rankings and their implications for higher education systems. The findings highlight the significance of structural and governance reforms in pursuit of world-class status while pointing out the need for further investigation into the role of research policies and internationalization in shaping institutional performance (Aula & Siltaoja, 2021; Lundin & Geschwind, 2021; Verbytska & Kholiavko, 2020; Bégin-Caouette et al.,

2020; Himanen & Puuska, 2022). Overall, this study sheds light on the dynamic discourse surrounding university rankings in Nordic higher education (Elken et al., 2016).

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Parallel Session 3:4

14:30 - 16:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Andrea Cameron

52 Platforming Employability: Exploring the experiences of graduates using social media for their post-university career transitions

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Research Domains

Digital University and new learning technologies (DU)

Abstract

This paper will focus on the role of digital platforms as sites for employability in the context of higher education. It will draw on empirical data from a longitudinal study exploring how university graduates make use of digital platforms as part of their career transitions. In a higher education context platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram are increasingly presented to students and graduates as part of a strategy for bringing about a positive career transition. This paper will critique dominant notions of digital career literacy as central to understanding how graduates interact with social media and instead aim to use theorisations of social media as a platform as the starting point for how best to theorise this relationship.

Full paper

Career development, over the last two decades, has increasingly become entangled with digital technologies such as social media. (Hooley and Staunton, 2021) this trend has also been growing in the higher education sector as well (Benson and Morgan, 2016; Bridgstock, 2016). This has created theoretical challenges for career and higher education researchers alike about how to theorise this relationship.

A key response to these developments is seen through the concept of digital literacies in general (Belshaw, 2012; Reddy, Sharma and Chaudhary, 2020) and more specifically digital career literacy (Hooley, 2012). These approaches often argue that students need to develop a certain set of attributes to respond to changes and possibilities that social media has brought about. In this paper, I am going to respond to this claim both theoretically and empirically.

From a theoretical position, I argue that this narrative fails to properly understand the nature of digital platforms. Digital literacy tends to focus on technology as an instrumental tool. Though social media sites do allow for various forms of agency they can be better conceptualised as digital platforms. This brings into view digital platforms as

based on a particular business model (Srniczek, 2017) which works around a particular logic of participation designed by the platform.

I will also explore these questions empirically through data from a longitudinal study. I collected data from students and graduates over a two period spanning the final year of their degree through to 12-18 months after their graduation. This data explored the lived experiences of graduates using social media as part of their transition to their future careers after finishing their degrees.

I found that three themes emerged about the impact that digital platforms had on students' career development.

1. Graduates' agency was heavily shaped by their university and by the sector, they were applying to.
2. Subjectively, graduates often fetishised technology.
3. Graduates reported significant experiences of surveillance.

Firstly then, students' agency was significantly shaped by the university and the sector they were moving into. Students started using digital platforms as sites for career development almost entirely because a member of the university staff (most commonly a lecturer) told them it was a good idea. Graduates took on narratives, especially about digital platforms allowing them to build up personal connections and that digital platforms are used by recruiters to search for and find candidates. Alongside this, the exact practices graduates employed were often shaped by the sector they were applying for. I found significant differences between graduates looking at careers in professional public sector settings (e.g. teaching, allied healthcare), creative industries and more traditional graduate schemes. This can be explained in terms of how education and recruitment increasingly are situated on platforms but in different ways.

Secondly, graduates often fetishised technology. In this context, we are looking at fetishism as placing unrealistic confidence in the practical power of technology. Graduates often felt that technology would make them better connected or would lead to them becoming more employable or actually finding work just by nature of being online. This was often because they believed that by being more connected online they could increase their social capital and recruiters would find them and potentially just offer them work. My data showed that over time graduates became disillusioned by this and stated they felt they had wasted their time or that they themselves were not good at using technology.

Thirdly, graduates were very aware of the impact of surveillance on them. This is obviously a key feature of digital platforms and how they extract data from individuals (Van Dijck, 2013; Feher, 2021). Graduates were particularly aware of the negative aspects of losing out on employment because of their digital footprints. This, in turn, led to them attempting to present themselves as being 'professional' online, though being professional was often vaguely defined and could be seen as anything between avoiding lude behaviour online though to appearing politically neutral. Despite these attempts to manage their digital footprints graduates still experienced various scams and forms of harassment online. Often these were exacerbated by their precarity in relation to the labour market.

These themes raise questions about the centrality of digital career literacy. Instead starting from considering the nature of digital platforms helps us to understand the practices, possibilities but also structures and dangers that may occur on digital platforms.

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38 Professional Digital ePortfolios: Perceptions on Employability, Reflective Practice and Professional Identity for UK Undergraduate Childhood Studies Students

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This research examines the integration of digital ePortfolios in UK undergraduate Childhood Studies courses. With graduate employability a key driver for UK universities to attract students, strategies to connect learning to employment are becoming increasingly valuable in higher education. Although ePortfolios may not be a novel approach in degree programmes, their integration as a central element of curriculum and assessment has not been fully explored. This study investigates how ePortfolios can affect students' interaction with their university experiences by enhancing professional identities and reflective, lifelong learning. Data collected for this project draws upon students' perceptions through recorded online interviews adopting a phenomenological approach, eliciting meaning through reflective, subjective understandings. Findings portray that reflective work in ePortfolios can be challenging through exposing vulnerabilities whilst also positively playing a role in the 'bigger picture' of students' development. This is through the facilitation of digital skill development and evolving professional identities.

Full paper

This research investigates digital ePortfolios in the undergraduate curriculum in Childhood Studies at a UK university. An ePortfolio is an online resource created by students that detail professional experiences linked to academic study. It culminates in a structured collection of learner work that is primarily framed by reflection (Wolf & Dietz, 1998).

Research into ePortfolios in Higher Education is ongoing and well-informed. Closely related to employability, ePortfolios showcase applicant credentials and digital competence, allowing universities to assess students, and for organisations to determine applicants' skills for entering the job market (Ring et al, 2017). In a competitive graduate employability climate, degree programmes are perceived as a 'product' with an emphasis on value for money with students as customers (Modell, 2005). As pressure builds around student recruitment, action is needed to improve graduate employability metrics, with ePortfolios proven to enhance these.

The qualitative nature of this research draws upon participant perceptions of ePortfolios through recorded online interviews, with discussions surrounding work placements, digital skills, professional experiences and employability. Participants are in 2 groups; current students and graduates, with data collection adopting a phenomenological approach, relying upon specific contexts and circumstances (Willig, 2008). This elicits a richness of meaning forged through reflective, subjective understandings (Finlay, 1999). The data collected encompasses the perceivers' *angle* of perception, basing reality on human experience (Willig, 2008) and taking an idiographic stance (Burrell and Morgan, 1999).

ePortfolios "develop engaged, reflective, lifelong learners," by collecting valuable evidence of career-based skills, and promoting "professional digital identities" (McKay & Watty, 2016). This study recognises this shift in identity for students, with findings outlining how ePortfolios "**help you to reflect and develop as a professional person,**" and that students did not "**feel like a student when [...] writing this**" (Graduate Participant). This is arguably caused by the facilitated connections between practical learning and reflective summative assessment: "**I've got this theory and understanding of things from uni and I can apply that. And everything makes so much more sense which moving forward has meant Oh, my gosh! I can work even better now**" (Graduate Participant). As students reflect on professional experiences, value exists in the connections between theory and practice, with ePortfolios aiding reflection on an individual's strengths and weaknesses. This in turn improves the quality of work and addresses multiple identities (Ring et al, 2017). Embedding ePortfolios in the curriculum as a summative assessment enforces accountability for students' professionalism, leading to an increased level of perceived value from degree study. The requirement to self-author reflective accounts, and build connections between experiential and theoretical learning leads to "heightened awareness and preparation for professions" (Svyantek, Kajfez & McNair, 2015, p.137). When students have an idea of their professional trajectories, this leads to valuable consideration of career plans: "**You've got clarity in your writing as well, which is probably a nice feather to the bow when you were reflecting on [your career]**" (Student Participant). As ePortfolios prompt students to present their professional personas for large audiences to "intentionally curate their digital presence" (Svyantek et al, 2015, p. 146), the development of professional identity aids career planning significantly.

Reflection is key in Childhood Studies, with a need to effectively embed this in the curriculum. "Danger lies in [reflection] being a separate curriculum element with a set of exercises" (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018, p.1), and with ePortfolios, reflective writing characterises their creation. The meaning of this reflection is evident in the findings: "**This is the only assessment that you go and do something real, and then you have to bring it back to our lovely, fluffy theory of 'Oh, this is how things should be,' and no one else really makes you do that**" (Student Participant). This recognises integrative thinking for students encouraging the management of complexity and problem-solving by connecting ideas akin to professional experiences (Svyantek, et al, 2015). Reflection brings challenges, however, with vulnerability associated with articulating learning from experience. Findings showed: "**[There was a] vulnerability that you felt when you submitted those reflections**" (Graduate Participant); the cause arguably in revealing more of the 'self' than other assessment methods (Lewis & Gerbic, 2012). Accompanying this is the requirement to adopt alternative ways of thinking that encompass purposeful goal-directed tasks that personalise the learning experience (Lewis, 2017).

To conclude, ePortfolios in undergraduate Childhood Studies degree programmes positively affect students' perceptions of professional identities, employability and digital competence. Reflecting on learning is challenging and vulnerability arises from recounting experiences for assessment purposes. ePortfolios had a positive impact on the undergraduate Childhood Studies degree programme, encompassing wider contexts and individual learning experiences.

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209 We deserved fair treatment! A pathetic career transition within an outsourcing company

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

Romania is home to numerous outsourcing companies and their arrival has radically increased the number of service-job opportunities. Romania is among the leading countries with the highest underemployment rate, and the mismatch between education and job remains a public and socio-economic issue. However, there is a lack of studies on education-job misalliance-lived-work experience and the potentially complex issues facing young university graduates. This study explains the return to the office (RTO) transition drawn on two-year ethnographical case study

data analysed with a reflective thematic lens. Findings emphasised that returning to work in the office on a full-time basis proved how company management purposively ignored employees' participation and devalued CSRs engagement—for many, minimal work flexibility hindered the work-life balance. We reveal how outsourcing aligns with talent mismanagement and insecure career prospects, i.e., CSRs' daily tasks entail deskilling, offer limited personal and professional development and deter career mobility.

Full paper

We deserved fair treatment! A pathetic career transition within an outsourcing company

Romania is home to numerous outsourcing companies. The emergence of multinational corporations (MNCs) has radically increased the number of service-job opportunities and altered working conditions (Edgel et al., 2016; ILO, 2022). In recent decades, there has been a skyrocketing number of graduates employed for positions beneath their education and skill levels in their university-to-work transition (Scurry et al., 2020; Tomlinson and Holmes, 2017), and the Romania labour market is no exception (Isirabahenda, 2019; Pantea, 2019). Within European countries, Romania is among the leading countries with the highest underemployment rate, and the mismatch between education and job remains a public and socio-economic issue (Pantea 2019). However, there is a lack of studies on education-job misalliance-lived-work experience and the possible complex problems facing young university graduates. This study examines and explains the mechanisms that marked the total return to the office (RTO) drawn on two-year ethnographical case study data analysed with a reflective thematic lens. The findings emphasised that despite the numerous RTO effects on customer support representatives (CSRs) working conditions, the decision and timeframe to return work to the office on a full-time basis proved how multinational company management purposively ignored employees' participation and devalued CSRs engagement—for many, minimal work flexibility hindered the work-life balance during the RTO transition. Against the myth of a decent career provided by outsourced companies, this study reveals how outsourcing aligns with talent mismanagement and insecure career prospects. For instance, CSRs' daily tasks entail deskilling, and entry-level positions offer limited personal and professional development and deterred career mobility. The results explain how the MNC studied re-outsourced accounts receivable departments in Asia to keep pace with the competitive world, boost profits, and highlight the pathetic strategies used to terminate employment contracts for CSRs. The disguise of mutual agreement from redeployment to the cessation of employment contracts for some CSRs triggered alarms on outsourcing precarious work, and it proved uncertain career prospects that under-employed CSRs endured. This study makes two significant contributions to the literature. The substantial enquiry into lived work experiences within service jobs is central to contemporary research in the sociology of work and employment, and this study fills this gap in the Romanian context. This study demonstrates the need for a fundamental labour policy shift in Romania. The need to re-assess the myth of decent careers within outsourced service jobs is vital as the underemployment phenomena affect the psycho-socio-economic status of young university graduates (Dooley and Prause, 2004; Kallerberg, 2007; Heyes and Tomlinson 2021) and the underutilisation of graduate capitals significantly impact the knowledge-based economy growth (Broadley et al. 2022). To improve social and economic outcomes and smooth the transition from school to work, Romania should rethink and develop education-job matching and talent management approaches in which young university graduates can access high-quality and secure employment.

Keywords: Education-job mismatch; outsourcing jobs; precarious career, young people, Romania

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Parallel Session 3:5

14:30 - 16:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Steve Woodfield

257 Faculty Enactment of Curriculum and Teaching Policy in Kazakhstan.

Saule Yeszhanova

Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how faculty members of one foreign languages department are enacting the changes in curriculum and teaching policy implemented in Kazakhstan's public higher education system and their perspectives on changing their teaching and learning practices. The current study employed an ethnographic

research design. Twenty-one faculty members of one foreign languages department took part in the study. I conducted twenty semi-structured interviews, observed twenty-nine faculty classroom teaching, and attended one faculty meeting where they discussed how they enacted curriculum changes. Some of the hindrances in curriculum policy enactment by faculty might be a lack of clear guidelines or instructions on how to implement the policy into practice initiated by the policymakers and time pressure to enact curriculum policy. Also, academics may have mixed feelings about curriculum reforms. Some may be positive about these reforms whereas senior faculty members may not support curriculum changes.

Full paper

Introduction

For the past three decades Kazakhstan has undergone many transformations in the higher education system (Ahn et al., 2018). In particular, Kazakhstan's universities have witnessed significant changes in the content of curriculum (Kerimkulova & Kuzhabekova, 2017). For example, Kazakh education policymakers asked the teaching body to modernise the content of the curriculum and change the way in which faculty work by aligning it more closely with the Bologna process (Maudarbekova & Kashkinbayeva, 2014). However, no studies have been done on how faculty members enact curriculum reforms in practice in Kazakh higher education system. Therefore, the purpose of this ethnographic study is to explore how faculty members of one foreign languages department are enacting the changes in curriculum and teaching policy implemented in Kazakhstan's public higher education system and their experiences in changing their teaching and learning practices. This research analyses the reaction and response of faculty members to the ambitious goals laid out by Kazakhstan's policymakers, and how educators interpret and work in response to these aims.

The theoretical framework of policy enactment into practice will guide this study (Ball et al., 2012). This theory will help to understand how curriculum and teaching policies work in practice. The significance of this theory in this study is that it has not previously been applied in post-Soviet higher education contexts, and so potentially will make an original contribution to knowledge by gaining insights and knowledge how faculty are enacting changes in curriculum and teaching policy. This theory will enable me to study this particular issue in all its complexity and gain some valuable insights into how policies work in practice.

Methodology:

To achieve the purpose of the study, the current study will employ an ethnographic research design. The ethnographic research will be conducted in the natural setting of a university and long-term engagement in the academic department will provide a holistic analysis of participants' understanding and experiences of the curriculum and teaching policy, how they implement a new curriculum which is manifested in their classroom teaching, during discussions with each other, informal conversations, meetings with the head of the department; produce a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon through doing observations outside and inside of the classroom, understanding how participants construct their knowledge of curriculum and teaching policy, recording what academics are saying about curriculum changes and analysing data (Geertz, 1973) to avoid superficial findings (Woods, 1994).

Further, the ethnographic approach will allow me to hear the voices of participants to provide a wide range of interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). I will explore the faculty's daily teaching practices, activities, behaviours, their interactions, beliefs, values, and the things that impact the culture of that department. Also, in an ethnographic study, I will build rapport with my participants, choose interviewees, observe lessons and keep a diary.

As I am doing an ethnographic study, I will be using multiple sources of data collection such as participant observations inside and outside of the classroom, document analysis, semi-structured and informal interviews, and field notes. The use of a wide range of data collection methods will provide a holistic analysis of the ethnographic study.

Findings:

This ethnographic study lasted four months. Twenty-one faculty members took part in this study. I conducted twenty semi-structured, attended twenty-nine faculty's classroom teaching, and one faculty formal meeting. Expected outcomes of the study will be that professors may have mixed feelings about curriculum reforms. Some of them may be positive about these reforms as they obtained their MA or PhD degrees abroad that facilitated curriculum policy enactment whereas senior faculty members may not support curriculum changes as they were trained under the Soviet education system and their teaching instructions may be based on the Soviet pedagogy that hindered curriculum policy enactment. In addition, a close collaboration with faculty may facilitate curriculum development and improvement in instructional approaches as well as professional development and a peer networking between universities may lead to the changes in the content of curricula and teacher pedagogy. However, one of the hindrances in curriculum policy enactment by faculty might be a lack of clear guidelines or instructions on how to implement the policy into practice initiated by the policymakers and time pressure to enact curriculum policy. In conclusion, there will be some recommendations to the dean and university leadership to support the continued development of curriculum, teaching, and learning based on international literature.

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372 Programmatic policy from a clientelist setting: The case of the passage of the free public higher education law in the Philippines

Nelson Cainghog

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Scholars characterized Philippine politics as clientelist. Policies that are not clientelist especially major ones that require huge funding rarely materialize. Starting in 2018, a free higher education law provided for free tuition and most miscellaneous expenses to students taking their first college degree within the prescribed duration of study in a government college. The assistance is provided to eligible students who passed the admission examination. Why was this programmatic program passed by a clientelist Congress? The following factors contributed to the passage of law: (1) the Supreme Court's declaration of Congress' pork barrel funds as unconstitutional in 2013; (2) the Philippine Senate's lesser incentive to engage in clientelist distribution due to their national as opposed to local constituency; and (3) the fiscal space that made a costly programmatic program feasible. The paper aims to shed light on how programmatic policies, especially a major one, emerge from a clientelist Congress.

Full paper

Scholars characterized Philippine politics as clientelist (Lande 1964, Teehankee 2012). However, this view does not fully account policies that are not clientelist especially major ones that require huge funding. The Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931) which was signed into law in August 2017 is one of those programs. One of the main provisions of the law, which was appropriated at least 200 billion pesos since 2018, is that students taking their first undergraduate degree within the prescribed duration of study in a state or a Commission on Higher Education-recognized local college or university may not pay tuition and most miscellaneous fees (cf. Tullao and Ruiz 2022). This provision is programmatic as receipt of the benefits is not conditioned on the students' political support but is purely based on merit; that is student's admission in the university or college. This effectively removed the role of Congress in the selection of beneficiaries which was a long-standing practice in the provision of financial assistance for decades. Why was this programmatic provision passed by Congress notwithstanding the longstanding clientelist mode of providing financial assistance to higher education students? Based on congressional records and secondary data, I argue that the following factors contributed to the passage of the programmatic version of the law: (1) the legal discourse against the Priority Development Assistance Fund, a clientelist mechanism for distributing financial assistance, with the Supreme Court's declaration of its unconstitutionality in 2013 (Belgica et al. v. Executive Secretary); (2) the Philippines Senate, which has less incentives to engage in clientelist distribution due to their national constituency, which facilitated the realignment of PhP8 billion in the 2017 budget that effectively set the design of the program, and also approved its version of the bill in 7.5 months; and (3) the fiscal space that made a more costly programmatic program feasible and gave leeway to a populist president. The Supreme Court decision freed up fiscal space which was already enhanced by the Philippines investment grade rating starting in 2013. All it takes was for a group of Senators to push for the idea of free tuition and later free higher education in 2016. Using a least-likely case study design, these factors are traced and contextualized. The paper aims to shed light on how programmatic policies, especially a major one, emerge from a clientelist Congress.

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26 A qualitative study employing Bourdieu's concepts: how Chinese graduates perceive the UK Masters programme

Miaomiao Jia

Cardiff University, Cardiff, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

Extensive research has examined positive influences of international educational mobility (IEM) on international students, mostly regarding English language learning, cross-cultural interactions, student experience and student mobility. Few studies have investigated how Chinese graduates perceive and experience IEM, and relevant studies focus on singular facets, like acculturation, psychological adaptation or programme engagement. To fill this key gap, this study draws on Bourdieu's theoretical lenses of cultural capital and social practice to qualitatively explore the influence of international experiences on international graduates' perceptions of life and work. This study clarifies the positive implications of international exposure for graduates regarding institutional recognition, employability, global friendships, cosmopolitan horizons and acculturation. Particularly, accrued social capital and perceived employability are identified as key positive attributes. Future research needs to further synthesize cultural factors, labour market contexts and experiences of returnees and stayers to identify the sustainability of employability and capital values of IEM for Chinese graduates.

Full paper

In this study, Bourdieu's (1986, 1990) concept serves as excellent explanatory tool in both macro and micro dimensions, explaining social phenomena from sociological, psychological and educational perspectives. This study identifies the advantages of employability, cultural capital and social capital that entails from international experiences, offering insights into individuals' enduring struggles with acculturation and capital building.

In the global talent competition, the influx of Chinese students into the UK has garnered considerable attention. However, most studies solely focus on in-school students, less examining graduates (Brooks & Waters, 2022; Cheng & Liu, 2021; Kang, 2019; Wang & Miao, 2021). Extensive research has discussed the relationship between international educational mobility (IEM) and international student, mobility and capital from different angles, notably around talents policies, cross-cultural adaptation, labour markets, career strategies and the influence of symbolic cultural and social capital arising from the intersection of international contexts, reflecting the complex and dynamic nature of international student identity transformation and capital construction in IEM (Blackmore et al., 2017; Cheung & Xu, 2015; Dolzhikova et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2020; Kang, 2019; Wong & Guo, 2023). However, scholars assert that the high mismatch between IEM content and diverse labour market needs, and difficulties for large numbers of Chinese students to secure jobs after graduation and return home, reveal the diminishing signalling strengths of international education diplomas, rendering investment returns of international education highly questionable (Hao & Welch, 2012; HU, 2017; Tharenou, 2015).

Despite this, few studies have explored the post-graduation dynamics and capital accumulation of these international students, leaving it challenging to investigate the transition and status of students from study to work or other fields, unclear about the long-term value of previous educational experiences for subsequent life paths, implying a research gap. While some studies recognise the impact of such transnational experiences on graduates' cultural and social capital, further research is needed to determine the continuity, contextuality and variability of this impact (Bernstein & Osman, 2012; Khan & Ali, 2022; Zhang & Xu, 2020). More importantly, it is necessary to understand the significance of this influence on graduates' future career development (Anderson & Tomlinson, 2021; Shao et al., 2022; Stavrou, 2022). Furthermore, for many graduates, the UK taught Masters programme is only one year long, but more than a course experience or financial purpose, but a lifelong memory of a long-term stay in a foreign country (Wong & Guo, 2023). It is filled with a rich social value and human landscape that profoundly shapes the identities, perceptions and values of the participants (Wang, 2022)

This research conducted semi-structured interviews with ten graduates across different periods, drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis to yield the following extracts. The interviews suggest that the UK Masters experience brings long-term career benefits.

I work in advertising in the UK and the nature of my job requires me to be exposed to different social groups. Thanks to the network of alumni resources during my master's degree, my classmates who returned to China after graduation supported me in obtaining data on Chinese clients. Tina

Besides Tina, Sarah's career benefited from the social resources. After graduating, Sarah set up her English tutoring business and needed English textbook resources made in the UK which she could not access for firewall barriers. Sarah said her UK friend was helpful.

I contacted one of my best UK classmates, amazingly, she did not hesitate to help me. Two weeks later, I received a package from the UK. Sarah

Beyond benefiting from these social resources, participants reported that they had helped others find jobs through their connections with classmates. Tom, a supply chain risk engineer, was working for a state-owned company when his masters classmate contacted him and asked for help in finding a job.

I helped him secure an interview with another engineering department. He eventually passed the interview. Tom

Aside from help from Chinese friends and alumni resources, notably, the support of university teachers is also essential, Ann notes that her current part-time postgraduate teaching assistantship and dissertation tutorial were both referred to her by her dissertation supervisor in the UK.

I worked hard and invested lots of efforts and time to complete my dissertation, thus maintaining a good relationship with my supervisor. He knew I wanted to earn money and introduced me to short-term works. Ann

In summary, social capital accumulated by the UK Masters programme comes not only from positive cross-cultural exchanges, but also from supportive alumni resources and the assistance of teachers at Masters institutions. This implies the value of this international experience in employability and social capital shaping.

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Break

16:00 - 16:15 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Parallel Session 4:1

16:15 - 17:45 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Clare Loughlin-Chow

293 Enhancing University mentoring practice through Activity Theory analysis of the lived experiences of Learning and Teaching mentors.

Helen Hooper, Jaden Allan, Linda Allin, Michael Elsdon, Susan Mathieson, Roger Penlington

Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Increased emphasis has been placed on mentoring in educational development to enhance the quality of University Learning and Teaching. However, there is little research exploring L&T Mentors' experiences. This study, by a cross-University team investigating LTM experiences, is underpinned by Cultural Historical Activity Theory. CHAT provides a framework for collaborative research to change thinking and practice through identification and understanding contradictions in 'Activity Systems'. The mentoring AS was collaboratively mapped and used to survey LTM. Data analysis surfaced typical patterns of experience and revealed mentors experienced contradictions with both sociocultural and structural aspects within the AS. Commitment to reflective practice and collegiality motivate LTM and conflicts with perceptions that L&T mentoring is not valued or rewarded by academic leaders who prioritise research. Exploring contradictions enable us to collaboratively develop interventions rooted in academics' lived experiences. We will reflect on the 'expansive learning' promoted by researcher engagement with CHAT.

Full paper

Findings from a collaborative research project underpinned by Cultural Historical Activity system Theory (CHAT)1-3 are presented in this paper. Research was undertaken in an UK University by an inter- disciplinary group of academic developers who aimed to better understand the experiences of Learning and Teaching Mentors (LTM) in order to improve the support available and recognition for mentoring, and ultimately enhance mentoring to support learning and teaching.

Increased emphasis has been placed on mentoring in educational development as this has been shown to enhance the quality of University learning and teaching, by contributing to both expanding the knowledge and understanding for teaching from programmes for University teachers and also facilitating the transfer of that knowledge to the pedagogic practice of University teachers⁴⁻⁶.

In contrast, there is little research exploring the experiences of LTM, including the motivations and values underpinning engagement with mentoring, whether support is effective or if the role of mentor is perceived as valued activity.

CHAT has been used in higher education to facilitate collaborative research to identify and address educational challenges⁷⁻¹¹ but has not been used to investigate the experiences of LTM. CHAT is a theory of 'expansive learning' and transformation through collaborative reflection on contradictions within 'Activity Systems'¹, focussed on socially situated learning through engaging in everyday tasks - in this case the experiences of LTM.

Activity systems comprise six interconnected elements which were collaboratively defined for the activity system for learning and teaching mentoring as follows, with effective support for and recognition of LTM defined as the 'outcome' (also see Figure 1).

- The Subject: LTM
- The Object: effective mentoring to support learning and teaching
- The Community: who and how they support LTM
- Tools and Resources: that support LTM and mentoring
- Rules: that govern learning and teaching mentoring
- Division of labour: for LTM

The activity system for LTM informed development of a survey containing both quantitative questions (e.g. Have you been allocated a workload for mentoring?) and free response questions (e.g. What have been the most difficult aspects of being a mentor?). Educational developers in academic departments and professional services distributed the survey across the Institute.

Qualitative data analysis focussed on surfacing typical patterns of experience and identifying contradictions and tensions between elements of the activity system, within and between departments, as the basis for collaborative discussion and proposals for change to the way LTM are supported and recognised across the Institute.

An iterative analytical approach was adopted¹², investigators moved back-and-forth between data and the CHAT framework. Theme-codes were initially distilled from qualitative responses, clustered into over-arching categories and both theme-codes and categories were organised around the nodes of the activity system for support of LTM (Figure 1).

Findings support previous research on the value of informal learning in departmental communities¹³ and critical reflection on practice¹⁴ but this paper will focus on the tensions and contractions experienced by LTM- 'the subject' of the activity system- stemming from inconsistent support:

"Initially: 0 preparation, 0 support, 0 recognition. Since [name] started to coordinate this, I attended a mentor training workshop and I know we are supposed to get.. workload hours (although that is on trust as there isn't even a line in the workload spreadsheet)."

A perceived lack of value or reward for LTM activity:

"Valued by whom? Senior leadership do not value anything other than a 4* publication."

"This is not recognised or rewarded at any level. This is a constant source of frustration and upset... Without the teaching focussed people, the University could not function!"

and contradictions between the intrinsic ethos of collegiality and commitment to reflective practice as motivations underpinning engagement with mentoring

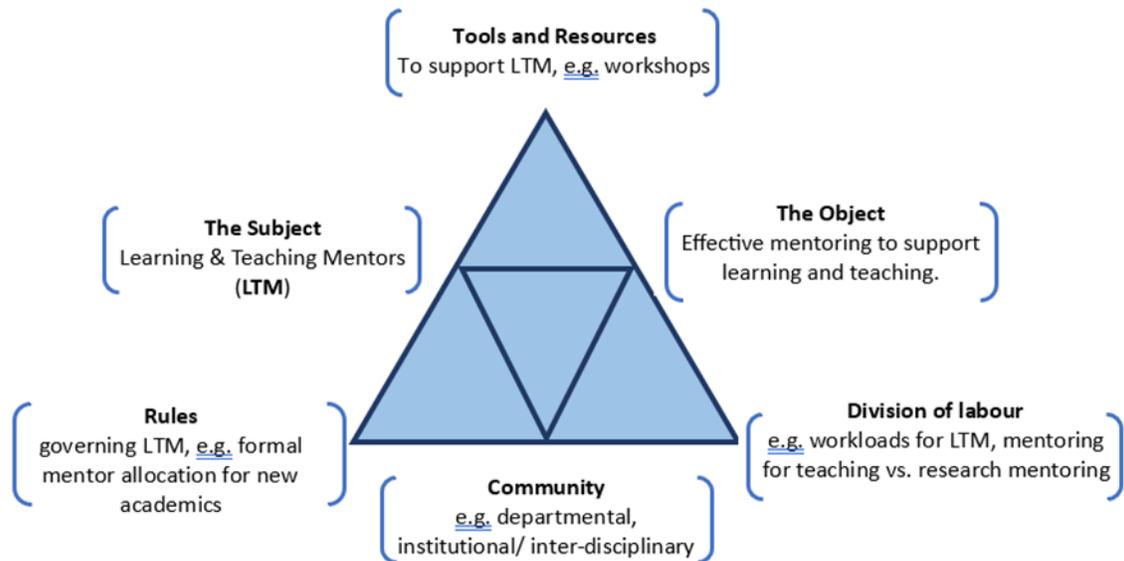
"I enjoy talking to people about teaching methods. It helps me to reflect on my own teaching and to consider different practices."

and the challenges reported by experienced mentors surrounding support of new staff who prioritise research over teaching

"...Unfortunately many... new staff have been appointed due to their research track record. For these mentees engagement with teaching, trying to develop practice in this area, is.. a distraction.. from research.. For example, the only Q my current mentee has asked is what the minimum hours of teaching they 'need' to do to 'get' a FHEA. ... This is pretty soul destroying stuff."

Adopting a CHAT research framework committed investigators to exploring potential for 'transformative agency'. Our collective understanding of how LTM experiences were shaped by contradictions impacting on the activity systems for learning and teaching mentoring motivated collaborative work to develop better support and recognition mechanisms

Fig. 1: L&T Mentoring Activity System



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267 Different but equal? Examining notions of difference and equality in the student-staff partnership literature

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Student-staff partnerships in higher education are grounded in an ideal of increased equality between students and staff. At the same time, a key argument for student-staff partnerships is that students contribute with knowledge and experiences that are different to those of staff. This paper argues that the implications of this juxtaposition of equality and difference have not been sufficiently explored. Building on a systematic review of literature on student-staff partnerships, we examine 228 published articles with analytical focus on how notions of equality and difference between students and staff are expressed conceptually and empirically. Our analysis, driven by the concepts of positioning and agency, identifies four main student positions as follows: students as resources on a) subject knowledge, b) pedagogical approaches, c) inclusive learning spaces, and d) self-growth. For each category, we discuss implications for students-staff relations and for opportunities of student agency.

Full paper

There is a significant literature on student-staff partnerships, which explores how students can act as co-creators of teaching and learning in higher education (e.g. Bovill, 2019; Cook-Sather, 2020; Matthews et al., 2019; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Typical objectives of student-staff partnerships include positioning students as resources for academic development; strengthening inclusion of marginalised student groups; strengthening students' autonomy in their own learning processes; and challenging hierarchical relationships between students and staff (Alhadad et al., 2021; Mercer-Mapstone & Bovill, 2020; Seale et al., 2015). Reported benefits include reduced dropout, improved academic performance, increased student engagement and improved equity (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

A key assumption underlying this literature is that students should participate in academic development on more equal terms with staff. At the same time, a key argument for student-staff partnerships is that students contribute with knowledge and experiences that are different to those of staff. For example, they might have a stronger understanding of the student experience, or experiences of minority groups. In one definition, partnerships are conceived of as “a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways” (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014, p. 6–7, cited in Bovill, 2019, emphasis added). Bovill highlights this inherent tension in many conceptualisations of partnerships: On the one hand, most definitions imply “a level of equality between partners” (Bovill, 2019, p. 386); yet partners are not equally positioned in terms of knowledge, experience, and power over decision-making processes.

In brief, student-staff partnerships are grounded in an ideal of equality, which is to be built on difference among actors. In this paper, we take as a point of departure that the implications of this premise have not been sufficiently explored. As argued by Alhadad et al. (2021), there is a need to adopt a “context/ and temporal-dependent view of power” that challenges “the false dichotomy of power asymmetry as inherently bad, and power symmetry as inherently good” (p. 46). To explore, in more depth, what a context and temporal-dependent view of power entails, we re-examine 228 published articles on student-staff partnerships. The research questions are:

- How are differences in the relations between students and staff addressed in existing literature?
- How are the implications of such differences discussed with regard to student agency?

We address these questions through a systematic review of existing literature on student-staff partnerships. Our corpus includes 228 articles published between 2001 and 2022, identified through searches in Scopus, Web of Science and Eric using the search string: “higher education” AND “co-creation” OR “student-staff partnership” OR “students as partners”. The corpus is limited to peer-reviewed, English-language articles. A comprehensive analysis of the corpus is being developed for a different publication, which accounts for the screening process and inclusion criteria in depth (Authors, 2023). In this article, we re-examine the articles with a narrower analytical focus, with attention to how notions of equality and difference between students and staff are expressed conceptually and empirically.

The analysis is guided by the concepts of positioning and agency. We use positioning to describe how relations between people are socially constituted, referring to an individual’s ‘relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance’ (Holland et al., 1998, p. 127). Positions are not static, and a person’s status may be repositioned through negotiations as the partnership proceeds. Through these positions, students may be afforded with different degrees and forms of agency in student-staff partnerships.

We employed the concept of positioning to identify which roles and responsibilities students and staff were assigned in student-staff partnerships, and how this might influence the relations between them, the stated objectives of the partnerships, and opportunities for enactment of student agency. The analysis generated four main categories of student positions:

- Students as resources on subject knowledge.
- Students as resources on pedagogical approaches.
- Students as resources for more inclusive learning spaces.
- Students as resources for their own self-growth.

Within each of these categories, we discuss implications for student-staff-relations and for opportunities for student agency. In the last step of the analysis, we examine how notions of “equal” positioning between staff and students are discussed in the literature, using the following categories as a point of departure: Equal positioning discussed a) as intention; b) as challenge; c) as recommendations; and d), as a tool for developing students’ agency. We conclude by discussing implications for future research and for the development of student-staff partnerships in higher education.

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Parallel Session 4:2

16:15 - 17:45 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Sazana Jayadeva

206 Understanding how Doctoral Students Prepare for Faculty Positions in Higher Education: Building Connection, Gaining Insight and Understanding Complexities

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

Higher education is complex. While in a doctoral program, students might get limited insight into the complexities of an academic role and the faculty search process. This qualitative study examines the ways in which doctoral students can prepare themselves for faculty positions. Analysis of eight semi-structured interviews conducted with current and former school library faculty members suggests that doctoral students should hone their soft skills and use strategies to build connections, understand complexities, and prepare themselves. Examples of recommended soft skills include networking, self-presentation, communication, planning, time management, leadership, and cultural awareness. Examples of recommended strategies include attending conferences, going to job talks, being active in associations, mapping your skills with teaching needs, practicing for interviews, learning about location, socializing, using support options and conducting research. The study provides a foundation for future research including exploring the experiences of current doctoral students as they prepare for academic positions.

Full paper

Introduction

Universities as organizations are complex and doctoral students may not understand these complexities (Ghaffarzadegan et al., 2017; Rexroth, 2015) and may have a limited understanding of “what is needed to secure a job” (Fernandes et al., 2020, p. 1). In addition, the faculty job market is constantly changing (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Mathews, 2000) and it is increasingly competitive (Larson et al., 2014). Lightfoot et al. (2021) suggest that doctoral “students need help transitioning from their role as a doctoral student to navigating the academic job market” (p. 153).

This research examines the ways in which doctoral students can prepare themselves for faculty positions by developing specific soft skills and using specific strategies to build connections and understand the complexities of higher education.

Literature Review

Weston (2020) defines soft skills as interpersonal and intrapersonal transferable skills. Research detailed soft skills for all work settings (e.g., El-Fakahany, 2022; Robles, 2012), and for academic work in particular (e.g., Brungardt, 2011; Curtin et al., 2016; Dorenkamp & Ruhle, 2019; Kinman & Jones, 2008; Orsini & Coer, 2022; Strawser et al., 2022). Gaff (2002) and Hanson (2022) detail the gap between experiences in a doctoral program and the realities of an academic position. The academic job search landscape has been studied from multiple perspectives (e.g., Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Carter & Scott, 1998; Hsu et al., 2021; Iacono, 1981; Martin, 2017; Perlman et al., 1996). Lightfoot et al. (2021) explored the job search life cycle while Lantsoght (2018) shared a number of tips for successful career in academia.

Methodology

This research uses a generic qualitative research paradigm and aims to “understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23) by looking at how “social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 14). The research team conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with eight current and former school library faculty members. All the participants were women, spoke English, and were at different stages of their academic careers in Canadian, US, and Australian universities. Common themes and trends that emerged across the three researchers’ analyses were gathered together (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1998).

Emerging Findings

Findings from this research suggest that doctoral students should hone their soft skills and use specific strategies (see Figure 1) to gain a deeper understanding of academic positions.

Soft Skills

- Develop Networking Skills and Build Connections
- Refine Presentation Skills
- Enhance Communication Skills
- Work on Self-Presentation
- Improve Cultural Awareness
- Strengthen Planning Skills
- Sharpen Time Management Skills
- Revitalize Leadership Skills

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Figure 1. Emerging soft skills and strategies for faculty job search

Examples of soft skills include:

- Develop networking skills and build connections (“Build some connections there with people, get to know what it's like working at your university”);
- Work on self-presentation (“Start thinking about you know how you want to present yourself”);
- Enhance communication skills, particularly with strangers (“Try to get yourself used to talking to strangers, whether that's at a conference...”);
- Improve your cultural awareness abilities (“...Having a sense of what the culture of that institution is or that department is...they can be quite different”);
- Strengthen planning skills (“Figuring out your path like your five year plan...”);
- Revitalize leadership skills (“Taking on leadership roles in those [organizations and associations]”).

Examples of strategies include:

- Explore opportunities to attend Conferences (“You know ALISE has a job market and the program for preparing young faculty members...”);
- Learn more about the location of your future employment (“Well, I would say location location location...Go to a place, you want to be...that's important”);
- Be active in associations (“Build relationships through conferences and join organizations and associations...”);
- Map your skills with teaching needs (“Making sure that the area that you're going to be teaching matches with your skill set...”)

The emerging findings align with previous literature from different academic disciplines, for example, “impression management and self-presentation”(Cotten et al., 2001 p. 26); “do your homework” (Gray et al., 2019 p. 23; Carter & Scott, 2001), interview preparation (Stasny, 2001; Gray et al., 2019), presentation and communication skills (Iyer and Clark, 1998); networking and “conference attendance” (Camacho, 2014 p. 17); and, “...get a sense of the culture of the place” (Prieto, 2015 p. 48).

Conclusion

This research presents findings and enriches the research literature on soft skills and strategies that doctoral students can use to build connections, understand complexities, and prepare themselves when exploring faculty positions. The study provides a foundation for future research including exploring the experiences of current doctoral students as they prepare for academic positions.

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278 Coaching - The Missing Link in Authentic Assessments for International Students?

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

Authentic assessments increasingly play a pivotal role in developing students' key employability skills (Sotiriadou et al., 2020). However, the authors observed international students struggling to connect theory to practice and develop employability skills required for an authentic assessment. Therefore, this paper focuses on the role of 'blended coaching', particularly expert industry coaching, as a learning intervention to develop and enhance students'

employability and practical skills alongside authentic assessments. The author has extensive marketing industry experience, therefore, expert industry coaching was blended with facilitative coaching, to connect theory to practice and develop key soft skills including problem solving and creativity (Bloom et al., 2005). A case study from the MSc Digital Marketing module will be used to demonstrate the role of coaching to support international students with an authentic assessment.

This working paper contributes to research and practice in coaching and employability of international students in higher education.

Full paper

Overview

With the evolving role of AI, authentic assessments are increasingly pivotal in promoting the development of key employability skills (Sotiriadou et al., 2020). The author observed many of the international student cohort struggling to connect theory to practice and develop key soft skills required for an authentic assessment. With extensive industry experience, the author saw an opportunity to provide coaching, specifically expert marketing coaching, as a learning intervention to develop students' employability and practical skills alongside their authentic assessment. Coaching can facilitate the transfer of soft skills and enhance graduate employability (Jones et al., 2022). This working paper aims to provide insights on coaching within the context of supporting and enhancing employability for international students in authentic assessments, as there are currently limited insights on this within the literature (Heinrich et al., 2021).

Literature review

Coaching is distinct from mentoring (Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). They are on the same continuum, but coaching is associated with the practical rather than theoretical side (Fletcher, 2012). There is no universal definition of coaching within higher education, but instruction and facilitation tend to underpin coaching practice, which is influenced by an instructor's pedagogy (Jones, 2015).

Coaching is recognised as a central component in student experience, which can accelerate learning and student success (Andreanoff, 2016). It can be a learning intervention, helping to enhance a student's employability and develop their knowledge and skills (Jones and Smith, 2022). This is pertinent for international students who face challenges developing key transferable soft skills (Shaheen, 2016). Coaching can provide opportunities for students to share ideas and receive guidance on how to develop these key skills, which can be particularly valuable for international students who have no experience of studying at a British institution (Shaheen, 2016). Hence, international students often require more tailored support and resources (Lewis and Brown, 2021).

There are several approaches to coaching including peer coaching; cognitive coaching; literacy coaching; and instructional coaching (Cornett and Knight, 2008). However, Bloom et al's (2005) blended coaching model provides a holistic and fluid approach. It acknowledges the diverse needs of students and the level of expertise of coaches, allowing the respective coaching approach to be adapted accordingly. Coaching follows an instructional or a facilitative approach, or a combination of these strategies (Bloom et al., 2005). The flexibility and fluidity of this approach complements student-centred teaching and learning (Stavrou and Koutselini, 2016).

Methodology

By using a case study from the MSc Digital Marketing module, this working paper will demonstrate the role of coaching to develop students' employability skills while undertaking an authentic assessment. The assessment was based on a live marketing problem an organisation wanted the students to solve, aiming to mirror industry practice and connect theory to practice, developing students to be 'work ready' (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014).

The cohort were all international students, with little or no marketing experience and knowledge. The author observed the students experiencing difficulties connecting theory and practice and developing critical analysis, problem-solving and creativity skills. Some students were unfamiliar with authentic assessments, with one student describing it as "impossible". Additionally, the transfer of key soft skills required for authentic assessments are not automatic

(Jackson, 2013). Therefore, the author felt the students would benefit from coaching to support the authentic assessment as a learning intervention to bridge the gap between theory and practice and build the key soft skills required to make them 'work ready'. The author adopted Bloom et al's (2005) blended coaching model as the fluidity and flexibility of this approach acknowledged the diverse needs of the international student cohort.

Utilising the author's extensive marketing industry experience, practical and expert industry advice was provided to the students through consultative coaching (Fletcher, 2012). This was blended with facilitative coaching, building on the student's existing knowledge and developing problem solving and creativity skills (Bloom et al., 2005). Qualitative student feedback will be shared at the conference.

Contribution

This working paper has demonstrated the originality and value of supporting and developing international students' employability skills with a blend of expert industry and facilitative coaching alongside authentic assessments. This contributes to research and practice in both coaching and employability of international students in higher education.

Key take-aways for academics:

- How to implement blended coaching alongside authentic assessments within their modules.
- How to build a supportive and inclusive learning environment, enhancing international students' employability skills in higher education.
- How to support international students with authentic assessments and be 'work ready', which is vital post-pandemic (Aliu and Aigbavboa, 2022).

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344 Evaluating the Impact of the Teaching Campus Programme on Education Subject Students and Hosting Schools in an Indonesian Teacher Training and Education Institute

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

This paper marks the pioneering effort to assess the impact of the Teaching Campus Programme (TCP) on individual students, universities, and hosting schools in the Kubu Raya Region of West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The TCP was designed to enhance the career prospects and employability skills of university students while fostering collaboration between universities and rural elementary schools as a vehicle for school improvement. The study draws on the principles of communities of practice and employs various sources of data, including curriculum documents, focus group interviews, and students' fieldnotes.

Preliminary findings indicate that the TCP has played a crucial role in cultivating practical teaching skills among education subject students; the hosting schools have greatly benefited from the programme, witnessing notable improvements in teaching practices and increased professionalism; the TCP has primarily emphasised the development of employment skills among university students, with less emphasis placed on school improvement.

Full paper

This paper marks the pioneering effort in Indonesia to investigate an employability and work placements programme within the context of higher education. Specifically, the research aims to assess the impact of the Teaching Campus Programme (TCP) on individual students, universities, and hosting schools in the Kubu Raya Region of West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The TCP, implemented as part of the MBKM policy, was designed to enhance the career prospects and employability skills of university students while fostering collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and rural/remote elementary schools as a vehicle for school improvement. The study draws on the principles of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et.al, 2002) to analyse a combined

government endeavour aimed at simultaneously enhancing students' employability skills and improving remote elementary schools.

We conducted a multiple case study (Thomas, 2011) to examine various forms of value generated by members from three organisations, and to track the changes in practices and performance of the university, Year-3 undergraduate students pursuing an education major, and hosting schools resulting from these efforts. The study spanned two years and utilized a sample consisting of two communities of practice. Our research aimed to address three main questions:

- How is the Teaching Campus Programme implemented in an Indonesian Teacher Training and Education Institute?
- What are the perceived benefits and challenges faced by education subject students participating in the Teaching Campus Programme in an Indonesian Teacher Training and Education Institute?
- What are the perceptions of hosting schools regarding the effectiveness and impact of the Teaching Campus Programme in an Indonesian Teacher Training and Education Institute?

We employed various methods to gather data, including policy and curriculum documents analysis, focus group interviews, and students' fieldnotes. The study involved one Teacher Training and Education Institute, one university lecturer, two groups of undergraduate students, one elementary school, and one junior secondary school. The collected data was meticulously analysed to identify key themes and trends associated with the TCP's effects on the university, students, and schools.

The study yielded four main findings:

The coordination of Government-initiated communities of practice by university lecturers has proven to be a powerful mechanism. These formal communities hold immense potential in facilitating the exchange of knowledge, fostering people connections, and enhancing social mobility in remote and economically disadvantaged rural areas. By transcending bureaucratic barriers that often exist within formal organizational structures, these communities enable effective collaboration and open up new avenues for growth and development.

The Teaching Campus Programme has played a crucial role in cultivating practical teaching skills among education subject students. By immersing themselves in authentic classroom settings, students have gained invaluable practical knowledge in instructional techniques, classroom management strategies, and methods to engage students effectively. This experiential learning approach has significantly bolstered their readiness for future teaching careers.

The schools hosting Teaching Campus students have greatly benefited from the programme, witnessing notable improvements in teaching practices and increased professionalism. The involvement of university lecturers and students has brought fresh perspectives, digital literacy skills, and innovative pedagogical approaches to these schools. The collaboration between Teaching Campus students and school staff has resulted in the implementation of diverse teaching methods, leading to enhanced instructional quality and higher student engagement. This strengthened community support has fostered a nurturing environment for both students and educators alike.

Preliminary findings also indicate that the TCP has primarily emphasized the development of employment skills among university students, with less emphasis placed on school improvement due to university students' short-term community engagement and support. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the active involvement of local schools in HE curriculum development for the TCP is an essential prerequisite. This collaboration not only helps address the challenges faced by universities in designing effective curricula but also serves as a catalyst for driving school improvement by aligning curriculum design with the priorities of rural and remote elementary schools.

By shedding light on these findings, the study underscores the need for a more balanced approach within the TCP, where equal attention is given to both university students' employability skills and the enhancement of school quality. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of HE and school partnerships in ensuring effective curriculum alignment and achieving mutual goals. This research contributes to the existing literature by examining the unique context of Indonesian higher education, specifically focusing on the TCP's impact. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, HEIs, and schools, guiding them towards a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to improve employability and elementary school education in rural and remote areas of Indonesia.

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Parallel Session 4:3

16:15 - 17:45 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Andrea Cameron

294 Politics, Policies, and the crusade against science: higher education research and evaluation under a denialist government in Brazil

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Our proposal is to analyze the impact of the breakdown of institutional logic in the evaluation system in the last Brazilian Presidency on the forms of collaboration between researchers and policymakers. From a privileged point of

view of a collaboration of more than 8 years between LAPES (Laboratório de Pesquisa em Ensino Superior) and Inep, we will analyze the official model of evaluation of the higher education system in Brazil and the types of participation of researchers from outside the institution (participation in Conaes and individual consultancy work).

Based on the institutional agency approach, we will analyze how INEP's researchers resisted the onslaughts of negationism and sought support from the academic community in the area of education and evaluation, ensuring the resilience of institutional values. We analyze the types of theoretical/ methodological contributions proposed by groups of researchers in the development of social indicators related to the higher education system.

Full paper

Both the Brazilian Ministry of Education and other governmental research and evaluation institutions, such as Inep (National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira) and CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development), are bureaucratic structures that have been well established since the 1950s. For most of the time, including the period of civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985), there was extensive cooperation between them and the academic community. Although conflicts and political disputes around educational reforms and interventions were common throughout that period, they used to be based on models and perspectives guided by minimally scientific principles, therefore open to evidence-based argument and debate.

The participation of the academic community in building expansion policies for the Brazilian education system was quite expressive in such a framework. Examples include policies for reducing illiteracy, improving learning in basic education, and universalization of primary education. Policies for higher education followed the same pattern, as illustrated by the 1968 University Reform, which was a major step forward, despite having had paradoxical effects on the modernization of Brazilian higher education, and the Quotas Law for federal institutions of higher education, which has expanded access for students from a disadvantaged background.

The longstanding cooperation between the bureaucratic structure established in Brazil to foster research and academic training and the academic community provides a unique case for understanding how such an institutional and social arrangement was able to withstand the attacks of an openly science denialist government. The Bolsonaro administration (2019-2022) has turned the Ministry of Education into a circus where corrupt evangelical pastors and "flat-earth" politicians tried to impose a conservative agenda of customs by weakening the school institution and alienating the academic community.

Inep was surrounded and suffered numerous attempts to control the different evaluation systems. The Brazilian President tried to intervene in the contents and items of the tests and all the technicians responsible for the evaluation resigned from their positions.

Our proposal is to analyze the impact of the breakdown of institutional logic in the evaluation system in the indicated period on the forms of collaboration between researchers and policymakers. From a privileged point of view of a collaboration of more than 8 years between LAPES (Higher Education Research Laboratory) and Inep, we will analyze the official model of evaluation of the higher education system in Brazil and the types of participation of researchers from outside the institution. Two forms will be privileged in this analysis: participation in Conaes (National Commission for Evaluation of Higher Education) and individual consultancy work.

By definition, institutional logics results from the work of many actors, with a plethora of interests, values, desires, and resources. So, this research focuses on the characterization of actors and their patterns of action in an essential nucleus for the definition of the rules and forms of evaluation systems in Brazil.

Based on the institutional agency approach, we will try to analyse how INEP's researchers resisted the onslaughts of negationism and sought support from the academic community in the area of education and evaluation, ensuring the resilience of institutional values. On the other hand, we will analyse the types of theoretical and methodological

contributions proposed by groups of researchers in the development of social indicators related to the higher education system.

Through interviews with managers and technicians of INEP, analysis of documents that guide the elaboration and application of the examinations of evaluation of the students, and systematization of the scientific academic debate on the results and limits of the different stages of the evaluation, we seek to examine the impact of the negationist perspective on the most important centre of production of knowledge about higher education in the country.

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328 FACTORS RELATED TO THE PERMANENCE OF STUDENTS IN EVENING DEGREE COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRASÍLIA - BRAZIL, 2015 -2019

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This paper examines the factors related to permanence in evening degree courses at UnB, as perceived by former students, both graduates and non-graduates, between 2015 and 2019. The study is relevant for institutional policies aiming to reduce the high dropout rates in these courses, which reach 50% of enrollments, and that are responsible for training teachers for primary and secondary education. The research draws on quantitative methodology and descriptive analysis, integrating institutional data and responses to surveys applied to graduates and non-graduates. First, it will present the theoretical-methodological framework of the research. Second, it will analyze determining factors to permanence of students who attend university at night. In conclusion, reducing dropout rates in evening courses requires institutional efforts to develop policies for the success of students, particularly workers. This challenge needs to consider inequalities in the student's profile and improvements in infrastructure, technological aspects, pedagogical conditions, and curriculum innovations.

Full paper

Introduction

The first evening degree courses at University of Brasília (UnB) were established in 1993 when the university opened its doors to working students. Today, comprising fifteen courses that prepare teachers for primary and secondary education, the University faces complex challenges regarding student permanence.

The aim of this study was to understand factors that contribute or not to the permanence in evening degree courses at UnB, in the perception of former students, both graduates and non-graduates, between 2015 and 2019. The study is relevant for institutional policies to reduce the high dropout rates in these courses, which reach 50% of enrollments.

This paper consists of two parts. The first part will present the theoretical-methodological framework of the research, while the second will analyze factors related to the permanence of students who attend university at night.

Theoretical - methodological framework

The theoretical framework included factors for permanence, institutional policies to support students, and predictive characteristics of dropout, defining the factors covered in the research: student's profile, pre-university school trajectory, choice of course, self-regulation, self-efficacy, engagement, academic environment, assistance actions; qualifying actions, and satisfaction with the course.

The study draws on a quantitative approach. It combined institutional data, taken from the academic management system to identify the research universe, composed of individuals who left the course between 2015 and 2019, categorized by way of leaving: 1,573 graduates and 2,394 non-graduates. Online surveys were applied to each group

from March 18 to April 30, 2022, with a response rate of around 15%. The scope of the analysis included 255 graduates and 296 non-graduates as valid cases.

Factors related to permanence in evening degree courses at UnB

The first factor is the student's profile. More women (56%) completed the courses than men (43%). Predominate, among graduates and non-graduates, whites (51%); of those who declared themselves black, 45% completed the course. Most of the two groups have father and mother education lower than higher education (60%); among graduates, 40% had father with higher education. The origin of public schools is also predominant in both groups.

The main form of admission was the university entrance exam for graduates (56%) and non-graduates (44%). 23% of non-graduates entered through the federal Unified Selection System (SiSU) program. The universal admission system prevails for graduates (88%) and non-graduates (75%), while others entered through the quota system. The majority in both groups did not choose a teacher training course as their first choice.

Regarding student's experience, there was low engagement in academic activities beyond teaching. Graduates participated more in student assistance action such as the permanence grant, socioeconomic aid, emergency aid, book voucher and food aid than non-graduates, who had a greater participation in housing aid and scholarship for language study.

Graduates also showed greater engagement in qualifying actions as monitors, scientific initiation, initiation into teaching and tutorial education. Regarding self-regulation and self-efficacy, this group has an even greater capacity for resilience and organization of studies.

Being at UnB was a positive factor for former students. 69% of graduates said they felt welcomed in a university environment free of discrimination, while for non-graduates, this percentage was 59%. Non-graduates also faced more difficulties in social relationships: talking to their teachers as well as interacting with study colleagues. Despite this, most (67%) said that this was not a determining factor for dropping out.

At the time of leaving, 73% of both groups were working, with 37% of non-graduates working more than 40 hours a week.

For graduates, family support (70%), good professional perspective (67%) and support from professors (50%) were positive factors for completing the course, while solidarity from colleagues (44%) and being in an academic program (30%) were not relevant.

For non-graduates, the difficulty in reconciling work and study (70%), the difficulty in organizing the time for studies (66%), emotional difficulties (59%), lack of motivation to continue studying (58%), and the difficulty in reconciling study and family responsibilities (57%) were determinants of dropout. On the other hand, access to study materials (71%), difficulties with the content (63%), financial conditions (69%), or going to university (54%), and carry out the proposed evaluations (59%) were not relevant.

Conclusion

The study highlighted individual, social, and institutional factors related to permanence and the specificities of students who attend university at night. Reducing dropout rates in evening courses requires institutional efforts to develop policies for the success of students, particularly workers. These policies need to align with the profile of students and improve infrastructure, physical and technological aspects, pedagogical conditions, and curriculum innovations.

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130 Levelling as a remedial education dispositif to govern the entry of non-traditional students within the inclusive Latin American University

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Levelling refers to remedial strategies usually focused on non-traditional students to foster their post-entry inclusion. Here I investigate about such construction, as a remedial education dispositif to govern their entrance in-between teaching, management and research. From an archive of conference/journal papers and policy documents from 12 countries, and interviews of Chilean affirmative action practitioners, this study adumbrates a system of relations of discourses, professionalisms, expert knowledges and practices that strategically construct gaps and slopes, as objects, and vulnerable students, as subjects, to level-up. I argue about a line of subjectification that invites students to be eager to participate, open to intervention and thankful of support, as well as affirmative action practitioner to be proud and useful agents of inclusion. Finally, levelling, as curricular and supplementary teaching, derives from assessment of academic and social vulnerability, as well as studies that legitimize what to measure and intervene to foster student retention.

Full paper

Levelling as an inclusion imperative

At the junction of equity of access and equity for retention in Latin American Higher Education (HE), levelling refers to a set of remedial strategies to foster student readiness derived from US retention studies (Miranda-Molina, 2023). Within this problematization the historical underrepresentation of broad social groups is attributed to their insufficient preparation, funding the need to level them up beyond entry (Miranda-Molina, 2022a). As an equity problematic (Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000) injustice here is constructed as previous and external to the University, legitimizing the intervention of non-traditional student trajectories as an inclusion imperative (Miranda-Molina, 2022b).

This research is framed in critical studies of educational policy (Ozga, 2019) and its problematizations (Bacchi, 2012), to understand the way in which levelling is -discursively and non-discursively- constructed. As a possible *dispositif* this would be a system of relations of discourses, policies, institutions, expert knowledges, subject positions, scientific and moral propositions (Foucault, 1980), amongst others, to produce certain visibilities, enunciabilities, lines of force and subjectification (Ball & Grimaldi, 2022). I argue about a remedial education *dispositif* to produce post-entry interventions as a feature of the inclusive University, to equalize differences of performance (enacted as gaps and slopes) between traditional and non-traditional students (Miranda-Molina, 2022a).

Methodologically this study is based on an archive of 233 conference papers, 39 journal articles and 49 policy documents, all of which address levelling in 12 countries between 2011 and 2021. It also considers semi-structured interviews with 18 affirmative action practitioners of 8 Chilean universities, regarding the challenges of non-traditional students beyond access. This analysis is mostly focused on discursive and non-discursive practices that construct the levelling objects and subjects, from a system of relations of multiple discourses, professionalisms, expert knowledges and practices that strategically articulate teaching, management and research.

The levelling *dispositif*

In the teaching arena, levelling is carried out by faculty to prepare new students for the subsequent curricular levels. This internalization of the levelling problem, enacted as a gateway or developmental courses, is structured by competence-based discourses and expert knowledges from disciplines judged both critical and elementary. But also, an extracurricular deployment of levelling, enacted as supplementary support for low performers, is developed in learning centers by non-departmental teachers and peer tutors. Here, powerful discourses (Veiga-neto & Lopes, 2010) of deficit, about the risk of non-completion given a vulnerable social background is the basis of differentiating the levelling subject from the normal student, to be intervened outside curriculum.

In this arena a strong line of subjectification requires the participation of the levelling subject, pushed to be open to intervention (Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015) as well as to work on himself to achieve the proper autonomy of the higher learner. This would be a regime of subjectification to produce an eager to participate, open to be intervened and thankful for being supported subject. It also invites the levelling practitioner to be proud useful agents of inclusion.

A second arena is the deployment of assessment technologies to individualize the levelling subject, intervene and monitor his entry trajectory. Typically deployed from specialized centers and non-academic professionals and managers, institutional student profiles constitute a starting point to define a set of characteristics aimed to measure the risk of dropping out. This brings into play expert knowledges linked to "critical" disciplines (of high failure), as well as methodological (psychometric and mathematical), summoning experts to make academic and social vulnerability visible. Such construction tends to be naturalized as it presents the profile as a picture of the vulnerable subject, deficit discourse that produces a paradoxical subject carrying lacks.

A third arena is research, from which the main assumptions are legitimized to build profiles, monitoring systems and remedial strategies. With a strong influence of US retention studies, the relevance measures and intervention practices are sustained from quantitative studies that produce the explanatory weight of performance indicators and other measures expressive of social vulnerability. Thus, researchers mobilize a mathematical discourse of regression studies and explanatory models which operate as discourses of truth about who would have a greater probability of dropping out and what works to reduce such risk.

To problematize the constructed nature of levelling, as a *dispositif* governing the entry of non-traditional students, requires to address an internal articulation -and not just an external causation- of discursive and non-discursive practices to construct its objects and subjects. These results contribute to adumbrate a relationship between research and practice productive of a specific form of entrance for non-traditional students as a current facet of the -aspiring to be- inclusive university.

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Parallel Session 4:4

16:15 - 17:45 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Rachel Brooks

153 Geographies of pedagogies in internationalised higher education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Inspired by critical internationalisation studies, this work in progress explores 'geographies of pedagogies' inherent in present internationalisation practices. The past 30 years, academia has become increasingly international through mobility of students and staff. Within the EU, policies such as the Bologna process intend to make this mobility as smooth and seamless as possible. In this development, the English language has gained prominence as the lingua franca of Academia. Based on 14 interviews with international academics at Danish universities, we examine how language, pedagogies, and scientific knowledge are seen and articulated as universal, particular, or contextual. We use spatial theories and the notion 'geographies of scientific knowledge' in our analysis, which highlights the situatedness of academic practice in internationalisation of higher education. By using Denmark as a case, this study provides new findings from a non-English speaking country and shows how teaching is a localised practice even in an international classroom.

Full paper

Background

The past 30 years, academia has become increasingly internationalised through academic mobility (Tzanakou & Henderson, 2021). Within the EU, policies such as the Bologna process are adopted to make this mobility smooth and it is accompanied by a growing use of English (Tange & Jæger, 2021). Through this development, English has become unmoored and universalised, and especially policy documents often ignore that knowledge production and teaching are situated practices (Adriansen et al. 2023). Some researchers, however, have addressed this by providing personal narratives of how they as international academics have adapted and developed their teaching in foreign countries (Hosein et al. 2018), by showing how it varies from one country to another what counts as a 'good' geography student (Simandan, 2002), and by exploring the situatedness of what it means to be an academic (Adriansen & Madsen, 2021).

While the 'geographies of skills' have been researched in various contexts lately (e.g. Burzynski et al., 2020; Raghuram, 2021; Richardson 2019), there is little knowledge about the 'geographies of pedagogy' – this means how pedagogical practices and what constitutes good teaching are contextual and spatially situated and how language play into this. This is what we aim to explore through the experiences of international academics at Danish universities.

Methodology and analytical background

This study, which is part of a larger research project, is based on 14 qualitative interviews with international academics at Danish universities. To ensure confidentiality, we use pseudonyms, may have changed their gender, and do not mention where they are from. The theoretical backdrop of the study is spatial theories (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Larsen, 2016) and ideas about the 'geographies of scientific knowledge' (Livingstone, 2003). This analytical perspective shows how academic knowledges and practices are spatially situated not only in nation states but also in different sites of knowledge and learning such as universities and laboratories. In his critique of universality claims, Livingstone (2003) argues that place is important for determining what constitutes legitimate knowledge and the 'right' academic practice within a research field.

Analysis – pedagogical practices and delivery of knowledge

First, we analyse different pedagogical practices such as oral exam and study groups; second, we explore how the delivery of knowledge is culturally situated.

As we have shown elsewhere, 'the international classroom' is in fact local in its pedagogies and teaching practices (Spangler & Adriansen, 2021). Especially two practices stand out as unusual for the international academics entering Danish academia: oral exams and group work. However, these pedagogies are often not addressed and international

academics and students are usually just expected to participate (Nissen, 2019), which one of our interviewees, Patricia, confirmed:

That [oral exam] I had never encountered before I came here [...]. That was a bit difficult for me at the beginning, and then I taught these Master courses [...] There are mostly Danes, but some internationals [students], and I often find that the internationals have a lot of trouble in the oral exam, whereas the Danes are much more relaxed and not nervous.

Group work is central in Danish education (Spangler & Adriansen, 2021) and international academics are expected to assimilate their pedagogies to this practice without much explanation. Patricia continued:

There is a huge emphasis on group work. This is a big surprise to me, I have never seen it before, to this extent [...] I had a lot of trouble in the beginning.

According to Livingstone (2003), ways of understanding is also situated. Ben, one of the international academics, noted this. He experienced that there are different cultural norms or understandings of how to explain a particular part of mathematics, even though that we think mathematics is universal. When his students did not understand his explanations, they thought it was a language problem and he switched language. However, they realised it did not help. Ben elaborates:

I mean what is universal? I mean if you say to somebody, proof this to this, you know. The proof might look the same but the words you use. I think where the explanation was falling down, was the words I use to describe the working out [...] I didn't have any of the right words.

Concluding remarks

This work in progress shows the first lines of 'geographies of pedagogies' inherent in internationalisation practices. By exploring international academics experiences in Danish higher education, we highlight the situatedness of pedagogical practices and provides new insights from the periphery of the hegemonic Anglo-American academy. The full paper compares and contrasts these pedagogical practices in relation to academics' mobility patterns, mother tongue and accents, discipline, and level of experience.

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270 Unveiling the path to internationalisation: an evaluation of strategies and understandings in Portuguese higher education

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Portuguese higher education comprises universities and polytechnics, both public and private. Although a relatively new phenomenon in Portugal, internationalisation may be at different stages of development according to institution type. This paper examines how different higher education institutions (HEIs) in Portugal approach internationalisation from a strategic point of view and how they understand this phenomenon. It uses a mixed-methods approach comprising an online survey (N = 65) and semi-structured interviews (n= 4) with HEIs' representatives. The first results indicate that internationalisation represents a strategic objective for most institutions, however less than half have structures dedicated to it. Differences between institution types emerge concerning the activities undertaken to pursue internationalisation as well as concerning the understanding of the concept. The study contributes to the

existing literature on the varied nature of internationalisation, stressing the fluid and multifaceted nature of the concept, especially in HE systems marked by diversity.

Full paper

Despite a slow start, a significant commitment to internationalisation has been made by Portuguese higher education institutions (HEIs) since 2014, when an internationalisation strategy for higher education (HE) in Portugal was launched (MADR/MEC, 2014). The Portuguese HE system is not homogeneous, as it comprises different types (universities and polytechnics) both public and private. It is therefore expected that different missions and diverse funding types may lead to diversified conceptions and strategies to foster internationalisation. International student numbers have increased notably, especially within polytechnics, with the diversity of nationalities represented also expanding (Mourato, 2019). Notwithstanding, students from Lusophone countries, particularly Brazil, Angola, and Cape Verde, still dominate (Sin et al., 2022).

Generally, internationalisation strategies include integration into international networks, exchange agreements, and mutual degree recognition (Guerreiro & Barros, 2018). Key strategies include Erasmus mobility, research collaborations, language training, and marketing campaigns (Sin et al., 2019). It is important to grasp whether these general strategies differ by type and sector of HEI.

Motives behind internationalisation are predominantly economic, though academic and socio-cultural reasons are also present (Guerreiro & Barros, 2018). The current study explores the strategies adopted by different HEIs in Portugal towards internationalisation. It involves a quantitative comparison of how universities and polytechnics, both public and private, define and implement their internationalisation strategies/activities. We also conduct a qualitative assessment of how various HEIs understand the concept of internationalisation.

This research employed a mixed-method approach involving an online survey and semi-structured interviews. All 102 HEIs in Portugal were invited to participate in the quantitative study. Responses were received from 65 institutions (63.1% polytechnics, 52.3% private). We determined any noteworthy variations between the university and polytechnic groups, as well as the public and private sector groups, by conducting Fisher's exact test. Semi-structured interviews were made with representatives of 4 institutions: 2 universities and 2 polytechnics (one public and one private of each).

98.5% of the surveyed HEIs viewed internationalisation as a strategic objective. Less than 6% lacked an activity plan. Those with a plan (88.2%) explicitly included actions for internationalisation. Most institutions (92.8%) monitor their strategy or activity plan annually. Less than half (48.5%) have a centralised office for implementing internationalisation activities, while 33.8% use multiple support offices.

Comparisons by type and by sector are still work in progress. First results indicate that there is a significant difference ($p = .040$) between universities and polytechnics regarding their motivations for internationalisation. Specifically, universities, more than polytechnics, were found to be driven by the intention to enhance institutional competitiveness through internationalisation. Another significant difference concerned two strategic activities envisaged for internationalisation: universities are more prone to consider research publication in international journals in co-authorship with international colleagues as an activity framed within the institution internationalisation plan ($p = .004$). In contrast, polytechnics were more frequently found to consider cross-border HE as a critical activity to consolidate internationalisation ($p = .026$).

Furthermore, there are some differences between public and private institutions. Public institutions tended to emphasise activities that promote joint programmes ($p = .035$) and internationalise curricula ($p = .019$) more frequently than private ones. Moreover, public institutions tend to focus on improving their standings in relevant rankings and prioritise research publications in international journals that involve foreign teams ($p = .046$).

The interviews revealed that internationalisation was broadly understood as a shared opportunity for institutional improvement and learning, particularly for students. However, the specific objectives varied across the institutions. For the Private University, internationalisation aimed to provide diverse experiences for students. In contrast, the Public University focused on bolstering its core missions: teaching and research. A public polytechnic representative expressed a desire to integrate internationalisation transversally into all institutional aspects, demonstrating its multi-faceted nature. The study also examined the activities undertaken to achieve these objectives. Both Public and Private Universities engage in a wide range of activities, including establishing international relationships, participating in global networks and conferences, recruiting international students, promoting staff and student

mobility, and participating in international projects. Additionally, the Private University focuses on organisational capacity building, offering English language courses, promoting multicultural awareness, and improving international rankings. The Erasmus+ Programme's role in promoting student and staff mobility was widely acknowledged.

Portuguese HEIs have made significant strides in their commitment to internationalisation since 2014. The study highlights the varying nature of internationalisation efforts across institutions, underlining the need for a comprehensive and strategic approach. Overall, this study provides a contribution for understanding and enhancing internationalisation in HE sectors marked by diversity such as the Portuguese one and the multiplicity of expressions of this phenomenon.

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136 Examining the Impact of Distance Learning in the Context of International Mobility

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

The Commonwealth Distance Learning programme was launched in 2001 to enable development impact in the Commonwealth by providing training that is not otherwise available to skilled and qualified postgraduate students who

wish or need to stay in their home country while they study thereby enabling them to access opportunities that would otherwise require them to travel abroad.

An evaluation of the programme was completed in 2022, using surveys, interviews, and case studies to investigate the impact of the programme on students, universities, and international partner organisations. This paper explores the findings of the evaluation in greater detail from the perspectives of these different stakeholders, and the longer-term impact that their involvement in the programme has had for themselves, their organisations, and their larger communities.

Full paper

The Commonwealth Distance Learning programme launched in 2001, with 3,793 Scholars from 41 different Commonwealth countries have received funding for their studies in the first twenty years of the programme. The primary purpose of the programme is to enable development impact in the Commonwealth by providing training that is not otherwise available to skilled and qualified postgraduate students who wish or need to stay in their home country while they study. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission completed an evaluation of the programme in 2022, using surveys, interviews, and case studies to investigate the impact of the programme on students, universities, and international partners.

The majority of Distance Learning Scholars reported that without their Commonwealth Scholarship, they would not have been able to undertake their studies at an institution based in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. The most frequent motivations cited for applying for their Scholarship were to apply to their particular study programme, to continue to work during their studies, and to apply for either a higher education scholarship generally, a Commonwealth Scholarship specifically, or a distance learning scholarship. Most Scholars continue to remain employed at their job full- or part-time throughout their studies, fulfilling their desire to continue working but also providing an opportunity to immediately apply what they are learning in the workplace.

Scholars consistently reported significant gains to their soft and hard skills and knowledge in areas such as critical thinking, research techniques, technical skills, and leaderships skills. Employers of Scholars who remain working during their studies confirmed that they had observed significant increases to their employees' knowledge and skills, and that their employees' Commonwealth Scholarship met or exceeded their expectations and also brought significant benefits to their workplaces. Not only do both Scholars and Employers consistently report the application of the new knowledge and skills in the workplace, but they also reported that Scholars frequently shared skills and knowledge that they had acquired through their studies with colleagues through both formal and informal training activities. Employers reported that their Scholar's activities improved both the knowledge base of their staff, but also the overall operation of their organisations.

University Partners in the UK reported that Commonwealth Scholars gain a number of benefits from their ability to study at their institutions. These include access to the significant expertise of university staff, the quality of the education that they receive, the cutting-edge nature of the programmes of study on offer, and the career benefits of studying at a prestigious institution. Providers also highlighted a number of benefits to their own institutions and programmes associated with the presence of Commonwealth Distance Learning Scholars. They note that Scholars provide a variety of perspectives to their classes based on their own professional experiences, country contexts, and cultural backgrounds which enrich the learning experience for other students, while broadening the networks that can be created among student cohorts.

Many UK university Providers also offer their programmes of study in tandem with an international Partner organisation. In these instances, university Providers benefit from the input of their Partner's local knowledge and expertise in the programme design, as well as the Partner's ability to host face-to-face sessions, and to help with Scholar recruitment. Partner organisations similarly benefit from these partnerships by being able to engage in an international partnership, sharing of expertise, and being able to offer pathways to postgraduate learning through scholarships. Both Providers and Partners also reported that the partnership provided opportunities for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and the pursuit of mutual goals.

The work of Alumni post-Scholarship cuts across many different areas of development. The majority of Alumni report that their work has an impact in the areas of Social Development, Civic Engagement, Economic Development, and Policymaking and at the Institutional, Local, National and International levels. These include significant concentrations

in the areas of health, policy, economic impact, education, and community, which is also reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals that Alumni most-commonly reported contributing towards. It is this demonstrable and varied development impact that is the long-term goal of the Commonwealth Distance Learning programme.

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Parallel Session: 4:5

16:15 - 17:45 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Chair Harriet Barnes

311 Quality assurance parameters evolution in online environment

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Research Domains

Digital University and new learning technologies (DU)

Abstract

Higher education nowadays is under a significant transformation, with digitalisation being a part of this change (Tømte et al, 2019). Rapid growth of online-programmes started from 2009 (Blagg, K., 2018) and turned them into a part of university system. A need to provide online-programmes with the same set of tools as traditional ones emerged, for example, with quality assurance models. Existing instruments, however, are hardly suitable for online mode due to a complex nature of quality online (La Rotta et al, 2020). This paper presents results of comparative analysis of quality assurance models for online university programmes. The aim is to trace models' overlapping parameters evolution. Analytical frame consists of apriori parameters, derived from literature review, and aposteriori parameters that emerged during the analysis process. The research question is: How have the criteria of quality evolved over time and how this evolution shapes online quality nature nowadays?

Full paper

Implementation of technology into the field of higher education was a relatively slow process a few decades ago (Plotkin 2010). The situation changed in 2009, when a growth of online-programmes started. The year of 2020, when 220 mln students had to go online at once, was a point when the problems of online mode that already existed were highlighted: issues with technologies, both in terms of digital skills and hardware (Sagheb-Tehrani, 2008), time-management skills (Dyrbye et al, 2009) and difficulties teachers face in the classes (Fawns, 2021). These challenges decrease motivation, create lack of trust in distance education and overall dissatisfaction (Aleshkovski et al, 2021, Conrad et al, 2022). Further to this, online-programmes receive a lot of criticism for being "degree factories" (Smith, 2008). This issue, if not addressed promptly, may lead to reputational damage for universities in the future (Landry et al., 2008).

Present models of quality assurance are either fragmentary with a focus on one of the elements like teaching and technologies (Davis et al, 2011) or identical to traditional quality assurance models (Nikolić et al, 2018). The aim of research is to conduct a comparative analysis of internal quality assurance models for online-programmes, tracing their evolution based on parameters they consist of, which may help to reconstruct the nature of distance education quality.

Research questions:

1. How do the models evolve in 2009-2021 from the standpoint of overlapping parameters?
2. How does the models' evolution from quality phenomenon in online environment?

Methodology and data

Data collection was done via Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald, IEEE Xplore, Wiley Online Library, SAGE Journals Online, Springer Link search. Keywords used to find articles are as follows: "quality assurance model online (in) higher education", "quality assurance (model) in higher education online", "quality assurance in higher education online model". As a result, 35 relevant articles were found. To form the final sampling the following criteria were applied: Q1-Q2 journals (Scopus) (except for Quality Assurance in Education - Q3: thematically-relevant journal, where relevant models were found); not online or open university; internal quality assurance model; online-programme (blended mode excluded); quality assurance of the programme, not the course. Final sampling includes 13 models, 1 model for each year (2009 - 2022). Exceptions: 2015 - no relevant articles found. All models were analysed using a qualitative thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Similar topics in models' description were taken as basis for overlapping parameters identification. Analytical frame consists of 9 parameters, apriori and aposteriori. Apriori-parameters are technologies, communication, student's support and teaching online, aposteriori - learning environment development, teacher's support, staff support, student-centred design and resource reusability.

Results:

Time frame for models analysis was divided into three periods according to general characteristics of the models:

1. 2009 - 2015 rr
2. 2015 - 2019 rr
3. 2019 - 2022 rr

Period 1 "Trial"

The main aim of quality assurance models is to help the educational process actors adapt to online mode per se. The key overlapping parameters are technologies, teaching online and students' support. It shows that both of the categories needed a gap before they finally accepted online as a part of university environment. In this period study experience of the students is first mentioned. The data for the models is not collected on purpose: they operate with what is already being collected, like digital trace of students in LMS. External standards are being considered, but not integrated with real context.

Period 2 "Transitional"

"Trial period" models become outdated and new are not designed yet. They focus on the indicators like students' satisfaction, motivation and well-being, prioritising the process of study instead of the result. Technologies stop being something novel and become a part of university environment. Study experience of the students grows in importance. The data is being collected on purpose, and the external standards are integrated with real context. The models are becoming more research-oriented.

Period 3

"Modern": models adopt a data-driven approach and are theoretically-grounded. The data on which models run not only allows to correlate existing standards and educational context of the university, but also personalises quality management. Culture of working with data is turning into a casual strategy of online-programmes realisation. Study experience of students is the centre of this period models along with educational materials for e-learning.

Parameters' evolution analysis showed that they are either invariant - comprising the central domains of quality online and appearing in each model - or variant - absent in some models. They are subsidiary quality domains, which can add a different perspective to quality work if required.

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369 Examining the Impact of Online Teaching and Learning on Medical Trainers and Trainees in the East of England Deanery

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Research Domains

Abstract

The unprecedented changes to the delivery of medical training in response to the Covid-19 pandemic continue to impact postgraduate medical education. Our study aims to learn from this unanticipated 'experiment' and inform the development of future policy and practice. While the focus is on medicine, findings will offer insights across HE. To understand new forms of provision and educator and learner experiences, we conducted a theory-based evaluation to examine the factors that could affect online teaching and learning within the East of England Deanery. Our results indicate that trainees and trainers enjoyed the flexibility offered by online learning and believe that online training should play a more prominent role in medical education. The perceived learning efficacy was predicted by the lecturers' experience in online teaching, course features, and self-regulation. The challenges included reduced trainers' motivation to teach online, lack of admin support and IT skills, and loneliness during learning.

Full paper

Introduction

The continuous digital transformation in higher education calls for developing and providing successful blended teaching methods utilising digital technology (Redecker & Punie, 2017; Lohr et al. 2021). However, the medical field was slower in adopting this transition, until it became a necessity due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from previous studies indicate that students' performance and satisfaction in online learning environments are predicted by learner characteristics, such as self-regulation, and the design features of the online learning environment, including the quality of the platform and technology-supported interactions (Kintu et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2012).

From students' perspectives, the benefits of online learning include greater flexibility and higher attendance (ElShami et al., 2021; Stoehr et al., 2021). According to Stoehr's et al. (2021) study of 3286 medical students studying online due to COVID-19, most students were satisfied with the quality (62%) and quantity (67%) of the courses and called for maintaining a higher proportion of online provision beyond the pandemic. Following these findings, Stoehr and colleagues called for utilising the Covid-19 pandemic as the 'long-awaited catalyst' for increasing the proportion of online teaching in medical education.

The systematic barriers to effective online teaching provision in medical contexts include lack of planning and resources, usability issues, time constraints, poor technical skills, inadequate infrastructure, and absence of institutional strategies and support (Bastos et al., 2022; O'Doherty et al., 2018). In addition, Stojan's et al. (2022) systematic review identified the absence of non-verbal cues and low social interaction as threats to engaged learning.

Research questions

Our study sought to (1) explore trainer and trainee perspectives on the newly introduced blended learning platform (BLP) and (2) identify the enablers and barriers that affect teaching and learning on the BLP in the East of England deanery.

Methodology and Evaluation Design

Our evaluation was developed using a theory-based evaluation (TBE) design (Stern, 2015). The evaluation took place using an exploratory sequential design (focus groups and surveys) with the qualitative data from the focus groups informing the survey design. A total of 546 trainees and 49 trainers responded to the surveys. The focus groups were attended by 15 trainers and 13 trainees.

Results

Our results indicate that the trainers perceived the flexibility provided by online training as a great asset. The administrative challenges and IT skills requirements, however, reduced its desirability among trainers, according to 54% of the respondents. Additionally, 70% felt unmotivated to teach online. Furthermore, 85% of the trainers disagreed that online teaching makes them more connected with their learners compared to face-to-face teaching, a challenge that is aligned with prior research (Bastos et al., 2022; O'Doherty et al., 2018). Finally, the trainers admitted that it is challenging to formatively assess trainees during blended delivery, as trainers have limited knowledge regarding effective approaches for accomplishing this.

Most of the trainees (81%) valued the flexibility and accessibility of online teaching, especially those who work in remote hospitals or have caring responsibilities. However, such flexibility did not improve their perceived effectiveness of learning, according to regression analysis. Instead, self-regulation (ability to set short-term goals in remote learning) and course features (clear course descriptions and frequently updated materials) predicted their perceived learning efficacy. Additionally, the trainers' experience in online teaching was a statistically significant predictor of trainees' perceived learning efficacy. Interestingly, the trainers' experience also predicted the trainees' ease to motivate themselves to study online, which in turn predicted their overall satisfaction. Furthermore, interaction with the trainer predicted lower perceived time demand.

The most significant predictors of trainees' preference for future online provision are (1) the flexibility offered by online learning, (2) the lecturers' experience in delivering online teaching, and (3) their perception of their learning efficacy. Notably, features of the online platform did not predict their responses.

Conclusion

The current study highlighted that the perceived efficacy of learning is predicted by content features of the learning environment, learner characteristics, such as self-regulation, and the lecturers' experience in online teaching. The study also highlights the important role of the lecturer where their experience predicts students' motivation to learn remotely and their interaction with students reduces the perceived time demand. Trainers' motivation appears to play

a key role in their perceived teaching efficacy; their interest may be enhanced by learning interactive techniques, addressing IT skills gaps, and clarifying trainees' needs and trainers' expectations. Finally, online learning platforms require continuous improvement and updates to be effective.

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Closing remarks

17:45 - 18:00 Monday, 4th December, 2023

Registration, tea & coffee and exhibition viewing

10:00 - 11:00 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Courtyard Restaurant

SRHE welcome & opening remarks

11:00 - 11:15 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Conference Room 1

with Dr Clare Loughlin-Chow (SRHE CEO) and Prof Pauline Kneale (SRHE Chair)

Plenary: Re-shaping Tertiary Education

11:15 - 12:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Conference Room 1
Chair Peter Scott

Plenary speakers: Prof Huw Morris, Prof Ellen Hazelkorn, Prof Chris Millward, and Professor Andy Westwood.

This plenary will consider theoretical frameworks for understanding tertiary system models, how they relate to evidence on practice at different levels of geography and governance, and the potential lessons from this for future governments in England and beyond. The plenary will address this through discussion of four key areas of interest that will:

- Compare theories for understanding models of tertiary education with practice across the UK nations.
- Review major trends impacting on post-secondary education, including the policy shift towards tertiary eco-systems, and putting forth propositions on governance, design, delivery and funding.
- Explore the changing landscape for tertiary education in England and the different approaches that may be adopted by current and future governments.

- Explore existing funding and regulation issues for FE and HE – and why policymakers might prioritise tertiary reform in England?

Meet the SRHE Network Convenors

12:30 - 13:00 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Courtyard Restaurant

The SRHE Networks provide the primary means of bringing together researchers in special interest groups through facilitating meetings with fellow researchers to share research issues, exchange ideas and review current thinking and new developments.

Come along and meet the SRHE Network Convenors. This is a chance to informally learn more about the various SRHE Networks, share your thoughts and ideas, and discuss the Society's activities and program of events.

Lunch, networking, poster & exhibition viewing

13:00 - 14:00 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Courtyard Suites 1- 4

Parallel Session 1:1

14:00 - 15:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Room 141
Chair Richard Davies

30 Writing machines: Embodied gestures and generative AIs in higher education

[Lesley Gourlay](#)

University College London, London, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Abstract

The act of writing cannot be understood as disembodied information transfer, just as a technology or device cannot be regarded as an instrument or tool (Vlieghe 2016). Instead, any form of writing enrolls the body in interaction with a physically tangible device, in which embodied subjectivities are formed through our prosthetic interrelationships with technologies. Generative AIs have the potential to fundamentally alter the experience of academic writing, and therefore how the embodied authoring self-unfolds. Marin (2021) takes a phenomenological approach which focuses on sensory configurations and the mediality of embodied gestures, drawing on Flusser (2014). She identifies three categories of gesture involved in academic writing: dis-assembling, assembling, and interlacing. Building on this work and utilising a heuristic approach to 'interviewing digital objects' (Adams and Thompson 2016) this paper will consist of a phenomenological investigation into the effects of GAIs on these gestures and academic writing in the age of AI.

Full paper

The act of writing cannot be understood as disembodied information transfer or the production of text, just as any technology or device cannot be regarded as mere instrument or tool (Vlieghe 2016). Instead, any form of writing, from longhand using graphomotoric control, to the motor and visual space of keyboards and screens (Mangen & Velay 2010) enrolls the body in interaction with a physically tangible device. As such, the materiality of communication (Lenoir 1998) is not neutral but is agentive and constitutive of human subjectivities as writing bodies. Work in media theory has revealed closely intertwined relationships between technologies of inscription and material, cultural and ideological forms of education (McLuhan 1994, Friesen & Cressman 2010, Friesen 2017) and the generation of 'alphabetized bodies' (Kittler 1990). Stiegler, working in the philosophy of technology, holds that our embodied subjectivities are formed through prosthetic interrelationships with technologies (Stiegler 1998). Vieghle (2016) and calls for a technosomatic (Richardson 2010) account of how practices of reading and writing impact our bodies and the social and cultural effects of that entanglement, arguing that this leads to 'a grammar' of responding to the world via gestural routines. Typing differs from the productive gesture of handwriting as it can be seen instead as a pointing gesture (Mangen & Velay 2010), in which the keyboard writer becomes a consumer, with different technological arrangements opening up different spaces of experience in which we come to inhabit a particular relation to script (Vlieghe 2016). In this regard, one of the pressing questions for research in this area centres on how generative AIs will change human practices of writing and generating texts, and how these effects will be felt in the everyday practices of education, writing, study and meaning making. Textual practices in education and beyond have always been intertwined with technologies of inscription, from the earliest recorded human practices of writing using clay tablets (Friesen 2017), to the emergence of digital technologies. Theorists working in social semiotics have accounted for the multimodal nature of communication (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996), and more recently the complex materiality of textual communication has been theorised in the emergent field of Posthuman Applied Linguistics (Pennycook 2018a, 2018b). The advent of GAIs requires further theoretical extension to provide insights into how these 'more-than-human' machine-human texts emerge, how we might begin to understand the nature of authorship in the AI age, and how to understand the rapidly evolving and uncanny nature of these texts (Costello 2023). The way that we experience writing has been explored from a first-person perspective using the approach of phenomenology, '... the study of structures of consciousness from the first-person point of view. The focus is on how we experience things, '... notably the significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our 'lifeworld'.' (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2013). An analysis using this perspective focuses on aspects such as time, space, where we place our attention, the actions we take with our bodies, eyes and movements, the way we interact with others, and our linguistic activity, and has been applied to practice (van Manen 2009, 2014). In recent years postphenomenological enquiry has been developed to guide descriptions and enquiries into the nature of the experience of technologies in particular (e.g. Ihde 1990, 2002, Verbeek 2023). Further work has focused on digital technologies with a posthuman lens, such as Adams and Thompson's (2016) *Researching Posthuman Worlds*, in which they developed a series of heuristics to be used to investigate the nature of experience of digital technologies, by 'interviewing objects', also used in Gourlay (2021). Adams has recently demonstrated in a study where she 'interviews' AI in education using these heuristic questions to investigate teachers' experiences of using GAIs (Adams 2023). Marin (2021) analyses the study practices of the university in terms of mediatic displacement, in which texts move between various modes of speech and text, taking a phenomenological approach focusing on sensory configurations and the mediality of embodied gestures, drawing on the work of Flusser (2011, 2014). Her analysis of interviews with students reveals what she calls the gestures of academic writing as study practice. She identifies three categories: dis-assembling, assembling, and interlacing. This paper will combine Adams and Thompson's heuristics with Marin's categories to conduct a phenomenological enquiry into the gestures invoked by generative AIs in higher education, focusing on mediatic displacement, authorship, and the notion of posthuman texts. Implications for research and practice will be discussed.

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112 Exploring the Impact of a disruptive technology on Higher Education assessment design: The case of ChatGPT

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Research Domains

Digital University and new learning technologies (DU)

Abstract

This exploratory study looks at the extent to which a generative AI writing tool, ChatGPT, impacts on student performance in Higher Education assessments and how effectively educators are able to differentiate AI-authored and human work. A two-phased, within-subjects experiment, involving paired academics from two UK business schools, was conducted. Preliminary findings revealed a struggle for participants in differentiating AI and human work. AI enhancements proved to be neutral to both originally high-quality and subpar student work. However, work that was crafted by ChatGPT only was of very high quality, often getting the highest grades, and it was particularly difficult to identify. It is suggested that ChatGPT's effectiveness varied according to assessment type, showing greater impacts on traditional than on authentic assessments. These findings pose more questions than answers in redefining academic integrity and re-exemplifying academic misconduct. Future research should explore what would constitute effective assessment strategies in Higher Education.

Full paper

Assessments play a vital role in Higher Education (HE), providing a measurement of a student's learning (Cilliers et al., 2012). Summative assessments are seen to drive student's learning as students often aim to achieve a high grade. The task for educators is to design effective assessments that instil deep learning in students.

The advent of technology enables innovative assessment types but also challenges academic integrity. ChatGPT, or Generative Pretraining Transformer, is a large language model developed by OpenAI and released in November

2022. It uses machine learning to generate human-like text by predicting the probability of a word given the words that came before it. ChatGPT offers promising applications for HE, including language practice and virtual tutoring for students and teaching, learning, and assessment design for educators (Millick & Mollick, 2023). Nevertheless, its role in assessment design is complex, balancing benefits of diverse, creative assignments against the risk of student misuse and academic misconduct (Cotton et al., 2023).

We ask two research questions (RQ):

RQ1: How effectively would markers be able to differentiate between human-authored assessments and ChatGPT modified/generated assessments?

RQ2: Does ChatGPT generate better versions of the assessment so that it has a substantial impact on students' grades?

We conducted a two-phased, within-subjects experimental design to compare AI writing to human writing (Charness, Gneezy, & Kuhn, 2012). Institutional ethics approval was obtained. Two undergraduate degree programmes at two post-92 business schools in the United Kingdom were first identified. Upon receiving academics' agreements, one module at each undergraduate academic level (levels 4 to 6) within a programme was selected for the generation of writing samples. Two academics from each programme, who are familiar with the modules but not involved in the marking of the selected writing samples, were invited to mark the samples based on the established assessment rubrics.

Four pairs of two academics participated in the experiment. For each programme, a total of 21 writing samples were prepared for each pair of two academics, marked by the academics and followed by live interviews with a research team member. All identifying information and feedback were removed from the writing samples. The writing samples at each academic level contained three pieces of work written at three grade bands (i.e., <40, low 50s, and 70s) by the original human authors, three pieces of ChatGPT-modified version of the same assessments, and one ChatGPT-generated work.

In Phase 1, each pair of participants were presented with a mix of randomly ordered original, GPT-modified, and GPT-generated scripts to a total of four scripts. They were asked to assign grades against the marking criteria and identify the ChatGPT submission(s). In Phase 2, participants were asked to grade the remaining scripts, and then identify the ChatGPT submission(s).

After each phase, a debrief and interview is conducted where the assessment identities were revealed, and the participants were asked to compare the original and GPT-modified and generated assessments. The participants' overall impressions, grading differences, and reflections were gathered. The process was carefully designed to minimise the order effect and sources of bias (Charness et al., 2012).

Data analyses from interviews revealed interesting preliminary findings. To answer RQ1, most participants were unable to distinguish between student-written and AI-written content, demonstrating the sophistication of the AI's output. To answer RQ2, ChatGPT enhancements did not significantly improve the original student-written work across all grade bands. Furthermore, utilising ChatGPT to generate completely original work, was mostly graded at the upper second level, and was effective for traditional assessments such as literature review essays. In contrast, the results were mixed when the assessments were deemed more authentic.

Interestingly, the fact that academics could not distinguish between human- and AI-authored work poses a few interesting questions that are worth future examinations. For example, to what extent should we encourage the use of disruptive technologies like ChatGPT in student assessment preparation, as opposed to using current technologies such as Studiosity and Grammarly? How would academic misconduct/integrity be redefined or exemplified if disruptive technologies are embedded as part of HE teaching and learning?

To conclude, this research suggests that there are significant challenges for academic integrity and the need for assessment adaptations. Future studies must explore ethical AI usage, possibly redefining academic misconduct in the context of emerging technologies.

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172 Chat GPT and ethics of suspicion

Liz Bennett

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Research Domains

Digital University and new learning technologies (DU)

Abstract

This paper examines lecturers' responses to the emergence of generative artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT. The paper draws on data collected at a workshop and on interviews with six colleagues at one institution. It examines what lecturers have noticed about the impact of artificial intelligence on students' assessed work. It analyses lecturers' views on how they perceive the threat of artificial intelligence to the validity of our awards and the challenges and dilemmas that lecturers encounter when revising their approach to assessment. My focus is on the changing behaviours at the level of teaching, learning and assessment rather than broader issues of institutional policy. I interrogate the data to examine how these tools affect our role informed by our values as educators. I draw on notions of hermeneutics of suspicion (Ricoeur 1965) and relational pedagogies (Gravett 2023) to illuminate the findings.

Full paper

The growth of the availability of artificial intelligence, AI, tools is presenting higher education with a challenge to the validity of its awards (Benuyenah, 2023). ChatGPT3 was released in November 2022 and was being widely used by students immediately (Snapvangers, 2023). In response Turnitin has developed an AI detection tool which became available in April 2023.

This paper aims to understand the impact of AI and its detection from the perspectives of lecturers in one higher education institution. The paper focuses on four research questions:

1. What are lecturers' perceptions of the threat to academic standards posed by AI?
2. What are lecturers' perceptions of the role of assessment design for addressing the challenges posed by AI?
3. What are lecturers' experiences and views of using Turnitin's AI detector?
4. What are lecturers' perceptions of the ways that they might address assessment security other than assessment task design?

One of the most common responses to the threat of AI is to change assessment design to make their assessments more 'AI proof' (QAA, 2023). Authenticity of assessments, that is ones with more real-world application, is one way to achieve this (Bryant 2023). Alternatively incorporating a range of media types in the assessment design makes it harder to generate via AI or shortening the length of the assessment task to enable more detailed interrogation of the ideas by the assessor. The extent to which assessment design is considered by lecturers to be an effective way to tackle the issue is explored (RQ2).

Turnitin's detection tool is unable to prove the use of AI, hence its use raises questions about its value: have lecturers found it to be effective in helping to identify AI? Has it changed the relationships between student and tutor which are in play during marking? RQ3 explores these questions.

Other aspects of the marking process may be part of a response to AI. For instance, by being more vigilant in particular areas such as referencing, where ChatGPT is known to 'hallucinate' (a hallucination is an inaccuracy generated by artificial intelligence). These and other approaches to assessment practices will be investigated (RQ4).

A radically different approach to designing out, or detection, may be thinking about how to teach about use of AI in order to develop students' experience of using AI tools. This alternative approach reflects the idea that the tools exist in the workplace and offer potential that our students need to be alert to and skilled in thinking about these potentials in preparation for the future workplace. However this approach is beyond the scope of the current paper.

Methods

This is an emergent area where understandings and practice are rapidly developing. Hence this paper reports on data being collected between end of June and end of September 23. The data will be collected at a workshop scheduled as part of an institution's teaching and learning conference. The 1 hour workshop will be structured around two small group activities related to their response to what they have observed during the marking process and the dilemmas raised by AI.

Further to the workshop six colleagues from across one institution who have more well developed views on the topic of AI will be interviewed one to one with each interview lasting around 30 minutes. This purposive sample is not aimed at generalisability but does aim to gather insights informed by lecturers' lived experience of assessment during the spring and summer of 2023.

The data will be analysed thematically to illuminate the answers to the four research questions.

Theoretical framing of the study

Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion is a lens that may be used to interpret the data. Ricoeur invites us to question 'under what circumstances can I say that I have understood this text?' (Scott-Baumann 2012, p.46) and argues that this leads to "an overly powerful mechanism for suspecting others, which is what we do when we believe we know more than others do" (Scott-Baumann, 2012, p.4).

Relational pedagogies is another theoretical lens which may be helpful to consider. Relational pedagogies assert that “understanding relationships – connections, mattering, and relationality – as fundamental to learning and teaching” (Gravett, 2023, p.2).

The paper will examine how AI tools change the teacher-student relationship, and draw on these theoretical notions to consider the importance of being explicit about our values as a way to address the threats of AI to our awards.

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Parallel Session 1:2

14:00 - 15:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Room 139

Chair Jacqueline Stevenson

319 Working towards inclusive internationalisation: Policy, staff perspectives and implementation

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

In this paper, we report on a study of the interplay between internationalisation and inclusion discourses and practices in a research-intensive university in the UK. Our analysis of institutional artefacts and policy documentation suggested that these two themes are often considered in isolation rather than integrated. We followed up this preliminary research with a questionnaire, interviews and focus groups with staff. We found that some staff had good awareness of relevant policy, whilst others had less understanding of this wider context. Some staff talked about giving close consideration to the interplay between internationalisation and inclusion, others had not thought through this integration. We discuss the importance of connecting work on internationalisation and inclusion to ensure that conceptualisations of internationalisation are not merely reflections of diversity. Our paper contributes to an identified gap by highlighting possibilities for cultural diversity to drive inclusivity in international higher education amidst globalised narratives.

Full paper

The conceptual uncertainties around what might internationalisation of higher education mean continue to attract debate and reflection from scholars around the world. This conundrum can be attributed to three main interrelated issues. First, as recently reiterated by Marginson (2023) there remains a lack of generative connection between internationalisation researchers and practitioners, which is problematic for developing the field. He therefore called for a redefinition of internationalisation taking into account its relational dimension. This call for reimagining internationalisation links to the second issue in that there is a need for a shift from the dominant focus on the macro and meso strategic management of internationalisation processes to an integrative approach that interweaves macro, meso and micro level aspects of internationalisation processes (Fakunle, 2021). This proposed integrative approach addresses the observation in the European Higher Education Area Bologna Process Implementation Report (2020) that states that internationalisation activities are 'very general and thus offer little practical guidance' (p.124). In other words, the 'organisational characteristics' of internationalisation for institutions (Seeber et al, 2020) do not provide a full understanding of internationalisation to guide practice. Furthermore, thirdly, normative internationalisation discourse does not address the lack of insight as to how the diversity of people and ideas that internationalisation enables may result in inclusivity. This relates to a key question posed in this SRHE conference call as to what knowledges are prominent and whether there are yet unrecognised knowledges in research and practice of higher education.

To this end, our 2-stage mixed method research project explores linkages between internationalisation and inclusion in institutional artefacts. The outcomes from this work were then deepened by exploring staff perspectives as to the extent to which they make connections between internationalisation and inclusion in their teaching practice in an international university.

For the first stage of the research, we conducted a documentary analysis of internationalisation related documents across our research site which is a large research intensive university in the UK that attracts international students from over 160 countries. We produced a scoping report to complete this stage of the study. The scoping report reveals there is mostly a lack of connection between internationalisation and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion discourse across the institution. This is unsurprising given that there remains a lack of connection at the conceptual level between these two main agendas in higher education. Nonetheless, there was evidence of attempts to connect the two agendas in a few isolated contexts, pointing to possibilities. The report fed into the development of research instruments for the second stage of our study

The second stage involved 168 academic staff across three Colleges in the university. This includes 127 respondents to our Qualtrics questionnaire, 28 individual interviews and 4 multidisciplinary focus groups with 14 staff. Our thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021) of the findings reveals some staff have a rich awareness of the interplay between inclusion and internationalisation, whereas others had not explored these connections. The survey and interview data indicate differing staff level of awareness of institutional policy on internationalisation. Nonetheless, all the participants displayed keen awareness (and criticism) of normative and well-discussed economic-driven internationalisation (see Higher Education Policy Institute Report, 2023). This in turn has an impact on how staff perceive the concept of internationalisation may be connected to their practice.

The cultural dimensions of internationalisation emerged as a key theme, reflecting the opportunities and challenges with learning and teaching while encountering cultural differences in internationalised classrooms. This reflects the increasing ethnic diversity in higher education in UK institutions and globally, and the need to understand how diversity and inclusion work in practice.

The issue, however, remains regarding the conceptual void in the field (de Wit, 2023) that underpins to some extent the lack of connectivity between the concept of internationalisation based on organisational rationales (Seeber et al, 2020) and individual rationales (Fakunle, 2021) that points up a gap in the integration between higher education policy and practice (Bologna Report, 2020). Our research seeks to make a contribution by providing empirical evidence to highlight the lack of connection between internationalisation and inclusion policy, which points to a macro/micro disconnect. Importantly, our findings reveal general awareness of normative economic-oriented internationalisation discourses, and visions of inclusive internationalisation with implications for policy and practice. Our conference presentation will therefore share recommendations on inclusive practices within formal, informal, and organised spaces in internationalised classrooms. This ensures that conceptualisations of internationalisation are not merely reflections of diversity, but possibilities for diversity to drive inclusivity in delivering higher education amidst globalised narratives.

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122 The operationalisation of collaborative academic practice

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Collaborations are a key feature of contemporary practice in higher education, involving work across multiple boundaries. For those involved in their operationalisation, expertise is demonstrated in the ability to navigate complex boundary zones, often outside of 'traditional' university structures and processes. With calls being made to bring the experiences and motivations of those working in the 'third space' into the open, this presentation discusses the operationalisation of the collaborative academic practice associated with TNE partnerships, and introduces a new model for analysing boundary work, The Collaborative Work Model (CWM).

Full paper

Transnational Education (TNE), defined by the British Council as “the delivery of degrees in a country other than where the awarding institution is based” (Wake, 2018, p. 5) plays a significant part in contemporary higher education policy (Yencken, Croucher, Elliott and Locke 2021). It represents one of the ways in which higher education is diversifying internationally, resulting in new spaces for university work (Clegg 2008), challenging the maintenance of perceived boundaries and identities as interdependence, collaboration and engagement across groups and institutions become increasingly influential (Henkel 2007).

TNE is made up of several different types of provision, including partnerships (Emery and Worton 2014; HE Global, 2016). In the UK, these partnerships between a UK HEI and an overseas HE institution provide valuable revenue to the UK HE sector, but, it is essential to note, regarding TNE partnerships as simply an income generator seriously devalues the reputation of the higher education sector. They enable universities to enhance their institutional reputation (Heffernan, Wilkins and Butt 2018) and contribute to claims for social justice and equality of opportunity in higher education (UNESCO 2023). However, despite multiple, complex factors to consider, Wagstaff (2013) considers that not enough is known about what contributes to their success or failure. Commenting on this lack of knowledge, Yenckel et al (2021:13) suggest ...‘it is not so much the mode of provision (for example, international branch campus, franchised or validated provision, and wholly online learning) that matters, but the nature of the partnerships and the relationships formed and sustained over time [italics in original].

The purpose of this presentation is twofold. Firstly it answers the question ‘what are the experiences and motivations of academics responsible for operationalising TNE partnerships’. Often called academic liaison, or academic link tutors these individuals represent an excellent example of members of the university workforce who operate in collaborative, hybridized, boundary spanning or ‘third space’ environments (Messenger and Bloisi 2020; Whitchurch 2013). However, Whitchurch (2022) has indicated that far less is known about academics in boundary spanning roles than their ‘non-academic’ counterparts. Secondly, it aims to contribute more generally to discussions relating to the university workforce and calls for the examination of the experiences and practices of those working in a ‘third space’ to be drawn into the open and examined (Hall 2022) because as Sugrue, Englund, Solbrette, and Fosslund (2018) have argued, those in third space now require the “equally exciting and frightening ability to service as activist advocates within universities, to model leadership, to advocate for sustainable innovations, to be strategic, to be politically aware, aware of values, of power and positioning within the organization.”

Academic link tutors are key to partnership success ‘after the ink dries’. They are responsible for managing the ‘increasingly complex operational and academic requirements of TNE

successfully and to ensure quality’ (Henderson, Barnett and Barrett 2017:14), working closely on a day-to-day basis with external university partners and internal university departments, spanning functions, departments, institutions and international borders. A TNE partnership is just one of the collaborative endeavours that characterise the contemporary university, and Daniels (2011) suggests that whereas professional expertise is generally anticipated to develop ‘vertically’ over time as new professional knowledge and competences are developed and practitioners reach a higher ‘level’, for those involved in collaborations, expertise is also developed when practitioners operate ‘horizontally’. As debates amass relating to the future of the university workforce, and the artificial divide often existing between ‘academic’ and non-academic’ roles, this publication has a significant and critical purpose by conceptualising the working environment of academic link tutors as a boundary zone, so providing new ways of interpreting other university collaborations and the professional practices involved.

This presentation makes use of data obtained from organisational data and in-depth interviews with 10 highly experienced academic link tutors from one university to identify their experiences and motivations. It presents a new model for analysing activities in the boundary zone where TNE partnerships are operationalised. This model

(Collaborative Work Model; CWM) will also be useful for all situations which require collaborative university work, and for revealing the experiences and motivations of those involved.

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162 Internationalisation and its impact on students in higher education: A scoping review of the literature 2011 - 2022

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Research about internationalisation of higher education has expanded rapidly in recent decades with few attempts to map available evidence. This scoping review synthesises articles about how internationalisation practices specifically impact students’ outcomes and experiences. We identified 967 articles in 21 themes, spread across 493 journals and 27 disciplines. Of these, only 233 (22.8%) were categorised as ‘designed to highlight impacts on students’. We characterise research as scattered and primarily descriptive, with limited efforts to build on previous research. However, we have synthesised five key principles that underpin practice with the most demonstrable impact on students: (1) embedding internationalisation holistically across the institution; (2) centring inclusion and connection; (3) developing active and creative learning approaches; (4) providing opportunities for reflection and personal connection; and (5) explicitly scaffolding intercultural skills. At SRHE, we call for researchers to design more research that builds on this maturing subfield, centring evidence to inform critical practice.

Full paper

Internationalisation is considered a disruptive force on the practices in global higher education (Kosmützky & Putty, 2016), commonly defined Knight (2004, p. 2) as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education’. This definition is purposefully vague, including ‘comprehensive internationalisation’ (Hudzik, 2015) efforts across teaching, research, and service operations. Due to this vagueness, scholars have argued that the ways institutions approach internationalisation are

not systematic between and across sectors (Kehm & Teichler, 2007). This has led to a burgeoning area of research, where it is estimated that there are more than 2,300 published articles about internationalisation (Kuzhabekova et al., 2015), with over 200 articles published each year (Tight, 2021). However, most systematic reviews on this topic have been macro bibliometric analyses (e.g., Kuzhabekova et al., 2015; Mittelmeier & Yang, 2022; Tight, 2021; Yemini & Sagie, 2016), meaning there is scope for developing a synthesis of existing knowledge for evidence-based internationalisation practices.

We have narrowed our focus specifically on how internationalisation impacts students, their outcomes, and their experiences. One reason is the exponential rise of international students over the last few decades (OECD, 2021), leading to growing scholarly interest in their experiences and associated supports. Another reason is that internationalisation is also positioned as a tool for supporting students 'at home', mainly through internationalising the curriculum (Leask, 2009) and pedagogies (Lomer & Mittelmeier, 2021). Therefore, there are questions about whether existing scholarly publications can provide an evidence base for whether and how internationalisation demonstrably impacts students' learning and campus experiences.

We focused on two research questions:

1. How is the internationalisation of higher education being researched in relation to students' outcomes and experiences?
2. How and under what conditions does internationalisation make a demonstrable impact on higher education students?

We conducted a scoping review of global evidence about internationalisation and its demonstrable impact on students using the guidance of Arksey and O'Malley (2005), conceptualised as 'a process of summarizing a range of evidence in order to convey the breadth and depth of a field' (Levac et al., 2010, p. 1). We identified 967 articles which met our exclusion and inclusion criteria, published between January 2011 and April 2022. Identified articles were sorted into three categories according to whether and how authors demonstrated impact on students' outcomes or experiences: demonstrable impact, reflected impact, and limited impact. We also outlined 21 thematic categories within existing evidence. In addition to mapping research on this topic, we also synthesised research findings to develop a "what works" understanding of five key principles of effective internationalisation, based on the approach undertaken by Evans (2013).

This review was the first to synthesise global evidence about internationalisation and how it impacts students in higher education. Our review outlines a prolific subfield with great quantities of research produced within a short timeframe and across disciplines. However, we also characterise the subfield as scattered rather than cohesive, with a tendency to be descriptive rather than provide demonstrable evidence for how internationalisation impacts on students' outcomes and experiences. While there is also extensive critical and conceptual literature offering richer and more nuanced insights, this is often divorced from empirical scholarship.

Yet, building on the analytical approach by Evans (2013), there is enough available evidence to identify five clear principles of successful internationalisation, as outlined in our findings. These provide guidance for practice by highlighting 'what works' in internationalisation:

1. Internationalisation should be purposefully (re-)designed and embedded through holistic campus approaches
2. Internationalisation efforts should centre inclusion and connection
3. Internationalised teaching should centre active and creative approaches
4. Internationalisation efforts should provide targeted opportunities for reflection and be made relevant to students' lives and futures
5. Internationalisation efforts should provide explicit scaffolding of international and intercultural skills

Internationalisation, therefore, should be holistically planned by institutions across domains of teaching, student support, extra-curricular activities, and (although this review did not include these in the discussion) policy, staff training, research, professional services, and administration. These findings are significant, considering our prior work

has outlined that the vast majority of institutional strategies about internationalisation focus on research and international student recruitment, rather than issues of student experience, pedagogies, or curricula (Lomer et al., in press). Therefore, there is a need for strategic focus not just on what universities can gain from internationalisation (particularly in terms of research funding or impact and tuition fees), but also on what it *contributes* to the development of graduates with critical, ethical, and meaningful intercultural competencies and experiences.

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Parallel Session 1:3 - Symposium

14:00 - 15:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Room 145

5 Challenges in developing professional knowledge, education, and practices in Swedish higher education

Research Domain

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Rationale

The formation of professionals and professions is, simultaneously, a core function of contemporary universities and a field of contestation where different worldviews, rationalities and aspirations meet. In this symposium, we will present an interdisciplinary research collaboration, called PHE (Professional knowledge in Higher Education), between four academic institutions in Sweden. These institutions regularly collaborate on research activities concerning professional knowledge, professional education and learning addressing core issues for the welfare state, for social justice, sustainable development, and higher education pedagogy. We will present the main motivations for this collaboration, its goals, and examples of its ongoing interdisciplinary research. The symposium will situate our collaboration in current public and academic debates on the growing societal demand for strong, flexible, and pluralistic professional programs in higher education and in doing so, also address pressing issues related to welfare, the knowledge economy, and the labour market. Such demands pose new challenges for universities today in regard to, for example, the need for expertise and pedagogy.

Central to this collaborative project is a new interdisciplinary research school, SPETS (Studies in Professional Education and Training for Society), with doctoral students from all four institutions and inter-institutional supervision. In the symposium, five ongoing doctoral projects that represent current challenges and tensions in Swedish professional education and development will be presented. In Matilda B Svensson's research, she highlights the policy turns of teacher education in Sweden and how they affect understandings of professional knowledge. Per Holmgren and Yihua Zhang examine how digitalization impacts what is seen as valuable knowledge and pedagogy in HE today and how digitalization is used to address some of the key issues in professional programs. Reghan Borer's study concerns how public engagement is addressed in Swedish doctoral education, and Sara Svensson discusses the use of arts-based pedagogies to facilitate personal and professional development across a range of professional education programs. In Amoni Kitooke's work, he explores community-oriented aspects of professional education, particularly praxis and knowledge issues in teacher education.

These doctoral projects, in parallel with other joint activities and meeting points in this collaborative endeavour, address issues that include highly relevant intersections between digitalization, internationalisation, equity, policy and quality assurance, economic disparities, migration, and community welfare, which point to some of the challenges of developing professional knowledge, education and practices in higher education today.

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Chair

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Lund University, Lund, Sweden

Discussants

Petra Angervall

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106 Professional Knowledge Domains in Community-oriented Teacher Education: A literature review

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Initial teacher education through higher education courses and school-based practicums has been criticised for being decontextualised and insufficiently preparing teacher candidates to address the complexity and needs of the classroom, school, and local communities. An alternative, practice-intensive initial 'teacher training' uncritically offers a curriculum-scripted approach aimed at increasing standardised test scores but attends much less if at all to students' experiences and community needs. An emerging third approach, community-oriented teacher education (CoTE), combines learning in higher education, school-based practicums, as well as experiential learning and civic participation in community life. An unresolved question remains: what kinds of professional knowledge do CoTE practices and activities develop among teacher candidates? This literature review analyses the process phases of CoTE activities in 12 contexts and identifies that CoTE develops teacher candidates' theoretical, technical, practical, and critical-emancipatory knowledge.

Full paper

Introduction

The knowledge base of teacher education is contentious because there are contrasting perspectives on what an 'ideal teacher' needs to know, be and do (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001). Stakeholders conceptualise differently the nature and purpose of education; and whether to prioritise developing teacher candidates' knowledge of subject, pedagogy, research, or change agency (Furuhagen et al., 2019). Kretchmar & Zeichner (2016) describe initial teacher preparation approaches dubbed 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0. Teacher Prep 1.0, offered through higher education courses and school-based practicums, has been criticised as too theoretical with too limited classroom practice to

enable teacher candidates to facilitate student achievement on curricula demands, and too decontextualised to support societal development. Posited by 'reformers' (including private actors) as a remedy, Teacher Prep 2.0 offers teacher candidates non-university training primarily in implementing standardised curricula to improve students' test scores; yet still decontextualised as it seldom engages teacher candidates in local community issues. Teacher prep 3.0 bridges the university, school and local community, all as spaces with 'funds of knowledge' (Oughton, 2010; Zipin, 2009) necessary for teacher candidates to understand and address student learning needs and societal challenges.

I consider and refer to Teacher Prep 3.0 as community-oriented teacher education (CoTE) because it is a kind of education facilitated by, in, with, and for the human, environmental and institutional resources in the communities (Smith & Sobel, 2010). A question at hand regards what professional knowledge CoTE offers teacher candidates. A useful categorisation of knowledge is the Pedagogy, Education and Praxis (PEP - <https://research.tuni.fi/pep/>) research network framework. PEP categorises knowledge into "theoretical knowledge, epistemē, whose end goal is [pursuing the] truth; technical (or poetical) knowledge, technē, whose end goal is production of something; ... practical knowledge, phronēsis, whose end goal is wise action" (Mahon et al., 2020, p. 18 quoting Aristotle, NE 1139a27-8, italics added); and critical-emancipatory knowledge, whose goal is to overcome irrationality in and "transform existing ways of seeing and doing things" (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 23). I use this framing to chart professional knowledge domains.

The current study

Articles describing CoTE activities in 12 contexts (Table 1) were reviewed to identify the knowledge domains developed among participating teacher candidates.

Table 1: Reviewed articles on CoTE in various contexts

Continent	Countries and Articles
Africa	Tanzania: (Kalungwizi et al., 2020)
	Uganda: (Walimbwa et al., 2022)
Asia	Vietnam: (Nguyen & Dang, 2020)
	Hong Kong: (Harfitt & Mei Ling Chow, 2018)
Europe	Italy: (Thomas, 2020)
	UK: (Bhargava & Jerome, 2020)
North America	USA: (Burant & Kirby, 2002; Popielarz & Galliher, 2023)
	Canada: (Goodnough & Mulcahy, 2011)
Oceania	Australia: (Ma & Green, 2021; Somerville et al., 2010)
South America	Peru: (Alsop et al., 2010)

Findings

Five process stages were identified (conception, introduction, planning, implementation, and reflection & reporting); developing four knowledge domains (theoretical, technical, practical, and critical-emancipatory).

At the conception stage, project initiators plan the 'innovation'. Since teacher candidates are seldom involved, no knowledge domain is developed here. For example, the activity in Popielarz & Galliher (2023) involved teacher educators working with community mentors from two local non-governmental organisations.

The introductory stage develops theoretical knowledge by orienting teacher candidates to the theoretical and pedagogical basis of the activities. This includes subject knowledge (environmental education Kalungwizi et al. (2020); ideological issues (social justice in Burant & Kirby (2002); and the pedagogical theory (critical action research in Alsop et al. (2010).

The planning stage develops technical knowledge as teacher candidates design their project plans considering the learned theory, curricula demands and the envisioned school and community dynamics. They usually work with multiple stakeholders to identify, pre-visit and engage with the targeted resources in the community. For example, the teacher candidates in Ma & Green (2021) work with school-based teachers and conduct reconnaissance pre-visits to a swamp and a playground, their learning sites.

The implementation stage develops practical knowledge as teacher candidates face the classrooms and communities, needing to make decisions on the go. In Alsop et al. (2010), Carmen María conducts home visits instead of joint meetings with parents. When parent lack the time to meet at home, she walks with them to the field while they talk. Such flexibility reflects practical knowledge.

The reflection and reporting stage develops critical-emancipatory knowledge, as teacher candidates introspect, and critique systems and practices for transformation. Through community projects, Tyrone and Maya in Popielarz & Galliher (2023) [re]gain the love for social studies as they now see how it connects with and impacts students and communities.

Conclusion

As these five stages illustrate, CoTE activities develop a range of professional knowledge domains among teacher candidates. Such knowledge is necessary for addressing students' learning needs and addressing societal challenges.

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120 Evolving professional development in nuclear reactor physics and safety through hybrid learning environments

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Nuclear education providers have difficulties sustaining their programs that typically consist of small cohorts of students and tend to follow a traditional, lecture-based design. This paper presents the GRE@T-PIONEER project as a response aiming to preserve competencies and skills in computational and experimental nuclear reactor physics and nuclear safety through the implementation of six advanced courses offered globally to PhD and Post-Doc students, nuclear professionals, and MSc students. The courses employ a flipped classroom approach within a hybrid learning environment, complemented by three hands-on training sessions on nuclear training reactors. The courses were evaluated using validated survey instruments associated with various learning-theoretical frameworks. The paper presents preliminary findings derived from one of the courses comprising asynchronous online and synchronous hybrid sessions. While course completion and performance were high both among onsite and online students, some notable distinctions between the two groups emerge. Future research will explore these differences further.

Full paper

The dynamics of knowledge in society have significantly impacted the conditions of professional work and learning, including the field of engineering (Nerland, 2018). This becomes especially evident in the context of modern engineering, where engineers are tasked with designing innovative solutions that incorporate cutting-edge technology, that often requires a deep understanding of the latest advancements (Crawley et al., 2007). One of these areas is nuclear engineering, where the advent of affordable computing power has significantly augmented the significance of modeling and simulations. However, European nuclear engineering programs are in a state of crisis and need innovative changes to face an alarming decline in student enrollment and to keep up with the increasing demand for skilled labor. Nuclear education providers have difficulties sustaining their programs that typically consist of small cohorts of students. Courses tend to follow a traditional, lecture-based design, which can present significant obstacles to participation and learning. A potential solution is provided through the collaborative provision of online learning programs with greater accessibility and flexibility. But online learning often suffers from low levels of student engagement and high drop-out rates (Eriksson et al., 2017). Hence, an ongoing imperative exists to develop and assess learning designs that aim to address the limitations of both online and traditional courses while capitalizing on their inherent strengths through hybrid configurations.

The GRE@T-PIONEER project aims to follow this call and preserve competencies and skills in computational and experimental nuclear reactor physics and nuclear safety (Demazière et al., 2021). Ten partners from six European countries developed a series of six advanced courses offered globally to MSc and PhD students, Post-Doc, and nuclear professionals. The courses are conducted as online and hybrid versions and based on the (online) flipped classroom method (Stöhr & Adawi, 2018) and principles of active learning (Freeman et al., 2014). In the beginning of a course, participants submit an honor code agreement, and the courses are offered free of charge. The courses consist of preparatory asynchronous (online) sessions comprising activities such as a series of handbooks, short video lectures, and online quizzes as well as synchronous sessions, where participants either participate in-class or online. The sessions include a combination of individual and collaborative active learning activities.

As part of a PhD project, a research design was developed that aims to better understand the effects of this digitalized learning environment on learners and their learning. In addition to data on motivation and learner background, learning analytics data was collected on learner activity and performance from the Moodle-based learning management system. Further, a learner survey instrument was designed building on four relevant learning theories focusing on different aspects of the learning process – the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison et al., 1999), Transactional Distance Theory (Moore, 2013), Self-regulated Learning theory (SRL) (Zimmerman, 2002), and the ARCS Model of Motivation (Keller, 1983). The survey combined validated standard instruments from each theoretical perspective and some questions about course satisfaction. After pretesting and some re-adjustments, the survey was distributed after each course module. About 50 learners participated in each module of which approx. 50% responded to the survey.

Although the analysis just started, some initial results can be reported about learner activity, performance, and satisfaction from one of the modules titled “Core Modelling for Core Design,” which will be supplemented during the presentation at the conference. Regarding performance, the course completion rate was slightly above 50%, which is interpreted as a good result given the advanced course level and the high drop-out rates in other online courses. Pure online participants demonstrated considerably more strategic behavior with many just passing the required minimum, whereas onsite learners often reached maximum points. This disparity is also reflected in the activity measurements. While overall completion of the different learning activities was high, online learners showed a

significantly lower completion rate, particularly during the synchronous sessions. These effects are presumed to be influenced by online participants' need to balance their participation with other commitments. There could also be motivational differences or effects of SRL (Stöhr et al., 2020), underlining the need for further analysis. However, participants (both online and hybrid) expressed exceptionally high levels of satisfaction with the course. In sum, the study affirms the pedagogical advantages of the flipped classroom and demonstrates how the hybrid learning design broadens access for learners while maintaining a high level of learner retention. Further research will explore the observed patterns further.

Acknowledgements

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173 Valuable knowledge in teacher education: Negotiating digital technology and AI in a teacher education program

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Digitalization is an ongoing process and includes recent developments in AI and machine learning. In Sweden, the agenda of educational and school digitalization puts continuous expectations on teachers and teacher education. For this presentation an ongoing substudy is introduced, along with its theoretical framework, research topics, preliminary findings, and analysis. The purpose of the study is to examine how a Swedish teacher education program within higher education approaches and addresses the evolving need for contemporary digital and AI competence. The aim is to contribute knowledge into which and what kind of competencies teacher educators negotiate, as well as to how contemporary advancements in digital technology influence what is seen as valuable knowledge in teacher education. Neopragmatism forms the theoretical framework. Government and educational policy documents and examinations as well as qualitative interviews with key actors are currently gathered and analyzed for data collection, using thematic analysis and content analysis.

Full paper

Introduction

As an evolving process, digitalization has been identified as a major trend affecting ongoing changes in professional life (Thun et al., 2022). In relation, teachers' work has continuously been subject to technological and digital solutions, as well as to policy suggestions (Bergviken Rensfeldt & Rahm, 2022). Before the pandemic, Sweden reported high figures regarding computer density in schools in relation to other countries, and in December 2015 the government at the time tasked the Swedish National Agency for Education with developing a new digitalization and IT strategy. The resulting changes meant that digital competence concerning learning activities in schools was written into the curriculum in a clearer way, relating to the syllabus as well as to the overarching mission statements and goals of the public school system (Franck et al., 2019). In the subsequent curriculum revision, the concept of digital competence has been expanded and now includes two orientations. One aims to strengthen the ability of students to understand and use digital services and systems, as well as to be able to solve problems using digital technology. The other orientation emphasizes the importance of students being able to develop skills and attitudes concerning media and information in a responsible, sustainable, and critical way (Ibid). However, expectations on competence relating to these developments, now including AI technology, may influence the relation between teacher education and contemporary professional teacher knowledge and lead to tensions between the two. Teachers may not be knowledgeable enough to use AI-driven educational applications for teaching and learning purposes and may lack the technological expertise to conduct necessary data analysis or to create principles for automatically generating assignments (Ng, Leung et al., 2023). Simultaneously, contemporary studies rarely reveal which specific and lasting digital competencies teachers need to become qualified in an AI-driven learning environment (Ibid.), pointing to an ambiguity concerning the professional knowledge base. Given the rise of AI-driven information and media technologies, coupled with these gaps in knowledge, additional research is required.

Substudy: Digital technology, knowledge, and competency in a teacher education program

The purpose of the research study is to examine and analyze how a Swedish teacher education program within higher education approaches and addresses the evolving need for contemporary digital and AI competence. The project is viewed through the concept of digitalization as an unfolding and escalating process and in relation to critical skills, information analysis and source evaluation. The aim is not only to contribute knowledge and insights into which

and what kind of competencies teacher educators negotiate, but also how contemporary advancements in digital technology influence what is seen as valuable knowledge in teacher education. A specific focus is given to themes concerning course subject matter and examinations relating to digital competencies formulated in Swedish higher education regulation; in turn linked to the local degree ordinance of University of Borås. The teacher education program of interest will be the primary teacher program, with a focus on work in primary school grades 4-6. Specific topics of interest include the following:

- How the overarching goals of Swedish higher education regulation concerning digital technology are interpreted, understood, and implemented, in relation to current developments in AI technology.

The theoretical perspective is situated within the neopragmatic framework, relating to a pragmatist conception of knowledge. As such interpretation of specific elements in relation to one another, usefulness, and practical applicability are particularly important (Newton et al., 2020). Rather than using a perspective of interplay of discourses, valuable knowledge relating to digitalization and AI is primarily understood as applicable in everyday educational situations for teachers and teacher educators.

The source material is collected from the levels of government agency and policy, higher education as well as local education actors, and is thereafter evaluated and analyzed. Some examples of documents and sources of specific interest include the Swedish higher education ordinance, Borås University Degree Ordinance, the local course syllabus and literature as well as examinations relating to the primary teacher program (grades 4-6). Levels of analysis includes wording, sentence, and theme. Additionally, the study will use qualitative interviews with key actors concerning the planning and formation of as well as educating within the teacher program. Content analysis and thematic analysis are used, allowing for exploration of micro level frequency counts, as well as of qualitative patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Database, mapping, and analysis software, such as Nvivo, is used to locate and delineate topics and themes of interest.

The presentation will focus on introducing preliminary results as well as discussing theoretical and conceptual topics.

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229 The Dynamics of Detach and Connect when using Autobiographies in Professional Education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The paper reports on preliminary findings from a case study of an autobiography-based course element included in the social work professional education program of a Swedish university. In the studied course element, the aim was for autobiographies to provide a platform and catalyst for student reflections on client perspectives as well as for reflexivity in relation to students' own frames of reference. The paper seeks to investigate how students engaged with autobiographies in relation to their conceptualizations of the future profession and how their engagement was shaped by the didactic context. Preliminarily, it is found that student displays of empathetic and personal connection and analytical detachment are informed by their conceptualizations of their future professional role. Furthermore, these patterns of connection and detachment appear to be significantly impacted by prompts and input that students receive from the didactic context, including teacher guidance and the social dynamics of the learning environment.

Full paper

As Satchwell (2019) points out, "stories are a tried and trusted means of learning and understanding. This includes learning not only about other people, places and events, but also learning about oneself" (p. 54). The dual pedagogical potential of story that Satchwell refers to has captured the interest of educators and scholars in different professional education (PE) domains, and several arguments for using story – a wide category that comprises autobiographical and biographical narratives as well as various forms of narrative fiction – in PE have been brought forth (cf. e.g. Jarvis & Gouthro, 2019; Bernhardsson, Lundin & Stenbeck, 2021). Existing research is dominated by studies in which educators conduct research in their own teaching-context. This body of work provides insight into the assumptions and intentions behind such pedagogical initiatives, as well as the students' learning outcomes. However, how different factors shape student engagement with story have received less attention, despite the circumstance that what a student will learn through the reading of a story is determined not only by the characteristics of text and reader, but also by how the reading is contextualized, prompted, guided, and processed in the PE context. It follows that the development of further knowledge is needed in these regards, since it is key to understanding *how stories function as pedagogical tools for learning* (or not).

The case study presented in this paper seeks to contribute to the scientific discussion of the pedagogical role of story in PE by investigating: (i) how students engage with story in relation to their conceptualizations of the future profession, and (ii) how their engagement is shaped by the didactic context (i.e. the understandings of professional knowledge and professionalism that teachers on the course convey in their communication with students, the learning activities that the students engage in and interact through, and the scaffolding provided for those learning activities by teaching staff). In the studied case, the type of story employed is autobiography, and the PE context is located within the social work PE program of a large research-intensive university in Sweden. The autobiography course element was introduced with a two-fold intent, as stated by the head teacher: to provide the students with a platform and catalyst for A) reflections on client perspectives and B) reflexivity in relation to the students' own frame of reference. The element was comprised of the reading of an autobiography selected by the student from a list of options, the writing of an individual reflection paper, and a seminar in which participants' papers were discussed in a group of approximately 6 students with the aid of a facilitator. Data collection included student papers and recorded seminar discussions in three groups, and interviews with five students and four facilitators after the completion of the course element. Two of the interviewed facilitators were also teaching/leading the course. In addition to this, supplementary data were collected from other elements of the course to support the researcher's understanding of the overall context.

The study is currently at the stage of data analysis. Documents, transcripts, and field-notes are undergoing a theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) driven by the two foci stated above. Preliminarily, the analytical concepts of *detachment* and *connection* are emerging as important both vis-a-vis how students engage with story in relation to their conceptualizations of the future profession and how their engagement is shaped by the didactic context. *Detachment* occurs in relation to the “subjective personal space of emotions and experiences” (Kramsch, 2000, as cited in Matos, 2004, p. 169) of the student, through empathetic engagement with the narrated experience of another, or through reflexive reasoning that requires a degree of analytical distancing. It also occurs in relation to the narrated experience of another through the application of theoretical frameworks. *Connection*, on the other hand, is at work in the students’ empathetic engagement with the narrated experience of another, as they strive to understand the narrator’s vantagepoint and its implications. Moreover, it is a crucial component of reflexivity, in that students recognize how cognitive and affective dimensions interconnect in their thinking and attitudes, and how those constellations in turn connect to their identity and experience. Preliminary findings suggest that links exist between student conceptualizations of their future professional role and their modes of detaching and connecting in the studied course element. It is also found that patterns of connection and detachment are significantly impacted by prompts and input that students receive from the didactic context, including teacher guidance and the social dynamics of the seminar group.

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Parallel Session 1:4

14:00 - 15:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Conference Room 1a

Chair Gina Wisker

116 Reimagining Research Excellence in Doctoral Education: Connecting Communities with Doctoral Research Agendas

[Rebekah Smith-McGloin](#), [Rachel Handforth](#), [Matthew Young](#)

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Research Domains

Abstract

This paper explores emerging work on civic and community-informed models of doctoral education. Drawing on literature relating to modes of knowledge production (Liyanage et al., 2022; Miller et al. 2018; Peris-Ortiz 2016), we consider how discourses around research excellence and inclusion in doctoral education may be reimagined in this context. In this paper, we offer a tentative conceptual model for civic practice in doctoral education which we review through three recent initiatives that have aimed to connect doctoral communities to civic challenges, and engage citizens and employers with doctoral education. These include programmes seeking to legitimise broader conceptions of scholarship within the core of doctoral education through public scholar initiatives (Porter, 2021), expanding the core sets of values on which doctoral education are founded (Chiappa and Cantini, 2022), and place-based partnerships engaging civic partners in shaping doctoral research agendas (Smith-McGloin, 2022; Handforth, 2023).

Full paper

Universities have a long history of civic engagement; primarily in relation to undergraduate curricula (McCunney, 2017) in areas such as service learning, volunteering, and policy discussions. Relevant literature has used theoretical lenses including Social Cognitive Theory to describe modes of agency (Bandura, 1977), Critical Pedagogy (Freire), and Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991). In policy terms, discourses relating to civic engagement have centred on universities' third mission (Petersen, Kruss and van Rheede, 2022) engaging with sociological lenses such as institutional theory, network analysis and cultural sociology.

Simultaneously, whilst the notion of 'excellence' has become an increasingly significant driver within the research ecosystem in recent years (OECD, 2014), linked to the need to justify the investment of public money in research and increasing competition for scarce resources (Münch, 2014), policy-makers have begun to centre equity as critical to achieving excellence in UK research and innovation (PGR New Deal, UKRI EDI Strategy).

Work on civic and community-informed practice has been slow to emerge at doctoral level. Existing literature on doctoral education and wider engagement with communities focuses predominantly on praxis in the context of industrial and professional doctorates (see Boud et al., 2021; Terzioğlu, 2011; Wildy, Peden and Chan, 2015). Doctoral education is largely still conceptualised as an instrumentalist tool of neoliberal higher education; producing highly-skilled postgraduate researchers and knowledge for the economy. For example, professional doctorates are framed as an effective conduit within the triple helix model of the knowledge economy.

Professional doctorates are specifically viewed as a mechanism by which the university can realise its potential, through close interaction with industry and government, to deliver innovation and economic development in a Knowledge Society. Lee, Green and Brennan (2000) and Gallagher (2000) both view positively the professional doctorate's connection with practice; closer integration between university and professions; encouragement of university-industry partnerships; and opening up of the process of knowledge production within the knowledge economy. The knowledge created within a professional doctorate is generally conceptualised as Mode 2 knowledge, following Gibbons et al. (1994); 'produced in (the) context of application; transdisciplinary; heterogeneous; [...] socially accountable and reflexive, including a wider and more temporary and heterogeneous set of practitioners, collaborating on problems defined in specific and localised context' (Lee, Green and Brennan 2000, p.124).

The modern 'networked' university is shifting to Mode 3 knowledge production, by adding a fourth element of wider public (culture, media, values, technology, creative industries) to the university-industry-government relations 'triple helix' described by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (2000). This quadruple helix (Miller et al. 2018; Peris-Ortiz 2016) speaks to university social responsibilities and a developing capacity through virtual and other means to democratise knowledge and knowledge production by working with publics who can engage with ever-growing knowledge and super-complexity (Barnett, 2000). Liyanage and Netswera (2022) summarise thus:

Mode 1 is not adequate to solve social problems. As a result, Mode 2 and Mode 3 have evolved combining scientific knowledge and social contexts. It is a reflexive knowledge production system with reverse communication. Namely, science speaks to society, and society speaks back to science. (3)

In this paper we explore conceptually how doctoral education might use the nodes and networks described in Mode 3 knowledge production – often situated in a global context – to engage civic society in a hyper-local way. We consider

how members of local communities can be engaged with doctoral research as co-creators of research agendas, research end-users, consumers of research outputs and as researchers themselves. Building on Deem's work (2020) on doctoral education for the public good, we consider how new models of doctoral programmes which connect with communities have the potential to: improve public engagement with research that is currently patchy, despite high-level policy initiatives attempting to embed the 'civic' focus of universities across the sector (Harrow and Guest, 2021); ensure better research questions and the inclusion of 'undone science' projects (Hess, 2007) with local impact; address issues of diversity in research communities by engaging with a wider variety of applicants to undertake research projects with local resonance.

We offer a tentative conceptual model for civic practice in doctoral education which we review through three recent initiatives that have aimed to connect doctoral communities to civic challenges, and engage citizens and employers with doctoral education. These include programmes seeking to legitimise broader conceptions of scholarship within doctoral education through public scholar initiatives (Porter, 2021), expanding the core sets of values on which doctoral education are founded (Chiappa and Cantini, 2022), and place-based partnerships engaging civic partners in shaping doctoral research agendas (Smith-McGloin, 2022; Handforth, 2023).

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331 Creative contagion – what can we learn from the REF about doctoral education?

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

Prompted by the continued growth in practice research in creative disciplines and in creative methods across disciplines at doctoral level (Vear et al 2021, Kara 2017), this paper reports on work in progress to test the potential of a significant data set in the United Kingdom to reveal the extent to which creative practice is influencing change in the

practices and structures of doctoral education. As a periodic quality audit of research in higher education in the United Kingdom, the Research Excellence Framework has been examined and contested from multiple perspectives (e.g., McNay 2015, O'Regan & Gray 2018). My concern here is not with the process or politics of REF, but with the potentiality of the online archives of submissions for researching changes in doctoral education. What evidence and indicators can be found of creative practice's influence on the structures, practices, and discourse of doctoral education?

Full paper

Prompted by the continued growth in practice research in creative disciplines and in creative methods across disciplines at doctoral level (Vear et al 2021, Kara 2017), this paper reports on work in progress to test the potential of a significant data set in the United Kingdom to reveal the extent to which creative practice is influencing change in the practices and structures of doctoral education.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a roughly seven-year audit and assessment of research in higher education institutes in the United Kingdom which requires the submission of data around research outputs, research environment and impact. The REF has been examined and contested from multiple perspectives (e.g., McNay 2015, Murphy & Sage 2014, O'Regan & Gray 2018, Siversten 2017). My concern here is not with the process or politics of REF, the problematics of bureaucratic quality audits and concepts of excellence, it is with considering the latent value of the resulting aftermath – the archives of submissions published online – for other forms of research. Is it possible to find alternative forms of value in REF returns as sources for researching trends in doctoral education?

Specifically, it is the corpus of environment statements at subject level (unit of assessment) that form the data for this project. In the most recent iteration, REF2021, 157 institutions submitted across 34 units of assessment, a total of 1,878 submissions. Each of these includes a statement on the environment to support research and enable impact, documents between 8,000 and 12,000+ words depending on the size of the submission (REF21 Guidelines). In REF, these were assessed for sustainability and vitality alongside data on research income and completed doctoral degrees to produce quality profiles against a starred system. This research explores what this vast data-set might reveal about changes in the doctoral landscape, taking as its focus the potential spread and influence of creative practice in research, whether as practice research in creative disciplines or as creative methods used in other disciplines. As such the focus of analysis is not on the number of stars achieved, but on what the data might reveal about the structures, processes, and discourses of the doctoral landscape in the UK.

For the pilot stage, four units of assessment have been selected: UoA32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory and UoA33 Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies as subject areas where practice research is firmly established, and UoA23 Education where the use creative methods might be expected to be found, and finally UoA12 Engineering. In each of these UoAs, ten submissions out of the top 20 ranked submissions were chosen to try to obtain a sample across the range of types of institution. This pilot phase is also testing different approaches and methods to analysis and interpretation of the REF environment statements including content analysis, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and linguistics.

Environment statements are required to comment explicitly on support for research students and infrastructure and facilities, which would enable explicit mention of creative practice, and for example of workshop, exhibition, or studio facilities, and/or of specific researcher development in relation to creative practice (Taylor 2019, Vaughan 2021). Can inferences be drawn as to the significance ascribed to enabling creative practice in where and how such references are found, and can a response to creative practice be identified in doctoral provision beyond traditionally creative disciplines? My research is also in exploring whether subtler indications of change in the doctoral landscape in response to creative practice might be found, for example in relation to the use of terminology to describe what is submitted for examination (Vaughan 2021). What influence if any, has creative practice had on the terminology and discourse of doctoral education?

At this pilot phase, the research is also questioning the potential value of the large REF environment statement data set as a resource for further research into doctoral provision, and potentially comparative work across the data sets from previous iterations of REF and its predecessor Research Assessment Exercise which would enable longitudinal analysis. How might data from REF (and RAE) be used alongside other sources to research changes in doctoral education? For example, might REF data be triangulated with and enrich analysis of EThOS, the UK's national online thesis database and repository. What might we learn from the REF about changes in doctoral education?

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291 Is Decolonising HE making headway in Professional and Education Doctorate Supervision and Examination Processes: survey findings from UK Higher Education.

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

Intercultural communication in high stakes circumstances can go fatally wrong due to small differences in how speakers use contextualization conventions. Misreading these conventions can lead to unconscious bias and thus play a role in perpetuating institutional forms of disempowerment of marginalised groups. Decolonising knowledge generation is central to decolonising higher education, yet nowhere are the stakes higher for supervisors to "teach to the test" than in PhD completion. Supervisory practice is heavily influenced by perceptions of expectations in examination processes. We explore relationships between examination and supervisory practices, and the roles that regulatory frameworks and relational networks play in reinscribing existing elite relations or disrupting them. Our paper reports on survey findings from an exploratory-explanatory sequential design. We contrast reported practices

to address inequalities with available audit data, looking at a range of support mechanisms that would change awareness of intercultural contextual factors and the thesis examination context itself.

Full paper

As Gumperz and Gumperz seminal text alerted us (1996), intercultural communication in high stakes circumstances can go fatally wrong due to small differences in how speakers use contextualization conventions. Misreading these conventions can lead to unconscious bias and thus play a role in perpetuating institutional forms of disempowerment of marginalised groups. These conventions are habitually outside people's awareness and yet are generally relied on to interpret others' way of speaking. Research in job interviews, medical qualification exams and other gate keeper contexts has established these dynamics are impactful. Less is known about doctoral examination in the social sciences and related professional fields, such as Professional Doctorates and Education Doctorates, though this has had more research focus in Australia (Devos and Sommerville 2012, Lovat et al 2004, Holbrook et al 2008, Holbrook et al 2020) than in the UK (Nir and Bogler 2021). Decolonising knowledge generation lies at the heart of decolonising the curriculum (Manthalu CM and Waghid, Y 2019), yet nowhere are the stakes higher for supervisors to "teach to the test" than in the PhD completion process (Denicolo and Park 2013, Byram and Stiachova 2020). Changing these norms to be more sustainable, more respectful of wider communities of wisdom (Varner et al 2021) and more attuned to the PhD candidate's own journey (Devos and Sommerville 2012) are crucial aspects where we can learn from each other (Roland and Jones 2020, Majee and Ress 2020). However, supervisory practices cannot be unpicked from examination processes. Supervisory practice is heavily influenced by perceptions of expectations in examination processes (Kerry et al 2022).

We examine, here, the relationship between examination and supervisory practices, and the roles that regulatory frameworks, and relational networks play in reinscribing existing elite relations (Shahjahan 2011) or disrupting them. This paper reports on findings of a survey of post graduate coordinators, sr. academics, and regional graduate school coordinators on the regulation and support mechanisms in place for supervision and examination across HE in the UK. Responses were compared to publicly available information on university websites and through such equity programmes as Athena SWAN (Pearce 2017). The survey comprises the first part of a larger exploratory-explanatory sequenced model (Creswell and Plano 2017) project that includes student and supervisor interviews and focus groups that seek their views on survey and discourse analysis findings in comparison to their own experiences.

The survey used an exponential non-linear snowballing technique (Frank 2014) to recruit academics through SRHE special interest groups and other more informal networks of academics with responsibility for post graduate education management in the UK. Particular care was taken through the recruitment process to create a diverse demographic database of respondents to include members of BME groups and diverse gender groups in a trustworthy and transparent manner (Tuck and Guishard, 2013) as their intersectionality is of importance.

Respondents were asked about intercultural communicative competence and unconscious bias training for supervisors, the mechanisms in place to ensure cultural sensitivity of examiners and to diversify examiner recruitment, to audit examination practices to learn from any issues of discrimination that may arise within examination procedures, and systems and procedures in place to support early career academics to develop supervisory and examination recruitment and facilitation practices. Finally, their views on how each of these components may address needed culture change within supervision and examination practice were sought. Analysis included thematic, discourse analysis (Fairclough 2013) and descriptive statistical components (Creswell and Plano 2017).

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Parallel Session 1:5

14:00 - 15:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Conference Room 1b

Chair Andrea Cameron

167 The Impact of Higher Education Reform on Professional Education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Increasing societal demand for robust, adaptable, and pluralistic professions presents universities with new challenges in the realm of producing professional education (PE). Most professional programs share a common objective of forming a content rooted in interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. Additionally, they grant access to stable occupations within the welfare-state context, such as: engineering, nursing, teaching, and social work. Present work addresses a methodological challenge encountered in PE-research, specifically in relation to the intricate interplay of institutional and disciplinary diversity, but also to program legitimacy and quality. The paper reports on methodological insights, examining the limitations and opportunities for PE-research delving into the formation of professional knowledge bases, by especially targeting teacher education. These insights stem from a co study in a larger PhD project addressing the impact of higher education reform on professional education.

Full paper

Introduction

Increasing societal demand, coupled with a dynamic set of disciplines, institutions, and vocations, presents new challenges in the realm of producing professional education (PE) and professional knowledge within higher education (HE). Although PE-research addresses these emerging challenges, it falls short in addressing methodological issues potentially arising from the extensive and complex re-configuration within the field. This has shown to pose challenges in designing the work in an ongoing PhD study. Specifically in regards to making decisions on how to approach HE-reform aiming to reach insight on the formation of professional knowledge bases in PE, by using teacher education as an example.

Hence, this co study is a part of a larger PhD project in Educational Sciences. The project is rooted in the field of sociology, the proceedings are guided by the sociology of associations, which explores the dynamics of interconnected entities, and by the notion of actor-networks becoming durable by their expansion. Furthermore, the project embraces the principle of ontological pluralism. The aim of the co study is to explore alternative methodological approaches to reading HE-reform in research on the forming of professional knowledge bases in PE. Specifically addressing the question; what methodological limitations and opportunities is associated with applying a network approach to reading HE-reform in addressing the forming of professional knowledge bases in PE?

Research design and methodology

This co study delves into HE-reform initiatives employed to create a professional knowledge base by bringing together a specific collection of disciplinary and vocational fields. The research design is best described as ethnographic reading and writing, due to the emphasis on reflexivity (Atkinson, 2014; Davies, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). While the applied writing style bears resemblance to "reflective field notes" (Jeffrey, 2018, p. 120), it diverges in terms of the absence of a specific intention to showcase the critical voice of the ethnographer. Instead, the proceedings are designed to 'test' an approach to ethnographic writing that seeks to generate *provisional alternative formulations* of experiences, as suggested by (Latour, 2013, pp. 11-12, 64-65).

The central focus of this paper revolves around the methodological approach. The present methodology combines the reading approach targeting educational reform suggested by Fenwick (2011), together with the notion of network suggested by Latour (2013). Fenwick (2011) highlights the adequacy in revealing the interactions through which change initiatives are mobilized, seen in early actor-network theory (ANT) research. The notion of change as an expanding network have enabled the tracing of moments of translation, revealing their gradual stabilization and durability as the network extends. But Fenwick also highlights a specific limitation in early ANT-research, which concerns the extent to which the linkages that create ambivalent belongings is addressed. In response, Fenwick propose that actors struggling to protect practices from inscription through connections – while simultaneously working the connections for their own purposes – can be understood to represent these belongings. Further demarcating by conceptualizing these linkages as spaces alongside the network, referring to the occurrence of unpredictable and undecidable direction of action. Central to these arguments is to enable alternative educational change through the unveiling of weaknesses in reform. To this end, stating the adequacy of paying close attention to the socio-material connections and their patterns.

The present methodology follows Fenwick's suggestion, but diverges from the latter statement on patterns of socio-material connections and unveiling weakness. Instead, linkages is further elaborated on by following the approach suggested by Latour (2013). This opens an opportunity to explore the moments of translation *as passing through beings* (p. 41), and to explore *as crossings* (p. 63) what Fenwick (2011, p. 131) denotes as spaces.

Teacher education as an example

The case of the knowledge base and historical development of the teaching occupation in Sweden serves as a compelling subject for research on PE, exhibiting distinct features that distinguish it from other similar occupations. Notably, the teaching occupation demonstrates a unique interplay of factors, including field consolidation and the simultaneous emergence of a scientific knowledge base in parallel with similar professions. The teaching occupation manifests three specific characteristics that warrant attention: a dynamic nature marked by frequent shifts in knowledge paradigms, a notable pursuit of professionalization both internally and externally, and a comparatively delayed stabilization as a recognized profession in relation to similar occupations (Brante et al., 2019). Consequently, the PE of the teaching occupation stands out as an apt case for the present co study, owing to its inherent disciplinary and institutional complexity, as well as the extensive body of knowledge derived from previous sociological research in the field.

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5 An Examination of University Paramedical Students' Enculturation into the Ambulance Service-A sociological perspective

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The study explores student paramedics' enculturation into an NHS ambulance service trust. It illustrates the many challenges and dichotomies which face neophyte paramedics as they go from a university classroom setting into their day-to-day clinical work placements. The challenges they face are not the result of individuals alone, rather they result from an inherent subculture ingrained within the organisational structures of the ambulance service. This ethnography contributes to the social science literature on health and social care by presenting a sociological perspective of student enculturation, from the university into an often-chaotic working environment. The research explores the subculture and hidden curriculum which gives rise to it, as it seeks to understand how this appears to hamper and impede the pedagogy experienced by students. This is not the pedagogy taught in university, rather a pedagogy which arises out from the intricacies and nuances of the traditional working environment of the paramedic.

Full paper

The aim of this research was to establish how and why, following a period of formal university education, student paramedics become enculturated, *'the processes whereby newcomers come to participate in the normative practices of a cultural community'* (Kirshner & Meng, 2012: 65), into a National Health Service (NHS), Ambulance Service Trust. The paper explores and critically analyses students' enculturation away from the university to understand the relationship between two different cultures. It suggests the culture which neophyte paramedics experience in the clinical practice setting is different from the culture nurtured and experienced by students in university. The paper argues that the culture experienced in the workplace is a subculture drawn from the traditional practices and processes embedded within the ambulance service. It further argues this subculture creates a hidden curriculum which students are exposed to. This hidden curriculum gives rise to a form of pedagogy which, in part, inhibits and impedes the students' ability to influence and change the subculture which they become accustomed to. To help understand this, an ethnographic approach to explore, interpret, and illustrate the traditional workplace practices, cultural norms and hidden curriculum which neophyte paramedics experience in the clinical workplace was adopted.

Prior to undertaking this research, I had noticed distinct differences in the students' returning to university from their clinical practice placements. Their behaviours, attitudes and working practices to that previously seen in the university. I wondered why this was occurring after a relatively short period of time in clinical practice. In addition, I was aware of the high number of reported fitness to practice (FTP) cases (complaints), being referred to the UK regulator, The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2019), concerning both experienced and novice paramedics. I was also mindful of the growing number of adverse events taking place in healthcare. These were all questions which I needed to understand. To fulfil these objectives ethnography provided a suitable research approach. I decided to observe a group of university student paramedics over a prolonged period of eighteen months as they attended their day-to-day clinical work placements. This allowed me to witness the students' real-life experiences, along with the intricacies and nuances of their day-to-day work. As in the research, I used observational fieldnotes, audio recordings and my recorded reflective notes to capture the day-to-day practices of both the students and experienced paramedics. I was able to reflect on my observations and clarify my fieldnotes with follow-up interviews and conversations with the students and paramedics. Riemann (2012) suggests the written work is a synthesis of the researcher's impressions which are recorded as fieldnotes, observations or interview data. In collecting the fieldnotes several issues arose from my data. For example, students mimicked their paramedic colleagues' behaviours and attitudes, they made derogatory comments about patients and at times students were coerced into avoiding emergency calls along with occasionally damaging ambulances, such as kicking and damaging the dashboard. Students internalise and interpret the placement setting differently to that previously taught in university and which further adds to the dichotomies experienced by students. How they are influenced by and interact with the traditional cultures of the workplace and their perception of themselves within the paramedic environment, are explored. I needed to understand the various cultural meanings which students came to interpret as normal practice, such as those identified by (Devenish, Clark & Fleming 2016; Becker et al. 1961 and O'Meara, 2011), as these are essential components of the socialisation process. At times I use the terms enculturation and socialisation interchangeably. However, it is important that I define the two terms and their respective differences at the outset. Therefore, I very simply define these terms as – socialisation as a process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable to society, whereas enculturation is the process of being socialised in a certain culture.

I argue that students, when on placement, are drawn into a different form of practice. This form of practice influences and impedes the pedagogy to that experienced in the university. Metz (1981) work supports this, suggesting it is as a consequence of the traditions and practices embedded within the very fabric of the ambulance service workplace.

I illustrate how three dominant constructs: *work experience*, *professional identity* and *organisational culture*, are woven throughout the narrative of the work. I reveal how forms of student enculturation influences and impacts upon the student learning. I suggest that the pedagogy emerging from the practice placement experience is not reflective of the pedagogy which students experience in the university classroom setting.

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211 Investigating tutor teaching development through peer mentoring in business education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper explores peer mentoring, one component of a tutor professional development (PD) program in a business faculty of an Australian university. Peer mentoring involves matching new tutors (mentees) with experienced tutors (mentors), tutorial observations, and mentor feedback on mentees' teaching plans and practices. We investigate the impact that the mentor-mentee relationship has on conceptions of teaching, planning, and practice as perceived and reported by a) mentors and b) mentees. This exploratory study consists of semi-structured interviews with mentors and mentees, and thematic analysis of teaching plans and tutorial observation reports. The study aims to uncover the strengths and challenges of peer mentoring. The findings will contribute to scholarship on targeted tutor professional development and peer mentoring, offering insight into how to improve tutor PD and promote a culture of excellence in teaching. This project is currently underway and ethics approval has just been received. Preliminary findings will be presented.

Full paper

Introduction

Effective teaching is the dominant determinant of improved student learning (Trigwell & Prosser, 2020). As tutors[1] have a direct impact on student learning (Beaton, 2017; Hitch et al., 2018) targeted professional development (PD) is critical to ensuring tutors' teaching approaches are student-oriented and contribute to student learning. There is a growing interest in peer observation of teaching as part of tutor PD programs, and how it enhances teaching practice (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008). Contrasting research has indicated the negative aspects of peer observation of teaching, namely that it is intrusive or challenges academic freedom, is not objective, representative, or accurate (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). Yet, non-judgmental and developmental feedback may foster an environment in which these challenges can be overcome (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008). Indeed, effective peer observation of teaching can contribute to developing tutors as reflective practitioners, shifting their conception of teaching and learning and influencing their practice (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015; Cotronei-Baird et al., 2022).

Previous research exploring peer mentoring indicated that tutors (mentees) perceived peer observation of teaching to be highly valuable and that individualised feedback allowed them to reflect on and adjust their teaching practice (Cotronei-Baird et al., 2022). This suggests that this opportunity to learn from peers is a highly relevant component of PD. As such, exploration into the efficacy of peer mentoring is timely, with our study seeking to identify the strengths and challenges of the peer mentoring component of the tutor PD program and whether it contributes to a shift in teaching conceptions, planning, and practice. This project is currently underway and ethics approval has just been received. Preliminary findings will be presented.

The study context

The PD program in a business faculty of an Australian university matches new tutors (mentees) with experienced tutors (mentors). Peer mentoring is structured as follows:

- Initial meeting between mentor and mentee (prior to the commencement of semester teaching) to discuss their first teaching plan (Appendix 1) and any other concerns or questions.
- Mentors provide feedback on teaching plans for observed tutorials.
- Two tutorial observations (one in week 4 or 5 and one in week 8 or 9 of semester)
- A debrief meeting following the tutorial observations.
- Mentors provide mentees with an observation report (Appendix 2).

The peer mentoring is confidential and not aligned with performance management. It is distinct from Bell and Mladenovic's (2015) definition of peer review of teaching due to the focus on a reciprocal, collegiate and non-judgemental dialogue.

Research Design

To evaluate the impact of peer mentoring on teaching conceptions, planning, and practice, we employ qualitative enquiry to answer four questions.

1. What changes did mentors observe in mentees' approach to teaching plans?
2. What changes did mentors observe in mentees' teaching practice?
3. What is the impact of mentor feedback on mentees' own teaching planning?
4. What is the impact of mentor feedback on mentees' own teaching practices?

Qualitative research is selected as it captures the experience of peer mentoring from those who are directly involved (Patton, 2002). We will recruit approximately 15 mentors and 15 mentees who were involved in the PD program during 2015 and 2023. This small-scale exploratory study will utilise semi-structured interviews, and the collection of documents.

Semi-structured interviews: Mentors' and mentees' perceptions about their experience will be discussed, specifically focused on providing and receiving formative feedback (verbal and written) on a) teaching plans, and b) tutors' teaching practice. Semi-structured interviews will take no more than 60 minutes (Appendix 3).

Collection of documents: With the permissions of mentors and mentees we will collect:

1. Three teaching plans, including any feedback provided by mentors.
2. Tutorial observation report of two tutorials (Week 4 or 5 and Week 8 or 9 of semester).

Data Analysis

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participants, and thematic analysis of mentors' feedback on tutors' teaching plans and observation reports will be conducted.

Conclusion

This research will meaningfully contribute to the literature on tutor professional development by examining the effectiveness of peer mentoring on teaching conceptions, planning, and practice. We aim to generate strategies to improve tutor PD programs by specifically targeting the enhancement of feedback by mentors to mentees. Insights gained into tutor PD programs can be adopted to influence the structure of tutor PD across different institutions.

[1] Tutors is the term used in Australia. In other contexts, the term refers to teaching assistants (or graduate teaching assistants), graduate student instructor, casual academics, sessional staff, or teachers.

Appendix 1: Teaching Plan Template

Tutor	Subject	Tutorial	Venue
At the end of this tutorial students will be able to: 1. 2. 3. 4.			



Time	Activity and objectives	Tutor activities	Student activities

Tutor reflection after the tutorial	
What went really well in this tutorial?	
What do you feel was a challenge with this tutorial and how would you improve next time?	

Appendix 2: Observation Report Template



<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>Partly Achieved</i>	<i>Not Achieved</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	Comments
OBJECTIVES, COHERENCE & STRUCTURE					
1. Objectives of the tutorial were made clear to the students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Links were made in this tutorial to the previous lecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Links were made between the tutorial material and the subject assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. There was a clear introduction to the tutorial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. There was a clear summing up of the tutorial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
STUDENT PARTICIPATION					
6. Students readily responded to questions from the tutor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. There was active engagement of students with other students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Students actively participated in some pair or group work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Students were encouraged to ask the tutor and other students questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. All students actively participated in activities and not just some	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

|

11. The tutor asked appropriate questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. Good strategies were used to get students to respond to questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Many students provided feedback and not just the same ones all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. The tutor facilitated further discussion from questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. The tutor responded to questions effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ORGANISATION

16. The tutorial was well thought out in terms of <u>pace</u> and timing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17. It was clear that the tutor had considered what the students would be doing in the tutorial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
18. The tutor considered appropriate learning tools to support the students' engagement (whiteboard, audio-visuals, activity sheets, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19. When setting tutorial tasks, the tutor was clear about the nature and purpose of the task, the time available to do it, and the outcomes expected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



General Feedback

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for providing general feedback. The box is currently blank.

Appendix 3: Semi-structured interviews

Mentors

1. Describe your experience in completing the peer mentoring component of the TBE program as a mentor

Possible sub-questions

- a. In your own words, describe your mentor role in the TBE PD program.
- b. How many mentees did you mentor?
- c. In what disciplines did they teach in? Is it the same discipline you teach? How did you feel about this?
- d. Describe your experience and how you felt about your role as a mentor this semester?

2. Describe your role in giving your mentee(s) feedback on their teaching plan(s).

Possible sub-questions

- a. Which teaching plans did you read i.e., initial/early teaching plan, observation 1 teaching plan, observation 2 teaching plan.
- b. If you gave feedback, describe what you believe was the purpose of the feedback. What is your perception of the impact of the feedback you gave? How did your mentees' respond? (you can talk about the different responses from different mentees)
- c. If you did not give feedback, describe what you believe was the impact of not giving feedback (you can talk about the different responses from different mentees).

3. Tell me about the observation component of peer mentoring.

Possible sub-questions

- a. In your own words, what is the purpose of the observations?
- b. How many of your mentee's tutorials did you observe?
- c. How did you feel about observing the tutorials? Provide examples? Explain whether and how the experience was the same or different for each of the tutors you mentored this semester?
- d. Explain whether you believe that the observations had an impact on: Teaching planning? Teaching delivery? Teaching development? (You can talk about the different responses from different mentees)
- e. In your own words, what is the purpose of the observation report?
 - a. How did you feel about writing the report?
 - b. What impact do you believe the report had on your mentees': Teaching planning? Teaching delivery? Teaching development and/or anything else? (You can talk about the different responses from different mentees)
- f. How many times did you meet with your mentee?
 - a. Explain the debrief meetings?
 - b. What was the purpose of the debrief meetings?
 - c. How many meetings did you have? What was discussed?
 - d. What was the experience like? How did you feel about this experience and your role?
 - e. What impact do you believe they have had on your mentees': teaching planning? Teaching delivery? Teaching development? and/or anything else. (you can talk about the different responses from different mentees)

4. Any other questions

Mentees

1. Describe your experience in completing the peer mentoring component of the TBE program as a mentee

Possible sub-questions

- a. Describe your role of a mentee in the TBE program this semester.
- b. Describe, from your point of view, the role of your mentor in the TBE program.
- c. What disciplines did you teach in? Is it the same discipline as your mentor? What did you feel about this?

2. Describe your mentors' role in giving you feedback on your teaching plan(s).

Possible sub-questions

- a. Which teaching plans did your mentor read? i.e., initial/early teaching plan, observation 1 teaching plan, observation 2 teaching plan
- b. If you received feedback on teaching plans, describe what you believe was the impact of the feedback given:
 - a. on initial teaching plan,
 - b. on the first observation teaching plan,
 - c. on the second observation teaching plan
- c. If you did not receive feedback, describe what you believe was the impact of not receiving feedback on: The initial teaching plan? The first observation teaching plan? The second observation teaching plan?

3. Tell me about the observation component of peer mentoring.

Possible sub-questions

- a. How many of your tutorials did your mentor observe?
- b. In your own words, what was the purpose of the observations? Why do you believe you were observed twice throughout the semester?
- c. Explain whether you believe that the observations had an impact on: teaching planning? Teaching delivery? Teaching development?
- d. In your own words, what is the purpose of the observation report? How did you feel about the report? What was the impact of this report? In what ways have you used the report during the semester and/or beyond?
- e. Explain the debrief meetings? What was the purpose of the debrief meetings? How many meetings? What was discussed? What impact did they have on you? What impact do you believe they have had on your: teaching planning, teaching delivery and/or teaching development?

4. Any other questions

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Parallel Session 1:6

14:00 - 15:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Room 144

Chair Pauline Kneale

82 Emotions Experienced by Instructors Delivering Assessment feedback

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

We explore the emotional responses that instructors experience through the giving and receiving of assessment feedback. We undertook qualitative data collection, carrying out individual semi-structured interviews with instructors from three universities who had administered a dialogic feed-forward intervention on one of their teaching units. Interview transcripts were analysed inductively using thematic analysis and five themes emerged: 1. Summative written feedback aroused largely negative emotions in instructors because they felt distanced from their students; 2. Instructors experienced a broad range of emotions related to dialogic feed-forward emerging from their proximity to students; 3. Dialogic feed-forward, as an affective encounter, was emotionally challenging for instructors; 4. Dialogic feed-forward built strong learning relationships between students and instructors, strengthening students' sense of belonging; 5. Dialogic feed-forward was transformational for instructors. We consider the implications of our findings for instructor and wider assessment and feedback practices, including emotional labour, promotional reward, and instructor professional development.

Full paper

Research aim

Instructors have a dual responsibility in assessment; acting formatively as a teacher whilst fulfilling a summative role of judging achievement (Myry et al. 2020). This tension can be problematic for students and instructors, provoking a range of emotions in both groups. Nevertheless, studies focusing on instructors' emotions associated with assessment and feedback in higher education are scarce (Zhao et al. 2022). In her opinion piece, Spaeth (2018) identifies feedback as emotional labour performed by instructors as they balance the need to demonstrate care for their students with a lack of time emerging from increased quality control. She notes that consciously giving feedback to promote positive emotions in students, helping them to improve their learning, requires significant emotional work by the instructor.

We review the findings from our published research (Hill et al. 2023), examining the emotional responses that instructors experienced through the giving and receiving of assessment feedback (written feedback and dialogic feed-forward). We examine whether the instructors attempted to manage their dialogic feed-forward encounters to help shape the emotions experienced by themselves and their students, and whether they believed this impacted course dynamics. Answering these questions can help secure the educational benefit of feedback in practice (Winstone et al. 2017).

Methods

As part of a collaborative international writing group, we undertook qualitative data collection with instructors from three universities who had administered a dialogic feed-forward intervention over the 2019-20 academic year (Table 1). We focused specifically on instructor emotional responses to introduction of a novel form of dialogic feed-forward compared with written summative feedback commonly provided for such assignments. The instructors were experienced university teachers and they comprised three of our research team.

Table 1. Context for the instructors sampled in our research

University	Level of Study	Unit (and number of students)	Dialogic Feedforward Assessment Element
Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, USA	Year 1	Health Sciences (n=39)	Personal development plan
University of the West of England, UK	Year 2	Geography (n=30)	Research essay
MacEwan University, Canada	Year 4	Nursing (n=28)	Scholarly paper

Data collection and analysis

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted online by a single member of the research team who had not undertaken a dialogic intervention. Each instructor was questioned about the emotions they had encountered with respect to summative written feedback and to the dialogic feed-forward intervention they had administered. The instructors were also asked about what they observed with respect to student emotions as they engaged with the tutor commentary and how they responded to and tried to manage these emotions. The interviews lasted for around 60 minutes and secured rich, detailed narratives. They were recorded and transcribed verbatim, amounting to just under 26,000 words. Ethical approval was obtained from all institutions prior to commencement of data collection.

The three non-intervention researchers manually coded all three transcripts. The transcripts were analysed inductively using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013). Identification of themes was influenced by the research questions and concepts known to the researchers from the literature. A number of latent themes were identified and agreed. After additional reading, core themes were identified, discussed and synthesized into final themes post-coding.

Findings

Five themes emerged from the interviews (Table 2).

Table 2. Key themes from the instructor interview data

Theme	Instructor exemplar quotation
Written feedback aroused largely negative emotions in instructors because they felt distanced from students	<p><i>'My biggest feeling was frustration because I was writing so much ... thinking "this is so good for the students, I've taken such care." Then I would think "but I'm not going to know what happens". It's like a fracture exists between me giving it [feedback] and the students receiving it' (Instructor A)</i></p> <p><i>'With written feedback, I just give it to the students. If I make them happy, sad, angry, hurt, I never see it, so it never has any impact on me' (Instructor B)</i></p>
Instructors experienced a broad range of emotions related to dialogic feed-forward emerging from their proximity to students	<p><i>'I'm always a little nervous before a meeting because there's always that unknown "how are the students going to react?" I'm always a little bit on edge that I'm going to get that one student who's really upset with me and they want to make me feel uncomfortable because I didn't give them the mark they wanted' (Instructor C)</i></p> <p><i>'The number one emotion I saw students express when they came to my office was fear ... They came in with a very personal attachment to what was going on, and they were anxious and concerned ... The other emotion I saw was relief ... and when they left I really saw a lot of students motivated' (Instructor B)</i></p> <p><i>'The more I did it, the more I could make my routines for myself, so the emotions kind of went down, they were less intense' (Instructor C)</i></p>
Dialogic feed-forward, as an affective encounter, was emotionally challenging for instructors	<p><i>'I've got to face maybe six students in a day across a range of meetings. And that was quite an emotional burden; it was definitely a different feeling to marking in the written form – more intense for me emotionally' (Instructor A)</i></p> <p><i>'My body language, my tone of voice, I tried to be careful, consistent and positive with every student' (Instructor B)</i></p>
Dialogic feed-forward built strong learning relationships between students and instructors	<p><i>'It became a safe, honest space for students ... they could say what they wanted to say, what their worries were ... you could see students willing to share with you their fears, happiness, anxieties all the way through the meetings' (Instructor A)</i></p> <p><i>'Dialogic feedback really starts a transparent relationship ... they know I actually care about their learning and I care about what they're doing ... They'll connect with me at other times as they're working on other assignments ... and I find they participate more in class' (Instructor C)</i></p>
Dialogic feed-forward was transformational for instructors	<p><i>'It completely transformed me as a teacher and I never expected it to do that ... it just fundamentally alters who you are as an educator ... I literally saw with new eyes and it was because of the time I spent with the students' (Instructor A)</i></p> <p><i>'Dialogic feedback just made me a stronger, better teacher because it really helped put into perspective how the students felt when I was interacting with them ... I pay so much more attention to the feedback that I provide now when I'm grading or giving information back' (Instructor B)</i></p>

Implications for assessment and feedback practice

Although our instructors considered the impact of their written comments on the emotions of students, the realisation of these emotions remained largely unmanaged as the instructors were unable to experience the effects of their comments or felt powerless to defuse negative emotions through further explanation (see Paris 2022; Zhao et al. 2022).

Giving feedback was more emotional for instructors when it was delivered in dialogue with students. Through the feed-forward meetings, the instructors actively encountered the emotions their students experienced when receiving feedback. To help their students manage these feelings, the instructors purposefully surfaced or suppressed particular feelings of their own, which demanded emotional investment (supporting the findings of Spaeth 2018). As such, managers in higher education need to consider the emotional labour invested in the delivery of feedback/feed-forward. Emotional labour is an important resource for higher education, helping to improve student satisfaction and aid retention. It should thereby be recognised, valued and rewarded (Tuck 2012).

Dialogic feed-forward helped some students feel cared for, raising their confidence and helping them to feel they belonged at university (Hill and West 2022). When instructors displayed positive emotions, this developed the relationship between them and their students (Mendzheritskaya and Hansen 2019). Students subsequently tended to use their instructor more as a resource in and beyond the assessment task, which might reduce attrition and help progression from year to year.

To conclude, there is a burden placed on instructors in dealing with the emotions arising from assessment feedback. Instructors will need sustained institutional support, recognition, and reward if they, and their students, are to flourish and secure the most positive performance outcomes.

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253 Student voice: what assessments do higher education students find most engaging?

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

In this student-led project, we sought to understand what assessments students find most engaging, to characterise the features of those assessments, and understand the relationship between those features, students' emotional engagement with those assessments, and their self-perceived learning outcomes. 574 students across an English university completed a survey describing their most engaging and interesting assessments and rating 21 Likert-scale items on five design features and two perceived learning outcomes. Open-ended responses were thematically analysed. Quantitative items were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis. In the presence of appropriate support, authentic assessments that offer realism, higher order thinking (challenge via transferable skills), and opportunities to develop evaluative judgement were associated with positive emotional engagement and perceived higher academic achievement and self-confidence. The study is significant in highlighting student voices, examining experience across each student's programme rather than within a single module, and offering practical design guidance for academics.

Full paper

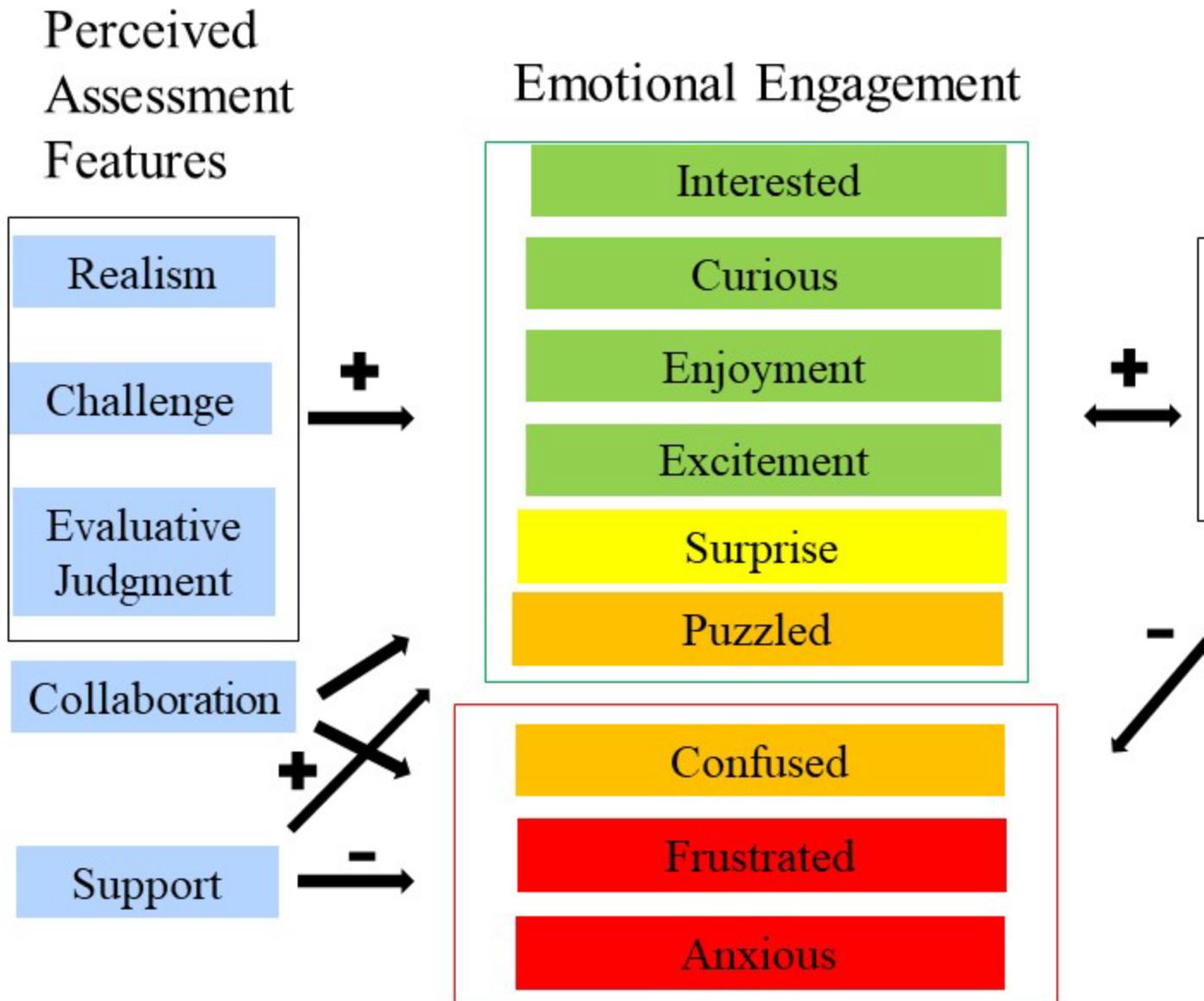
Introduction

Assessment design offers a critical lever for enhancing classroom-based education and students' engagement because students spend much of their independent study time completing or preparing for assessments. To use that lever effectively, we need a better understanding of the assessments students find most engaging and interesting. Student interest, and positive emotional engagement in learning in general, matter because they are associated with more productive learning behaviours, better self-regulation, and better learning outcomes (Jansen, Lüdtke, & Schroeders 2016; Renninger & Hidi, 2022; Sansone et al., 2019; Pekrun et al., 2023). This study is original because it is student-led and gathers students' views of the most engaging, interesting assessments their peers have experienced across their higher education (HE) studies. It also gathers their perceptions of the assessment design characteristics and their perceived learning outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

The student leaders assumed that authentic assessments would be most engaging, consistent with extant research (Sokhanvar et al, 2021; Pitt & Quinlan, 2022). To define the features of assessments that students found most engaging, we grounded our research in key dimensions of authentic assessment (Villarroel et al, 2018): realism, cognitive challenge and evaluative judgement, which we supplemented with collaboration and support. We defined engagement as activating epistemically-related emotions, measuring interested, curious, enjoyment, excited, surprised, puzzled, confused, anxious, frustrated (Pekrun et al., 2017). We defined perceived outcomes as academic achievement and self-confidence. We examined the relationships between five assessment design features, students' emotional engagement, and two self-perceived learning outcomes. Based on related literature, our assumptions are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Research Questions

RQ1. How did students describe their most engaging, interesting assessment in their own words?

RQ2. What were students' emotional experiences of this engaging assessment?

RQ3. What assessment design features (realism, cognitive challenge, evaluative judgment, collaboration, support) were associated with a) emotional engagement and b) students' perceived learning outcomes (academic achievement and self-confidence)?

Methods

Led by the Student Union (first and third author), under the supervision of a higher education researcher (second author), and the Director of Education and Student Experience in Arts and Humanities (fourth author), we invited all students across a mid-ranked English university to participate in a 10 minute online survey. In this cross-sectional, mixed methods study, we surveyed 574 students across the sciences, social sciences, and arts/humanities.

Respondents first described their most engaging and interesting assessment in their own words. To address RQ1, we thematically analysed those responses to identify the assessment types they volunteered most frequently and the most common themes that emerged in their descriptions. Students then 21 Likert scale items describing their perceptions of the assessment. An exploratory factor analysis indicated that these 21 statements assessed seven core factors which are outlined in Table 1, grouped into five assessment design features and two learning outcomes according to our conceptual framework.

Table 1.*Assessment Perceptions Scales: Items for each Factor*

Object of Perception	Factor	Items
Assessment Design Features	Realism	It was relevant to the career I want to pursue
		It was useful to my future
		It reflected real life situations
	Cognitive Challenge	It gave me skills I can use in a variety of contexts
		It promoted my transferable skills
		It gave me skills I can use after university
	Evaluative Judgement	It helped me appreciate what I'm good at
		It helped me identify my skills
		It helped me see where to improve
	Collaboration	It required collaboration with others
		It involved group work
		It developed my teamwork skills
Support	I felt supported	
	I felt reassured	
	I received feedback from my teaching staff throughout the assessment process	
Learning Outcomes	Academic Achievement	I thought I did well on it
		I think I did better than I usually do
		It allowed me to showcase my skills and knowledge
	Self-Confidence	It improved my self esteem
		It made me feel empowered
		It increased my confidence

Rating these items surfaced underlying characteristics of emotionally engaging assessments that may matter to students, but may not appear in students' explicit, volunteered descriptions. Using a validated scale (Pekrun et al, 2017), students rated nine emotions associated with this engaging assessment. Finally, students provided demographic information. To address RQ2, we will use descriptive statistics of the emotions scales and correlation matrices to indicate relationships between different emotions to characterise emotional engagement. Pearson correlation coefficient matrices will be used to address RQ3, examining correlations between the design features, emotions, and perceived learning outcomes.

Results

Overall, the preliminary results suggest that students find authentic assessments – those with connections to the real world and that are cognitively stimulating (challenging) – to be most engaging. Students also described their engaging assessments as offering opportunities to exercise creative freedom or autonomy. Although students did not volunteer comments about evaluative judgement, they agreed that items describing it characterised their engaging assessment. Students were least likely to agree that their engaging assessment involved collaboration.

Students experienced engaging assessments as emotionally positive: feeling interested, curious, enjoyment and even excited. Emotional engagement also involved low levels of negative emotions of confusion, frustration, and anxiety. Anxiety was more prevalent than frustration and confusion. Frustration was associated with fewer opportunities to develop evaluative judgement and lower self-confidence. Engaging assessments were associated with high perceived academic achievement and self-confidence. Full analysis will be completed by the time of the conference.

Discussion

This study is significant for illustrating how to engage students' voices in the design of assessments across a university. It provides vital information about the features of assessments that students find most engaging and interesting in a form that helps guide academics in re-designing their assessments.

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243 Clear in advance to whom? Transparency of assessment criteria in UK Higher Education assessment policy and guidance.

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

UK universities commonly use criterion referenced assessment and inform students of assessment criteria. In their assessment policy documents, universities outline assessment criteria requirements and suggest ways in which they should be used. Using document analysis and corpus linguistic methods on 120 Higher Education institutions' assessment policy documents, this project gives insight into the characteristics of transparency in assessment criteria communication, with whom assessment criteria should be communicated, and the approaches taken in Russell-Group and non-Russell Group universities. Preliminary quantitative findings show that the most frequent criteria communication collocations relate to making assessment criteria and marking schemes 'available' to students and external examiners, but rarely to internal assessors. Transparency is characterised by availability with little promotion of activities or discussion to foster shared understanding of assessment criteria. By providing an overview of approaches to transparency of assessment criteria, this study enhances understanding and practice of assessment policy designers.

Full paper

Background

UK universities commonly use criterion referenced assessment and inform students of assessment criteria (Jönsson & Prins, 2018). University directives for the communication of assessment criteria are increasingly important to assessment stakeholders and policy makers. The National Student Survey (NSS) results show enduring dissatisfaction with assessment (Buckley, 2021). Moreover, the 2023 NSS will ask students not just whether marking criteria were given in advance, but 'how clear' they were in advance. While "it is generally and widely accepted that

explicit criteria should be shared with students" (Jönsson & Prins, 2018, p. 1), it is unclear whether policy encourages this in practice.

The practice of sharing assessment criteria has been driven by a need for accountability, enhanced transparency of the assessment process, and to communicate assessment expectations (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2021). In their assessment policy documents, universities variously suggest assessment criteria should be used (1) as a foundation and compass to guide the learning process (Andrade & Du, 2005), (2) as tools and instruments (such as rubrics and marking schemes) to guide fairness and transparency of assessment and marking (Jönsson, 2014), and (3) as an administrative and procedural point of reference for standards used exclusively by academics (Sadler, 2014). This study argues that criterion referenced assessment is a social constructive practice, wherein assessment criteria should be communicated and discussed with the assessment team, and criteria and their interpretation communicated to students (O'Donovan et al., 2004).

To improve transparency of assessment, institutions need clarity on best practice for effective policy to be developed.

Aims and Research Questions

This study aimed to investigate whether and how the directives in UK universities' assessment policies promote communication and transparency of assessment criteria for students and other assessment stakeholders. This study addressed three research questions:

1. To whom is communication of assessment criteria directed in assessment policy documentation?
2. What characterises transparency of assessment criteria in assessment policy documentation?
3. Is there a difference between how the communication of assessment criteria is represented in assessment policy documentation in Russell-Group and non-Russell Group universities.

To answer the first question, the specific stakeholders to whom assessment criteria should be communicated is examined. This is particularly interesting in the HE context where assessment policies are framed to address different stakeholders (e.g., teachers, internal examiners, external examiners, and students) based on their roles in the assessment process (Raaper, 2017). This study contends that assessment criteria cannot be clear to students if assessment policy fails to explicitly position them as primary beneficiaries of assessment criteria communication.

This study takes as its springboard the assumption that artefacts such as assessment rubrics and marking schemes are straightforward means of communicating assessment criteria and expectations (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2021). Yet, communicating quality is complex. Many aspects of standards and expectations of performance are implicit, tacit and reside in practice (O'Donovan et al., 2004). The second question explores whether transparency of is characterised in assessment policy documentation by making criteria explicit through artefacts or through dialogue about assessment criteria with students and other stakeholders.

Drawing on Winstone's (2022) distinction between different university groups, the third question examines whether there is any difference in how 24 self-proclaimed "world-class, research intensive" UK universities (Russell Group, 2022) communicate assessment criteria to stakeholders compared to more teaching-focused, non-Russell Group universities.

Methodology

The data corpus for this study consists of publicly available assessment policy documents from a sample of 120 UK universities. This sample comprises assessment policies from 24 Russell-Group universities and 96 non-Russell Group Universities.

The data corpus was analysed in two ways through an interpretivist approach using deductive thematic coding using Nvivo 12 Pro and using a corpus linguistic software, Sketch Engine, to quantitatively analyse the corpora. In line with Davies (2023), the quantitative analysis focused on grammatical and collocational patterns associated with the term 'assessment criteria'. In combination, the qualitative and quantitative methods increase the validity, reliability, and replicability of this study.

Findings

Preliminary quantitative findings show that the most frequent criteria communication collocations relate to making assessment criteria and marking schemes 'available' to students and external examiners, but rarely to internal assessors. Transparency is characterised by availability with little promotion of activities or discussion to foster shared understanding of assessment criteria. Further analysis has yet to be conducted regarding Russell-Group versus non-Russell Group approaches to making assessment criteria transparent.

Outcome

The outcome of this research will be an overview of guidance for transparency and communication assessment criteria, leading to a set of practical guidelines assessment policy designers.

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Parallel Session 1:7

14:00 - 15:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Conference Room 1c

Chair Clare Loughlin-Chow

302 The UK's institutionalisation of racialised, global inequality through its academic employment practices: Insights from the period of 2015-2020

Dina Zoe Belluigi

Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, United Kingdom. Nelson Mandela University, South Africa

Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

This paper raises questions about the ineffectual impact of UK employment policy and practice in addressing academic inequalities. It is informed by a study of the academic staff composition and employment conditions over 2015-2020 within UK universities, comparing them with what was observed within the discipline of Education (Belluigi, Arday and O'Keefe, 2023). Most dire was the exclusion of academics from the majority world without passport privilege, particularly women; and the marginal employment of UK academic citizens of colour. The study demonstrates how the ways in which such data is collected, collated and then re-presented by UK bodies, too easily distorts the picture needed for ascertaining if institutions are complying with their duties as outlined in national equality legislation. The study also reveals the limits of nation-bound social regulation in addressing the reproduction of global inequalities in academia.

Full paper

This paper argues that the ways in which equality is legislated and enacted within UK higher education policy and practice are insufficient to ensure protections against internal threats to its academic citizens. They enable the UK's continued institutionalisation of global inequality - reproduced through its exclusionary academic employment practices of those from the majority world. They also allow for the masking of inequalities in access and participation faced by UK nationals who are racialised as other-than the white majority, yet whose protections fall within the scope of legislation primarily concerned with the public good of the nation-state. This is particularly concerning when observed within disciplines such as Education, which have a direct impact on society and a role to play in sustainable development.

The claims outlined above are supported by a recent report (Belluigi, Arday, O'Keefe 2023) which investigated official data purchased from the Higher Education Statistics Agency for what it revealed about academic staff composition and employment conditions in UK HE in the period 2015-2020. Sociodemographic changes (in terms of sex, ethnicity, nationality, age, dis/ability and religious belief) were mapped, with identification of where social dis/advantage impacted on employment conditions and signs of deterioration or improvement. To demonstrate inequalities in access, percentages were provided of the social groups represented; with proportions of different groupings revealing globalised, racialised and gendered inequalities in participation.

This paper focuses specifically on the intersections of racialization and geopolitics. The outcomes of employment policy and practice were evident when it came to the exclusion of majority world academics without 'passport privilege'. In the UK discipline of Education, Black African females were the most under-represented. The outcomes were also evidenced in the marginalization of UK-nationals racialized as 'ethnic minorities'. The study confirms that the national student-to-staff pipelines are racialised and broken (Williams et al 2019), and cannot be depended upon to alter the elitist ivory tower incrementally. The findings demonstrate that public universities in the UK are neither fulfilling their obligations to protect their academic citizens from discrimination, nor ensuring the conditions for academic autonomy, freedom and flourishing are protected from internal threat.

What does this picture of academics' nationality and ethnicity reflect about UK HE's perceptions of 'excellence' and claims by the UK government of attracting the best global talent? The dominance of white, minority world intellectual leadership renders hollow the UK HE's discourses of 'internationalisation' and its service for its increasing international student body; of its reckoning with coloniality within relations of the supposed Commonwealth; and its commitment to the principles of global equality which underpin initiatives such as the SDGs, global common good and the UN's Decade of People of African Descent. The impact of deficit perceptions and subordinated labour of 'underdeveloped' majority world academics is clear.

Studies such as these contribute an evidence-base for those advocating for proactive measures to address inequality. Unlike postcolonial contexts which have recognised that the discriminatory structures that were established during the British Empire contexts advantage whiteness (such as the USA and South Africa); the devolved nations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales operate under the myth of meritocracy, despite continued evidence of the dire rates of change. The study noted differences between these devolved nations; and indeed, more research to probe the impact of the relation between devolution, equality, and HE (Shattock and Horvath, 2020) on academic staffing and practice is needed. Cross-cutting was that equality law places obligations on public institutions, including universities. However, the collection of data about such 'protected characteristics' is only legislated for 'sex', reflective of public recognition that patriarchy in the UK has advantaged males. Alongside this has been the creation and successes of practice-based initiatives for 'women', such as Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) which are well documented (Barnard, 2017; Rosser et al., 2019; Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019). That particular intervention was not of equal benefit to women marginalised due to racism or classicism (Bhopal & Henderson, 2021; Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019). Sex is a central concern of research on UK HE (Nichols & Stahl 2019; Westoby et al 2021). However, this study's findings confirm assertions that what is required is more centring of ethnicity/race (Tate & Bagguley 2017; Tate & Page 2018) and, moreover, global inequalities and migrations (Sang and Özbilgin 2013; Pustelnikovaite & Chillias, 2022), to comprehend the differential impacts of intersecting systems of oppression experienced by the academic work force. For the global common goods of HE, international attention on the damage that is reproduced through such inequalities in academic employment is warranted.

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358 Getting the record straight: On the production of records in the context of professorial recruitment

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

Focussing both on methodological reflection as well as empirical evidence, my paper peruses a critical approach to records and challenges an understanding of records as mere reports of ‘what happened’. Drawing on empirical evidence regarding the documentation of personnel selection regarding professorships my research focuses on how these highly relevant decision processes are documented and what function this documentation serves. Specifically, I pursue the premise of not merely considering records and files as texts, but of understanding them theoretically and epistemologically as artefacts. My research thus shifts the focus away from the perception of records as providers of sheer factual information – an understanding not exclusive to the common-sense world, but also relevant in various research fields, including Higher Education research –, and towards the context of their production.

Full paper

Generally, records are understood to be reports of what happened, documented for the world (or rather: those authorised) to see. This understanding applies on the one hand to the 'common-sense world' (Gurwitsch 1962), and on the other to research: Document analysis is used by qualitative and quantitative researchers from various fields, including Higher Education research. Oftentimes, this method is perceived to meet higher standards regarding objectivity than competing methods. As the documents' existence is generally independent of the research process (they are neither produced by researchers themselves nor specifically for the purpose of being source material for research), they are classified as 'unobtrusive measures' (Webb et al. 1966).

My research challenges this uncritical approach to files as data sources (see also Ketelaar 2002; Skarpelis 2020) and shifts the focus away from the perception of files as providers of sheer factual information towards the context of their production. Specifically, I pursue the premise of not merely considering files as texts, but of understanding them theoretically and epistemologically as artefacts. The concept of artefact underlying this approach is based on Lueger, who defines artefacts as materialised products of human action (Lueger 2000, p. 141). Based on this theoretical approach to files my research focuses on the question of their production and their function.

Empirically, I draw on material collected on the subject of quality assurance regarding professorial recruitment at German universities. These appointment procedures are matters of high strategic value with very high stakes as the recruitment of professors is understood to be 'one of the most important decisions' (Kleimann and Hückstädt 2021, p. 171) in German public Higher Education. Due to the German chair system professors have a high degree of autonomy and as full professors in Germany generally are civil servants and hold their position for a lifetime, the appointment of a professor shapes the university for decades to come (Dobbins and Knill 2017; Hamann 2019). In view of this importance and the related demand for legal certainty, these procedures are highly formalised (see also Klawitter 2015; Kleimann and Hückstädt 2021) and well documented. This process of documentation is crucial as it argues the decision made by the appointment committee which is responsible for evaluating and ranking the candidates for the vacant professorship. This is also known to those who produce the records. Accordingly, there are social practices that influence the production of the records and thus shape them. The uncovering of these practices is the empirical objective of my study.

My data is drawn from a corpus of qualitative expert interviews (N=29) with those responsible for the proper running of appointment procedures for professorships at German universities. Those are (a) appointment managers for professorships – a new but increasingly common position in the university administration that holds responsibility for the procedural quality assurance of appointment procedures for professorships –, (b) chairs of appointment committees, (c) heads of universities as well as (d) professors in the role of officers for appointment procedures. The methodological framework includes a theoretically informed sampling strategy and a critical approach to the concept of expert interviews (Bogner et al. 2009, Liebold and Trinczek 2009, Meuser and Nagel 1991). The interviews were conducted as semi-structured and partly narrative. The analysis of the material focuses on two questions: Firstly, I am studying which function appointment procedure files serve. On this basis, secondly, I ask how they are produced, describing how they are crafted, and which social practices shape them.

Thus, my work touches on several aspects that are relevant both to researchers as well as to practitioners in Higher Education and beyond. For one, it argues for a differentiated look on records in general and further it allows for the critical reflection of (qualitative) research and methodology: Not only obtrusive but also unobtrusive measures are to be questioned with regard to their social embedding. Documents contain valuable information that lies beyond the actual text. Uncovering this, however, is challenging as those producing the records might fear the accusation of 'tampering with evidence' by getting the record straight.

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Tea & coffee, poster & exhibition viewing

15:30 - 16:00 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Courtyard Lounge

Parallel Session 2:1

16:00 - 17:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Room 141
Chair Emily Danvers

75 Meme Making as a Research Methodology to Enhance the Student Experience

Gary Currie¹, Helen Tidy¹, Joanne Irving-Walton¹, Leisha Nichols-Drew²

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Meme making presents a unique opportunity within the classroom to not only enhance the student experience but also to collect credible data to further develop the student experience and undertake research analysis. Although philosophically grounded in established research methodologies, such as photo-interview and photo-elicitation, meme making draws upon these established approaches in a more contemporary and relaxed manner allowing the introduction of group reflection through humour.

Participants were asked to produce a meme to convey sentiment in relation to a given topic related to either known anxiety points or wider reflection on self-development. Results were then shared and communicated to peers allowing the researcher to facilitate group discussion and further analysis.

This allowed the researcher a unique opportunity to better understand participants in relation to their anxieties and aspirations as well as enhancing the immediate student experience through the process of making the meme.

Full paper

Memes are defined as a contemporary cultural phenomenon that is spread from person to person, usually using social media (Iloh, 2021). In a post lockdown environment, over one million memes are shared each day on Instagram alone, making the format one of the most popular forms of visual communication (Growth Trends, 2023). Through the composition of digital images, videos, and text, the creator seeks to convey an amalgamated message of emotion, understanding and/or humour (Brown, 2020). Using memes as a qualitative research tool is philosophically grounded in established visual research methodologies, such as photo-interview and photo-elicitation (Pink, 2007; Currie, 2015; Ingelby et al, 2021). However, meme making further allows the creator to share their message in an acceptable and established manner with a wider audience by introducing humour into their message (Mortensen and Neumayer, 2021).

This popularity and familiarity enables memes to be used within the classroom to enhance the student experience and journey as an engaging and quirky approach to learning and teaching (Antón-Sancho et al, 2022). This can be achieved through the meme making activity being employed as a functional activity such as an icebreaker, plenary or used as a structural device to chunk blocks of learning.

Alternatively, and simultaneously, it can be used to embed reflexivity, assess the quality of understanding or extend or explore conceptions and perceptions of learning (Kyrpa et al, 2022). Meme making can also be successfully

employed to support students in a pastoral, academic advising and tutorial context to facilitate engagement, sharing and student voice (Cabral and Klemenčič, 2021). This enables the process to be utilised as a primary research method allowing the educator to explore students' anxieties, beliefs and wellbeing or understanding of knowledge, content and skills.

Students were asked to construct a meme to convey reflection, sentiment or knowledge in relation to a given topic. Results were then shared and communicated to their peers allowing the researcher to facilitate group discussion and explore meaning through analysis.

Our case studies revealed that the use of memes, and their implied humour, generated discussion that might otherwise not have been forthcoming in a standard Higher Education environment through the transference of power, focus and interpretation within the task to the creator. The subsequent subjective interpretation of the meme between creator and viewers creates further embodied knowledge resulting from the collaborative process which can form a powerful collection of data for the researcher. This data may only be related to the sentiments the creator is feeling within the classroom feeding into enhancement of the student experiences or it may be for a more abstract research need.

The strengths of this method have been revealed in the exploration of known assessment point anxieties and academic emotions within modules to facilitate discussion and allow students to engage in group and personal reflections whilst also developing and supporting peer communities. The resulting memes also allow course teams to reflect on, and explore, their perceptions of anxiety and emotional trigger points in learning to facilitate more effective course design and empathetic delivery.

The methodology has been further utilised within initial teacher training and on-going professional development across sectors. Here, we focussed on its use with early career academics to encourage reflection on their career identity, sector experiences and to facilitate Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2011).

It is also noted that the experience of making memes increased student enjoyment within the classroom at the point of creation thus immediately impacting on the student experience and enhancing the learning environment. Staff have also reported finding the process engaging, authentic, and cathartic whilst providing an 'interlude of light relief that brought a sense of fun into the learning and teaching space'.

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6 Wicked problem inquiries in higher science education: Philosophical analysis and pedagogical implications

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Wicked problems have been characterised by their high epistemological and axiological complexities. These are the kinds of problems that may invade our classrooms because many of them concern many stakeholders, including our students. Several approaches have been developed to address wicked problems in various contexts. However, little is known about how they may translate into educational research and practice. This paper proposes a conceptual framework in which wicked problems are analysed from their ontological, epistemological, and ethical commitments. Chief to the arguments is a focus on epistemic practices that are strongly anchored in but also extend from disciplinary science education. Implications for curriculum development and instruction in higher science education are presented.

Full paper

Recent works in higher education suggest that wicked problem solving entails working within and across disciplines, coming to terms with the complexity and messiness, and engaging diverse stakeholder perspectives (Block et al., 2022; McCune et al., 2021). However, it is still unclear whether, and how, discipline-based higher science education has been playing a role and, indeed, could be empowered to help faculty address wicked problems in their teaching practice. This paper is extracted from a larger work (currently under review in a leading journal) in which I propose a conceptual framework for teaching science using wicked problems as an integral part of university science curricula. The framework incorporates an analysis of wicked problems from their ontological, epistemological, and ethical commitments, employing ideas from philosophy of science. Subsequently, I will argue for a focus on epistemic practices that moves beyond disciplinary science. With higher science education in mind, I will propose relevant methodological and pedagogical implications.

The 'wicked' characteristic in the term 'wicked problems' is essentially attributed to the ill-formulated nature of the problems, exacerbated by conflicting findings and perspectives, which often lead to controversy, confusion, and messy solutions. Due to their high complexity, wicked problems pose unprecedented epistemological challenges. For instance, it is difficult to produce reliable knowledge because of conflicting perspectives. Expert and specialised knowledge, which is traditionally revered in its own domain, such as science, is no longer seen as the only authority (Kate ea, 2019). Consequently, teaching knowledge related to wicked problems is equally challenging. Scholars in the field emphasise the importance of reconciliation of opposites (Adam, 2016), open and critical transdisciplinary inquiry (Brown, 2010), and holistic thinking (Lehtonen ea, 2019). Ramification of wicked problems across various layers of socio-economic structures, political ideologies, and planetary sub-systems also create ethical dilemmas. When addressing a wicked problem, what is the right and ethical course of action to take when there are conflicting values between local communities and government organisations, or between science and individuals? In a context where indigenous communities are faced with big corporations, how can power imbalances (ever) lead to equitable solutions? How do we address this in our science teaching?

One of the most salient features of wicked problem inquiries is how knowledge is conceptualised, co-constructed, communicated, and evaluated. In science education, this has been studied primarily as an emerging construct called 'epistemic practices' (Kelly, 2018). In my current research in laboratory education, I have been focussing on laboratory work as an epistemic practice (Agustian, 2022), drawing on theories of learning in higher education, critical studies of science as a body of knowledge and ways of thinking, as well as philosophy of mind. The current paper expands the extant line of research on epistemic orientation in higher science education.

In the context of wicked problems, I argue that research on epistemic practices can no longer be confined within monodisciplinary structures and cultures, which typifies traditional higher (science) education. The far-reaching implications of wicked problems, the high system uncertainties and the high stakes decisions required to address them, render traditional approach to curriculum and instruction ineffective. Novel approaches are in dire need to developing curricula and pedagogies that address wicked problems in a way that is strongly anchored in disciplinary science but also engage other disciplines and non-academic perspectives. Creativity, imagination, and intellectual humility are relevant (Brown, 2015; Brown ea, 2010; Pritchard, 2018). The inherently high axiological complexity tied to wicked problems suggests that humanities and arts may prove to be powerful in addressing the ethical conundrums mentioned above.

Curriculum developers in each discipline may revisit their existing curricula first and foremost to identify areas in which a potential wicked problem could be investigated in a transdisciplinary context. They may wish to collaborate with educational researchers and consultants to scaffold this development process. Tradeoffs may need to be made, but the principle of balancing the conceptual, technical, social, and epistemic goals in designing intended learning outcomes applies here. Accordingly, the centrality of problem in the entire discussion on wicked problems implies that instruction could largely benefit from problem-based learning (PBL) pedagogy. In particular, research-based instructional approaches can be discerned from PBL in inter- and transdisciplinary higher education settings (Jensen ea, 2019). Other inductive and investigative frameworks may also be effective, including inquiry-based, context-based, and ultimately research-based teaching frameworks. Whichever is chosen, the focus on epistemic practices within PBL instruction implies that all stakeholders involved in the collective inquiry into the chosen wicked problem should continually reflect on their assumptions, biases, and limitations of knowledge.

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Parallel Session 2:2

16:00 - 17:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Conference Room 1a

Chair Karen Jones

37 Creating more representative policy for doctoral education and progression: using participatory methods to generate knowledge about diverse student journeys and needs

Sherran Clarence

Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, United Kingdom. Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

Research Domains

Abstract

Many universities, especially those in the global North, are concerned with addressing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in their policies, processes and practices. This is largely a response to the increasing diversity of their student bodies—international students, students from racialized backgrounds, students who identify as LGBTQI and trans, working-class students. However, while greater EDI is the goal, there are questions about the pace at, and extent to which, dominant processes and practices are changing to enable and sustain transformation, as well as whose knowledge and experiences are reflected in guiding policy. In this paper I draw on the voices of doctoral students in South Africa and the UK to unpick aspects of doctoral policy that may be undermining EDI goals. In foregrounding students' knowledge and experiences, generated through participatory research, I aim to contribute to a conversation focused on revising and rewriting policy to be meaningfully representative and inclusive.

Full paper

In recent years the demand for better-qualified researchers, high-level publications, and successful grant applications has intensified across the global North and South (see Nerad, 2019; CREST, 2018). Better qualified largely means independent, self-regulated, and successful in conducting productive post-doctoral work. This requires greater capacity within doctoral education and supervision. However, increased demands on supervisors as researchers, as well as decreased time for supervision and mentoring in relation to other work academics do means that there is a gap between these demands and candidates' success, retention, and 'satisfaction'. These increased time pressures may lead to 'assimilationist' pedagogies (Manathunga 2019) as well as doctoral policies that may harm especially women, refugee, migrant, Indigenous and international students who do not 'fit' the largely patriarchal, heteronormative, middle-class sensibilities dominant in the modern university.

Early career, which in most contexts includes doctoral candidature, is a particularly difficult period in an academic career, marked increasingly by casualisation, huge pressure to publish, teach, and participate in departmental life, and decreased job security (Megoran and Mason, 2020). This period may be even more difficult for scholars who identify as Black, non-binary, LGBTQI, as women, Indigenous, international, non-English speaking. Despite rhetoric to suggest a deep concern with equality, diversity and inclusion in universities across the world, we know that academics that do not look, sound, speak or behave like those who represent the cultural 'norm' experience discrimination, both subtle and open in nature (Gagnon, 2021). This discrimination tends to be subtly, and often invisibly, encoded in policy that tends to assume a certain kind of candidate or academic – able-bodied, independent, well-resourced, confident in the medium of instruction (usually English). The reality, though, is more diverse and requires policy that reflects this diversity, and that is inclusive of doctoral students' knowledge and experiences, rather than only the demands of the academy. In creating doctoral policies and processes we need to more fully account for the sociocultural structures and practices that are produced by and inform higher education (Hlengwa, 2020). In most higher education contexts, increasing numbers of doctoral students are struggling to confront and work through the intellectual, personal and emotional issues that doing a doctorate can give rise to. Their experiences can help us to carefully interrogate the culture within academia that shape 'right' and 'wrong' ways to be an academic teacher, scholar and researcher; listening to these can enable us to craft representative policy that gives their knowledge and experiences a voice, and that subsequently may enable and sustain deeper transformation.

In this paper I will draw on data generated through narrative interviews with doctoral candidates at one South African university and one English university. I will also use some data generated from publicly available doctoral policies from universities in both countries. The interviews were co-created with participants using visual participatory methods (the use of artefacts chosen by participants to represent their experience, journaling, and photographs). The interviews were conducted over 8 months, in person and online. Using a modified critical discourse analysis informed by feminist sociological theory, I aim to give voice to the kinds of knowledges we can generate through these participatory conversations, and how students' experiences can shed light on the ways in which dominant cultures may 'include' without creating spaces for true representation and belonging. Key questions I am asking in this phase of the research include: How are we 'policed' in subtle and overt ways in terms of acting and engaging in the 'right ways'? How is this communicated through policy? What effect might this have on how doctoral candidates who are not 'the norm' feel about being in academia and staying there? If we are serious about equity, diversity and inclusion as tools to transform the university from the inside out, we need to be paying attention to students' stories and experiences, and we need to begin to revisit policy that (inadvertently) undermines transformation and change at deeper levels.

I hope to contribute to the wider conversation on how we create and sustain more socially just, open and transformed universities by adding to the explanatory frameworks we have for exposing tools, such as policies, processes and practices, that inadvertently entrench forms of exclusion that can be hard to see, and harder to challenge.

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17 The LGBTQ+ Interactive International Travel for Work Policy Development Tool – An Introduction

Frances Hamilton, Tahlia-Rose Virdee

University of Reading, Reading, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

This presentation will provide an introduction to the newly launched 'LGBTQ+ Interactive International Travel for Work Policy Development Tool' (as of 2023).

Our previous research (Hamilton and Giles, 2021) revealed that many Higher Education Institutions ('HEIs') were lacking policy where LGBTQ+ students and staff were concerned when travelling internationally. This raises concerns for LGBTQ+ persons given the wide diversity of law and culture when considering LGBTQ+ issues on a global scale. The primary aims of the tool and website are to provide policy guidance for HEIs, businesses and individuals when considering developing or accessing policy in the area of LGBTQ+ international academic mobility.

Having recently been through developmental stages, this will be the first introduction of the novel LGBTQ+ Policy Development Tool to an academic audience. This introductory talk regarding the tool shall detail user case insights, preliminary findings of the data collected from the tool and user experience feedback.

Full paper

The LGBTQ+ Interactive International Travel for Work Policy Development Tool has been created for Higher Education Institutes ('HEIs'), businesses and individuals to identify gaps and oversights in current organisational policies and practices regarding safeguarding of LGBTQ+ individuals embarking on international travel for the purposes of work or education. This free-to-access tool will guide user organisations (particularly HEIs and companies) as well as individuals to create policy. By means of individual reports, based on responses to the tool, this will allow organisations insight into the concerns of their LGBTQ+ staff, students and colleagues, and a means of addressing these concerns when considering international travel policies and practices.

The recommendations provided to users will be delivered in the form of a 'personalised output report', which will provide suggestions for improving their organisation's safeguarding policies and practices based on their answers to the questions featured in the tool. The interactive tool is comprised of 51 questions regarding policies and practices currently in place at the user's organisation, as well as questions regarding measures to safeguard LGBTQ+ stakeholders at differing stages of planning and implementation of international travel plans, including before, during and after international travel.

Each downloadable output will be comprised of a checklist which details what measures the HEI / company currently has in place, as well as recommendations for future policy drafting and generation for the organisation, with general information on how to address the items on their personalised output report. The guidance featured in user output reports is not exhaustive, but serves as starting points for further research and raising awareness of specific LGBTQ+ concerns in policy.

As well as providing a novel service to users, the interactive tool and respective personalised user output reports are evidence based and informed through consultation with contemporary research and LGBTQ+ informed stakeholder organisations. The origins of the tool stem from critique of the UK Government's International Education Strategy (2021), and the fact that this does not currently consider the specific concerns of LGBTQ+ persons travelling internationally for the purposes of work or education.

This is a concern as laws regarding LGBTQ+ persons are very diverse internationally. Approximately 71 jurisdictions worldwide still criminalise same-sex (or even suspected same-sex) expression and activity, resulting in palpable danger for LGBTQ+ international travellers (The Human Dignity Trust, 2022). These dangers not only include discrimination and hate crimes, but also the risk of state sanctioned penalties such as hard labour, corporal punishment, indefinite imprisonment, and in some cases even death sentences (The Human Dignity Trust, 2022).

Hamilton (Primary Investigator of this project) and Giles research previously explored the lack of UK HEI policy in this area (Hamilton and Giles, 2021). In their investigation of international academic mobility, Hamilton and Giles sent Freedom of Information requests to UK Universities to gauge the existence of policies in place for LGBTQ+ staff and students embarking on international travel. They found that although many UK HEIs pursued globalisation initiatives, the advice given to LGBTQ+ students and staff travelling to international jurisdictions remained 'heteronormative' in nature, ignoring specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ international travellers, and underestimating the impact of the 'disparate global landscape of LGBTQ+ rights' (Hamilton and Giles, 2021: 1).

This research was furthered by the creators of the LGBTQ+ Interactive Tool (Hamilton and Virdee). In 2022, the University of Reading allocated Hamilton and Virdee Research England funded rapid-response policy engagement funding to explore the lived experiences of fifteen individual LGBTQ+ Academics at UK HEIs. This pilot project was concerned with interviewee observations of the balance between the globalisation initiatives of UK Universities and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ stakeholder concerns in policies and processes regarding safeguarding of international travel by their organisations. The findings of this study revealed that many of those interviewed considered that LGBTQ+ specific concerns were often excluded from the development of HEI policies regarding international travel. Additionally, findings demonstrate that LGBTQ+ stakeholders at these HEIs were fearful that their career progression would be impeded by their refusal to engage with globalisation initiatives, juxtaposed against concerns for their own safety and well-being in jurisdictions that are both legally and socially hostile towards LGBTQ+ individuals.

In response to these conditions, Hamilton and Virdee have developed an Interactive tool to assist both UK HEIs and businesses to develop policy that is inclusive and mindful of the specific risks and concerns potentially faced by LGBTQ+ individuals travelling internationally for work or education purposes.

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142 Revisiting national and institutional policy texts to enhance and revise understandings of the rise of the 'student experience' discourse in English higher education

Deanna Meth

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Situated within the period that saw the growth of a higher education market in England, this research uncovers new and revised understandings of when and how the 'student experience' discourse emerged as an entity. As part of a wider study on tensions in undergraduate education, an interdiscursive documentary analysis of national and institutional policies reveals a broader homogenised student-related discourse appearing prior to the 'student experience' but mirroring its increases over time. This sheds light on previous researchers' findings, also offering insights into the way in which policies intertwine and 'cannibalize' at local and national level, with some evidence that universities, under pressure to create distinctive market offers to students, may themselves have driven the rise of the 'student experience' discourse. Enhanced understanding of these shifts is key to gaining deeper insights on the impacts of changing discourses on curricula, pedagogies, academic-student relationships, and student and academic identities in universities.

Full paper

Introduction and research approach

The rise of marketization and the student experience in higher education (HE) may be critiqued through an interdiscursive analysis of policy texts (Taylor, 2004). As context-setting for qualitative research exploring academics' perceptions of tensions in undergraduate education at one English university, an analysis of national and institutional learning and teaching policy documents was undertaken.

This paper focuses on the growth of the 'student experience' discourse within these documents. Discourses are important as they reflect institutional values and priorities (Burgess et al., 2006) with implications for changing

curricula and pedagogies (Meth, 2022; Williams, 2013; Filippakou, 2011). Sabri (2011) ascribes the emergence of a 'student experience' to BIS (2009), that, foreshadowing BIS (2011) 'Students at the Heart of the System', overtly introduces this construct. Docherty (2011) proposes it emerged in 1998 together with the introduction of fees, with institutional attempts to homogenise offers, and learning and teaching 'among the now wide-ranging 'suite' of facilities' (p.60). Research addresses this discrepancy, enhancing previous findings. This is enabled through a wider analysis of the student-related discourse in English HE policy documents since Robbins (1963).

Research findings

Analysis of national policies (Figure 1 references full list) endorses research on the growing HE market and accompanying student as consumer discourse, seen through changing policy authorship, text arrangement, and dominant words and themes. Occurrences of the words 'student experience' are observed as increasing across successive policies from 2003 to 2011. There is a notable change from discussing different experiences of different students in education, to a singular entity, 'the student experience', where 'student' is used as an adjectival noun to describe a particular type of 'experience' (a noun) (Sabri, 2011, p.660).

Policies before this period however, evidence a related, but previously undocumented trend mirroring the growth of the 'student experience', emerging in Dearing (1997) with national recommendations for increasing student choice and introducing fees (Figure 1). A steady increase in the use of other nouns paired with 'student' is observed over a 20-year period. In a similar way that a range of students' experiences are now portrayed as a singular 'student experience', DES (1987) refers to students' (varied) achievements many times over, whereas by 2003, 'student achievement' is a singular entity. Instances from the 33 examples within BIS (2015) include 'student choice', 'student complaints' and 'student protection'.

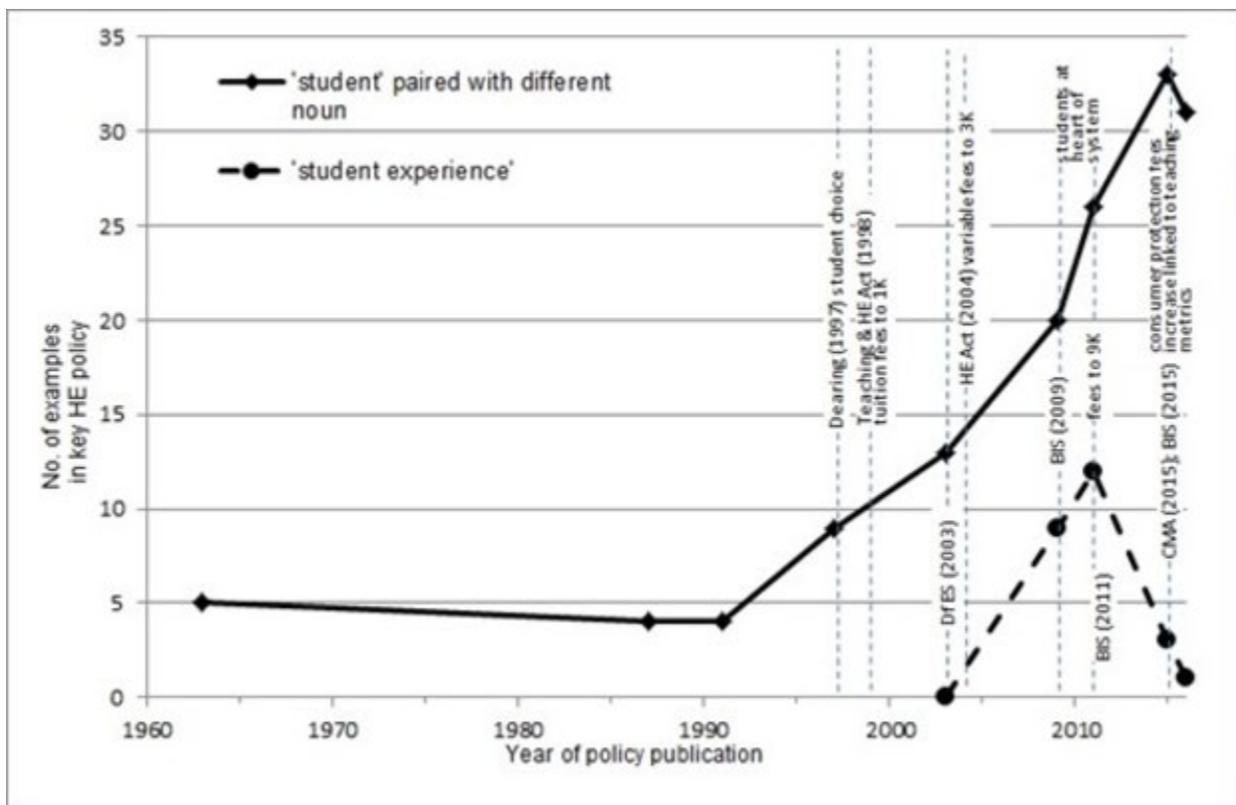


Figure 1: Graph charting instances of the 'student experience' and 'student' paired with another noun in English HE policies (Robbins, 1963; DES, 1987; DES, 1991; Dearing, 1997; DfES, 2003; BIS, 2009; BIS, 2011; BIS, 2015; BIS, 2016).

Institutional learning and teaching strategies (anonymised) reflect a similar change across time (Figure 2) and make overt links to shifting national policy. A substantial decrease in references to teaching and learning sits alongside an

increase in references to students. The decreasing total weighted percentage over time indicates the increase in elements other than learning and teaching within an institutional 'offer', including awards, student satisfaction, extra-curricular activities, facilities and support services. Institutional annual reports reflect this shift, with the 2004-05 report referring to the 'student experience' as an entity, pre-dating Sabri's (2011) observations.

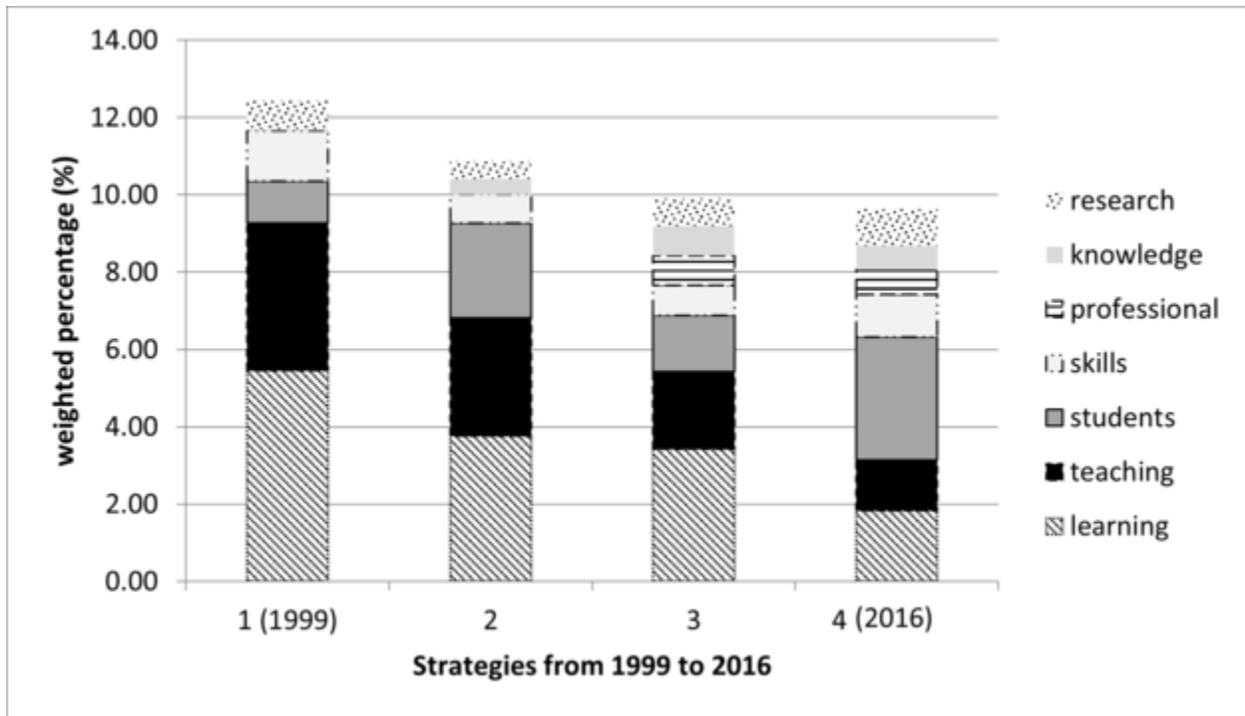


Figure 2: Weighted percentages of key word frequencies in four institutional learning and teaching strategies from 1999 to 2016 (gained through NVivo™ analysis).

Discussion

The 'student experience' as an entity appears sooner in institutional than in national discourses. Might the university, responding to pressures arising from Dearing (1997), the resulting 1998 HE Act, and DfES (2003), have exacerbated growth of a new student experience and consumer discourse from within? This argument is consistent with Docherty's (2011) point made regarding attempts by universities to make themselves a 'more attractive consumption item' (p.280-284).

In contrast to Sabri (2011), the analysis provides new evidence of changing discourses related to students well before BIS (2009). It offers evidence from within the policy texts to support and align more closely to Docherty (2011). Williams (2013) argued against a direct link between fees and student consumer status, however the correlation between new discourses related to students and increased fees is hard to ignore. That the discourse was already shifting in the late 1990s, with homogenised offers and the homogenising of undergraduates (Kelly, 2015 in Jones et al., 2020) is important if we are to understand fully the impacts on curricula and pedagogies, including student-teacher relationships and related academic identities, since this time. More broadly, the analysis also offers insights into policy-borrowing and policy drivers that fit well with Ball's (1994, p.15) points about how discourses intertwine and 'cannibalize' at different levels.

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Parallel Session 2:3 - Symposium

16:00 - 17:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023
Room 144

10 COVID-19 and higher education : Challenges and opportunities for (in)equalities?

Research Domain

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Rationale

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the education sector itself and the lives of young people, families and educators. The implications of emergency lockdowns, the pivot to online teaching and learning, changes to work practices and the impact on student and staff wellbeing extend into multiple areas of higher education practice and research, as do equality considerations.

A growing body of literature has emerged on COVID-19 and higher education capturing a range of topics from academic development, pedagogic approaches and the flipped classroom, to higher education policy and governance, staff and student retention, internationalisation, and staff and student wellbeing across various institutional, disciplinary, and geographical contexts. A common issue arising from these studies explores the effect of the pandemic on exacerbating existing or creating new inequalities and, in some cases, mitigating them.

This symposium is a starting point to explore the plethora of scholarly contributions, focusing on the experience, impact, implications and lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic on the higher education sector from an inequalities perspective. We need to expand upon the knowledge gained from the pandemic and inform the development of future higher education systems that can be more responsive and inclusive in future times of crisis. Thus, we envisage that this symposium will address some of the following questions:

- What inequality challenges and opportunities have higher education systems and institutions emerged during and after the pandemic?
- What higher education policy and institutional responses have been undertaken in relation to the challenges and opportunities arising from COVID-19? What can we learn from them for managing future crises in higher education?
- Which inequalities in higher education has COVID-19 made more prominent? How can we mitigate them?
- What pedagogical, disciplinary, and organisational approaches and practices need to be reviewed as a result of COVID-19 to make higher education more inclusive?
- What unintended consequences have post-COVID institutional decisions had or will have in regards to addressing or reproducing inequalities?
- To what extent has COVID-19 informed existing institutional efforts towards inclusive higher education such as Equality charters, decolonising curricula etc?

Chair

Charikleia Tzanakou

Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, United Kingdom

148 Inequalities in higher education experiences during COVID-19 across Europe

Charikleia Tzanakou, Alexis Still, Audrey Harroche

Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Based on an EU-funded Horizon project on the impact of COVID-19 on socioeconomic inequalities, we focus on individual narratives across Europe - with an inequality lens - that experienced higher education COVID-19. The pandemic influenced access to learning, learning experience and digital skills, but also outcomes.

The swift transition to online learning and virtual learning environments created many challenges related to digital skills, access to equipment and materials for online learning, and participants critically reflected on the ways in which the new teaching environment did not always meet learner needs and was often misaligned with the capabilities of students and teachers. Learning outcomes, employment outcomes and wellbeing outcomes seemed to be worsened over the pandemic.

Despite the negative implications of the pandemic, there were some better stories and opportunities that provided valuable lessons so that all stakeholders (individuals, higher education institutions, HE systems) can be more prepared in future times of crisis.

Full paper

The COVID-19 pandemic had profound, long lasting and multifaceted impacts upon the experiences and outcomes of Higher Education (HE) across Europe. According to the United Nations (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented disruption to education systems worldwide. It has impacted approximately 1.6 billion learners and 63 million teachers across all levels of education and training in over 190 countries on every continent. The transition from traditional forms of learning to online environments necessitating digital skills, access to equipment and materials to support learning created many challenges, and highlighted the stark inequalities in the capabilities of not only individual children and their families, but HE providers and their systems of work.

We draw upon data collected and analysed in the EU-funded RESISTIRÉ project, which aims to understand the unequal impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak and its policy responses on behavioural, social and economic inequalities in 31 countries (EU27 plus Iceland, UK, Serbia and Turkey). The project was conducted by a multi-disciplinary consortium of 11 partners from 9 European countries with expertise on quantitative and qualitative research on inequality, intersectionality and gender.

Within this framework, we focus on 48 narratives across Europe - from a gendered perspective - that experienced HE during COVID-19 and identify common patterns. More specifically, we address the following three questions:

1. How inequalities shaped the experiences of students in HE during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. To what extent have students' experiences during this period influenced their future perspectives on education and employment?
3. What strategies have students in HE across Europe employed to cope with the changes brought about by the pandemic?

While it was widely recognised that the transition to online learning was an adjustment for everyone in HE, there are specific disadvantages that arose in those who suffered from intersectional inequalities. While the university learning experience was disrupted due to closures, there was also a significant lack of support from wider education systems, especially for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. Many did not have the appropriate digital equipment required, and had to rely on utilising smartphones and data or communal devices to access lectures and seminars. Students also discussed that they had limited digital skills to begin or continue their learning successfully, and some found this affected their ability to perform to their full potential. Teachers and students alike had to quickly pivot to new platforms and ways of teaching and learning which took significant time and effort, and was not conducive to effective learning in some cases. The learning environment was sometimes particularly challenging for students at home due to a lack of internet, inconsistent internet connection and/or absence of a dedicated work space. Furthermore, due to their home environment, some participants found it difficult to balance learning with domestic tasks and struggled with interpersonal issues such as unstable family relationships or the threat of domestic violence. These issues were particularly striking during periods of lockdown where students were often forced to return to their family homes and respect stay at home measures.

Learning outcomes were also negatively affected by the pandemic due to not only lack of access to appropriate equipment, but impacts on the quality of teaching. In particular, participants noted how the lack of physical interaction with other students meant they felt isolated in their learning and could not freely share ideas and engage with one another. Opportunities for training, internships and work experience were also severely limited, as was the ability for postgraduate students to undertake fieldwork. Postgraduate students reported that in some cases their studies had to be extended or placed on hold, affecting their future career opportunities and their entry into the labour market. Employers were also recruiting fewer or no new staff, which made transitions from HE to work far more challenging and delayed opportunities for independence and movement.

The closure of higher education institutions also had a significant impact on mental health, as many students felt isolated and lonely, often causing issues of anxiety and depression. The move to online formats also exposed some students and teachers to forms of digital violence such as online harassment, and little support was offered to combat these concerns.

Conversely, the removal of physical interaction for some limited their exposure to bullying and violence from classmates, and therefore was seen in a positive light. There were also other 'better stories' in the move to online HE, such as those who discussed the pandemic as a period of self reflection and growth, and those who enjoyed being able to work from home.

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98 Learning from Labour: challenging student worker's precarity in UK post-92 HE

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper addresses student workers' educational and employment challenges in a UK post-92 University during the Covid-19 pandemic. Students' labour market and work-study-life balance difficulties are well known. Our research focuses on the less explored workplace dimension of precarity. The study is based on findings from a pilot project carried out at Middlesex University in 2022-2023. Using multiple methods, the research explored students' work experience and their knowledge of employment rights. Early findings show that students fill extremely challenging low-paying jobs where labour rights violations are widespread. The pandemic conjuncture has negatively impacted students with fewer jobs, higher workloads and more unpredictable schedules. Coping strategies include silent endurance but also small-scale resistance. Respondents' accounts portray highly exploitative workplace regimes which rely on student-worker's precarious condition for reproduction. We conclude that post-92 universities should not be unfairly blamed for failing students' employability. The project's ongoing impact strategy is documented.

Full paper

This paper addresses the educational and employment challenges faced by student workers in a UK post-92 University. Financial and labour market difficulties affecting students' work—study-life balance are well known. However, the benefits of labour market flexibility and resilience remain highly contested. Our research focuses on the less explored workplace dimension of precarity. The study is based on findings from a pilot project carried out at

Middlesex University in 2022-2023. We analyse the labour process of students' precarious work and their resistance tactics. The early phase of the project's ongoing impact strategy is documented.

The Project aimed at adapting and adopting Critical Pedagogy to the post-92 HE context to raise the quality of learning experienced by working students and to enhance understanding of the challenges they face at work, and their coping strategies in the COVID-19 pandemic scenario. The research used multiple methods, including a survey, interviews, in-class discussions and reflective essays, to establish the extent of their work experience, the nature of any problems encountered and their knowledge of employment rights. Academics across the University employed student-centred, research-engaged strategies to stimulate critical reflection on students' work experiences and socio-political backgrounds.

The research identified students' major workplace challenges and their coping strategies while reflexive exercises provided detailed descriptions and experiential narratives of labour processes across a wide range of jobs. Early findings show that this HE institution, in line with sectoral trends, welcomes potentially disadvantaged 'first-in-family' students accustomed to, and in need to work. Most working students fill low-paying, low-skilled jobs in hospitality, retail, care and education. The survey reveals labour rights violations reinforced by students' limited knowledge of employment rights. Variations in sample responses suggest international students display higher vulnerabilities. Visa constraints draw them towards labour market grey areas. Overall, most research participants find work extremely challenging. There are indications that the Covid-19 pandemic conjuncture has negatively impacted working students. The availability of suitable jobs has declined affecting their labour market participation rate. Available jobs display higher workloads and more unpredictable schedules. Coping strategies include silent endurance, embracement of employer-driven flexibility, but also small-scale resistance. High turnover remains the dominant form of resistance.

Labour process analysis identifies the structural constraints that make such workplaces toxic and exploitative environments. Participants' accounts report management exploitative practices, including the lengthening of the working time, deskilling and effort intensification combined with functional flexibility. The picture emerging is one of an often disorganised but highly exploitative workplace regime which relies on student-workers' precarious conditions for its reproduction. Due to their short-term commitments, lack of experience and employment rights knowledge as well as their desire for flexible hours, students become dependable workers. However, student workers are no mere victims of unscrupulous employers and exploitative work designs. Resistance to unfair conditions also materializes; this manifests itself as labour mobility power exercised by withdrawing labour (turnover) or as workplace small-scale resistance by individuals and groups (foot-dragging, work-to-rule, solidarity, grievances).

The paper presents a picture in line with national and local data about trends in student labour market engagement and employment as adjusted by the pandemic watershed. Its findings, however, suggest that the social suffering of student workers is underestimated and consequently there is a stronger connection between 'bad' jobs and poor educational outcomes than previously thought. In conclusion we argue that it is not poor education that allegedly prevents students from succeeding in the labour market, but rather it is the latter, due to the social suffering it causes, that prevents students from making the most of their learning opportunities. We conclude that post-92 universities should not be unfairly blamed for failing students' employability. However, recognition of the significant challenges students face should lead universities as well as students and educators to turn these struggles into an opportunity for collective, social and pedagogic, change.

The research team impact strategy consists of an evolving and cumulative roadmap of actions developed with key stakeholders. So far, local stakeholders (university leaders, students, lecturers, civil society actors and unions) have been engaged to develop social and pedagogic actions to overcome the significant challenges bad jobs pose to students. These include embedding critical pedagogy strategies in learning and teaching, generalising education about employment rights and providing an advisory service to support victims of their violations. A Citizens UK 'Listening Campaign' addresses student mobilising to generate activism and recommendations from below.

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280 Inequalities in HE during Covid-19: experiences of ethnic minority PhD students at an English pre-1992 University

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This article explores findings from a project conducted with ethnic minority PhD students at an English pre-1992 University from arts, humanities and social sciences disciplines. In the UK higher education there are different inequalities present, impacting various aspects such as access, attainment, and representation. In the context of post graduate research students, considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion remains an underexplored area. The article offers insight into the experiences of inequality among ethnic minority PhD students and highlights some of the impact of Covid-19 on this group. The paper is based on thematic analysis of thirteen individual semi-structured interviews to explore their lived experiences of navigating the pandemic. Our findings highlight that the inequalities experienced by ethnic minority students have been exacerbated due to Covid-19 and there is a need for making targeted support systems available for this group of students.

Full paper

Inequalities are observed in the overall student experience in Higher Education (HE) and that applies to PhD students too (Bhopal and Henderson 2019; Wong et al. 2020) with the literature often emphasizing PhD students feeling isolated, having limited access to support services and financial difficulties (see Atkins and Ebdon, 2014; Mattocks and Briscoe-Palmer 2016). These experiences can impact their sense of belonging, well-being, and academic success. Previous studies with ethnic minority students document that their differences are either dismissed or avoided (Hammond et al. 2019). PhD students from ethnic minority backgrounds often are portrayed as lacking confidence and self-esteem, experiencing isolation, exclusion and disadvantage and they see a lack of representation in the curriculum and faculty (see Gardner and Holley 2011; Mattocks and Briscoe-Palmer 2016; Anjum 2020; Arday and Jones 2022). While the impact of COVID-19 has been far-reaching, evidence points to specific groups being at greater risk of its effects. Arday and Jones (2022) for example have emphasised that 'Black communities experienced COVID-19 as a pandemic within a pandemic'.

Participants for this study were drawn from a combination of departments within arts, humanities and social sciences disciplines in a pre-1992 university. Participants were contacted through purposeful and voluntary participation sampling. The final sample comprised of thirteen PhD students, nine female and 4 male; three British nationals and ten non-British nationals. The interviews were done in May-July 2022 through a mixture of in-person and online interviews. The interviews were conducted by two interviewees, both female, from non-British backgrounds and lasted around 45-90 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, before being coded in NVivo and thematic data analysis applied. The interview guide explored the lived experiences of applying and doing a PhD with a special focus on the barriers and enabling factors that students experienced throughout their journeys. There wasn't a specific question on Covid-19 but all students reflected on the pandemic in their answers which shows how far-reaching the impact of the pandemic has been.

The participants we interviewed shared the opportunities and barriers they faced due to Covid-19 in their PhD journeys. First and foremost, the main impact of Covid-19 was felt in events being moved online. Students, in particular those starting their PhD journeys in 2020, felt that they needed to rely on themselves more and have the initiative to do things, to find things out by themselves, information which possibly they could have picked up via informal conversations on campus. These students (often being the first from their families to go to university) were unfamiliar with the habitus of a university and they didn't have anyone in their social networks to help them navigate the system either. On top of this, the challenges due to Covid and lockdowns felt like an extra burden and as a result they emphasised the sense of isolation and loneliness they experienced, relying only on themselves, which was overwhelming at times. The impostor syndrome, which is often mentioned in the literature, became apparent in our students' narratives too as they highlighted how they found it problematic to relate to the events and locations of events advertised. On top of this, due to Covid and the restrictions these socialising opportunities felt again extra difficult to manage. On the other hand, other students highlighted that there were some benefits too as there were more events and activities during Covid and that gave them more opportunities than it would have been in a 'normal' year. And finally, the career paths of students have been disrupted as they didn't have access to the 'normal' activities that PhD students would have experienced, like conducting fieldwork, attending conferences, amount and type of teaching opportunities, so they felt that these will have a negative effect on their career prospects. The participants acknowledged that there was an increase in online conferences, which also provided them unique opportunities, but they felt that the benefits of in-person opportunities would have been far greater.

The Doreen Lawrence review has highlighted that "Covid-19 has thrived on inequalities that have long scarred British society" (2020, p. 24). This seems to hold true in the context of ethnic minority PhD students' experiences too. The inequalities and struggles have been exacerbated due to Covid-19 and often felt as 'traumatising' in the words of one

of our participants. This highlights the need for further research and discussions about the experiences, barriers and opportunities of ethnic minority PhD students in UK higher education if the aim is to stop the 'leaky pipeline'.

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385 Casting a long shadow: COVID-19 and UK female academics' research productivity.

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper reports on research findings into female academics' experiences of grant application and writing for publication during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper draws on diary and interview research data collected during 2021 from 28 female academics across the career spectrum in 18 UK universities. Findings show that the pandemic exacerbated a troubled relationship between 'research' and 'teaching', pushing research time even further to the periphery. While for some participants the circumstances of the pandemic had positive impacts on networking and research opportunities, most experienced competing workloads, care and service responsibilities and fatigue as detrimental to their capacity to write grant applications and academic publications. Because any reduction in research productivity presents a potential risk to longer-term career success, the paper argues for a reckoning of damage done and determined policy development to mitigate the impacts.

Full paper

This paper reports on research findings into UK female academics' experiences of grant application and writing for publication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings reveal that participants navigated these demands in contexts of competing workloads, care and service responsibilities, precarity and fatigue over an extended period. As part of the symposium's wider exploration of ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities in the higher education (HE) sector, this paper argues for a reckoning of damage done to female academics' research productivity. This is a concern because the value placed on research income generation and peer-reviewed publications for academic status means that any reduction in research productivity presents a potential risk of longer-term career damage.

UK research funding is a complex arena in which UK academics must compete to further their research careers. It is a mixed economy, comprising competitive, performance-based funding from the UK government, grants from a wide range of charitable and commercial bodies, participation in international research programmes and small-scale institutional support. It is a far from level playing field. Not only is the sector characterised by 'entrenched institutional hierarchies' (Papatsiba & Cohen, 2019, p. 189) between 'research intensive' and 'teaching intensive' institutions, but gender and ethnic differences in grant awards are stubborn and stark. For example, 70% of recipients of UKRI research council Principal Investigator (PI) awards across all disciplines in 2020/2021 were male; 81% were White (UKRI, 2021).

Survey research conducted in a post-1992 UK university towards the end of the first lockdown (Carruthers Thomas, 2020) provided early evidence that the pandemic's shift of paid labour into the home was impacting female academics' research productivity more than their male peers. Findings showed female staff were more likely than male colleagues to take primary or sole responsibility for homeschooling, household tasks and others' care needs and less likely to have access to dedicated working space at home. Female academics with care responsibilities for children or elders were more likely than male colleagues to report that working from home had impacted upon their capacity to write grant applications or for publications and to sustain research projects.

Building on these findings, the author conducted qualitative research with 28 female academics, occupying roles across the career spectrum at 18 UK universities between March 2020 – September 2021 (Carruthers Thomas 2022). A diary, diary-interview method (DDIM) (Zimmerman & Wieder 1977) was used to investigate experiences of working from home, changes to working practices and longer-term career implications. The presentation of this paper will draw on these data to illustrate and support its claims.

Findings show that the pandemic exacerbated a troubled relationship between 'research' and 'teaching'. The lionising of the 'student experience' and the increased importance of external research funding to corporate budgets and reputations created tensions within individual academic workloads. The pivot to online delivery in March 2020 required time be devoted to adapting teaching materials and approaches. Workload allocation models redirected time towards teaching and student support, pushing research to the periphery. Participants noted that they, rather than male colleagues, shouldered the burden of students' increased demands for pastoral care. Homeschooling, household and/or care responsibilities were added to the challenges of navigating funding and publication deadlines around teaching or management duties. Several participants were encouraged to respond to the rash of quick turnaround, COVID-specific grants. Yet without 'process time ... as much time as needed ... embedded in the inherent logic of research activity' (Ylijoki, 2015, p.95) and in the face of the pandemic's physical and psychological challenges, most participants struggled to generate new ideas and write for publication.

It is important not to overlook narratives of new opportunities created by the pandemic's forced break with established processes. The hypermobility of virtual academic spaces enhanced accessibility for those with caring responsibilities and/or limited mobility. New networks forged via the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies brought unexpected career benefits for a minority. Yet most anxiously noted the career implications of decreased research activity - annual performance targets missed in the short-term; having 'nothing in the pipeline' in the longer-term.

Let's not lose the opportunity of the crisis to 'incite actions and bring contradictions to light' (Ahmann, 2018, p.144). Early preparations for the UK's Research Excellence Framework 2028 offers a window of opportunity to acknowledge that the burden of care carried by many female academics during the pandemic was largely incompatible with research productivity. This in turn could lead to policy development to mitigate gendered – and raced – impacts of the pandemic on research productivity.

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Parallel Session 2:4

16:00 - 17:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Room 139

Chair Dina Belluigi

382 Reading Time. A phenomenological exploration of reading habits, rhythms and practices in doctoral education in the UK.

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In contemporary doctoral education, much less attention is devoted to understanding how students engage with higher level readings, than it is to supporting the development of their academic writing skills. Reading is generally approached instrumentally for research and equated with an extractive process to retrieve, survey or review the information needed for writing.

This paper examines the under-researched area of reading habits, rhythms and practices among doctoral students in the UK, using vignettes to explore how a diverse group of doctoral students relates to, makes sense of, and engages with reading as a research practice in its own right. Through the innovative use of a rhythm-analytical-phenomenological methodology centred on the students' lived experience, the paper takes a closer look at the spatio-temporal, material, cognitive and affective dimensions of reading and draws pedagogical and philosophical implications for doctoral education and supervision whilst foregrounding mutual learning from cultural difference.

Full paper

The increasing exposure of higher education sectors worldwide to market mechanisms (e.g. privatisation in and of higher education, platformisation and assetization) generates market-making pressures, technologies and relations that are changing university missions and academic practices in both research and teaching, altering not only forms of knowledge production but also academic identities (Lewis and Robertson, 2022). These corporate, competitive systems operate in and through regimes of time acceleration and compression (Rosa, 2013; Wajcman & Dodd eds. 2017) that enable capitalist accumulation via a proliferation of calculative practices and surveillance techniques driven by instrumental logics.

In this context, this paper begins by acknowledging the tensions that pit institutional time-scarcity/pressure against the individual irrational times, practices and rhythms that characterise the craft of intellectual work. More specifically, it focuses on doctoral education, considered both as a liminal space-time of profound transformation for students and as the rite of passage through which doctoral candidates enter the academic community.

Doctoral students in the modern accelerated academy experience mounting institutional pressures to complete their research projects within tight timeframes punctuated by developmental milestones. At the same time, they are

increasingly encouraged to publish and participate in externally funded projects before completing their course of studies, to position themselves more favourably in a hyper-competitive, yet precarious job market.

Comparatively, much less attention is devoted to reading as an autonomous practice in relation to educational research. Reading is generally approached instrumentally for research and mostly equated with a strategic, extractive process whereby academics retrieve, survey or review the information needed for writing to maximise efficiency (Fulford and Hodgson eds. 2016; Walker 2017). Doctoral students are taught to tackle the volume of readings by deploying selective, skim and speed-reading techniques that 'teach' them a practical method to 'fillet' publications (Silverman 2010:323) or 'gut(ting) an article or book for the material you need' (Thomas 2013:67). The author argues instead that reading should be approached as research, that is a philosophical orientation whose intimate relation with thinking and writing constitutes a conjuncture with transformative potential for both the reader and the text (Hoveid&Hoveid 2013; Dakka and Wade 2019).

Against this backdrop, the paper builds substantially on two contributions in the cognate fields of philosophy, pedagogy and ethics of education that underpin its theoretical and methodological choices. Firstly, Aldridge (2019) explores the association between reading, higher education and educational engagement through the phenomenological literary theorisations of Rita Felski (2015) and Marielle Macé (2013). Reading here is considered as a phenomenological 'orientation' with ontological character: the entanglement of body, thought and sense makes reading an 'embodied mode of attentiveness' with 'rhythms of rapprochement and distancing, relaxation and suspense, movement and hesitation' (Felski 2015: 176). Secondly, Boulous Walker (2017) introduces the concept of 'slow reading', or reading philosophically against the institution. This practice stands in opposition to the institutional time, efficiency, and productivity pressures which prevent the intense, contemplative attitude toward research typical of active educational engagement. The author calls therefore for slow reading, careful reading, re-reading as antidotes against institutional contexts dominated by speed and the cult of efficiency.

Hence the paper aims to shine a light on the under-researched area of reading habits, rhythms and practices among doctoral students in the UK through the use of vignettes and a combination of hermeneutic phenomenology and rhythmanalysis. Through such exploration the author intends to examine pedagogical and philosophical implications for learning in doctoral education (educational engagement and intellectual flourishing), for the practice of doctoral supervision as teaching and mentoring, and, by extension, for higher education as the nurturing, enabling ground of teachers and learners.

Methodologically, Rhythmanalysis enables a closer look at the students' reading habits, rhythms and practices in relation to their doctoral studies. The emphasis on spatio-temporality and (auto-)ethnographic observations makes it possible to register and grasp the tensions that derive from clashes between meso institutional constraints and demands (e.g. set timeframes for completion; developmental milestones), micro individual responses and circumstances (e.g. different modes of study, private and/or professional commitments) and macro societal context (e.g. extractive capitalism, cultural expectations).

The phenomenologically/hermeneutical aspect draws instead on the hermeneutic, existential, and ontological dimensions found in Gadamer's and Heidegger's philosophy, which are concerned with grasping the lived experiential meanings and understanding human lifeworld and its phenomena.

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171 Creating peer learning spaces in distance education: the case of academic writing

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

In distance education, learning often takes place without collaboration with fellow students. Hence, distance students mostly need to study on their own. The aim of this study is to enhance the quality of distance students' learning processes. An intervention was implemented where a peer-learning structure was tested targeting students' development of academic writing. The intervention consisted of a structure for the creation of learning spaces to enable student-driven collaboration around scientific writing assignments. Theoretically, the study adopts a sociotechnical approach, consequently assuming that the peer learning spaces are social spaces. A sociocultural approach informs the orientation of the intervention, where learning occurs through collaboration and interaction in a specific context. Three aspects of the construction of the peer learning space have been identified: the structuring, the perception, and the experience of it. Going forward, structural as well as social dimensions of peer learning and learning spaces will be investigated.

Full paper

The aim of this study is to enhance the quality of distance students' learning processes. In the study, an intervention is implemented where a peer-learning structure is tested, in this case targeting students' development of academic writing.

In distance education, students usually interact with the technology and learning resources available in flexible ways, historically understood as anytime, anyplace at any pace (Veletsianos & Houlden, 2019). Often such interaction takes place without collaboration with fellow students. Hence, distance students are left on their own to cope with any potential difficulties they face. Studies have shown that a sense of belonging is important for student learning (e.g., Felder & Brent, 2016; Lieser, Taff & Murphy-Hagan, 2018), that a joint creation of social learning environments is crucial (Thomas, 2010), and that an extended view of distance learning environments is called for (Messina Dahlberg, 2017; Messina Dahlberg & Bagga-Gupta, 2015). Consequently, teachers need to consider questions about the distance educational environment and its social dimension, preferably in a direction leading to students developing a sense of community while learning.

An earlier intervention study, where a higher seminar feedback model (Wennergren, 2007) was used, showed that the feedback structure as such was essential in enabling peer engagement and development of academic writing skills (Lindh et al., 2021). Findings of this former intervention also revealed that the creation of peer learning spaces led to a community-like feeling, in which students shared and discussed issues other than writing related ones (ibid.). We understand peer learning spaces as student-led learning occasions with interactive potential learning activities.

The study design consisted of interventions, where learning structures were provided to enable pure student-driven collaboration around scientific writing assignments, as a way of creating a peer learning space. The interventions took place in two different consecutive courses in a Strategic Information and Communication Programme in the spring of 2023. Students in these courses volunteered to participate in student-led small group feedback seminars. The seminars followed a well-structured order through a task adapted template, which enabled a clear guiding of the learning process. The template was based on a seminar feedback model (Wennergren, 2007) and was scaled down and adapted to the writing assignments in the courses. A structure like this, linked to the assessment and learning outcomes, is essential for peer learning (Sampson & Cohen, 2016). In this phase of the study, less consideration is taken to peers' learning as socially and culturally situated, i.e., the students are considered as equal parties in their peer learning relations (cf. Boud & Lee, 2005).

Theoretically, the study adopts a sociotechnical approach, consequently assuming that the peer learning spaces are social spaces, in other words, that the form of interaction taking place, though distributed via technology, is considered as social as interaction "in reality" (Van Lieshout et al. 2018). A sociocultural approach informs the orientation of the intervention, where learning occurs through collaboration and interaction in a specific context (e.g., Dysthe, 2003).

The data consists of written accounts from the two courses, both direct answers to an anonymous questionnaire with one question - "Describe your experience of participating in the feedback seminars" - and spontaneous written comments sent to one of the course leaders, who is also one of two researchers following the intervention. A thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017) has commenced, and currently, we are familiarising with the data, generating codes and preliminary themes.

The data collected so far shows that students who participated in feedback seminars were generally positive. Less positive responses were primarily connected to inactive group members. Initial analysis shows the following tentative themes: a) the role of the template, for example, several students commented that the template was more helpful than they expected – "surprisingly helpful" – and that it provided time management support; b) emotional aspects of learning, for example, the students experienced the feedback on their own text as confirmatory reinforcing a feeling of being on the right track; and, c) collaborative gain, for example, the students highlighted that they understood the writing assignment better through the collaborative set-up where they learnt how other students had interpreted and taken on the assignment.

In conclusion, so far, three aspects of the construction of the peer learning space have been identified: the structuring of it, the perceptions of it and the experience of it. Going forward, we will continue exploring structural as well as social dimensions of peer learning and of learning spaces.

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251 Implementing Baseline Mathematics Testing and In-Curriculum Peer Mentoring Scheme to Improve Attainment and Continuation of 1st Year Engineering and Computer Science Students Post COVID-19.

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

In 2022-23, the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) at Aston University, implemented a college-wide Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme in all first year Mathematics modules in response to attainment gaps observed between 2019-2022 in first year mathematics modules across EPS programmes. This work describes some of the reasons behind the attainment gaps observed, the approach taken, and some of the initial data collected to explore whether participation in these timetabled in-curriculum PAL Mathematics sessions for first year EPS Engineering and Computing students improves students’ attainment in their respective Mathematics modules and enables them to continue to the next stage. This in turn allows us to explore whether participation in the PAL scheme improves the chances of successful transition into the first year and engagement with Learning Development Centre support. Analysis conducted on first year Mathematics modules demonstrated the significant impact of attending PAL sessions on students’ academic performance.

Full paper

Motivation

Aston University has a diverse student body. In the past four years, 68.3% of our full-time UK domiciled undergraduates were from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. Between 2015-2018, 49.9% of our undergraduate student population were from the two most deprived Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles. In the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS), the proportion of students entering our Engineering and

computing courses from IMD1&2, who are least likely to succeed in Higher Education (Summers et al., 2023), has increased steadily from 38.2% in 2018 to 44.8% 2022 as shown in Table 1. Coupled with the decreasing percentage of first year entries that have A/AS level entry qualifications, this has led to significant fail rate since returning to on-campus closed book exams in first year Mathematics and modules of mathematical nature.

Table 1

Academic Year	1st Year EPS Students from IMD 1&2	1st Year EPS Students A/AS Level Entry Qualification	1st Year Progression Rate at 1st Attempt for EPS Students from IMD 1&2.
2018-19	38.2%	74%	49%
2019-20	41.7%	61%	52%
2020-21	42.9%	50%	59%
2021-22	44.8%	48%	36%

Given the trends observed above and the previous success of timetabled Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Mathematics sessions at smaller scales in EPS (Doss et al., 2020 and Knight et al., 2021), in 2022-23, EPS implemented first year PAL sessions across all Engineering and Computing Mathematics modules in partnership with Aston University Learning and Development Centre (LDC).

Peer Assisted Learning Scheme

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is a “socially focused” system of student support where students work together to develop their learning (Hilsdon, 2013) that encourages collaboration and knowledge exchange within a safe space (Malm et al., 2012; Malm et al., 2016). In academic year 2022-2023, a PAL scheme was implemented in the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences for all first year Engineering and Computing Mathematics modules. In the first week of term, first year students completed a diagnostic test to determine their existing maths knowledge and skills and identify areas that required improvement. On receiving results, the students were signposted to support from the LDC and PAL sessions. Each week, students were timetabled an optional, hour-long, PAL session guided by ‘PAL leaders’ who were second year and final Year undergraduate students who had been carefully recruited through an interview process. These leaders had a deep understanding of the subject materials and had completed an online training course and in person half-day training delivered by LDC to prepare them for the challenges they might encounter during the PAL sessions. They also attended regular debriefs for sharing their practices, and to provide feedback and received ongoing support to ensure the sessions were engaging, relevant and impactful. During the PAL sessions, students engaged in collaborative activities, discussion, and problem-solving exercises.

Initial Observations

Two diagnostic tests were given to the students depending on the entry requirements for their chosen programme. Based on the 2022/23 academic year, 1065 students entered EPS at Aston University, with 521 students taking the diagnostic quiz – 49% of the student cohort. Tables 2 and 3 shows that that students from certain ethnicities/socio-economic background appeared to score better than others in the diagnostic quiz.

Table 2: Summary of the 2022/23 diagnostic scores based on student's ethnicity. Value in brackets represents the sample size.

Ethnicity	Diagnostic Score for Programmes Requiring A-Level in Mathematics	Diagnostic Score for Programmes Requiring GCSE in Mathematics
Asian	56.8%(n=111)	55.5%(n=118)
Black	49.6%(n=38)	38.8%(n=46)
White	66.5%(n=49)	51.0%(n=96)
Other	54.8%(n=42)	49.8%(n=25)

Table 3: Summary of the 2022/23 diagnostic score data based on student's socioeconomic background. |

Socio Economic Grouping	Diagnostic Score
Higher socioeconomic groups, i.e. managerial and professional occupations.	55.5%
Lower socioeconomic groups, i.e. unemployed, routine or semi-routine occupations.	48.5%

Previous entry requirements have also been shown to have a significant impact on the students diagnostic score and subsequent outcomes (Knight et al., 2021). This will be investigated further as the data currently available does not allow us to make a similar investigation.

The statistical analysis conducted to date has demonstrated the significant impact of attending PAL sessions on students' academic performance. Students who participated in these sessions showed significant improvement in their learning outcomes with an average increase of 15.7 % in their grades (Table 4).

Table 4:

		Group Statistics			
Participate in PAL sessions		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Academic improvement	No	120	1.1968	26.56212	2.42478
	Yes	103	15.6538	25.58818	2.52128

Furthermore, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the number of PAL visits and academic improvement. The result of the correlation analysis shows a significant positive correlation (Table 5) between the two variables. This means that as the number of PAL visit increases, students are more likely to observe improvement in their grades.

Table 5:

		Correlations	
		difference	PAL no visits
Academic Improvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.269**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	223	223
Number of Pal visit	Pearson Correlation	.269**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	223	223

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Remaining Work

From an initial analysis it has been shown that those students who participated in the PAL sessions had a significant improvement in their learning outcomes with an average increase of 15.7% in their grades. In the next stage of our research, we need to investigate which groups of students benefitted most from the sessions, and if engagement with the sessions changed the students' outcomes. We also need to investigate if the differences in student outcomes are based around a student's ethnicity, or other factors such as previous qualifications and/or socio-economic backgrounds. In addition to this, there needs to be a thorough investigation into the impact of the PAL scheme and how it has supported the different groups of students.

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Parallel Session 2:5

16:00 - 17:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Conference Room 1b

Chair Rita Hordosy

315 Promoting students' interest through culturally sensitive curricula in higher education

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

We examined the relationship between higher education students' perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of their curriculum and their interest in their programme of study. 286 (228 F) students rated the cultural sensitivity of the curriculum using a revised version of the Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales (CSCS-R) that contained six scales. They also rated their interest in their program and the perceived quality of their relationships with teachers. Racially minoritized students (n=99) perceived their curriculum as less culturally sensitive than White students (n=182). There were no significant differences between minoritized students and White students on interest or the perceived quality of relationships with teachers. Five dimensions of cultural sensitivity (Diversity Represented, Positive Depictions, Challenge Power, Inclusive Classroom Interactions, Culturally Sensitive Assessments) predicted interest. Ensuring curricula and assessments represent diversity positively and challenge power may support students' interest while accurately reflecting an increasingly diverse society.

Full paper

Higher education (HE) students are preparing for professional roles in which they will serve diverse clientele and operate within or attempt to re-dress pervasive inequalities (United Nations, 2015). Around the world, there is a move toward making curricula more culturally sensitive, diversified, or decolonized (Peters, 2018; Shahjahan et al., 2022). The impact of such curricula on students is not yet well understood.

In this study, we revised a ground-breaking measure of culturally sensitive curricula (CSCS-R) (Thomas & Quinlan, 2022) and used it to determine whether HE students perceive their curricula as culturally sensitive and the impact of cultural sensitivity on their interest in their program.

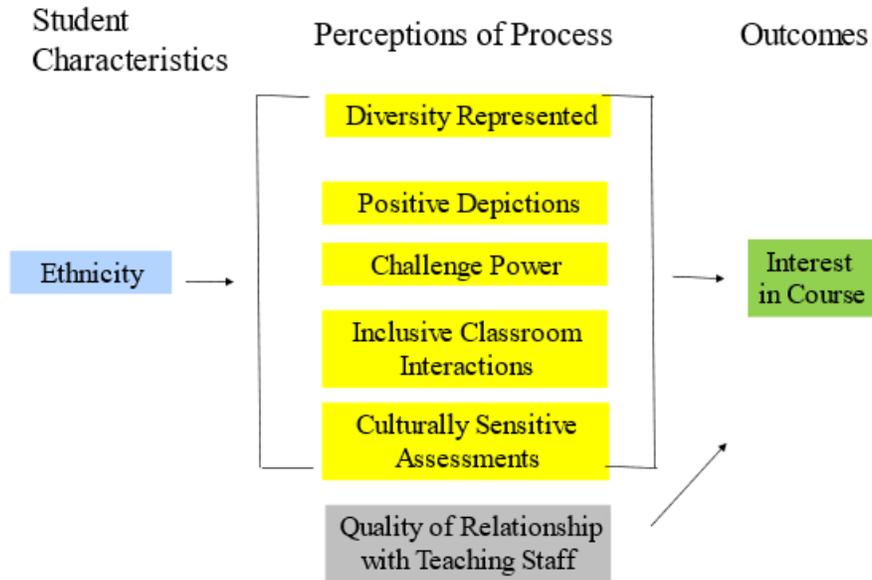
Conceptual Framework

We situate our study in interest theory (Renninger & Hidi, 2016; Renninger & Hidi, 2022). Interest refers to a psychological state of individuals during engagement with some object (e.g. an academic subject) and the predisposition to re-engage particular content meaningfully over time. Interest is inherently rewarding (Gottlieb et al, 2013) and is associated with many positive learning behaviours that lead to higher academic achievement and influence career decision-making and success (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff 2002; Jansen, Lüdtke, & Schroeders 2016; Nye et al, 2012; Quinlan & Renninger, 2022; Renninger & Hidi, 2022; Sansone et al., 2019).

Building on previous research that identifies factors that promote students' interest (Quinlan, 2019; Guo & Fryer, 2022), we propose that five of the six dimensions of the CSCS-R will support students' interest, as will students' perceived quality of relationships with teaching staff (QRTS) (Figure 1).



Figure 1
Conceptual Framework for this Study



Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1. To what extent did students perceive their curricula as culturally sensitive? We hypothesized that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students would perceive the curricula as less culturally sensitive than White students (H1).

RQ2. What is the relationship between cultural sensitivity of the curricula and students' interest in their program? We hypothesized that students' perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of the curricula (H2.1) and the perceived quality of relationships with teachers would predict interest (H2.2).

Methods

Following ethics approval, we surveyed second year undergraduate students in seven UK universities (N= 286; 228 F; 46 M; 182 White; 99 BAME). Most (69%) were in professional education program (Table 1).

Table 1
Participants by Program

Program	N	%
Childhood/Early Childhood Studies	12	4%
Education	49	17%
Law	42	15%
Nursing	72	25%
Other	6	2%
Politics and/or International Relations	22	8%
Psychology	48	17%
Social Work	35	12.2%

The survey included the following measures:

Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales (CSCS-R). We extended Thomas and Quinlan's (2021) CSCS scales. Students rated items on 6 point Likert scales from strongly disagree to strongly agree: Diversity Represented (7 items; $\alpha=.92$); Negative Portrayals (3 items; $\alpha=.92$); Positive Depictions (4 items; $\alpha=.86$); Challenging Power (5 items; $\alpha=.90$); Inclusive Classroom Interactions (3 items; $\alpha=.87$); Culturally-engaging Assessments (3 items; $\alpha=.89$).

Interest. We slightly adapted Quinlan's (2019) 5 point Likert scale for interest (10 items; $\alpha=.88$).

Quality of Relationships with Teacher Staff (QRTS). We assessed whether students found their teachers approachable, understanding and encouraging (3 items; $\alpha=.91$). This variable was included as a control variable.

Demographics: Students reported university, program, gender, race, and age.

Results

BAME students rated their curricula as significantly less culturally sensitive on five of the six CSCS scales (Table 2), confirming H1. Only Challenge Power showed no differences.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables /

Variable	BAME Mean (SD)	White Mean (SD)	Mean Dif	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Diversity Represented	4.29 (1.13)	4.70 (1.00)	-.41	-3.01**	-.39
Negative Portrayals	3.35 (1.51)	2.39 (1.41)	.96	5.30***	.67
Positive Depictions	3.55 (1.15)	4.17 (1.11)	-.62	-4.33***	-.55
Challenge Power	4.26 (1.30)	4.55 (1.12)	-.30	-1.91	-.25
Inclusive Classroom Interactions	4.83 (1.26)	5.29 (.89)	-.46	-3.20**	-.44
Culturally Sensitive Assessments	4.11 (1.28)	4.56 (1.12)	-.45	-2.91**	-.38
CSCS Overall ⁺	4.12 (.81)	4.63 (.76)	-.51	5.20***	-.65
Course Interest	3.85 (.56)	3.91 (.63)	-.06	-.766	-.10
Quality of Relationships w/Teaching Staff	3.26 (.78)	3.26 (.74)	-.12	-1.23	-.16

*** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$ (two tailed)

⁺CSCS Overall reverses Negative Portrayals so that all scales are in the same direction, with higher scores demonstrating higher Cohen's $d < .2$ small effect size; $d = .5$ medium effect size; $d > .8$ large effect size

There were significant correlations between ethnicity (BAME or White) and the CSCS scales, though not with interest or relationships with teachers (Table 3). Given the high correlations among the CSCS scales, we also computed CSCS Overall, an average of the six scales after reversing Negative Portrayal.

Table 3

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations for the Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Diversity Represented	—					
2. Negative Portrayals	-.04	—				
3. Positive Depictions	.53**	-.12	—			
4. Challenge Power	.58**	.02	.49**	—		
5. Inclusive Classroom Interactions	.52**	-.01	.45**	.62**	—	
6. Culturally Sensitive Assessments	.60**	-.01	.49**	.64**	.61**	—
7. CSCS Overall	.77**	-.37**	.76**	.77**	.72**	.77**
8. Course Interest	.33**	-.04	.28**	.34**	.40**	.33**
9. Quality of Relationships w/ T. S.	.29**	-.00	.14*	.39**	.45**	.29**
10. BAME or White	.23**	-.29**	.29**	.13*	.21**	.13*
11. Gender	-.05	.01	-.08	-.01	-.09	-.05
12. Age	.03	.09	-.00	-.01	.09	.03

** p<.01 * p<05 (two tailed)

Listwise deletion N=246

There were no significant differences on CSCS Overall, interest or QRTS by university or by program.

Regression analysis (Table 4) showed that CSCS Overall predicted students' subject interest even when controlling for QRTS, which was also significant, supporting H2.1 and H2.2. When running separate regression analyses for each CSCS subscale, five of the six scales were significant predictors when controlling for QRTS (Table 5). Only Negative Portrayals was not a significant predictor.

Insert Tables 4 and 5

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Analyses: Demographic Variables and CSCS Overall

Model	Variables	R ²	F(df1, df2)	SE	β
1		.01	687 (3, 270)		
	Gender			.07	.01
	BAME or White			.08	.05
	Age			.00	.07
2		.16	12.79*** (4, 269)		
	Gender			.06	.03
	BAME or White			.07	-.08
	Age			.00	.07
	CSCS Overall			.04	.41***
3		.20	13.64*** (5, 268)		
	Gender			.06	.03
	BAME or White			.07	-.06
	Age			.00	.06
	CSCS Overall			.05	.32***
	Quality of Relationships w/T.S.			.05	.23***

*** p<.001 ** p<.01 *p<05 (two tailed)

Table 5

Simultaneous Regression for Each of the CSCS Scales as Predictors of Interest

Variable	R ²	F (df1, df2)	SE
Diversity Represented	.17	11.13*** (5, 267)	.05
Negative Portrayals	.12	7.45*** (5, 263)	.02
Positive Depictions	.17	10.86*** (5, 258)	.03
Challenge Power	.16	10.02*** (5, 263)	.03
Inclusive Classroom Interactions	.19	11.96*** (5, 256)	.04
Culturally Sensitive Assessments	.18	11.49*** (5, 261)	.03

Run as separate equations due to collinearity. Controlling for gender, BAME or White, Age, Qu

Discussion

Racially minoritised students perceived their curricula as less culturally sensitive than White students, consistent with Thomas and Quinlan (2022). Culturally sensitive curricula predicted students' interest, suggesting that it benefits not only BAME students as previously emphasised (Thomas & Quinlan, 2022), but all students. By controlling for quality of relationships with teaching staff, we also showed that these effects were not due solely to enthusiastic teaching.

The study adds evidence on the effects of culturally sensitive curricula. Theoretically, this study highlights specific features of the curriculum that support students' interest. Practically, the CSCS items and scales detail how teachers can create curricula that both support students' interest and prepare students for increasingly diverse society.

For Tables, see:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bRHwyCHGc3w6H-_eLVYTj7tCJziuxcT/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109826477435222269791&rtpof=true&sd=true

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158 Love at the first sight? Students' attitudes towards statistics and R

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Research Domains

Abstract

Statistics courses are not the most popular. Knowing students' attitudes would allow to address their concerns in an appropriate way. To research students' attitudes towards statistics and R, we used the Q-methodology (N = 33). Three attitudes emerge. (1) "Statistics for career" represents students who are interested in understanding statistical concepts and show a greater affinity with R than other students. (2) "Statistics is hard work" represents students that do not enjoy the course and do not see statistics and R as a career advantage. (3) "R is the problem" represents students (n=5) who understand the material but the application in R causes them problems. By contrasting the three attitudes (factors), it was possible to identify the areas where students had the most difficulty or enjoyed the most. In general, students are determined to understand the material and see statistics as relevant.

Full paper

Statistics courses are not the most popular. As previous research has shown, attitudes towards statistics play a role in how engaged and successful students will be in the course (de Oliveira Júnior et al., 2018; Griffith et al., 2012; Prayoga & Abraham, 2017; Ramirez et al., 2012).

As instructors of an introductory statistics course, we want to create an engaging learning experience and make the course as accessible as possible. Knowing students' attitudes would allow us to respond to their needs and/or address their concerns in an appropriate way. Besides these aims, we'd like to add to the research on attitudes towards statistics. One of the core parts of our course is that students analyse real data using the software R from the beginning. However, this can become an additional burden for students. Some previous studies have focused on attitudes towards statistics with R, but only covered R in one or a few items (Counsell & Cribbie, 2020; Tucker et al., 2022). From our perspective, this coverage is not sufficient, as it is a substantial part of our (and many other) courses.

Our research question: What are students' attitudes towards statistics taught using the software R?

To answer our research question, we used the Q-methodology (Brown, 1980). The students (P-set, N=33) were asked to sort 34 items (Q-set) between two poles '+4: I most agree with...' and '-4: I most disagree with...'. 16 items related to the theoretical understanding of statistics, 12 to the application of statistics in R and 6 statements to the relationship between theory and application. The items were based on the Scale to measure attitudes towards statistics (Schau et al., 1995) and covered six areas: affect (feelings), cognitive competence, value, difficulty, effort, interest. The sorting took place online (EQ Web Sort, Shawn Banasick) and was accompanied by additional questions on e.g. statistical / mathematical pre-knowledge, workload. Students were asked to comment on items placed at the two extreme poles of the sorting (+4 and -4). The responses were analysed using the R package qmethod (Zabala, 2014).

The preliminary interpretation of the three factors extracted in the Q-analysis (Varimax, PCA, 64% of the variance explained, 32 of the participants loaded on one of the three factors), complemented by the students' statements on the most extreme items, leads to the following results. The first factor "Statistics for career" represents students (n=16) who are interested in understanding statistical concepts and show a greater affinity with R than other students. At the same time, they admit that statistics and R are demanding. They believe that statistical skills will make them more employable. The second factor "Statistics is hard work" represents students (n=11) who are more afraid of statistics than the others. They do not enjoy the course and do not see statistics and R as a career advantage. However, they put in a lot of effort and time to master the material. The third factor "R is the problem" represents students (n=5) who understand the material but the application in R causes them problems. They do not believe that they can perform analyses in R as well as their peers. They prefer not to attend R sessions. At the same time, they see some potential in statistics and R skills for their future careers. Affiliation to any of the factors is only significantly correlated with self-reported workload in the programme; suggesting that less workload may change attitudes towards statistics in a positive way.

The three factors are moderately correlated with each other (r between 0.29 and 0.36), meaning that there are not only differences but also some similarities. In all three factors, the items 'I tried to attend every statistics lecture' and

'Learning statistics requires a lot of discipline' ranked high, indicating students' determination to understand the material. All students negated the item 'Statistics is worthless' - from the instructors' point of view a solid base to build on. However, the students' comments showed that although the students do not consider statistics to be worthless, they do not see any direct relevance for a civic, personal and professional life.

This Q-study helped to understand the attitudes towards statistics and R as a total product, as the items were ranked globally. In addition, by contrasting the three attitudes (factors), it was possible to identify the areas where students had the most difficulty or enjoyed the most. We conclude that although statistics and R are not love at first sight for most students, it is the second time they reveal their importance.

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276 Exploring the role of research in curriculum documents and the eyes of Norwegian, Hungarian and English students

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Over the past few decades, there have been increased discussions on the relationships between research and teaching in higher education, subject to influence from a variety of structural and agential factors that change over time. This paper is based on an international comparative research project, and it explores the overall patterns of how sociology BA degrees are set up in the three case-study countries of Norway, England and Hungary. It a) analyses curriculum documents to pinpoint how 'research' appears in these degrees; and b) illuminates how students at different stages of their studies see the process of sociological inquiry. The early introduction of research methods courses means students often feel they gain some level of expertise, however, at this stage research is a practice of others that exists as texts. The feelings of belonging to the sociological community are intertwined with the practice of research becoming personalised.

Full paper

Introduction and context

Over the past few decades, there have been increased discussions on the relationships between research and teaching in higher education, with critical evaluations of the link between the two and its potential consequences (Geschwind & Brostrom, 2015; McKinley et al., 2021). These two constructs exist in a nuanced range of relationships, and are subject to influence from a variety of structural and agential factors that change over time. These are for instance, academic disciplines; the type of the institution; funding mechanisms for research and teaching; contractual arrangements, career stage and value-orientations of academic staff; previous experience and future career plans of students (Coate et al., 2001; McKinley et al., 2021; Clark & Hordósy, 2019).

Additionally, external factors, including natural events, can significantly impact the academic and educational sectors. For example, COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the dynamics of research and teaching activities and the way academic institutions operate (Piotrowski & King, 2020). Consequently, the experiences and knowledge gained during this period may lead to long-term changes in the way research and teaching are conducted, with an increased emphasis on digital technologies, flexible teaching/learning opportunities, and the integration of online and in-person aspects of teaching and learning.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of 'what actually happens in practice' (Tight, 2016, pp. 293), particularly in the aftermath of a global pandemic that has affected teaching and research dynamics, it is crucial to undertake a detailed exploration of the nexus in higher education institutions. This may reveal important findings related to the (dys)functionality and characteristics of the RTN across different disciplines and stakeholders within the post-pandemic world (Hordósy & McLean, 2022), shedding light on its practice within higher education settings.

Design and methods

This mixed-methods study is based on an international comparative design (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2006; Yin, 2009). Drawing first on curriculum documents, the paper explores the overall patterns of how sociology BA degrees are set up in the three case-study countries of Norway (7 institutions), England (20 institutions) and Hungary (9 institutions). Second, using interview evidence, current students' perceptions on their subject and the role of research in personal projects are drawn. Using a total of 38 face-to-face or online semi-structured interviews with sociology

Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral students, the similarities and differences in Hungarian ($N_{HU} = 17$), English ($N_{EN} = 9$) and Norwegian ($N_{NO} = 12$) students' views are outlined.

Results

Research methods and analysis courses tend to be compulsory and offered during first and second year of the study, as students are expected to work on their dissertation in final year of their bachelor's study. Research method courses are taught under various titles in the UK universities. Some universities offer general research method courses, some with special emphasises on social science research methods, other offer quantitative and qualitative courses separately or focus on one or the other. There is less focus on qualitative research methods in Hungarian Universities and more focus on quantitative research skills and using analytical software. Each Norwegian university offers one or two courses on social research methods in their bachelor's in sociology program with no particular focus on qualitative or quantitative methods.

The early introduction of research methods courses means students often feel they gain some level of expertise, for instance to be able to critique bad examples of survey-design. However, throughout the early stages of a BA degree research is generally about studying sociological texts, rather than gathering their own data from people. The overall trend of research seen as done by others before it becoming a personal experience can be hampered by the randomness of who gets to do research as extracurricular activity, and the major disruption of Covid-19. This is crucial, as the feelings of belonging to the sociological community and the process of becoming a sociologist seem intimately linked to research activities and having a chance to ask their own sociological research questions.

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Parallel Session 2:6

16:00 - 17:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Room 145

Chair Camille Kandiko-Howson

127 Troubling Identity: An Illustrative Example of a Middle Woman Leader's Identity Construction in HEI in China

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

This study explores the identity construction of women leaders in Chinese Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the case of Liwen, a deputy dean in a junior college. The research highlights the marginalization and underrepresentation of women leaders in China's HEIs, despite societal changes. It reveals that women leaders in middle-level positions in higher education struggle to establish their leadership identities due to shifting discourses surrounding education, gender, and performance. The study adopts a post-structuralist perspective and demonstrates how Liwen manages her troubling leadership identity by adopting alternative identities of "big sister," "teacher," and "engineer." These identities enable her to reclaim authority within a specific cultural context. The research suggests that while Liwen's image aligns with the ideal educational leader, her legitimacy as a woman leader remains questioned. The study provides a valuable reference for future research on gender and identity in Chinese higher education leadership.

Full paper

Women leaders in China's HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) have long been marginalised and underrepresented (References available on request). However, the rapidly changing socio-economic contexts continue to shape and modify the discourses around 'educational leaders' and 'women', persistently challenging the legitimacy of women's leadership identities.

Women leaders in China's HEIs are mainly concentrated in junior colleges and universities deemed non-prestigious, occupying middle-level leadership positions such as dean, deputy dean, or party secretary. These women leaders are the first batch of women who have received higher education after the resumption of the higher education entrance examination in China and grew up under the discourse of 'professional women' and the propaganda of gender equality. However, after experiencing economic reform and the invasion of education by the market economy, the discourse of higher education leadership continues to fit in an increasingly 'masculine' form. Rapidly changing situations and an emphasis on performance require leaders to be even more visionary, tough, and aggressive, while the discourse on women becomes more conservative as job market competition intensifies and the effects of the aging population.

This small-scale study adopts a post-structuralist perspective on identity construction, that is, women leaders in higher education need to face multiple identities brought about by subjects placed in different discourses. The current dominant discourse makes their multidimensional identities in opposition in contradiction while the troubling identities require them to develop a strategy to manage to achieve a subtle identity balance.

The study describes a women leader Liwen, a deputy dean working in a junior college, using narrative interviews, aiming to investigate how she constructs, understands, and manages her 'troubling' leadership identity. The results indicate Liwen has a strong rejection of leadership identity, and her description of her leadership practice and her preference for titles expressed an identity management strategy – taking another three identities of 'big sister', 'teacher', and 'engineer' to replace the leadership identity for reclaiming the authority. The strategy reveals an attempt to gain more legitimacy for a denied identity based on a specific cultural context. As an alternative to leadership identity, Big Sister's image is rooted in the context of Confucian culture, based on the natural sense of authority brought by the order of seniority, while Engineer and Teachers as identities she shares with her staff fit the communist definition of the attribute of leadership --coming from the people, with people.

The study claims that while the image of Liwen—a well-educated, elite woman— taking appears to be a 'right fit' (see Courtney and McGinity's typology of conceptualisations of educational-leader identity, 2020) for a higher education middle-level leader, the legitimacy of her leadership identity as a woman has never been accepted. This pilot study hopes to take this illustrative example to provide a reference for the ongoing research project on the identity construction of women middle and senior leaders in China's higher education. Gender and identity issues are becoming more prominent in current Chinese higher education leadership, but have not received commensurate attention.

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219 STUDENTS' AGENCY IN MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

This study explores the ways the Government of Kazakhstan's policy of mainstreaming gender in higher education institutions (HEIs) is enacted on the ground and to what effect by examining the perspectives of students' who have been exposed to gender-focused curriculum in Kazakhstan. The paper draws on 13 focus group discussions with 59 higher education students in nine universities across Kazakhstan to explore students' understanding of gender and gender equality. The collected data is currently being analyzed, and as the analysis progresses, differences in students' views will be explored; however, preliminary findings suggest that students acknowledge the existence of unequal gender relations and prescribed gender norms in society and are able to challenge and alter these gender norms and behaviors; nonetheless, there are instances where the university curriculum and teachers entrench prevalent gender stereotypes, leaving little spaces for students to defy the reproduction of unequal gender relationships.

Full paper

This paper reports on the second stage of a project focused on exploring how the Government of Kazakhstan's policy of mainstreaming gender in higher education institutions (HEIs) is enacted on the ground and to what effect. Kazakhstan has initiated the policy of gender mainstreaming in HEIs to fulfill its commitment to global gender equality initiatives, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration on advancing women's Rights, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including SDG 4 (Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Kazakhstan has also promulgated legislation to promote gender equality, including the Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities and the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence. A number of commissions, furthermore, have been established, including the National Commission for Women and the Family, demonstrating concerted efforts to address the issue of gender equality in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has made remarkable achievements in expanding access to all and its gender parity index in school and tertiary participation is the best in Central Asia (OECD, 2017). Yet, female students in Kazakhstan continue to be overrepresented in traditional areas of study and underrepresented in science and technology related fields (OECD, 2017). The segregation of students in particular areas of study produces gendered labor outcomes resulting in the concentration of women in feminized occupations with high prevalence of low-wages. The gendered labor outcomes and career choices in Kazakhstan are linked to expected gender roles and unequal power relations (ADB, 2013).

To respond to the government's agenda on gender equality, higher education institutions established centers and institutions on gender research. In 2016, 60 elective courses on gender equality were introduced in wide-ranging disciplines across 38 higher educational institutions, including "Education", "Humanities", "Social Science, Business and Economics". Among others, these courses include "Gender Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan", "Introduction to gender theory", "Constitutional and legal basis of gender policy", "Gender and Feminism Studies" and "Gender psychology". However, very little is known about how gender equality is understood or mainstreamed in educational courses in HEIs in Kazakhstan and how these courses are being developed and enacted.

Previous research demonstrates that gender-responsive curricula and educational initiatives aiming to interrupt unequal gender relationships influence students' agency (Bajaj and Pathmarajah's, 2011). The construction of gender identities via the curriculum and the understanding and learning of students are often mediated by student agency and their multiple identifications, such as socio-economic status, geographical location, home language, religion, race, and age. Bajaj and Pathmarajah's (2011) study on the differentiated impact of educational initiatives in Zambia and India demonstrates that curriculum innovations focusing on gender equality and human rights brought positive changes in attitudes toward gender amongst students and teachers; however, there were differences among boys

and girls; boys tended to enact more “transformative agency” and efficacy when asserting new understandings of gender and gender relations, while for girls, translating a new “sense of equality and respect into agency and action is often encountered with greater retaliation and difficulty” (p.62) due to the structural inequalities within the society which tend to privilege boys over girls. Understanding how educational initiatives are aimed at promoting gender equality received by students is important to tackle gender inequality both in the professional and domestic spheres. Thus, this paper aims to explore 1) students’ understanding of gender and gender equality, 2) how they receive the enacted gender curriculum in their respective schools, and 3) how they enact gender equality in professional and personal spaces. The paper draws on 13 focus group discussions with 59 higher education students including 50 female and 9 male students both undergraduates and graduates across nine universities located in South, North, West, and Central Kazakhstan.

The collected data is at the stage of the analysis, and differences among the views of students will be explored as the analysis goes in–depth; however, preliminary findings suggest that students acknowledge the strict gender boundaries within society and are able to challenge and disrupt the existing gender norms and behaviour; however, few cases demonstrate that university curriculum and teachers entrench the existing gender norms and gender stereotypes leaving little spaces for students to defy the reproduction of unequal gender relationships. The paper will discuss the implications for advancing, reimagining, and reinvigorating gender mainstreaming in HEIs in Kazakhstan and beyond.

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333 Has the 2014 Quality Reform in Higher Education in Peru Benefited the Development of Women in Academia?

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This study analyzes the presence of women in the highest categories of the academic career in two prestigious universities in Peru, the Universidad Nacional Mayor de Marcos and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. The objective is to investigate the potential effects of the 2014 Quality Policy reform in Higher Education on gender

segregation during two specific periods, 2010 and 2019. For this, the following research question was posed: how has the new university policy of 2014 in Peru influenced the progression of women to the highest academic category? The study analyzes the cases of these two universities based on data from the last University Census of 2010 and the Faculty Payroll Reports of the Superintendencia de Educación Universitaria of 2019. Although it is observed through the regression analysis that segregation persists, evidence of odds ratios shows that the probability of promotion of women to the highest category increases.

Full paper

Introduction

This study examines the representation of women in the highest categories of the academic career at two esteemed universities in Peru: the Universidad Nacional Mayor de Marcos (UNMS), the oldest state university, and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), the oldest private non-profit university. The analysis is conducted in the context of the changes brought about by the Policy of Quality Assurance in University Education in 2014. The main research question addressed is: How has the 2014 university policy influenced the advancement and access of women to the highest academic categories?

In Peru, the last two university censuses of 1994 and 2010, account for the lower presence of women in the highest category "full professor". Although an increase in the presence of women is observed (from 9% in 1994 to 33% in 2010), this is not consistent with their investment in training and dedication to research (Busse and Barrantes, 2018; Chavez and Ronso, 2021).

According to the idea of human capital, proposed by Becker (1964), there are three fundamental variables that guarantee access to the best job opportunities: work experience; academic training and learning; and, health care. From this perspective, the low presence of women in senior categories could be explained because women accumulate less human capital as their male peers, so their evaluators could choose not to promote a woman, because in the long term it is less productive than hire a man (Nielsen, 2016; O'Connor & O'Hagan, 2016)

On the other hand, Nielsen (2015) points out that the idea of the academic career has as its core the "meritocratic ethos" in which it is presumed that gender has no relevance, because according to its defenders, this system would provide everyone, regardless of their gender, the same opportunities to advance and obtain rewards for their individual merits and efforts. However, the literature on the tenure system poses a control problem when it is conducted by faculty themselves (McPherson & Shapiro, 1999; Bonifaz, 2021), as it grants a form of property right that influences decisions aimed at maintaining the long-term benefits of the evaluators (Brown, 2001).

Method

To examine the status of women faculty members in the academic career at UNMSM and PUCP, a mixed-methods approach has been employed. This approach involves analyzing the distribution of professors based on data from the University Census 2010 and the 2019 Faculty Payroll database. These findings are then triangulated with an analysis of changes in the requirements and procedures of the academic career following the enactment of the 2014 Law.

In the quantitative analysis, the variables derived from the analytical framework (university, gender, degrees, research, category) were utilized, and the multiple logistic regression model and odds ratio test were applied. The qualitative analysis involved comparing the statutes of the academic career in each case to identify changes in the requirements and procedures resulting from Law 30220.

Findings

For the analysis of the two universities with the data from the 2010 Census (n=3037), at a confidence level of 95%, the model and the independent variables were significant (p-value less than alpha 0.05). The model showed predictive capacity of the dependent variable (academic category), demonstrating that the variable sex=0 (woman) decreases the possibility of climbing from one category to another. In the same way, the odds ratios were obtained, where it was observed that a male professor who has a master's degree (or doctorate) and conducts research is more likely than a woman to be promoted to the highest category.

The same analysis was carried out with the same model and level of confidence, for the two cases (n=3520) with the 2019 Payrolls. With this database, it was observed, again, that a male faculty who has a master's degree (or doctorate) and conducts research are more likely to be promoted than their female peers.

However, the findings highlight that, with the 2019 Payroll data, the value of the odds ratios of these variables change considerably, since for this analysis, the variable "research" obtained the highest value (2.88), followed by the variable "maximum degree" and "sex", variables whose odds ratios decreased by 0.51 and 0.03 points, respectively. This shows that the probabilities of ascending for women improve in 2019 compared to 2010.

In this sense, it can be argued that changes in the "rules of the game" based on the assessment of merits and more transparent processes can benefit women. In turn, it can be affirmed that these changes do not happen spontaneously, but that they respond to new demands raised in university policies in Peru.

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Parallel Session 2:7

16:00 - 17:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Conference Room 1c

Chair Ella Taylor-Smith

281 The impact of symbolic violence on the perceived choices of female trainee primary school teachers: A poetic perspective

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

This presentation builds on another in the stream, that of Professor Richard Waller who discusses the forthcoming book *Critical Perspectives on Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Lessons from doctoral studies* and is from the perspective of an ECR, lead-author of one of the chapters in that edited collection.

This presentation looks at how symbolic violence impacts the perceived choices of young women training to be primary school teachers: a central aspect of the lead author's doctoral research. It discusses how the study's participants 'chose' primary school teaching based on the embedded notion that they are 'good with children'. Alongside the substantive content of the presentation is an examination of how the ECR and their co-author navigated the authorial journey together using autoethnography and poetry as ways to explore the concept of symbolic violence in the own lives as well as the lives of the research participants.

Full paper

This presentation focuses on one of the chapters from the forthcoming book **Critical Perspectives on Educational Policies and Professional Identities: Lessons from doctoral studies** (Waller, Andrews & Clark, forthcoming, 2024) discussed by Professor Richard Waller in a previous presentation. The context of Prof. Waller's presentation is an exploration of the processes and procedures taking place during the inception and writing of the book and this presentation homes in on the findings from a single chapter. The presentation examines the substantive theoretical framing and content of the chapter and how the lead-author and co-author worked together to shape and enrich the chapter as it progressed and evolved.

The chapter being discussed in this presentation is entitled *The impact of symbolic violence on the perceived choices of female trainee primary school teachers: A poetic perspective* and is presented by the lead author of the chapter who is an Early Career Researcher. It focuses on the concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001) as a powerful yet invisible force permeating society - 'an effective tool of silent domination and silencing the dominated' (Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016, p.8). The overarching thesis from which this chapter developed was a study of why young working and middle-class women make the decision to become primary school teachers and in the thesis the lead author argues that this is in part due to class and gender-based expectation and assumption which manifests as symbolic violence. The book chapter that has developed from the thesis focuses on this aspect of the thesis.

This presentation will look at the literature that underpins the concept of symbolic violence as presented in the chapter (Steedman, 1982; Bourdieu, 2001; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). It considers the impact of symbolic violence in the lives of the research participants who believed that choosing teaching as a future career was a conscious, personally motivated 'choice'. It goes on to embrace the concept of embedded and contingent choosers (Ball et al. 2002) as a contributory factor in reinforcing symbolic violence in the lives of working-class families and for the

purposes of the chapter in the lead-author's data. Furthermore, it argues that hot knowledge (Ball et al. 2002), the middle-class privileged knowledge of how Higher Education works, mitigates against the impact of symbolic violence for middle-class – embedded - choosers. This is also a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993) where the middle-classes 'pass on to their children – knowingly or not – the capacity for them to succeed at school and university, and thereby get the sort of qualifications which help them to move into the best jobs' (Savage et al., 2015, p.49)

The book chapter interweaves the narratives of the participants with those of the lead and co-authors to illuminate the exponential impact of symbolic violence. This presentation demonstrates how the chapter, like the thesis, uses narrative inquiry as its methodological tool and presents the data as poetry. This was a choice made by the lead author during the thesis and influenced by Richardson (1995, p.704) who suggests that poetry is a way of demonstrating that 'poems as "findings" resituates ideas of validity and reliability from "knowing" to "telling"'. Everybody's writing is suspect – not just those who write the poems'.

It also embraces autoethnography: the authors' experiences of symbolic violence are presented as poems alongside those of the participants to create a poetic vignette which is robustly underpinned by literature. The overarching thesis from which the chapter – and hence this presentation – evolved had become increasingly steeped in autoethnography and the presentation discusses how this growing necessity to situate self at the heart of the study gradually became not only apparent to the lead author but an essential, non-negotiable aspect of their doctoral journey, the 'little provocation [to] start an avalanche' that Douglas and Carless (2013, p.93) discuss. The co-author of the chapter was one of the lead author's doctoral supervisors whose own work is situated in narrative inquiry so the collaboration on this chapter was a 'natural' step and one that will be discussed in the presentation.

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357 What are we backgrounding? Exploring emerging aspects of technology in teacher training programmes

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Research Domains

Digital University and new learning technologies (DU)

Abstract

This paper reports on an ongoing project that explores how critical aspects of technology in teaching are backgrounded in teacher training programmes, meanwhile effective ways of using technology are foregrounded. The paper draws on findings from two participatory design workshops with groups of Danish academics and academic developers.

In the project, the concepts of foreground and background are employed as verbs, where something is actively foregrounded, while other issues are pushed to the background. Whereas the project is a work-in-progress that will be completed by the end of 2023, the results of the workshops already provide valuable insight into a range of micro, meso, and macro level issues affecting higher education staff's use of digital technologies.

Following a brief presentation of the project, we open the floor for a discussion of possible and alternative ways to address the hidden and backgrounded issues of digital technologies in teacher training.

Full paper

Backgrounding [verb]: *to give less attention or emphasis to (something): to place (something) in the background* (merriam-webster.com)

While teacher-training programmes in higher education increasingly integrate aspects of effective usage of digital technology, research from the last 10 to 20 years have prompted calls for institutions and academics to adopt more ecological and critical approaches toward the integration of digital technologies in higher education teaching and learning (Selwyn, 2011, Herrmann et al, 2021). These developments align with a recent call to close the gap between teacher training courses and themes of importance as identified in contemporary research (Kärkkäinen et al., 2023). Neil Selwyn also commented that there has been a tendency in educational literature to address EdTech as an essentially positive project, and a lack of discussion around its actual failures and problems (Selwyn, 2020). In this perspective, there is a tendency for literature on ed tech to foreground the best use of technologies or practicalities, and background more critical discussions.

A risk of this gap and the lack of discussions of current issues in teacher training is that it will reinforce the positive understanding of technologies for the higher education staff, as the teacher training programmes would have been their primary introduction to alternative narratives. However, too much emphasis on the use of technology might also risk taking away space, time and focus from the didactical and pedagogical issues that are already impacted by the instrumental focus on digital technologies in teaching (Stenalt et al, 2023).

Against this background, this paper reports on an ongoing project that explores the extent to which academics and academic developers are aware of aspects backgrounded by attempts to foreground effective ways of using technology. This focus is developed through the following research question: What relationships and tensions are emerging between teacher training programmes, practice and research within the field of higher education digital teaching and learning?

In addressing the overlooked or hidden themes in higher education teacher training and competence development courses, the concepts of foreground and background, as described by Ashwin (2008) has been an inspiration, and in this project used as verbs, where something is actively foregrounded, while other issues are pushed to the background.

Methods

The paper draws on findings from two participatory design workshops with groups of Danish academics and academic developers. As is the case with participatory research, the workshops were used to investigate the realities of the participants and to highlight issues which might be worth integrating in competence development (Spinuzzi, 2005). In brief, participants were distributed in smaller groups of 5 – 6 participants and asked to first identify issues that they found were hidden in the shadows or backgrounded in their teacher training courses. Second, to discuss ways of bringing these issues forward and finally to jointly reflect on the implications of this foregrounding. To support discussions across diverse groups of staff, the process was facilitated by using CoNavigator, a physical tool for interdisciplinary collaboration (c.f. Lindvig et al. 2017, van Lambalgen & de Vos, 2023).

Findings

The project is a work-in-progress that will be completed by the end of 2023. As such, the following results are preliminary. Nevertheless, the results of the workshops already provide valuable insight into a range of micro, meso, and macro level issues affecting higher education staff's use of digital technologies. Issues that were brought up were among others the extra time spent preparing teaching that include digital technologies, that the digital technologies overrule the didactical considerations and that negotiating the didactical contract between students and teacher is disturbed by the many devices in the room, where everyone seems to be alone together. Compared to the current content of teacher training programmes at University of Copenhagen, the emerging themes point to a need to encourage and support the development of a curriculum that covers the main pedagogical themes such as constructive alignment and congruence (Hounsell & Hounsell, 2007), meanwhile also shedding light on implications of digital technologies for teaching and learning. Considering this, it seems prudent to work towards developing or cultivating a room for discussing not only the ideal teaching situations, but also the failures, frustrations and insecurities, which are also part of developing new teaching practices, especially those pushed forward by political and institutional strategies at meso and macro levels of higher education.

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188 The Visual Design of Mouse Icons for Digital Literacy and Inclusion

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Flórez-Aristizábal (2018) describes how the growth in technology is changing the way society communicates, specifically within education. They highlight both the scope of adaptation possible with technology within education, and the lack of frameworks to guide developers & designers in the development of technological tools aimed at the Deaf community. This paper raises awareness of the challenges faced by Deaf students for (PC) computer based demonstrations, and presents a work-in-progress study that examines the use of digital computer mouse icons (DCMI) as graphic representations for conveying meaning and information to members of the Deaf community. Qualitative focus groups and task-based observations were used to gather user perceptions and experiences regarding the use of DCMI in enhancing the delivery of digital literacy skills available to students from the Deaf/ Hard of Hearing (HoH) communities. The project aims to enhance access of software and technology to Deaf users.

Full paper

Introduction

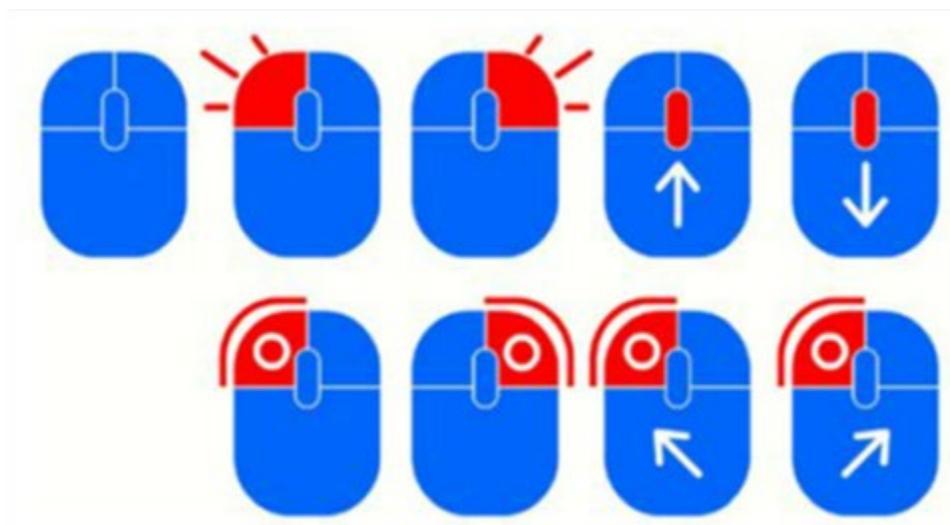
Education needs to take a more visual approach to communicate digital literacy skills to students from the Deaf community. Lane (2010) refers to people from the Deaf community as 'people of the eye', highlighting the visual

nature and approach of the Deaf community. The National Deaf Children's Society illustrated the disparity between Deaf and hearing students (NDCS, 2019), with less than one in three deaf pupils (29%) going to university. Alarmingly only 5% of teachers believe the current education system allows Deaf students to hit their full potential (NDCS, 2022). Berge (2015) highlights the challenges of efficiently passing on instructions to Deaf students. With Stinson (2013) seeing potential in computer based notes, even seeing improvement in post-testing. Digital Computer Mouse Icons are an attempt to represent information visually as an effective means.

Explanation of DCMI

Digital Computer Mouse Icons (DCMI) constitute a tool by using animated digital illustrations of a computer mouse and keyboard to summarise the actions of these devices within a computer demonstration [Fig. 1]. The design allows for the icons to be printed (with a specific frame shown) and still be legible to the user group.

FIG 1 - Initial illustration of the Digital Computer Mouse Icons (DCMI).



Created by Jonathan Mortimer

Methodology

Qualitative focus groups of five users from the Deaf community and observations were used to gather user perceptions and experiences regarding the use of DCMI. During these sessions a Sign Language Interpreter was present.

Findings

Each of the participants highlighted their challenges in learning computer graphics software while studying at College or University. This data was compiled together and used as an initial list of user requirements. Two main points were raised consistently across the focus group:

1. Having all the necessary information to understand PC computer based task/s.
2. A language gap due to a lack of BSL signs for animation/games terminology.

Observation

Berge (2015) mentions that Deaf students can only have their visual attention focused on one source at a time. It was observed that demonstrations of a (PC) computer based task, while users were learning computer graphics software, had to be delivered three times in the same session to Deaf participants. This is to ensure all the necessary information of the task was passed on, with each 'information pass' having a specific purpose [Fig. 2]. The initial design [Fig. 1.] of the DCMI was conceptualised as a paper based solution to offer clarity to users on mouse & keyboard actions. The DCMI design was later developed as an animated digital solution to help illustrate computer mouse and keyboard actions., whilst noting the required change of delivery approach for hearing and Deaf students - with simultaneous presentation of visual & auditory information creating a barrier for Deaf students, who cannot look at the interpreter and the demonstration at the same time.

FIG 2 - Table summary of the three 'information passes'.

No.	Step	Summary	Description
1	Instructions of the task/s is conveyed to student	Instructions	Sign language interpreter translates information of the task to student/s from lecturer / teacher
2	On-screen demonstration of task	Screen demo	Presentation of task / steps via an on-screen demonstration in the context of task
3	Highlights computer mouse & keyboard actions	What are the hands doing	Highlighting actions of hands, computer mouse movements and keyboard shortcuts

Impact

This study raises awareness of the challenges faced by Deaf students for (PC) computer based demonstrations. It encourages further discussions with delivery staff in regards to three information passes mentioned in this paper. The main impact is the potential to improve Deaf student retention rates, as well as encourage more Deaf students to pursue College & University education, with a refined approach and knowledge of three information passes and DCMI. There is scope that other groups and communities could benefit from the addition of a visual indicator for using a computer mouse & keyboard.

Next steps

A user centred testing approach will examine how the solutions developed can evolve to ensure future pedagogical approaches are embedded directly with the Deaf community. Scotland is uniquely placed to champion a new visual based approach to digital literacy skills with the Deaf community, with the BSL [Scotland] act 2015 representing a significant milestone in recognising and promoting the rights of British Sign Language (BSL) users in Scotland.

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Poster Session

17:30 - 18:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Courtyard Restaurant

Poster presenters are invited to be available by their posters for a live discussion with conference attendees. This is a chance to showcase your research, receive feedback and connect with colleagues.

There will be two prizes for poster presenters; all posters will be judged by members of the SRHE Committee and by conference delegates. The Delegate Pack will include the voting form with further guidance. Voting will open on Wednesday 6 December and end after lunch break on the following day.

Poster prize winners will be announced at 18:30 on Thursday 7 December – good luck to all involved.

Welcome Drinks Reception (sponsored by Taylor & Francis)

18:30 - 19:30 Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Courtyard Bar

The Drinks Reception is open to all delegates.

This will be an excellent opportunity to network and mingle with exhibitors, meet old friends and colleagues, and to make new ones.

Registration, tea & coffee and exhibition viewing

08:30 - 09:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Courtyard Restaurant

Parallel Session 3:1

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Room 139
Chair Jacqueline Stevenson

184 Female academic leaders in processes of transition: results from a small study from Germany and the USA

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

Processes of transition into top academic leadership positions are not well researched, and even less is known about how female leaders move into top academic roles. In our qualitative study, in which interviews were conducted with recently elected female presidents/rectors, and chancellors in Germany and the USA, we explore how females experience these transitions. Transitions usually involve a change in assumption about oneself and the world, which therefore leads to a corresponding change in behaviour (Schlossberg, 1984). Accordingly, we can identify predictable, linear stages accompanied by more fragmented, personally complex assumptions and issues. Processes of transition have already been reviewed in the literature, more recently by Manderscheid & Ardichvilli (2008). In our study we take Manderscheid & Ardichvilli's transition model as a starting point for developing further our understanding of how female academic leaders experience such transitions, looking in particular and comparatively at support structures and their overall navigation of change.

Full paper

Higher education institutions are large, complex, diverse and involve a wide range of stakeholders. Those who decide to take up a top leadership position in higher education therefore need to have some, if not a deep understanding of the complexity of this very particular environment as the academic leadership role “is a highly social endeavor” (Gallos & Bolman; 2021: xi). When new top leadership roles are occupied the institution will be watching the new leader very carefully to determine the extent to which existing traditions, cultures or processes are continued, adapted or replaced. This may involve some degree of turbulence within the institution. Ideally, leadership transitions should run smoothly and without greater periods of instability, thereby maintaining continuity with the institution’s mission (Van Maanen and Schein, 1977). Much of the literature concerning leadership transitions in higher education involves presidents (Gaval, 2009; Kolomitz, 2016; Lohse, 2008; Sanaghan, 2008; Smerek, 2013). Studies also tend to focus on presidential career paths, or their personal characteristics (Scott, 2011; Kim, 2013), which is unsurprising as changes in presidencies are not only highly visible, but are by their very nature fundamentally important to the institution and the wider community. Far less literature focuses, however, on other leadership transitions within higher education institutions (HEIs) including, for example, those of new chancellors, provosts or deans (Gmelch, 2000). Even less research examines the impact of new leaders, be these at whichever level within an institution, although some exceptions exist (Mallard, 2015; Riggs, 2012; Smith et al., 2012).

To date little literature examines the female perspective on transitions into leadership roles (Cook & Glass, 2014), although the need for research this area has been clearly identified (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2008). Our study aims to start closing part of this perceived research gap by undertaking exploratory qualitative research into a defined number of recently-elected female leaders in American and German universities (presidents and chancellors), to understand more about the processes involved, the support (if any) experienced and the pre-service training that may or not have been used. Our research asks the following questions:

- How have female leaders experienced the process of transition into a new role?
- What difficulties have female leaders experienced during their role transition?
- What support structures have helped female leaders during their role transition?

According to Brammer (1992: 239) life transitions “are sharp discontinuities with previous life events”, which implies that there are specific and clearly delineated moments in time along a trajectory marked by a particular start or end. These specific moments are usually dates in the calendar when a person takes up or takes leave office. Transition is, however, not simply determined by a date in the calendar. It usually also involves a change in assumption about oneself and the world, which therefore leads to a corresponding change in behaviour (Schlossberg, 1984). Accordingly, we can identify both predictable, linear stages accompanied by more fragmented, personally complex assumptions and issues. Processes of transition have already been reviewed in the literature, more recently by Manderscheid & Ardichvili (2008). In our study we take their transition model (ibid: 125) as a starting point for developing further our understanding of how female academic leaders experience their transitions.

We have already conducted eight semi-structured qualitative interviews with female leaders, four from Germany and four from the United States (including presidents/chancellors). At time of interview (May-June 2023) these leaders were in post within an 18 month period. Interviews were conducted virtually in English, transcribed and is presently being coded in MaxQDa. As the number of interviewees is small at this stage, we can make no claims of generalisability. However, as this research is the first part of an intended larger study, we will hopefully be able to include our data into a wider body of research.

Some aspects of transition are beginning to emerge. In the US new female leaders are being prepared for their role by attending an obligatory training programme, which is not the case in Germany. Individual, self-organised coaches are also important preparing the future top position. Female leaders of child-bearing age in Germany are still being subjected to questions about their family-planning.

We hope that these exploratory interviews will help us formulate more specific research questions for a larger research study. By employing Manderscheid & Ardichvili’s model of transition, we aim to develop research according to the empirical data. Our results, especially those associated with support structures, may be of political relevance to higher education governance, allowing HEIs to improve transition processes overall, and new female academic leaders in particular.

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350 Gender Equality Policy in the Neoliberal University: a Relational Analysis utilising Bourdieu's Field and Capital

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

This paper reports on fieldwork exploring gender equality (GE) policy within UK universities arising from the UK Equality Act 2010, utilizing Bourdieu's notion of field and capital. The research offers theoretical and practical insights on both the application of Bourdieu's theoretical constructs to organizational studies and the institutional-wide implementation of GE policy within universities.

The findings highlight the importance and centrality of HR and senior management afforded symbolic capital as the 'owners' of GE policy within UK universities, and the movement away from social justice rationales to legal compliance and strategic 'wins' serving to dilute, neutralise and depoliticize the equality agenda.

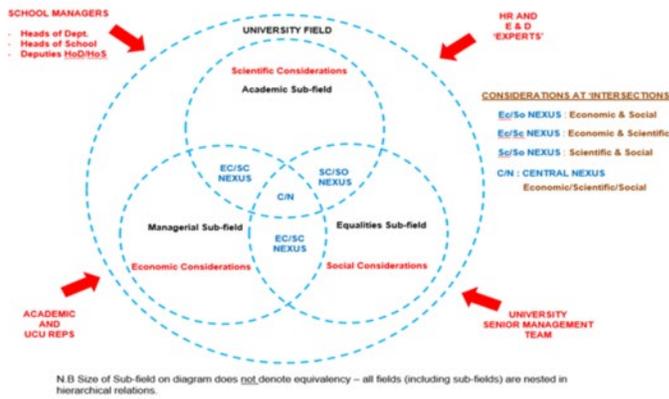
Hence the fieldwork reveals an integrationist model of GM predicated upon the neoliberal agenda. This reduces the likelihood of an alternative, transformative strategy being articulated and serves to constrain the beneficial outcomes of GE policy for women academics as well as overall policy on equality and inclusion.

Full paper

This paper reports on fieldwork exploring gender equality (GE) policy implementation in UK universities to evaluate the outcomes of policy arising from the UK Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010). It forms part of a wider study which utilizes Bourdieu's theoretical constructs of field, capital and habitus (1977; 1990) to carry out a fully relational analysis of GE policy from the perspective of women academics. Thematic analysis of data was based upon an ethnographic case study incorporating 44 multi-level participant interviews within five schools across three UK universities, supported by participant observation and documentary analysis. The research offers both theoretical and practical insights, adding to the relatively limited application of Bourdieu's theoretical constructs to organizational studies (Townley 2014) and addressing the 'dearth of attention' on how GE policy is implemented at institutional level (Tzanakou and Pearce 2019: 1192)

The fieldwork reveals the existence of three 'sub-fields' within the university field: the managerial, equalities and scientific fields respectively (figure 1). Crucially the findings highlight the importance and centrality of human resources (HR) and senior management within the managerial field as the 'owners' of GE policy. Specialist appointments and roles were created at all three universities, with symbolic capital afforded to equalities 'experts' positioned in the field as representatives of senior management. Their recognized expertise on equality matters formed the institutional cultural capital (Townley 2014: 44) and GE policy was used to strengthen the objective positions of agents in the managerial sub-field. Furthermore, centralized and standardized HR policy enabled and facilitated non-critical and neutral GE policy making.

Figure 1: University Field - Sub-Fields and Key Agents

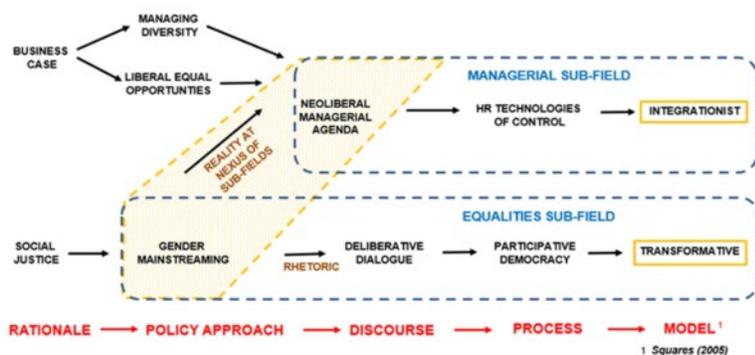


Concomitantly, academics and managers at school level, although relatively autonomous in their scientific sub-field, were repositioned at the periphery of the university field, with perceived 'tokenistic' consultations on GE policy masking the reality that agents at school level were constrained by the dictat from the centre. Furthermore, communications from HR were perceived to be too outward-facing, serving to undermine grassroots activism and 'buy in' of policy amongst school managers and academics. At school level, GE policy initiatives were largely perceived as surface level attitudinal interventions devised to devolve responsibility and avoid litigation, supported by an over-reliance on HR technocratic tools and 'tick-box' exercises.

These findings also reveal the relationship between the university field and its wider field of power. The external legislative requirements of EA 2010 and associated duties intensified the competition for capital and distinction in the field, and the outcome of this struggle was policy firmly embedded in legal compliance and transfer of risk from managerial to academic fields. The rationale for equality in the universities had moved away from social justice notions towards business case rationales, serving to dilute, sanitize and depoliticize the equality agenda. Thus the fieldwork reveals the tensions that exist at the nexus of university sub-fields, with notions of fairness and equity arising from the equalities field subsumed within economic considerations and pursuit of strategic 'wins' arising from the managerial sub-field.

This relational analysis can be related to the three models of GM as proposed by Squire's position paper (2005). Squires suggests that the integrationist model of GM, in its reliance on "experts within existing bureaucracies to pursue neutral policy-making" (ibid: 373), is more aligned with neoliberal managerial discourses, so that "mainstreaming becomes entrapped within a liberal egalitarian approach to equality" (ibid: 384). She posits that in order to reach its transformative potential, GM must adopt policies that facilitate deliberate dialogue and democratic processes, thus displacing the current systems and practices that perpetuate inequality (2005). The fieldwork in this study reveals an integrationist model of GM operated across all three universities as opposed to the transformative model. GE policy was firmly positioned in the managerial sub-field and operationalized in a manner aligned to neoliberal principles (figure 2).

Figure 2: Trajectory of GE Policy in University Field



These findings not only add to the arguments for a shift in power relationships within universities towards management hierarchies and HR experts pursuing neutral policy-making (Waitere, Wright, Tremaine, Brown and Pause 2011), but crucially also supports the position that “equality language is being hijacked, evacuated and put into the service of neoliberalism” (Archer 2007: 649). GE policy arising from HR practice as predicated upon the neoliberal agenda reduces the likelihood of an alternative, transformative strategy being articulated. This has significant implications with regard to constraining the beneficial outcomes of GE policy for women academics as well as overall policy on equality, diversity and inclusion within the neoliberal university.

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Parallel Session 3:2

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1a
Chair Colin McCaig

86 Climbing the ivory tower: educational and career pathways of care-experienced academics in higher education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

There has been increasing interest in understanding the higher education experiences of students who spent time 'in care' as children. Members of this group tend to have to overcome strong barriers to educational success, including social disruption, trauma, stigmatisation and low expectations from professionals. Nevertheless, care-experienced students often thrive in higher education, although little is known about those who choose to build on this success to pursue an academic career.

Our presentation seeks to explore the educational trajectories and working lives of care-experienced academics in the United Kingdom. An online survey was used to map the size and nature of the population; 31 valid responses were received. The survey was also used to identify potential interview participants, leading to 21 semi-structured online interviews. We use thematic analysis to represent their diverse journeys into higher education careers, including the challenges, precarities and enabling factors encountered.

Full paper

Rationale

Roughly 100,000 children are in the care of the state in the UK (e.g. with foster carers or in children's homes), usually due to neglect or maltreatment. Individuals who spent time in care are often referred to as 'care-experienced' and it is increasingly understood that their average educational outcomes are significantly lower than those of the general population (Sebba et al., 2015). Factors include the legacy of childhood trauma, educational and social disruption, societal stigma and low expectations from professionals.

Nevertheless, many care-experienced people thrive within the education system and achieve highly. The most recent official figures for England (Department for Education, 2022) show that 13% of those in care at 16 enter higher education by 19; this is substantially lower than for the general population (43%), but numbers appear to be growing and care-experienced people often choose to study later (Harrison, 2020). Furthermore, Harrison et al. (2022) have estimated that around one-quarter of care-experienced graduates progress immediately into postgraduate study and therefore toward professional careers. Almost nothing is currently known about those approaching the top of the academic ladder.

This study therefore explores the experiences of care-experienced people who are now pursuing an academic career (i.e. as professors, lecturers, research fellows and similar), addressing the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** What insights do the lived lives of the participants offer into successful pathways into and through higher education for people with experience of children's social care?
- **RQ2:** Why did the participants choose a career in academia, what challenges have they had to address to establish their careers and how have they overcome these?
- **RQ3:** What mechanisms, if any, exist within universities to support the professional development of care-experienced academics (e.g. mentoring or funding streams)?
- **RQ4:** How have the participants navigated issues of identity formation/renegotiation and communities of practice in academia?

Methodology

We believe this is the first study to engage with care-experienced academics as a group of interest. Our first aim was therefore to learn more about the group's size and composition, based on an assumption that the numbers are very small. To this end, we devised a short online questionnaire and publicised an anonymous weblink that was distributed extensively through relevant organisations, online forums and key individuals, aiming to reach as many care-experienced academics as possible.

After four months, we received 31 valid responses, providing a minimum measurement of the overall population. The majority were working in social science disciplines, but there was a mix of ages, institutional types and career lengths. Roughly two-thirds were women, while one-sixth were drawn from minority ethnic communities and a similar number identified as disabled.

The questionnaire's second purpose was to collect contact details for those interested in being interviewed. Twenty-five were invited, of whom 21 agreed. Semi-structured interviews lasting between 45 and 70 minutes were undertaken using Microsoft Teams, professionally transcribed and carefully anonymised, before being uploaded into Nvivo for analysis. A brief interim report was then circulated to the interviewees by e-mail as a form of member checking and to invite any further thoughts. The British Educational Research Association's 2018 guidelines for ethical research practice informed the study.

Findings

At the time of writing, analysis is on-going. We are using thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2021), drawing on the critical realist tradition which combines realist ontology with interpretivist epistemology. This is powerful when seeking to understand the lives of individuals who encounter rigid societal structures, such as the care and education systems (Pawson, 2013). Critical realist enquiry particularly seeks to shed light on how those systems can be adapted to challenge deep-rooted inequalities and support marginalised groups. In particular, we use Archer's (2007) concept of reflexivity to explore the balance between individual agency and societal structures.

This presentation will focus on the themes that relate to the process of entering an academic career, including challenges, precarities and enabling factors. It will also explore how educational experiences during childhood influenced pathways into academia and the formal/informal support received subsequently. It will conclude by looking at our participants' suggestions for the policy and practice changes needed to seed an increase in the number of care-experienced academics.

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318 Facing the 'cliff edge': Care-experienced graduates' transitions into and through taught postgraduate study

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Care-experienced (CE) people are one of the most under-represented groups in HE (Ellis and Johnston, 2019; Harrison, 2017). Despite the growth in research attention paid to CE peoples' access to HE at the undergraduate level, there are currently no qualitative insights into their transition experiences into and through taught postgraduate study. To better understand these experiences, this paper presents findings from a British Academy-funded project which qualitatively and longitudinally explores CE graduates' transitions out of HE in England and Scotland (Baker, 2022). The project identified several constraints faced by CE graduates when accessing and progressing through taught postgraduate degrees. These arose from a support 'cliff edge', with various forms of support from participants' HE institutions and local authorities abruptly ending upon undergraduate graduation. This resulted in taught postgraduate degrees being unfeasible for some. For others, this led to significant financial and academic hardship resulting in withdrawal from their postgraduate studies.

Full paper

Introduction

Care-experienced (CE) people (those who have spent time in the care system as children) overcome profound challenges to access and progress through higher education (HE). These include educational disruption, stigmatisation, and mental health issues arising from childhood trauma (Harrison, 2017). They are one of the most under-represented groups in HE both nationally (Ellis and Johnston, 2019) and internationally (Jackson and Cameron, 2014; Okpych and Courtney, 2019; Wilson et al., 2019; Zeira, et al., 2023).

Despite the growth in research attention paid to CE peoples' HE access and success at the undergraduate level, there are currently no qualitative insights into their transition experiences into and through taught postgraduate study (see Baker et al., 2022). This is important to understand, as constraints in postgraduate access and progression mean that the transformative potential of HE for CE people may be restricted to the undergraduate level. In turn, this may limit: access to specific careers (Keane, 2017), higher future earnings (Walker & Zhu, 2013), job satisfaction

levels (Rosenbaum & Rosenbaum, 2016), and protection from unemployment (Conlon & Patrignani, 2011). In establishing qualitative understandings of CE peoples' access and progression through postgraduate study, recommendations for policy and practice changes to redress the constraints that CE people face in this context can be proposed.

The study

To better understand the constraints that CE people face when accessing and progressing through taught postgraduate study, this paper presents findings from the *Care-Experienced Graduates' Decision-Making, Choices and Destinations* project. The project, funded by the British Academy (2021-2024), qualitatively and longitudinally explores: a) the influences that inform CE students' decision-making and choices in relation to their graduate pathways and destinations; b) the structural enablements and constraints that exist during their transitions out of HE and into employment and/or further study and c) what role CE graduates perceive their care experience as having in both their choices and decisions, as well as the constellations of any enablements and constraints they encounter. It does so through undertaking repeat semi-structured interviews with 18 CE graduates across England and Scotland from their final year of HE study (phase one), then at six (phase two) and 12 months after graduation (phase 3). The present paper specifically focuses on those participants who considered progressing to taught postgraduate study, had accessed or attempted to access taught postgraduate programmes, and those who were actively studying at this level at the start of the project.

What constrains care-experienced graduates' access to, and progression through, postgraduate study?

The increasing research attention paid to CE peoples' HE access to the undergraduate level over the past 15 years has contributed to welcome changes in the amount and types of support available from HE institutions and local authorities in the UK (DfE, 2019; Harrison et al., 2021). This HE-provided support, however, ends at the point of undergraduate graduation (Stevenson et al., 2020) and frequently coincides with a reduction in or complete loss of support from CE graduates' local authorities (Baker, 2022). As CE graduates are less likely to have a safety net in the form of a family home (Bengtsson et al., 2018), losses in support were acutely felt.

This 'cliff edge' in support underpinned several constraints that CE graduates faced when contemplating, accessing and progressing through taught postgraduate degrees. The absence of financial support from the HE institution and local authority to enable them to afford living costs resulted in some participants rejecting taught postgraduate study, viewing this as an unfeasible option. Concerns over meeting living costs through another period of study were also exacerbated by the cost of living crisis in the UK (Francis-Devine et al., 2022), and a desire for stable living circumstances after experiences of persistent instability throughout childhood (Sinclair et al., 2007).

Those who progressed to taught postgraduate degrees were met with a sudden loss of the HE support structures that they had become accustomed to during their undergraduate degrees. This included bursaries, accommodation and disability support, as well as access to a 'single point of contact' within the institution. This contrast was especially jarring for those who remained in their undergraduate institution as they had a 'direct comparison' between the level of support they had received in their previous and current degree studies. Of the small number of participants who had successfully accessed taught postgraduate degrees, half had withdrawn from their studies during phase two of the project citing financial constraints and the loss of academic and disability support as reasons for this.

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326 How does lived experience of the care system influence higher education decision-making and choices for care experienced young people? Reflections on findings from an anonymous online questionnaire

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Care experienced young people in the UK progress to higher education (HE) at consistently lower rates than their non-care experienced peers. Existing research highlights some of the constraints and barriers faced in accessing HE, but there is a gap in understanding how care histories and lived experience of the care system influence decision-making and choices about undergraduate study. This research investigates how and to what extent lived experience of the care system in England influences HE decision-making, from subject and course choice to engagement in widening participation initiatives. An online questionnaire was used to collect anonymous responses from 122 care experienced students aged 18-25 in the UK. Findings demonstrated that those with a source of support, formal or informal, were more likely to engage in widening participation initiatives and report a positive experience of HE exploration and decision-making, highlighting the importance of social connectedness for care experienced young adults.

Full paper

Introduction:

Care experienced young people in the UK progress to higher education (HE) at consistently lower rates than their non-care experienced peers. Previous studies have highlighted some of the constraints and barriers faced by care experienced young people in accessing HE (Jackson et al., 2005; Hauari & Cameron, 2014; Hauari et al. 2019; Harrison, 2017; Ellis & Johnston, 2019; Stevenson et al., 2020), but there is a gap in understanding how care histories and lived experience of the care system influence decision-making and choices about undergraduate study. This research investigates how and to what extent lived experience of the care system in England influences HE decision-making, from subject and course choice to engagement in widening participation initiatives that support with choosing next steps.

Research questions:

Over-arching research question: How does lived experience of the care system in England influence HE decision-making and choices for care experienced young people entering undergraduate study in the UK?

Sub-questions:

1. How and to what extent does lived experience of the care system in England shape motivations to study in HE over other options for care experienced young people?
2. How and to what extent does lived experience of the care system in England shape higher education choices, such as choice of course and institution, for care experienced young people?
3. How and to what extent does lived experience of the care system shape access to and experience of widening participation outreach initiatives?

Methodology and theoretical framework:

An online questionnaire was used to collect anonymous responses from 122 care experienced undergraduate students aged 18-25 studying in the UK. The questionnaire was shared online via social media, through organisations supporting care experienced young people and HEI widening participation teams or named contacts for care experienced or estranged students. The online questionnaire included a mix of closed and open-ended questions, with closed questions analysed quantitatively and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) used to analyse the open-ended questions.

A theoretical framework has been developed that draws on Marcus and Nurius' (1986) theory of possible selves and Erikson's (2019) discussion of the four aspects that influence the motivational power of possible selves: salience, probability, perceived control and emotional valence. This theoretical framework facilitates an understanding of which aspects of care experience shape motivations and choices.

Findings:

Care histories shape motivations and choices

Lived experience of the care system shaped motivations and choices in a number of significant ways: for a large number of participants, choosing to study in HE was seen as a direct pathway to not only a more stable, financially secure future (in contrast to financial instability and insecurity experienced prior to, during or whilst leaving the care system), but one where an enjoyable or interesting career could be pursued. Others saw the specific pathways offered by HE, such as social work or education, as an opportunity to help people with similar lived experiences. The flexibility of pathways that could be pursued during and after HE was also viewed as attractive due to the financial support on offer during HE study, as it could provide a safer, more secure way to explore and experiment with interests and future careers. Personal care histories and lived experience of the care system therefore played a key role in shaping motivations for HE study and aspirations for life after graduation.

Social connectedness facilitates access to widening participation initiatives

Findings also demonstrated that those with a source of support, formal or informal, were more likely to engage in widening participation initiatives and report a positive experience of HE exploration and decision-making. Open days and taster lectures and seminars played a key role in facilitating the exploration of interest and enjoyment in a subject and a sense of belonging in an institution or course – factors that respondents emphasised were central to retention and positive wellbeing in HE. In contrast, young people who had to make choices without support found themselves reliant on institutional rankings and were more likely to report feeling overwhelmed by the number of options available and the information sources they had to navigate.

Implications:

These findings have important implications for how professionals, from teachers to social workers, can best support care experienced young people with HE exploration and decision-making. In particular, emphasising the importance of facilitating social networks for care experienced young adults and how increased social connectedness can support positive experiences of educational decision-making and increased take-up of potentially useful outreach initiatives, such as open days or taster lectures and seminars.

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Parallel Session 3:3 - Symposium

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1b

13 Grant-funding and the careers of women academics: what, where and when

Research Domain

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Rationale

In this symposium, presenters engage with ways in which gender issues interconnect with the search for research funding that is taking over large parts of academic life. How these pressures play out depends on many considerations, including subject field, gender, departmental cultures and national context (Deem & Lucas, 2007; Nokkala & Diogo, 2020).

Participants in this symposium are among contributors to *The social production of research: perspectives on funding and gender*, edited by Sandra Acker, Oili-Helena Ylijoki and Michelle K. McGinn, to be published by SRHE/Routledge. Papers from three countries – Canada, Finland and the UK – illustrate the impact of both national and local contexts. Taking a broadly sociological and feminist approach, and drawing on a varied set of qualitative

methods, participants elaborate on the subtle and not so subtle factors that shape academic women's grant-related opportunities and thus their careers.

Many of the recent sources that bring together gender and funding are quantitative, bibliometric explorations of large data sets that consider the relationship of gender to application behaviour, funding success, citations and/or productivity (e.g., Ceci et al., 2023; Kozlowski et al., 2022). While these approaches are useful in identifying broad trends, we prioritise questions of how funding works and the everyday gendered and racialised practices that sustain and often mask inequalities (e.g., Acker & Wagner, 2019; Morley, 2018; Rollock, 2021; Sato et al., 2021; Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2020).

Paper 1, by Sandra Acker and Michelle K. McGinn, introduces the symposium by identifying themes in the higher education literature on gender and research funding, adding illustrative quotations from a Canadian project based on semi-structured interviews with academics, mostly women, who hold strong funding records on social justice topics. Paper 2, by Oili-Helena Ylijoki, analyses two 'career stories' of women academics in Finland. In these cases, acquiring external research funding is not a problem but a solution that enables surviving in academia. Paper 3, by Lisa Lucas and Barbara Read, illuminates the changing research landscape in the UK, using interviews and media analysis to explore implications of the Research Excellence Framework and the COVID-19 pandemic for women academics' research and careers. These three papers demonstrate how a variety of qualitative methods can be applied to a particular topic, as well as allowing a comparison of country-specific research policies. Overall, the symposium connects to two of the suggested themes: firstly, structural inequalities and social justice in higher education and secondly, staff mental health.

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Chair

Kate Carruthers Thomas

Birmingham City University, Birmingham, United Kingdom

140 Research funding and gender: insights from the literature and a Canadian project

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In this paper, we explore the interrelations of research funding and gender as represented in the higher education literature. We uncovered three major themes, roughly corresponding to micro, meso and macro level analyses, which we identify as *individual effects* for grant-seekers, *institutional structures* that shape experiences, and influences from *government actions and funding agency practices*. Using a theoretical approach of academic sensemaking, we articulate how these themes from the literature were also evident in a set of interviews conducted with 27 academics in seven contrasting Canadian universities. Participants, most of whom are women, many racialised, are drawn from the fields of education, geography, social work and sociology and selected for their records of success in securing external funding for social-justice themed research. We find that gender, understood intersectionally, has both obvious and subtle impacts within each theme. Institutions and funding agencies must be considered along with individual needs.

Full paper

In this paper, we explore the interrelations of research funding and gender in higher education literature. Granting structures and cultures have been relatively neglected within the literature on neo-liberalism in higher education (Polster, 2007; Smith, 2010), while studies on women in academe seldom focus on grant-seeking. This paper brings together published studies from these research areas and draws connections to selected findings from a Canadian project about academics' experiences with grant funding. Canada does not have an equivalent of the UK's Research Excellence Framework. Most university funding comes from a provincial block grant and academics compete for project funding from three funding agencies, including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Theoretical framework

Our guiding theoretical approach is academic sensemaking (Degn, 2018), concerning the ways individuals and organizations in academe produce meaning in circumstances of ambiguity and rapid change. Academic research occurs in a social context involving disciplinary and departmental expectations, administrative and resource contingencies, and competing responsibilities.

Literature analysis

Many studies of gender and funding involve quantitative, bibliometric explorations of large data sets (e.g. Ceci et al., 2023; Kozłowski et al., 2022). Complementary qualitative evidence documents how funding works and is integrated with everyday gendered and racialised practices (Acker & Wagner, 2019; Morley, 2018; Rollock, 2021; Sato et al., 2021; Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2020).

We identify three broad themes from the literature:

1. With regard to *individual effects*, grant writing requires allocating extensive time, foregoing self-care, distorting knowledge to fit requirements and coping with emotions associated with success and failure (Barnett et al., 2022; McGinn et al., 2019).
2. Concerning *institutional structures*, 'inequality regimes' (J. Acker, 2006) privilege some researchers over others: for example, women and racialised scholars tend to do more 'academic housework' (Heijstra et al., 2017; Mohamed & Beagan, 2019), which reduces their research time.
3. Finally, *government actions and funding agency practices* mean that 'researchers face a complex and changing environment. . . not under their control' (Luukkonen & Thomas, 2016, p. 100) where biased conceptions of excellence may disadvantage women (Husu & de Cheveigné, 2010; Sato et al., 2021).

The study

This Canadian project encompassed in-depth qualitative interviews in 2019 and 2020 with 27 academics in education, geography, social work and sociology from seven universities. Participants, most of whom were women, many racialised, had successful records of securing external research funding for social-justice research. Thematic analyses (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Saldaña, 2016) of these interviews indicated clear connections to the prominent themes identified in the literature.

Findings

The following quotations are illustrative of those in the full paper.

Individual effects

I do find that having children and being the spouse, being a woman . . . absolutely curtails my ability to do research, field research.

It was very difficult as a young, single mom. . . . Now I try to take much better care of myself than I was in those days with two little people and school and driving and working and doing a PhD.

Institutional structures

The institutions, they work very smoothly for a white man of a certain class and all that sort of thing. . . . We move through the space very differently and have profiles that look differently because of that.

[The University] supported me in keeping me accountable, but . . . in some ways, it's a constant challenge to be able to bring Indigenous ways of being into the research context.

Government actions and funding agency practices

Often funders . . . don't understand the relationship building and the protocols that have to take place.

I think SSHRC has done a better job than many other organizations . . . in acknowledging and supporting women in their research.

Conclusion

Outcomes of quantitative research on gender and productivity tend to be 'inconclusive and ambiguous' (Nielsen, 2016, p. 2045), while qualitative work generally identifies disadvantages for women. Our study finds frequent challenges, even for women participants selected for success at the 'research game' (Lucas, 1996). Challenges such as controlling one's emotions, working around care commitments or meeting community needs may be too subtle to appear in broader surveys of productivity.

While 'sensemaking' fits nicely with participants' efforts to understand their rapidly changing situations, it remains vague. We suggest emphasis be placed on variations, including nation, region, discipline, funding availability, research policy and institutional priorities, and on changes over time, such as the introduction of equity, diversity, and inclusion requirements into grant-funding arrangements. These broader contextual influences need to be considered alongside an intersectional understanding of gender.

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107 Research funding, gender and academic career building: two stories from Finland

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In the current higher education context, attracting external research funding has become a key requirement for academic career building. Success in securing research funds has turned into an indicator of research excellence as competition per se is believed to ensure that the best get selected, an ideology which Naidoo (2018) calls competition fetish. In the literature, the imperative of grant-funding success is typically seen to work to women's disadvantage and impede their career progress. In this paper, I offer a more nuanced view using two career stories drawn from interviews with women academics working in the field of health technology in Finland. In these stories, acquiring external research funding is not so much a problem but a solution that enables surviving financially, socially and emotionally under particularly strained local working conditions. The paper shows the complexity and multi-layeredness of the relationships among research funding, gender and academic career building.

Full paper

Introduction

In the current higher education context, attracting external research funding has become a key requirement for academic career building. The centrality of external funding is particularly relevant in Finland where most academics are employed on fixed-term contracts that are renewed only when funding is secured. Across nations, success in securing research funds has turned into an indicator of research excellence as competition per se is believed to ensure that the best get selected, an ideology which Naidoo (2018) calls competition fetish. The imperative of grant-funding success is typically seen to work to women's disadvantage and impede their career progress. In this paper, I offer a more nuanced view by presenting two career stories that illuminate the diversity of women's experiences of research funding. In these stories, acquiring external research funding is not so much a problem but a solution enabling surviving financially, socially and emotionally in particularly strained local work environments. The paper shows the context-dependency, complexity and multi-layeredness of the relationships among gender, research funding and academic career building.

Literature

Previous studies have found that the imperative of grant-funding success can work against women academics for several reasons. Women tend to favour disciplines and research areas that do not belong to the core in the current science policy prioritising male-dominated fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Thus, there are fewer funding opportunities available, already making the starting points for competition gender biased (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2020). It has also been suggested that many women feel uncomfortable with the current masculinist culture of competitive individualism (Morley & Crossouard, 2016) and may struggle to build or maintain the self-confidence needed to apply for funding and cope with rejections (Leberman et al., 2017). In addition, women tend to be less mobile than men and lack wide collaborative networks that would advance their research productivity and chances of being funded (Uhly et al., 2017). Moreover, compared to men, women carry more caring and service duties at home and at work, which take time and energy away from research (Gaudet et al., 2021). Additionally, subtle but systematic biases in funding bodies' decision making may operate to women's disadvantage (Sato et al., 2021).

Data and method

The paper is informed by a set of 30 career interviews with women scholars in the broad interdisciplinary field of health technology in Finland. For this paper, two interviews are selected for close scrutiny because they involve strikingly different experiences compared to the dominant accounts of difficulties related to grant-seeking. From this angle, the two interviews are success stories as these fixed-term academics have been particularly successful in securing funding for years for themselves and their research groups. At the same time, the interviews include gloomy accounts of harsh working conditions, bullying and discrimination, turning the career paths into misery stories. By analysing this curious mixture of success and misery, the aim of the paper is to shed new light on gendered structures and processes in research funding and academic career building.

I adopt narrative analysis to trace the ways the interviewees experience and attach meaning to their career trajectories. Instead of attempting a factual account of 'what happened', the aim of the analysis is to capture how the

interviewees understand their career histories, what cultural resources they rely upon, and what episodes have been meaningful for them, why and with what implications.

Findings

The cases demonstrate that attracting research funding can act as a solution to workplace issues. Beyond necessary financial resources, funding success is highly influential socially and emotionally by opening access to new networks and collegial relationships and giving visibility and recognition for one's work, thereby strengthening a sense of self-worth, self-reliance and empowerment even under harsh and unstable working conditions. The results also point to the importance of collegial feedback and mentoring in learning the rules of the game in grant writing. Thus, success in research funding is not purely individual achievement but facilitated by formal and informal support structures, necessary for these women to keep themselves motivated to continue in academic careers.

Conclusion

Although funding success has become a necessary requirement for career progress in academia, it is not a sufficient condition. The paper's findings highlight gendered structures and gendering processes in research work, closely connected to subtle hierarchies within and between disciplinary fields. The disciplinary elite, comprising men professors, still has much power to define what funding sources are most valued and what counts as core scientific credit in recruitment and promotion decisions.

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176 Gender and precarity amidst the changing research landscape in the UK

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In this paper, we draw on two projects featuring gender and research policy in the United Kingdom (UK). Data for Project 1 come from two sets of interviews with academics about their experiences of the Research Assessment Exercise in 2001 and the Research Excellence Framework in 2014, considering the extent to which these interventions have enhanced or curtailed career opportunities for women academics over the years. Project 2 is a feminist intersectional analysis of discourses found in articles about the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK's leading higher education publication, the Times Higher Education, from January 2020 to June 2021. Together, the two projects expand notions of precarity as introduced by Judith Butler and enable some conclusions about connections and continuations of the gendered impact of UK research and evaluation policies on women researchers amidst the complexities of the research landscape over time.

Full paper

Context and background of research funding in the UK

In the UK, government research funding is split between a quality-related block grant allocation to individual universities based on the outcomes of a periodic audit of research staff at the institution (the Research Excellence Framework or REF, previously the Research Assessment Exercise or RAE), and competitive research project grants and programmes administered by discipline-based research councils under the auspices of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The research arena has long been a highly gendered and racialised field, which affects both types of government research funding. Although data show that applications and successful outcomes for UKRI grants increased for female applicants between 2014–2015 and 2019–2020, around two thirds of all research grant applications are still from male applicants, the majority of whom are white (UKRI, 2021). Further, whilst there is relatively little data about gender inequalities in how institutions present researchers' work for audit under the RAE/REF, in a case study of a research-intensive British university, Yarrow (2018) argues that 'unconscious bias', together with the operation of informal networks that favour men, can affect the representation of women academics in the REF.

Theoretical framing

The work of Judith Butler will be utilised to explore the various complexities associated with precarity and challenges in forging a research career, particularly for women academics. Butler (2004, 2009) uses the term social precarity to refer to precariousness that is not simply the product of accident but is connected to, or indeed induced by, wider socio-political policies and practices. Of particular concern to Butler is that the ability to cushion oneself from the worst effects of precarity is greatly mediated and constrained by particular social positionings. Those in less advantaged positions are more likely to experience insecurity and precarity and to experience it more severely (Butler, 2009).

In the UK, a variety of factors influence who can conduct research and apply for research funding as well as what knowledge is produced, valued and recognised. This includes identity formations such as gender, social class, race,

ethnicity, disability, sexuality and age; discipline and university status; and contract status (made more precarious by the absence of a strong tenure system). Policy changes and unexpected events, such as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, add another layer of insecurity.

Methodology

Project 1 draws from two empirical studies undertaken around the Research Assessment Exercise in 2001 and the Research Excellence Framework in 2014 and features a thematic analysis of 18 semi-structured interviews with women academics in different disciplines across a purposive selection of a range of UK universities. Project 2 is a feminist intersectional analysis of articles in the UK's leading higher education publication, the Times Higher Education, from January 2020 to June 2021. Overall, 540 articles were chosen from the 'News' and 'Opinion' sections of the online edition of the paper.

Both thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and Foucauldian discourse analyses (Khan & MacEachen, 2021) were applied to identify gendered discourses relating to research in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings and conclusions

In Project 1's interviews, three key themes, laced through with anxiety, captured the women's experiences of the relevant RAE/REF exercise: (a) being RAE/REFable: the challenges of building and maintaining a research profile, (b) the imperative of research funding and publishing and (c) research support and mentoring. Project 2's discourse analysis showed that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated individual academics' and university concerns about access to research funding opportunities and the continuation of international research collaborations in the higher education sector. In addition, fears over job security already engendered by REF requirements, as reported in the interviews, were deepened by the pandemic. It is potentially those who are already in precarious situations in UK academia – more likely to be women and people of colour – who are at most risk of cuts and job losses post-Brexit and post-COVID-19 (Watermeyer et al., 2020). Furthermore, difficulties of combining academic work with caring commitments, evident in both projects, also disproportionately affected women in the pandemic, impacting on their ability to publish and submit funding bids (Baker, 2021; Walker et al., 2020) and signalling potential long-term career disadvantages (Carruthers Thomas, in press). In combination, the two projects provide a broad temporal perspective on ongoing gendered challenges in relation to research production in academia, showing how longstanding inequitable patterns have become even worse in precarious pandemic and post-pandemic times.

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Parallel Session 3:4

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 141

Chair Clare Loughlin-Chow

223 The German “Disadvantage Compensation” as an Instrument of Inclusion in Higher Education

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Inclusive higher education in Germany relies on the *Disadvantage Compensation* (Nachteilsausgleich) as a form of institutionalised individual accommodation to support students with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses. Based on medical certificates, the examinations can get modified, or the students can be allowed to use auxiliary aids. Answering the question, in how far the German *Disadvantage Compensation* is experienced as an instrument of inclusion by students themselves, this inquiry reconstructs the study experience of students with chronic illnesses and/or disabilities who were granted *Disadvantage Compensation* at the University of Kassel in Hesse, Germany. The analysis draws on more than 30 narrative interviews that were conducted in 2022 and 2023. The interviews are evaluated following the Grounded Theory methodology. The inquiry aims on adding up to existing knowledge about the study experience of students with chronic illness and/or disability with implications for higher education teaching and learning.

Full paper

While inclusive higher education is an established policy aim in Europe and many other countries, universities are confronted with questions of how to achieve inclusion. Generally, they implement a mixture of measurements of universal design and individual accommodation to achieve a higher level of inclusion for the rising number of students with chronic illness and/or disability. International research showed that individual accommodation is both, necessary to meet the diverse needs of students with chronic illnesses and disabilities, and effective in reducing their disadvantages (Salzer et al. 2008, Sharpe et al. 2005). However, it also showed that individual accommodation presents a challenge to the students (Magnus/Tøssebro 2013) and is not experienced as an effective instrument of inclusion in higher education by all students (Kendall 2016, Bartz 2020). Further, there is a high non-take-up rate of individual accommodation (Lyman et al. 2016). In Germany, inclusive higher education relies on the *Disadvantage Compensation* (Nachteilsausgleich), an institutionalised form of individual accommodation. Based on medical certificates, the examinations can get modified, or the students can be allowed to use auxiliary aids. As the best 2 study showed, 29% percent of those who experience disadvantages related to their studies in 2016 and 2017 applied for *Disadvantage Compensation* (Deutsches Studentenwerk 2018:10).

The following investigation focusses on those, who were granted *Disadvantage Compensation* at the University of Kassel in Hesse, Germany. Asking the question, in how far the German *Disadvantage Compensation* is experienced as an instrument of inclusion, the inquiry reconstructs the study experience of students with chronic illness or disabilities. The analysis draws on more than 30 narrative interviews that were conducted in 2022 and 2023. The interviews are evaluated, following the Grounded Theory methodology. The inquiry aims on adding up to existing knowledge about the study experience of students with chronic illness or disabilities, as well as about potentials and problems of individual accommodation to inform decisions on policy changes and inclusive teaching in the future.

Preliminary findings show that the experience of *Disadvantage Compensation* is depending to a large extent on the information about individual disadvantages, social networks, the lecturers and the access to medical certificates. All these factors can be barriers that prevent both, the application for Disadvantage Compensation and the effective use of Disadvantage Compensation as an instrument of inclusion.

Information about individual disadvantages and the existence of *Disadvantage Compensation* is essential for applying for this form of individual compensation. This information can be acquired by own experience or in interaction with others. Thus, social networks are of special relevance for students with chronic illness or disabilities. Further, students need a medical certificate to apply for *Disadvantage Compensation*. While most of the students regard this requirement as manageable, some students were confronted with major problems. They had to visit specialists that were hard to reach, had to pay for their certificates themselves or had to renew their certificates annually. In case those points culminated, students experienced the requirements as major barriers that could even lead to dropping out of university. As soon as the *Disadvantage Compensation* is granted, the students must inform their lecturers to agree on a specific form of compensation bilaterally. While the students explained that many lecturers tried their best to fulfil their needs and provide fruitful amendments to the exam situation or form, others were less benevolent and understanding.

Beneath these organisational aspects of *Disadvantage Compensation*, the experience of illness and disability in higher education is accompanied by a variety of negotiation processes. Students ask themselves and discuss with others, in how far they are disadvantaged and, further, in how far a compensation for their situation is legitimate or fair. Negotiation processes as such are neither limited to a specific time nor stage of the study experience or experience of illness and disability. Rather, students are confronted with these negotiation processes during the whole time they are part of the educational system, often starting in primary school. Regarding this aspect, the current organisation of *Disadvantage Compensation* in Germany as dependent on bilateral arrangements between the lecturers and students seems rather problematic. Many students reported that they feared negative responses and did not want to generate "extra workload". Further, they expressed a lack of understanding for the necessity to inform lecturers about their medical conditions. Thus, the preliminary findings show that, while some students who were granted *Disadvantage Compensation* do experience it as an effective instrument of inclusion, others still conquer barriers. These are partly dependent on how this form of individual accommodation is organised in Germany.

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16 On beyond Sheldon Cooper: what do we know about neurodiverse PhD students?

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

One of the most popular autistic characters on television is the clearly autistic academic Dr Sheldon Cooper from the *Big Bang Theory*. At the same time that there is no systematic study of the lived experiences of real neurodiverse PhD students to challenge these kinds of stereotypes. This silence around neurodiversity is curious. The PhD is a small, but notoriously difficult area of education. Over the last thirty years academics have produced a broad literature about policy, curriculum, pedagogy, mental health and employability. Without a deep understanding of how neurodiverse people experience the PhD, we are stuck in a deficit model that assumes that ‘accommodations’ are the only answer, ignoring the radical potentials of (re)designing the PhD around the concept of difference. This paper reviews what we know already and maps out future research directions using concepts from the universal design movement.

Full paper

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), Tourettes and dyslexia. The term has been popularised by advocates who contend that these conditions are not ‘disorders’ or pathologies, merely different ways of being human and have taken up the ‘rainbow

infinity' symbol to represent the rights of this community (Gross, 2016). However, as Armstrong (2015) pointed out, there is no 'brain in jar' that can be labelled neurotypical, so trying to exactly define neurodiversity is problematic. The discourse and narratives around neurodiversity and its causes, treatments are extremely complex so it is perhaps not surprising that researchers have yet to explore the experiences of neurodiverse PhD students.

Getting a diagnosis, especially of ADHD, can be difficult, which makes it hard to know how many PhD students could identify as neurodiverse. Doyle (2020) suggests that neurodiverse conditions are characterised by a 'spikey profile' across tests of working memory, processing speed, verbal and visual skills, with so called 'neurotypicals' having a flatter profile. Estimates vary on how many people could be counted as neurodiverse from 8 - 15% (Doyle, 2020), although determining the prevalence can be difficult and depend on factors such as access to healthcare and intersectionality of class and gender. We can, however, safely assume neurodiverse people commence PhD study all the time as not all people who are neurodiverse have impaired cognitive function; in fact, it's likely neurodiverse people experience advantages from their 'wiring', specifically in relation to pattern recognition, creativity and hyper-focus. Since neurodiversity is a hidden condition, people have the choice to disclose, but might fear labelling and consequent career implications, especially in the hyper competitive environments of contemporary academia (Brown, 2020). To date, however, there has been no systematic study of the experience of neurodiverse PhD students so it is impossible to measure the numbers and whether they consider their neurodiversity to be an asset, or disabling, or both.

The PhD has what has been called a 'signature pedagogy' (Shulman, 2005) complete with an 'imagined ideal student' and 'pedagogical inertia'. Doctoral study is designed to foster a professional identity as an academic, always an international profession, which in part explains and its forms are replicated over time and space with only minor variations. Despite sustained critique with respect to form and function over a long period of time (beginning with Dale, 1935), the PhD experience has been slow to change. All PhD students have supervisors (even if they are not all called that), engage in the independent construction of new knowledge and produce some kind of large document at the end. Shulman points out that in addition to common 'surface constructions' like the features I already mentioned, signature pedagogies also have deep structures, or what is 'really being taught'.

When it comes to doctoral education, it can be argued that what is really being taught is how to participate as a scholar/researcher within insitutional constraints which, include cultures that are both hierarchical and classed in nature. To this end, doctoral education tends to be organised around an 'imagined ideal student', which we can most clearly see in policy settings and documents. For instance, the paid stipends or the pay offered to Teaching Assistants is extremely low, assuming the student has access to other sources of support or is independently wealthy; part time stipends are often only offered to carers, assuming that all scholars are able bodied unless 'burdened' with children, disabled partners or elderly parents. Socialising is an integral part of 'getting along' in academia, yet students are assumed to be able to pick up unspoken rules about how to behave. Neurodiverse people challenge the imagined ideal student of doctoral education; if we want to be truly inclusive we must confront the hegemony of these normative assumptions about how to 'do' the PhD.

Without a deep understanding of how neurodiverse people experience the PhD, we are stuck in a deficit model that assumes that 'accomodations' to the normative PhD structure are the only answer. Principles from the Universal Design (Rose and Meyer, 2007) can be helpful here. Universal Design (UD) has roots in the accessibility movement in building design where the removal of obstacles for the physically disabled and design of alternatives, such as swapping stairs for ramps, enables fuller participation. UD principles might unlock radical potentials of (re)designing the PhD around the concept of difference - with benefits for neurodiverse and neurotypical PhD students alike.

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346 Teaching and Learning Practice and the Retention of Disabled Students in Scottish Higher Education

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Many Higher Education Institutions face low student retention rates amongst the whole body of students. Although disabled students seem to be at higher risk of leaving Higher Education (HE) before graduating, limited literature is available about the factors that impact these particularly low rates. Considering this, a PhD research study was designed to explore how teaching and learning practice - crucial to the student experience - shapes the intentions to persist of disabled students in Scottish HE. Preliminary findings, resulting from thematic and critical discourse analyses of semi-structured interviews, show a complex landscape where, although the flexibility brought by the pandemic benefited disabled students, online delivery seemed to be linked to isolation and low student engagement, which harmed their experience. In the future, participants would like accessibility and flexibility to be maintained in Scottish HE alongside high-quality educational practices that promote student engagement and a sense of belonging, which could enhance retention.

Full paper

Many higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide face low student retention rates, which are impacted by several different interacting and dynamic factors, such as students' individual circumstances or their social and academic engagement (Kirk, 2018; Manyanga, Sithole and Hanson, 2017; Munizaga, Cifuentes and Beltrán, 2018). Because of this, low student retention rates are deemed a "wicked problem" for which there are no simple solutions (Beer and Lawson, 2018, p. 773). Although these low student retention rates affect the whole body of students, certain groups seem to be at higher risk, one example being disabled students (Kilpatrick et al., 2016; Koch et al., 2018). Disabled students' particularly low retention rates could be the result of the interaction between the factors mentioned above and the additional challenges they still face in Higher Education (HE), such as negative attitudes or difficulties in accessing support, which can have an added negative impact on their intentions to persist (see Thompson-Ebanks, 2014). Still, limited research exploring the factors that influence the retention of disabled students in HE is available. Notably, there is a significant lack of qualitative studies that consider the perspectives of different stakeholders (Collins, Azmat and Rentschler, 2019), limiting the understanding of the complex factors shaping the retention of disabled students in HE.

Considering this, this PhD research project, based in Scotland, set out to explore the impact of one factor deemed essential to the student experience (Thomas, 2016): teaching and learning practice. The decision to focus on this particular factor was firstly based on its ubiquity, as the majority of students who join HE - even if they only stay for a week - will be involved in some teaching and learning experience. Additionally, the focus is on educational practice due to its potential impact on retention since, according to Tinto (2003, p.3), "students who learn are students who stay". Although there is evidence that teaching and learning practices that are not inclusive can act as a significant barrier for disabled students in HE (see Melero Aguilar, Morfiña and Perera, 2019), the literature studying their impact on the retention of disabled students in the sector is scarce.

Consequently, this exploratory, qualitative PhD study was designed with the aim of addressing these gaps in knowledge. The main tool of data generation used was in-depth semi-structured interviews, selected to study a complex area that still raises many questions and to explore the subjective experience of disabled students, whose voices have been historically marginalised (see De Beer et al., 2022 and Thomson-Ebanks, 2014). As a result, 29 participants were interviewed to explore how teaching and learning practice shapes the retention of disabled students in Scottish HE from different perspectives while focusing on the experiences of disabled students. These 29 participants can be divided into the following three groups: staff working in Scottish HE (educators and disability advisors; N = 12), disabled students enrolled in Scottish HE (N = 14) and disabled people formerly enrolled in Scottish HE (N = 3). Interviews were conducted mainly over video calls but also on-site, over the phone, via email and via chat to respect participants' preferences and accessibility needs. The data generated is being analysed using Reflective Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021) to identify current educational practices in Scottish HE that could be shaping the retention of disabled students. Critical Discourse Analysis is also being used to identify prevalent discourses and relations of power that are shaping the beliefs, values, and practices of the participants regarding the subject matter (Aston, 2016).

Although this research is still underway, preliminary findings indicate that the move to online learning resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic created positive change within HEIs in Scotland. Therefore, disabled students who participated in this study seemed to benefit from increased accessibility and flexibility, something they felt was long overdue. However, online teaching and learning delivery was linked to severe challenges, such as reduced student engagement and satisfaction, alongside feelings of isolation. These preliminary results illustrate the complex HE landscape still existing in Scotland, where the needs of disabled students are not always effectively met, impacting their educational experience and intentions to persist. According to participants, some strategies that could help address these issues in the future include taking a proactive approach and promoting inclusion broadly to help upkeep the retention of disabled students in Scottish HE. Moving forward, participants would like HEIs to protect the accessibility and flexibility achieved during the pandemic while promoting high-quality educational practices that encourage student engagement and a sense of belonging.

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Parallel Session 3:5

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Conference Room 1c

Chair Richard Davies

185 Teaching-based job roles in a research-intensive environment: Driving change or nowhere to go

[Camille Kandiko Howson](#), [Martyn Kingsbury](#)

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This research explores the role of teaching-based staff in educational enhancement as part of a wider research and evaluation exercise of strategic reform at a UK-based research-intensive institution. This research, in the context of large-scale policy and institutional change, highlights perceptions of the role of prestige in relation to research and teaching, sense of empowerment towards change, hiring and promotion policies and disciplinary and professional factors on academic identities and motivation. The role of local culture influences the agency individuals feel in relation to educational change. This research identifies staff members' perception of their ability to drive change; perception and prestige of teaching and other educational activities; and the impact of new teaching-based job roles. The research highlights the challenges and successes of teaching-based staff in gaining credibility in their local departments, the negotiation of multiple identities across areas of work and disciplinary cultures, and the institutional-specific nature of roles.

Full paper

Introduction

This research explores the role of teaching-based staff in educational enhancement as part of a wider research and evaluation exercise of strategic reform at a UK-based research-intensive institution. This research, in the context of large-scale policy and institutional change, highlights perceptions of the role of prestige in relation to research and teaching, sense of empowerment towards change, hiring and promotion policies and disciplinary and professional factors on academic identities and motivation. The role of local culture influences the agency individuals feel in relation to educational change. This research identifies staff members' perception of their ability to drive change;

perception and prestige of teaching and other educational activities; and the impact of new teaching-based job roles. The research highlights the challenges and successes of teaching-based staff in gaining credibility in their local departments, the negotiation of multiple identities across areas of work and disciplinary cultures, and the institutional-specific nature of roles.

This research explores the experience of staff in teaching-based job roles, identifying what they value in their roles and what they perceive to be valued by their departments and the institution. We draw on the theoretical framework of the prestige economy, which is used to describe the collection of beliefs, values and behaviours that characterise and express what a group of people prizes highly (English, 2005). We apply this to efforts to enhance education and the student experience at a research-intensive institution, exploring how staff feel their disciplinary and pedagogical expertise is valued and what agency they feel they had to influence change in their departments.

Teaching-based roles

While higher education has always had positions for staff who have teaching as a dominant part of their role, the traditional tri-partite academic role of teaching, research and service/administration has dominated popular views of academia. Macfarlane (2011) has written about the unbundling of this role, and there has been a subsequent rise in teaching and teaching and scholarship-based roles (Rogers & Swain, 2012). Such roles have inconsistent titles and focus across the sector (Smith & Walker, 2021) and can lack access to development support (Smith & Walker 2022).

Methodology

The research utilises concept map-mediated semi-structured interviews with staff to capture multiple data artefacts. The research approach draws out 'pedagogical currency' metrics to support reward and recognition for high quality educational work. This research draws on four phases of data collection. The first phase commenced in 2019 and drew on interviews with 10 academics at the beginning of the implementation phase of a curriculum review across a number of departments and Faculties. Data collection was paused the following year due to Covid-19 pandemic and the demands of the shift to remote delivery of teaching. The second phase two years later explored an in-depth analysis of one department, with a further 10 interviews with academic staff, teaching fellows and PhD students with teaching responsibilities. The third phase, another year on in 2022, consisted of a further 15 interviews with staff across departments and Faculties. This was followed by the fourth phase (throughout the 2022-2023 academic year) which consisted of seven sets of department-based interviews (ranging from 2-6 interviews each). This research reports on thematic analysis of interviews with those staff who were in teaching focused job roles. The research project received institutional ethical approval and follows BERA research guidelines.

Findings

Thematic analysis is on-going. Initial findings There were complex understandings of academic identity and shared and competing motivations in relation to job role, disciplinary, professional, institutional and external national and international communities. We identified varying perceptions of the role of prestige in relation to research and teaching, sense of empowerment towards change, challenges of the hiring and promotion policies and disciplinary and professional factors influencing academic identities and motivation.

We identified very different departmental communities in which teaching-based staff were located. In a highly devolved research-intensive environment, the structure of the department significantly influenced the agency staff felt and their ability to enact change (Ashwin, 2009). The departments varied by disciplinary communities (e.g. 'teaching is different in physics') as well as the leadership and departmental culture about education and the authority of those in teaching-based roles to be empowered towards change (Annala et al., 2022).

Staff expressed more agency in departments that engaged with their educational expertise and took on more strategic roles enacting change within their departments. They were focused on educational improvements and understood the intent of wider institutional goals, engaged with some pedagogical and central support but this was not integrated into disciplinary practices, which still had primacy.

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163 The in/visibility of the 'teacher' role in a STEM-focused institution: Competing and complementary identities across career trajectories

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Higher education staff with teaching responsibilities are some of the most visible institutional employees to students and key avenues through which they form a relationship to their place of study. Those in teaching positions play multiple roles – as educators, sources of pastoral support, representatives of the institution, examples of the vocation (as teachers and/or as practitioners of what they teach), models of subject specialists, and embodiments of wider social categories and identities. However, it is widely perceived that in HE the activity of teaching is considered less professionally esteemed and rewarded than that of research (Bagilhole, 2016; Murray, 2022). This presentation summarises some indicative themes and presents interview data from a single-site research project that aims to better understand the experiences, identities, and self-conceptions of staff with teaching responsibilities at a UK STEM-focused institution, illuminating the complex relationships between academic identity hierarchies, social identity inequalities, and the 'teacher' role.

Full paper

Higher education staff with teaching responsibilities are some of the most visible institutional employees to students and key avenues through which they form a relationship to their place of study. In STEM subjects in particular, contact time between teaching staff and students is often considerable and teaching staff perform a variety of tasks related to delivering learning that may extend beyond conveying academic knowledge and into demonstrating applied

skills and cultivating practitioners, lending additional weight to the already significant interface between teachers and learners. Those in teaching positions therefore play multiple roles – as learning designers, sources of pastoral support, representatives of the institution, examples of the vocation (as teachers and/or as practitioners of what they teach), models of subject specialists, and embodiments of wider social categories and identities. At the same time, it is widely perceived that in an HE context the activity of teaching is considered less professionally esteemed and rewarded than that of research (Bagilhole, 2016; Murray, 2022) – a division and hierarchy of which students may be unaware but that nonetheless impacts on the wellbeing and professional identity of those who teach them and find their teaching role to be institutionally *invisible* (Wren Butler, 2021).

In this paper we summarise some indicative themes from a single-site research project that aims to better understand the experiences, identities, and self-conceptions of staff with teaching responsibilities at a STEM-focused institution, illuminating the complex relationships between academic identity hierarchies, social identity hierarchies, and the ‘teacher’ role. While findings are localised to one environment and its disciplinary foci, there is transferability to other institutional contexts given the increasingly globalised and homogenous nature of HE, particularly in England, in the wake of shifts towards a ‘marketised’ and ‘massified’ sector (Ball, 2012). Insights from this work help us consider the benefits and challenges the vital community of staff with teaching responsibilities face through their role, position, and status. Particular attention is given to any inequalities that could be mitigated to improve staff wellbeing and retention as well as student learning and experience, and to promote equitable and inclusive practices targeted at making diverse and welcoming institutions for both existing and potential employees and students.

The study uses semi-structured interviews of 60-120 minutes, conducted May-October 2023, to gain insight into participants’ perspectives and experiences. Respondents were purposively sampled from a pool of volunteers, aiming for 10 from each of the key teaching roles represented at the institution – staff in the academic job family with teaching responsibility; Teaching Fellows; GTAs – and from a diversity of subject positions (disciplinary focus, career stage, social identity, etc.). 30 participants were considered appropriate, enough to contain a variety of perspectives yet manageable with the resourcing allocated to the project.

Data analysis will be undertaken from a post-structuralist, anti-positivist, intersectional feminist approach that understands societal inequalities to be a product of both local and systemic systems of hierarchical value assigned to individuals and groups based on identity features such as ethnicity, gender, social class, disability, LGBTQIA+ status, and so on, working in concert. Beyond this, we do not invoke a specific a priori theoretical architecture or work within a defined paradigm, instead allowing the data in conversation with extant research literature (e.g. Hattam & Weiler, 2021; Herman et al, 2021; Loveday, 2018a, 2018b; Pereira, 2017; Read & Leathwood, 2020), including our own previous work (e.g. Horsburgh & Ippolito, 2018; Wren Butler, 2021, 2022), to determine the most productive approaches and concepts.

Early issues identified include:

- Inadequacy of job titles to encapsulate what staff do, their self-conception, or institutional status;
- Rigid hierarchies that undermine the status of teaching and teaching-focused staff compared to research-active academics;
- Inconsistent line management – lack of support and career development oversight, especially for GTAs;
- Unhelpful student feedback mechanisms – poor response rate, polarised and biased data, limited personal applicability, lack of utility for understanding performance or improvement potential;
- Some staff demographics – e.g. particularly early-career women – making conscious efforts to modify appearance, behaviour, demeanour, in preparation for their role in the teaching environment; this could be to accentuate or downplay femininity in male-dominated disciplines, conform to normative gendered expectations and reduce negative feedback, pre-empt attacks on authority/legitimacy, etc.;
- Confused disciplinary identity for teaching-focused staff who were previously research-active;
- Role models – whether or not they are teachers – tend to be inspirational as people rather than teachers.

Overall, these point to contingent visibilities and invisibilities for both individuals and the role and identities they inhabit, which we contend interact with social and demographic characteristics in complex ways.

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255 Who do you think we are? Social representations of academics among academics and other professional groups

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

We investigated how different social groups perceive academics using an established mixed methods approach to identify *if* and *where* there are misconceptions. Participants ($n = 408$) completed an online Free Association Task where they provided five words or expressions that came to mind when presented with the word 'academic' or a priming vignette where the implied ethnicity or gender of the protagonist was manipulated. We used Social Representation Theory to identify the central, stable elements of the perception of academics that vary by professional group (e.g., Student, Other Profession) or prime (gender / ethnicity manipulation). Results show that for all professional groups *Research* is central, however, *Teaching* is absent from the central core for Academics and Students. We also find the association of *Societal Contribution* varies according to professional group or priming condition. We discuss the implications of these findings on the profession of Academics and Higher Education more broadly.

Full paper

We examined how different social groups perceive academics using an established mixed methods approach (Cristea et al., 2020) to identify *if* and *where* there are misconceptions about the academic profession. We want to know whether society's perception of academics is keeping up with academia's evolution to ensure our teaching, research and scholarship is *accessible*, *trusted*, and *engaged with* by the wide range of stakeholders that academics and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) engage with (e.g., prospective students, professional service staff, charities and third sector, non-government organisations, corporates, schools, governments, government agencies, peers, employers, local, national and international media outlets, health professionals, the public, recruiters). We need to understand how perceptions may vary according to different social groups if we want to change the perception of academics as *distant from the public*, *inaccessible*, and *hidden away* in their "ivory towers" (Buckley & Du Toit, 2010; Serdaroğlu, 2020; Sever, Ozdemir, & Jobson, 2021).

We use Social Representation Theory (Moscovici, 1961) to identify the central, stable elements of the perception of academics and the peripheral, flexible elements that vary by social group. Social representations are a form of social knowledge and express a group's shared values, norms, and attitudes towards a specific social object (e.g., academia; Moscovici, 1984). They are formed through the various modalities in which people imagine, define and represent the social reality surrounding them and are shared by people belonging to the same culture, community, social category, or group (Rateau, Moliner, & Abric, 2011). We may conceive of them as societal or cultural representations (e.g., ideology, collective representations), or as organised individual representations that update each time individuals identify themselves with a specific social group (e.g., students versus academics).

Participants ($n = 408$) completed an online Free Association Task (Abric, 2003) where they provided five words or expressions that came to mind when presented with the stimulus word 'academic' or one of five priming vignettes where the implied ethnicity or gender of the protagonist was manipulated (e.g., Dr. Jane Smith or Dr. Adebayo). Participants provided additional justifications (di Giacomo, 1981) about provided associations to ensure correct interpretation. Prototypical analysis (Vergès, 1994) identified the central, stable elements (high frequency, high importance associations) of the perception of academics and the peripheral, flexible elements (see Figure 1) that varied by professional group (Academics, Students, Non-Academic HEI employees, and Other Professionals) or prime (implied ethnicity or gender of the protagonist).

Prototypical analysis by professional group (e.g., Academics, Students, Non-Academic HEI employees and Other Professionals) demonstrates shared central elements of *Research*, *Knowledgeable* and *Dedicated* for all groups (see Figure 2). While *Research* falls within the central core for all professional groups, *Teaching* is considered peripheral for Academics and Students; it is frequently associated but rated low in importance. Other Professionals were the only group to recognise *Societal Contribution* as central. *Societal Contribution* was associated with low frequency and low importance by Academics while Students and Non-Academic HEI participants rated it as important on the few occasions they made the association. In line with other research (Buckley & Du Toit, 2010; Sever et al., 2021), we also find evidence of issues around gender inequality with *Male* being negatively associated as a central element by Academics.

Prototypical analysis by priming condition (e.g., 'Academic', Higher Education (HE) Professional, Dr. Adebayo, Dr. Smith, Dr. Jane Smith or Dr. John Smith) demonstrates shared central elements of *Research*, *Knowledgeable*, *Dedicated* and *Intelligence* (see Figure 3). *Teaching* is a central element for all priming vignettes, but not with the prime 'Academic' suggesting the importance of priming teaching within the vignette for it to be recognised as central. *Societal Contribution* is a central element for priming categories of HE Professional, Dr. Adebayo and Dr. John Smith but not for other primes (e.g., Drs Jane Smith or Smith, or 'Academic') implying the perceived gender or ethnicity of the protagonist affects the perceived contribution they make to society.

To our knowledge this is the first time Social Representation Theory has been used to understand the perception of academics. In addition to providing a theoretical framework for the interpretation of results, identification of the central and peripheral elements associated with each social group can provide strategic value. Greater *equality of opportunity within* as well as *greater impact beyond* the Higher Education Institution can be achieved by using these findings to tailor communication to be inclusive and directed to the wide range of stakeholders that academics and HEIs engage with.

		Rank (R)	
		High	Low
Frequency (F)	High	Central Elements	First Periphery
	Low	Contrasted Elements	Second Periphery

Figure 1: Structure of the associations following prototypical analysis. Associations are allocated to a quadrant on the basis of their frequency (rows) or rank (columns).

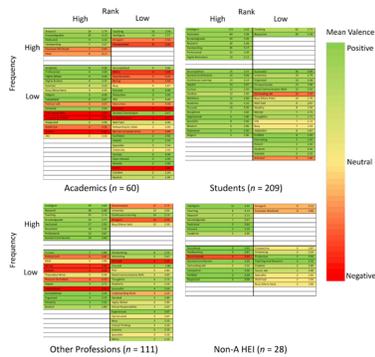


Figure 2: Prototypical analysis by professional group (Academics, Students, Other Professions and Non-Academic working in Higher Education (Non-A HEI)). High frequency associations are on the upper row of each table (low on the bottom) and high ranked associations are in the left column (low on the right). Central Elements (high frequency, high importance) are located in the top left quadrant of each table. Associations are also colour coded to indicate the mean valence (positive or negative).

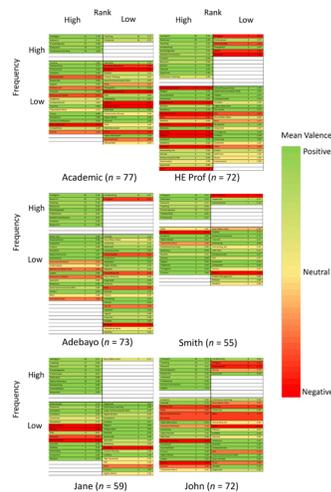


Figure 3: Prototypical analysis by priming condition (Academic, HE Professional, Dr. Adebayo, Dr. Smith, Dr. Jane Smith, Dr. John Smith). High frequency associations are on the upper row of each table (low on the bottom) and highly ranked associations are in the left column (low on the right). Central Elements (high frequency, high importance) are located in the top left quadrant of each table. Associations are also colour coded to indicate the mean valence (positive or negative).

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Parallel Session 3:6

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 145

Chair Dina Belluigi

89 International Research Collaborations in the Post-Brexit Era: Implications for the scientific connectivity between the UK, EU and MENA Science

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

The UK is a productive science system internationally in terms of both scientific publication numbers and citation recognition. However, UK's productive science system has not been an individual endeavour, as it used to be strongly embedded into the European scientific infrastructure. Brexit has the potential to shape UK science and its international research collaborations (IRC) with other systems globally. This study uses bibliometric data to examine whether Brexit had an effect on the IRC between (1) the UK and the EU science system and (2) the UK and the Middle East and North African science, (UK's closest neighbouring region beyond Europe) and (3) the world overall. The findings indicate that there is a slowdown in UK's IRC with the EU and the world overall after Brexit. On the contrary, UK's IRC with MENA countries gained momentum post-Brexit, with a 2% uptick in the rate of increase.

Full paper

Background

The United Kingdom is a leading science-producing country globally. However, UK's productive science system has not been an individual success in the increasingly interconnected global research system (Wagner, 2018): it used to be strongly embedded into the European scientific infrastructure. Being embedded to a union of science systems that are highly collaborative with each other is an important factor. Indeed, international research collaborations (IRC) has been shown to be a major driving force explaining the increasing number of research publications across Europe (Kwiek, 2021).

However, the recent macro development of Brexit referendum in 2016, which led to UK leaving the European Union (EU) has the potential to shape British science and its IRC with other countries globally. In such a situation, it is worth investigating the UK's scientific connectedness with other regions and countries. A quick geographical investigation

would show that the UK's closest neighbouring region beyond Europe is the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region alongside the Mediterranean Sea. As part of the global trend of pluralisation of science systems (Marginson, 2021), countries in MENA region have rapidly developed more productive science systems (Oldac, 2022). Brexit's potentially negative effect on the British scientific connectivity with the EU may have implications for IRC between UK-based scientists and the scientists in the immediate neighbours beyond Europe, the MENA countries.

Investigating Brexit's effect on the scientific connectivity between the UK, EU, and MENA countries bears significant value for research, but no previous research has investigated it in detail using scientometric analyses. Existing research has mostly focused on mobility of peoples and uncertainty about research funding matters (E.g. Highman et al, 2023). An in-depth investigation of change in research connectivity, scientific influence and funding patterns as a result of Brexit is highly important for researchers, policymakers and practitioners.

Against this backdrop, this study aimed to examine whether Brexit had an effect on the IRC between (1) the UK and the EU science system and (2) the UK and the Middle East and North African science, (UK's closest neighbouring region beyond Europe) and (3) the world overall.

Summary of methods

The study used bibliometric data for its analyses. It included the analysis of (a) the total and discipline-based collaborative research publication patterns between the UK, the EU and the selected MENA countries specifically focusing on pre- and post-Brexit years, (b) the citation recognition and impact of the collaborative research output, and (c) potential patterns in research funding bodies over the years. The study used Web of Science (WoS) database as a data source.

Summary of findings

The quantitative trends of IRC

The analysis indicated that there is a slowdown in UK's IRC with the EU and the world countries after Brexit, compared to the pre-Brexit period. The biggest drop is with EU countries: the rate of increase slows down with 7,4% when compared to pre-Brexit trends. This is a significant macro-level change. The drop in the rate of increase in IRC with all countries globally is at 2%. On the contrary, UK's IRC with MENA countries gained momentum post-Brexit, with a 2% change in the rate of increase.

Citation recognition of UK's IRC

Striking differences in citation recognition differences before Brexit starts taking effect and after five years of the Brexit vote in 2016. This analysis uses Category Normalised Citation Impact (CNCI) values, which are normalised for each year based on research area and document type of all documents covered by WoS.

UK -based publications' (IRC excluded) citation recognition drops post-Brexit, when compared to 2016. UK's research is above the world average of 1 (1.24), but the drop is visible.

There is a significantly increased citation premium for UK publications co-authored with MENA countries after Brexit. By contrast, there is a slight drop in citation premium gained from IRC with EU27. IRC with MENA now yields more citation premium for UK-based researchers when compared to IRC with EU countries. UK's citation premium of IRC with all countries globally also is on a downward trend.

Research funding related findings

EU-funded research publications start fluctuating after Brexit. There is a visible decrease immediately after the Brexit vote year (2016), but the trend turns upward leading to the five years after Brexit, in 2021. Uncertainty continues, UK scholars cannot officially apply to EU Horizon, which started in 2021. MENA funding sees a sharp increase, especially from 2019 onwards. However, the biggest increase is in the number of Chinese research funding reported in the publications.

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375 Refocusing Embedded Agency: Internationalisation Strategies of Taiwanese Higher Education Institutions under Current Policies

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Internationalisation has become a focus of Taiwan's higher education policies since the 2000s. While there are numerous policy reviews, the internationalisation practices in universities remain under-investigated. Therefore, this study conducts case studies at a top public university and a private university of technology in Taiwan. With a maximum variance sampling design, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of higher education internationalisation in non-Western contexts and the theorisation of the relationship between organisational status and internationalisation strategies.

Empirical data on institutional internationalisation strategies are collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation and interpreted with an institutional logics approach. Preliminary findings from a reflexive thematic analysis suggest that both cases are not solely following government policies. Instead, they demonstrate commitments to different logics in their internationalisation strategies depending on their statuses and conditions. Furthermore, a tendency towards widening structural inequalities under current policies is also revealed.

Full paper

The internationalisation of higher education (IoHE) has gained greater attention from governments and universities worldwide over decades. Nevertheless, it is not until recently that an increase in non-Western studies in this highly

Western-dominant research field has been witnessed (de Wit et al., 2022; Marginson & Xu, 2022; Mittelmeier & Yang, 2022). In line with this trend, this study investigates IoHE in Taiwan.

Currently, Taiwan is implementing three higher education internationalisation policies. The *New Southbound Policy* aims to strengthen people-to-people connections with Southeast and South Asia countries and recruit students from this region. Another competitive grant, *Higher Education SPROUT Project*, supports selected universities to pursue global excellence while other HEIs focus on local development. More recently, *the Programme on Bilingual Education for Students in College* was launched in 2021 to improve Taiwanese students' English proficiency and elevate Taiwan's global competitiveness by promoting English-medium instruction courses in universities.

While there are numerous policy reviews (e.g., Hou & Hill, 2021; Hou et al., 2020), the actual situation in universities is overlooked [YH1H1]. Therefore, this study looks into the internationalisation strategies of Taiwanese higher education institutions (HEIs). More specifically, it aims to answer the following questions: (1) How is higher education internationalisation conceptualised within HEIs in Taiwan? (2) What strategies for internationalisation are prioritised by different HEIs? (3) In what ways do the policy contexts inform the internationalisation strategies of different HEIs?

To answer these questions, a qualitative multiple-case study design was employed. Following a maximum variation sampling approach, a public top-ranked university and a private university of technology are selected as cases. These cases represent the elite sector and the mass 'demand-absorbing' sector of Taiwan's higher education system, respectively (Hou & Lu, 2023; Marginson, 2016). With this case selection approach, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between organisational status and internationalisation strategies, which remains under-theorised (Buckner, 2022).

Empirical data on institutional internationalisation strategies are mainly collected through semi-structured interviews with senior leaders and academic staff in the two cases. Documents regarding government policies and institutional strategies, such as official press releases and annual plans, are also collected to further contextualise interview data. In total, 27 interview transcripts and 136 documents have been included for analysis.

The theoretical frameworks applied to interpret these data are Brankovic's (2018) concept of organisational status and Thornton et al.'s (2012) institutional logic approach. According to Brankovic (2018), organisational status comprises three elements: categories, affiliations, and intermediaries. *Categories* refer to socially constructed classifications of HEIs, such as public- or private-operated and research- or teaching-focused. Furthermore, *affiliations*, namely inter-institutional partnerships in the forms of sister schools or association memberships, are also influential. Moreover, *intermediaries* are the third parties delivering their observations of competing universities to audiences (Werron, 2015). In the contemporary global education system, university rankings are powerful intermediaries that affect organisational status.

On this conceptual basis, the institutional logics approach of Thornton et al. (2012) is applied to explain the similarities and differences in the internationalisation strategies of the two cases with different statuses. Institutional logics are "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). Based on the relevant literature (Cai & Mountford, 2022; Qi, 2022; Thornton et al., 2012), this study identifies five logics underlying HEIs' internationalisation practices, including academic, market, managerial, state, and community logics.

More specifically, while *academic* logic values organisational reputation and professional norms (Grossi et al., 2020), *market* logic leads universities to make commercial-based decisions in order to elevate their competitive position in higher education markets. Another logic, *managerial* logic, shapes internal hierarchical decision-making structures and accountability systems to maximise organisational efficiency. Furthermore, *state* logic reflects the role of governments and universities in redistributing resources and providing high-quality education as public goods (McMullin & Skelcher, 2018). Lastly, *community* logic is reflected in the reciprocal relationships that universities build with local and global communities in their internationalisation practices (Qi, 2022).

Through these theoretical lenses, this ongoing project reveals that while both cases follow government policies closely, their embedded agency is demonstrated in their internationalisation strategies. In other words, they commit to different logics depending on their statuses and conditions. Furthermore, based on the interviewees' reflections, this study draws attention to structural inequalities under Taiwan's current internationalisation approach. Suggestions for the government and HEIs are made in order to enable a more egalitarian future.

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Parallel Session 3:7 - Symposium

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 144

7 Disrupting Coloniality in Global Higher Education: Perspectives from the Margins.

Research Domain

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Rationale

Disrupting Coloniality in Global Higher Education: Perspectives from the Margins

The symposium aims to critically examine and challenge the pervasive colonial structures within higher education systems. By bringing together scholars working on decolonial theories and critical approaches to global higher education, this symposium seeks to foster dialogue and generate transformative ideas that can reshape the landscape of higher education to promote global social justice.

Historically, higher education has been rooted in colonial ideologies, perpetuating unequal power dynamics and marginalising diverse voices. Recognising the urgency of dismantling these structures, the symposium provides a space to think critically about global higher education from the margins. A key question to be explored is:

which/whose knowledges are most valued and validated in the context of higher education, and which/whose are denigrated, invisibilised and erased?

The four papers address different aspects of higher education and intersect in their critique of dominant narratives and frameworks. The first paper highlights the absence of Black-centred research and the limited use of Black Studies, arguing that this perpetuates the marginalisation of Black people and their experiences in understanding global higher education, with a focus on Sino-African relations. The second paper explores the decolonisation of the curriculum in postcolonial India, particularly the English Literature curriculum. It analyses how internal divisions based on ethnicity, caste, class, religion and gender influence the inclusion/exclusion of voices in the 'decolonised' curriculum. It raises concerns about decolonisation in India's diverse and hierarchical postcolonial context. The third paper shifts the focus to Latin America, examining the power dynamics in defining and enacting internationalisation in higher education. It reflects on how Latin American institutions often adhere to colonial and hegemonic narratives, but also highlights emerging critical voices that challenge these dominant narratives. The fourth paper takes a conceptual approach, challenging the nation-state ontology that shapes global higher education policy and practice. It suggests exploring alternative frameworks, such as inter-being and the promotion of planetary consciousness, which broaden the scope beyond trans/national issues in higher education.

Collectively, these papers shed light on the limitations and power dynamics within global higher education and advocate for more inclusive and critical approaches that centre marginalised perspectives, challenge dominant narratives and promote alternative frameworks for understanding and transforming higher education systems to promote social justice.

Chair

Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela

Universidad de Tarapaca, Arica, Chile

Riyad Shahjahan

Michigan State University, Michigan, USA

Discussants

Tristan McCowan

UCL-IOE, London, United Kingdom

41 Challenging Dominant Paradigms: Towards a Decolonised Approach to Internationalisation in Latin America

Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela

Universidad de Tarapaca, Arica, Chile

Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

This paper explores the complexities of internationalisation in Latin American higher education, focusing on the power dynamics that shape this phenomenon. While contemporary universities are under increasing pressure to embrace internationalisation for global competitiveness, dominant narratives often reflect Western perspectives and ignore the specificities of postcolonial contexts. This essay explores the evolving concept of internationalisation, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and decolonised approach that takes into account shifting global dynamics and lingering

colonial legacies. Critical voices from Latin America emerge, critically examining internationalisation as a new form of colonialism and advocating for the recognition and inclusion of indigenous knowledge and practices. However, these critical perspectives struggle to gain traction and influence policy. The conclusion highlights the challenges faced by Latin American institutions in managing internationalisation and calls for grassroots approaches that empower those directly affected by the process.

Full paper

Contemporary universities are increasingly called upon to promote internationalisation in the pursuit of global competitiveness and quality education (Altbach, 2006; de Wit, 2020; Knight, 2004; Thondhlana et al, 2021). However, these calls often emanate from Western imaginaries and influential organisations that shape policy debates and decision-making processes (Shahjahan & Edwards, 2021; Buckner, 2022). Such narratives tend to overlook the historical specificities of postcolonial contexts and perpetuate existing power imbalances (Shahjahan, 2016; Stein & Andreotti, 2016; Stein, 2021).

There is a lack of research that acknowledges the historical legacies of colonisation in the internationalisation efforts of countries in the so-called Global South (Majee and Ress, 2018). The colonial condition, characterised by the subjugation and marginalisation of indigenous communities and Afro-descendant peoples, continues to shape the challenges faced by former colonised countries (McEwan, 2018). Postcolonial studies reveal how Western countries promote their knowledge systems and narratives as universal and superior, with internationalisation serving as a manifestation of these power dynamics (Heleta & Chasi, 2022; Lander, 2013; Quijano, 2002). There is therefore a need to critically interrogate internationalisation, taking into account both the changing world order and enduring colonial legacies (Shein, 2021; author, 2021).

The evolving concept of internationalisation

The concept of internationalisation in higher education has evolved over time, with different perspectives and definitions emerging (Knight, 2004; de Wit, 2019). While some define it as the integration of a global dimension into education, others emphasise its overarching public purpose (de Wit, 2020). However, these dominant definitions still reflect Western perspectives and market-driven higher education systems.

In Latin America, internationalisation is seen as essential to improve research, programme quality and institutional development (Gacel-Ávila, 2021). Policy reports often offer a positive but depoliticised view of internationalisation, with recommendations that may not align with institutional commitments

In response to these challenges, more than twenty years ago, UNESCO pointed to the need for solidarity in international cooperation, with an emphasis on South-South cooperation; the need to create training programmes in developing countries and centres of excellence. Both academic literature (Ress, 2018; Thondhlana et al. 2021) and international organisations (OECD, 2009; World Bank, 2002) have also highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation and/or internationalisation domestically, especially in less developed regions.

However, concerns remain as to whether these initiatives sufficiently promote the agency of less developed countries and regions and sustain benefits and developments over time (Moshtari & Safarpour, 2023).

Critical voices on internationalisation emerging from Latin America

Critical voices on internationalisation have also emerged. These narratives can be divided into two. The first critically examines internationalisation as a new form of colonialism driven by global market forces and neoliberal ideologies. It raises concerns about global rankings, brain drain, imported theories and the marketization of higher education, while emphasizing the need for equity, empowerment of marginalized groups and South-South cooperation. Concrete policies and strategies to address internationalisation and colonial legacies are often lacking in this narrative (Author, 2022).

The second narrative focuses on the decolonisation of universities in the context of internationalisation. It emphasises the recognition and inclusion of indigenous knowledge and practices to challenge the Western-centric curriculum and promote local knowledges. Some universities have implemented policies and practices to make visible indigenous

knowledges and practices,. However, the visibility of these initiatives is often limited to regional academic circles (Mato, 2022; Perales Franco & McCowan, 2021).

Both narratives contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by Latin American higher education institutions in engaging with internationalisation (Author, 2021; Leask, 2021).

Conclusion

Competing narratives of internationalisation coexist in Latin America. Traditional normative perspectives influenced by Western ideologies dominate the region, while critical voices challenge internationalisation as a new form of colonialism (Author, 2022; Author and others, 2017). However, these critical perspectives struggle to gain mainstream recognition and influence policy.

Internationalisation in Latin America faces complex challenges due to structural inequalities inherited from the colonial past. While these challenges have been recognised in the literature, practical implementation tends to reinforce a normative view of internationalisation that disadvantages most institutions in the region. Stratification and the inability to meet globalised indicators hinder progress in internationalisation efforts.

Inspired by Appadurai (2000) and his idea of globalisation from below, or 'grassroots globalisation', it is suggested here that internationalisation needs to be driven outside supranational agencies or national governments - which have characteristically privileged global competition and economic growth - in order to involve those directly affected by internationalisation processes.

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125 Can we transcend the nation-state ontology in global higher education?

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

This conceptual essay provides a metaphysical critique of the inherent logic of “internationalization” by unpacking the nation-state ontology pervading global higher education (HE) policy and practices. “Internationalization” signifies the “in-between” of multiple nation-states and continues to perpetuate an anthropocentric ‘worldsense’ marked by national containers. It begins with a genealogy of the word “international,” its inherent assumptions, and why it’s important to interrogate the role of “nation-state” worldsense in the global HE field. It next unpacks the ways in which the nation-state as a category (and an entity) comes to being and informs globally facing HE policies (“internationalization” policies) and practices (i.e. engaging with “international” students). The paper argues that the nation-state worldview provides the onto-epistemic grammar in global HE to demarcate boundaries between what is internal and external to an entity, to help make sense of particular objects (e.g. groups, institutions, entities) and processes, and impacts *ways of being*.

Full paper

In this conceptual essay, I offer a metaphysical critique of the inherent logic of “internationalization” by unpacking the nation-state ontology pervading global higher education (HE) policy and practices. “Internationalization” signifies the “in-between” of multiple nation-states and continues to perpetuate an anthropocentric ‘worldsense’ marked by national containers. While many have debated the role of nation-state or national scale as a unit of analysis in global HE research, practice, and policy (Marginson, 2022; Shahjahan & Kezar, 2023), the nation-state onto-epistemic grammar remains unpacked and challenged in the global HE field. Drawing on the interdisciplinary literature on nation-state formation, internationalization of HE, and HE policy documents, I unpack how the nation-state as a category (and an entity) comes to being and informs globally facing HE policies (“internationalization” policies) and practices (i.e. engaging with “international” students). I will argue that the nation-state worldsense provides the onto-epistemic grammar in global HE to demarcate boundaries between what is internal and external to an entity, to help make sense of particular objects (groups, institutions, entities and/or destinations) and processes, and has consequences for ways of being.

When one explores the actual genealogy of the word “international”, we discover that it is less than 300 years old. The “international” was an adjective coined by Jeremy Bentham in 1780 to help capture the kinds of laws that would govern the relations between sovereign states (1780) (Suganami, 1978). “International”, as originally conceived, was thus a means to articulate a phenomenon that happened between two separate self-contained entities (i.e. sovereign states). This coinage presumes the planet can be divided spatially as self-contained geographic entities. In short, the “international” denotes planetary space in particular ways (i.e. a world divided by sovereign states). But, where does this ontology of space as sovereign states come from? A brief history of the “nation-state” construct reveals that it comes from Europe and Spanish Colonies in Latin America in the 17th and 18th centuries. Furthermore, subsequent European historical epochs witnessed the weakening of the medieval worldview, Latin as a sacred language, the dynastic monarchies, the emergence of printing press, to name a few (Anderson, 2006). This nation-state ontology of space became the norm of the international order through decolonization movements in the 1950s, and throughout the 1970s when sovereign states replaced empires worldwide. Overall, these transitions helped produce nation-states as “imagined communities” bounded within borders—in which members feel commonality with others, even though they may not know them (Anderson, 2006). Furthermore, as the nation-state emerged as the legitimate “unit” of the global system, it normalized “the belief that this has been the normal way of doing things since 1648” (Vergerio, 2021, p. 8). In summary, the nation-state becomes a (or the) way of being on this planet. But more importantly, as an anthropocentric category, it led to disrupting, and reconnecting, us in particular ways not with simply other human-beings, but also other than human beings.

The nation-state worldview manifests in global higher education practices in so many ways, thus reinforcing the pernicious nature of this worldview. For instance, it helps signify identities and entities in global HE. Many social groups such as students, faculty, and institutions, are signified by their specific nation-state signifier, and more importantly, use the term “international” to signify that object that is outside of one’s nation- container referent. The

nation-state worldview pervades the labor market as 'international degree' or 'international qualification' (not to mention international experience), rather than domestic degrees, is sought by employers, thus driving student and faculty mobility (Brooks & Waters, 2022). The nation-state worldview also manifests in national or institutional HE policies, both domestically or globally facing (Shahjahan & Grimm, 2023). For instance, Japan's "The Global 30 Project" policy (MEXT, 2023) reproduces the nation-state ontology in several ways. First, it helps to designate a kind of action (e.g., "internationalization", "internationalize") rooted from "outside" the national referent (or border or community), to be applied to something internal to the "national" referent (i.e. Japanese universities, academic systems or campuses). Relatedly, the language of "Japanese" is used to differentiate borders and markers of separating knowledge or people from one geography or the other.

In summary, my analysis raises some ontological questions: how are nation-states and associated actors (e.g. HEIs, identities) constantly ontologised (i.e. becoming)? How do we center relationships to the cosmos, land, ancestors, other-than-human beings, other ontological perspectives? Finally, how can we expand our fences of what we perceive to be knowledge (e.g. space and time), relationality, and affect, beyond the nation-state worldview, in global HE (Shahjahan & Grimm, 2023)?

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305 "The Challenges of Curriculum Decolonization within the Postcolonial Indian Context: a case study" under the symposium, "Disrupting Coloniality in Global Higher Education: Perspectives from the Borders"

Mousumi Mukherjee

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Even in the postcolonial contexts of the Global South, Universities as sites of knowledge production and dissemination had reinforced only colonial knowledge systems which involved a systemic exclusion of alternative epistemologies of categories like Indigenous people, gender, race, and sexuality. This is probably because decolonization has not been an easy process. This paper highlights the challenges of curriculum decolonization within the postcolonial Indian context with the English literature curriculum as a case. Citing the controversial removal of renowned Bengali author and activist, Mahasweta Devi and two Dalit authors' texts from the undergraduate English syllabus at Delhi University, this paper discusses how the internal ethnic, caste, class, religious, and gender-based divisions determine the voices that get incorporated within the "decolonized" curriculum versus the voices, that get excluded within the postcolonial Indian society. Thereby, this paper problematizes the act of curriculum decolonization within the internally diverse and hierarchical postcolonial context of India.

Full paper

Introduction:

Knowledge production in formalized education has carried the colonial legacy in its curriculum and pedagogy. Academic experts like Shahjahan et al. (2021) explicate the significance of decolonial work growing substantially among educators across the globe.

The global discourse on academic decolonization gained momentum when we, as democratic societies felt that the education system all around the world needed to decentre the Western canon, the Eurocentrism embedded in our reproduction and dissemination of knowledge.

Movements in the form of campaigns like the "Rhodes Must Fall" in Oxford, and student-driven campaigns like "Why is My Curriculum White?", and "Liberate My Degree" all specifically focus on the problem of the domination of Eurocentrism and lack of diversity in university curriculum.

Decolonial work began in the Global South with Ngugi Thiongo's call for decolonization in Nairobi, Kenya, and ideals of democratization in higher educational institutions, such as Jawaharlal Nehru University following the Constitutional values enshrined by B.R. Ambedkar in India.

The available literature on the reform of English studies in India tells us that the process of decolonization of the curriculum started in the 1980s and 1990s arising out of years of crisis debates because of the colonial legacy of the English curriculum. Indian, Australian, Caribbean, and even American writing in English was not part of the formal curriculum.

The widening of the repertoire of the English curriculum with a significant change in the syllabus was propelled by zonal workshops, reports, and recommendations of the University Grants Commission (UGC) panel and Curriculum Development Committees (CDC). However, which texts (especially with regard to Indian writing in English) get selected in the curriculum remains problematic.

This paper highlights the challenges of curriculum decolonization within the postcolonial Indian context with the English literature curriculum as a case. Citing the controversial removal of renowned Bengali author and activist, Mahasweta Devi and two Dalit authors' texts from the undergraduate English syllabus at Delhi University, this paper raises a critical question about the voices that get incorporated within the "decolonized" curriculum versus the voices, that get excluded within the postcolonial Indian society.

Controversy over Delhi University English Curriculum

In the context of postcolonial India, the curriculum reforms have been driven by a strong postcolonial sentiment. Ideologically speaking, the political left-oriented parties and right-oriented parties across the Indian states are driven by this postcolonial standpoint. However, based on their ideological orientation, the parties have their own interpretations of decolonization. Hence, decolonization has become a problematic process within the country. In recent years, critics have raised growing concern about decolonization in postcolonial India becoming closely aligned with the project of extreme right-wing nationalism. It has taken the shape of the 'saffronization' of the curriculum. (Gohain, 2022 as cited in Mukherjee, 2022).

This is reflected in the recent controversy over the English syllabi of the University of Delhi. Draupadi, a short story by renowned Bengali upper-caste writer and social activist Mahashweta Devi (translated into English by globally renowned academic, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak) was dropped from the English Literature syllabus of Delhi University. The story is about a tribal woman who is raped by Army officers. It was part of 'women's writings' papers in the English literature syllabus for the fifth semester and had been taught since 1999. No "academic logic" was provided for the action by the DU oversight committee responsible for curriculum revision. In the same way, two Dalit writers Bama Faustina Soosairaj's "Sangati" and Sukirtharani's "My Body" were also removed from the syllabus. These two texts also talked about caste and gender discrimination faced by Dalit women.

The reason DU senior administrators gave was that, these three texts portrayed gruesome sexual content and the Indian army in poor light. In support of their action, it was stated that they would like to include more empowering stories about Dalits and oppressed sections of society in the curriculum to show how people can overcome and rise above societal discrimination.

Critical Question

But isn't Mahashweta Devi's tribal Draupadi (Dopdi) modeled after the epic character, Draupadi of Mahabharata, empowering? Don't they both overcome the fear of being violated by patriarchy? This is a critical question to ponder in the light of the current controversy. As Dasgupta (2021) writes, "The removal of these three Dalit texts, Sangati, My Body and Draupadi from the syllabus for their gruesome sexual content and denigrating representation of the military, validates Toni Morrison's arguments about the power of literary texts as minefields, that can be more expository, explosive and dreadful than lethal weapons."

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Parallel Session 3:8

09:00 - 10:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 122

Chair Ibrar Bhatt

392 Challenges and Positive Practices for Supervisors of Part-Time and Distance Learning Doctoral Candidates

Gina Wisker

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

The wellbeing and success of doctoral students is the subject of many current, recent and historical research projects, however, not all doctoral students can equally benefit from some strategies known to support their full-time, on site peers. For supervisors working with remote and part-time doctoral students there are many challenges in supervising the doctoral learning journey, encouraging intellectual engagement, working successfully with remote research and writing while being mindful of and supporting doctoral students and their wellbeing. Ongoing research and experience shared here from UK and international projects conducted (2022, 2020, 2021) and supervision experience, brings research on support for the doctoral journey, the wellbeing of doctoral students, together with work on the supervision of those studying remotely and /or part-time, either for personal development or professional development reasons, or both to identify strategies for positive supervisory practices to support doctoral student success and wellbeing.

Full paper

The wellbeing and success of doctoral students is the subject of many current, recent and historical research projects, however, not all doctoral students can equally benefit from some of the strategies known to support their fulltime, onsite peers. For supervisors working with remote and part-time doctoral students, there are many challenges supervising the doctoral learning journey, encouraging intellectual engagement while being mindful of and supporting students, and working successfully, remotely with their research and writing. Ongoing work shared here brings research on support for the doctoral journey, the wellbeing and mental health of doctoral students together with work on the supervision of remote students, particularly those studying part-time, for personal or professional development. In particular, it considers the challenges and affordances of remote supervision of remote, part-time doctoral students, and strategies for working effectively with these students, their research and writing. It shares ways in which supervisors can support this journey and does so by building on the doctoral research learning journey work (Wisker, Morris et al 2011), more recent work on remote supervision of doctoral students (Wisker et al, 2021) and the author's own professional experience as a supervisor, researcher and international workshop presenter. We look at the three dimensions of doctoral student learning: personal, learning and institutional and consider how they're affected by distance supervision and the supervision of part-time students, recognising that the arrow straight route (Gurr 2002) towards autonomy and doctoral success is often a different journey for those studying part-time and at a distance. The supervisor support for this varied journey takes into account remote context, online supervision, the part-time nature of the students' study and in many instances the effects of these exacerbated in terms of wellbeing and mental health. Issues with wellbeing can be inflected by the very characteristics of distance, part-time research and remote supervision, since students are separated from any collegial communities which support wellbeing and collegial exchange, and from their supervisory team. For many there are competing pressures of part-time study and often fulltime professional work as well as the daunting prospects of working towards an unknown, mystifying goal (a new knowledge contribution). Such research journeys are more likely to be fractured, stop-start and under pressure contributing further to known stresses and the unknown stresses. In such contexts, the wellbeing of the remote part-time students is not only their own responsibility and that of the supervisor, but institutions need to support the students by appropriate distance library access and collegial communities eg cohorts and residential programmes to reduce isolation and demystify the research process and the production of doctoral work. Our research (2021) and experience showed that those supervising remotely need to learn to use all the strategies of functional approaches, and encouraging critical thinking (Lee, 2008) structuring regular supervisions with focused work and outcomes to keep students motivated and on course to complete their doctorates successfully.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) emerged in the first of the research projects (2021) as a way of understanding physiological, safety needs and belonging of doctoral students were fundamental building blocks for both wellbeing and an ongoing sense of fitting in, being a successful doctoral student.

Much of our work as remote supervisors with remote and part-time doctoral students must take account of their context and time pressures supporting and empowering them to be planned and organised while demystifying the research and writing journey both for their success and our self-actualisation and wellbeing as supervisors (Wisker and Robinson, 2016) and so our own wellbeing. Suggestions for supervisors shared here come from both historical and recent research projects conducted with colleagues (2011, 2016, 2021, 2022) and my own continued practice working as a part-time distance doctoral supervisor for part-time distance doctoral students.

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164 Navigating the Role of Replacement Lead Supervisor: An Autoethnographic perspective

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In this paper we build on Wisker and Robinson's (2012) work on supervisors and doctoral 'orphans' to reflect on our autoethnographic experiences of what has been referred to as 'picking up the pieces'. We believe it is especially timely to re-explore losses and gains involved in changes in supervisory arrangements against a backdrop of reports of academics leaving the profession (voluntarily or through compulsory redundancy schemes), associated supervisory capacity challenges, and disputes over academic pay, work-loading and the significance of particular academic activities. By adopting an autoethnographic approach, we acknowledge and value the relationships that research supervisors have with others and look beyond discourses that underplay our positionality as academics, administrators, leaders and managers, and colleagues. A reflexive approach enables us to explicate the practice of 'taking on' additional supervisees mid-registration or 'stepping in' to ameliorate risks of non-completion that threaten doctoral candidate success (and institutional metrics and reputation).

Full paper

Doctoral supervision involves long-term relationships that contrast with many other academic roles that often start and finish within an academic year. It is not difficult therefore to imagine potential complexities in ensuring or guaranteeing sustainable supervision arrangements. Team-based supervision approaches are often intended to mitigate against loss of individual supervisors. However, it is rare that doctoral supervision will (officially) continue with one supervisor or advisor even if team-based supervision ideals do not mitigate against lesser interested or engaged colleagues in the team. Supervisors do not always leave an institution but may leave a team when relationships are deemed irretrievable or the leaving may be more akin to 'checking out' when a supervisor decides they no longer wish to be involved ("I don't get enough hours", "I'm not enjoying doctoral supervision", "I don't want to do it any more"). There is often a particular sense of urgency to fill a void when a principal advisor or lead supervisor leaves the team and where that supervisor has carried the weight of supervision. The latter context forms the backdrop to our reflections.

The breakdown of a supervisory package can be traumatic for a candidate, leading to feelings of abandonment, a loss of trust in the institution, questioning the worth of their research, and a fissure in the continuity of the research, their belief in their methodology and philosophical foundations adopted which have often been built in partnership with the machinations of their ex-supervisor. Replacement supervisors often come with a different epistemological, axiological and methodological view of the research or, in many cases, come from an opposite intellectual tradition. Wisker and Robinson's (2012) work on supervisors and doctoral 'orphans' identified three broad dimensions of problems and ways forward based on empirical research with 20 international supervisors. Two of their categorised issues – learning (relating to the doctoral project, research approach, and patterns of learning) and personal/professional (relating to interactions, relationships, mindsets and wellbeing) – hold relevance to the framing of our experiences of becoming and being replacement lead supervisors.

Quite often, the qualification for a replacement supervisor is their experience rather than subject specialism. Thus, 'getting on board' is more than signing a form. It involves negotiation, understanding, flexibility, creativity, and diplomacy. For the new supervisor, the first time they meet the candidate is often when they have been assigned to them by a desperate manager. They have not been involved in either the recruitment process or the formulation of project aims and objectives or research questions and 'getting on board' is often the end process of discussions such as "there is no one else I can ask", "as a senior member of staff you should" or "if you don't X will fail or formally complain". As academics involved in doctoral programme leadership we also may be confronted directly with emotionally charged candidates begging for us to step in as lead supervisors due to perceptions that there is "no-one else to help".

'Getting onboard' encompasses the decision-making that occurs prior to agreeing to be a replacement supervisor and, here, we acknowledge coercion to be at play as much as agency; becoming a replacement supervisor can be emotionally loaded, exhausting and stressful.

Implicit and explicit levels of commitment ensue from getting onboard, particularly in relation to candidates who, by the time they receive a replacement lead supervisor, have already suffered what Wisker and Robinson (2012) acknowledge as 'loss'. For us, navigation of challenges and ways forward extend beyond Wisker and Robinson's (2012) learning and personal/professional dimensions. Being a supervisor is only one (small) academic role we perform alongside concurrent teaching, research, administrative, leadership and management roles. This means that our identities and relationships as research supervisors collide with others whose readings may include misguided interpretations that by taking on additional supervisees we are seeking or will gain 'quick wins' to increase our

doctoral completions records[i]. There may be little empathy for our positions. Becoming a replacement lead supervisor is fraught for both the student and the supervisor, yet this actuality is often not supported in terms of training or additional resources if picked up mid-academic year.

Expectations associated with being a replacement supervisor are often overlooked in terms of pressures to rescue at-risk candidates. Highlighting particular challenges experienced through this aspect of academic practice, we call for wider appreciation of the nuances associated with doctoral supervision in different contexts.

[i] Despite numbers of doctoral completions not being a determinant of academic promotion or reward systems in our institution.

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13 Doctoral rhythms within an EdD: the case of group supervision

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

This paper explores the application of group supervision as a pedagogical strategy during the module stage of a Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) at a teaching intensive university. The study uses an elicitation approach to explore the marks, traces, and murmurs of group supervision on the EdD, through six open-ended provocations with ten candidates who were advanced practitioners including several who were university staff. Rhythmanalysis is applied to explore the candidates' experiences of group supervision at the early stages of their research careers. The findings highlight how group supervision is important for containing anxiety, developing identities, grappling with theories and methodologies, peer learning and highlighting the benefit of cohortness. Group supervision could also be described as a meta-supervision approach as the supervisor needs to articulate and justify the learning experience as it develops for the advanced practitioners involved.

Full paper

Introduction

The literature on doctoral supervision still tends to be predicated on the more traditional and widely accepted practice of the one-to-one supervisory model which is common in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Moulton et al. 2015). Beyond the one-to-one model there exists a number of different models of supervision (e.g., team or panel supervision, cohort or coursework-based supervision and PhD by publication (ASSAF, 2010). A more recent addition is group supervision which has a background in the sciences such as in lab groups (Egan et al. 2009) and undergraduate counselling studies (e.g., Enyedy et al. 2003). A common factor across group supervision is the value

of peer learning, diffusion of power dynamics, the development of a sense of community and creating opportunities for social learning (Wilmot, 2021).

However, there is a limited prevalence of the application of group supervision within research on professional doctorates. Whilst six studies were located include Malfroy (2005); Carr et al. (2010), Fenge (2012) Hutchins (2017); Agné and Mörkenstam (2018) and Kumar (2021); only the latter from the USA focused on the EdD. Furthermore, only Carr et al. (2010) suggested that group supervision could replace one to one supervision, in their conceptual paper, and Agné and Mörkenstam (2018) conclude that group supervision could replace individual supervision in the first year, rather than being seen as supplementary to individual supervision. None of the papers considered group supervision as a pedagogical strategy during the module stage of the EdD.

Research Aims and Methods

Aims: This paper presents data from a completed research project investigating the value of group supervision as a pedagogical strategy on the module stage of the EdD, at a teaching intensive university. The candidates were advanced practitioners in their fields with several working at the Post'92 university in question. The group consisted of ten members who attended eighteen sessions over the academic year. The aim of the study is to explore group supervision and the experience of the doctoral learning involved within the EdD programme.

Theory: Rhythmanalysis (Levebvre, 2017) is applied to explore the candidates' experiences of group supervision as an emerging practice in order to investigate its inherent potential and possibilities for wider use and application within the doctoral community.

Methods: The research intension was to begin the process of gathering a group supervision conspectus which included marks, traces, and murmurs on the EdD by using an elicitation approach rather than more conventional direct interviews. The use of elicitations provided rather open-ended considerations and reflections around six EdD pertinent evocations and provocations.

Analysis

In order to identify and explore the rhythmic present and presence within EdD doctoral learning and group supervision we will record and analyse the evidence provided by the marks and traces and the murmurs that remain when the group supervision in the module stage is complete.

Findings

There are two emerging trends that appear from these EdD marks, traces, and murmurs around the pedagogical practice of group supervision. First, what is clear from many of the doctoral candidates is the central importance of the exploration and production of ideas within the group supervision process. Group supervision was seen as useful to help candidates to feel that they belonged to a learning community of peers with a similar identity which assisted with containing fears and anxiety of being able to undertake a doctorate as suggested in the conceptual model of 'nourished supervision' outlined by Carr et al. (2010). Being with likeminded peers during the EdD module sessions was a powerful pedagogical aspect for the candidates as part of the group supervision which contributed to the changes, they noted in themselves. New ideas and concepts were being experienced during the group supervision which were impacting on the identities or world view of the candidates (Fenge, 2012).

The second emerging trend which appeared from the data related perhaps more precisely to a form what could be described as a certain meta-supervision approach which had a presence within the group supervision practice. As a result of the candidates being advanced practitioners in their own particular professional fields of expertise, the supervisor had to regularly step in and out of the doctoral learning in order to articulate and justify what was happening in relation to the learning experience and its relevance to future doctoral demands. In short, whilst the group supervision strategy was useful overall there was an additional aspect added that took it beyond the form of EdD cohort working and learning as found in earlier studies (Carr et al. 2010).

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Tea & coffee, poster & exhibition viewing

10:30 - 11:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Courtyard Lounge

Parallel Session 4:1

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 144

Chair Camille Kandiko-Howson

367 Exploring 'readiness': Women academics and the demonstrative mangle of promotions practices in the performative university

[Carol A. Taylor](#)¹, [Sally Hewlett](#)¹, [Christina Hughes](#)²

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Promotions practices work as gatekeepers for women academics, filtering who gets through, who is deemed to meet the grade, who is successful. This presentation zones in on the work that promotions criteria and promotions practices do in regulating academic women's promotion. Based on insights from a UKRI/University of Bath funded project entitled WomenCAN: Breaking Promotion Barriers, Changing University Cultures, the paper discusses women academics' often bruising experiences of promotion, and that institutionally gendered micro-practices continue to ensure that 'merit sticks to men' (Woodhams et al., 2022). Insights from the project – a survey with Heads of Department, narrative interviews with senior women academics, and a bespoke coaching course – challenge the view that promotions criteria are neutral, objective descriptors of standard tasks and levels which can/are 'applied equally' to individual cases across all contexts. In fact, promotions practices are shaped by gendered perceptions of career paths, readiness and deservingness.

Full paper

Promotions criteria are often held to be neutral, objective descriptors of the standard tasks and levels required to achieve promotion. As such, they provide institutions with apparently transparent mechanisms for sorting out the deserving and the not yet deserving, and they offer those applying for promotion an apparently clear list of requirements and standards that must be demonstrated in order for promotion to be achieved. And yet, research continues to show gender pay gaps (HESA, 2023), research funding gaps (Weale and Barr, 2018), and an academic promotions success gap shaped by gender, race and class (Bailey, 2022). Promotions practices continue to act as gatekeepers for women academics, filtering who gets through, who is deemed to meet the grade, and who is successful, thus regulating academic women's career paths, identities and roles within HEIs.

We explore these tensions in the light of insights from a UKRI/University of Bath funded project entitled WomenCAN: Breaking Promotion Barriers, Changing University Cultures. Empirical evidence from the project disclosed that women academics' experiences of promotion are often bruising, and that institutionally gendered micro-practices continue to ensure that 'merit sticks to men' (Woodhams et al., 2022). Insights from the project – a survey with Heads of Department, narrative interviews with senior women academics, and a bespoke coaching course – challenge the view that promotions criteria are neutral, objective descriptors of standard tasks and levels which can/are 'applied equally' to individual cases across all contexts. In fact, promotions practices are shaped by gendered perceptions of career paths, readiness and deservingness.

In this context, perceptions of 'readiness' for promotion takes on significance. Many women academics who go for promotion to professor have had the experience of being told they are 'not ready' for promotion by male peers but this notion of 'readiness' is itself deeply shaped by gendered factors that hide under the radar. Assumptions regarding who or how 'professorship' or research leadership should and can be demonstrated, or who possesses the required attributes for promotion to reader or professor, pull the interpretation of apparently 'neutral' promotions criteria into the realm of gendered political micropractices. As Yamamoto (2019: 167) points out, women in research leadership positions are often there at the behest of a patriarchal powerbase built on 'elite, academic, male, social and cultural capital'. That this is the case is not new news! Thornton's (2013: 3) exploration of the cultural practices of neoliberal

universities notes that the 're-masculinisation of the university' is endemic in producing forms of gendered behaviour which valorise stereotypically masculinist behaviours - behaviours which, Morley (2016: 5) points out enable a 'virility culture' of competitive individualism to thrive'.

What is new, we think, is what can be disclosed by a specific focus on the work that promotions criteria and promotions practices do in continually re-shaping and re-producing at the micro-level the institutional gender order which continues to entrench long-standing patterns of inequality which, while changing somewhat over time, are doing so at a glacial pace. In addition, our project discloses insights on how promotions practices shape academic women's perceptions that they have to discipline themselves and their careers within and around these institutional inequalities: bending their minds and accommodating their bodies to try to fit in with (and failing to fit in with) the rules of the neoliberal game which continue to privilege white, middle class, able-bodied, internationally mobile male academics causes affective damage – shame, despair, burnout, for example (Morley, 2003; Taylor, 2020). Covid-19 effects feed into these systemic, affective and identity concerns (Sharafizad, F. et al., 2022).

Promotions criteria in some ways also contribute to the invisibilisation and stigmatisation of women's' chosen career and promotion pathways: their choices are seen as lacking in legitimacy in academic authority structures which continue to privilege research over leadership, teaching, citizenship and engagement. All of this has negative effects on women's career progression and on perceptions of women's institutional value. As O'Connor's (2020) work indicates, equality is impeded by structures, cultures and identities within HEIs, and it is within this micropolitical institutional nexus that promotions criteria and promotions practices gain animacy, force and power. We bring a feminist theoretical orientation to the discussion of how women attend to and address the demonstrative mangle of promotions practices in the performative university. This is a subject worthy of close investigation. Findings from the project will, we hope, provide new recommendations as to how women can be better supported in promotion through institutional practices at departmental, faculty and university level.

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31 Maternity leave experiences and implications in the neoliberal academy

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper is based on a study that involved secondary analysis of a mixed method online survey dataset with a sample of 450 women academics (82% UK and 18% international). The study explored the women's experiences of maternity leave in academia and their perceptions of the implications of maternity leave for their career. Finding that 69% of the sample continued to undertake core academic duties while on maternity leave, their motives for doing so were examined through thematic analysis of qualitative data. Four orientations adopted by the women were identified. Each orientation characterises unique aspects of neoliberal subjectivity. Foucauldian governmentality is used as an analytical tool to examine hidden mechanisms that undermine equality, diversity and inclusion policies and women's rights by effectively driving women to relinquish their maternity rights by undertaking academic work during maternity leave. Implications for research, policy and practice are discussed.

Full paper

This research addresses the dearth of large-scale studies about female academic's maternity experiences of leave in academia and seeks to contribute important new insights into the influence neoliberalism in the academy.

The extant literature indicates that women academics suffer from inequitable maternity rights (Weststar 2012; Epifanio and Troeger 2019), ineffective family friendly policies (Feeney, Bernal, and Bowman 2014), and a lack of suitable formal policies to support career success (Gerten 2011). Neoliberalism has been implicated in women's plight, since it is associated with unmanageable workloads and the use of homogenised systems for measuring research and teaching performance (Erickson, Hanna, and Walker 2021; Gill 2009). Thus academics are compelled to work long hours as there simply is not enough time to do all the things the job requires. Pressure to meet performance targets such as those set for research outputs, can lead to exhaustion and disadvantage for women in the period following the birth of a child (Acker and Armenti 2004; Allison 2007; Mavriplis et al. 2010; Gerten 2011; Epifanio and Troeger 2019; Huppertz, Sang, and Napier 2019).

It is surprising given the burgeoning literature on the influence of neoliberalism in higher education that little rigorous analysis has been undertaken of the impact of neoliberalism on academic mothers (Huppatz, Sang, and Napier 2019), and even less on their maternity leave experiences. This empirical study addresses that gap.

The study involved secondary analysis of an online mixed method survey with 553 women academics, of which 82% resided in the UK and the remaining 18% in many other parts of the world. 444 (80.6%) had previously taken maternity leave and 107 (19.3%) were still on maternity leave at the time of the survey. The survey included quantitative and qualitative questions. Quantitative data were subjected to descriptive statistics to produce frequencies and percentages to create a profile of participants. One multiple choice closed question was used for the main study. This asked about work and other activities undertaken by participants during the period of maternity leave. As part of the analysis, responses to this question were grouped into core academic duties, such as responding to email, teaching, doctoral supervision, grant writing, publishing papers etc., and another group of activities of a less demanding nature was created. This included activities such as keeping in touch with a mentor, attending a conference, accessing the university library etc.

The results of this analysis revealed that 69% of women continued to perform core academic duties during maternity leave. This result directed the qualitative phase of analysis, which explored women's motives for working during maternity leave and their perceptions of the implications of maternity leave for their career. The qualitative analysis followed a six-stage thematic analysis method (Braun and Clarke 2006). The qualitative findings identify four distinct motives – referred to as orientations. Each orientation characterises unique aspects of neoliberal subjectivity. The paper is not suggesting that women conform to one 'type' or neoliberal subject. Indeed, some women exhibited overlapping motives for working during maternity leave, and it is likely that motives may change over time, according to individual circumstances. However, the analysis reveals hidden mechanisms at play driving the women to effectively relinquish their maternity rights. In terms of the implications of maternity leave, upon returning to the workplace, many women reported that they experienced punitive measures and believed they were no longer seen as dedicated, ambitious or career oriented.

Foucauldian Governmentality is used to aid interpretation work of the results. This seeks to unravel the mechanisms compelling women to work during periods of formal maternity leave. The paper argues that under neoliberalism women's maternity protection and entitlements are being eroded and highlights implications for policy and practice.

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Parallel Session 4:2

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 141

Chair Labake Fakunle

60 The Knowledge, Action and Identity Project: Empirically modelling 'Professionalism' in Undergraduate Students

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Research Domains

Technical, Professional and Vocational Higher Education (TPV)

Abstract

Students in higher professional education are prepared for high level professional practice. To be able to fulfil their future roles, their educational programs aid them in developing their professionalism. This paper presents the conceptual and empirical search for a measurement model on professionalism. Professionalism is a multifaceted construct which is at best vaguely described in previous research. It is here conceptualized through the conceptual model by Griffioen (2019) as a personal integration of professional identity, professional knowledge and professional action that transforms over time through accommodation and assimilation practices. These practices imply the development of the (future) professional. Additionally, initial findings of the development of professionalism in students during their 4 year undergraduate degree are discussed.

Full paper

Introduction

The higher education system has been given the responsibility of the university to educate citizens who often become high level professionals in society (Ministry of Education Culture & Science, 2015). This is an important responsibility

that actively helps to shape society. At the brink of their educational pathway towards professionalism, students bring their own beliefs and expectations of what it entails to become a professional through higher education (Brownlee, Walker, Exley, & Pearce, 2009). It is however unclear how interactions with higher education over time results in educated professionals; in their own particular types of professionalism. This understanding of the development of professionalism in students is the focus of the overarching project. This paper focuses on the methodology needed to analyse the student's professionalism.

'Professionalism' is at best a vaguely described and multifaceted concept (Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021; Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012). To be able to grasp this change in more detail, the conceptual model of professionalism by Griffioen (2019b) is applied, which distinguishes between professional knowledge, professional identity and professional action (see Figure 1; see also Barnett and Coate (2005)). The presumption underpinning this model is that these elements of professionalism will develop over time in students and professionals resulting in a need for assimilation or accommodation to achieve a new balanced state of professionalism. This process would imply professional learning, and raises questions like: 'Who do I want to be?'; 'What do I need to know' (also embodied)?; and 'What do I need to do?'.

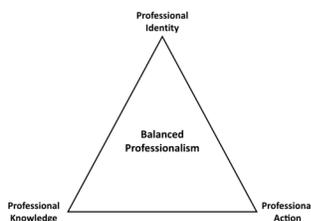


Figure 1: The model by Griffioen (2019b) on professionalism.

For each of the elements a body of knowledge exists and is applied to this study, however, for all three, as well as professionalism as a whole, there still is a need for clarity in conceptualisation, demarcation and measurement. This will be further explored in the full paper.

Research Design

This five year longitudinal project considers the development of undergraduate students' professionalism over time. The project approach builds on the Sociology project by Ashwin, Abbas, and McLean (2014).

This Dutch project included in total 40 students (16 remained after 4 undergraduate years) from four disciplinary different programmes in a single applied university in The Netherlands. They were selected based on prior research (Griffioen, 2019a) showing differences in knowledge interactions between life-applied disciplines, and non-life-applied disciplines (see also Biglan, 1973). In the Summer of 2023 the final set of data will be gathered.

Table 1: Educational programmes included in this study.

	Life		
Hard	Physical Therapy (PT)	Social Work (SW)	Soft
	Aviation (AV)	Creative Business (CB)	
	Non-life		

Measurement instruments

The students were interviewed annually, 5 times in total. The interviews were focused on the development of (the elements of) their professionalism. From the second interview, each student brought an assignment from their educational track to discuss their development as a professional. The interviews were part of a wider dataset.

Analysis

The intention in the analysis is to capture the development of professionalism in students in a holistic, grounded manner (Saldana, 2021), so not to lose the whole person by segmenting the data, while still following its concept in the three integrated elements identity, knowledge and action.

For data-reduction, all quotes related to professionalism, being a professional, etc. were selected in all interviews. Secondly, these quotes were physically mapped on the triangle of professionalism (Figure 1). Thirdly, combinations of quotes with similar content were labelled with a grounded phrase. Finally, combinations of phrases received a more meta-level label. This procedure provided a data-reduction with a continuous overview over the wholeness of the students utterances, 'absorbing them as a whole, rather than analysing them line by line' (Saldana, 2021, p. 214).

The conceptualisation of an interpretation model for data-analysis started with interpreting the nine positions of intellectual development by Perry (1999) as notions of 'knowledge' and expanding them to nine notions of 'identity' and nine of 'action'. In several iterations, this base model is further developed to attune better to the current literature, and to increase applicability to analyse the afore described reduced data. After development the measurement model will be applied to define the students' position on the different elements of professionalism, and combined their professionalism as a whole at a particular point in time.

Findings

The expectation is that at the time of the conference a empirically and conceptually sound model for analysing students professionalism can be shared. Additionally, some initial results of the development of undergraduate students' professionalism over four years is expected. Both methodological and content findings will be discussed with the SRHE audience.

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337 Working While Studying: an exploration of the drivers leading university students to seek employment over the course of their degree

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

We consider the increasing trend in the number of university students seeking part-time employment whilst studying in the UK. Building on a case-study situated at a mid-sized British university, we survey the undergraduate population to investigate the relative importance of three drivers for working while studying: (i) necessities, (ii) wants, and (iii) for future employment. Questionnaire responses are linked to university records, providing demographic information, as well as attainment and engagement indicators, to inform the characterisation of typologies. A third dataset address affective dimensions, such as physical/mental wellbeing, to be correlated with university outcomes. We also conduct follow-up interviews to enrich quantitative findings. Grounding on such detailed instruments, our results enable us to advance recommendations for intervention at institutional level, as well as pathways for further exploration at education policy level.

Full paper

In recent times, higher education providers in the United Kingdom have registered an increasing trend in the number of students seeking part-time employment whilst studying (Creed et al., 2015; Darolia, 2014; Grozev & Easterbook, 2020; Eurostat, 2016). Different factors seem to contribute to this phenomenon. Increasing participation in higher education (HE) implies that a greater proportion of students from less privileged background access university without family support (Lessky & Unger, 2021; Mishra, 2020); resorting to part-time work to pay for living costs. At the same time, wider access to HE increases the competition for graduate-level jobs, leading students to seek opportunities to signal work-readiness through employment experience on top of their degree qualifications (Little, 2002). Furthermore, the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are now compounded by a cost of living crisis fuelled by economic and political instability, which generate additional pressure on student finance, mental wellbeing, and attainment (Grozev & Easterbook, 2020; Students' Union UCL, 2023; Wang et al., 2020).

Whilst there is broad acknowledgement of the challenges faced by university students, very little research has been conducted in exploring the motivations that lead students to work while studying, with the great majority of contributions focusing on US data (e.g., Darolia, 2014; Stern & Nakata, 1991; Wang et al., 2020), and limited scope to assess external validity and implications for British HE, due to the difference across education systems. This paper addresses gaps in the literature in two ways. First, it considers the experience of the United Kingdom to compare and contrast findings with US based studies. Second, it shifts the focus to the lived experience of students through extensive surveying of the student population. Our research builds on a case-study situated at a mid-sized British university with the aim of (i) generating valuable information for universities to understand and respond to students' needs and (ii) developing a methodology that can be easily scaled up to other HE institutions, in the United Kingdom and beyond, informing the HE policy debate.

The first objective of our investigation is to assess the relative importance of three drivers for working while studying: (i) necessities, (ii) wants, and (iii) future employment. The first two drivers encompass issues with the increasing cost of living, and with the willingness to increase purchasing power to afford a better lifestyle during studies. The third driver explores motivations linked to employability, such as the acquisition of practical skills, experience, and/or an internship record.

Our research framework grounds on a mixed methods approach. A questionnaire designed and deployed via Qualtrics is administered to students, targeting the undergraduate population and recording the views of students currently in employment, as well as not in employment. Linking student responses to university records, data exploring the three drivers for working while studying are combined with demographic information, as well as attainment and engagement indicators to inform the characterisation of typologies. A third dataset addresses affective dimensions, such as physical/mental wellbeing, as well as student's self-assessment of their financial situation, to establish correlation with university outcomes.

Questionnaire respondents are also invited to attend follow-up interviews to elaborate on their experience. Qualitative data is being explored both deductively (to gather further information about the three drivers) as well as inductively (to assess whether further drivers and nuances emerge from student narratives). The accuracy of our questionnaire items (i.e. gathering information on shift patterns, distance from workplace, as well as affective dimensions of the student experience), will enable us to advance recommendations for practical intervention at institutional level, as well as pathways for further exploration at wider education policy level. The research protocol has cleared ethical approval.

In this first account, we will detail the results of a pilot survey, comprising survey responses from 150 students and a subset of transcripts with those respondents who agreed to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview. The insights derived from the pilot will enable us to review the structure of the questionnaire, refine the interview script for qualitative interviews, and progress to further data collection from the beginning of the Academic Year 2023-24. We shall welcome collaboration and partnership with other HE institutions interested in researching the experience of student workers.

Initial findings suggest that the main motivation for additional employment is 'wants', with a substantial share of respondents (over a third) working to cover basic needs. This suggests that there are some cases where, firstly, student finance may be inadequate and, secondly, students do not recognise the employability benefits of part-time work.

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Parallel Session 4:3 - Symposium

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Room 145

3 Reimagining Transitions into, through and beyond Higher Education: Empirical and theoretical considerations

Research Domain

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Rationale

The Symposium's goal is threefold; first, to document how transitions to Higher Education (HE) are experienced and narrated by students from under-represented groups; second, to reframe transitions with the valuable aid of Bourdieu's and Archer's theoretical tools; thirdly, to reimagine the role of University and its moral and civic duties, beyond the neoliberal orthodoxy, as enabling space for forging solidarities across raced, social classed, gendered and citizenship divides.

Both Bourdieu and Archer provide theoretical tools that unpack the interplay between structure and agency. Archer's work places greater weight on individual agency (as a reflexive practice) than Bourdieu's account of individuals whose agency is framed by their status and positioning within fields. The symposium offers an opportunity to discuss the unique struggles and complex relationships these under-represented students experience as they navigate the higher education field.

The Symposium will share findings and implications of four empirical studies that mapped the phenomenon of transitions to HE. The four papers develop different but related accounts of what transitions might mean in the context of HE. Hordósy's work explores the personal life-changing experiences of students as they acclimatise and adapt throughout their university careers to produce a graduate identity they are comfortable to occupy. By contrast Myers's paper focuses on universities in which ethnic minority students find their prior experiences of racism are reconstituted by institutional practice that shapes their identities to accept inequalities. Katartzi's work with refugees explores how new unprecedented migratory flows create challenges for new groups of students seeking to access and participate in HE. Finally, Madriaga will discuss the potential for an inclusive, anti-racist university and how white widening access practitioners have grasped this 'potential'.

In light of the studies' findings, and building upon the Bourdieusian/Archerian theorisation, transitions are conceptualised as mediated by two factors; first, the differential access to manifold resources possessed and mobilised by social agents and secondly, transitions are further compounded by epistemic injustices and the interplay of the latter with exclusionary pedagogical regimes that marginalise under-represented students' diverse knowledges.

The Symposium contributors will be arguing for the need of a reimagining at systemic and organisational levels in HE. Firstly, by widening access, namely through enabling the participation by students who face intersecting oppressions. Secondly, by putting in place decolonised curricula and inclusive pedagogies that will meaningfully empower multiple disadvantaged students to successfully complete their studies.

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Chair

Rita Hordosy

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Discussants

Kalwant Bhopal

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232 Enabling transformative university transitions: becoming a student and a graduate

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Research Domains

Abstract

Drawing on a longitudinal research project that followed the undergraduate entrants of 2013 into, and through their university time, this paper provides a novel conceptualisation of transformative transitions via looking at the four dimensions of non-linearity, multiplicity, diversity and structure. The paper builds on Archer's relational realist approach and work on reflexivity to show how students select and merge a diverse set of personal concerns to arrive at a *modus vivendi*. This four-year tracking study collected interview data from a diverse group of 40 students on a yearly basis at an English northern red brick university. The paper explores the changing focus of student experiences, from the social aspects of acclimatisation, to learning to be academic, and finally, becoming a graduate. The results presented here point to the structural enablements and constraints that higher education institutions and policymakers should mitigate in responding to the inequalities of access and experience.

Full paper

Context

The emergence of high participation higher education systems has been coupled with changes to how universities are funded (Callender 2012), seeing the individualisation of financial risk in England (Antonucci 2016). The onus is then on the student to make an informed choice over higher education participation, whilst universities compete for their 'custom' (Tight 2013). However, university choice and participation is experienced differently in a system that remains stratified and socially segregated, with large variety in student budgets creating differential contexts for learning (Raffe and Croxford 2015; Hordósy, Clark, and Vickers 2018). This paper reports on a longitudinal research project that followed the entrants of 2013 into, through and beyond their studies. Importantly, using a novel definition of higher education transitions, it illustrates through a case study of an English northern red brick university (NRBU) how undergraduate student experiences change over time.

Conceptualising higher education transitions

The field of student transitions in higher education is 'underconceptualised' (Briggs, Clark, and Hall 2012, 2), with Gale and Parker (2014) identifying three main strands of the literature: transitions as induction; transitions as development; and transitions as becoming. Using this latter approach, Gravett (2019, 5 & 7) points to the 'diversity and multiplicity of not just experiences but of the self'. Archer's (2003, 298) work on reflexivity, 'as the process that mediates the effects of structure upon agency' is highly relevant here, with her later adding that 'our internal conversations define what courses of action we take in given situations and subjects who are similarly placed do not respond uniformly' (Archer 2012, 6). As such, a *modus vivendi* is forged through reflexive internal conversations that select and merge a diverse set of personal concerns.

This paper understands transformative university transitions as a dynamic, perpetual and uncertain series of changes and movements through time and space to become a student, and subsequently a graduate; it also sets out the horizontal, vertical, agential and structural dimensions of university transitions.

Design and methods

This tracking project draws on interviews with home, undergraduate full-time students at an English northern red brick university (NRBU), focusing on how students understood, and made sense of, their experiences of student life as they moved into, through, and beyond university. Taking a longitudinal approach it followed a sample of 40 students over a period of four years, starting in the second semester of 2013/2014. The yearly interview schedule and follow-up questions also built on both the previous years' overall findings, and personal stories.

Results

The paper looks at three broad foci of transitions: the initial focus on becoming a member of new social space gives way to the academic duties, to subsequently orienting towards the future, post-graduation life. The crosscutting concerns are budgeting constraints and financial futures, as well as physical and mental ill-health of students, their families and friends.

Although the first academic year is characterised by a sense of arrival, the new environment, timeframe, concepts, rules and especially new peers make university transitions emotionally overwhelming. The predominant stress factor throughout this period relates to the social requirements of university life, with the first few weeks even more tumultuous. Given learning experiences exist on a continuum within the life course, students will initially attempt to adapt their (often unsuitable) learning and revision techniques, whilst also grappling with a new learner identity. To conquer the complex and unbounded nature of university knowledge, most students start actively prioritising, tailoring the academic experiences to their needs. They seek more personalised relations with university staff and start to recognise the wide range of attitudes and interests of their tutors and lecturers. Throughout the final year, time once more becomes tumultuous, given the concerns around finishing university and figuring out what is next. Recognising the multitude of dimensions at play, a diverse and interlinked set of future plans emerge, entangled in a commitment to personal concerns, values and identity, social relationships, belonging to a community and a place, as well as the wider structural constraints.

Conclusions

To foster transformative transitions for all, embracing the diversity in student and graduate experiences that also change over time is key. This means, first, knowing who students are, using sufficient scaffolding to make knowledge accessible, and fostering an inclusive university community. Second, a whole-institutional support provision throughout the student lifecycle that understands transitions as changeable and diverse could ensure more equitable access. Finally, stable and substantive non-repayable financial support is fundamental to level student experiences for those from poor backgrounds, especially in the context of the current cost of living crisis.

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14 The scyborg work towards an anti-racist English university

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

The journey of achieving race equity in English higher education appears to be an arduous task given the evidence of racial inequalities whether for staff and students. This gives cause for pessimism for people of colour working and studying in higher education, which highlights universities as racialised organisations (Ray 2019). It is also an indicator of how hope for anti-racist institutional change is racially structured, reflecting on Bourdieu's idea of 'subjective hopes and objective chances'. The paper presentation examines how race is accounted for in higher education widening access policy and practice through interviews with sixteen university outreach practitioners in the English context. With race at the centre of study, the findings suggest that practitioners invest in an idea of people from marginalised backgrounds transitioning into an inclusive university, where hope resides, structured by a racially organised academy.

Full paper

The journey of achieving race equity in English higher education seems an arduous task. The presence of Black professors is lacking, with only 30 Black female professors compared to 4340 white female professors throughout the UK (Rollock 2021, 2). Moreover, Black undergraduate students are not accessing higher education in the same way as their white counterparts (Boliver 2013), and if they do access similar institutions, they are unlikely to achieve similar degree outcomes as their white counterparts (Advance HE 2020). This is cause for pessimism for people of colour working and studying in higher education, which highlights universities as racialised organisations (Ray 2019).

la paperson (2017) offered hope to make anti-racist change within higher education institutions. An illustration of university workers being cast as scyborgs was offered in retooling and rewiring the colonial machinery of universities to become more inclusive and anti-racist for decolonial ends. It provided a sense of hope amidst the realization that universities are racialized organizations whether in metropole England or in settler colonial states like the USA and Canada. It is this dichotomy of hope (subjective expectations) and realness of racism (objective probabilities) (Bourdieu 1990), specifically among university workers who specialize in outreach and widening access into higher education to people in marginalized communities, which is the focus of this paper. This is a study that examines how race is accounted for in higher education widening access policy and practice through interviews with sixteen university outreach practitioners in the English context. With race at the centre of study, the findings suggest that practitioners invest in an idea of people from marginalised backgrounds transitioning into an inclusive university, where hope resides, structured by a racially organised academy.

Context

The emergence of English widening access policy did not have students of color in mind. This is a result of a dominant narrative that has been carved out foregrounding ethnic minority 'success' in university participation. This narrative can be traced back to the wording of a government-commissioned report, the Dearing Report (1997, chapter 7, para 7.16): 'Ethnic minorities as a whole are more than proportionally represented in higher education, compared to the general population.' Despite having detailed specific underrepresentation of students of color in prestigious, highly-rejective institutions and that students of color achieved a lower rate of return on qualifications than white students, the Dearing Report wording indicated that ethnic minorities were more proportionately represented in the sector than white students. This was captured by political commentators and media as a 'success'. Pilkington (2009, 17) expressed concern about this emphasis of 'success', as it pushed other observations of race inequality recorded in the Dearing Report to the periphery.

Given this, I turn my attention specifically towards to widening access policy in English higher education. The research questions driving this study have been originally framed by Gillborn (2005) but repurposed here to examine race and widening access in higher education: (1) Who or what is driving widening access policy, and what does it

have to do with race? (2) Who are the beneficiaries, who wins and loses based on race because of widening access policy priorities? (3) What are the racial outcomes and effects of widening access policy?

Methods

To address these research questions, interviews conducted with sixteen workers in university widening access in the spring of 2021. The work of widening access practitioners includes working with schools and communities to raise awareness of higher education opportunities to children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. In reference to English higher education widening access policy, the dominant discourse on children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is associated with poverty and working-class.

Having a background as a widening access practitioner and being based in the UK, I was able to recruit respondents for my study via my contacts. The research was in line with the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines and scrutinized by my institution's ethics committee and approved in Spring 2021. Many of the respondents self-identified as white, though I did not specifically ask for their ethnicity or gender.

The findings suggest that there is a disconnect between the policy discourse on widening access into higher education and what practitioners actually do, congruent with Rainford's (2021) findings on his work with widening access practitioners. However, with race at the center of my study, the analysis of interview data suggest that many practitioners are operating like la paperson's (2017) scyborgs reassembling the colonial tools of the university to support racially marginalized communities.

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271 Routes through higher education: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students and the development of a 'specialisation of consciousness' in UK universities

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

UK higher education policy designed to improve social mobility has been a staple of successive New Labour, Coalition and Conservative governments. Such policy is framed within neoliberal narratives conflating increased marketisation and 'choice' with the potential for improving problems of diversity and equity. However, structural inequalities of class and ethnicity affecting university admissions and transitions into the labour market persist. Using Bourdieu, this paper explores the experiences of final year, BME undergraduates. It argues ethnic minority students preparing to enter the labour market display a 'specialisation of consciousness': a set of practices framed by prior background and experience, choice of university, institutional support and expectations of continuing familial support. This represents an adaptation of individual consciousness to a 'white' institutional and societal framework with corresponding psychic harms. Despite expressing optimism for the future, many students acknowledged their opportunities were shaped by a range of inequalities including those of universities.

Full paper

Policy designed to improve social mobility and promote 'widening participation' for under-represented groups within UK Higher Education (HE) has been a staple of government policy since New Labour's commitment to increase student participation rates to 50% (NAO, 2002; DfES, 2003). Subsequent Coalition and Conservative governments persisted with the 'widening participation' agenda, often framed within neoliberal narratives conflating increased marketisation and 'choice' with the potential for improving identifiable problems of diversity and equity (Ball et al. 2001; Furedi, 2010). Despite significantly increasing student numbers, structural inequalities of social class and ethnicity affecting university admissions continue (Bhopal, 2018; Reay, 2018) as do inequalities within the labour market (Rafferty, 2012; EHRC, 2016).

This paper explores the experiences of 43 BME final year students. Drawing on Bourdieu, it argues BME students preparing to enter the labour market display a 'specialisation of consciousness', a set of practices framed by prior background and experience, choice of university, institutional support provided by their university and expectations of continuing familial support. For BME students this represents an adaptation of individual consciousness to a 'white' institutional and societal framework with corresponding psychic harms. Often interviewees described both optimism for their futures whilst noting their continuing subjection to inequalities at university and their inequitable expectations for the future.

There was a clear recognition that both class and ethnicity determined the value of the stakes students were competing for at universities. BME students from working class backgrounds identified their outcomes were likely to be less rewarding in the future than those of white peers or from more affluent backgrounds. BME students without an initial access to capitals generally entered a lesser game with lower stakes than those with an excess of capitals.

Students identified this form of inequality was a systemic characteristic of previous educational experiences and also informed their expectations of the labour market. For example they described being poorly advised whilst at school to choose less prestigious or local universities, assuming a relative parity between different institutions and the value of their degrees. Whilst at university they identified how opportunities that would improve their chances when applying for jobs were often selectively distributed to more affluent white students. These experiences map closely the evidence of poorer school outcomes, degree attainment gaps and inequitable employment and income outcomes (Bhopal 2018; EHRC 2016).

Compounding these inequalities current funding arrangements ensure all students pay the same fees regardless of institution or social background. In this model, the transfer of economic capital mirrors transfers of knowledge and cultural capital, and the fostering of social networks to benefit already privileged students. Put simply, students from poorer, non-traditional working-class BME backgrounds pay more and get less back. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999:45) describe a 'racial (or racist) sociodicy' in which institutional practices of addressing racial inequalities are themselves implicated in maintaining pre-existing racial inequalities. This was evidenced in the disjunct between the narratives of universities eschewing widening participation and a broad commitment to equity, whilst simultaneously

producing BME graduates imbued with dispositions and characteristics that disadvantage their futures. In a Bourdieusian sense these students are complicit in this process: they readily described their 'practical mastery' of the rules of university field and their engagement with them. The unequal nature of such practical mastery for BME students, (which they themselves identified), indicating the gap between realistic opportunities and outcomes compared to white peers.

The flourishing of inequitable practice within institutional fields is a commonplace example of symbolic violence: 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:167). Participants discussed the detrimental impact of such practice as a recognisable feature of the experience of university life upon them. They recognised rather than misrecognised the consequences of racism in universities. The acceptance of racism in universities by BME students aware of such racism appeared if not entirely contrary to the complex version of complicity suggested by Bourdieu, at least divergent from its tone of unsaid and embodied behaviours. What emerged were not ambiguous accounts of 'hidden persuasion' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:168) but rather narratives of overt discrimination.

In conclusion the research identified an ongoing process described as 'specialisation of consciousness', in which BME students identify and understand racial inequalities in HE and accept the limiting consequences these have on transitions into the labour market or further study. This is a process that allows universities to preserve their institutional and economic standing, whilst training BME students to graduate without challenging overtly inequitable institutions and social inequalities more generally.

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313 Refugee transitions to English Higher Education (HE): Towards an intersectional social justice framework (PART OF THE SYMPOSIUM Reimagining Transitions in and out of Higher Education: Empirical and theoretical considerations)

Eugenia Katartzi

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

In the global context of unprecedented migratory flows, the refugee education is gaining increased research and policy attention. The paper sheds light on the under-researched topic of refugees' access to HE. It is based on a wider ongoing project that comparatively examines HE refugee governance in England and Germany, focussing on student refugee voices, on HE institutional structures and cultures of support (or lack thereof) and on discourses and management of diversity. The methodology includes in-depth interviews with key institutional actors and refugee students, along with Qualitative Content Analysis of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion documents, seeking to unearth the 'more tacit, culture and system-level assumptions' that may lead to unintended exclusions (Hartley et al 2023; Stevenson and Baker, 2018). Drawing upon the lived experiences of refugee students as they transition to two English HEIs, the paper's goal is to identify the barriers and enablers to their access and participation.

Full paper

In the global context of unprecedented migratory flows, the education of refugees is gaining increased research and policy attention. Access to education for refugees remains in a state of an 'entrenched crisis' according to the UN Refugee Agency's latest report, notably with access to tertiary education being globally at 6% (UNHCR,2022). The paper will report on an ongoing project that seeks to contribute to the under-researched area of refugee HE, through comparatively examining refugee governance in two key resettlement countries, Germany and England and their respective High Participation systems of HE (Marginson, 2016).Further, in employing a qualitative case study design the project focuses on four universities in Midlands, England and in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, examining their institutional structures and cultures of refugee support (or lack thereof) and their discursive constructions of refugee students. The methodology includes in-depth interviews with refugee students and with key institutional actors, along with Qualitative Content Analysis of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) documents. The latter aims at identifying the prevailing discourses around the management of diversity and discursive construction of refugee students. Further, the project explores the key institutional actors' perspectives seeking to unearth the implicit, cultural, systemic assumptions that may lead to unintended exclusionary practices for refugee students in HE (Stevenson and Baker, 2018).

For the purposes of the presentation, the focus will be on the case of English HE and the marginal place of refugee students as a Widening Participation and EDI target group. Until recently, refugee students were invisible in Widening Participation policies and only in 2017 they were added by the Office for Students as one of the under-represented groups, albeit still remaining undefined. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with refugee students the goal will be to document their lived experiences and the interplay between the intersecting regimes of the ever-tightening migration control and English higher education. Centring on refugee voices, the presentation will identify the enabling and constraining factors affecting displaced students' access and participation in two English universities. In the context of hyper-marketised and neoliberal English HE, it will be argued that a radical reimagining of HE policies and practices is needed that, in going beyond access and the rhetoric of EDI, recognises the unique, intersecting disadvantages that refugee students face and challenges the entrenched inequalities and epistemic injustices that they have to grapple with within Universities.

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UNHCR (2022) All inclusive: A campaign for refugee education

Parallel Session 4:4

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Conference Room 1c

Chair Gina Wisker

134 UK universities' responsiveness to local migrants and ethnic minorities? Exploring the hidden curriculum of evasion and race unconsciousness in the Northern Irish academy

[Dina Zoe Belluigi](#)

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Significant changes to the local demographics of Northern Ireland have been under-studied within that contexts' research-intensive universities. This paper explores how the academics who have undertaken such marginalised research have experienced negotiating the socio-cultural influences, enablements and constraints of that local research ecology. It is informed by a mixed method study of published research outputs and interviews with academic authors, members of a non-academic partner organisation and research developers. A hidden curriculum of evasion of controversial local topics, groups and dynamics emerged; not unlike insider-research phenomena observed during the height of the contexts' conflict period. Questions are raised about the conditions of race unconsciousness and coloniality shaping academic citizenry within in that context.

Full paper

Migration, race/ethnicity and majority-minority dynamics are established areas of academic enquiry in many contexts around the world, including the United Kingdom. However, they have been under-studied within Northern Ireland's research-intensive universities, despite significant local socio-demographic change. This has included increases in those not locally-born, from 1.09% to 6.53%; those racialised as other-than-'white', from 0.8% to 3.4%, and those other-than-Christian, from 0.4% in 2001 to 1.5% (according to Census data of 1991 and 2021).

The study's triangulated findings were informed by (a) a critical systematic analysis of research outputs from 1994-2022 (n=209) (Moynihan and Bellugi, 2022); (b) a critical discourse analysis of primary data generated from questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews undertaken with the participation of academic authors (n=32 of 247); (c) report-and-respond discussions with members of non-academic partnering organisations (n=3) and with research developers (n=2) of a and b. These provided insights into how academic research practice is shaped by, resists and/or negotiates influences in local research ecologies. The paper focuses on evasion and race unconsciousness in the Northern Irish academy.

Participating authors' accounts function as counter-narratives to the dominant priorities within NI, where their academic agency and critical consciousness was developed exogenous to its universities. Many distinguished themselves as outlier academic citizens; and from the topics, discourses and interests valued as salient by research funders. This sense of academic practice in isolation and against the grain, was not unsurprising considering there were only 209 outputs in this area of enquiry out of >120K recorded on the institutional repositories. Many also saw themselves as illegitimate researchers in the area: that it was not their primary area of enquiry or interest (indeed, the majority published only 1 output, most often in the form of a report); that they lacked lived experience or shared identities with those studied. When positioning was analysed in relation to authorship, very few academics of colour were attributed as lead or sole author role, and very few of the authors of colour were locally born. However, many of the authors self-identified as (internal or external) migrants themselves; and despite NI having the lowest representation of women in UK academic staffing, a sizable portion of the authors (60%) were women.

In the 1980's, it was found that NI-born academics avoided engagement with controversial phenomena in their midst (Taylor, 1988), with a dearth of local research about The Troubles. Migrant academics served the function of stabilising the local staff cohort. Paradoxically, enquiry about the conflict and its legacies has since developed to such an extent, that many participant authors articulated how the related academic capitalism and omni-present sectarianism (Vieten and Murphy, 2021) effectively overshadowed, whitewashed and dulled academics' ethical obligations to deliberate the various 'other' social conflicts, injustices and hate crimes endured locally. Some articulated how it silenced migrant academics' contributions to local debates.

Observations, about prior research on NI research (Campbell, 1993; Gilligan, 2022; Irwin, 2005; Knox, 2001; Schubotz, 2005; Taylor, 1988) and racialised local knowledge production in other post-colonial contexts (such as Jansen and Walters, 2020), are drawn upon to interpret the state of this area of enquiry. When situated within tenuous peace or divisiveness, public institutions (including universities and local-born academics) may continue to err with safety, illusions of objectivity and discourses salient to those in power, in a bid to re-establish legitimacy. Such conditions are exacerbated by technocratic pressures for 'rightness' and short-term efficacy, which subordinate the value of engagement with complexity, truth and justice (Peters 2020). Dynamics such as these may explain why discussion of the ethical dilemmas, the politics of representation or the positionality of the researchers were omitted from the vast majority (95%) of published outputs.

Unacknowledged is the whiteness and coloniality underpinning the hidden curriculum of academic knowledge production. The political intention of prior identifications with contexts where peace necessitates deracialisation (USA, South Africa, Palestine), has indeed not had the politically progressive consequences for racialised Others on the island, as Peatling (2005) once warned. Neither has it informed local academe's commitments to racial justice in their

locality. The recent discourse wave of decolonisation barely featured (Belluigi et al., 2023; Weerawardhana, 2018). The burden of knowledge-making is placed on non-academic individuals or groups; or on those academics positioned outside of/to the locality.

This paper raises concerns about the politics of participation and representation in knowledge generation in a post-conflict, post-colonial context.

This study was developed in partnership with the Migrant and Minority Ethnic Thinktank of Northern Ireland. Funding acknowledgement: British Academy/ Leverhulme Trust.

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216 A conceptual exploration of universities as migration intermediaries

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Migration intermediaries are individuals, groups, and institutions that connect international migrants with their destination country. Research on intermediaries typically focuses on recruitment agencies, migration brokers, network and community groups, employers, and travel agents, among others. Together, migration intermediaries are a powerful force in guiding and sustaining international migration flows. Recently, scholars have begun to examine universities as intermediaries. Universities host a growing and diversifying international community, and frequently act as the legal sponsor for the visas of students, faculty and dependents from overseas. In some contexts, universities are drivers of migration flows, powerful attractors of migrant communities. Simultaneously, universities may be deputised by the state and, as a consequence, become institutions of migration control. This paper expands discussion of universities' intermediary roles in international migration by situating universities within a broader web of intermediaries, and interrogating their contradictory contributions to enabling and controlling migrant flows.

Full paper

This conceptual paper seeks to explore how and to what effect universities have become migration intermediaries. Migration intermediaries, defined as “agents that intervene at various critical junctures to connect the migrant to the destination country” (van den Broek et al., 2016, p. 524), are recognized as critical actors in international migration flows. A large body of literature has investigated the different individuals, groups and institutions that perform intermediary roles in migration around the world. Jones and Sha (2020) list “money lenders, recruitment agencies and individual brokers, transportation providers, travel agents, coyotes, contractors, lawyers, legal and advisory firms, formal and informal remittance, courier service owners” as typical examples of migration intermediaries that have been identified in a range of contexts. Their impact on global migration flows should not to be underestimated. On the one hand, intermediaries provide services and support than can enable and/or facilitate migration. Key examples include visa brokerage, job-hunting support, connection to public services, and information provision (Jones & Sha, 2020). On the other hand, evidence suggests that intermediaries increasingly control access to international migration in particular context. In some cases, lacking access to the appropriate intermediaries can make migration journeys impossible or dangerous. In others, migration intermediaries are active agents of state control and seek to restrict mobility (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021). Viewed holistically, the facilitating and controlling roles of migration intermediaries mediate who is able to migrate, where they are likely to migrate to, and the safety and security of those undertaking these migration journeys (Harvey, 2023).

Within this context, it is notable that, notwithstanding some outstanding exceptions, universities have not yet come under considered scrutiny with regard to their roles as migration intermediaries (Baas, 2019; Cranston et al., 2017; Tran et al., 2022). Research in both the higher education and migration studies fields has increasingly considered the intersection of universities and migration, often termed the “education-migration nexus.” Such research has often used internationalization or transnationalism as a lens to approach this issue, identifying the synergies between states and universities' desires to internationalize with individuals' desires to improve their prospects through international education. The results of these synergies are evident in the enormous growth in international student and faculty mobility in recent decades.

However, there may be several considerable upsides to further investigating universities' intermediary roles. First, it would broaden discussion regarding the education-migration nexus within universities to consider alternative forms of international migrants sponsored by our higher education institutions. International faculty members and their dependents are increasingly seen on campuses across the world, but their migration statuses and the role of

universities in enabling and maintaining these statuses are rarely the focus of scholarly attention. Second, it would contribute to the growing but insufficient body of research focusing on international student support in universities. Further attention here stands to provide necessary evidence to guide improvements in offering support services tailored to the diverse needs of the international student community. Third, it would help us to interrogate the ways in which universities are being deputised by state actors, and used to further stratify and control migration processes.

In this vein, this paper reviews the literature on migration intermediaries and seeks to locate universities within the broader network of intermediary individuals, groups, and institutions. This will form the basis for future research on the specific intermediary roles of universities, and how different stakeholders in these migration flows—national and local government, universities, local communities, and critically migrants themselves—understand the role of universities as intermediaries in migration flows.

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349 Perspectives from the South: a transgressive schema for knowledge-making in Higher Education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The schema for knowledge-making presented here is a synthesis of collaborations culminating in two concurrent events that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. One was an online course on African Feminist research

Methodology offered to Scottish and African PhD students for a week in 2021; the other was an online research project undertaken with South African students during 2020/2021. Both events grappled with the question of what counts as legitimate, inclusive, relevant knowledge, and how can we work with each other over ontological, geographical, and epistemological differences to find common purpose? Framing, activating, seeing, creating, and imagining, are the aspects and actions of the schema, which have emerged from these two events as a template for future pedagogic and research processes. Using African and Black feminist theory and principles, we explored meaningful knowledge-making together and practised radical care at a time of isolation and anxiety brought on by the pandemic.

Full paper

The paper explains and applies a schema for transgressive knowledge-making which we believe has broad applicability. The two knowledge-making events we describe are vehicles for the schema, and we argue that they both generate new knowledge, show effective connections between research, teaching and learning, and have lasting impact. There are five aspects to the schema, each one signifying a finger on the hand that holds our dreams and offers our contributions. We apply each aspect to the two knowledge-making projects: an African Feminist Methodology online course to Scottish and African PhD students; and a research project with South African undergrad and postgrad humanities students.

The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) 'Spring Into Methods' Workshops are annual events that host training programs on research methods across various disciplines. Our aim with the course we ran was to introduce African Feminist methodologies to PhD students across continents, and to use African Feminist principles as a guide for our pedagogy. Spread over five days, the course consisted of an hour zoom session each day. We had around 40 candidates evenly spread over both African and UK continents. The course introduced the principles, ethics, positionality, and data generation techniques associated with African feminist research principles. Participants in the course have continued to meet as part of an online African feminist reading group, and some have collaborated in cross-continental projects.

The research project was a collaboration between former Extended Studies (ES) students at Rhodes University, South Africa, and their lecturer, over a period of 9 months. The ES humanities programme provides access to a BA degree to a select group of around 35 disadvantaged students. 24 former ES students volunteered to be part of the project. Participants came up with topics and guidelines, and each one submitted a response to a topic. They then reviewed each other's submissions. Some went on to collaboratively write two academic papers which have been published in international journals, based on the data from the topic submissions.

The first aspect of the schema is: *framing*. The frame is the compass that directs the scope and range of possibilities for knowledge-making. It is the lens and theory that guides our focus. The frame requires us to ask: Whose ideas underpin our pedagogy and research, and whose interests are served by them? For both of the knowledge-making events, African feminism was the frame. In contrast to Western emphasis on rationality, and the Cartesian separation of the mind from the body, African feminist theory sees knowledge as also embodied; spiritual; always political; and oriented towards the collective (Wane 2008, Moletsane 2015, Ntseane 2011). We employed this frame to consider how to connect with each other online, and the paper explains how this worked, and with what effects.

The second aspect of the schema is: *activating*, which is an awareness of the politics and power arrangements of the setting. The disruption of hierarchies is a kind of scholar-activism intrinsic to African feminist scholarship, and we employed this in both of the knowledge-making projects. As Adomako Ampofo puts it, African feminist scholars are strongly committed to teaching, research and activism and the division between scholarship and activism often seem artificial (Adomako Ampofo, 2010). In a world that remains divided along tensed geopolitical lines and conflicting interests that determines who is a knower and what is worthy of being known, we continue to push the frontiers of limitations by those who cast African scholars as mere empiricists and echoes of thoughts emanating from the Global North (Mkandawire 1997).

The third aspect is *seeing*: using the activated frame in how we approached the pedagogy and research, we focussed on ways for participants of both projects to feel recognised and included. Kulundu explains that this kind of transgressive visibility "is an open invitation for each person to become more of themselves in response to what they reclaim as well as what they strip away" (Kulundu et al., 2020, p. 121).

The fourth aspect, *creating*, refers to the setting and platform we set up for the work to happen – in both cases we facilitated communal knowledge-making, or "existence-in-relation and being-for-self-and-others" (Chilisa and Ntseane

2010, p. 619). In both projects, this transgressed a western individualistic onto-epistemology to find new ways of knowledge-making, worth sharing.

Finally, the fifth aspect is *imagining*, and in both projects the futuristic capacity of both to move beyond the initial plans to meaningful collaborations are perhaps the most profound indication of the success of the schema.

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Parallel Session 4:5

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 122

Chair Martin Gough

324 Academics of working-class heritage talking: a participatory storytelling project with academics working in UK-based elite institutions

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Research Domains

Abstract

This paper discusses the outcomes of an SRHE-funded participatory storytelling study with eight UK-based academics of working-class heritage (AWCH). Using story circle approaches, lived experiences became sites of critique and analysis to reflect on what it means to become an AWCH. Working with narrative contributions from the story circles, the participants created three composite stories representing aspects of their collective transitions into and through academia. These stories were transformed into interactive comics alongside an illustrator/coder. Key findings from the study highlight the generative possibilities of composite storytelling approaches and comic-research to create reflexive opportunities to (re)imagine what it means to become an AWCH. However, the study demonstrated the need for participants, and the researcher, to be ethically vigilant to ensure the inquiry space does not become an oppressive space where participants feel silenced, owing to some stories being more valued as authentic representations of working-class experience than others.

Full paper

Introduction

The lived experiences of academics of working-class heritage (AWCH) continue to be the focus of studies concerned with themes of equity and inclusion in higher education. Despite a growing body of work, a sense that academic spaces were not created with working-class people in mind persists (Ingram and Abrahams, 2015; Morley, 2021). Perceptions of exclusion are reinforced by stubborn stereotypes representing AWCH in limited ways, e.g. the perpetual victim or the plucky socially mobile hero overcoming adversity as part of a rags-to-riches narrative (Brook and Michell, 2012; Morley, 2021). These characterisations reinforce pernicious representations of working-class life as something to escape owing to a perceived lack of epistemic and cultural wealth (Lawler, 2014; Lee, 2017). However, such depictions belie the rich diversity of experience among working-class groups, and by extension AWCH (Poole, 2021). Therefore, more needs to be done to create opportunities for people of working-class heritage, in all areas of academia, to research their own lived experiences on their terms, rather than being objects of curiosity in the work of other more powerful others (Walkerdine, 2021).

This SRHE-funded participatory storytelling project represents a commitment to creating spaces where life histories become the sites of critique and analysis to challenge forms of social injustice. Over 18 months, eight participants working in elite UK-based institutions came together to unsettle, interrogate and reimagine how their transitions into and through academia affect their sense of becoming a person of working-class heritage. Mobilising creative storytelling methods, the participants reflexively considered “the many discomforts, discords, and frictions involved in a subject position of being working-class in socio-cultural organisations that were never designed to include them” (Morley, 2021: 10). The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the diverse and multiple experiences which represent becoming an AWCH?
2. How does the interplay of different social, cultural and historical aspects of the participants' lived experiences affect the storytelling experience?
3. What creative conditions are needed to facilitate narrative encounters which lead to participants unsettling and interrogating their lived experiences so new interpretations might develop?

Narrative contributions were produced through a series of story circles in which participants shared experiences shaping their sense of becoming an AWCH. Participants reorganised into smaller groups where they worked with contributions from the story circles to create three composite stories: roots, and routes into academia; uncertain career pathways into academia and developing the epistemic confidence to be heard. Alongside an illustrator/coder, the groups transformed the composites into a series of interactive comics. Utilising audio, text-based and visual modalities, the participants worked with transcripts and observations from the research process to create comics which troubled binaries placing creative forms of knowledge production in opposition to 'traditional' forms of research (Nisbet, 2002).

Methodology and methods

The concept of narrative encounter provided an analytical lens through which to understand how convergent and divergent lived experiences shaped the stories participants created to represent becoming an AWCH. Drawing on

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Goodson and Gill (2011: 74) characterise the "narrative encounter" as an interpretatively disruptive process providing individuals opportunities to develop new "understandings of self, other and the world."

A series of data production methods were used:

1. Biographical questionnaire seeking basic demographic data and reasons for participating.
2. Story circles (x5) in which participants shared and critiqued stories on themes of being and becoming an AWCH.
3. End-of-project interviews (x6) – one participant was not interviewed.
4. Researcher observations and reflections.

Data from the study were analysed using a reflexive thematic approach. I worked across the data sets using deductive concept driven codes and inductive data-driven codes to iteratively generate themes forming the basis of my findings.

Key findings

The main findings of the work are represented through the following themes:

- The emotional work of coming to terms with a liminal existence as an academic of working-class heritage
- Generating trust through the reciprocity of sharing and listening
- Generative possibilities of working in a messy space
- Being vigilant against the development of epistemic bubbles

I argue that the narrative approaches mobilised in this study are transferable to other contexts where efforts are made to provide under-represented social groups opportunities to tell their stories about their lived experiences on their terms. I stress, however, that for this to happen a great deal of ethical care needs to be taken to ensure spaces designed to explore the effects of marginalisation do not become sites of further exclusion because some stories become more valued than others.

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101 'I work 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, and I often think those kind of academics are invisible': Communicating ideal academic identity and complicity with cultures of overwork in English higher education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Academics' working conditions are a hot topic in UK higher education, where ongoing industrial action foregrounds not just pay and pensions but broader sectoral norms, notably cultures of overwork (Bergfeld, 2018; Universities and Colleges Union, 2023). This presentation answers Sang et al's (2015) call to further scrutinise the persistence of academic overwork – drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with academic staff I argue that excessive working is not just a norm of practice but a method of externally communicating ideal academic identity by making it visible. Furthermore, overwork is not straightforwardly extractive or exploitative in a context where achievements are highly individualised. I conclude that academics are complicit in perpetuating cultures of overwork, and also that despite fantasies of a 'golden age' (Tight, 2010) and a tendency to blame 'neoliberalism' for a perceived contemporary decline in academic experience there is little to indicate that such cultures are recent inventions.

Full paper

Academics' working conditions are a hot topic in the higher education (HE) world, particularly in the UK where ongoing industrial action beginning in 2018 continues to focus not just on pay and pensions but broader sectoral norms, notably cultures of overwork (Bergfeld, 2018; Universities and Colleges Union [UCU], 2023). Amongst theorists and researchers of HE there is a tendency to attribute the degradation of academic life to so-called 'neoliberalism' and place the majority of the blame for this perceived backsliding at the feet of government policymakers and senior institutional managers (see, for example, Cribb & Gewirtz, 2013; Harrison, 2017; Tight, 2010, 2018, for comprehensive overviews of recent change to the UK HE landscape). However, as Sang et al (2015) observe, when it comes to practices of excessive working in particular, top-down instruction does not fully account for why this behaviour is perceived to be endemic to academic culture even against a backdrop of high awareness and vocal discontent. It is suggested that UK academic staff work, on average, the equivalent of two days in addition to a standard week of 35-40 hours (UCU, 2022), and strike action proves this is understood to be a problem, yet at the same time the discourse within institutions often frames overwork as an inevitable aspect of academic labour. So, what other reasons might there be to explain the ubiquity of these practices and their resilience in the face of critique? How might those working in academic spaces prove solidarity through collective support for bounded working and move away from explicitly or implicitly demanding expressions of solidarity through alignment to the ideal 'overworked scholar' identity?

This paper answers Sang et al's (2015) call to further scrutinise the persistence of overwork in UK academia. Drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with 29 academic staff ('traditional' academics and those in teaching- or research-focused positions) across a range of disciplines, roles, career stages, identities, and English higher education institutions in 2018 I argue that excessive working is not just a norm of practice in HE but a method of externally validating academic identity by making it visible. Furthermore, overwork is not straightforwardly extractive or exploitative in a context where achievements are highly individualised – although institutions may benefit from their staff's additional labour, staff themselves also add the achievements gained as a product of such work to their name, reputation, and CV. While the backdrop of individualistic competitiveness is not without a wider context that policymakers and institutional managers do their part to sustain, I suggest that academic employees are highly complicit in perpetuating this culture, and also that despite fantasies of a 'golden age' of academia (Tight, 2010) there is little to indicate that such individualism is a recent invention in the HE environment.

The data underpinning this paper was generated during a project designed to investigate top-level norms of academic culture in England and consider the implications for equality, diversity, and inclusion. Interview questions focused primarily on matters of identity, conceptions of success and failure, and the pleasures and pitfalls of academic life. Participants were not asked explicitly about overwork, although an average number of working hours per week was sought from most as a consequence of responses to the main cluster of questions. The topic of *time* arose frequently, in large part due to its connection with academic identity and the strongly-held belief that academia is characterised by its status as 'not a 9-5 job' (P1; P4; Sang et al, 2015).

The purpose of highlighting the ways overwork might be intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically imposed is not to assign blame or invoke shame but to refocus. A considerable amount of scholarly attention is directed at, inter alia, global trends in political economy, national-level HE policy, and diffuse notions of 'the institution' or 'university managers': putting to one side whether analyses and critiques of these macro forces are accurate or valid – how useful are they? At best, perhaps, we are shouting into the wind, railing against influences too large and established to overcome; at worst, in pushing criticism outwards we can sidestep the fact that we are part of the systems we observe, elide our compromised position, deny the rewards we reap by participating, and, more practically, forget our power, our agency, our freedom of choice. This paper is an invitation for self-reflection.

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Parallel Session 4:6

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Conference Room 1b

Chair Rob Cuthbert

352 Creating a community through Discord: The use of innovative technology in distance education

Mel Green

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This study examined the role of Discord in fostering community and enhancing the learning experience in a distance-learning tutor group, employing student focus groups, a lecturer interview, and reflexive researcher journaling. Students preferred Discord's informality over traditional forums on the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), resulting in greater engagement, improved module study, and increased motivation. Discord also facilitated stronger communication as well as more meaningful and realistic relationships between students and associate lecturers, aiding in achieving study goals. However, drawbacks were identified, such as the additional workload for lecturers. The findings suggest Discord's potential in promoting community and enriching distance learning, warranting further exploration for designing effective online education.

Full paper

Introduction

The digital age has given rise to new educational opportunities and challenges. Among these challenges, fostering a sense of community in distance learning is increasingly crucial. This study focuses on Discord, an app initially designed for gamers that various other communities, including education, have since adopted. After attending a webinar by Oliver Bills from The University of Southampton at the 'Digitally Enhanced' webinar run by University of Kent, I began using Discord with students from three modules in Oct 2021. I found that using Discord allowed cohorts to create more informal and naturalistic communities than the OU forums, as one student commented that they found Discord 'less intimidating than the OU forums' (OU student, 2022). This experience led me to conduct this research project with the aim of investigating how Discord impacts the learning experience, encourages engagement in module study, and facilitates the achievement of academic goals.

The research was conducted with the aim of answering the following:

1. How effective is Discord in creating a sense of community for students and tutors in a distance learning class?
2. What does a class community created on Discord look like?
3. How can Discord be used in order to encourage engagement in their module study?
4. How can Discord be used in order to improve and enhance the learning experience of students?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Discord alongside existing OU tools?

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative approach, conducting focus groups with distance learning students and a semi-structured interview with an associate lecturer. This researcher also kept a reflexive journal that was completed after every Discord learning event. This methodology allowed me to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding the use of Discord in an academic context.

Related Literature

Several studies have previously explored the potential benefits of Discord in educational settings. Wulanjani (2018) asserted that Discord could transform traditional classroom settings, making them more interactive, active, and motivating. Fonseca Cacho (2020) found that 80.9% of students believed their grades improved due to using Discord, and 98.5% stated they enjoyed its implementation. Arifianto and Izzudin (2021) reported student acceptance of Discord as an alternative learning medium, citing the attractive user interface, features, and ease of use as favourable factors. Lacher and Biehl (2018) also explored Discord's potential to moderate student collaboration and teamwork, suggesting that the platform could facilitate group work and track student activity. These studies align with my findings, highlighting the positive impact of Discord on student engagement and learning experiences. However, unlike my research, these studies primarily focused on student perspectives, overlooking the viewpoints of educators.

Conversely, Jiang et al. (2018) identified unique moderation challenges within voice-based online communities on Discord, including unfamiliar disruptive practices such as disruptive noise and voice raiding. While these studies contributed valuable insights to my understanding of Discord's potential pitfalls and benefits, they lacked a comprehensive exploration of student and tutor perspectives, which this study aims to provide.

Results and Discussion

My findings corroborate previous research indicating Discord's effectiveness in fostering a sense of community (Wulanjani, 2018; Fonseca Cacho, 2020). Discord's real-time interaction and informal environment allowed students and tutors to build more meaningful relationships (Arifianto & Izzudin, 2021), contributing to a cooperative learning community.

Echoing Fonseca Cacho's (2020) findings, Discord's features, such as direct messaging, voice chat, and file sharing, foster interaction and collaboration, leading to enhanced engagement in the module study.

Similar to Arifianto and Izzudin's (2021) results, Discord's user-friendly and accessible nature facilitated an enhanced learning experience, making it a potent alternative to traditional VLEs.

Supporting Wulanjani's (2018) observations, Discord's real-time access to tutors and peers significantly assisted students in achieving their study goals by immediately clarifying doubts and promoting active learning.

In terms of immediacy and informality, Discord outperformed existing Open University (OU) tools, fostering higher student participation. However, challenges were also identified, including the time-consuming setup for tutors and moderation difficulties like disruptive noises and off-topic conversations, as highlighted by Jiang et al. (2018).

Conclusion

This research, in agreement with previous studies (Wulanjani, 2018; Fonseca Cacho, 2020; Arifianto & Izzudin, 2021), suggests that Discord can be an effective tool in distance education for fostering community, enhancing engagement, and improving the learning experience. However, potential issues such as setup complexities and data privacy must be addressed to optimise its benefits. Future studies should aim to integrate Discord effectively into the academic system without compromising academic integrity or data privacy standards.

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110 The 'RED': A Liminal Space for New Chinese Academics

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Research Domains

Postgraduate scholarship and practice (PGSP)

Abstract

The paper explores how 'RED', a social media platform in China, serves as a liminal space for Chinese students undertaking doctoral degrees in the UK. As a liminal space, RED is used to search for and disseminate information, provide support, and foster and maintain relationships in a way that is far removed from campus-based sites and formal processes of doctoral study. The early phase data reported consists of 'dialogic-reflective' interviews with RED users alongside logs of their interactions and posts. This study explores how RED serves as a resource for Chinese international students, helping them navigate their academic migration and build a sense of community. The study underscores the significance of social media platforms in supporting the needs of international students and highlights the importance of developing more tailored support structures for such student groups whose motivations, goals and preferred strategies are sometimes not fully appreciated by their institutions.

Full paper

Background to the study

Social media platforms serve as multifunctional digital tools to assist people's lives and to build or maintain relationships. They prove particularly indispensable for Chinese academic migrants who, while studying abroad, may experience feelings of isolation or disconnection from their native country and culture. This study delves into the role of 'RED', a prominent social media platform in China, functioning as a liminal space for Chinese students pursuing

doctoral degrees in the UK. As a liminal space, RED provides a unique forum for information discovery and sharing, peer support, and academic relationship cultivation and maintenance.

UK higher education welcomes huge numbers of international students every year, among which the number of international students from mainland China is the largest (HESA, 2023; Project Atlas®, 2023). The presence of international student groups fosters cultural exchange and contributes their distinct research interests and viewpoints to academia. As Chinese students face the transition personally, culturally, and academically, they engaged in intricate social and academic practices, which deserve research attention. Moreover, they actively engage with one another through social media platforms, utilizing these platforms to connect, assist, and exchange their experiences related to pursuing HE and living in the UK.

This study investigates how and why international doctoral students use social media as a liminal space during their doctoral studies. The research aims to explore their experience during liminality from multiple perspectives, including cultural, social, and academic transition through their discourse practices on social media. In this study, discourse is beyond its purely linguistic origins. It also serves as a mediation of practice, which means individuals do things by discourse. Discourse is a means of practice and also embodied the knowledge of people's thoughts, considerations, behaviours and identity negotiations, offering researchers a valuable lens through which to investigate human practices. The study thus adopts a qualitative approach with dialogic-reflective interviews as the primary data collection instrument, alongside the collection of posts and interactions discussed during research encounters.

Context: The RED

The social media platform used in this study is RED, which is mainly used in Mandarin-speaking areas, especially mainland China. As a platform that aims to accompany a generation to find a lifestyle that suits them and grow together with them (People.cn, 2020). In RED every post must include an image or short video, which is similar to Instagram, while it also pays attention to users' textual discourse practice. Hashtags are used to create communities and also the Big Data technology will help users find more posts related to their interests.

Chinese international doctoral students, technically, can find the content posted by those who have experience living and studying abroad in the UK HE settings simply find the virtual community by searching the keywords or key hashtags in Mandarin.

Theoretical framework

The study draws on theories of liminality. Liminal spaces can be understood as spaces where liminality is manifest, which is one of the tripartite processual schemes in the concept of transition, together with separation and reintegration (Turner, 1983; van Gennep, 1969). It refers to a state of being "in-between" or on the threshold of something (ibid). Van Gennep (1969) saw liminality as a stage of temporal transitions within a larger process of rites of passage, within which an individual moves from a child to an adult. Later, Turner (1983) added spatial considerations to liminality, specifically the physical and social space between two clearly defined boundaries. Another related iteration comes from Madison (2011), who focuses more on identity transition.

Implications

Drawing upon early phase findings of this study, I posit that social media platforms act as unique digital meeting grounds, creating an unprecedented type of transitional space or 'liminal space.' This space serves to unify individuals with common traits, facilitating the exchange of information and communication of emotions. Liminality, a

key phase in any transition, often involves subtle elements that are difficult to discern. Yet, the interactive capabilities of social media allow these minute aspects to be expressed, archived, and retrievable as digital discourse. This makes digital discourse, as highlighted in studies by Herwig (2009), Haimson (2018), and Mitra & Evansluong (2019), a significant research window into understanding liminality. The dynamics of discourse on RED provide researchers with a critical perspective on Chinese doctoral students' transition experiences, beyond the conventional boundaries of campus-centric locations and formal procedures inherent to doctoral studies. Moreover, it opens opportunities to thwart homogenization, as discussed by Gu (2009) and Huang (2012), and to understand individuals' experiences of liminality from an emic perspective.

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312 An agency approach to path creation by academics in technology research - lessons from semiconductor research in India.

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

We examine the role of agency in how academics explore and create paths in emerging fields of technology research. Relying on structuration theory, we examine the mechanism and conditions that enable academics to explore new areas of research and develop those areas. Further, we analyze the effects of exploration and path creation on the productivity and identity of academics. Empirically, our study is situated in the context of semiconductor research carried out by academics in India. We employ a mixed methods approach that includes a bibliometric analysis of semiconductor research from 2007-2022 and semi-structured interviews with ten academics engaged in semiconductor research in various universities in India.

Full paper

This study investigates how academics in technology research explore new research areas and create new research paths. We investigate the following questions. First, how academics use their agency to explore new research areas and develop new research paths. Second is how universities' structure, resources, and policies influence actor-driven path creation. Third, what are the mechanisms and processes through which academics deploy their agency and their interactions with the (university) structure for path creation? Path-creation efforts can also shape academics' commitment to research, productivity, and professional trajectory. Therefore, we examine the effects of path creation on academic identity and the nature of the research being done.

Our focus on academics, rather than the university or the environment, is motivated by arguments that searching for new areas is inherently driven by the academic: universities themselves do not explore new research fields (Dahlander et al, 2016). Empirically, our study is situated in the context of semiconductor research done by academics in India.

By focusing on the agency of academics and their interactions with the structure, we enhance the perspective of organisations as the central actors to enable and anchor new fields of research. Further, by examining the effects of exploration on academic identity, we move forward the literature on path creation that has hitherto been limited to organisations and organisational capability and learning (March, 1991). Finally, through the bibliometric analysis, we provide empirical evidence on path creation in semiconductor research (Sengupta & Ray, 2017).

Research design, data collection and analysis

We employed a mixed method design, combining bibliometric analysis of academic research in the semiconductor domain and semi-structured interviews with academics. We used the VIDWAN Portal of the Government of India, an expert database of academics in India working in semiconductor research. A total of ten interviews have been conducted, with an approximate duration of 45-60 minutes. We analysed the data collected through interviews using qualitative data analysis methods, specifically employing thematic analysis.

We employed the bibliometric analysis method to examine path creation at the macro level. We used the widely recognized Web of Science (WOS) database for research done between 2007-22. To gather relevant research papers related to semiconductors, we conducted a keyword search using the term 'semiconductor.' We used open source software Visualization of Similarities (VOS) Viewer, R Studio for our analysis. This allowed us to examine the patterns and trends within the retrieved literature, identify the prominent research areas, understand the semiconductor research landscape comprehensively, and uncover the structural aspect of path creation.

Preliminary findings

The evolution of new areas of semiconductor research

The bibliometric analysis showed not just new research areas emerging but also old areas seeing a gradual decline in the period 2007-2022. We hope to analyse the data further to examine correlations between the nature of universities that the academics were affiliated with and the emergence and growth of new areas. The bibliometric analysis also demonstrates the co-citation networks and the linkages between different institutions within India.

We intend to analyse collaboration patterns to explore if certain collaborations - across technological fields and universities - are more suited to the emergence of new research fields. Further, we plan to do a longitudinal analysis to examine if the growth of existing areas and the emergence of new research areas is correlated with any major policy interventions in higher education or, semi-conductor research.

The interaction between academics' agency and university structure

We now move on to analysing the semi-structured interviews to explore how the agency of the academics interacted with the structure for exploration and path creation.

Exposing academics beyond their disciplinary priorities: The participants described their exposure to new research areas by hiring new PhD students and teaching new courses. The participants described how the new PhD students brought in fresh disciplinary perspectives beyond their own. Participants in national-level institutes were de facto eligible for hiring PhD students, through the financial support of the institute, without having to generate their resources, making it easier for academics to recruit PhD students - early in their careers.

Strategic manipulation by actors: This was possible due to the dual nature of semi-conduction research involving theoretical and experimental research. The requirement of resources in theoretical research is less as compared to experimental research.

Collaboration: The collaborations were primarily through the researcher's interaction with different institutions through their research career. Academics also highlighted challenges with collaborations with industry due to the mismatch in the way academic research is conducted and the industry research is conducted.

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Parallel Session 4:7 -Symposium

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 139

16 Accessing difficult-to-reach voices using diary method in higher education research

Research Domain

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Rationale

Diary method is still relatively under-explored in higher education (HE) research, though recent years have seen a consolidation of this approach (Cao & Henderson, 2021). Solicited diary method, where participants complete a diary designed by the researcher for the purposes of a specific study (Bartlett & Milligan, 2020), enables researchers to enter the everyday lives, working and learning experiences of participants in a range of HE settings. Diaries enable researchers to access contexts that are otherwise inaccessible and facilitate research on sensitive topics (Sabharwal et al., 2021). In HE research, diaries have been used to explore, for example, students' identity and learning development (Ewijk, Fabriz, and Buttner 2015), or for employment management experiences (Cao, 2021). Within HE institutions, while these are increasingly recognising the importance of inclusivity and diversity, certain voices within these contexts may remain unheard or marginalised. Exploring these nuances and challenges is essential for fostering an inclusive HE environment and amplifying underrepresented perspectives. However, accessing difficult-to-reach voices in higher education research poses specific nuances and challenges, which are addressed in this symposium.

Expanding the use of the diary method to capture what we are terming 'difficult-to-reach voices' is framed by four key understandings of 'difficult-to-reach', each of which poses different methodological challenges, which are explored in this symposium. Firstly, individuals may be difficult to reach because they are 'busy', which calls for particular methodological strategies, due to the time and responsibility constraints that normally characterise those individuals. Understanding how the diary method effectively captures their voices is crucial. Secondly, particular contexts or situations mean that participants are difficult to reach, such as displacement. Conducting research on displaced HE professionals or students raises complex ethical considerations, as this group remains underexplored and marginalised within academic discourse, and their sensitive experiences may be difficult to articulate through conventional qualitative research methods. Lastly, the topic around the engagement of international students and HE professionals with varying conditions around them, particularly in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, has been extensively researched via traditional qualitative methods, capturing momentary snapshots of their dynamic experiences. It is time to consider diary method as a reflective, creative and therapeutic research tool that is particularly suited to, and could make sense of, HE environments that are in constant change and flux. There is a need for a longitudinal exploration of their self-reflection over the dynamic nature of their own experiences via diary as a flexible method.

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Chair

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299 Using diary method to access the voices of 'busy' academics: methodological insights from three diary studies

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Diary method is infrequently used in research studies where academics are participants, although the method has been used to research various other 'busy' professionals such as nurses and NGO workers. This paper discusses methodological considerations related to researching with 'busy' academics, illustrated with three research studies of different groups of academics: academics with caring responsibilities, displaced academics and doctoral supervisors. The paper introduces the three projects, and sets out three assumptions of 'busy' professionals as derived from a literature review of diary studies of workplaces: that academics are too busy to complete a diary, that academics are slippery and likely to drop out, and that academics may struggle to take in information. The three assumptions are evaluated in relation to diary design and execution in the three studies.

Full paper

Introduction

Solicited diary method, where participants complete a diary which has been designed for a research study, is a relatively neglected method, in comparison with for instance interviews and observation (Hyers, 2018; Cao & Henderson, 2021). A subset of diary method studies across disciplines of health sciences, psychology, sociology, education studies and beyond has used diary method to research busy professionals in their workplaces. For instance, there have been studies of nurses (Waddington, 2005), NGO workers (Plowman, 2010) and street vendors (Eidse & Turner, 2014). The method is still rarely used in empirical studies where academics are participants, with some exceptions (e.g. Hyers et al., 2012; Henderson, 2021). To gain useful knowledge about the lives of busy professionals can be a challenging effort for researchers due to time and responsibility constraints that normally characterise these participants – what if busy professionals are too busy to participate in a study? This paper explores methodological challenges associated with accessing the voices of ‘busy’ higher education (HE) professionals, in particular academics.

Three diary method studies with ‘busy’ academics

The paper discusses the use of the diary method to understand the lived experiences and actions of three different groups of academics: academics with caring responsibilities, displaced academics, and doctoral supervisors during the admissions process. Study 1 was a qualitative short-term diary study exploring academics’ experiences of managing care while at conferences, kept over the duration of one conference, followed by a post-diary interview; 20 academics with caring responsibilities participated. Study 2, which aimed to explore the experiences of displaced academics and their role in reconstruction, was a qualitative longitudinal study over six months, using interview-diary-interview design, with 20 displaced Syrian academics. Study 3, which explored doctoral supervisors’ practices in relation to communications from potential applicants, was a six-week diary study with 19 supervisors. For the purpose of this paper, the authors (also researchers on these studies) developed key understandings of ‘busyness’ from the diary method literature and engaged in structured reflection to consolidate findings.

Diary method with ‘busy’ academics – findings

Literature on diary method reveals three assumptions about how the method needs to adapt to researching busy workplaces: (i) that professionals are already fully occupied at work, so diary completion will be difficult (e.g. Waddington, 2005); (ii) that professionals are slippery and hard to get hold of, and likely to drop out of a study (e.g. Eidse & Turner, 2014); (iii) that professionals may struggle to take in information and need simple modes of recording data (e.g. Hyers et al., 2012). In the below section, we address each of these assumptions in terms of designing and executing diary studies with ‘busy’ academics.

(i) Academics are already fully occupied at work

Study 1 researched academics who were even busier than usual, as they were at conferences. The data collection form (Word document) was very simple to complete, taking the form of a simple table, but participants struggled to fill this in and some participants informed the researcher that they had collated their diary after returning from the conference.

(ii) Academics are slippery and likely to drop out

Study 2 was a six-month study of displaced academics, who were therefore facing two different kinds of ‘busy’. In order to boost retention, the study included an option to keep an audio diary, if the written form was too burdensome. However, all participants kept written diaries and there was very little attrition from the study.

(iii) Academics struggle to take in information and need simplicity for data collection

Study 3 was a study of doctoral supervisors in relation to the emails they receive from prospective applicants, and due to the volume of these emails we anticipated that academics may easily tire of the study and perhaps lose attention on the data collection process. As such, the forms were designed to be attractive and used colour coding to ensure that the different sections were memorable. However, as anticipated, several academics forgot various instructions from one week to the next.

Conclusion

It is recognised that diary method is both a useful method to gather time-sensitive data from professionals in relation to their work practices, and at the same time that completing a diary about work can be burdensome and challenging for participants (Henderson, 2021). Choosing a convenient design for the researcher and participants alike, to obtain valuable insights into the personal and professional lives of participants, is particularly important. This paper contributes to fostering discussions around the usefulness of diary method in gaining longitudinal and micro-level details about 'busy' academics.

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300 Capturing the Difficult-to-Reach Voices of Displaced Academics: Methodological Benefits of Solicited Diary as a 'Participant-Centred' Method

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Displaced academics (DAs) face unique challenges and barriers that render their voices difficult to reach through traditional research methods. Drawing on a study on the lived experiences of 20 displaced Syrian academics (DSAs) and their potential role in reconstruction in conflict-affected countries, this paper explores the significance of solicited diary method in understanding the multifaceted dimensions of displacement, amplifying the voices of DAs, and advancing knowledge on reconstruction from the perspectives of DAs, as a marginalised and under-explored group.

The paper underscores the usefulness of solicited diary method in i) capturing longitudinal data, ii) exploring dynamic and shifting experiences as a mobile method, iii) illuminating silent narratives, and iv) functioning as an epistemic and ethical tool. The paper concludes that researchers can overcome access obstacles and gain valuable insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of DAs via solicited diary, while keeping participants at the heart of concern.

Full paper

Introduction

The voices of DAs are often marginalised and underrepresented in research, limiting our understanding of their experiences and perspectives (Akkad, 2022). Traditional research methods, such as focus groups (Parkinson, 2018) or single interviews (Theo and Leung, 2022), have been utilised in researching DAs, yet they often fail to capture the nuanced aspects of their lives due to the transient and ever-evolving nature of their circumstances. Further, several studies benefited from solicited diaries in researching higher education (HE) and academic issues and experiences, including students' identity and marginalisation in HE (Mathebula and Vargas, 2021), HE students' language lives (Groves, 2021), and academics with care responsibilities (Henderson, 2021). However, researching DAs using solicited diary is scarce. Consequently, there is a pressing need for a research approach that enables DAs to share their stories. This paper explores methodological benefits involved in accessing the voices of DAs.

The study

This study explored over six months the professional and personal lived experiences of DSAs in Europe and the Middle East and their potential role in reconstruction in Syria. It utilised an interview-diary-interview design, a modified version of Zimmerman and Wieder's (1977) diary-interview, to investigate DSAs' lived experiences and positionalities so as to understand their academic identity and belonging to their host society and their potential role in reconstruction, as scholars and as displaced individuals. For this paper, the focus is on the diary part of the study.

Initial findings

Literature studies on DAs have indeed explored various aspects of their experiences, challenges, or successes in exile. While interviews have been used to explore DAs' precarity in academia (Theo and Leung, 2022), and focus groups have been used to explore life history and future aspirations of DAs (Parkinson et al., 2018), DAs' voices and extraordinary conditions are examined through ordinary methods. The findings below illustrate potential benefits of using solicited diary with DAs.

Shifting experiences of displacement- diary captures longitudinal data

The use of solicited diary method in the study for six months was useful to gain longitudinal data on the ongoing experiences of DSAs. The diary recordings showed shifting experiences across participants between the first and sixth month of the diary study, such as developing new skills, seizing academic opportunities, or undergoing painful experiences in exile.

Displaced academics on the move and knowledge in transit- diary as a mobile method

In exploring displaced academics, solicited diary was a useful mobile method to accompany participants and capture their dynamic and shifting lived experiences wherever they moved. It was more flexible and convenient for participants to record their experiences than be frequently interviewed, for example, to recount their experiences. Moreover, it was helpful to encounter the challenge of reaching out dispersed participants in different places and with different time zones.

Echoes from exile- diary illuminates silent narratives

Due to displacement experiences, DAs may find it difficult to narrate their experiences that are difficult to tell orally, for their sensitive nature. Diary recording in the study was valuable for participants to uncover micro-level and hidden experiences that shed light on their experiences and positionalities. For instance, some DSAs recorded experiences on how they navigated HE systems in their host countries, or how they struggled to integrate into academia in exile by mentioning minute details on who was involved and how they felt about such experiences.

Unveiling important knowledge – diary as an epistemic and ethical tool

By employing solicited diary method, participants could discuss their own experiences and perspectives and had the power to choose what to write about, when to write, and how to present their information, whether via a written diary or an audio diary. Solicited diary functioned as an epistemic tool for DAs in this study to contribute to valuable knowledge production about the meaning and purpose of reconstruction from their own perspectives.

Conclusion

Solicited diary has proven useful in exploring longitudinal and nuanced experiences of DAs, serving as an ethical and epistemic tool for self-expression. Nonetheless, challenges may arise in using solicited diary, including participant attrition and fatigue (Hyers, 2018). To access difficult-to-reach voices, researchers should adopt a participant-centred approach, prioritising participants' time and commitments. Strategies such as developing user-friendly diary designs and adopting effective communication are crucial for maintaining participant motivation and engagement. Overall, solicited diary offers potential as a valuable research method, necessitating careful attention to participant needs and fostering meaningful engagement.

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301 Sharing experiences in flux: Using audio diaries to access international scholars' lived experiences during the pandemic

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The unforeseen arrival of the COVID-19 virus has transformed the way people around the world live and work since 2020. In the higher educational settings, it radically shifted how scholars research, teach, learn and socialise. The transition online was deemed the best alternative enabling pursuit of various modes of engagement. Equally, it has served to foster and strengthen new routines, particularly among international scholars who were forced to stay in host countries during the lockdown. This study sought an in-depth understanding of international scholars' nuanced experiences in flux, e.g., successes, challenges and continuous endeavour to 'survive' during the initial phase of lockdown. Using an autoethnographic approach comprising six-week audio diaries and written reflections, this paper aims to discuss the suitability and effectiveness of the diary method to understand international scholars' lived experiences and hearing the less known impact of the pandemic on them within and beyond academia.

Full paper

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak at the end of 2019 disrupted the lives and regular routines of people globally. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) worldwide were required to convert academic and social activities to online delivery modes (Sahu, 2020). As a precaution in the UK, social distancing became mandatory, with routine working in offices converted to the 'Work From Home' (WFH) mode (www.gov.uk) and for which HEI students and staff heavily relied on online spaces. Consequently, the foreseen grave implications of the pandemic and/or lockdown for the physical and mental health and psychological well-being of both researchers and participants took its toll and also caused serious implications for the types of research studies that were deemed 'safe' to undertake. This paper aims to discuss the ways in which diary method, in particular, audio diary, enabled and facilitated research practices, and was a therapeutic, sensitive research tool to researchers'/participants' circumstances and supportive of their psychological well-being.

Literature Review

The diary method remains underutilised among HE professionals and students, in particular with international cohorts (Byrom et al., 2020; Elliot, 2021). Discussions around in what ways it could be used in flux, such as the pandemic, are still needed. Methodological discussions around the flexibility and sensitivity of the diary method, particularly the audio diary (AD) method, could shed light on further research in HE settings (Dangeni et al., 2021; Hyers, 2018).

This study aims to provide insights, through AD data, into how a group of international scholars made sense of their learning and living experiences abroad, while coping with the multiple threats of COVID-19. While the term 'scholar' refers to students and/or staff in academic contexts, being 'international' highlights living, learning and working outside of one's home country and culture. Very little has been published on how this pandemic has affected international professionals and students in particular (Elliot & Makara, 2021), which means that a more nuanced exploration of their experiences is still warranted, particularly in terms of methodological discussions.

Methods

This two-stage study adopted an autoethnographic research design within an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework, which employed 1) ADs during the early phase of the initial UK lockdown in 2020 and 2) a follow-up written retrospective reflection in 2023. Participants were six international scholars: one academic staff member and five international doctoral researchers at a Russell Group University. Participants were asked to describe their experiences during the early period of social confinement, highlighting any crucial incidents they dealt with that week. Based on the recording instructions and using the built-in recording phone app, each participant recorded one ten-minute AD for each of the six consecutive weeks (13th April to 22nd May, 2020). All data were securely stored on the University OneDrive, to which all researchers (who were also participants) had access. This paper focuses on the AD element.

Findings

1. A safe and therapeutic tool: The AD method is considered a pandemic-friendly research tool that all participants were comfortable with. It was identified suitable for those with different circumstances, e.g., shielding due to a pre-existing medical condition or with caring responsibilities. By maintaining physical distance, the AD method was safe and sensitive to the researcher's/participant's circumstances. The ADs also appeared to serve a therapeutic practice for the participants, providing time and space to disclose their lived experiences. As one participant shared: "Reflecting on my experience last week actually brought more positive feelings. I must say that I find reflection therapeutic".

2. Capable of stimulating reflection: Participants were stimulated to reflect in depth on the lesser-known successes and challenges in the midst of a global pandemic in those AD entries. They shared their vulnerability, and how they stimulated a strong urge to reach out to others. This then created a heightened sense of connectedness and had multiple effects.

Conclusion

With the multiple challenges that other researchers may face in undertaking small projects like this, we argue that the key considerations, i.e. use of creative, sensitive and therapeutic diary method, in this study, AD method, enabled our group to realise our intention to undertake another collaborative research project in the midst of the pandemic are crucial in the light of these challenging circumstances. Taking them into consideration not only opens possibilities for empirical research, but equally importantly, they contribute to enriching the quality of the data by eliciting in-depth and reflective insights and making research process as friendly as it could possibly be.

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304 Audio diary: Embracing the complexity of student's experience through 'hearing' their voices

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The burgeoning internationalisation of higher education and the growing number of international students have become visible components and characteristics in research and practice, at the same time, posing certain methodological challenges when approaching, understanding and ultimately supporting international students. Yet, most of the existing literature focuses on using 'traditional' research methods and tends to take a narrow view of their experiences, mostly identifying challenges and barriers, it is necessary and timely to think critically and creatively about the suitable methodological approaches to research and understand international students. This paper reflects on employing the audio diary method to explore international students' complex and dynamic experiences in UK master's programmes. Through detailing the methodological and practical issues, this paper intends to highlight this researcher/researched-friendly method to better inform and enhance future research practices given its flexibility, operability and 'restrained freedom' to generate rich descriptions with international students in HE settings.

Full paper

Introduction

The burgeoning internationalisation of higher education (HE) and the growth in international students have become visible components and characteristics in research and practice, and inevitably posing certain methodological challenges for researchers when approaching and investigating international students, i.e., the key players in the HE sphere (Green, 2019). Yet, most of the existing literature focuses on using 'traditional' research methods, e.g., interviews and surveys with a snapshot of their experiences. It is necessary and timely to think critically and creatively about suitable methodological approaches to research and understand diverse student cohorts in HE. Considering their multifaceted experiences in HE, e.g., on campus and out of campus, as well as their regional and global mobility, there is a call for suitable and flexible research tools for accessing and facilitating research practice in HE (Kahu, 2013).

Literature Review

Diary method, i.e., participants record detailed perceptions and reflections on their experiences, has been adopted by researchers from various disciplines in different forms given its ability to capture detailed accounts of processes,

routines and experiences (Cao & Henderson, 2021; Cucu-Oancea, 2013). Rather than writing down participants' reflections via traditional paper-pencil diary methods, an audio diary (hereafter AD) allows participants to use an audio recording facility to record their thoughts following reflection on personal aspects of life and stories (Crozier & Cassell, 2016; Hislop et al., 2005). Literature on the AD method remains scarce (Dangeni et al., 2021), with most of the studies has been found in the field of Medicine and Psychology. ADs are found capable and suitable to capture experiences of participants with their accessibility, flexibility and convenience. The ease of recording counteracts the inconvenience typically posed by diary writing that may easily discourage both researchers and participants (especially those who have difficulties with sitting down and writing) from implementing a diary method.

The study

The study was a qualitative, multi-method study of Master's programmes at two Scottish universities, and it included perspectives from different stakeholders: (i) document analysis, classroom observation and debriefing with programme organisers; (ii) the monthly ADs of 22 Chinese international students to capture their experiences; (iii) a visually-guided interview with Chinese international students and (iv) semi-structured interviews with staff members. This paper focuses on the 10-month audio diary collection and aims to explore what audio diary method brings to HE research, and in particular, research with international students. The study received ethical approval from the University of Glasgow.

Findings

1) Motivations and appreciations for AD method: The accessibility and flexibility of AD method stand out in the participants' reflections, particularly in their very first entries about who they are, why they are willing to take part in the study, and what they expect from such research participation. While the participants' familiarity with WeChat is not surprising, the novelty of using this chat app as a data collection tool motivated them to explore this method with the researcher. This ease of sharing everyday experiences out loud was also seen as helpful and valuable regarding their expectations and development as international students in this Master's programme. Additionally, as participants became familiar with this monthly reflection, rather than seeing it as a separate research activity that they were involved in, the enthusiasm to continue recording and sharing reflections was evident in the AD entries.

2) Embracing the complexity of student's experience through 'hearing' their voices: The AD method was found to be appropriate, flexible and valued for its ability to encourage participants to think, talk and reflect on their multidimensional experiences, particularly the strong emotions associated with everyday learning. For many of the participants who, in their initial entries, talked about the challenges they faced in everyday learning, e.g., academic writing and communication skills that were new to them, their voices and laughter indicated that they had managed to improve the skills that they had found very challenging at the beginning of their studies.

Conclusion

The AD method is considered appropriate for HE context as its flexibility encourages participants to think, talk and reflect on their experiences. The 'revelatory and creative' nature of this research technique (Hyers & Walmer, 2021) makes it suitable and recommended for similar HE settings where the aim is to promote learning, insight and innovation in an increasingly diverse context. Furthermore, AD method enables researchers and participants to overcome barriers with the rigour and trustworthiness of diary studies, while being able to stimulate reflection and deep thought while maintaining social (i.e. physical) distance, and arguably supporting participants' psychological wellbeing as their voices are heard (Elliot et al., 2020).

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Parallel Session 4:8

11:00 - 12:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1a

Chair Pauline Kneale

25 Walk, talk, and connect: Exploring the potential of informal walking groups for enhancing learning communities

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted students' ability to connect with each other, impacted personal wellbeing and as a consequence, learning communities evolved. In the wake of the pandemic universities have looked for opportunities to facilitate social connectedness among student cohorts. This qualitative study investigated choice to participate in, and experiences of, a walking-based intervention for part-time mature postgraduate students at a time when classroom activities remained restricted by Covid-19 mitigation measures. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to explore the interview data of the n= 8 subjects. Analysis is still in progress, but concepts related to movement, flow, being in nature, being with others, and being attuned to the surroundings are evident in the transcripts. It is hoped that the findings will be of interest to those who want to explore nature- or activity-based pedagogies to foster and/or enhance higher education learning communities.

Full paper

The pandemic has had a negative impact on many students' sense of wellbeing as well as their sense of community (Student Minds, 2021; Maguire & Cameron, 2021) accordingly, some academics have considered how to adjust their classroom pedagogy to foster connectedness within cohorts.

Walking pedagogies are not common practice in higher education and those who have engaged with them have had mixed experiences mainly centred on adoption and engagement (Cameron, 2019) despite others documenting the creative and cognitive benefits (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014) as well as the mental health advantages of being connected with nature (Lutyen, 2017). Walking has been noted to be particularly beneficial for managing anxiety (as well as fostering the many other health benefits that are derived from being physically active) and its rhythmic nature is thought to relax and thereby facilitate creative thinking (Goertz, 2018). Some extol the virtues of 'learn to wonder as we wander' (Lyle, Latremouille, & Jardine, 2021) and others embrace walking as a critical pedagogy and research method that enables participants to 'pay attention' and experience a form of immersive sensory learning that helps collective connectedness with landmarks, associated history and culture (O' Neill, no date).

In recognition that there could be benefits derived from walking-based activities while Covid-19 still placed restrictions on classroom practices, a group of Counselling academic staff based at a modern university in Scotland offered their part-time MSc students' opportunities to engage in a series of extra-curricular tutor-led walks during the 2021/22 academic session. Students from all three-year groups were able to sign up to one or more walks and given the dispersed nature of the student group, some of these were local to the city campus others were at mutually agreed central locations, meaning that there was a mixture of urban and rural walks on offer. In the summer of 2022, QAA Scotland Resilient Learning Communities' institutional funding was awarded to employ a student as a research assistant to explore the experiences of students who chose to participate (or not) in the intervention.

An email invite to be part of the study led to n= 8 students being interviewed. N= 6 had taken part in the walks, and n= 2 had not. Interviews were transcribed, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to explore the resultant data. While the analysis is still in progress some early insights have been garnered which relate to 'more and new connections with each other', 'real connections beyond the screen', a sense of 'connectedness to the city',

'connectedness to staff' and that the 'unstructured' nature of the walks enabled connections to be made. An appreciation of nature also features as well as several narratives that relate to movement and flow, for example 'meandering'. 'Freedom' and 'space' are also noted particularly in relation to personal situations or the intensity of the programme of studies. Those that chose not to participate in the intervention did so mainly as a result of individual circumstances. In one case this related to disability and highlights the need for extra- and in-curricular pedagogic practices to be inclusive. The intent of the analysis, aside from giving voice to the students' experiences, is to consider whether there could be wider adoption within the higher education system, and what infrastructure might need to be in place to best support co-curriculum implementation of a walking pedagogy.

In the post-pandemic university landscape, the mental wellbeing of students is still a matter of concern (Liverpool et al, 2023). Fostering a sense of belonging premised on being and feeling part of a community is something many institutions are focused on, recognising the impact that the required Covid-19 isolation measures have had on this (Sutcliffe & Noble, 2022). Walking already has many well-documented benefits but its role as an adjunct to the curriculum is still little explored. The early indications derived from this study suggest that for some cohorts (in this case a mature part-time group of learners) making time for a walking-based co-curriculum intervention could help foster valuable peer connections.

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117 Exploring the Homeification of Post-Pandemic Learning: Pedagogic Relations, Student Experiences and Questions of Equity

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Hybridity, flexibility, and digitisation remain features of the post-pandemic university. This decoupling of learning from physical campuses enables students to spend more time studying outside the university – with homes emerging an important pedagogic ‘space’. Yet, ‘home’ is not static or neutral backdrop but shapes the possibilities of learning and learners. Drawing on research in progress, including qualitative interviews with 20 undergraduate students from a UK university and photos from a creative workshop involving university decision-makers, this paper interrogates what ‘home’ represents, produces, and excludes. It first explores how students engage with learning at home and the resources, relations, materials and pedagogies required. Secondly, it asks who thrives when learning is ‘homeified’ and how the complex constellation of students’ identities and equity characteristics shape these possibilities. Finally, it considers the relations between learners and their ‘homes’ and imagines the current and future ways home/campus spaces might coexist and interact.

Full paper

Learning at home is not a new phenomenon for higher education, but home as a universal site of learning for all students (albeit in different intensities and durations) was unique to the global Covid-19 pandemic, during which home became a site for ‘campus exiles to learn’ (Schwartzman, 2020). In these moments, university learning became ‘homeified’ (Beausoleil, 2020) - decompartmentalising and ‘queering’ (Morley and Leyton, 2023) the relations between learners, teachers and the academy. Post-pandemic in the UK, the physical campus remains in crisis as digital provision, commuter students, and changing domestic and international markets fragment the reliance on ‘hallowed’ buildings. As institutions seek to capitalise on the threats and opportunities of a post-pandemic sector, there is a real urgency to understand the equity implications of the intensification of home. Temple’s (2014) research foregrounds how the physical and material form of the university is not a blank space within which learning happens but the ‘interplay between space and the people in it’ shapes possibilities for learning. Moreover Clayton et al (2009) describe how the geographies of home and university are both material and physical places but also spatial resources that enable students to make sense of themselves and are critical to the ongoing re-constitution of student identities. Futurologists imagine that by 2030 students will be able to ‘move fluidly across physical, digital and social experiences’ (JISC, 2021) and envision a university without walls – accessible at home and freed from the confines of the physical campus. Consequently, this paper aims to explore the under-theorised and omnipresent role of ‘home’ in the campus student experience in order that such future ‘boundaryless’ provision is both accessible and inclusive for a diverse student population.

This paper draws on research in progress, including two data encounters: qualitative semi-structured interviews with 20 UK university students and a creative workshop involving students and key university staff decision-makers related to pedagogy, technology, and campus resourcing. The interviews delve into the possibilities and limitations that home presents for diverse learners, examining the material, psychological, and social resources necessary for successful home learning. The workshop utilises art and model-building to encourage participants to imagine and construct representations of home and campus learning, facilitating ‘multi-model’ visual and collaborative engagement with the topic (Gourlay, 2015). Both the interview transcripts, photos and workshop discussion will be analysed using feminist post-humanist theorisations (including Braidotti, 2009 and Barad, 2007) which seek to explore themes of connections, flow, materialities and affect.

The paper will focus on the following emergent findings. Firstly, it will explore the activities students engage in outside of formal teaching and what home looks like as an extension of the university. It will examine the compatibility of home spaces with new pedagogic approaches and challenge normative assumptions about homes and the digital

and material resources required for effective learning in these diverse settings. For example, interview participants reflected on the assumption from lecturers that home equated to 'quiet' and the challenges in finding spaces to absorb asynchronous materials for 'flipped learning' on busy campuses. Secondly it will consider who thrives when learning is homeified and how do the complex constellation of students' identities and equity characteristics shape this possibility? Higher education's policy demands, and pedagogical practices often take as their 'desirable' subject an unspecified body, failing to interrogate who the student is (and is not) in relation to differentiated access to power, privilege, and opportunity structures (Danvers, 2018). This research seeks to ask similar questions about the imagined or idealised home learner particularly given how the pandemic exposed inequalities, tensions, and instabilities among student populations. Finally, the paper will consider the relations between home and campus spaces and how these are experienced and valued as students are increasingly 'in motion' across a range of material, digital and imagined spaces (Holton and Finn, 2020). Attendance and engagement on campus is declining (Times Higher Education, 2022), and the number of commuter students rising (Maguire and Morris, 2018), with expensive private rents in the UK and an ongoing cost-of living crisis set to exasperate these flexible, hybrid or spatially distant engagements. Participants in the research spoke of everyday decisions shaping mobility such as the intellectual and financial trade-off between bus fare to campus or watching the lecture recording at home. Through these data, this research will seek to understand the renewed place of home as a space of the university and argue the need for new imaginaries of higher education that consider what 'home' represents, produces, and excludes learners and learning.

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199 Students' perceptions and experiences of online and hybrid education during and after the pandemic: Lessons for HE Pedagogy and Policy

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

As a response to the pandemic, Universities worldwide had to adopt online methods of teaching to fulfil specific safety criteria. This included initially an exclusively online provision and later, a hybrid or blended style of teaching. There is now a plethora of relevant studies that have shown how this abrupt change not only impacted scholars, and their way of teaching, but also students' learning experiences and their ability to grasp the content that was delivered online (Ali, 2020; Ferris-Mucci et al 2021).

Extending current research on this topic (Dommett et al, 2019; Fatoni et al, 2020; Chan et al, 2023) this paper investigates student perceptions and experiences of hybrid and online learning. Based on data collected through a student-staff partnership project, this study focuses on the students' perspectives and provides a critical sociological appraisal of some aspects of online education whilst exploring lessons learnt for future HE policy and practice.

Full paper

Between 2020 and 2022, as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Universities worldwide had to adopt online, 'digital' methods of teaching and education to safeguard the continuation of high-standards learning provision for their students, while also fulfilling specific safety criteria. Amidst the despair that the pandemic brought about, and the difficult and challenging teaching conditions it created, this global crisis also served as a stark reminder of the absolute necessity for HE to constantly adjust and rapidly adapt to new environments and circumstances. Similarly, this period of time stands as proof of the resilience of educational institutions, the dedication of lecturers (and the wider HE community) to ensure educational continuity, and the robust willpower and determination of students to carry on and complete their studies.

The pandemic and its aftermath continue to offer both challenges and opportunities for reflecting on what were taken as 'well-established' practices and reimagining learning and teaching processes. There is now a plethora of relevant studies that have shown how this abrupt change not only impacted scholars, and their way of teaching, but also students' learning experiences and their ability to grasp the content that was delivered online (Ali, 2020; Ferris-Mucci et al 2021; Coman et al 2020; Ahshan, 2021, Chan et al 2023, to name but a few).

Adopting an interpretivist sociological perspective (Blumer, 1962; Rock, 1979; Prus, 1997) the current study analyses the intersubjective learning experiences of students during the pandemic. The focus here is on their shared understandings of the situation, the areas they found most challenging while they were adapting to the rapid switch to an online learning environment and the things they enjoyed and wanted to retain post-pandemic.

Combining sociological and pedagogical theoretical understandings provides a more holistic and robust exploration of the ways and processes through which the students in the study shared their experiences of learning in higher education during the pandemic. Fundamental to this experience was an active, ongoing negotiation of their student learning experience and the reconfiguration of taken-for-granted notions of University life and identities.

More specifically, our study explores undergraduate and postgraduate students' experiences of online and hybrid teaching and learning during the pandemic and the ways through which they adapted back to an in-person learning experience post-pandemic. The research was funded by an internal Teaching Innovation, Student-Staff partnership fund by the University of Surrey and it involves two phases. The first phase of the project took place in the summer of 2021 and utilised an online survey and two focus groups with students from all three Faculties of the University of Surrey. In this part of the study, we were particularly interested in understanding how students interacted with and utilised pre-recorded materials and guided learning online activities in their studies. A second phase of the project is currently under way and we are gathering information on the Affordances of Hybrid and Online Teaching and the specific elements that students would like to retain moving back to face-to-face teaching. The second part of the study involves a further online survey and we are also collecting data through student narratives, reflecting mainly on their learning experiences during the transition period from online and hybrid, back to a full in-person education.

What is becoming apparent in our study is that the way students viewed and experienced online and hybrid learning during and after the pandemic, largely depended on their wider intersubjective experiences (Prus, 1997) and circumstances, such as their support networks, their background and living arrangement (at home or on campus), their learning patterns and their broader socialisation and friendship patterns at University.

The current paper will concentrate on five distinct but highly inter-related, themes emerging from our data analysis: Socialisation; Mental Health and Stress; Assessment and Feedback; Engagement, Motivation and Attendance; and Pre-recorded/Recorded Lectures and online Seminars. Here we are highlighting the advantages of online learning from a student perspective and the hierarchy of problems associated with online provision, mainly within the context of the rapid changes implemented during the pandemic, but also in the transitional period of returning to an in-person educational delivery. Based on our findings we are also discussing implications for future research and recommendations for policy and practice. The perspectives and analysis offered in this paper allow us to point to the need for a more holistic framework of implementing strategies for students' active (and interactive) engagement through student peer interactions, student-lecturer interactions and classroom and social presence regardless of the online, digital and in-person modes of teaching adopted.

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Lunch, networking, poster & exhibition viewing

12:30 - 13:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Courtyard Suites 1- 4

13.00 - 13.30, HEQU Session with Wiley: Academic Publishing in the Era of AI: Risks and Opportunities for Authors

Location: Conference Room 1a

Please join us for a roundtable discussion on Artificial Intelligence and academic journals publishing, discussing both the risks and opportunities that AI presents for authors. The roundtable will be hosted by Higher Education Quarterly Associate Editors Dr. Debananda Misra, from the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, and Dr. Miguel Lim from the University of Manchester. With invited speakers Pascal Hetzscholdt, Wiley's Senior Director for Content Protection, and Hong Zhou, Director of Intelligent Services & Head of AI R&D at Wiley Partner Solutions.

Parallel Session 5:1

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Room 139
Chair Jill Dickinson

23 Spaces to write: temporal, physical, digital. What can we learn from the experiences of female academics attending writing groups and retreats during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic?

Kate Carruthers Thomas

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper reports on ongoing research into the experiences of female academics participating in academic writing groups and retreats, online and in-person, between 2020 and 2023. It considers how these interventions addressed challenges participants faced in writing for publication during the pandemic. Findings to date show that writing groups and retreats, whether online or in-person, create not only temporal, physical and digital spaces for academic writing, but importantly intellectual and professional space to expand and strengthen academic identities. The creation of spaces to write continues to matter 'post-pandemic'. Not only are participants trying to catch up on writing goals disrupted by COVID-19, but the pressure to publish ('or perish') continues in the face of academic workloads dominated by teaching, student pastoral care and administration. The paper argues that research findings demonstrate both need and potential for post-pandemic institutional policy to create space, in the broadest sense, for academic writing.

Full paper

Introduction

This paper reports on research into the experiences of UK female academics participating in academic writing groups and retreats, online and in-person, between 2020 and 2023. It considers how these interventions addressed challenges participants faced in writing for publication during the pandemic and argues that research findings demonstrate both need and potential for post-pandemic institutional policy to create space, in the broadest sense, for academic writing. (66)

Contexts

What, where and how often academics publish their research is vital currency of an academic career, yet 'while research is a priority in every university strategy, the writing element of research is not universally experienced as a mainstream activity' (Murray and Newton 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing challenges of finding time and concentration to produce high-quality academic writing. As working women shouldered the burden of care when paid work shifted into the home, Boncori (2020), Pebdani et al. (2022) among others, document disadvantages female academics faced in sustaining research productivity during lockdowns. Emerging research (Clark, 2023) shows that the negative impact of the pandemic on female academics' publication output continues two years after the lifting of the last (UK) lockdown.

Writing groups and retreats are frequently deployed to support academic writing for staff and students. Haas' typology (2014) notes that no two are like, but all 'involve writers coming together to support each other, and ... share the common goal of improving both process and product of writing (2017, p.2). They also serve to 'disrupt the commonplace ... fantasy of writing as a solitary activity' (Gere, 1987; Brodkey, 1996). Although terms are sometimes used interchangeably, the literature distinguishes writing groups from retreats, the latter being 'structured events during which a group of people write in the same room and share their aims, progress and difficulties over several days' (Aitchison and Guerin 2014; Murray 2015). The pre-pandemic assumption was that participants shared common physical space during the event. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated what had been a more gradual move towards the use of online platforms.

Method

This paper prefigures fuller findings of ongoing research investigating the experiences of female participants in four academic writing interventions between 2020-2023.

- WRITESPACE (June-December 2020) - online writing initiative for female academics employed at a large, modern UK university;
- THIRDSpace (January-March 2021) - six-week international online writing programme, part of the SRHE Professional Development Programme;
- RESIDENTIAL 1 (February 2023) and 2 (June 2023) - two three-day retreats

Data gathering from participants of RESIDENTIALS 1 and 2 will complete in October 2023 when the full dataset will comprise:

- 5 written testimonials (WRITESPACE)
- 28 online, post-programme surveys (THIRDSpace, RESIDENTIALS 1 and 2)
- 8 transcripts of individual, semi-structured interviews (THIRDSpace)
- 2 transcripts of facilitated online discussions (RESIDENTIALS 1 and 2).

Findings to date

Findings to date show that writing groups and retreats, whether online or in-person, create not only temporal, physical and digital spaces for academic writing, but importantly intellectual and professional space to expand and strengthen academic identities. The forging of protected space for writing was particularly important during pandemic lockdowns, as already porous work/home boundaries became increasingly blurred. Online groups provided digital spaces separate from constrained physical circumstances at home. Data shows that pursuing a shared endeavour with increasingly familiar strangers contributed to meaningful connections which participants found helpful in developing a writing 'habit'. Findings also indicate that session structuring and timekeeping by a peer facilitator played a significant role in 'holding' a positive space for participants to write.

Data from RESIDENTIAL 1 participants indicates the creation of space to write continues to matter 'post-pandemic' as participants try to 'catch up' on writing goals disrupted by COVID-19. The pressure to publish ('or perish') continues in the face of academic workloads dominated by teaching, student pastoral care and administration. The seemingly simple act of visibly blocking out electronic calendar space both deters other colleagues from interrupting and claiming time and gives the writer herself permission to give time to writing. Analysis of the full dataset will enable further comparison of online and in-person interventions.

Implications for policy?

The conference presentation will argue that as long as academic writing is not mainstreamed in the academic workload, those who carry the burden of care within the workplace and the home will be disadvantaged. It will call for an institutional policy approach which a) acknowledges the COVID-19 pandemic's unequal impact on women's research productivity including writing for publication and b) creates protected space for academic writing for those who were disproportionately disadvantaged eg: through workload allocation models and supported interventions.

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143 Ecologies of Research Writing in Chinese Universities

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This research investigates the ecologies of research writing in Chinese universities through a study of writing practices of early-career scholars. Focusing on humanities and social sciences, we study the effects of state and institutional productivity policies, including performance assessment and reward systems, which cause a specific set of writing-related tensions and uncertainties for new Chinese academics. Data were collected through interviews with twenty-four academics and extensive multimodal diary entries from four participants who detailed reflections upon their research writing as it was being undertaken. Findings underscore unique practices regarding how academics in China structure their writing environments and schedules, how they disrupt and renegotiate established spatial, temporal, professional, personal, and emotional boundaries in a managerialism-controlled setting. We argue that these practices constitute emergent, shifting and precarious assemblages which have implications for understanding academic work, in China and beyond.

Full paper

1. Background

In Chinese universities, research productivity – largely centred on research writing – is a pivotal driver of China's knowledge-based economy, and highlights the country's commitment to advancing its research and development activities through the work of higher education. Universities have responded by introducing various forms of incentivisation policies for academic productivity to enhance the quality and quantity of publications in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), following similar policies having been in place in the natural sciences since the 1980s (see Xu et al 2019). These moves signify a substantial investment in developing a robust research culture and promoting excellence in fields beyond the natural sciences.

While some incentivisation schemes have been dropped to allow more room for staff to teach, and for academics to publish a component of their written outputs in domestic Chinese journals (MOE 2020), the pressure to publish in high-ranking 'international' (which usually means 'English-medium') journals still remains a core part of many institutional academic performance criteria and an indicator of prestige. Particular forms of research writing thereby retain a central place in Chinese academic professional life. These pressures, for many, constitute a double-bind: to write in English and thereby orient their writing to anglophone forms of genre and research conventions, alongside an additional expectation to achieve a more local impact within China.

In the complex landscape of Chinese higher education, how early-career academics, especially in HSS disciplines, acquire the ability to produce knowledge through their research writing is of paramount importance. This is especially salient given the country's emphasis on individual and institutional achievement as a measure of success. There is also a pressing need to examine the role of doctoral training for Chinese academics and how writing-related transformations are driven by multiple simultaneous pressures upon their work.

Using a 'social practice' approach to literacy as a theoretical frame, and attention to the ecology of research writing in context (see Barton 1994), this project uses a cross-disciplinary sample of twenty-four early-career academics employed at different types of university across China, to investigate the specific features of how research writing practices occur in their everyday professional lives. We also draw on studies of social space (see Simmel 1997/1909) to help us delve deeper into the intricate relationship between research writing and spatial organisation. This illuminates the fact that research writing is not only a linguistic practice, but also a spatial one, and with significant implications for academic work.

2. The Research

The study consists of repeat research encounters with participants, including narrative oriented interviews, collection of documents salient to research writing work, and multimodal journaling consisting of reflections of particular writing task that participants were working on at the time of the study. If required, we followed up journal accounts to gain clarity on issues for analysis. These follow up research encounters were recorded and transcribed, or written up immediately afterwards.

3. Findings

Participants in the study all reported various ways in which changes related to research writing expectations have reshaped the environmental conditions of their writing work. Themes related largely to practices at the boundaries of space and time emerged as salient and oriented us towards examining the breakdown of traditional spatiotemporal barriers between homes and workplaces that were caused by various lockdowns in China over the period of the research (early 2022 to mid 2023), as well as the blurring of lines between personal and professional lives.

While a managerial approach will likely differentiate academic responsibilities between instructional work, service, and research activity, the academic role is clearly different depending on the context, and involves a wide range of activities that fall both in-between and beyond these three commonly invoked categories. In-depth and ethnographic inquiry of what research writing actually entails reveals that a significant portion of it entails tasks that go beyond writing alone. These tasks include reading, speaking, and a variety of forms of communication in addition to meta-logistical work, or 'work around the work', revolving around texts, objects and creating the right spaces and timeframes in which to write. This is precisely what we dub as 'ecologies of research writing' in Chinese universities.

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100 The Complex Impact of Space on Academic Identity and Sense of Community

Lauren Clark

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Even before the pandemic, space within universities was changing, evolving to respond to different ways of teaching, learning, and working within the university sector. Post-pandemic, this change is more visible as many staff and students have become more competent users of different forms of technology enabling academics and students to work remotely more comfortably. Even though research is one of the primary functions of universities, when reconfiguring university spaces the students' learning experience is often placed at the forefront, neglecting the needs of academics. This paper acts as a discussion piece, exploring difficult questions about what it means to work in the university post-pandemic, and how this new way of working will impact the development of academic identities and communities, by drawing on my experience of significant, on-going renovations to the physical space of my university.

Full paper

Even before the pandemic, space within universities was changing, evolving to respond to different ways of teaching, learning, and working within the university sector. Post-pandemic, this change is more visible as many staff and students have become more competent users of different forms of technology enabling academics and students to work remotely more comfortably. The functionality of the traditional tiered lecture theatre has been under question for years, as we move toward a more interactive and student-centred approach to teaching and learning, but now that many have moved to a flipped classroom approach, certain teaching spaces are being seen as unnecessary (Boys, 2015). Many discussions around the physical space of the university focus on the impact this has on teaching and learning (van Merriënboer et al., 2017). Even though research is one of the primary functions of universities, when reconfiguring university spaces the students' learning experience is often placed at the forefront, neglecting the needs of academics. This paper aims to explore the impact changes to the material space of the university have on academics working in these spaces, to their way of working and to their identity as academics.

My interest in this area comes as a result of ongoing and costly renovations to the Grade II listed building that I work in. These changes were presented as a much-needed update to a crumbling estate – toilet facilities that were no longer functional, and classrooms and offices that needed an update. However, the scale of the project, and who has been consulted in the planning has thrown into question the purpose of the university building and what it represents for those who work and study inside it. As part of the renovations, staff are being temporarily re-housed, shifted from floor to floor as works continue around the building, with some moved to different buildings entirely. Staff are being asked to pack up their belongings, books they have accumulated over years of working in academia, encouraged to 'have a clear out' before moving into their new spaces. The general sentiment among staff is that the architects don't understand what academics need from their spaces – the words 'open-plan' are whispered along the corridors, and staff are yet to know what the new space will look like or how they will fit within it.

After the pandemic, many colleagues were ready and looking forward to returning to campus to strengthen and in some cases rebuild connections with colleagues, but loud and disruptive building works meant that many have stayed home (if they have a quiet place to work), isolating themselves from their colleagues and students. Smith et al. (2022) found that while staff adapted to the hybrid working model or working from home, they often had a disrupted sense of

identity due to these changes. Much of academic work is solitary – reading, writing, data analysis. And therefore, we may forget what we get from having a social infrastructure to our working lives – the spontaneous coffees had with colleagues in the café, or the brief chat in the lift that might spark a new idea. In their research on the impact of Covid-19 on academic identity, Smith et al. (2022) found that changes to teaching and working during the pandemic impacted on academic's confidence and sense of identity due to the quick changes they were required to make in relation to their use of technology and online pedagogies. What do we lose when the space we work in no longer works for us or is not designed with our needs in mind? How does this mismatch impact on our development as academics, on our identity as academics in the current context?

This paper acts as a discussion piece, exploring difficult questions about what it means to work in the university post-pandemic, and how this new way of working will impact the development of academic identities and communities.

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Parallel Session 5:2

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 141

Chair Sandra Acker

113 Third-space research: Influencing higher education policy?

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

The first two decades of this century have witnessed unprecedented global societal changes. Likewise, the higher education sector has undergone colossal changes, socially, technologically, economically, environmentally and politically. Concurrently, Whitchurch observed that a third space has developed where staff and activities occupy a boundary zone between the traditional binary divide of academic and professional services. A recent systematic literature review (SLR) revealed that the third space has increased over this time; however, the industrial relations structures that govern official staff structures and institutional reporting to governments (conspicuously in Australia) remain based on a binary divide that has outlived its usefulness. This paper analyses potential changes in work

practices and interactions in the context of this SLR and the current Australian Universities Accord (a comprehensive review of Australia's higher education system). Similarities with and implications for other higher education contexts are explored.

Full paper

Introduction and background

During the first two decades of this century, the global higher education sector has undergone extensive changes, such as internationalisation, massification and widening participation, technologies supporting online education and AI, and embracing neoliberal management practices (Chan, 2018; de Wit & Altbach, 2021). In November 2022, in response to such challenges, the Australian Government announced the Australian Universities Accord, a comprehensive review of the Australian higher education sector that aims to align the Australian higher education sector and national needs. This review seeks to develop a shared understanding of the issues among higher education leaders, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders, to devise an agreed transition to a boldly different sector in the following decade.

The Accord Discussion Paper (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE], 2023) raised, *inter alia*, the question of how higher education providers might adopt innovative employment practices to address the sector's challenges. The discussion paper acknowledged insecure employment, limited career progression, increasing financial challenges faced by academic staff, and the need to address these concerns. Despite comprising 56% of staff in Australian universities in 2021 (Australian Government Department of Education [AGDE], 2022), professional (including administrative, technical and other) staff received only two footnoted mentions in the Accord Discussion Paper (pp. 27–28). In response, the Association for Tertiary Education Management submitted a paper addressing existing inadequacies in the higher education workforce, and provided recommendations for changes to support professional and academic staff alike (Baré & Beard, 2023).

Concurrently, a systematic literature review (SLR) was published (Veles et al., 2023) that examined the identities and spaces of interaction of hybrid/third/new space professionals in higher education literature over the first two decades of this century. Major themes derived from the analysis reaffirmed the complexity of the roles of professional staff as a basis for evolving multiple and hybrid identities (i.e. third-space identities), resulting from the increasingly complex higher education context (Whitchurch, 2012). The SLR also identified the emergence of various new spaces of interaction. Crucial for policy recommendations was evidence of professional and academic staff experiencing similar navigational challenges in these new spaces of interaction, making binary ideas of professional identities outmoded, unproductive and unable to account for the complexity of processes and goals of contemporary university work. The SLR provided actionable 'transformative redefinitions' (Massaro et al. 2016, p. 776) of professionalism, professional identity, and ways of working together among university staff in new spaces.

Using the Australian context as a case study, this paper examines how evolving staff roles, identities and spaces of interaction might inform and influence global higher education policy development.

Policy conundrums for sustainable higher education futures

The SLR found nuanced analyses of the re-interpretation of professionalism and identities across various university contexts (Veles et al., 2023). Moreover, the SLR revealed a steadily rising number of third-space narratives (e.g. Whitchurch, 2018; Whitchurch et al., 2019), indicating a heightened sense of agency among professional staff, who increasingly work across multiple boundaries. This research identified a gradual normalisation of new interaction spaces, portraying the university as a constantly changing arena or boundary zone of new types of work, with professional interactions between diverse staff, students and community stakeholders. In contrast, the Accord (AGDE, 2023) was entirely silent on the third space. Baré and Beard (2023) suggest formal recognition in career and industrial relation structures of a group of cross-boundary or third-space professionals. However, this approach may exacerbate the persisting inequalities between academic and professional staff.

Research—policy nexus: Whither the way forward?

The Australian Universities Accord (AGDE, 2023) should recognise diverse conceptualisations of professionalism, while acknowledging all staff contributions and promoting diverse career paths among professional and academic staff alike. It is crucial to develop new human resources and industrial relations frameworks that transcend the

traditional and outdated academic/administrative binary (Graham, 2014; 2018; Veles, 2022), employing and remunerating workers based on required work, specific projects or ongoing collaboration, thereby benefiting the university, individual staff and their career aspirations, and aligning with the needs of students, research and other communities.

Globally, policymakers, practitioners, researchers and research funders need to make evidence-based decisions. Drawing on research insights systematised in the SLR, changes to higher education policy can modernise and improve the sector and redress the systemic and continued imbalances in recognising staff contributions and their roles in advancing higher education. Hence, research is indispensable in informing global higher education policy and advancing social and organisational changes (e.g., Hazelkorn & Locke, 2022; St John et al., 2018).

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224 Interrogating the representation efficacy of low socioeconomic status as an equity category in Australian higher education

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Connected to an ongoing discursive analysis, this paper explores how the reification of the formal equity group of low socioeconomic status is connected to the persistence of higher educational inequity. It explores how the 'field of equity' has been established in Australia that requires researchers, practitioners and administrators to presuppose the representational efficacy of low-socioeconomic status for understanding inequity and stratification. The concept of low-ses becomes decoupled from its use as a quantitative measurement and is subsequently produced as a political discourse that hegemonically fixes the possible interpretations, relevant questions and salient characteristics as they pertain to the problem of equity. This displaces the possibility of alternative, pluralistic or antagonistic accounts of inequality and stratification. The paper provides a theoretical provocation on how the lack of interrogation of the representation efficacy of the equity group of 'low-ses' contributes to maintaining entrenched inequities in Australian higher education.

Full paper

For over 30 years widening participation in Australian higher education has relied on six categories to make sense of who is 'underrepresented' in higher education. Yet despite these ambitious equity targets and accompanying funding systems, measurements and evaluations aimed at changing the composition of university enrolments, key equity 'groups' show little change in their participation. This paper centres on one of these groups or categories – that of 'low socioeconomic status' (low-ses). Drawing from an ongoing discursive analysis of Australian research and policy pertaining to the production of higher education equity, this paper contributes to the building of a 'theory of the theory effect' (Bourdieu, 1991: 105) in the construction of low-ses as an equity category. I argue drawing from this discursive analysis that low-ses is overwhelmingly used in research and policy to understand and explain the 'problem' of equity because of its political legitimisation rather than through a rigorous and empirical engagement with the problem of representation. It is an initial step in providing a theoretical account of the emergence of 'low-ses' – distinct from its broader SES conceptual framework – as a real group.

Australian equity policy in particular assumes the efficacy of its own conceptualisation of the problem – despite the limited success of producing even proportional parity through its use. Indeed, this has been a problem in equity initiatives globally (see Burke et. Al 2023). This has led to an industry of equity explanations largely locked to preestablished categories and elaborations enshrined in HE policy. Despite socioeconomic status being a relative and abstract statistical measurement developed to understand the breadth of social positions as they pertain to generalised indicators (albeit sterilised from political realities of inequality), political discourse continually repeats and reasserts generalised accounts of 'the low-ses'. This discourse has gained its pertinence not through rigorous critical examination of how higher education and broader social groups interact, but through various policy and funding mechanisms that reify officially sanctioned categories. Not only does this continue to displace alternative or pluralistic accounts of 'the problem' (meant here in the vein of Bacchi, 2009) through formal systems of reporting and measurement, it suggests that researchers are adopting a preestablished conceptualisation of equity, despite the need to bring these categories into question (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Wacquant, 2022).

It should be stressed that the political performativity of low-ses becomes decoupled from its use as a statistical measurement. The performativity of low-ses in political discourse relies on a scientific legitimisation while performing as a sterilised and 'depoliticised' category. This invokes low-ses without acting as an interpellation of the group in

question (unlike many other forms of symbolic violence toward marginalised groups and classes – see Tyler, 2013; Shildrick, 2018 Threadgold, 2018). Low-ses can thus perform as an act of group making intended as a technology of governance (as in a form of representation that cannot be taken as a basis for mobilisation or identity by those within the group). Low-ses enacts a symbolic or ‘representational’ violence (Bunn, 2021) through its displacement of those named within the group from the means to interact with the act of naming and constitution. The representational power of low-ses is aimed at interpellating positions within the field of power (i.e. the professional class, bureaucrats, politicians).

The need to take up this official construction of an equity group is elicited through short term ‘soft funding’. This produces a precarity for researchers and practitioners working in the field of equity, and subsequently means that in order to continue to receive funding, the conceptual parameters and sanctioned ‘groups’ must be utilised in research grants and outputs. The effect is the production of a research field that cannot interrogate the salience of the formalised categories, as in most cases research is called on to presuppose the validity of the formally sanctioned equity categorisations.

This paper takes seriously the need for higher educational researchers to ‘take as their object of study the social operations of naming and the rites of institution through which they are accomplished’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 105). It points towards a ‘lemming effect’ (Wacquant, 2022), whereby the field enacts the performative low-ses without conceptual interrogation or participatory means for establishing its efficacy. This research is offered as a potentially fruitful approach to understanding the persistence of higher education inequity despite the vast resources aimed at its ostensible amelioration. Through interrogating the representation efficacy of low ses as a political discourse this research hopes to shed greater light on how concepts and representations are produced and restrict possible courses of action in equity initiatives.

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Key concerns are expressed regarding the capacity of the current level and structure of HE funding to drive a sustainable and fair system. This paper explores this question by examining the historical connections and tensions between the funding, student enrolment and staff recruitment of HE systems in France, the UK, the USA and Canada since the 1920s. The study shows that as a result of public underfunding, the four systems are all (differently) challenged by tensions between their meritocratic ideal, lacks in effective social mobility and differentials in resources between institutions. A countercyclical revival of public funding is necessary to reverse the process of public private/substitution and ensure that a reduction of inequalities within HE systems and a rebalancing of the rationales driving them in order to contribute to wider socio-economic transformations necessary in hard times.

Full paper

Objectives and debates

Covid-19 revealed and reinforced unsustainable levels of inequalities -already exposed by the 2008 crisis (Piketty 2014) and left unaddressed since- which combined with struggling underfunded public services have underlined the vulnerability of socio-economic systems and questioned their capacity to cope with the perfect storm of political, economic, social, geopolitical and environmental threats currently brewing. This reactivated longstanding debates on the social sphere including on the past, present and future of public higher education (HE) systems.

Key concerns relate to the capacity of the current level and structure of funding to drive a sustainable and fair HE system. The slowdown in public funding and the rise in private resources including fees have raised concerns related to student access, precarity and private debt in a context of replacement of grants by loans (Callender and Davis 2023). Declining public resources also raised growing concerns on quality including student support, working condition of staff and tensions between teaching and research. Underfunding also questioned HE as a system with an increasingly competitive institutional differentiation considered by some as a necessary concentration of resources within institutions to compete internationally and by others as a further source of inequalities strengthening social stratification (Boliver 2011). Finally, the 2008 crisis can be seen as a crisis of globalisation with a neonationalist backlash (Douglass 2021) affecting the glonocal balance of HE (Marginson 2022) and its internationalisation under pressure from income generation, geopolitical and immigration rationales.

This paper proposes to look back at these issues by exploring the historical connections and tensions between funding, expansion of enrolment and staff and institutional differentiation within HE systems. The study examines the cases of France, the UK, the USA and Canada which have systems with distinctive historical traditions and different political economy of education regarding levels of public/private funding (Eastman et al. 2022; Geiger, Musselin 2021; Scott 2021)

Methodology

The analysis is based on an original dataset on HE funding, enrolment and staff since the 1920s. It follows the methodology of quantitative history which offers a system of collecting and processing of data providing homogenous statistical series comparable across time and space. Data sources come from governmental publications. Data on funding includes public and private resources. Data on enrolment are disaggregated by geographical origins, gender, social class and types, modes and subjects of studies. Staff data on academic staff are distributed according to gender, activities, position, and types and mode of employment. All data were when possible disaggregated by types of institutions shaping the HE systems.

Summary of the findings

The first finding reveals the influence of economic fluctuations (Kondratiev cycles) on the level and structure of HE resources driving periodic tensions between funding and expansion of the system. Economic crises were turning points with policies of reduction of public funding and promotion of marketisation implemented after 1973 and intensified after 2008 in all countries. This produced underfunding in the mainly public funded French system. In the other countries which had already experienced marketisation since 1973, the 2008 crisis produced a shift towards public/private substitution by which private funding increasingly played a role of substitutive rather than additional resources as initially designed by reforms promoting cost-sharing. This shift has strong implications for equity, quality and sustainability of HE systems with underfunding raising significant tensions between the historical trajectories of student enrolment and the recruitment of the academic workforce which tends to be increasingly segmented and casualised.

The data also shows that Kondratiev cycles have influenced and reshaped the historical processes of institutional differentiation with private or/and selective HE sector/s rising during crises. Importantly, the well-established link between institutional differentiation and social stratification is historically contingent. The crises of 1970s and 2008 led institutional differentiation to slowly shift away from social inclusion towards diversion in most countries. Finally, the effect of differentiation on inequalities is strengthened by increasing differential of resources (including staff) between elite and non-elite institutions, especially during economic crises.

Conclusion

2008 has intensified rather than reversed the HE policies adopted since 1973. As a result of public underfunding, the four systems are all strongly challenged by tensions between their meritocratic ideal, lacks in effective social mobility and differentials in resources between institutions. Changes in funding is not sufficient but necessary to initiate a countercyclical revival of public funding reversing the process of public private/substitution and ensure that the reduction of inequalities within HE systems and a rebalancing of the rationales behind HE contribute to initiate the wider socio-economic transformations necessary in hard times.

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Parallel Session 5:3 - Symposium

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1b

4 Personal Approaches to Resilience and Community – supporting student success

Research Domain

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Rationale

Having a positive transition experience to university is associated with better student outcomes including student wellbeing, performance, and overall retention (Hughes & Spanner, 2019). Widening access to university education while enriching and enabling can result in a student population with varied prior learning experiences and consequent support systems, who may have divergent needs if facilitating them to navigate their higher education experience successfully (Thomas, 2020). Therefore, a standardised approach to managing their initial studies, particularly in a generation who may have had a pandemic-disrupted education, may not address individual requirements.

The PARC (Personal Approaches to Resilience and Community) QAA Scotland-sponsored collaborative cluster project focuses on developing activities that support successful transition into and through university. The application of 'diagnostic' tools has been an area of attention and builds on work that previously featured in the HEFCE/OfS Learning Gain initiative. Each of the project partners has adopted a different approach based on the specific needs of their cohorts (e.g. analysing generic study and wellbeing skills for first year entrants or remote learners, reviewing writing for English Academic Purposes skills for international students, preparing for professional practice Masters study). However, all of the tools are administered either pre-arrival or on arrival to the university and explore preparedness and expectations of a higher education university experience and the students' personal perceptions of their academic skills, numeracy, wellbeing, digital competence and approach to career planning (or subsets derived from this list). On completion of the 'diagnostic' the student, administering staff, and programme leaders (if desired) receive a unique report outlining areas of strength but also areas of development. The student is signposted to additional learning resources and support that is accessible within the host university or in the case of one of the partners, microcredit modules designed to enhance their academic and personal skills. Staff are also cognisant of cohort needs and can look to embed bespoke content within programme-specific resources.

This 'diagnostic' approach is designed to personalise the learner journey matched to student need, but in the process build resilience while also signposting the wider university support systems and consequently, embed students in their academic community. This symposium will draw on the work of three of the partners providing oversight of their adopted approach, its implementation, outcomes, and future directions.

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Chair

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Discussants

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Heather Fotheringham

University of the Highlands and Islands, Inverness, United Kingdom

Colin Milligan

Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, United Kingdom

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34 Building Academic and Social Success: Abertay Discovery Tool

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

In September 2020, Abertay University launched a suite of microcredentials aimed at preparing students academically and socially for success. All first-year students completed a credit bearing, core microcredential upon enrolment to the university. This microcredential was called ABE101 Being Successful at Abertay and had embedded within it a diagnostic test (Abertay Discovery Tool). The University had taken the strategic decision to implement this approach to supporting student transition and success as these new students were entering the University with an interrupted, pandemic influenced, education. ABE101 had the core purpose of setting student expectations, signalling successful student behaviours and informing microcredential choices as the institution sought to build successful academic and social foundations with our students. This session will report on outcomes and discuss possible developments to enhance student success.

Full paper

The Abertay Discovery tool has 5 sections for students to complete. By undertaking the self-reflective questions, students receive feedback to help them identify strengths and areas for development. These tailored reports focus upon defining key terms, recommended actions for students to complete within their first 3 months of study and recommendations for which optional microcredentials to choose. The 5 sections of the Abertay Discovery tool are:

- Studying at University (10 questions covering study habits, expectations of university, independent learning etc).
- Academic Skills (19 questions covering writing, reading, referencing and basic numeracy skills).
- Digital Skills (5 questions covering Digital Collaboration, teamwork, and applications).
- Careers & Employability (5 questions covering career registration and previous work experiences).
- Wellbeing (5 questions covering building relationships, mindfulness and seeking support).

As well as students receiving a personalised report, Programme leaders received a cohort level insight report by week 4 of term 1. These reports identified cohort strengths and areas for development. Where an area for development was identified the solution focused report offered key actions, resources or support available to implement within the students' modules and programme of study.

The Abertay offer is part of the QAA Scotland Collaborative Cluster project 'Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community' <https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resilient-learning-communities/flexible-and-accessible-learning/parc>. The full institutional case study can be found at that site.

The Abertay Discovery Tool was a core formative feature of ABE101 Being Successful at Abertay. Students were able to attempt the sections as many times as they liked as they reflected on the questions. Interestingly, quite a number of the students on the module went back in again to redo the formative test as they reflected. There were 758 completed attempts from the 676 students.

Amongst the 676 students who were enrolled onto this module:

- 618 Students (91.4%) completed all sections of the Abertay Discovery tool
- 34 Students (5%) completed some sections of the Abertay Discovery tool
- 24 Students (3.6%) did not engage with the Abertay Discovery tool

Students provided initial feedback linking the usefulness of the Abertay Discovery tool to identifying strengths and areas for development and being able to consider solutions.

"It helped me identify my strongest skills and qualities and also where I can improve in order to become the best version of myself in my university life." BA (Hons) Criminology Student

"It allowed me to identify areas that I struggle with such as procrastination - and provided me with possible solutions to manage this. It also allowed me to identify areas of support from other sources for when it is required." BSc (Hons) Psychology & Counselling Student

The presentation will share the latest data and the impact on retention, as well as considering future developments and the implications for student success.

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384 Personal Approaches to Resilience and Community –Supporting Student Success on Postgraduate Professional Courses

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This paper reports on a project aimed at developing a diagnostic tool to support student teachers academically and professionally. Relationships between teacher resilience and teacher retention have been well established; however, less is known about practical strategies which can strengthen teacher resilience. This project was conducted in two phases in which the first phase focused on designing a diagnostic instrument focused on strategies for building teacher resilience and phase two focused on engaging participants with the diagnostic tool and the relevant supporting resources offered to each participant based on their responses to the diagnostic questions. The findings reveal that more participants at the end of the project attributed their experience of resilience building to their engagement with the diagnostic tool and the supporting resources. This case study, therefore, highlights the crucial role of approaches to resilience and community, supporting PG students on professional courses.

Full paper

Teaching has one of the highest turnover rates among PG professional programmes (Worth, Hillary and De Lazzari, 2017) and much research has been conducted on why novice teachers leave teaching (Clandinin et al., 2015). While initially statistics on the high dropout rate of new teachers made teacher attrition a more dominant topic with research focusing on reasons and causes for high rates of teacher attrition, over recent years, there has been a shift in focus from the reasons and causes for teacher attrition towards reasons and causes for retention (Peixoto et al., 2018). Therefore, a more in-depth understanding of factors and strategies contributing to teacher retention can help refine strategies for retaining new teachers. That said, any research focused on improving teacher retention may begin with exploring challenges faced by new teachers. The use of a diagnostic tool reported here looked to address this issue and would potentially yield data that would help to provide resources into those areas that would support student teachers embarking a career into the teaching profession.

To decide and plan the diagnostic tool, a number of primary questions needed to be addressed, as follows:

-What types of questions should be included to improve responses to both academic and professional challenges student teachers face?

-How can the diagnostic tool for PG professional programmes be made distinct from other types of tools suitable for UG and academic programmes?

-How can the outcomes of students' engagement with the diagnostic tool be evaluated as indicated by students' academic and professional progress while completing their pre-service year?

-How can the tensions between a prescribed diagnostic tool and the flexibility required for amendment of the tool depending on students' learning needs be resolved?

The tool was delivered online in the first term in 2021-22, using a question set created by the author. The students were asked to complete the tool by the module leader and received individual feedback on their results upon completing the questions. Thirty-four students completed the questions and engaged with the online materials including self-reflection quizzes, information about skills and strategies, tips, videos, scenarios and finally creating their personal plans in order to further develop their knowledge, skills and experiences related to the areas highlighted in the diagnostic tool. A programme report was compiled by the module leader which summarised the responses and highlighted strengths and areas for improvement for the student cohort.

Reflections on the activity

- All students commented that professional challenges had the greatest impact on their pre-service year.
- Feedback from students indicated that the diagnostic tool was more successful in supporting students with academic aspects of their work. In future, a more tailored diagnostic tool is required for students' learning needs guided by their feedback.
- Questions about mental health and well-being were included in the tool, however, fewer students engaged with these resources despite the need for more appropriate levels of support that can be offered to students in this area based on their responses. The lack of engagement with this aspect could be related to the lack of perceived importance of this aspect of the diagnostic tool by students on professional programmes.

Impact on Students

While all 34 students engaging with the diagnostic tool completed their pre-service programme (the retention rate for the cohort was 87%), further evidence is required to explicate the impact of the diagnostic on student teachers' retention in longer term. More focus on the professional aspects of this programme within the diagnostic could tell what setting and school culture is having the greatest effect on professional outcome of the students.

Institutional Impact

Institutional impact is currently low as the diagnostic tool was mainly designed and delivered for students completing PG Teacher Education Programmes. However, this pilot and involvement in the PARC cluster has demonstrated that the approach is deliverable and has kept the discussion around the use of diagnostic testing for other professional programmes within the institution.

Next Steps

The institution continues to develop the delivery of the tool for a larger student cohort. This was rolled out in 2022-23 with a focus on gathering feedback from both staff and students to effectively include professional aspects and to gauge the impact beyond the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provider.

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388 Diagnostics to support student success: A case study

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This case study describes an intervention at the University of the Highlands and Islands to support student retention and success at a widening access institution.

A diagnostic tool was used to gauge student ability and confidence in a range of areas such as maths, wellbeing and digital literacy.

The case study describes the local and institutional impact of this intervention, and the further developments that have arisen as a result.

Full paper

Context

The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) is a widening access institution and historically non-continuation rates have been high. Staff perception is that some students are not prepared for higher level study. In particular, because of UHI's tertiary nature and the delivery of NC and HN as well as UG and PG degree level study, the transition can be challenging for students. Whilst retention is an institutional priority, there has historically been a focus on why students leave rather than on understanding the challenges that students face when they start at UHI. The use of a diagnostic tool was proposed as a solution to this issue and would potentially yield data that would help to target support for student transition and persistence.

Description

The tool was trialled in the HNC in Applied Sciences where students struggled to make the transition into higher level study, often with maths and academic writing as their main challenges. Existing practice includes a fortnightly 'skills session' with students to address any areas in which students feel uncertain and the results from the tool would be used to inform the content of these sessions.

The tool was delivered online towards the end of semester 1 in 2021-22, using a question set created by Birmingham City University. This included sections on:

- Studying at University
- Academic writing
- Numeracy

- Digital literacy
- Wellbeing

Students were asked to complete the tool and could opt to receive individual feedback. Eight students completed the diagnostic out of 22, and six of those requested individual feedback. This was in the form of a short report which identified three areas of strength and development for each student. A cohort report was compiled for the programme leader summarising responses and highlighting areas of common strength and challenge.

Reflections on the activity

- All students achieved 100% for the 'numeracy' correctly suggesting the need for different levels of questions depending on the subject area (students in the pilot were studying sciences)
- Whilst the use of JISC Online Surveys made delivery of the tool very straightforward, the analysis of responses had to be undertaken outside of the surveys tool, and much of this was manual. This was manageable for the small numbers included in the pilot, but further rollout would present an unsustainable workload. An automated tool is required for this- and the expertise to build and maintain it.
- Feedback from both the staff and students involved in the pilot has been difficult to obtain. In future, this will be built into the delivery of the tool and accompanying individual and programme reports.
- Questions about mental health were included in the tool. All of the individual responses demonstrated a level of need for mental health support that was really unexpected. Although sources of support were included in students' individual reports, I did reflect whether this was sufficient- that students may not proactively seek out this support. More careful consideration will be given to this area of the tool, and the mechanisms for offering support to students depending on their responses in this section.

Local impact

The programme leader used the results to inform the weekly skills sessions and address the areas of challenge identified. Student attendance at these optional sessions was higher than in previous years. The tool has been utilised with future student cohorts.

Student feedback on the use of the tool and reports was limited. However, we anticipate that students will read and reflect on the feedback given to them in their individual reports and use these to seek out opportunities to improve their skills in areas identified as challenging. As indicated above, the gathering of evaluation data will be built into the next iteration of the tool.

Institutional impact

This pilot has demonstrated that the approach is deliverable and has raised the profile of diagnostic testing. It has provided a useful focus for members of staff interested in the applications of the tool such as pre-entry guidance, additional support for returners to learning, bespoke support for postgraduate students.

As a result of this, the institution has developed a piece of software that automates the delivery of the self-evaluation aspects of the tool to enable it to be used by a larger student cohort. A wide variety of applications has already been identified for this tool including for pre-application support and guidance for applicants to online postgraduate programmes and to inform targeted professional development for academic staff.

References

N/A

Parallel Session 5:4

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Conference Room 1a

Chair Pauline Kneale

46 Connecting conceptual and practical dimensions of employability

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This paper draws on existing literature and research to contribute towards addressing a key challenge and long-time debate regarding the relationship between higher education and employability. This paper expounds a tri-dimensional conceptual framework that captures the opportunities, complexities, and challenges in making connections between higher education and employability. Three dimensions of employability are put forward: outcomes, process, and conceptual approaches. The presenters will discuss the connections and distinctions between the three approaches, contributing to scholarly debates and discourses on what conceptual employability is. Crucially, empirical research and theoretical constructs will be drawn upon to support the categorisation of employability into three distinct, though interrelated dimensions, proposed by the presenter in their co-authored article recognised in 2023 as a top cited paper in the Higher Education Quarterly journal. The presenters will discuss the practical implications of adopting the conceptual framework for research-policy engagement on a major higher education agenda.

Full paper

This conference presentation serves three purposes. First, speaking to the purpose of SRHE, it shares a successful research story that started from a panel presentation at the 2019 SRHE conference in Newport which in itself inspired a collaborative special issue published in Higher Education Quarterly Journal in 2021. The editorial paper, co-authored by the presenters was recognised in 2023 as a top cited article in the journal, demonstrating impact and resonance with a wider audience. Second, since meeting at a workshop organised in 2014 by the SRHE, the presenters demonstrate how SRHE events and conferences facilitate a nurturing environment for established academics and newer researchers to build a strong academic relationship together. It is important to be intentional in our discussion about the value of this nurturing collaboration which is often not discussed but crucially important and perfectly aligned to SRHE's aim and commitment to providing a platform for collaboration and exchange of ideas to advance research and scholarship. The third and central aim of our presentation is to share the conceptual framework we proposed in our editorial paper. The paper proposes a conceptual framing of employability from three interrelated dimensions; outcomes, process, and conceptual approaches. The presentation offers an opportunity as researcher and university leader/policy-maker to articulate how our proposed tri-dimensional framework captures the opportunities, complexities, and challenges in making connections between higher education and employability. Hence, we make a case for linking academic research and policy development, which as noted in the conference call, remains a perennial issue in higher education. Related to the topic of our presentation, we suggest that continuing contestation with academic-policy engagement is underpinned by a lack of clarification as to what conceptual employability is. We aim to contribute to addressing this well-discussed conceptual fog. A key starting point is the limitation of a dominant normative framing of employability from a human capital conceptual approach which is contested when causally measured based on employment outcomes. We propose that a process approach allows institutions to assess the employability development opportunities available for students. Our presentation will

highlight the connection and the distinction between the outcomes, process, and conceptual approaches. We will draw on empirical research and prominent as well as emerging theoretical constructs (Cashian, 2017; Clarke, 2018; Fakunle & Higson, 2021; Harvey, 2001; Suleman, 2018; Tomlinson, and Holmes, 2017) to support the categorisation of employability into the three dimensions proposed in our framework. This paper thus provides a novel analytical lens for assessing and enacting research-policy engagement on a major issue that surrounds the practical integration of employability in the delivery of higher education in a globalised world.

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146 Too complex for policy? Identity work in students' paths through and out of university

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

Fifteen students were followed from 18 months before high-school graduation until three years after graduation to study their considerations concerning choice of study after high school. This paper presents the results from interviews with the fifteen students made ten year after high school graduation. The paper presents their study paths through higher education and into the labour market. While the paths at the surface appears more continuous and less volatile than their choice process following high school, several students also talk about having doubts and about social relations to other students as important for their completion of the study. In the choice of higher-education programme, students emphasised whether the study matched their sense of identity. In the recent interviews, the concerns about family and where to settle affected their choice of career. The paper discusses the implications of this for policy initiatives to make students follow particular study paths.

Full paper

From a policy perspective, higher education is about serving the needs of society, including providing graduates to the labour market. Therefore, there is a policy interest in students completing particular study programmes. This has led to initiatives informing future students to make them interested in and choosing particular lines of study (e.g., STEM programmes). However, students' choice of study programme follows a less linear decision process (Holmegaard, Ulriksen, & Madsen, 2014), and different concerns play a role in the process (Vulperhorst, van der Rijst, & Akkerman, 2020).

This paper presents the results from the second part of a longitudinal study following 15 students over a total of 11½ years. The first part of the study followed the students from 18 months before completing high school until three years after completion (Lykkegaard & Ulriksen, 2019). We found that the students had different choice processes, many of them did not decide on which study to pursue until after high-school graduation, and several changed their minds during the process (Lykkegaard & Ulriksen, 2019).

This second part is a follow-up study where the students were interviewed 10 years after high-school graduation to map their study and career paths retrospectively. The overarching research question of this paper is:

How did the students' study and career paths evolve, and what affected this progression?

Methods

Sixteen students were selected when attending an outreach project at a research-intensive university targeted STEM-oriented high-school students from underserved backgrounds. The students were interviewed 10 times over a 4½ years period. In 2022, fifteen (10 males, 5 females, no one identified as non-binary) students were interviewed using a timeline approach (Adriansen, 2012) about what had happened in the intermediate seven years. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings

Compared to the volatility of the choice processes in the first part, the study paths were continuous. Only four of 15 changed their line of study after having entered, and two of these did so already during the first part of the study. Fellow students and the social life at the study programmes were emphasised as important for their persistence.

However, after graduation from higher education some of the students were considering changing their career paths. Reasons for this were, e.g., an interest in theoretical aspects of the discipline, dissatisfaction with the way the job content was developing, or being unsure whether one would be physically able to remain in the profession. While the informants' paths appeared stable, for some of them there was a sense of uncertainty underneath.

In the first study, the students' choices were linked to whether they found the study programme reflected the way they perceived themselves (ego identity) and to some extent how they found it would affect the way they related to others (personal identity) (Côté & Levine, 2002). In this study, we found that the choices were strongly linked to family situations. This could be a wish to living close to parents after having become parents themselves or because the parents needed help. To some (also male students), prioritising time for family made an academic career unattractive.

Discussion

While the students had appeared uncertain and changing by the end of school, most students had continued at the chosen study programme. Student departures had mainly been during the first year or two, in line with previous research (Ulriksen, Madsen, & Holmegaard, 2015). Still, several students had had more concerns about their choice while studying than the actual path revealed, but had continued, not least due to social relations.

We found that the students' career considerations included thoughts about the job content and employment prospects, but other realms of life played a decisive role as well. Particularly, family concerns affected the informants' reflections and decision. This was the case for both genders. It appears, that the students' decisions build on whether they can see themselves in the life they pursue (ego and personal identity), rather than going for status (social identity) (Côté & Levine, 2002). Thus, just like Akkerman and Bakker (2019) found choice of higher education to be a balance of multiple interests in multiple contexts, career decisions involve balancing different realms of life against each other.

Education and career policies need to consider these complexities. Students' choice of study is not simply a matter of nurturing an interest in a discipline or pursuing status. Neither are career decisions. This may also have implications for the way employability is perceived and addressed in policy and in conversations with present and future students (Quinlan & Renninger, 2022).

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159 International experience – not a must have in the labour market: Why? Where? And for whom?

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

There is a mixed evidence regarding job related assets of European student mobility. We use employers and employees' perspective (N = 26) from a study on soft and hard skills in the graduate labour markets in Germany. The Q-Methodology carried out as part of narrative interviews show relatively low relevance of an international stay for career outcomes in comparison to other skills. The participants underlined that a stay abroad per se is not crucial; it must be made explicit which skills you learn during an international experience to show why it is an asset. Although the study showed that an international stay is not necessarily a career booster, some differences in ratings occurred. This result shows that some aspects such as different study level, type of mobility, country of origin or country of the job, may lead to different labour markets outcomes of an international stay.

Full paper

The politics will see as many as possible students mobile (e. g. Bologna process). There is a mixed evidence regarding job related assets of European student mobility (Van Mol et al., 2020). Firstly, most studies on this topic are based on rather small samples. Secondly, some studies use self-reporting from the graduates on the importance of a stay abroad. Thirdly, it is not clear if indeed a stay abroad and not other unobserved characteristics are cause for better career prospects (Bryła, 2015; Di Pietro, 2019). Besides, scientific literature shows that a stay abroad is not necessarily seen as a must have in the labour market (King et al., 2010; Petzold, 2017). However, studies considering the employers' perspective cover the topic only in few items (but see Petzold, 2017). In this point the study presented steps in. Its main aspect was the relevance of soft and hard skills required in the labour market for academics in Germany.

For data collection, we used problem-centred interviews (Witzel and Reiter, 2012) with an integrated Q-sort as a part of Q-Methodology (Brown, 1980). The fieldwork took place between November 2019 and July 2020. The sample consisted of 12 employers and 14 employees from different disciplines. The employees' work experience after their master's degree ranged from one to ten years. The group defined as 'employers' had personal responsibility and/or were responsible for the selection of new employees. The participants were asked to rank 43 elements, soft and hard skills, according to their relevance for the labour market on a scale reaching from (+4) indispensable to (-4) less relevant. One of the elements was defined as "International Experience". Thus, all elements were evaluated globally, simultaneously with the relevance of the other characteristics. In this way, it was possible to determine which elements were the most relevant and not only relevant for the graduate labour market, as is often done using scales, where a single item is rated.

The findings show three areas of the labour market with different skill requirements. Whereas the first area 'The world of rules' applies rather to the professions and academia, the two other areas 'The middle field' and 'The people-oriented and critical market' can be found throughout the labour market. The disciplinary affiliation does not play a role (more details in Kmiotek-Meier et al., forthcoming). In all three areas the element "International Experience" was ranked relatively low: in 'The middle field' as the least relevant out of 43 elements, in 'The world of rules' on the 39th rank, and 36th in 'The people-oriented and critical market'. Preliminary findings from an accompanying survey show the same picture: international experience is not as relevant as the other skills.

The participants underlined that an international experience per se is not crucial, but "what you do out of it" may be (Interviewee 2). Thus, it may be helpful in a recruiting process when special skills are sought after, e.g. language skills or cultural sensibility. Interestingly, skills such as "Willingness to learn", "Being considerate of the views and feelings of others and responding appropriately", "Taking initiative", "Openness to new ideas" were ranked relatively high in all three areas. Such skills may be linked to an international experience. The participants underlined that it must be made explicit which skills you learn during an international experience to show why it is an asset.

Generally, the study showed that an international stay is not necessarily equal to a career booster. Despite the fact that an international experience was generally ranked low, there were some participant ranking it very high. This result shows that different types of jobs asks for different skills. Other potential aspects such as different study level (Bachelor / Master), type of mobility (credit / degree) or country of origin or country of the job, may lead to different labour markets outcomes of an international stay. Thus, more nuances in this research branch are needed.

While this study captured a (partly) perspective from German employers and employees', there are also other perspectives and indicators used to research the influence of a stay abroad on future career of graduates (e.g. time before the graduation and the first job, position, income). More systematic approach regarding the outcomes of a stay abroad would help to see the bigger picture from the fragmented findings.

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Parallel Session 5:5

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Conference Room 1c

Chair Colin McCaig

145 Narratives of higher education and the university in UK general election manifestos: 1945 to 2019

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

In the UK since 1945 there have been 21 general elections, producing a corpus of 63 manifesto texts written by Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. These 21 elections present a corpus of 63 texts making up 651,696 words for analysis. Here we draw upon diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analysis and narrative policy frameworks to analyse how political priorities for universities and higher education have changed. Diachronic discourse analysis is used to track change over 74 years and the narrative policy frameworks are employed to analyse context, the actors involved and how parties position universities and higher education within their visions for governing.

The findings of this paper and the broader project will produce a grounded theory to understand political priorities for higher education, which will advance understanding of policy and potentially influence future manifestos.

Full paper

General election manifestos are the discursive culmination of the key political issues of the day through the prism of political ideology, broader public and media discourse and narratives to convince the electorate of worthiness for office. These texts are not produced in ideological silos but draw on the discourse and challenges of their time of writing. Manifesto texts are being analysed as data in a wide range of contexts and disciplines. For example, industrial relations (Lamare and Budd, 2022), empirical analysis of perceived ideological position (Gabel and Hix, 2002; Pelizzo, 2003) and political economy of home ownership (Kohl, 2021).

This research paper reports on a work in progress empirical study of UK political party manifestos from 1945 to 2019, which asks how references to higher education and universities in UK political manifesto documents have changed over the period. The form and function of the political manifesto affords us the opportunity to analyse the political economy of higher education (Durazzi, 2019). Drawing upon this large corpus of texts shows us how, over time, prospective governing administrations describe the role of universities and how much space they give to them in a manifesto document relative to other priorities such as health and schools.

The work builds on Souto-Otero's (2011) finding that between 1979 and 2010 the left and right of the political spectrum saw a convergence of perspectives on higher education with some differences in access, finance and management but broadly converging in perspective on neoliberal capitalism and marketization (Pearce, 2004).

In order to trace the changes in political discourse on UK higher education we are adopting aspects of diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analysis and narrative policy frameworks. Diachronic corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington, 2010; Candarli and Jones, 2022) tracks discourse over a period of time (diachronic) using computational text analysis (corpus linguistics) (Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008) under the broader umbrella of discourse analysis (Foucault, 1971; Branco Sousa and Magalhaes, 2013; Gee, 2015).

We draw together the broad methodological theories of discourse (Mills, 2004) and narrative (Roe, 1994; Caine, Clandinin and Lessard, 2022) over time (diachronic) using computational text analysis (Mahlberg, 2014; Gillings, Mautner and Baker, 2023).

We draw together the innate objectivity and positivism of computational analysis alongside the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) which makes the case for texts to be used in empirical studies in contrast to poststructural literary theory (Jones and McBeth, 2010). Schlauffer et al (2022) describe NPF as a relatively new approach which is gaining traction across many disciplines with much experimentation and integration with other theories and methodologies to understand policy processes. Here we show how such flexibility and integration can provide a way of analysing

political manifesto documents discourse and narratives over time in an empirical manner which is both rigorous and open to interpretation.

Initial findings indicate:

- Peaks in use of keywords 'higher education' and 'university/universities' in 1966, 1987, 2001 and 2010 (Chart 1).
- The Labour Party uses the keyword 'higher education' more often than other parties (Chart 2).
- Broadly parties talk of universities equally as often (Chart 3).
- References to higher education and universities can be most often found in sections on Education, followed by dedicated headings of Higher Education. Frequency of mentions of universities and higher education following Education and Higher Education are: Science and Innovation, Economy, Introduction or Conclusion, Further and Higher Education, Immigration and Regional and National Devolution (Table 1).
- From 1945 onwards the scope and focus of the role of universities has broadened significantly from education and science and innovation to economic growth, immigration and lifelong learning. This progressively broadens out to a myriad of perceived roles, responsibilities and influences on society.

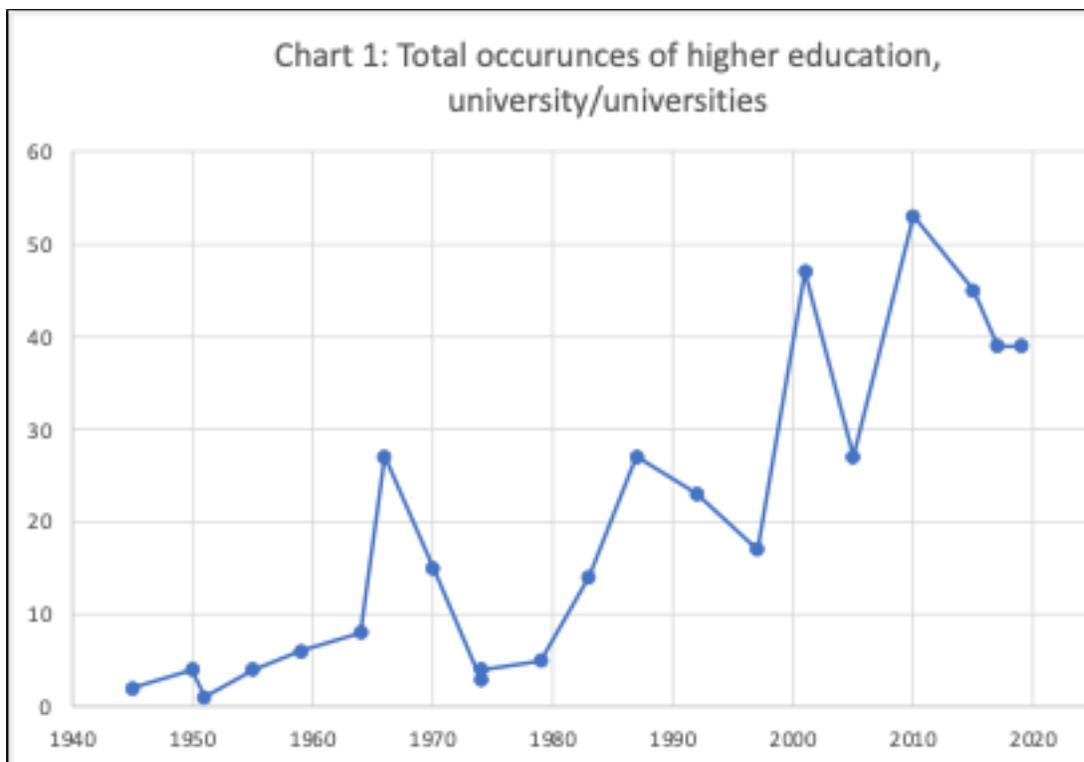


Chart 2: Uses of 'higher education' across the sub corpus of parties

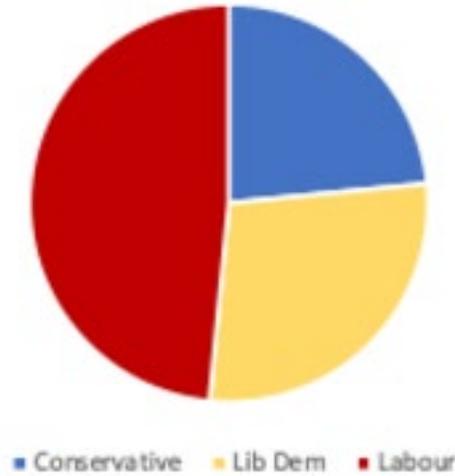
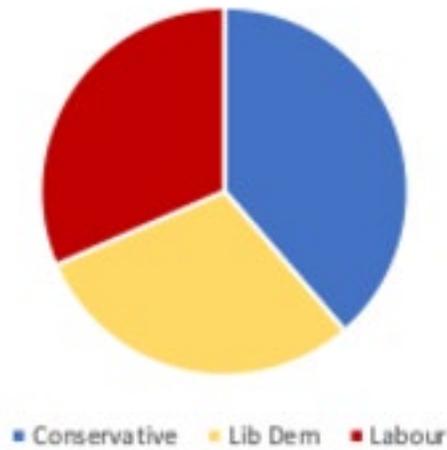


Chart 3: Uses of 'university*' across the sub corpus of parties



Manifesto section headers	Total
Education	56
Higher Education	21
Science and innovation	18
Economy	17
introduction or conclusion	11
Further and Higher Education	10
Immigration	10
Regional and national devolution	8
Youth	7
Lifelong learning	6
Health	5
Public services	5
Failure of present government	2
European Union	2
Extremism	2
electoral reform	2
equality	2
The Open University	1
Adult education	1
Further Education	1
Apprenticeships	1

These initial findings are in line with the work of others who have highlighted the change in political economy of higher education and the role of the university (Wilensky, 2002; Schulze-Cleven et al., 2017; Matthews, 2022). The findings presented here and in the broader work of this project enhance understanding of how UK political parties position universities and higher education within their visions for the future and their policies for delivering them, demonstrating increasing expectations for their scope and impact on society.

Further work in the project will draw further on NPF to analyse manifesto narratives around setting, characters, plot and moral (Shanahan, Jones and McBeth, 2018).

This work also provides a platform for further research, which could drawing upon international comparisons of discourse and narrative in political manifesto texts using datasets such as The Manifesto Corpus (Merz, Regel and Lewandowski, 2016).

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111 “You have to play the game”. Discomfort and compromise in third sector organisations' strategic decision making to influence widening participation policy.

Ruth Squire

Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

In a climate of 'evidence-based policy' in education, researchers have debated at length the moral and practical dilemmas of engaging with education policy. However, academic researchers are not the only 'experts' called upon in the policy process and, in the field of widening participation in the UK, third sector organisations are increasingly regular contributors to public and private policy discussions. Publicly, many of these organisations conform to dominant narratives about the policy problem, its solutions and how we know 'what works?' but, in less public fora, they acknowledge a discomfort and disconnect between the positive image of TSOs as experts and moral authorities and the challenges actually faced by charities in pursuing their social missions. Based on interviews with those working in charities and policy experts, this paper explores what it means to 'play the game' as an organisation trying to influence widening participation policy.

Full paper

Widening participation (WP), as the process of broadening higher education participation to under-represented groups, is a global concern for expanding economies and has been part of UK Higher Education policy and practice for several decades. The modern establishment of WP as a policy concern has its origins in the 1997 Dearing Report, which highlighted the roles of government and universities in challenging issues of under-representation within HE. The report, and the policies that followed, were intended to align with the newly-elected New Labour government's turn towards a more technocratic era of policymaking (Nutley et al., 2019) where 'evidence' would take the ideology out of decision-making. This focus on evidence and the expertise behind it has had a lasting impact on widening participation, including who is considered a valid participation in WP policymaking.

Expertise is a core element of policy (Colebatch, 2002) and, in education policy contexts, where the 'what works' focus dominates, there have been a proliferation of 'ideas' organisations such as think tanks and 'public policy labs', as well as demand for organisations and individuals who can act as policy 'experts' (Ball & Exley, 2010). The 'third sector' particularly has been seen as a strong site for the generation of policy ideas due to its public image as 'non-political or pre-political' (Rose, 1999:188) and in some ways 'better' than public or private sector alternatives, whether ethically or in terms of structures that make it more effective at tackling social issues (Macmillan, 2015). Within widening participation, there has been a proliferation of organisations of this type since 1997 (Squire, 2022). Most focus on delivery of WP activity, but there is also an established practice of acting as 'ideas organisations' or experts in WP policy. The largest organisation of this type, the Sutton Trust, has published research that is frequently cited as the basis for policy action, and acts as Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on social mobility. For many of these organisations, being part of the policy space is a core part of their mission and seen as essential to their organisational survival.

Who is accepted as an 'expert' within policy is significantly shaped by networks, relationships and values (Stevens, 2021) and it is common for individuals and organisations to engage in 'credibility work' (Geiger, 2021) to advance their positions. This credibility work can involve multiple and complex personal tensions and negotiation of values. Some researchers have noted a tendency to 'self-censor' amongst chosen 'experts' (Stevens, 2021), as they negotiate an understanding that policymaking 'tends to favour the politically feasible over the technically possible' (Monaghan et. al. 2018: 436). How individuals and organisations develop their credibility and navigate these tensions is an important factor in understanding how expertise is used within policy but has not been explored within widening participation and only to a limited extent within third sector contexts.

This paper draws on 19 interviews with those working within TSOs and a wider group of 'policy experts', undertaken as part of my PhD thesis, to explore how they are negotiating the discomfort of, in their words, 'playing to the premise' in policy work. Interviewees reflected a range of third sector organisations in terms of size and mission focus, and a range of positions of authority, including civil servants, CEOs, Trustees and Operational staff. This research was based in an interpretive approach to policy analysis, combining 'expert' interviews (Bogner, Littig & Menz, 2009) with documentary analysis to explore the 'words and reasonings of communities or networks of policy actors' (Gale, 2007: 153).

These interviews revealed less public concerns about dominant narratives in widening participation, a preoccupation with quantitative 'evidence' under the 'what works' banner, a lack of diversity in the sector, and the dominance of a few voices on policy. They also revealed a focus on relationships in their policy work and highlighted the importance of networks where policy conversations take place, often outside formal structures of government engagement with 'experts'. There were varying levels of comfort for interviewees with the compromises that they felt policy work entailed and varying levels of confidence in its effectiveness in supporting their social mission. Some were seeking alternative routes to influence, particularly in response to a government that is 'not listening'. Their reflections on policy influence offer an interesting exploration of what 'playing the game' of policy can mean at an individual and sector level and what it means to be a credible policy expert. They offer an insight into higher education policy spaces and the potential for expertise to influence policy.

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177 Widening Access to University in England: Understanding Access Agreements

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

This paper explores the impact of university access agreements on widening access and success in Higher Education. The policy which represents a substantial cost to institutions saw circa 25% of additional fee income allocated to access activities and financial support for students. This was regulated by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), which was able to impose penalties where there was non-compliance. This paper directly compares how accountable universities are to their access agreements, encompassing both their targets and performance. Through matching administrative data on students in England to their access plans and looking at the key outcomes for those from underrepresented backgrounds, such as completion, good honours and graduate employment. A second branch of this research focuses on the contents of the agreements to understand institution behaviour and responses to policy changes. We can comment on whether this represents an effective and desirable policy to improve HE access.

Full paper

This paper analyses access agreements from all universities in England since 2004. By combining key metrics and claims from the agreements with administrative data on all students who attended English universities in the period, we can comment on how accountable universities are to their Access Agreements and whether they have been an effective tool to not only increase access to higher education (HE) in England, but also to increase the success of widening participation students at university

Previously, higher education was reserved for those of higher socio-economic status yet changing policy has meant a shift towards encouraging students from underrepresented groups to pursue HE. In 2018/19, students from areas of low progression to HE made up 12% of undergraduates, however, these students are more likely to not progress, achieve good honours, or get a graduate level job. In response, universities are required to submit plans on how they intend to close these gaps. This is through Access Agreements (now Access and Participation Plans) which outline how they will spend fee income on outreach and other activities. In 2019/20, 25% of additional fee income (£828.1million), was allocated to widening access, representing a substantial cost to universities.

This project's approach is comprehensive, focusing both on the behaviour of institutions as well as on the impact on student outcomes. We firstly test whether Access Agreements represent a competitive factor and investigate the impact of access agreements on student outcomes, and to what extent they contributed to the closing of gaps. By analysing how universities allocate additional fee income, we conduct an evaluation of whether access plans constituted an effective and desirable public policy.

Moreover, we will look at the heterogeneous impacts on different widening participation (WP) groups, which cover a number of characteristics, not only students from areas of low progression to HE but additionally and not exhaustive: mature students, care leavers and estranged students. Our approach will allow us to evaluate the impact of Access Agreements across different target groups, thus enriching previous work in this area, and contributing to the current policy debates around access and funding in HE.

Following the Higher Education Act 2004, universities would be allowed to set their own tuition fees up to a maximum of £3000, the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was created with the aim of increasing the representation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups in HE. In response to concerns that higher fees would further discourage disadvantaged groups from accessing HE. Thus, institutions were required to submit 'Access Agreements' which outlined how they were to spend additional fee income on promoting fair access through support and other activities. Key changes have come into effect since 2004, notably a further increase in the tuition fee cap to £9000 for the 2012/13 academic year and the dissolution of OFFA in 2018 and being replaced by the Office for Students (OfS). Throughout this time period, universities have been required to submit plans to OFFA detailing the actions they would take to ensure equal access and success in HE for all. OfS is now responsible for enforcing the contents of the access agreements.

The topic of access agreements has received attention in the Education Policy literature, see Evans et. al (2017), McCaig (2015) and McCaig (2016). McCaig and Adnett (2009) are the closest in theme to this project. They study changes in 2006 to 2008 access agreements, comparing broadly pre-92 and post-92 institutions commitments and propose that agreements are used mostly as a marketing tool thus, perpetuating differences between these types of institutions, rather than an industry wide shift in access, as intended.

More broadly, a wealth of literature investigates the process of access to higher education, primarily looking at interventions that aims to ameliorate any barriers, such as financial constraints, which might prevent students from disadvantaged backgrounds from progressing onto higher education (See Dynarski (2003), French and Oreopoulos (2017) as examples). In the UK context, Dearden et al. (2014) and Wyness (2016) focus on bursaries, looking at the socio-economic characteristics of recipients in addition to estimating effectiveness. Using data from a selected number of universities, they find that the system is quite inequitable, yet appears to be effective in increasing the number of students enrolled from low-income backgrounds.

The paper explores two areas, firstly focusing on institution behaviour by using text analysis tools to understand the contents of Access Agreements. Secondly, the impact is assessed of the activities outlined in the Access Agreements by linking with administrative data of students during this time.

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Parallel Session 5:6

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 145

Chair Richard Davies

361 Education research in UK higher education: connected research, policy and practice?

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

In May 2023, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) released a major report based on a survey of 1,623 education researchers working in higher education across the UK. This was the largest survey of its kind and presents a comprehensive and wide-ranging picture of education research and researchers. A prominent theme was the complex and changing relationship between research, policy and practice. In this paper we examine what the BERA survey reveals about the research-policy-practice nexus in education. We present original analyses, including survey statistics, multivariate quantitative analysis and thematic analysis of the extensive survey data. Our results explore the nature of education research and how specialisms within the field foster and inhibit knowledge exchange; education research as a contested space for organisations rooted variously in higher education, policy and practice; and the purposes, values and topics pursued by education researchers and their connection to policy and practice.

Full paper

In May 2023, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) released a major report based on a survey of 1,623 education researchers working in higher education across the UK (Morris et al., 2023). Representing about 20 percent of all education researchers in UK higher education, this was the largest survey of its kind and presents a comprehensive picture of education research and researchers. In this paper we examine what the BERA survey reveals about the research-policy-practice nexus in education. The accompanying conference presentation presents further original results drawing on survey statistics, multivariate quantitative analysis and thematic analysis of the extensive survey data.

The nature of education research

Education researchers are in many ways an 'atypical' HE workforce. More than 80 percent of education researchers come to academia as a second career – many from the school sector or teaching roles outside of higher education, and with about 30 percent coming from other industries, such as healthcare, engineering or charities. Education research has very few younger researchers, with just 3 percent of researchers in their 20s. To a large extent, academic education research is an assemblage of teachers-turned researchers and researchers coming from other disciplines. This is reflected in the fact that only 16 percent had education as the focus of their undergraduate degree and over 40 percent did not have education as the subject area of their highest qualification.

At its best, this second career, second discipline, workforce is a melting pot: forging powerful connections with schools and society, creating fertile ground for interdisciplinary research, and bringing vast external expertise into the academy. Education often proves an ideal space to blend pure and applied research and produce strong connections with policy and practice. An eclectic range of research methods are in use, suggesting a breadth of methodological expertise and knowledge. Half of survey respondents, however, rated their level of formal training in research design and methods as 'limited or none' or 'basic'. There is also evidence that longstanding concerns about divides between 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' research remain. Rather than spreading and combining its diverse expertise, some

education researchers are working in disciplinary, methodological and ideological pockets. There are myriad routes into education research, yet few uniting experiences to sustain common understanding and coherence.

Supporting education research

Education research struggles to maintain strong support from higher education and the school sector. Schools – tackling staff recruitment crises, funding shortfalls and many other pressing challenges – cannot provide reliable support. Moreover, the role of higher education in professional education is now highly variable across the UK. In higher education, education researchers experience the challenges of insecure work, casualisation and crushing workloads that will be familiar to many working within the sector. The education research funding environment is widely perceived to be austere and inequitable (only 9.2 percent of respondents thought that the process of allocating external research funding was fair). This can inflame the methodological divides touched on above. One survey respondent bemoaned how “larger-scale, quantitative studies are favoured over smaller-scale and qualitative research designs by funding bodies” while another, as if in response, criticised researchers who are “irrationally averse to evidence-based policy or anything to do with the quantitative measurement of educational outcomes.” Overall, education research receives relatively low status in academia, partly on account of its applied focus; yet it is often criticised by the more practically-minded for being ‘too theoretical and detached from reality’. Perhaps one indicator of this uncomfortable fit is that only 44 percent of education researchers in the survey were entered in REF2021 (and only 13 percent agree that the REF is a valid measure of the quality of education research).

Purposes, values and research topics

Education researchers interests are firmly rooted in deeply held values relating to learning, social justice and knowledge. The majority of respondents thought that education research should have some practical value, and many were motivated by professional and personal circumstances, often linked to previous and current work roles. There was an overwhelming sense that education research speaks to pressing issues of social and technological change and makes a real difference to children, young people and society. The situation described in the paper, however, suggests that many education researchers find themselves working in a tricky space, without the powerful institutional supports and autonomy which maintain other disciplines. Where researchers can secure the funding, and carve out the space, education research is social research at its best: innovative, meaningful and impactful. At the moment, this is not consistently achieved. It is a vision of what might be.

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102 All that glitters is not gold: The depoliticization of social inequality in European education policy on ‘microcredentials’

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

In a time of crises threatening the neoliberal hegemony, it is important to scrutinize in what ways tensions between intensifying demands for sustainability and social inclusion on the one hand, and objectives adhering to the competitive order on the other, are managed within education policy. In this presentation, we discuss results from a critical discourse analysis of a recent EU council recommendation on ‘microcredentials’ – credits for short courses primarily oriented towards skills-development. We demonstrate how the policy appropriates and recontextualizes discourses of social inclusion to advance a market-oriented agenda. The concept ‘bling’ is used as an explanatory metaphor for this discursive depoliticization, making *invisible* an underlying neoliberal rationality and *hypervisible* an apolitical and consensus-oriented surface. This prevents disagreements over aspects of education that are fundamentally political and paves the way for an educational market that utilizes microcredentials as tokens of exchange-value to further subjugate institutions and students to capital interests.

Full paper

Introduction

The neoliberal rationality and its gradual economization of society has had a large impact on higher education (HE) on a global scale, and resulted in heightened competition, an increased focus on excellence and efficiency, as well as a stronger emphasis on employability and skills in the curriculum. While, in the present conjuncture, economic, ecological, political and social emergencies may have created a ‘crisis of hegemony’ for neoliberalism (Fraser 2019), at the same time, its ability to adapt and adjust to competing ideologies has allowed it to overcome serious global challenges for decades, despite many declarations of its death. It is thus important to observe in what ways potential tensions between calls for sustainability and social inclusion on the one hand, and objectives adhering to the competitive order on the other, are managed within education policy. With this study we aim to highlight the importance for critical scholars of paying particular attention to the ‘subtleties of neoliberal reasoning’ (Plehwé, Slobodian, & Mirowski, 2020, p. 7) when studying the governance of HE. The close scrutiny and exposure of such reasoning is crucial for enabling critical discussion around its material consequences.

Research questions

We will present results from an analysis of a recent (2022) EU council recommendation on ‘microcredentials’ – credits for short courses primarily oriented towards the attainment of skills. Previous research has demonstrated a linkage between microcredentials and neoliberal visions (Pollard & Vincent, 2022; Ralston, 2021; Reynoldson, 2022; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021, 2022). At the same time, the analyzed policy text is embedded within an EU policy landscape which – in contrast to the openly competition-focused agenda of the early 2000s – puts a strong emphasis on social goals and social inclusion (Laalo, Kinnari, & Silvennoinen, 2019; Zeitlin & Vanhercke, 2018), objectives that may potentially clash with agendas promoting economic growth. Against this background, our research questions were:

- How does the EU council’s recommendation on microcredentials construct the role of education in relation to economic and social objectives?
- What tensions and contradictions can be identified in such constructions?

- How are these tensions and contradictions discursively managed?

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to analyze the Council recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (Council of the European Union, 2022), following the methodology suggested by Fairclough (2010). Guided by Phelan's (2007) analytical distinction between ideologically 'transparent' and ideologically 'euphemized' neoliberal discourses, particular attention was paid to segments of the text where expressions distinguished as promoting a progressive, social agenda occurred within an economically informed discourse.

Results

Through our analysis, we demonstrate that the policy text illustrates both transparent and euphemized neoliberal discourses. We identify a set of discursive techniques used to depoliticize issues of social inequality and protect a neoliberal agenda from being challenged. By appropriating a social justice vocabulary, by embedding ambiguous 'trans-ideological' (Fox, 2010) concepts in a context of self-improvement and responsabilization, and by drawing from a discourse of saviorism, market objectives can be legitimized, potential contestation over the commodification of the oppressed can be obscured, and inequality in relation to education possibilities and life trajectories can be preserved. The techniques allow for the construction of microcredentials as a means for addressing social injustice and enabling a fairer society at the same time as they unify these objectives with a discourse reproducing a neoliberal subjectivity.

Discussion

We draw on political theorists such as Gramsci (1971) and Mouffe (2009) in order to explain the implications of the depoliticization of social inequalities that we have identified in this policy. Using the concept of 'bling' (Thompson 2009) as a metaphor for this depoliticization, we conclude that the expressions used in the operationalization of the identified techniques have the capacity to "bling" the argumentation for microcredentials – making *invisible* an underlying neoliberal rationality and *hypervisible* an apolitical and consensus-oriented surface, thereby preventing disagreements over aspects of education that are fundamentally political. This strategy is particularly troublesome as the policy paves the way for an educational market that utilizes microcredentials as tokens of exchange-value to further subjugate institutions and students to capital interests. We argue, thus, that the policy text represents an attempt, in the face of the present crises, to both discursively and materially protect, sustain, and reinforce a "common sense" (Gramsci 1971) which is conducive to neoliberal objectives for HE.

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282 Opportunity pluralism, widening participation and the implications of higher education regulatory environment.

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Education is a positional good, and higher education is an increasingly significant positional good. Not only is a higher education qualification a gateway to 'graduate jobs' but also a necessary path to many traditionally non-graduate occupations. This paper argues that UK higher education regulations are decreasing rather than improving the opportunities for disadvantage young people. Core to the argument is Fishkin's modelling of the ways society

constructs its opportunity structure and the need for 'opportunity pluralism'. Fishkin identifies a range of social bottlenecks, moments, tests or requirements which provide gates into jobs and other opportunities for which passing through that gate is an imposed rather than necessary precondition. For Fishkin, in general, liberal democratic state ought to reduce such bottlenecks, diversify the ways in which people conceive of the flourishing life, and provide a variety of pathways by which individuals can pursue their conception of the flourishing life.

Full paper

In this paper, I argue that changes and proposed changes in higher education regulations decrease rather than improve the opportunities for disadvantage young people. Here, I use the situation in England as a case study of what is a wider global shift in reducing opportunity through the (mis)using of a discourse of meritocracy. Core to the argument is Fishkin's (2014) modelling of the ways society constructs its opportunity structure and the need for 'opportunity pluralism'. Fishkin identifies a range of social bottlenecks, moments, tests or requirements which provide gates into jobs and other opportunities for which passing through that gate is not necessary. For Fishkin, whilst there may be advantages of such institutional 'bottlenecks', in general liberal democratic state ought to reduce such bottlenecks, diversify the ways in which people conceive of the flourishing life, and provide a variety of pathways by which individuals can pursue their conception of the flourishing life.

Education is such an institutional bottleneck. Success in a range of national tests provide the standard entry route into high education, which themselves provide the gateway into high paid, higher status jobs that bring with them a range of other presumed valuable opportunities. For Fishkin, this bottleneck gives rise to three negative outcomes. Firstly, it solidifies a specific distinct conception of the flourishing life; the importance of educational success becomes so psychologically intense for children, young people and their families that questioning of the goods being dangled as positive rewards does not occur. In fact, questioning these goods is seen as an aspiration of failure. Secondly, such bottlenecks are competitive and selective; some people (children) fail and as a result their life chances are significantly reduced. As well as these individual implications, there are also broader social implications; namely individuals who do not succeed are likely to contribute less to society and require increased costs throughout their lives. Thirdly, the bottleneck bakes in distinctive class and other social group identifiers; the distribution of success repeats in one generation the distribution of previous generations. This does not mean that distributions cannot be changed but that it requires significant resources, time and, in terms of education, is probably dependent on other non-educational factors. These issues are ethically and politically problematic. They are ethically problematic in that they reduce opportunity and create unnecessary costs; they are politically problematic in that they lead to reduced investment in democracy and the valuing of liberal states.

States, including England, have sought to address the issues of this educational bottleneck in a range of ways. In higher education, this has tended to fall under the heading of 'widening participation' and we can characterise the effort into two approaches. The first is maintaining the bottleneck but increasing the diversity (and perhaps number) of people who pass through it, for example, higher education provider (HEP) staff working in schools to raise the aspirations of underrepresented groups, supporting transition into higher education of those groups. This maintains the opportunity structure but seeks to improve 'equality of opportunity' for all those who would benefit from higher education. Fishkin raises several issues with this type of approach, both for underrepresented groups and for young people in general. The second approach seeks to provide alternative (non-traditional) routes into higher education, e.g. higher apprenticeships, foundation programmes, which partially addresses Fishkin's broader critique, but only partly. Higher education, as a broader tool of social order, has limits on what it can do to overcome the limitations of the social order. But nevertheless, offering different routes in and through higher education would seem a suitable first attempt to reduce its negative impact on people.

However, this second approach is under significant regulatory attack, where there are active negative consequences for HEPs seeking to provide this wider access into higher education courses. In this paper, I will first review Fishkin's argument and set out, in an English context, the difficulties that HEPs face in contributing to opportunity pluralism and the harm this causes. In the second half of the paper, I sketch out a more positive view of the possibilities and the regulatory environment that might enable such possibilities to be realised. As will become clear, higher education is only one element of a more extensive set of changes required to bring about a more equal, pluralistic society. The focus here is on reducing the harm that HEPs do by their very existence and beginning to address the sectors moral obligations.

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Parallel Session 5:7

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 122

Chair Dina Belluigi

381 The challenges of academic freedom of expression in the Scandinavian universities – and how they are handled

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Academic autonomy- and freedom of expression is central for democracy as well as scientific progress. This principle is under threat due to a range of developments; managerial governance, external funding and commercialization of research, populist movements, woke, and research collaboration with autocratic regimes. This paper is based on an empirical investigation of recent cases and public debates related to the academic freedom of expression in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. It provides an overview of how these are handled by the central authorities and institutions to safeguard academic autonomy and freedom of expression, in legislation, funding, organization, governance and management.

Full paper

In international comparison, the Nordic university and research system has been characterized by distinct public funding, and part of a welfare state system where the state has long functioned as a guarantor and protector of academic autonomy. In the wake of developments such as the New Public Management trend, a greater degree of institutional exemption in addition to extensive growth, differentiation and devaluation of the academic profession, academic autonomy has come under more pressure. However, the Scandinavian countries first and foremost have been characterized by a large degree of trust and consensus, where higher education and universities are seen as important democracy-building institutions. Against this background, it is interesting that academic freedom of expression is also being challenged in this region.

This empirical study was originally presented as a part of the Norwegian report Freedom of expression under pressure? Academic freedom and freedom of expression in a time of crisis.

The sample of empirical cases was the result of a search for media debates and discussions concerning academic freedom of speech in the three Scandinavian countries from 2015-21. The aim was to get an overview of issues characteristic of the current climate for academic freedom of expression in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. When using news articles as data there is always a risk of sample and selection bias, and as a quality precaution the final sample was discussed internally among the five authors of the initial report. The Swedish and Danish samples were in addition presented for academics from Sweden and Denmark with special competence on higher education and education policy.

Denmark: The cultural struggle

In Denmark, the challenges to academic freedom of expression can be understood in the light of an extreme polarization between right and left in politics throughout the 2000s, characterized as the cultural struggle, or the value struggle. Academia is and has been an important arena in the cultural struggle. The right has criticized the entire field of research and individuals for being unscientific and political. However there are two major scandals related to commercial interests and commissioned research, the so-called beef-report and the muck-case[1], which really put academic freedom and academic rights on the agenda in Denmark the last few years.

Sweden: Selv-sensorship?

The dialogue between academia and Swedish society is according to Heuman, Sandström and Widmalm (2020) threatened of market management and politicization and of 'nervous self-censorship' and fragmentation. We do find several examples of conflicts between students and lectures related to race and gender in our material.

Norway: A more peaceful climate?

A recent Norwegian study reveals that immigration and integration researchers, gender researchers and the climate scientists are the ones who limit themselves the most in their research dissemination. There are both fear of a general tabloid media logic, incitement and threats, career considerations and that the topic is political controversial behind these limitations (Mangset et al., 2021).

Research on the commercialization of natural resources has been exposed to critic from companies as well as private persons and communities dependent on this income. One example is The Norwegian Institute for Natural Research (NINA), which has been unpopular for years in parts of the salmon industry because of research on the unfortunate effects of salmon lice and escaped farmed salmon on Norwegian wild salmon. Evidence that has set limitations for growth in farming along the coast (Myklebust, 2019).

Even though there have been public discussions related to topics such as identity politics, decolonization of academia, no-platforming and safe-spaces, in general such topics have not dominated the Norwegian debate concerning academic freedom of speech as seem to be the case in Sweden.

Concluding remark:

The Nordic universities, like the trends in the rest of Europe, are thus also characterized by turbulent times in terms of the autonomy of academic staff in relation to their public role. How has this pressure been handled by the universities? Taken together, we find that political, organizational, legal and financial measures have been proposed and implemented in the wake of events and debates surrounding academic autonomy and freedom of expression.

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314 Re-inventing research-based teaching in a time of performance governance: Examining the premises for linking research and teaching in Danish higher education since the 1990s

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Over the last three decades, a concern with invigorating the links between research and teaching has re-emerged in scholarly and political debates about the university. This happened during a period when policies of higher education were characterized by new modes of governing by measuring performance. This paper explores how policies, research and practices concerned with linking research and teaching have been affected by this introduction of performance governance policies in Danish higher education.

Examining the *problematizations* in discourses and practices on linking research and teaching in Danish higher education, the paper shows how concerns with linking research and teaching since the 1990s in various ways have been affected by policies of performance governance. It calls for a broader approach to the issues of linking research and teaching that takes such policy contexts into account and discuss their implications.

Full paper

Linking research and teaching is often described as a key principle of the modern university. Over the last three decades, a concern with invigorating these linkages has re-emerged in scholarly and political debates, often referring to German scientist Wilhelm von Humboldt's famous principles for the Berlin university (cf. Jenkins & Healy 2019 [2011], Dohn & Dolin 2015:43). What such linking involves, or should involve, has fuelled debates over definitions of scholarship (Boyer 1990), how to organize the university (Barnett 2005, Jenkins & Healy 2005), and teaching and learning (Brew 2003, Fung 2017:39ff, Healy 2005, Healy & Jenkins 2009, Hattie & Marsh 1996, Weller 2019:101ff).

Interestingly, the preoccupation with linking research and teaching in higher education has flourished during a period when higher education policies have focused on organizing research, teaching and learning around researchers and students' performance on specific measures (Brew 2003:4, Colbeck, C.L. 1998, cf. Espeland & Sauder 2007, Power 1999, Wright 2014). In Danish higher education, this change in governance structures is particularly pronounced, as university governance since the 1960s has been characterised by progressive ideals stressing democratic forms of governance and independence in research and education (Nielsen 2015, cf. Pedersen 1987, cf. Ryberg et al. 2022).

The aim of this paper is to explore how concerns with linking research and teaching have been conditioned by the ambitions and effects of performance governance policies in Danish higher education since the 1990s. Combining

approaches from the later Michel Foucault on studying problematisations (Foucault 1998[1984]:389) and studies into the anthropology of policy in Danish higher education (Wright & Shore 1997, Wright et al. 2020) the paper examines the changing problematisations that are associated with linking research and teaching - across policies, research and practices in this period.

The paper draws on vast material, including political and scholarly debates, policies and ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with scholars and students, to show the development in how ambitions and effects of performance governance policies have shaped the re-invention of ways of linking research and teaching, since it became the subject of policies in the 1990s. More specifically, it examines the problematisations surrounding first, the policy making from the late 1990s, 2) the emergent research on linking research and teaching from the 2010s, and 3) concrete teaching and learning practices in the early 2020s.

Tracing the problematisations across these contexts from policy, over research and to practice, the paper finds that: First, the political debates in the 1990s were characterised by an aim to preserve implicit values of discovery and independence in research and teaching at the university, leading to the notion of research-based education being made explicit in the university act of 2003. Second, that a concern with different student expectations and students and teachers' co-creation of knowledge as a means of linking research and teaching in research emerges from the late 2010s in the face of new policies for measuring research output. Third, based in a strategic project involving 54 courses experimenting with integrating research and teaching in a research-intensive university, the paper shows how for teachers and students linking research and teaching becomes a question of exploration and discovery in the face of students' engagement oriented towards performance in exams.

On the basis of the studies of these problematisations from national policy-making to research and local teaching practices, the paper shows that an important aspect of the current efforts to link research and teaching is premised on the ambitions and effects of policies of performance governance introduced in this period.

The paper thus shows that the re-invention of Humboldt's principles of linking research and teaching should be considered in relation to these modes of governing based on performance measures, as they appear not only to have premised policy making and research agendas, but also local practices of teaching and learning. It argues that the concern with linking research and teaching is not taking place in a vacuum, but is embedded in a context, affected by policies as well as local circumstances and actions. The paper calls for an approach to linking research and teaching that takes such policy contexts into account and evaluate how they premise the ways ambitions of linking research and teaching take form, and what this means for research, and for teaching and learning.

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95 Balancing Life Times and Term Times: Study Rhythms and the Long History of Temporal Synchronization in Swedish Higher Education Policy

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Struggles of how to introduce new temporal standards, and synchronizing them with existing practices, appear as a structural challenge in modern university policy. Attempts to speed up and homogenize study rhythms, for instance, come across as highly controversial, as reflected in the recent emergence of the slow academia movement. By employing the theoretical concept of “temporal synchronization”, this paper examines active efforts that have been made in order to bring the multitude, and sometimes incompatible, temporal rhythms of the complex university organization into harmony. This is conducted through a historical case study, focused on the Swedish 1960s that saw salient attempts of introducing “normal” term times and reforming study routes. Departing from this case, we argue that current policy needs to pay more attention to the long history of temporal renegotiations both within academia and in connection to society, as this would enable a more nuanced understanding of current predicaments.

Full paper

The last decade has seen recurring discussions on whether to introduce a system of three terms in Swedish higher education, thus replacing the age-old convention of dividing the academic year into two semesters. Various political parties have supported such proposals to parliament in order to accelerate students' paths toward graduation and thus make the system more efficient. Also, student organizations have supported such proposals. A three-term system could in fact improve students' conditions as a long summer gap otherwise poses a problem from a financial perspective.

This is certainly not the first time that issues of term times are brought up for discussion. (Östh Gustafsson, 2023) Already in the 1910s, debates on Swedish university reforms centered on whether to introduce a more standardized timeframe for degree completion, glancing at German universities where students, purportedly, were expected to finish their studies within a stipulated “normal time” of three years. Half a century later, in the 1960s, a “normal” standard of term times was eventually imposed on higher education. This decade also saw fierce debates erupt in the wake of an (in)famous political proposal to introduce fixed study paths at the faculties of liberal arts, which was regarded as an open assault on time-honored ideals of academic freedom, based on notions of *Lehrfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*. In that fashion, struggles on how to introduce new temporal standards and simultaneously balance term times with existing practices appear as a structural challenge in modern university history as policy and academic work tend to operate according to different paces. Debates on how to design educational routes have thus contributed to spotlighting fundamental questions regarding the temporal confines of higher education and the place of universities in society, and also what it means to be a student in times of profound change.

The complex temporal entanglements of academia have indeed generated a wide interest within various fields of scholarship, including anthropology, philosophy, and sociology. Dwelling on theoretical concepts such as Barbara Adam's “timescapes” and Hartmut Rosa's “social acceleration”, recent literature points at the intricate work that goes into the ordering of multiple and, typically, conflicting times – an operation that brings a distinct mark on the everyday life of students and academic staff (e.g., Gibbs et al, 2015; Kidd, 2021; Rider, 2016; Vostal, 2021; Ylijoki & Mäntylä, 2003). By employing the concept of “temporal synchronization”, we argue that the various temporal rhythms of students, professors, educational leaders, policy makers, etc., actively have to be brought into harmony. Historian Helge Jordheim (2014; 2022) asserts that societies are marked by shifting rhythms that need to be synchronized by various agents in order to generate social cohesion, as there exists no given “in-synchness” from the outset. Perceived in that light, the recurring attempts to reconcile academic term times with students' temporal requirements illuminate mechanisms that have been central to ambitions of creating more effective organizations of learning in an accelerating society.

Any university (just like any complex organization) has to deal with temporal synchronization. This work will inevitably include a calibration of various expectations and ideas concerning individual student life and future prospects. The synchronization work thus needs to handle heterogeneity, for instance differences regarding biological and academic career ages. In such cases, there is an evident risk that inadequate space is preserved for diversity as students enter higher education with shifting backgrounds and future aspirations, and that political initiatives – aiming at temporal efficiency and unity – risk reducing a potential richness of temporal rhythms (including slower ones, as championed

by the recent slow academia/science movements) as well as a multitude of possible life stories. We therefore argue that higher education policy should be particularly cautious upon interventions into temporal frameworks of relevance to students. Proper respect toward generational differences and the impact of policy on individual lives should be imperative. A better awareness of how various life histories (based on distinct temporalities) and experiences of students and staff constantly intermingle at universities would enable a new conception of a “responsible university”. (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Sørensen et al, 2019)

Drawing on cases of particularly contentious and intense political debates in 1960s Sweden, including the attempts of introducing “normal” term times and reforming study routes, and also a parallel reform of PhD programs, we will highlight relevant examples that accentuate the need of incorporating longer perspectives into discussions on academic rhythms. This historically informed study of the synchronization of complex sets of temporalities in higher education may hopefully provide new perspectives on the intricate connections between policy and academic practice.

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Parallel Session 5:8

13:30 - 15:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Room 144
Chair Rita Hordosy

266 Gatekeepers and producers of global sociological knowledge: exploring the stated aims, editorial boards and author networks of disciplinary journals

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse leading international sociology journals regarding the interplay of the centre-periphery relations as observed within their aims, editorial boards and author networks. As such, it explores the geographies of knowledge in the context of sociology as a discipline (Calma & Davies, 2017). First, it analyses the aims of journals as outlined via their respective websites, focusing on whether and how any global or international focus appears. Second, it explores the current country affiliation of their editorial boards and their different roles. Third, it looks at the network of these gatekeepers, exploring the degree of editorial board interlocking (Goyanes et al., 2022). Fourth, bibliometric analysis is used to explore author networks over time regarding institutional and national affiliation. The four approaches show that despite the discursively positioning journals as global, both editorial boards and author networks remain highly skewed towards the centre.

Full paper

Introduction

A knowledge hierarchy has long existed within the academic community dominated by producers, publishers and journals from western countries (Heilbron, 2014: 687; Demeter, 2022), whilst inequalities in who gets to edit and author have prompted calls for more inclusive and diverse scholarly publishing (Liu et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021; Gomez et al., 2022). This paper explores today's sociology journals in the Social Sciences Citation Index of the Web of Science, looking at the stated and implied aims of internationality, scope and mission of sociology journals, and juxtaposes these with the lack of diversity in their editorial board membership. It also explores the wider network of gatekeepers, looking at editorial board interlocking in sociology journals, as well as the broad changes in global author networks. As such, this analysis provides an important snapshot of the limits to the spaces of dialogue in the discipline.

Context

Academic journals are key vehicles to disseminate scholarly work, and to build a body of knowledge and shared understanding in different disciplinary areas, fields and sub-fields. They allow for the academic community, stakeholders and the wider public to engage in discussion, providing policy and practice critique and recommendations. As such, journal editorial and review processes are a form of gatekeeping, delineating what knowledge is considered relevant and valuable. Determining which academics have produced outstanding work has progressively become "metricised" (Kelly and Burrows, 2012), with research articles in prestigious journals being valorised by research assessment systems. This is potentially at the detriment of other forms of research

communication and certain types of locally important research that do not fit the 'internationally relevant' criteria (Albuquerque et al., 2020).

Valued knowledge and research paradigms diverge between these the centre and periphery of global knowledge production (Marginson and Xu, 2021; Collyer, 2014). There are several exclusionary mechanisms at play: a) publishing in high status journals often means publishing in English – as opposed to the national language; b) the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of academic writing of the Anglophone centre journals can present significant obstacles; c) topics can be deemed 'different' and 'exotic' if beyond the centre context, indicating a bias in peer review (see also Canagarajah 2002; Trahar et al. 2019; Lillies et al., 2010). This paper looks at how the "international" or "global" appears within the aims, scope and mission of sociology journals, and juxtaposes these with their editorial board membership and author networks. As such, it explores the geographies of knowledge in the context of sociology as a discipline (Calma & Davies, 2017).

Design and methods

This paper uses a diverse array of data collection and analysis techniques. First, the descriptions and aims sections of journal websites are subjected to content analysis using NVivo, regarding the representation of explicit and implicit references to their international or national scope, as well as the language requirements. Second, journal websites were searched for editorial board membership, to explore the overall patterns of institutional and national belonging and roles of members. Third, to examine the network of gatekeepers, social network analysis was employed. Finally, bibliometric analysis is used to explore author networks over time regarding institutional and national affiliation.

Results

Despite blurry boundaries of sociology as a discipline (Holmwood, 2010), the ways of speaking about journal aims are surprisingly consistent, likely a result of journal acquisitions and publishers aiming to standardise how such information is presented (Kutz, 2018). The thematic examination of the aims, scope or descriptions sections on journal websites yielded results that contained substantive amounts of semantic overlap. Overall, most journals included in this analysis signal explicitly or implicitly an international orientation either through the localities or topics they cover, or the potential authors or readers they aim to reach. To understand the international nature of the editorial boards of these journals, the country of affiliation was measured across the roles of leadership, editorial board, further editorial board and overall position. This examination yielded a surprising amount of predictability across these roles. For every role, the USA holds the greatest number of leaders, editorial board members and further editorial board members, with the UK holding the second-largest number of positions across all fields. Looking into the editorial board networks, several scholars are repeated across boards, consistent with the literature reviewed; this phenomenon is recognized as editorial board interlocking (Goyanes et al. 2022). Regarding author-networks, the analysis over time shows the initial dominance of the USA based scholars in the early 1990s gives way to a more interconnected global knowledge production by the 2020s.

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154 What and where to publish? Tensions of publishing choices for individual researchers in Finland

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

A great deal is known about academics' publishing patterns. But what kinds of individual choices are there behind those patterns? This study examines how different factors affect academics' choices of research topics and publishing outlets. The studied context is Finland, a non-Anglophone country with one of the most performance-based research evaluation systems in Europe. The data for this mixed-methods study is being generated with an online survey (N = >277) from academics representing different fields and career stages. The preliminary results indicate that although there is pressure to study "strategic" topics and publish in high-impact journals, researchers' primary motivation of choosing research topics stems from personal interests. Furthermore, researchers want to publish in outlets whose scope is suitable rather than in outlets owned by big publishing houses. These results suggest a high-level of academic freedom and that Finland-based academics are resilient when it comes to the pressures of neoliberal academia.

Full paper

Introduction

Academic work is constantly being measured with different metrics, shaping the work and identities (Kulczycki, 2023; Lupton et al. 2018; Pardo-Guerra, 2022). Interestingly, as Shore and Wright (2015) argue, academic organisations and academics have easily conformed to the calculative, performative rationality of performance measurement systems while simultaneously being critical about them.

In this paper, we study this tension of complying yet critiquing in relation to publishing. Specifically, we are interested in how different factors—such as metrics—affect individual researchers' choices of research topics and publishing outlets. Our research questions are:

1. What affects researchers' choices regarding their research topics and publishing outlets? Are there differences between disciplines or career stages?
2. What kinds of tensions are there behind the choices?

Theoretically, we analyse researchers' choices through the concept of reactivity (Espeland & Sauder, 2007): As humans are reflexive beings constantly monitoring and interpreting the surrounding world, as well reacting and adjusting to it, all measures are re-active (p. 2). Therefore, we are particularly interested in how researchers describe the causes behind the factors that they consider important.

The context of this study is Finland. Although a relatively small higher education system, Finland offers an illuminating case of a non-Anglophone country, which has one of the most performance-based research evaluations systems in Europe (Pölonen, 2018; Sīle et al., 2018).

Data and methods

We created an online survey which included questions about respondents' background and employment situation, how different aspects influenced the choice of their research topics (13 different statements and an open question), and choices around publishing outlets (21 different statements and an open question). The survey was available in three languages, Finnish, Swedish, and English.

By early June 2023, 277 respondents representing different fields and career stages had completed the survey. The preliminary results are reported by using 231 responses, and the results will be updated once the survey has been closed.

Results

Regarding how to choose one's research topic, the preliminary results are as follows:

Figure 1. The impact of different aspects on one's research topic (1 being "not important at all" and 5 being "extremely important").

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
I'm personally interested in the topic	0,4%	0%	0,9%	19,0%	79,7%	4,8
The topic is important for society	1,7%	5,6%	20,4%	50,2%	22,1%	3,9
I've studied the topic before	2,6%	12,6%	33,5%	39,6%	11,7%	3,5
The topic is unconventional or understudied	1,3%	15,2%	28,7%	39,6%	15,2%	3,5
I want to work with people who are interested in the topic	4,3%	16,0%	32,5%	34,2%	13,0%	3,4
There might be funding for the topic in the future	11,7%	14,7%	23,4%	35,9%	14,3%	3,3
The topic is suitable considering my current workload	7,4%	15,7%	24,9%	38,4%	13,6%	3,3
The topic is a good choice considering my future career plans	16,6%	9,2%	22,7%	32,3%	19,2%	3,3
There is funding currently available for the topic	10,8%	17,8%	28,1%	29,0%	14,3%	3,2
The topic aligns with the research profile of my faculty, department, or research group	15,2%	18,7%	26,1%	29,1%	10,9%	3,0
Data for my topic is easy to collect or acquire	9,1%	25,1%	39,4%	21,6%	4,8%	2,9
The topic is a requirement in my job description	27,7%	17,6%	25,1%	15,9%	13,7%	2,7
The topic aligns with the research strategy of my university	25,1%	30,0%	25,1%	15,4%	4,4%	2,4

Based on Figure 1, it seems that respondents wanted to study topics that they are personally interested in or topics that are important for society. The first aspect was considered overwhelmingly important: almost all respondents found the topic extremely or quite important. By contrast, the aspects that had the least impact, on average, were the topic being a requirement in one's job description and aligning with the research strategy of one's university.

The respondents' answers to the open question however revealed tensions. For example, several respondents stated that even though it would be great to study what one wants, one cannot often choose the topic but instead has it dictated by the research group, available funding, or planned future projects. Such responses were primarily given by those who were early on in their career and/or in a precarious job situation, highlighting the differences between different career stages.

Regarding the decisions on publishing outlets, the results are presented in Figure 2:

Figure 2. The impact of different aspects on the chosen research outlet.

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
My research fits well with the outlet's focus or scope	0%	0,4%	3,0%	31,2%	65,4%	4,6
The outlet's type is suitable (e.g. it is a journal)	0%	0%	6,5%	30,0%	63,5%	4,6
The language of the outlet	1,7%	3,0%	13,4%	39,0%	42,9%	4,2
The outlet is established in my field	2,2%	3,9%	18,3%	45,2%	30,4%	4,0
The quality of reviews	2,2%	11,3%	26,1%	40,0%	20,4%	3,7
My co-authors recommend the outlet	5,2%	8,3%	24,8%	44,8%	16,9%	3,6
The outlet is Open Access	5,2%	15,2%	28,7%	30,9%	20,0%	3,5
My other colleagues recommend the outlet	3,5%	11,7%	29,6%	40,9%	14,3%	3,5
Researchers in my field are expected to publish in the outlet	4,8%	14,0%	25,8%	37,1%	18,3%	3,5
The JUFO level of the outlet	9,6%	12,6%	21,3%	30,9%	25,6%	3,5
The speed of the review process	2,6%	19,9%	36,4%	29,0%	12,1%	3,3
The potential publishing fees	14,3%	15,2%	22,2%	27,0%	21,3%	3,3
I'm familiar with the outlet	8,2%	17,3%	26,9%	38,5%	9,1%	3,2
The outlet is officially recognized in Scopus and/or Web of Science	18,8%	14,0%	18,8%	23,1%	25,3%	3,2
The outlet's suitability considering my future career plans	12,2%	15,3%	26,6%	30,6%	15,3%	3,2
The outlet also publishes unconventional research (topic, method, or form-wise)	12,7%	20,2%	38,1%	22,4%	6,6%	2,9
I have been invited to contribute to the outlet	24,7%	22,0%	26,4%	16,3%	10,6%	2,7
The outlet is part of a large, well-known publishing house (such as Springer, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, Emerald, etc.)	23,1%	21,4%	28,0%	20,5%	7,0%	2,7
The acceptance rate of the outlet	13,0%	34,2%	35,9%	15,2%	1,7%	2,6
My formal job performance evaluation requires such an outlet	31,7%	25,5%	18,1%	14,1%	10,6%	2,5
I know the editors of the outlet	41,5%	29,3%	20,1%	8,7%	0,4%	2,0

Here there were several aspects that more than half of the respondents found either extremely or quite important: research fitting well with the outlet's focus or scope being the most important on average. By contrast, the lowest rated aspects were knowing the editors of the outlet and one's formal job performance evaluation requiring such an outlet.

Like with the research topics, the outlets seem to be partly determined by "what has to be done" or "what is smart", while simultaneously being what one believes is "the right thing to do" or "one's personal preference". Many respondents described multiple factors driving their decisions, even if they did not like it, illustrating the reactivity of different publishing-related factors.

Discussion and conclusion

While we cannot yet suggest any strong arguments or implications based on the preliminary analysis, there is tentative evidence that Finnish academia is still, in fact, quite robust and allows strong academic freedom. Researchers primarily study what they want to study instead of what is stated in strategies and publish in suitable outlets instead of a journal of a big publishing house. However, the open answers of the survey suggest that academics are constantly juggling between what they would like to do and what they have to do, which raises some concern over the future of doing research and publishing in Finland.

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191 Research Culture as Instituent Practice: the possibilities of thinking differently?

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This exploratory paper draws from curatorial and art theory to speculate on the possibilities of conceptualising research culture as instituent practice (Raunig 2009). Research culture is increasingly being problematised and contested (Moore et al 2017, Moran et al 2020) with contemporary challenges for researchers including academic precarity (Mulligan & Danaher 2021) and its impact on the persistence of ‘publish or perish’ and competitiveness, to increased expectations through growing emphasis on impact literacy (Bayley 2023), interdisciplinarity, and collaboration. In the United Kingdom expectations for researcher support are set out by funders and bodies such as Vitae and the Royal Society, and research environments are assessed through the Research Excellence Framework and resulting league tables. How might thinking through instituent practice help us to reimagine research culture? What are the possibilities of instituent practice as critical self-reflection, as recognition of research culture as political practice, and as openness to continual transformation?

Full paper

Prompted by the continued growth in practice research in creative disciplines and in creative methods across disciplines, this paper draws from curatorial and art theory to speculate on the possibilities of conceptualising and enacting research culture as instituent practice (Raunig 2009).

The research landscape is changing and along with it the expectations of academics as researchers with challenges including academic precarity (Mulligan & Danaher 2021) and its impact on the persistence of 'publish or perish' and competitiveness, to a growing emphasis on impact literacy (Bayley 2023), interdisciplinarity, and collaboration. Research culture in terms of the "behaviours, values expectations, attitudes and norms of our research communities" (Royal Society 2018) is complexly entangled with the structures and processes of the research environment. In the United Kingdom expectations for researcher support are set out by the national governmental funding body UKRI and formally encoded through the Researcher Development Concordat (Vitae 2019) and the Higher Education Funding Council commissioned report on the Characteristics of high-performing research units (Manville et al 2015). Research environments are formally assessed through the Research Excellence Framework, impacting on funding institutions receive and league tables. However, research culture is being increasingly problematised and contested (Moore et al 2017). The Royal Society's recent Changing Expectations (2018) programme focused on research culture in the sciences and the Wellcome Trust commissioned report on perceptions of research (Moran et al 2020) culture indicate growing recognition of a need for changes in approach.

In this context, I speculate that looking to practices and concepts within the arts might prove fruitful for rethinking research culture as a practice (Trowler 2013). In identifying a third phase of institutional critique in contemporary art practice, philosopher and art theorist Gerald Raunig defined instituent practices as a linking of social criticism, institutional critique and self-criticism (2009). His conceptualisation of instituent practices is complex theoretically, drawing on Foucault, Deleuze, Virno and decades of artistic practice and theory. It addresses earlier institutional critique in art that sought distance from the institution, and then acknowledged artistic practice's complicity with the institution. Raunig advocates instead for "betraying the rules of the game through the act of flight: 'transforming the arts of governing' ... as participation in processes of instituting and in political practices that traverse the fields, the structures, the institutions" (2009:11) in an instituent practice as instituting itself, always in a state of becoming. This conception of instituting as an ongoing practice of critique which has the capacity to change the structures of institutions (or perhaps to resist forming such structures) is thought provoking in relation to research culture in higher education. Raunig was arguing against both historical conceptions of the art institution as elitist and exclusionary and the more contemporary market-driven art world and its organisations. The parallels with debates around higher education are clear, indeed Raunig's later co-authored *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity* (Raunig et al 2013) focused on both the art world and the university as a potential sites of resistance and transformation.

So what might we draw from instituent practice to reimagine the concept and practice of research culture? Raunig lays out a complex philosophical terrain around concepts of power, constitution and constituent, and of the interrelationships between governmentality, institution-as-establishment, and institution-as-process. Without necessarily delving into the philosophical complexities, and thus appropriating rather than interrogating at this stage of speculation, an instituent practice would demand attentiveness to research culture as political practice as well as social practice. A critical attitude would recognise research culture as embodied and enacted in organisations and processes as much as behaviours and values and commit to research culture in its many manifestations as in remaining in states of becoming, that is as open to transformation. It would of course be naïve to imagine that research can ever exist entirely without institutions or governmentality in terms of systems of funding, quality assurance and accountability. Raunig's concept of instituting is useful to reflect on how much of the problematics of contemporary research cultures are also enacted through self-government, through "dichotomies such as that of the individual and the collective" (Raunig 2009:8), as much as through audit processes, competition and gate-keeping. Adopting a concept of instituent practice would entail a continual process of reconsidering research cultures with an openness to reorganizing, to traversing fields and structures, and to responding differently. Arguably attempting to enact research culture conceived as instituent practice might enable more openness to inclusivity and care, as well as appropriate and agile responses to our changing social, technological, ecological contexts and challenges.

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Panel Session: Landscapes of Learning for Unknown Futures: Prospects for Space in Higher Education

15:00 - 16:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1a

with Prof Sam Elkington and Dr Jill Dickinson.

This presentation unpacks the principal findings that emerged from an SRHE-hosted Symposia Series that brought together sector stakeholders to consider new thinking in decision-making, policy, and practice and reflect on the promise of future landscapes of learning in HE through the prism of three thematic lenses: networks, assemblages, and flexibilities. Each of these lenses formed the conceptual focus for a symposium event with the aim of providing designated space and scope for interrogating a range of theoretical and applied interpretations and perspectives, and generating collaborative, reflexive discussions, and debate. The presentation draws together key learning and emergent themes to emphasise a more holistic understanding of the synergies and possibilities for learning spaces and the networks, assemblages, and flexibilities that characterise them according to the level of complexity and depth that they exhibit and the neoteric topologies of connection, social meaning, and practice that they promote.

Panel Discussion: Higher Education Policy

15:00 - 16:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1b

Chaired by Prof Colin McCaig (co-convenor of the HEP network).

The session will be an open forum for discussion on UK HE policy in the medium term, led by Colin McCaig, and feature a stimulus talk by Smita Jamdar who will consider ways in which the HE sector might change/develop following the upcoming general election.

Panel Session: Use and Misuse of Generative Artificial Intelligence Large Language Models in Student Undergraduate and Postgraduate Research

15:00 - 16:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1c
Chair Christine O'Dea

Speakers: Professor Tony Wall, Dr Christine O'Dea, Dr Ruth Stoker, and Dr Mike O'Dea.

This session will provide an opportunity for educators to explore possible opportunities in using GenAI tools to support students to conduct academic research in an ethical manner, share good practices and make recommendations for university key stakeholders and policy makers.

Tea & coffee, poster & exhibition viewing

16:00 - 16:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Courtyard Lounge

Parallel Session 6:1

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 122

Chair Christine O'Dea

57 The other side of knowledge transfer - science officers in local governments

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Universities and science more generally play an increasingly important role for cities' wellbeing in the knowledge society. While much research exists on the interplay between research institutions and different partners, e.g. the local economy ("clusters"), especially in the context of transfer and third mission, the role of city administrations has not yet been sufficiently investigated, at least not in the German context.

In our project "Town & Gown" we therefore conducted the first survey on what we call "science officers": people within city administrations responsible to organize a structured exchange between cities and their local research institutions. The survey was supplemented by case studies and in-depth expert interviews in a smaller number of cities.

Our results show a dense and growing network between city administrations and their HEI's as well as some hindering and fostering factors for a successful partnership.

Full paper

Knowledge transfer is one of the major challenges that HEIs increasingly have to face (Berghaeuser & Hoelscher 2019). For a long time, transfer was understood primarily as a transfer of technology into the economy, but it is defined much more broadly today (e.g. Compagnucci & Spigarelli 2020). HEIs are not only research and education institutions, but also an important economic and social factor ("third mission"). For example, as significant employers and building owners, HEIs have to take on new responsibilities in their hosting city with regard to sustainability issues or the local rent market (e.g. Marquardt 2019; Smith 2008).

But HEIs are only one side of the transfer medal within cities – local governments are the other. While some cities in Germany already proactively include science in their city marketing (e.g. Münster), others are not yet aware of the potential that lies in their own research institutions. This has been changing for about 15 years. Science has become more visible in the urban society, for example through such initiatives as the "Stadt der Wissenschaft". To support these processes, city councils are setting up new positions for cooperation with science institutions. Science officers establish contact with research institutions situated in their own city and connect scientists, society and local

economy. But how do they work together? Whereas there is a lot of research on the role of universities within the hosting city or the own region (Benneworth et al. 2010; Tripl 2015), virtually no research is done on the city side yet.

In our research project "Town & Gown" at the German University of Administrative Sciences, Speyer, we addressed this lacuna for the German context for the first time and therefore in a mainly exploratory manner. The main research questions are a) to what extent do city administrations in Germany engage in a structured exchange with their research institutions, b) what is the context and form of this cooperation and c) which factors foster a good relationship.

To answer these questions, we draw on four different data sources. First, a comprehensive (international) literature review was performed, supporting our claim of a research gap. Second, a survey with science officers in 80 German cities was held in 2020 and provides an overview of how the issue is anchored in city administrations. To get a more fine-grained picture, we, third, conducted short case studies on a similar set of cities based on desk research (Marquardt & Gerhard 2021) as well as, fourth, some more in-depth interviews in two cities. By combining these quantitative and qualitative data we can demonstrate a dense network between city councils and their HEIs working together to move the city further and make it fit for the challenges of the future.

In our presentation we would like to present the broader context of city-HEI-relations as well as descriptive results from our research. The aim for the discussion would be to compare the German context to the UK one.

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284 Narratives of research impact and knowledge exchange: a regional perspective

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Universities in the broadest public policy sense have three missions: research, teaching and a contribution to wider society. The third mission (TM) of universities in the form of a contribution to society is less well defined and nebulous than the missions of research and teaching. TM captures an array of activities and concepts such as the entrepreneurial university, the civic university, development of science and society through various forms of communication and social engagement, and knowledge transfer and exchange by universities to and with society and organisations. In this research paper, we report on a work in progress that looks at national policies in the UK which assesses excellence in research (REF) and knowledge exchange (KEF) from a regional and place-based perspective by looking at institutional responses to both REF and TEF exercises and future plans to extend the project to inform both policy and practice of TM.

Full paper

In England, universities are required to undertake responses to regulatory assessment exercises in line with three missions (Gunn and Mintrom, 2022) of research (REF), knowledge exchange (KEF) and teaching (TEF). Similar public policy assessment trends are being adopted globally.

The KEF aligns most closely with the third mission (TM) of universities. TM is less clear cut than teaching and research, and is often a catch all for everything that isn't teaching and research (Compagnuccia and Spigarellib, 2020). The myriad terms for TM activity include: public engagement, technology transfer, knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange. This shows the complex, emerging and constant evolution of a university's TM (Gregersen et al. 2009; Watermeyer and Lewis, 2018). Equally in flux is TM policy (i.e. KEF in the UK). Policy may also converge, as Johnson (2022) notes, data and narratives required by KEF may overlap with research impact and even provide pathways to research impact whilst teaching could also be described as knowledge exchange, particularly at postgraduate level.

Here, we present initial findings, of place-based perspectives on research impact and knowledge exchange by analysing institutional narratives in response to regulatory frameworks to show how policy requirements are articulated in the context of the connections and complexities involved as the three missions of the university both converge and diverge. The focus of a regulatory exercise which asks universities to evidence knowledge exchange activity and impact brings into sharp focus the third mission of universities when a designated policy is put in place which goes on to influence practice. KEF2 metrics and institutional narratives were published in May 2022 and report on universities institutional context, public and community engagement, research partnerships, working with business, working with the public and the third sector, CPD and grad start-ups, IP and commercialisation and local growth and regeneration. The REF2021 latest results were published in 2022 with the latest round of TEF results coming in late 2023 following the first full scale exercise in 2017 (Matthews and Kotzee, 2021).

We are using institutional responses to the REF and KEF as policy objects (Sin, 2014) of analysis with future plans to investigate how these narratives texts came to be and the actors and resources involved. This will make links between policy and practice and the wider effects on research and public engagement activities. This draws upon the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) (Jones and McBeth, 2010; Caine, Clandinin and Lessard, 2022; Schlauffer et al., 2022) which allows us to explore connections between policies, institutional responses and practice. This builds on

work in analysing how separate regulatory exercises of teaching and research can impact the often overlapping three missions of the university (Matthews and Kotzee, 2022).

The focus on region and place falls in line with devolution of accountability in the UK through a levelling up agenda which has seen an increase in Mayoral Combined Authorities of which, the West Midlands is one such authority (Millward, 2023). Moreover, Wain et al (2021) report gaps in the literature regarding knowledge exchange and place, particularly around regulatory assessment returns and local practice. The KEF acknowledges different institutional contexts by clustering universities from large broad multi-discipline to small and specialist. We use these clusters as well as other institutional markers such as 'elite' Russell Group and history of pre and post 92 to compare knowledge exchange activity on the West Midlands. Table 1 outlines the institutions included and their diverse characteristics.

Institution name	Pre or post 92	Russell Group?	KEF Cluster
Birmingham City University	Post-92		J
Coventry University	Post-92		E
Harper Adams University	Post-92		STEM
Newman University	Post-92		M
Staffordshire University	Post-92		J
University of Wolverhampton	Post-92		J
University of Worcester	Post-92		J
Aston University	Pre-92		E
The University of Birmingham	Pre-92	RG	V
University of Keele	Pre-92		X
The University of Warwick	Pre-92	RG	V

*Institutions are classified as West Midlands using REF2021 results

This work adds to the field of TM studies and integrates place-based approaches. This includes the role and purpose of the university as a social and civic institution as well as the role of individual academics (Bandola-Gill et al, 2022; Stamou et al, 2022) and knowledge exchange and communications professionals working in and with universities (Bandola-Gill, 2023; Gesualdo et al, 2020).

This project supports the aim of transferring knowledge into action (Ward et al, 2009) for wider societal exchange and impact, including equitable approaches to knowledge access as well as production. We acknowledge and embrace the complex challenges for the identity and purpose of a university in the context of growth in size and social influence (Matthews, 2022). Such growth and influence has brought with it a complexity of connections, described by Schütz et al (2019) as a quadruple helix of interconnections between universities, government, business and society. In presenting our work in progress and initial narrative analysis of regional universities responses to excellence frameworks we aim to explore this complexity and engage with those in the SRHE community to develop our work further.

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Parallel Session 6:2

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 139

Chair Dina Belluigi

179 Between a rock and a hard place: the effect of regionalised global university rankings in Chile

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

This paper reports on an investigation of the responses of Chilean higher education to the emergence of regionalised global university rankings in Latin America. Using interviews with educational leaders across 18 institutions, the research sought to understand the effect of these global rankings on conceptions of quality, local academic work, and social perceptions of institutional value. Using the conceptual framing of a glonocal heuristic (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002), a series of tensions generated by the escalating social significance of regionalised forms of global rankings were identified. These tensions included the value of global comparison versus sustaining a local mission, institutional recognition versus structural inequality in Chilean higher education and the potential and danger of the influence of global North epistemologies and language in shaping future local higher education. The implications are considered through the lenses of how quality is defined, and institutional value understood, in the global South.

Full paper

Introduction

Over the last decade, two leading university rankings organisations (Times Higher Education and Quacquarelli Symonds) have designed regionalised forms of global rankings for Latin America. The emergence of these new rankings has acted to simultaneously reinforce and disrupt social assumptions of university quality that have been historically formed through national accreditation systems and localised rankings models (Hazelkorn, 2019; Author, 2023). These regionalised global rankings—calculated using slightly modified criteria to that used in their international iterations—have become increasingly influential as the call for institutions in the region to address the demands of being a legitimate 'global' university has become more prominent (Bernasconi & Knobel, 2021; Véliz & Marshall, 2021).

However, there has been limited research undertaken across the region on the practical impact of these new and potentially powerful global rankings on local institutional practices (Guaglianone, 2018). Although research has examined the specific impact of localised rankings or national accreditation models, less attention has been given to what impact global rankings have on the nature of conceptions of high education quality and mission, on the nature and form of local academic work, and on changing social perceptions of institutional value borne of a global perspective. Given this gap, the objective of the study reported here was to understand what were the mediating effects that regionalised global rankings had on the strategic orientation and everyday research and teaching practices in Chilean higher education.

Research Methodology

Using a qualitative, case study-based methodology (Stake, 1995), the data for this study was generated using a series of semi-structured interviews with university leaders across a range of Chilean universities (n=18). In addition, key institutional characteristics (i.e., current accreditation level, local ranking, research performance), as well as materials related to global rankings issued by these institutions were subject to artefact analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The universities included were selected through a purposive sample based on a typology that ensured a range of institutions of differing focus, size and location were included. Data were thematically coded using a concept-driven approach based on the glonacal heuristic developed by Marginson & Rhoades (2002).

Findings

The outcomes of the research identified a series of tensions that were generated between the often-conflicting demands of global, national, and local imperatives. Although the extent of these tensions varied considerably across different institutional types, they remained apparent in differing forms.

The most fundamental tension identified was between the drive to be recognised as a globally legitimate institution, whilst at the same time responding to the powerful local demands for social development within the country. Institutions that had been ranked at the highest level of rankings expressed this in terms of looking globally for quality assurance and locally for social recognition of purpose, while those more lowly ranked rejected the relative importance of rankings against the local drives of their institutions (whilst also featuring ranking fragments positive to the institution).

Secondly, another identified tension existed between the exposure of regionalised global rankings provided to the apparent disparities in quality and resources between global and local institutions, and between institutions in the highly fragmented Chilean higher education model. This global and local stratification was a source of dual tensions for higher-ranked local institutions as it highlighted the ascribed distance from the Anglosphere, while also revealing an uncomfortable socio-economic advantage that benefits the institution in the local system. Conversely, lower-ranked institutions tended to stress the irrelevance of global comparisons and foreground the primacy of the local in assessments of quality.

Thirdly, the rising social hegemony of global rankings was broadly identified as having the potential of privileging global North epistemologies and the English language in shaping future local higher education. For higher-ranked institutions, this meant adaptation to have more capacity to publish internationally, whilst attempting to maintain a legitimate local focus. For the lower ranked, it was identified as a 'necessary evil' that was potentially undermining the local social and educational mission of the institution.

Implications

The findings suggest that the mediating effect of regionalised global rankings is both disruptive and stratifying in its effect. By undermining traditional conceptions of the various social missions of Chilean universities, institutions are being forced increasingly to remediate conventional assumptions about what represents quality as global rankings increasingly shape social and policy assumptions in nation-states about what university quality looks like. Such remediation demonstrates the strong gravitational pull of global rankings and their broader homogenising impact. This effect has the potential to displace the socio-historical foundations of Chilean universities that are grounded in imperatives of socio-economic development.

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59 Cultural Studies and University Rankings

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

We offer a Cultural Studies approach—a transdisciplinary field of study critically examining contemporary culture—to illuminate the roles of cultural producers and consumers in mediating the meaning of university rankings amidst a global media landscape. Using the case study of Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and drawing on the concepts of a) meaning-making, b) cultural texts, and c) audiencing, we illuminate how QS, as a commercial ranker, aims to ‘fix’ meanings about quality and excellence in global higher education (HE) through its various outreach efforts. Based on a multi-method analysis of QS’ digital texts, specifically a YouTube video and a press release, we demonstrate how interactions between cultural producers and consumers complicate a ranker’s efforts to fix and diffuse meanings about HE. We argue that a Cultural Studies approach helps us probe the meaning-making process underlying university rankings amid a digital media culture.

Full paper

Defying traditional understandings of the roles and impacts of university rankings in higher education (HE) (Hazelkorn, 2017; Lo, 2014; Stack, 2021), we offer a Cultural Studies (CS) approach to studying the relationship between university rankings and culture. CS is a transdisciplinary field of study critically examining contemporary culture from non-elite and counter-hegemonic perspectives with an openness to the culture's reception and production in everyday life (During, 2007). Using the case study of Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and drawing on the concepts of a) meaning-making, b) cultural texts, and c) audiencing, we illuminate how QS, as a commercial ranker, aims to 'fix' meanings about quality and excellence in global higher education (HE) through its various outreach efforts. Based on a multi-method analysis of QS' digital texts, specifically a YouTube video and a press release, we demonstrate how interactions between cultural producers and consumers complicate a ranker's efforts to fix and diffuse meanings about HE. We argue that a Cultural Studies approach helps us probe the meaning-making process underlying university rankings amid a digital media culture.

First, central to cultural production and consumption is the question of *meaning-making*. From a CS perspective, the 'meaning' of an object (i.e., rankings) is not inherent in the "object itself" but shaped by broader socio-cultural processes, such as signifying practices (Hall, 1997). As such, meaning-making is a negotiated process, whereby the cultural producer (author) seeks to fix and communicate particular meanings for their audience (reader) using cultural texts and signifying practices. Second, meaning-making is also mediated by the role of '*cultural texts*'. Here by "text" we are signifying that a cultural product serves as a text, producing meaning and is authored with particular audiences in mind. A cultural text thus interfaces the cultural producer with the consumer. Third, meaning-making is mediated by the role of *audiencing*. The role of audiences, or consumers, in meaning-making, is not simply passive, but also mediated by their social positionality, contexts, and whether they can identify with the meanings being communicated (During, 2007; Kellner, 2011). Examining audiencing is key for understanding how cultural producers, like QS, and their audiences, from varying social locations, negotiate what to think, do, fear, and desire (Kellner, 2011).

We analyzed QS Top Universities YouTube channel's most watched video's foundational narrative and its audience comments. Our chosen video artifact is titled, "Meet the UK's Top Universities 2019" and has amassed 483,652 views and over 500-plus comments since its posting on June 6, 2018. We examined the participatory dimension of the QS video, specifically the 500+ comments the video received, and observed that audiences consumed and negotiated the QS "story" (meaning) about the UK's top universities from various standpoints. While some identified with the QS story (compliance), others added or challenged the QS story. As such, multiple audiences surfaced through the cultural consumption process by attributing different meanings to the QS video. QS occasionally replied to audiences' comments. Audiencing helps us illustrate how meanings are not unidirectional between a cultural producer (QS) and consumer (audiences) through a cultural text (e.g., YouTube video), but are negotiated based on audiences' HE status, aspirations, interactions, identities, and critiques.

After reading The Economic Times' 2021 article on Indian universities' 2022 QS ranking results, we noticed the exact quote below from Ben Sowter, the QS Director of Research, regarding QS' Asian Rankings. A quick Google search with Sowter's above quote resulted in 10+ news releases from various national and independent news media, such as The Korea Herald, The Standard, Global Giants, Asia One, Malay Mail, and others. We eventually confirmed that Sowter's quote was initially circulated by PR Newswire in an original press release authored by PR Newswire on their website, which cited QS Quacquarelli Symonds as the source. The pervasive use of Sowter's quote despite differences in media actors speaks to the nature of rankings as a meaning-making tool that can sell news and attract audiences, and perhaps why QS employs a company like PR Newswire for their outreach. While some of the news media act as cultural producers by recontextualizing QS' meaning-making, others merely consumed QS' story, with both seeking to engage and form new/local audiences. Taken together, these media networks and their digital platforms help diffuse and normalize the use of university rankings as a meaning-making tool for assessing and articulating the quality and excellence of local HE institutions.

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371 The Hegemonic and Disciplinary Power of International University Ranking Programmes: Chinese Prestigious Universities under Embroilment

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

This study explains the power technique of international university ranking programmes (e.g. QS Rankings, US News Rankings) that are issued by companies in countries other than China but have realised their influence on Chinese prestigious universities. Combining Foucault's theory of discipline (1975) with Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1947), this study proposes a political concept 'to embroil / embroilment' to refer to a post-modernist form of power technique that influences the affairs of modern institutions, that is, in this case, the higher education affairs of modern universities with academic autonomy as one of their principles of modernity. Based on a critical dialogue analysis on policy documents from universities selected as cases, this study shows these universities' administrative reactions to these international rankings and further reflects the power relationship between universities and their external economic subjects in the context of China mainland.

Full paper

This study applies the theories of 'hegemony' and 'discipline' to explain the power technique of international university ranking programmes that have realised their influence on the higher education of Chinese prestigious universities through their administrative and policy-making affairs. This research consists of one theoretical study and one empirical study.

A propose of the concept of 'embroil' based on Foucault's theory of discipline (1975) with Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1947) is the highlight of the theoretical part of this research. A Gramscian view is employed to elaborate the power relation between the initiators of rankings and Chinese HEIs; a Foucauldian view is adopted to analyse the power technique from the power subject to HEI interior. A combination of them two is proposed to explain different types of foundation on which the power of ratings/rankings in China is based: obedience (punishment), consent (hegemony), and enthusiastic desire (discipline). On one hand, the mechanism of "hegemony" together with "passive revolution" is applied to explain the power relation of "embroil". The embroiling power includes three subjects: (1) the HEIs as the embroiled recipient, (2) the society of higher education where the hegemonic power occurs, and (3) the external social power subject as the embroiling initiator. Thus, the embroiling process is that the political or economic subjects launch higher education activities (i.e. university rankings), forming a hegemony over the universities. The concept of "passive revolution" is applied not only to explain the existence of hegemony, but also to show the advantage of its mechanism over an "active" revolution. On the other hand, the mechanism of "discipline" is applied to explain the "embroiling" power technique that indirectly influences HEIs' administrative affairs. In the process of embroiling power occurring, the surveillance link of discipline refers to the process that ranking/rating indicators are

created by the initiators to highlight certain norms in the society of higher education; the normalisation happens when the HEIs are pursuing those norms as accepted behaviours; and the internalisation takes place when administrators form their inner desire to conform to those norms. In summary, 'to embroil' is the mechanism that enables or even empowers an economic subject to surveil, standardise, and commensurate (different) modern universities, as well as to hierarchise the universities according to the companies' evaluation criteria (international ranking metrics); in this case, 'embroilment' is the process that ranking companies realise their hegemonic power over Chinese prestigious universities to gradually make them accept, normalise and even internalise their educational values (essentially its educational standards which should have been external to the universities according to the principle of academic autonomy) of their own free will.

Critical Dialogue Analysis (CDA) is central to the empirical approach of this study, as it provides the methodological framework through which to interrogate the documents that constitute the data for this project. Rooted in Foucault's theory of dialogue order, the main purpose of CDA is to expose the relationship between discourse (in documents) and ideology (in documents). The document analysis of this study addresses what can be empirically observed (documents data) and attempts to see through them to the worlds of the actual and the real (Fairclough 2005; Fairclough et al. 2002), taking a "dialectical relational" approach to discourse analysis (Fairclough 2010) and seeking to locate semiotic phenomena "within their necessary dialectical relations with persons (hence minds, intentions, desires, bodies), social relations, and the material world—locating them within the practical engagement of embodied and socially organised persons with the material world" (Fairclough et al. 2002: 3). As CDA involves a belief that "texts are both socially-structuring and socially-structured" (Fairclough et al. 2002: 3), the primary sources of data for this study are policy and administrative documents together with media files from both the implementer (ranking companies) and participants (Chinese prestigious universities) of international rankings. This study explores what institutional adaptation in terms of discipline construction and research development have been conducted by Chinese prestigious universities to face the change of international higher education standards. This study outlines a thorough policy and documentary assessment of the international ranking system that is evolving in the university sector in the Chinese context. The theoretical framework engages Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and Foucault's concepts of discipline to energise the idea of a consensus building ranking system in China. This study also addresses the ways in which the rating system can be viewed as a power formation that may or could be seen as a kind of revolution of sorts, taking place in and through higher education.

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Parallel Session 6:3 - Symposium

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1c

14 Contextual complexities of interdisciplinary collaboration to demystify academic discourses

Research Domain

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Rationale

In this symposium we will discuss the challenges and successes of interdisciplinary collaborations that demystify academic discourses and practices for students from diverse backgrounds. These students include widening participation students, students who navigate between 'posh' and 'slang' language practices (Preece, 2009), and international students who come with diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds. In order to succeed in higher education, students need to be able to acquire the discourses of their chosen discipline(s) which vary according to the preferred epistemologies of those discipline(s) (Hyland, 2004). However, the process of learning the discourses and genres of a particular discipline in higher education has been described as a "pedagogy of osmosis" (Turner, 2011, p.21) that is embedded within the "institutional practice of mystery" (Lillis, 2001, p.58). Lecturers who have acquired their discursive preferences via those practices may not always be able to describe or explain them as a result. Collaboration between subject experts and language and literacy experts has been long recommended but rarely systematically implemented (Li, 2020). Benefits of collaboration include both the unpacking of disciplinary discourses, which bypasses the need for osmosis and makes disciplinary skills more accessible for students (Hampton et al, 2003), and the development of staff expertise and institutional capacity (Thies, 2016).

However, collaboration is challenging to both instigate and sustain. Shifting national and institutional priorities, regular changes in personnel at all levels, and the ubiquitous challenge of workload, time and timing require constant consideration and adaptation. A further hindrance in making lecturers' expectations explicit to today's diverse student body is the reductionist view of language which oversimplifies the linguistic and cognitive demands of academic discourses. Following the Office for Students' (2021) study of a small number of universities, media and minister reports about levels of spelling, punctuation and grammar demonstrated perfectly this reductionist view. Following their consultation process, the Office for Students (2022) introduced a requirement for explicit assessment of "technical proficiency in English" (p.49). However, this "technical proficiency" is not defined, and it hides the complexity and variability of disciplinary discourses that students are expected to master.

Internationally, policies and practices for demystifying academic expectations differ, including compulsory courses and post-entry, discipline-specific diagnostic assessments. In the UK, practice is largely small-scale and sometimes difficult to locate (Wingate, 2015). In this symposium, we present and critique a range of approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration between language and subject experts from four diverse higher education institutions.

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Chair

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Discussants

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Steve Kirk

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370 The complexity of interdisciplinary collaboration: what LCT's Autonomy can tell us about success and failure

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Sustainable collaboration between academic language and literacies experts and experts from university students' target disciplines is highly valorised in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), yet fraught with challenges (Murray & Nallaya, 2016; Sloan & Porter, 2010). At her current institution, this author has experienced a range of success and failures in attempts to collaborate with target discipline experts in the development of students' academic literacies. This paper presents the analysis of focus group data where participants discussed the need for academic writing and literacies support for their students. This data has been analysed using the dimension of Autonomy from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT). The analysis illuminates the relations between disciplinary and EAP practices and where they are positioned on, and move across, the autonomy plane, offers great insight into why approaches to collaboration are likely to succeed or fail.

Full paper

Sustainable collaboration between academic language and literacies experts and experts from the students' target disciplines is highly valorised in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Collaboration has historically taken many guises. From target disciplines providing texts for the EAP educator to exploit in the EAP classroom, to team-teaching with the target discipline, who may focus on 'content' while the EAP educator focuses on 'language', with many other configurations of collaboration existing in between. Collaboration, however, is fraught with many challenges, not least its inability to be sustained due to its reliance on charisma and networking skills (Murray & Nallaya, 2016) and an unsupportive institutional culture (Sloan & Porter, 2010). These challenges continue to problematise sustainable collaboration between target discipline and EAP expert.

UK universities (indeed many HE systems within Anglophone countries) are increasingly aware of the need to support students from all backgrounds with their development of academic literacies (Wingate & Tribble, 2012; Murray & Nallaya, 2016). In the UK context, supporting students classed as international or speakers of English as an additional language, has largely been the remit of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) educators. Consequently, this support has traditionally only reached a proportion of an institution's student population. There is an emergent and ever-expanding body of work that is seeing EAP educators collaborate with experts from other disciplines with the common aim of academic literacies development being enacted within the disciplinary classroom (McGrath et al., 2019; Macnaught et al., 2022) and, therefore, being accessible to all and ultimately more sustainable.

In the post-pandemic era, this EAP educator has been involved in initiatives to foster greater collaboration between EAP expert and target discipline experts across a Russell Group institution, with various degrees of success. The challenges faced stem from a lack of top-down support for such collaboration, a lack of local policy advocating for the need for collaboration and a lack of awareness within the institution of what expertise exists and crucially where it is located. Centralised academic writing provision that once existed and 'served' departments has been replaced with support for employability and graduate skills. The institution's EAP experts are misunderstood as English teachers and perceived to be able to only support students with an English language deficit. There is institution wide frustration with a lack of academic literacies development for all students across disciplines. Leaving the question; who can, or should, help students develop their academic literacies across this institution.

This paper shares the analysis of focus group data from different faculties across the institution tasked with discussing this question. The analysis enacts the dimension of Autonomy from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to explore relations between disciplinary experts' and the EAP expert's practices when it comes to helping students develop their academic literacies. Autonomy "explores what makes practices distinctive" (Maton & Howard, 2021b, p.79) and starts from "the premise that any set of practices comprises constituents that are related together in particular ways" (Maton & Howard, 2021a, p.28). The dimension "focuses on relations between sets of practices (such as subject areas) and conceptualizes their organising principles as autonomy codes" (Maton & Howard, 2021a p. 28). Where practices are positioned within the four autonomy codes (and their movement between) is determined by degrees of strength of insulated positions, or how strongly actors are associated with the context and how autonomous principles are, or whether actors act according to specific ways of working (Maton & Howard, 2021a, p.30). By examining the relations between disciplinary and EAP practices through the lens of Autonomy, we can begin to gain insight into reasons behind the successes and failures of the approaches taken within the institution to

collaborate on the development of academic literacies. This can be powerful knowledge in creating sustainable collaborations for developing students' academic literacies.

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320 Alternative approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration: navigating new challenges, alignments and alliances

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Developing students' academic literacies within their disciplines has become an increasingly important part of Higher Education, contributing to subject-specific knowledge and graduate attributes. As this often involves input from various university departments, collaboration is central to this endeavour (Wingate, 2018). Effective collaboration is regarded as a key part of the practitioner's role, frequently cited within job descriptions and role requirements.

However, within EAP (English for Academic Purposes) there is little explicit attention to this aspect of teacher training (Campion 2016) and tutor induction offers insufficient opportunities to explore methods and skills for collaboration (Driscoll, 2019). In this presentation, I report on two recent examples of interdisciplinary collaboration and explore alternative approaches proposed by the disciplines, considering the reconfiguration of professional roles this has led to. I suggest that greater collaboration across institutions and knowledge-sharing can serve to address some of the complexities of interdisciplinary collaboration to demystify academic discourses.

Full paper

The notion of a core and shared understanding of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and what these three letters stand for may exist on a very general level within Higher Education. However, EAP is viewed from diverse perspectives (Hyland, 2018) and can be interpreted and manifested differently according to the contexts in which we work. EAP operates across a range of different institutional and disciplinary contexts and has evolved within various models and formats (Hyland, 2006; Tibbetts and Chapman, 2023). This in turn, influences the role of the EAP practitioner, with implications for our practice, remit and identity within the academy (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

This paper is situated within a In-sessional context where a more 'conventional' model of discipline-specific EAP has developed over a period of two decades as one in which the In-sessional teacher analyses disciplinary genres to develop a syllabus, materials and deliver discipline-specific EAP sessions. This approach to developing disciplinary knowledge utilises the EAP practitioner's discourse and genre analysis skills, knowledge of linguistic theory, experience of pedagogy and is often undertaken with some input from subject lecturers in academic departments. The aim of this paper is to explore the transition from this more conventional model of collaboration for EAP course design, delivery and embedding, towards an alternative approach to EAP pedagogy as proposed by academics in departments we teach into. By examining contrasting examples of collaboration in two STEM subjects which are recent additions to our In-sessional provision, this paper explores what happens when an institutionally established approach to discipline-specific EAP is challenged by the disciplines, taking the EAP practitioner out of their comfort zone and forcing a rethink of fundamental questions such as:

What is EAP?

How do we 'do' EAP?

How do we collaborate with subject lecturers in the disciplines?

How do we embed EAP?

What might discipline-specific EAP look like in practice?

What is the EAP practitioner's role in embedded discipline-specific EAP?

The paper draws upon recent research on fluidity in professional identities (Whitchurch, 2008) and specific identities of 'the collaborator, the relationship manager, the applied linguist, the teacher, the content (non)expert, the academic, the strategist, and the expense' (Fenton-Smith and Gurney, 2022, p160). It reflects on some of the challenges and opportunities presented in addressing these questions when forced to do so in collaborating with disciplines who may have new answers to some of our old questions. Far from a variation on 'the butler stance' (Raimes, 1991), this process can involve the disciplines as an alternative learning site for EAP practitioners to critically analyse our professional role, its component parts and how it can evolve beyond its traditional parameters. In making the familiar strange, it is possible to question our own assumptions about our practice, remit and identity within the academy. In short, it can be seen as an opportunity to deconstruct the role of the EAP practitioner and reconstruct it to reflect and develop the multiple constituent roles it entails.

In reporting on these two alternative approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration at one institution, it is also necessary to view these developments within the wider field, its related frameworks and practice. Therefore, the relationship between these two examples of collaborative discipline-specific EAP practice will be analysed within the context of existing approaches to collaboration such as the Conceptualisation, Embedding and Mapping (CEM) model (Sloan and Porter 2010; Alexander et al, 2017) and examples of collaborative projects with subject specialists, teacher developers and EAP specialists (Yakovchuk and Ingle, 2013; Zappa-Hollman, 2018; Caplan, 2019, Colclough et al, 2019; McGrath et al, 2019).

This paper also considers how these examples of interdisciplinary collaboration have not only served to demystify academic discourses within the respective disciplines but also to challenge certain assumptions about the nature of interdisciplinary collaboration and the roles of those engaging in it. This necessarily includes the role of students in co-constructing their curriculum and fostering greater 'discipline empathy' within EAP practitioners. In analysing some of the key questions and issues which practitioners encounter when interdisciplinary collaboration takes place within HE institutions, the paper considers arguments for greater collaboration across institutions to jointly unpack academic discourses and develop discipline-specific pedagogy.

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198 Challenges in developing a systematic approach to interdisciplinary collaboration to embed academic language and literacies into the curriculum: a case study

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

In the UK, there have been few reported cases of systematic approaches to the development of students' academic literacies (Wingate, 2018). One exception was the Thinking Writing work developed at Queen Mary, University of London (Mitchell & Evison, 2006). In a review of the approaches developed in that project, including the successes and challenges experienced, Mitchell (2010) employs the contrastive metaphors of a "cottage industry" versus "industrialised approaches" with a warning of what can be lost through the process of 'industrialisation'. In this presentation, I explore and critique a multi-stranded approach to interdisciplinary collaborations between language and subject experts from conception through to practice, evaluation, and research publication. I suggest that it is the latter, the creation of an evidence base, which may be the critical factor in navigating the demand to scale up (Nicholls, 2020) without losing the specificity of local (discipline-specific) discourses and practices.

Full paper

In this paper I present and critique a systematic approach to interdisciplinary collaborations between language and subject experts at a post-1992 UK university: the Academic Language and Literacy Project. The goal of those interdisciplinary collaborations was to make lecturers' expectations of academic discourse in student assessments explicit to all of their students: to demystify disciplinary discourses.

Approaches to teaching academic discourses, particularly written discourses, in higher education curricula are well-advanced in some anglophone countries. In the United States of America, there are traditions of Writing in the Disciplines (WID) and Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) that take discipline-specific or generic approaches to the development of students' writing (Russell, 2002; Tardy and Jwa, 2016). In Australia, the publication of government guidance on language development for students led to numerous reports and analyses of different practices (see

Moore & Harrington, 2016). These mainly but not exclusively focus on learners with English as an additional language (eg. Edwards et al, 2021). In the UK, there are numerous local, small-scale developments (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2006), but few systematic university-wide approaches reported (Wingate, 2018). One notable exception was the Thinking Writing work carried out at Queen Mary (Mitchell & Evison, 2006). Mitchell (2010) describes the aim of Thinking Writing as “making writing visible by making it part of the mainstream institutional agenda” (p.135). However, Mitchell notes the tension between wanting to make writing visible through processes such as quality assurance structures and assessment criteria, and risking the creation of a “compliance-driven approach” (p.146) amongst students as a result of “industrialized approaches to writing and assessment” (p.145). The desire amongst academic leaders to scale up (Nicholls, 2019) what they see as good practice is often at odds with Mitchell’s final recommendation that we should assert the values of the cottage industry: we should keep sight of the local and specific whilst engaging with institutional agendas.

The project reported on in this paper is based on several stages of development and is comprised of multiple strands of work. Developmental work that preceded the collaborations include: the creation of a logic model that summarises our activities and intended outcomes; a set of principles that underpins our collaborative and pedagogic approaches; a set of communication resources; and a research-based interview protocol to open discussions with collaborators from any discipline (McGrath et al, 2019).

Despite a standardised approach to initial interviews with potential collaborators, the focus and format of collaborative ‘interventions’ varied widely. This variation emanates from the specific needs of students, as perceived by their lecturers, and the experience and expertise of the language expert paired with subject expert(s) (Axelby et al, forthcoming). Regular review by the Academic Language and Literacy Project team has identified common factors for success, as well as issues and challenges.

A key challenge has been the selection and recruitment of collaborators. How do we ensure that the activities which we engage in are reaching the students who could benefit the most? The team of language experts has been navigating this conundrum with both top-down and bottom-up networking strategies. Top-down strategies have included: bidding for internal funding to pilot the Academic Language and Literacies project; and presenting the project the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors for Learning and Teaching (three so far), Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching, and various committees in different colleges. At the same time, direct contact with those who might be interested in collaborating has been sought via informal contacts with known colleagues in different departments, through presentations at learning and teaching events within the university, and through the introduction of the issues and the goals of the project at the professional development course for lecturers who are new to teaching in higher education. University-wide curriculum redesign is a new opportunity on our horizon, and we are hoping to be able to identify further partnerships through this process. A further challenge is the hunt for evidence of impact. Our plan to build an evidence base throughout the project leading to publications and presentations is fundamental to the project. Such evidence could be the key to maintaining a cottage industry’s local specificity whilst working at scale.

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Parallel Session 6:4

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 145

Chair Katy Jordan

156 State of Play: An Historic Review of Playful Learning Approaches in Higher Education

Nicola Whitton

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Play is an integral part of childhood education for centuries, however, in an increasingly instrumental Higher Education environment, the relationship between play and learning becomes more distant as the focus moves from intrinsic interest to learning for assessments.

Over the past fifty years there has been a movement in the use of playful approaches in Higher Education, showing increased use of gameful techniques and a gradually increasing acceptance of play. This article describes the trends

over this time, based on a narrative literature review of the use of games, play, and playful techniques in the context of learning in Higher Education.

An analysis of 1090 journal articles dating from 1973 to 2022 enabled an exploration of the trends of research in play and learning in universities, focusing on role play, business simulation games, traditional play, digital play, game making, gamification, and post-digital play.

Full paper

While play in childhood learning is accepted, it is used far less in adult education, as the focus moves from intrinsic motivation to learning for assessment (Nørgård, 2021). However, play and playfulness in higher education takes many forms and has evolved over the past fifty years. A literature review on the last fifty years of play in higher education is used here to better understand changes in approaches and terminology used, focusing on articles that use the tools, techniques, and tactics (Whitton, 2018) of playful learning in its widest sense.

The review focused on a single database, Scopus, selected because of the scale of its coverage. Included in the review were journal articles available in English published between 1973 and 2022 where the title of the article contains either “play*” or “gam*” and where the abstract contains “undergraduate” or “postgraduate” or “higher education”. Articles were removed that were not relevant, including those on playing music, analysis of theatrical plays, studies into gambling behaviour and sports performance, analysis of leisure games, discussions of drinking games, economic game theory, and teaching about games in non-playful ways. This left 1090 articles that were included in the analysis.

The most obvious trend in the data is the growing numbers of articles on playful learning being published each year, increasing faster than the overall growth in articles published, and showing that research interest in this area is on the ascendency. However, there are also clear biases in the origin of the research with most articles coming from the United States and Europe, and a tiny proportion from either Africa or South America. While this may be partially the result to drawing on an English-language corpus, it is still important to highlight the US-European biases in the research literature.

To explore the trends in playful approaches used in the literature, each article was coded to identify the primary terminologies used. This analysis of terminology enabled the identification of seven forms of playful learning and trends in the literature over the past fifty years.

- Role play, where learners act out roles in specific scenarios (Rao & Stupans, 2012), has been commonly used across all areas of medical practice over the past fifty years, as well as in a range of other disciplines, most heavily in the social sciences.
- Business simulation games, in which students take on business roles and make company decisions, were the first games used in higher education (van Ments, 1995), and until the 2000s ‘simulation game’ was the most common term used to describe games for learning in the corpus.
- Traditional play using formats such as board games, card games, or quizzes were the second most common forms of game in the early part of the corpus and the use of the term remains steady throughout.
- Digital play began to dominate the research literature from the early 2000s, with the term ‘serious game’ first being used in the corpus in 2008 to denote a game (mainly computer games) for which fun is not the primary purpose (Westera et al., 2008). As well as video games, digital play also includes mobile games and virtual worlds.
- Game-making focuses on the design and development of games, particularly digital games, as a pedagogic approach, and is most commonly related to teaching computer science.
- Gamification is use of game mechanics (such as points, competition, quests, and rewards) in non-gaming contexts to make them more engaging (Deterding, 2012). The term ‘gamification’ was first used in the corpus in 2013 and is still used heavily.
- Post-digital play encompasses several forms of playful learning that have emerged in recent years that go beyond a core focus on video games, and includes playfulness as a pedagogy (Hancock, 2014), alternate reality games (Piatt, 2009), pervasive games (Montola et al., 2009), playing with toys such as LEGO (James, 2013), and escape rooms (Fotaris & Mastoras, 2019).

While this review enabled the identification of historic themes in the literature base, most of the research evaluates a single game or intervention. We lack the large-scale long-term impactful studies that show not just the effects of

playful learning but also explore the qualitative experiences for teachers and students and the social, cultural, and political agendas of play. Too many studies have self-selecting or otherwise biased sampling; too much research is carried out by play evangelists. The use of play in higher education, more so than many other fields, still needs a rigorous evidence-base of what works and why to be taken seriously as a pedagogy and research field.

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228 Learning by design in Living Labs: understanding the complexities

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Living Labs in higher education have the intention to synergize learning and innovation through integration of education, research and innovation. However, the literature does not seem to provide an evidence-base for student learning in these complex settings, balancing professional, pedagogical and accountability discourses. An educational-design study aims to help develop this knowledge-base: three social learning settings in Labs in the Social Professions Faculty of a single university are analyzed and redesigned in collaborations with teachers, students, and professional partners. Afterward, their experiences are collected through semi-structured interviews. A grounded approach of the analysis of the interviews and fieldnotes will contribute to the understanding of the complexities of balancing professional, pedagogical and accountability discourses in learning and its scaffolding in Labs. The conceptual framework and initial methodological findings will be presented and discussed. It is expected that preliminary findings in the first co-design project and interviews will also be shared.

Full paper

Introduction

Living Labs in higher education aim to offer integration of education, research and professional practice and intend to synergize learning and innovation (Schipper, Vos & Wallner, 2022). Yet, the literature shows a divide between innovation focused labs and student focused labs (Griffioen & van Heijningen, accepted). Labs with innovation focus do hardly include students (Kalinauskaite, Brankaert, Lu, Bekker, Brombacher & Vos, 2021; Westerlund, Leminen & Habib, 2018). Similarly, student Labs are framed as secondary pedagogical devices, with transferable innovation positioned as a mere by-product of education (Admiraal et al., 2019; McLaughlan & Lodge, 2019). Hence, international literature does not seem to provide an evidence-base for student learning in complex, innovative Lab settings.

Labs aim to offer students a learning environment characterized by realistic, complex task situations, multidisciplinary and social interaction (Admiraal, 2019). Thus, students' interactions in Labs are less strongly framed than they are for example in the traditional lecture; in a Lab the pedagogical relationships are more open to initiative and require more autonomy (Barnett & Coate, p. 34). This requires adequate scaffolding of students' intended learning processes (de Kleijn, 2021; Griffioen & van Heijningen, accepted). Following Markauskaite and Goodyear's (2017, p. 210) triple perspective to professional education, student learning in Labs is underpinned by three discourses: a professional discourse in the interaction with practice, a pedagogical discourse for learning structures and an accountability discourse for testing. These discourses interact, but so far it remains unclear how to position the professional discourse to ensure transferable innovation and learning of students (Griffioen & van Heijningen, accepted). Within this overarching frame basic human needs (Dweck, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017) and Labs as social learning spaces (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020) are chosen as framework from which to design and develop the scaffolding practices.

An understanding of the complexities of balancing professional, pedagogical and accountability discourses in learning and its scaffolding in Labs is needed to (possibly) allow Labs to fulfill their promises as rich learning environments.

Research design

This issue is addressed in a two-year educational-design study in which three social learning settings in living labs in the Social Professions Faculty of a single university are analyzed and iteratively redesigned. Undergraduate students follow part of their formal education in these Labs.

The three co-design projects each follow an iterative redesign process, where needed adapted to their particular context and setup (McKenney, Nieveen, & Van den Akker, 2006). Labs will be chosen to cover the scope of Labs at the Social Professions Faculty in terms of complexity, multidisciplinary and social interaction. Semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and professionals results in a needs-analysis for the learning goals of the Labs, as well in a first insight in the experienced working mechanisms of scaffolding practices in labs. Next, the professional, pedagogical and assessment practices, and scaffolding practices are co-designed and co-developed by teachers, students, professional partners and the researcher. After implementation, an evaluation session will take place per Lab, and experiences will be shared in a cross-Lab evaluation session.

Measurement instruments

The experiences of students, teachers and professionals partaking in each of three Labs are collected after implementation through semi-structured interviews on the professional, pedagogical and assessment practices and the students' learning and their needs in learning. Depending on the size of the teacher teams and their classes, in Lab 3 to 6 teachers, 6 to 12 students and 3 to 6 six professional partners will be interviewed.

Fieldnotes of and memo's on the co-design and co-development sessions will complement the interview data.

Analysis

A grounded approach is used in coding the interviews (Charmaz, 2014). For data reduction, all quotes on professional practices, pedagogical practices, assessment practices, learning, and needs are selected in all interviews and mapped onto these categories. Secondly, focused coding is used to analyze emergent relations between professional, pedagogical, and assessment practices, student learning and needs. Design principles for balanced professional, pedagogical and assessment practices in Labs and effective scaffolding practices will be inferred from comparisons of the data of the three labs.

Findings

At SRHE 2023 the conceptual framework and methodological findings will be presented and discussed. Both the interviews and the first co-design project indicate that the students' experiences do not match the conceptual ideal of balanced professional, pedagogical, and assessment discourses, see Figure 1. It is expected that preliminary content findings in the first of three co-design projects and the first interviews can also be shared and discussed.

Conceptual ideal of balanced Professional, Pedagogical, and Accountability discourses in Labs

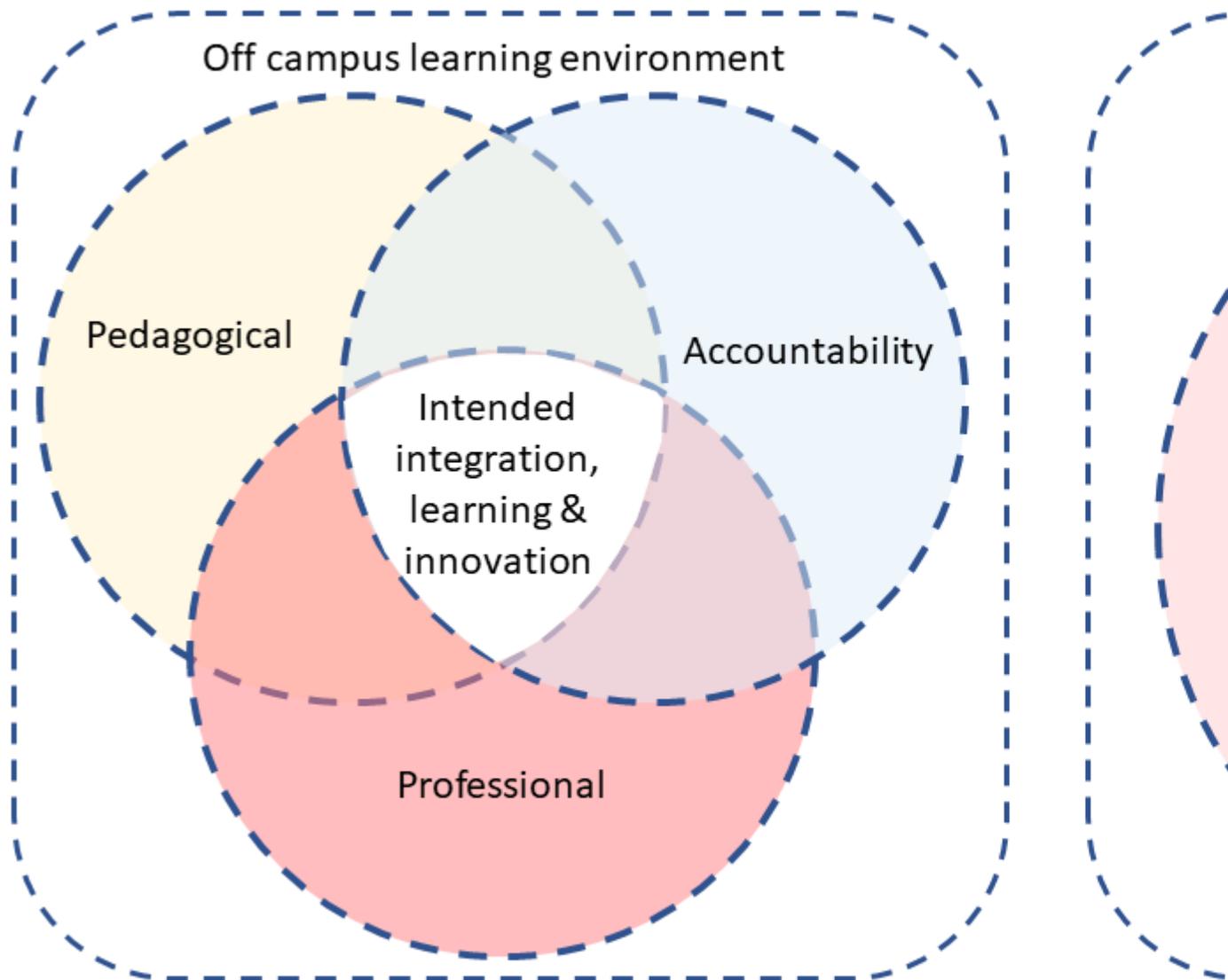


Figure 1. Visualization of the conceptual ideal of the intended balance of Professional, Pedagogical, and Accountability discourses in Labs and preliminary students' experienced balance of Professional, Pedagogical, and Accountability discourses in Labs

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378 The generative power of co-creation: lessons from a blended learning co-creation project

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Higher education is being shaped by the increasing demand of the labour market for transversal skills of graduates, while the massification of Higher Education results in changing student populations and their needs. Co-creation seeks to improve student engagement, empower students as active learners and establish a partnership between students and lecturers. The University of Suffolk has embraced block and blend format learning and teaching with strengths in immersive learning and challenges in disconnect between skills. As a response, the Learning Hubs as spaces for individual development of skills were piloted. To increase engagement with these resources a co-creative consortium of students, professional and academic staff was established. The community created an exemplar of the practice of co-creation in higher education that can be adopted across the university and inform the sector.

Full paper

The massification of Higher Education and associated foci on widening participation has had significant impact on universities. Related, but additionally, cost-benefit accountability measures, related to the efficacy of courses for all learners, in terms of developing employability, has had significant impact on how learning and courses are conceived, designed and realised. Increasingly evident in literature and policy is a drive to design Higher Education not just for but with students, towards co-creation. Bovill (2020) argues co-creation is a term closely connected with, and part of a continuum which begins with seeking to improve student engagement, employ active learning and is journeying more toward the notion of partnership between students and teachers. As a young university entering the field not long before the pandemic, the University of Suffolk embraced the necessity of online learning to further develop engaging and efficacious designs for learning asynchronously and in blended form. Courses have been redesigned into intensive five-week blocks, characterised by a blended format of on-campus sessions, tutor-led asynchronous online activities and independent work. Evaluation data suggests this has improved student-tutor relationships and students' ability to immerse themselves in one thing at a time. However, students and tutors have identified the challenge in developing the range of academic, employability skills and wellbeing at enough depth to ensure good outcomes. In response, tutors in one course piloted their own design for 'Learning Hubs'. This was a resource pool of online interactive activities, designed and developed with examples curated and created by the staff to ensure the relevance of the resource for learners on this course. They were conceived to support the holistic development of students' academic, transversal, employability skills and wellbeing. The concept and the resources were received with excitement from staff and appreciated by the students who made use of them, however, the engagement with using and evaluating the Learning Hubs remained low. Therefore, a co-creative consortium (n=15) was gathered to identify best practice in blended learning and teaching and to design a research study that would further inform the implementation of the Learning Hubs. Undergraduate and postgraduate students (n=6), learning designers (n=2), academic skills advisors (n=1), and academics (n=6) were involved in a series of workshops co-creating the Learning Hubs.

Following participatory (research) design (Kindon et al., 2007; Sanders and Stappers, 2008), the study unfolded in several phases and layers. The involvement in co-creation was reflected upon using several traditional and creative methods (impact questionnaire, SWOT analysis, reflective logs, online collaboration tools, visual metaphors, lego) some of which were included in the original research design and some of which were added by the community members.

The shared commission (Trowsdale and Davies, 2022) of the community intensely focusing on what matters to them sustained and deepened their engagement. In this case it was a shared interest in designing high-quality online resources for skill development that brought the group together, kept them focused on task and individually motivated. Making things together created a sense of belonging, and a value for diverse skills as the 'expertise' in the room was dynamic and affirmed people's sense of capability.

While co-creation could be perceived as time-consuming and 'messy', it addresses current challenges of higher education from its core.

Co-creation serves as a means of achieving inclusion through valuing diversity which is demonstrated by breaking down hierarchical structures in relationships between those who constitute a university. Each member of the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is genuinely valued for their contributions to the collective as the commission takes shape as a direct result of their interaction with the community.

Co-Creating the Learning Hubs resulted in co-creating the product of a resource pool of online activities, but equally importantly enabled us to formulate the principles of good practice in blended learning. Moreover, the community

created an exemplar of the practice of co-creation in higher education that can be adopted across the university and inform the sector. At a time when Higher Education is under intense scrutiny to deliver on multiple fronts, as civic hubs, culturally, professional and industry attuned, accessible and inclusive, co-creation may have particular significance. Our experience emphasised how collaboration can generate the momentum for ongoing re-inventing (here of content and methods) in response to current and future needs; our process revealed personal, community and professional value for all involved. Practising and honing the principles of co-creation in our universities may be important in their evolution as places where academic good outcomes and employability is reliant on and interwoven with personal and community growth.

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Parallel Session 6:5

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Conference Room 1b

Chair Jacqueline Stevenson

183 Making connections between research and ancillary staff experiences in Higher Education: a literature review.

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The proposed paper outlines the literature review conducted as part of a SRHE-funded project exploring the experiences of ancillary staff (e.g. catering, security and cleaning staff) in UK Higher Education Institutions. An in-depth literature search was carried out using EBSCO host, and similar databases. The review captures the experiences of a group which has been given limited consideration in research and policy debates around HE. Initial findings highlight that, overall, the literature tends to focus on the benefits of having a clean, well looked after environment to work in, but lacks acknowledgement of the individuals who make it so (Amstutz, 2008; Campbell & Bigger, 2008). Where research explores the experiences of ancillary staff, it shows that this group experiences feelings of invisibility and non-belonging, as well as battling long working shifts and lacking social interaction in the workplace (Caridad Rabelo & Mahalingham, 2019; Du Toit, 2015).

Full paper

This paper is one of two papers part of a research project exploring the experiences of ancillary staff in UK Higher Education Institutions. The other paper focuses on the empirical data gathered via the staff interviews, with this paper having a sole focus on the literature review element of the study. Ancillary staff (defined for the purpose of this study as staff working in catering, cleaning and security roles) are typically involved in 'reproductive work' and, as such, fulfil an important role in society. In the HE sector, their work helps to maintain the environment in which academics, those in professional roles and students operate.

An in-depth review of the literature in English language was carried out using EBSCO host, and similar databases, in addition to recommended articles by colleagues and scholars writing within the field and reference list signposting. Initial inclusion/exclusion criteria were discussed within the research team to enable a starting point for the search and help give the searches direction. A barrier to the initial stages of this process was an acknowledgement in varying terminology for this workforce. Detailed key words, derived from the initial inclusion criteria and developed throughout the reading, were used to access literature widely, including as many groups as possible. A literature categorisation table was created to keep track of key information from each resource relevant to the search. Identifiers such as location, source type, data collection method and which group of ancillary staff the source was focused on (cleaners, catering or security) were all noted. This was to ensure a clear snapshot of the texts captured by the search was available at a glance for the analysis stage. When searching the literature, it was occasionally necessary to explore the sample description for those ambiguous terms that remained unclear, to see if the sources were relevant to this review.

Findings from the review show that research about ancillary staff is rare and tends to focus on the quality or the costs of those services, with limited consideration of those doing the work and of their own perspectives (see, eg du Toit, 2015). The research in this area has a clear focus on the benefits of having a clean and well looked after workspace. However, there is a distinct lack of acknowledgement of the individuals to whom the responsibility falls to keep these environments safe, clean and catered for (Amstutz, 2008, Campbell & Bigger, 2008; Uleanya, 2020). Some of the texts we reviewed identify a stigma and spatial separation from co-workers, with some staff feeling as though people think they are 'beneath them' and, sometimes, experiencing feelings of not belonging and shame. Some researchers attribute the invisibility and misrecognition of ancillary to class divides, amongst other factors (Caridad Rabelo & Mahalingham, 2019). While research shows that those managing ancillary staff have become more aware of the challenges they face, research shows that feelings of being invisible, concerns about work-life (im)balance, long hours and work being considered 'tedious' persist (Britten, 2021). Regarding catering staff, for example, one researcher noted that the catering role was broadly perceived as being 'intangible, perishable, and variable' (Tsai, 2016, p. 215). Those outsourced often feel a lack in direction from the overall strategic plan of the institution, resulting in teams feeling that they are expected to be reactive rather than proactive to any changes that happen within the institution, with little or no consideration of inclusion on strategy discussions for the implementation of such services (HEFCE, 2003).

This literature review is part of a larger project (Doing the dirty work of academia? Ancillary staff in higher education). As such, it is an important step to provide the context for the research in addition to informing the analysis and avoiding duplicating the work. Most crucially, as we have argued elsewhere (Moreau & Wheeler, 2023), the research literature is not 'out of the discourse' of academia. Instead, it constructs the objects it speaks of. Thus the review provides some helpful indication of how, from within HE, the work of academic researchers and policy-makers can contribute to the reproduction of the inner hierarchies of HE, for example when research on HE focuses on academics or professionals, yet renders invisible the cleaning, catering and security staff who enable them to work in safe and healthy environment. Thus, this literature review is a useful tool for researchers to reflect on the classed dimension of knowledge production and call for the generation of new connections between academic work and work positioned at the margins of academic cultures.

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137 Doing the dirty work of academia? Ancillary staff in UK Higher Education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Ancillary staff (defined as staff working in catering, cleaning and security roles) are typically involved in 'reproductive work' and, as such, fulfill a crucial role. In Higher Education, their work contributes to maintaining and enhancing the social and physical environment where academics, professional staff, and students operate.

Borrowing from Nancy Fraser's (1997) and Kathleen Lynch's (2010) multi-level theories of social justice, the SRHE-funded research project underpinning this paper involved a literature review, on-campus observations, an online survey of UK HE stakeholders and 20 online interviews with ancillary staff.

Focusing on interviews with ancillary staff, we explore how this group experiences distributive, cultural, representational and affective in/justices in HE contexts, while also considering how these dimensions of social justice are compounded by the politics of gender, class and race (Acker, 1994; Lynch, 2010). Ultimately, the project calls for the recognition of ancillary work in HE research and policies.

Full paper

Ancillary staff (defined for the purpose of this study as staff working in catering, cleaning and security roles) are typically involved in 'reproductive work' and, as such, fulfill a crucial role in society. In Higher Education, their work contributes to maintaining and enhancing the social and physical environment where academics, professional staff, and students operate, with benefits observed in terms of students' learning, the well-being of students and staff, and workplace collegiality (Lugosi, 2019; Northern Ireland Education, 2007). These positions often require a range of technical and relational skills and can be physically, emotionally and mentally demanding as well as, at times, risky. The Covid-19 pandemic, in particular, has increased health risks for these staff who are often in 'people-facing' roles, while anecdotal evidence suggests that these roles have become more encompassing (see, eg, Britten, 2021).

Yet the scarce evidence available about this group shows that ancillary work tends to attract low pay (distributive injustice) and low recognition (cultural injustice) (Magolda, 2016; Sykes et al, 2014). This group also tends to be

poorly represented in decision-making bodies and professional organisations (representational injustice) and their working conditions are likely to conflict with the demands of their private lives (affective injustice). Often, ancillary staff are also members of underprivileged groups, with these positions disproportionately taken up by women, as well as migrants and those with working class and minority ethnic backgrounds. As such, they are potentially sitting at the intersection of multiple injustices (Sykes et al, 2014).

As well as being scarce, research about this group tends to adopt a rational economic lens, focusing on the quality or the costs of the services provided, with limited concern for ancillary staff's experiences and perspectives (see, eg, du Toit, 2015). In this respect, Peter Magolda's in-depth, ethnographic study of cleaners in two US institutions represents a notable exception. While the limited evidence points to a deficit in terms of economic or distributive justice (eg low pay, precarious, part-time contracts), cultural justice (invisibility and misrecognition of their contribution to the sector and wider society), political or representational justice (low levels of involvements in union and decision-making bodies) and affective justice (eg working conditions which do not lend themselves well to caring responsibilities), little is known about how staff themselves experience, and potentially resist, these injustices.

More specifically, borrowing from Nancy Fraser's (1997) and Kathleen Lynch's (2010) multi-level theories of social justice, this paper explores how ancillary staff experience distributive, cultural, representational and affective in/justices, while also considering how these dimensions of social justice are compounded by the politics of gender, class and race (Acker, 1994; Lynch, 2010).

Funded by a SRHE Research Award (2022-23), the research project underpinning this paper involved a review of the literature, on-campus observations, an online survey of UK HE stakeholders (to build a picture of who ancillary staff are and how they are contracted), and 20 interviews with ancillary staff. Participants to the semi-structured interviews were recruited through the distribution of a call through email lists and social media. Recruitment was closely monitored to ensure maximum diversity, particularly in relation to the position, UK nation, gender and ethnicity. The interviews focused on how participants made sense of their work and the potential injustices they face. Interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed, then summarised and written up in short summaries to maintain the 'wholeness' of each narrative. In complement, we used thematic and discourse analysis to identify cross-cutting themes emerging from the body of transcripts, as well as similarities and differences based on the position, gender and ethnicity.

The paper is part of a broader project aiming to kickstart a conversation about a group who is given limited consideration in HE research and policy circles, and to contribute to a better understanding of their contribution to HE. The paper also aims to interrogate the gendered, raced and classed hierarchies of HE labour, including the potential economic, cultural, political and affective in/equalities ancillary staff experience. In alignment with the conference call, we seek to establish generative connections between research, practice and policy, including through the development of epistemologies and forms of knowledge which critically explore the in/visibilities and dis/valuing of ancillary work.

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283 Doing the heavy lifting: The experiences of working class professional services and administrative staff in Russell Group universities

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

At present, research which seeks to understand social class based experiences of universities has focused predominantly on the experiences of working class academics and working class students. There is currently a large gap in research which has not yet addressed the experiences of working class professional services and administrative staff. In fact, professional services voices in themselves rarely feature in academic literature regardless of social class background. This paper outlines findings of an EdD thesis. Using semi-structured interviews and narrative inquiry, the experiences of 13 working class professional services employees at Russell Group universities were collected. This paper both addresses the complexities of defining social class in the 21st century and looks at the experiences of those working in professional services. It hopes to contribute to knowledge by investigating the complexities of organizational culture through the experiences that professional services staff have working day to day in Russell Group universities.

Full paper

All participants reported generally good relationships with others in professional services teams and working class students who they sought to help. Where participants mentioned relationships with students from other social class backgrounds and academics, these relationships were reported with a distinctly negative framing. Working class professional services staff are subjected to poor behaviour, disdain, a lack of respect, with derogatory and demeaning action on the part of academics and students from other social class backgrounds.

The single most common theme when asked what the least enjoyable part of their role was, was unequivocally the relationships they had with academics. Participants referred to these behaviours as being a result of a higher degree of value placed on academics, a sense that academics were the ones who were 'shining', a lack of regard for professional services work and a sense that professional services staff could be used to carry out often demeaning and non-contracted work, even whilst ill or on leave. The mechanisms at play which demonstrate this lack of value include direct examples of poor behaviour towards professional services staff (shouting, speaking in a derogatory way), using deferential language, not valuing professional services voices in meetings and placing expectations on staff which were unreasonable or unfeasible. At times where professional services colleagues demonstrated historical instances of speaking up (which does not seem to be a normative course of behaviour for working class staff members), they were shushed or told to get on with their work, and therefore not taken seriously.

Not feeling fully included in the culture of the organisation in which they worked materialised in different ways across this study. For many of the participants in this study, they were highly qualified individuals, often with a PhD or

Master's degree and yet they felt they were unable to progress in their careers due, either to a lack of qualification, or because the career path or trajectory had no further steps on it. In these instances, technical colleagues expressed their dissatisfaction that future promotion would have to come at the expense of people management, despite their functional roles in IT and programming. It was clear that where universities were making big decisions, such as relocating a campus, that they had not implemented a mainstreaming framework and therefore failed to take into consideration the impact these policies changes would have on people with different personal demographics.

A further facet of not being truly included in the fabric of the university was the sense that there was a predominant set of cultural tastes and preferences which were exemplified and demonstrated by those who had come from different social class backgrounds. Many spoke about their inability to engage in conversations about art, theatre, opera or 'high culture', a lack of understanding about classical antiquity, or an inability to fit in with the style of dress which seemed to pervade the workplace. Despite feeling a tension of not fitting into their workplace environment, colleagues noted that this shift in working life and (sometimes) geographical relocation also made it very difficult to fit into their previous home environment, rendering them often as feeling like 'class traitors' to their roots, yet also not being able to fully integrate into their new local environment.

Finally, this study illuminates themes around class which ask larger conceptual questions about the social mobility agenda which is currently being pursued across the board by large governmental organisations. As this study shows there are two fundamental issues with this approach. Firstly, there is the concern that whilst individuals might be able to access an institution or organisation that actually, they never fully 'integrate' and always feel a sense of flux between their origins and the new environment they find themselves in at work. This raises significant questions about well-being. Furthermore, the idea of social mobility and the integration of people from working class backgrounds is predicated on the prioritisation of the kind of cultural tastes and behaviours which are already in practice within that institution. In the case of large city-based firms and organisations and in 'elite' universities, this set of cultural tastes and behaviours have been set in place by decades, and sometimes, centuries, of this space being dominated by members of the upper and upper middle classes. As such, this kind of approach advocates for the adoption of these kinds of cultural tastes and dispositions in opposition to the cultures and tastes of the working class (Walkerdine 2021).

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Parallel Session 6:6

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 144

Chair Neil Harrison

268 Reprioritising personal tutoring through the lens of under-represented student experiences

Rachael O'Connor

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Amplifying voices of students and staff captured through multi-modal data collection including interviews, reflective logs and group discussions, this presentation critically explores a unique intervention to enhance personal tutoring institutionally, sharing findings from my project: 'Exploring academic personal tutoring in partnership with under-represented students'. The presentation focuses on a student co-designed staff/student reverse mentoring project, spanning 20 disciplines within a Russell Group university. The project involves: (i) students mentoring staff on their lived experiences as students who self-identify as under-represented; and (ii) those staff and students collaborating to propose developments to personal tutoring. Personal tutoring, this presentation argues, is rarely done well and rarely involves student voices in design/policy, let alone under-represented students. This project seeks to change that and inspire sectoral through sharing the impact of this project on staff and students. Critical higher education issues will be explored, including community, belonging, identity, emotional labour and empowerment.

Full paper

Reverse mentoring has potential to transform and impact student and staff experiences, resulting in reciprocal empowerment. The same can also be said of personal tutoring when it is done effectively. Building on my reverse mentoring research, I argue strongly for the prioritisation of personal tutoring in policy developments and strategic decisions around student support and wellbeing across our sector. Personal tutoring is a critical space (and perhaps one of the only spaces) where students may explore and share their identities with staff – to be their authentic selves at University (Gravett and Winstone, 2022). This opportunity for authentic exploration of identity can no longer continue as a “nice to have” opportunity for a few students who get involved with projects like mine but must be embedded into the curriculum and be accessible to all. I suggest personal tutoring is an ideal mechanism.

My fellowship project 'Exploring academic personal tutoring in partnership with under-represented students' explores how reverse mentoring principles can be sustainably embedded into personal tutoring. Consequently, in partnership with staff and students, it makes institutional proposals to develop personal tutoring through the vehicle of reverse mentoring. The project was co-designed with 15 students from 12 disciplines who self-identify as underrepresented and participated in by a wider group of students (mentors) and staff (mentees) (n=38) spanning over 20 disciplines across one Russell Group university, exemplifying the potential snowball effect of grass-roots, partnership projects like this. The project involved two key phases. Phase 1 in 2021/22 involved a co-design project in partnership with under-represented students. Phase 2 in 2022/23 saw the running of the co-designed project itself.

Reverse mentoring in this context is about intentionally dismantling hierarchical “traditions” that serve as barriers, most significantly for under-represented students (O'Connor, 2023) and supporting under-represented students into positions of power, recognising their expertise. This links to authentic and inclusive personal tutoring given it may be one of the only spaces in which students and staff may have 1-to-1, more personalised relationships during a student's University journey and is at risk of being damaged through unhealthy performance of hierarchy. Reverse

mentoring also has potential to catalyse cultural change when applied with purpose, as in this project to develop personal tutoring.

This reverse mentoring scheme involved: (i) students mentoring staff on their lived experiences as students who self-identify as under-represented; and (ii) those staff and student pairs collaborating in a form of action research to propose institutional developments to personal tutoring, stemming from their reverse mentoring experiences. This builds on my pilot project, one of the first higher education reverse mentoring schemes to be empirically explored and qualitatively analysed from a diversity and inclusion perspective (O'Connor, 2022). Forthcoming publications explore the wellbeing impact on student co-designers in Phase 1 (O'Connor, 2023). Hence, this presentation focuses instead on experiences of students and staff who participated in Phase 2 with the aim of supporting colleagues looking to develop their practice or influence others working with underrepresented students in personal tutoring. I encourage you to consider the use of reverse mentoring in your own contexts, focusing on its purposeful disruption of hierarchies and what this could mean for achieving authentic and consistent personal tutoring.

Reverse mentoring in higher education is a relatively under-researched area (Cain, et al, 2022; Raymond, et al, 2021; Petersen and Ramsay, 2021). This is the first study to consider its connections with personal tutoring and to be co-designed with students. The development of impactful personal tutoring which respects individuals and is inclusive and authentic, demonstrating genuine care (Yale, 2019) must be a joint endeavour between staff and students. One can't create it without the other. Reverse mentoring, I argue, lays the foundations for this reciprocal action and breathes life into promises in higher education of staff/student partnerships. The freedom and unique nature of reversed or flattened hierarchies permits staff and students to think outside the box when it comes to challenging "what is" and stargazing about "what could be". Personal tutoring must be a space where wellbeing is prioritised and everyone feels they belong and matter – critically intertwined challenges (WonkHE, 2022; Student Minds, 2022). It is time this vital support mechanism be properly recognised, rewarded and respected. The voices of staff and students embedded within this project seek to be a significant cog in the wheel of change to propel personal tutoring into the spotlight and reconsider it in a new light through the lens of reverse mentoring and under-represented experiences as a space of power, reciprocity and revolution.

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342 Tutoring Forcibly Displaced Students: Understanding the Barriers and Unlocking the Potential of Tutoring Systems for Displaced Students at UK Universities

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

British universities have a long history of personal tutoring and the establishment of the Office for Students and the Teaching Excellence Framework have incentivised them to provide a personalised student experience that ensures student wellbeing (Lochtié et al 2018). It might be expected, then, that they are well-positioned to offer exactly the sort of 'warm support' that forcibly displaced students (FDSs) need (Baker et al, 2018). This paper critically interrogates this assertion however, drawing on ongoing research into FDSs experiences of personal tutoring at four British universities. We use evidence from focus groups with FDSs and staff to provide a typology of the potential of personal tutoring systems, alongside insights into the obstacles and complexities that prevent FDSs from tapping into them effectively. In so doing, we present research findings that can inform good practice around personal tutoring within the increasingly complex systems of support for students at UK Universities.

Full paper

Introduction

UK universities are increasingly declaring their support for forcibly displaced students (FDSs) (Universities of Sanctuary, 2022). There are now over 80 scholarships for FDSs offered by British Universities for example, spurred by widespread concern to support Ukrainian scholars in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Student Action for Refugees, 2023). There are 60 UK Universities that are recognised as Universities of Sanctuary or working towards the award.

British Universities appear well-positioned to provide support to FDSs. They have a long tradition of personal tutoring (meaning 'all activities where academic or professional staff work in partnership with students to provide one-to-one support, advice and guidance, of either an academic or a pastoral nature' (Lochtié et al, 2018: 2)) with roots in the eleventh century Oxbridge collegiate system (Lochtié et al, 2018). They are now subject to regulation, including the Teaching Excellence Framework, which promotes individualised student support and inclusivity. They also have the third largest share of international students globally (after America and Australia, Universities UK 2022), which suggests expertise in supporting students after migrating.

Literature

Recent research has raised concerns about the accessibility of meaningful educational opportunities when refugee students are admitted into universities though (Morrice, 2013; Berg et al 2021; Cantat et al 2022; Naidoo et al 2018). There are often such high cultural and social barriers that refugee students feel isolated and marginalised (Naidoo, 2019).

Refugee students therefore value approachable, trustworthy forms of support – so called 'warm' support (Baker et al, 2018), characterised by familiarity, although still within formal structures of pedagogic provision. Warm support is distinct from 'hot' support which is both familiar and informal, such as peer support. Although individuals who provide warm support might 'work for the university and thereby potentially represent its interests' (ibid: 8) they are able to

forge relationships of trust with FDSs based on elements of shared identity, willingness to provide support beyond their contracts, and access to key information.

Such individuals might be seen to be doing the day-to-day work of adjusting universities themselves to the needs of FDSs. This sort of adjustment is key to decolonisation (Bhambra et al 2018). Freire's (1970) and bell hooks' (1994) work has long-emphasized the idea of partnership between teachers and students (Freire, 1970) and the notion that teachers and students should be able to learn from each other (hooks, 1994). Building on this, our approach examines the relationship between personal tutors and FDSs through a decolonial lens, drawing on Icaza and Vázquez' (2018) framework of 'Positionality', 'Relationality' and 'Transitionality' (p.119-120). Positionality refers to situating information in a geopolitical and historical context; Relationality means changing the power dynamics and valuing the different backgrounds of students and staff; and Transitionality involves discussing how the knowledge learned at university affects society (Icaza and Vázquez, 2018).

Methodology

We draw on focus groups with FDSs who have experienced personal tutoring at British universities. Focus groups can highlight the range of perspectives and experiences of a phenomenon, provoke debate and generate the conditions for coming to a shared understanding of complex issues (Powell and Single, 1996). This research seeks to use a decolonial approach through the research process, which enables participants to be 'co-producers' of research outcomes (Timmis et al, 2021) Our focus groups will include group activities, such as collectively populating message boards, which can help to improve participants' confidence by promoting the feeling they are speaking together and not being singled out (Bourne and Winstone, 2021). The project also explores the perspectives of university staff, including academics who are tutors, as well as widening participation officers, equality and diversity champions, and migration personnel, via separate focus groups. A reflexive thematic analysis approach will be utilised to analyse the data (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

Findings

The research work is ongoing but we expect our findings to offer insight into the FDSs lived experience of university life and particularly aspects of personal tutoring. Through the theoretical lenses of positionality, relationality and transitionality, we hope to better understand the unique positioning of FDSs and how they can be better supported in ways that value their different backgrounds. Our analysis will potentially inform practice and suggest ways to better understand the complexities of how personal tutoring systems at universities can support FDSs. Our research, funded by a GW4 Initiator Grant (see <https://gw4.ac.uk/community/forcibly-displaced-students-in-higher-education/>), also aims to co-produce practical resources by and for FDSs and personal tutors that can be shared widely to help inform practice at other universities.

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27 Considering a pedagogy of vulnerability in higher education

Fiona Stirling

Abertay University, Dundee, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The central premise of a pedagogy of vulnerability is defined by Kelly and Kelly (2020, p177) as 'purposeful and selective acts of self-disclosure by teachers [to] help build the conditions of trust and care needed for dialogue around emotionally and politically challenging topics'. Using the frame of my own teaching practice this presentation draws upon three pieces of research, one completed and two currently in progress, to explore the various potentials and challenges of vulnerability in Higher education.

Full paper

'Should higher education be about life, or something else?' Brantmeier (2013, p1)

The central premise of a pedagogy of vulnerability is defined by Kelly and Kelly (2020, p177) as 'purposeful and selective acts of self-disclosure by teachers [to] help build the conditions of trust and care needed for dialogue around emotionally and politically challenging topics'. The potential of this process is two-fold. Firstly, the educational context becomes humanised (Zinn, Proteus, Keet, 2009), with students able to begin linking concepts to their lives outside the classroom, enhancing critical self-reflection. Second, traditional power hierarchies are disrupted and thus new ways of relating made possible. As bell hooks (1994, p21) explains: 'when professors bring narratives of their experience into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators'.

I action vulnerability in my teaching by being open about my own mental health, and consciously having my self-injury scars visible. Dominique Hill (2016) refers to this as 'embodied vulnerability', mobilising the body within the teaching/learning process as a potential tool for forging deeper student-teacher relationships. As a lecturer in counselling the assumption can be that I am immune to mental health issues. My scars challenge such unrealistic attitudes. It is a conscious choice which brings personal risk; an associated emotional labour of being scrutinised and potentially discredited as an academic (Stirling and Chandler, 2020). Yet, it feels essential in creating possibilities in the teaching process and beyond. As Hill (2016, p434) explains, 'I am shifting gaze and asking students to learn about themselves by seeing me'. This shifted gaze can reveal recovery in mental health is possible, that people who self-injure can still have meaningful roles in society, that the untroubled therapist is a myth, and increase comfort around scarred bodies.

My commitment to be visible in this way has profoundly impacted my students, creating a space in which they feel comfortable to explore their own life experiences at a deeper and more vulnerable level. In essence, my body sets the tone for the learning space. Impact goes beyond the classroom, prompting them to challenge long held stigmas, and even their relationship with their own bodies, creating change that will be with them for the rest of their lives: 'I think Fiona's scars made me feel freer; I discussed things more, and certainly felt it was a whole deeper learning experience' (Anonymous student).

Of course, the choice to engage vulnerability involves risk – of not getting things right, of not knowing what might happen next – but this risk is precisely what creates the opportunity for learning to be deepened and for new discoveries to be made by both students and educators in tandem. Such risk though demands both courage from individual educators, and communities of support within institutions. This was evident in my exploration with Chandler (2021) around scarred bodies in the academy. Using the format of dialogue we considered personal notions of activism, researcher identity, and emotional labour, concluding that it is essential to build and maintain communities for embodied solidarity.

Activities which expand learning beyond the confines of the traditional classroom can also open the door to vulnerability. For example, our integration of walking groups alongside the Counselling programme core teaching during COVID-19 appeared to allow students to relate to staff outside of the formal educational environment, reducing hierarchical relationships and deepening connection with learning on the course.

bell hooks (1994) asserts that an unwillingness to be vulnerable is what prevents the creation of environments where teachers, as well as students, can grow and become empowered so while the subject of counselling may lend itself particularly well to embedding vulnerability there is space for it within any curriculum where the educator is willing to be courageous.

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Parallel Session 6:7

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Conference Room 1a

Chair Andrea Cameron

213 Beyond employability? A new conceptual framing for 'real world learning' to better situate institutional endeavours in this space

Deanna Meth

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

'Real world learning' is an overtly stated aspiration of many universities, though readers are often left to interpret its meaning. Most frequently, the term is seen used as synonymous with experiential, authentic and applied learning, directly linked to skills and knowledge for employability and students' careers. There are also examples of more 'radical' real world learning approaches, that encompass areas including civic engagement, sustainability, and citizenship.

Responding to calls for greater rigour in this area, this paper uses a modified Clark triangle conceptual framework to situate real world learning within a spectrum, where endpoints are 'instrumentalist', with strong market/state pulls and 'social constructivist', with broader societal pulls. This provides a theoretical space within which to place the myriad definitions observed, also bringing clarity to their ideological underpinnings. The work offers an important foundation on which further research might build, and a way to differentiate curricula and appropriate enabling pedagogies.

Full paper

Introduction

'Real world learning' (RWL) is observed in higher education (HE) marketing, policy, and practice discourses as a phrase not dissimilar to those identified by Morrish and Sauntson (2020), 'strategically deployable shifters' (Urcioli, 2000, p.4), where interpretation 'depends on the relation of its user to its audience and so shifts with context'.

Barnett and Coate (2005, p.92) have noted a steady shift towards real-world and performative curricula, and across the research literature, RWL is seen coupled, or synonymous with experiential, authentic and applied learning, addressing a theory-practice gap. It is often directly linked to skills and knowledge for employability and students' careers, where work-based, or work-integrated learning and placements are seen as pinnacle activities. That these approaches are termed 'real', 'progressive' and 'relevant' makes problematic inferences regarding learning and curricula 'excluded from imposed notions of real' (Trelfa, 2021, p.300). This is a potential use value judgement that infers development of a 'worker-self-as-skills-bundle' (Urcioli, 2008, p.211). In some instances, the term is seen to offer a more radical stance, encompassing areas like civic and community engagement, sustainability and citizenship education and, as at my own institution, diversity and inclusion and Indigenous perspectives. Digital and interdisciplinary (boundary-crossing) knowledge and skills, and reflective practice are also noted as key across RWL. Introducing the spectrum of underpinning learning and education theories, Trelfa (2021) spans this 'multiformed landscape' to define RWL as 'critical consciousness of, as well as beyond, self through experiential learning' (p.303-304).

Morley and Jamils' (2021) volume of case studies makes the call for RWL to move 'into a robust, research informed position so its implementation does not occur by accident' (p.5). For staff, implementing RWL aspirations may be hampered by a lack of clarity, and complex questions arise for learning, teaching and research deemed not to be real world. For those external to the university, informed understandings and choice are made more difficult. With growing efforts to decolonise HE curricula and pedagogies, and recognition of the multiplicity of knowledge systems beyond 'western/northern', questions such as 'which world?' 'whose reality?' and importantly 'to what end?' must be asked. It is important to therefore examine the ideologies behind these interpretations which are likely connected to views on the purpose(s) of HE. A gradual shift of HE from public to private good is widely recognised, and with this also a shift in curricula, pedagogies and students' relationships with the academy (Englund and Bergh, 2020, p.41). The reality is however unlikely to lie at the somewhat unhelpful spectrum endpoints (Muller and Young, 2014).

The conceptual framework

The amended Clark (1983) triangle of coordination of tensions in the HE system developed by Meth (2022) offers a spectrum for applied curricula and pedagogies (and RWL approaches) (Figure 1) that sit anywhere between instrumentalist (state/market-driven) and social constructivist (societal) endpoints. This spectrum was developed following Wheelahan (2009) who noted the lack of clarity in defining experiential, contextual learning, where both constructivism and instrumentalism hold commitments towards these (p.227).

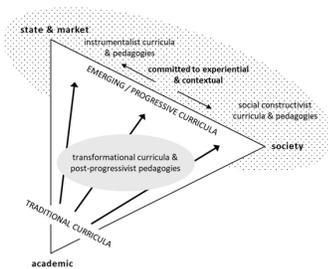


Figure 1. Amended Clark triangle of coordination linking pedagogic and curricular models to underlying ideologies, positioning real world learning (stippled area) (adapted from Meth, 2022).

Spectrum ends relate to differing ideologies on the purpose of HE, reflecting more appropriately the full spectrum of RWL cases, seen, for example in Morley and Jamil (2021), albeit with a skew towards state/market aims.

Discussion

In the instance of Australian HE (where my institution is based), Khalaf (2020) notes the singularity of purpose conveyed through policy and communication documents, where HE is positioned as an 'export service industry'. This chimes with the dominant narratives of RWL tending towards 'state/economic'. Khalaf (2020) recognises the

inadequacy of the original Clark triangle (p.451) in representing current tensions in HE, stressing the importance of continued dialogue on the aims of Australian HE, asking where the voices 'advocating for HE's role in creating a better world' might be (p.450).

This new spectrum, with an overt distinction of different 'worlds' and aims embodied in RWL offers a conceptual space within which to support such a dialogue, and opportunities to explicitly acknowledge critical radical pedagogies, with social justice and democratic knowledge groundings. The study provides an effective foundation on which to build further research. A scoping study (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005) exploring the full range of definitions of RWL across the literature and in institutional discourses is proposed as a possible next step. This would capture the breadth of interpretations with the potential to bring greater clarity to the range of approaches and corresponding enabling pedagogies.

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237 Which future skills and entrepreneurial skills are teachable at universities and what are the currently applied teaching methods?

Eszter Szendrei-Pál

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

The future is uncertain as well as the skills which students should have after their university studies. Independently from that universities must be prepared for both present and future requirements at the same time. This paper compares teachable entrepreneurial and future skills, and also investigates the relating teaching methods. It is based on partial result of a literature review related to an in-progress dissertation research. The goal is to present the first results and first impressions related to the differences and similarities between these two groups of skills and between their teaching methods. The results are useful for higher education institutions, who are eager to investigate to what extent their programs include teachable future skills, and which methods can they apply to provide effective entrepreneurial and future skills development to their students.

Full paper

Introduction

Universities are eager to equip students with the skills of today and tomorrow as well. However, it is hard to determine the list of future skills due to fast changes of our world. As no one knows what will happen in the future it is almost impossible to be prepared for the unclear challenges. In spite of it, employers and students have requirements in connection with students' skills development: teach as much future skills as possible. Next to this, the future of entrepreneurs is also uncertain. Entrepreneurial related programs should develop the skills which are important in the present and will be important in the future as well. This paper introduces teachable entrepreneurial and future skills based on results of a literature review. Additionally, it also includes the relating skill development methods provided by universities. At the end of the paper teachable future skills and entrepreneurial skills will be compared as well as their teaching methods.

Methodology

The methodology of this paper is literature review. I observed the discourses related to entrepreneurial and future skills. To involve literatures only from a trustworthy source EBSCO and Scopus databases were used and different filters were applied (e.g.: peer reviewed, published after 2015, only English, etc.). Currently partial results are presented. In the following two figures introduce the content of literatures related to teachable skills and teaching methods. It is important to note, the figures highlight only the skills which were marked as teachable skills in the literatures.

Teachable entrepreneurial skills and teaching methods for entrepreneurial skill development

As it can be seen on Figure 1, the emphasis is on the soft skills. The risk-taking, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork skills are the most popular ones as they are mentioned by more than 1 author. In connection with the skill development all methods are practice oriented. Most of them are in person technique, however the appearance of e-learning materials indicates skill development in an online way.

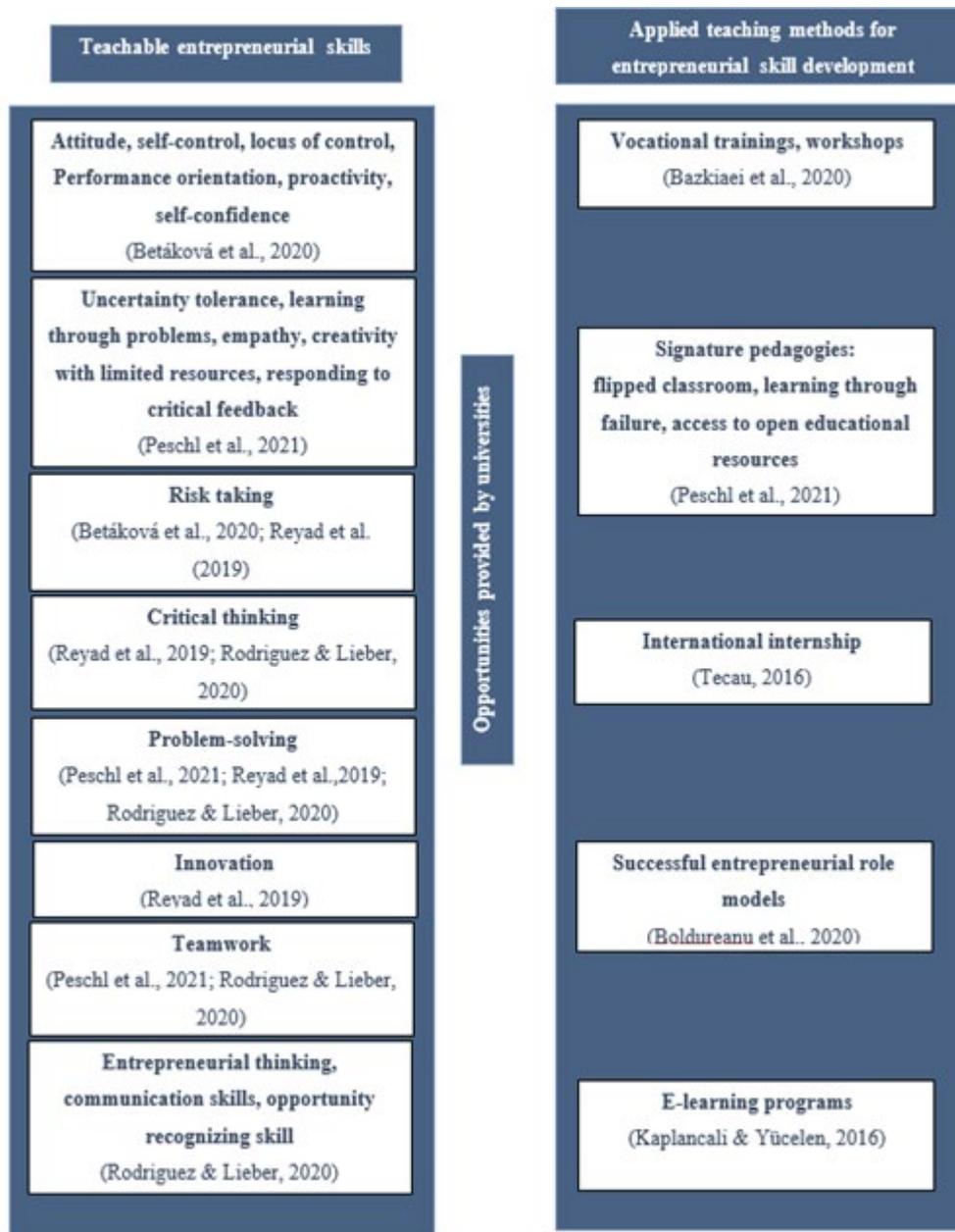


Figure 1.: Entrepreneurial skills and teaching methods (source: Szendrei-Pál, In press)

Teachable future skills and teaching methods for future skills development

As Figure 2 shows critical thinking and collaboration skills are mentioned the most. Next to soft skills, hard skills like STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) (Garcia-Esteban & Jahnke, 2020) appear also on the list of skills. The teaching methods are practice oriented and mostly focus on gaining international or real-world experiences.

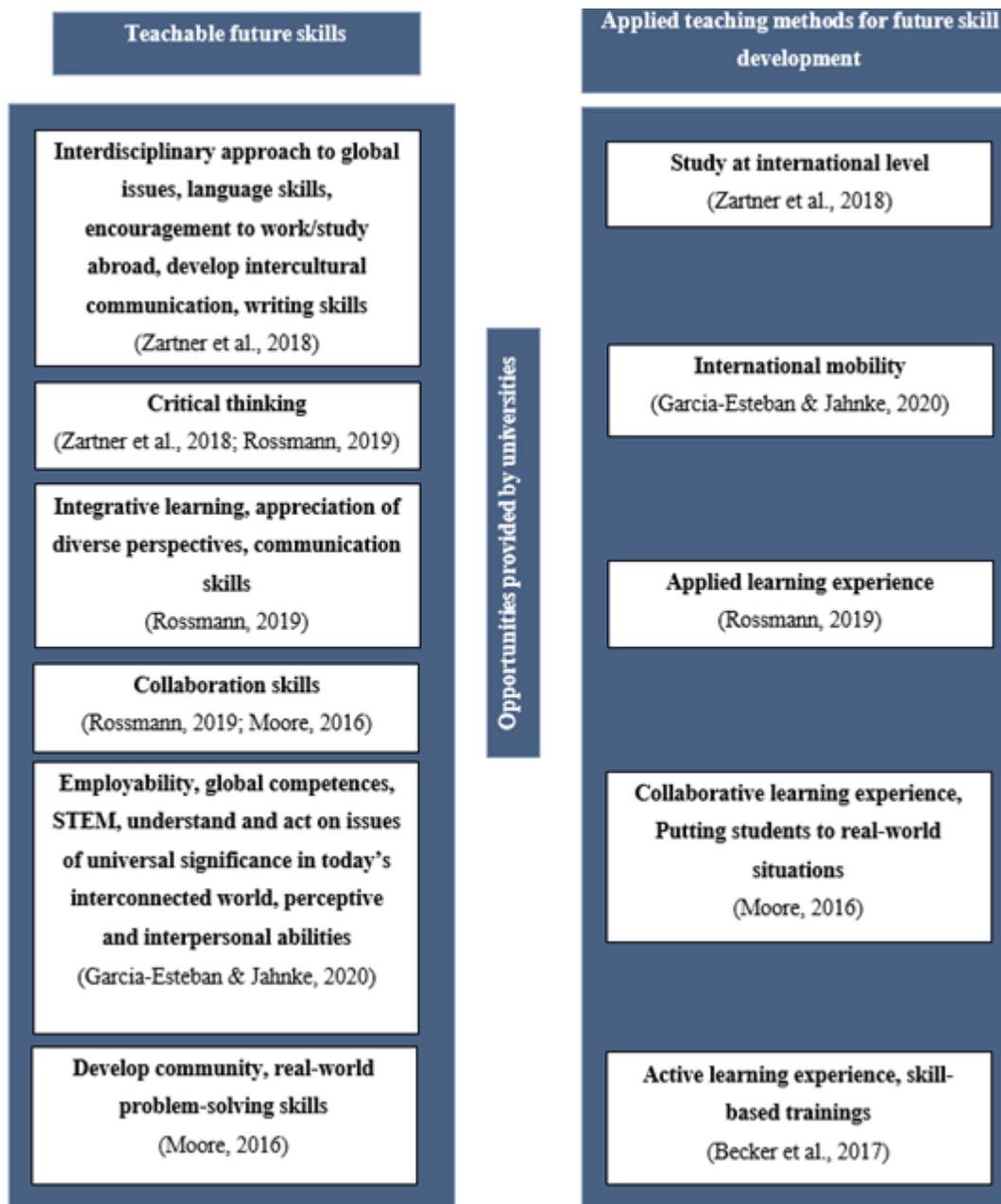


Figure 2.: Future skills and teaching methods (source: own elaboration)

Comparison of figures (first impressions)

Regarding to the similarities between future and entrepreneurial skills critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving are mentioned in both cases. The teaching methods are practice oriented, and the emphasis is on the (international) internship and experience.

In connection with the differences entrepreneurial skills are developed mostly within the university, while the development of future skills is happening outside of it. Next to this, there are specific teaching methods for entrepreneurial skills (e.g.: flipped classroom), however there are mostly indirect ways to gain future skills (not taught by teachers). Additionally, instead of traditional teamwork, collaborative learning experience is applied during classes as it is more effective. Finally, hard skills appear only in case of future skills.

To sum up it seems like universities are developing future skills in an indirect way, while they provide direct ways to develop entrepreneurial skills. The reason behind it could be there is no exact teaching methods for the uncertain future skills. It seems like while universities try to figure out the best ways to develop future skills, they solve it with the help of employers and foreign higher education institutions through providing internships or international semesters to students. The motto could be "bringing the future through practice", as the students can gain the currently important skills from employers. Next to this, they can discover the skills they will need in the future by themselves. Universities should prepare students for one of the most important future skills which is the adaptability.

Conclusion

It is important to note it is an early phase research. Further investigation is required to collect evidence how the teaching of these skills is really occurring at universities' curricula. In the future this research will be continued, and the mentioned skills will be investigated in universities' curricula. The results are useful for universities who want to become more future oriented. For example, they can follow up their students' early career: which skills did they obtain during their studies and which skills were required by the employers.

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157 From “group work” to “teamwork”: students’ perception and lecturer’s reflections.

Atisha Ghosh¹, Kamilya Suleymenova²

¹University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom. ²University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

The aim of our study is to understand students’ perceptions of the transferable skills in group assessment. The quantitative results of a survey of over 60 student responses in an optional final year economics module indicate that, overall, students benefitted from the assessment in terms of learning from other group members and developing interpersonal skills; while differences in work ethics within the group was reported as the most significant challenge by a quarter of the respondents. The free text comments analysis shows that free-riding and communications issues are the most frustrating concerns. In line with the literature, e.g. Johnson & Johnson (2009), we conclude that the experience is beneficial for most students, but may leave some others behind. We suggest that providing specific resources for efficient group work and focusing on “teamwork” as a term will help students to better acknowledge and reflect on the transferable skills they gain.

Full paper

Small group work learning and assessments, by a large consensus in the literature (e.g. Gaudet et al., 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2009), yield a number of significant benefits for students. One of the ways to conceptualise these benefits is to understand the process of the collaborative learning and the effects it has on a range of different factors (Lavy, 2017), from time management skills to motivation (Jones & Issroff, 2005). These transferrable skills imbibed during the process of group work, have long-term and employability impacts (Mutch, 1998; Riebe et al., 2010). Soft skills, such as interpersonal skills, communication, and teamwork, are particularly relevant for the constantly changing work environment (Succi and Canovi, 2020) and are in high demand by employers (Asefer and Abidin, 2021).

While these benefits have been documented, not all participants perceive groupwork as being supportive and secure (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003); trust, respect, and peer-support are extremely important for the success of any group (Lavy, 2017; Bradley et al., 2013; Pfaff & Huddelston, 2003). Thus, while group work projects help foster some crucial

soft skills, imperative for employment, students' perception, and ability to articulate these skills is the crucial first step on this journey (see also Succi and Canovi, 2020; Burke et al., 2005).

Our main aim is to examine students' perception of their groupwork experience. To do so, we have conducted a survey in an optional final year policy-oriented Economics module, with a 20% group policy report assignment, where students were able to form their own groups (or randomly allocated, if they failed to do so). While students were able to explore their creativity by choosing between three broad topics, they were given a precise timeline (Fig 1), template structure and other guidance. Students had previous exposure to groupwork assessments and the usual support from the teaching team.

The survey asked respondents to both provide their evaluations on various aspects of the project on a scale of 1(lowest) to 10(highest). It also gave them the opportunity to provide free text comments. It is useful to note that the survey was conducted after the grades were released, so that immediate challenges wouldn't influence the answers given.

The first part of the survey offers unambiguous results: 80% of respondents considered that they worked together effectively and 72% affirmed that all group members were involved most of the time; almost half of respondents indicated that learning from other group members was the main benefit; while improved interpersonal teamworking and communication skills were acknowledged only in a shared second position. The highest-ranking challenge was the "difference in work ethics".

Additionally, almost a third of respondents provided a free-text comment. Unsurprisingly for optional open comments, the majority focused on the challenges and the drawbacks of the groupwork ; however, a few have acknowledged the benefits as well (Fig 2 for the full map). The students highlighted effective teamwork and enjoyment of working together, underlining that they have learned from other group members, gaining new perspectives and knowledge. The drawbacks focused on the free-riding issue, which can be linked to the low "work ethics" score in the quantitative part of the questionnaire. The fairness of group formation was raised as an issue, particularly when communication problems have occurred, which resulted in perceived unfair workload and drop in the quality of the project.

The results of both quantitative and qualitative parts of the question suggest that, in line with the literature (e.g. Johnson & Johnson, 2009), the experience is beneficial for students and that, importantly, they perceive it as such. However, it is also clear that at least without additional prompting and reflection, students do not perceive their groupwork assessment as a direct help in development of transferable and teamworking skills, which means that they may not be easily ready to articulate this in an interview setting. More importantly, they may not also take appropriate time to consciously reflect on their experiences and learn for the future.

This leads us to our recommendations and conclusions: we need to both provide more explicit as well as articulate support in team-working skills, when a group work assessment is introduced in a module. This could include specific materials on communication and conflict resolution. Articulating these skills explicitly and shifting the terminology from group work to "team work" is likely to prompt students to reflect on the transferable skills they are gaining and help them present these skills to employers.

Fig 1: Assessment Timeline

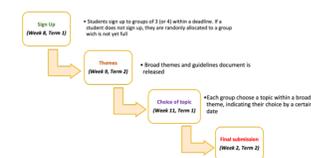
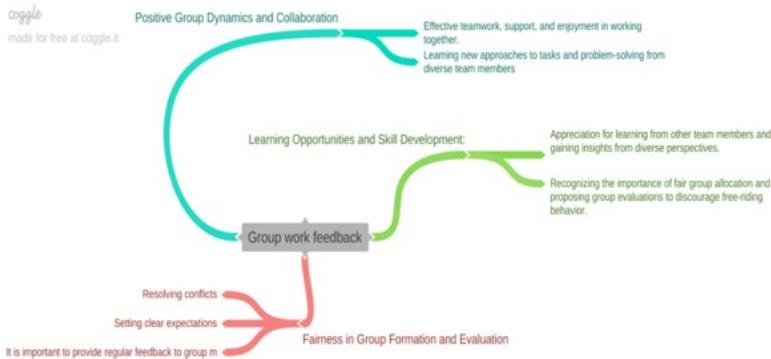


Fig 2: Free text comments map



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Parallel Session 6:8

16:30 - 18:00 Thursday, 7th December, 2023

Room 141

Chair Michael O'Dea

22 Students' gendered experiences of male-dominated Computing and Engineering courses

Ella Taylor-Smith, Sally Smith, Khristin Fabian

Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

How does it feel to be in a gender minority on a STEM programme? Does it have an impact on individual students? Via an online survey (n=255), undergraduate students on Computing and Engineering programmes were asked whether they felt that gender had an impact on their experience of their course, inviting them to 'tell us a little more'. While most students said that their gender did not have an impact, there was a significant difference between the experience of male and female students, and examples of impact were provided in response to the open question. Tackling gender imbalance in STEM is a focus of evolving government equality policies, including encouraging girls to consider careers in Computing and Engineering and supporting women STEM students. Universities need to explore how to support potentially isolated women students who may feel encouraged by their peers to discount any perception that their experience is gendered.

Full paper

Introduction

Scottish Government policies aim to 'promote equality within STEM and tackle stereotypes and unconscious bias' (2022); for example, through strategies such as Skills Development Scotland's recent 'Women into STEM pipeline project' (ibid.). In UK universities, only 22.78% of 'Computing' students and 20.47% of 'Engineering and Technology' students are women (HESA 2023). Lack of women is a problem for these sectors, which need more skilled employees and also diversity to create appropriate products and systems. Explanatory theories focus on stereotypes dissuading women from pursuing STEM careers (Cheryan, Master, and Meltzoff 2015) and role models to encourage (Gladstone and Cimpian 2021). However, discrimination is also a factor (Rubery 2019).

At an individual level, women are missing opportunities for influential and well-paid work. In Higher Education (HE), women Computing students express feelings of isolation (Taylor-Smith et al. 2022; Winter, Thomas, and Blair 2021). This study focuses on the perceptions of STEM students, of any gender, exploring whether and how they feel gender has had an impact on their experience of their course.

Online survey

The data comes from an online survey (with ethics board approval) of undergraduates studying computing, engineering, and the built environment. From a larger survey looking at student engagement, three questions underpin this study: students were asked to specify their gender and asked the closed question 'Do you think gender has had an impact on your experience of your course?' [Yes / No /To some extent]; followed by the open question: 'Please could you tell us a little more?'

Gender impact

Most students who answered the closed question (n=255) chose 'No' (85.5%); 9% felt gender might have an impact 'To some extent'; and 5.5% said 'Yes'. However, the response was itself gendered ($p < .001$), with female students more likely to suggest gender has an impact (27.6% chose 'Yes' or 'To some extent') and male students much less likely to recognise its impact (8.7% chose 'Yes' or 'To some extent').

The open question responses (n=69) were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2020), identifying thematically-organised patterns across the whole, heteroglossic dataset (Braun et al. 2020). After exploring and coding the data, themes were developed and refined, then mapped, visually and intuitively. Mapping indicated two poles of opinion (left to right on Figure 1): the theme 'No impact: all genders treated equally on course' contrasted with the two themes 'Gendered interactions and discrimination' and 'Male-domination causes difficulties'. A more neutral theme, 'My course is mostly male', stated or lamented the gender imbalance. Comments below are extracts from the free text responses.

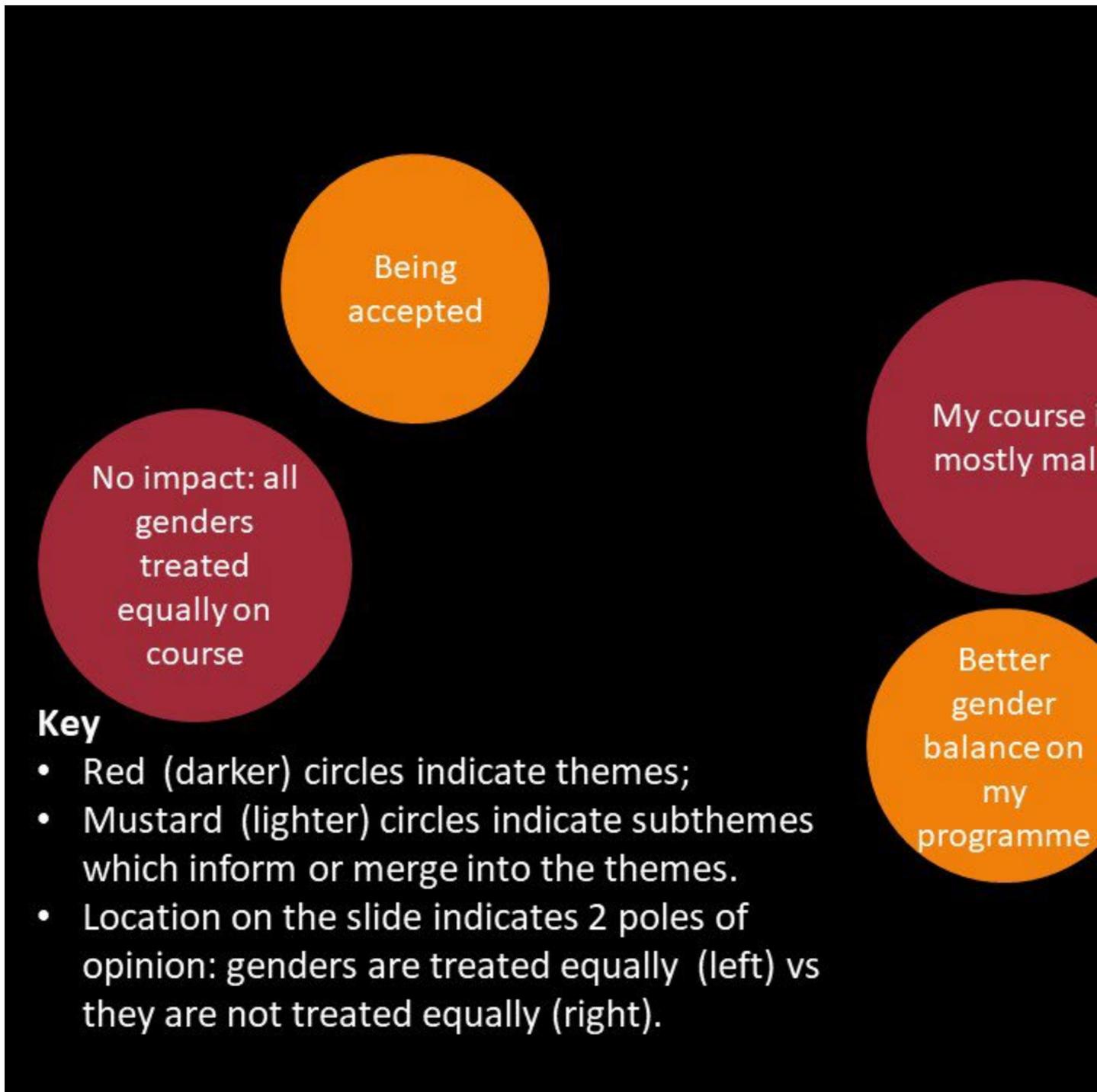


Figure 1: mapping themes

The theme '**No impact: all genders treated equally on course**' stressed the equality of teaching and opportunity. For example '*Doesn't matter what gender you identify with get taught all the same*'; '*All genders are being treated equal*'.

An opposite theme '**Gendered interactions and discrimination**' included examples of students experiencing negative gendered interactions, from lecturers or other students. Some interactions were observed: '*Unfortunately,*

the male attitude towards women in the room was not always the best...I often saw some younger girls being drowned by the voices of men who thought they knew better'; some were experienced: 'a few interactions with students and staff that I believe would have been different or wouldn't have happened if I was the opposite gender'.

The related theme '**Male-domination causes difficulties**' described ways in which the gender imbalance could be intimidating and isolating: '*Being female on a computing course is difficult as it is a male dominated course. It is harder to meet other girls and make friends'; 'There are not many other females in my class, and male dominance is quite intimidating'.*

A more neutral theme '**My course is mostly male**' focused on the gender imbalance among students and lecturers: '*I can't really say as my course is 90% male'; 'Male dominated subject, only had male lecturers.'*

Conclusions

While most students did not experience the impact of gender on their course, other students, especially women, experienced negative impacts of male dominance, such as isolation, and also incidents of sexism, such as men talking over or down to women. In this context it is especially important for us to support our minority gender students, lest they, like Winter et al.'s (2021) students, blame themselves for any (gendered) negative experiences. We are working with our students to create a network and events to combat isolation and further their aspirations. We are also planning focus groups to identify ways to create a welcoming and inclusive department at all levels.

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45 Addressing gender imbalance in STEM graduate apprenticeships.

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Research Domains

Technical, Professional and Vocational Higher Education (TPV)

Abstract

There is currently significant gender imbalance within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduate apprenticeship (GA) programmes in Scotland. This is a considerable, ongoing issue for both higher education institutions and the labour market as there is a shortfall in skilled, qualified employees within these sectors which will have a significant impact on Scotland's economy and productivity. The problem of gender imbalance in STEM is also a wider social issue, as women are more likely to be unemployed (Scottish Government, 2022), or working in low paid, unskilled jobs than men, which results in them being left behind in a rapidly growing post pandemic digital world. This paper will outline an ongoing research study which explores some of the reasons and factors which may cause or contribute to the problem of gender imbalance in STEM GA programmes and investigates the role that Scottish government policy can play in mitigating these.

Full paper

Introduction

Graduate apprenticeships (GA's) are Scotland's higher education apprenticeships, which are delivered in partnership between higher education institutions, national skills agencies, and employers. The Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering (STEM) sector is one of the most rapidly growing sectors in the world which has led to predictions of significant future skills shortages, meaning that demand for skilled, qualified workers will outstrip supply. It is estimated that by 2030 there will be a shortfall of 173,000 workers in the UK STEM sector alone, which equates to a £1.5 billion cost to the UK economy annually (The Institute of Engineering and Technology, 2021). Whilst a diverse engineering sector is thought to be vital for the UK economy currently demand for these skills is not being met effectively through education and training pipelines (Engineering UK, 2018). One small factor in this is gender imbalance within graduate apprenticeships. For example, as of 2022, only 21.2% of STEM graduate apprentices were female (Henderson, 2022).

Globalisation makes this problem even more significant, as there have been profound changes in the global workforce as a whole due to rapid advancements in technology, particularly in STEM industries (Waite & McDonald, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial that more women are encouraged to develop skills in computing and technology which will afford them the ability to participate fully in the global workforce. This is also critical for the welfare of society as a whole, as the freedom to work (and to choose meaningful rewarding work) is integral to human welfare (International Labour Organisation, 2022).

The main aim of this research study is to explore the information landscapes (Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2019) of young people in Scotland to identify the sources of gender stereotyping influencing apprenticeship choices and their salience for different groups and individuals (Bourdieu, 2000). Key objectives of the study are to gather and synthesise existing work in occupational segregation, with regard to apprenticeships, and to investigate young people's situated experience of potentially gendered information related to graduate apprenticeships and its influence on their choices.

The research questions for the study are:

RQ1. To what extent are apprenticeships segregated by gender in Scotland and internationally?

RQ2. What are the main current and recent policies and strategies to address gender stereotyping and disparities in young people's choices around apprenticeships?

RQ3. What theories address occupational segregation in apprenticeships, and how do these fit with educational timelines from early years to leaving school?

RQ4. What gendered influences do young people identify when looking back over their choices of apprenticeships?

Methodology

Initial reviews of related literature and Scottish policy relating to gender balance and apprenticeships is currently in progress. Data collection will employ a mixed methods approach, incorporating a survey and focus groups. The survey will be carried out with a sample of STEM apprentices, and the focus groups (recruited through the questionnaires) will each consist of around 3-5 apprentices who will be asked to map their routes into and through their apprenticeships in visual format e.g., Rich Pictures. Data collection will begin in October 2023 and will be analysed using thematic and discourse analysis. Finally, an evaluation process will be applied to ensure validity of the data, this will include sharing initial findings with participants. This will be part of a wider study into gender balance in apprenticeships.

Results of pilot

A pilot study was conducted in the summer of 2022. Focus groups were conducted with 12 careers advisors from Skills Development Scotland. The purpose of the data collection was to establish their perspectives and opinions on how gendered information landscapes may influence young people's (aged 13 to 17) choices around apprenticeships. Some of the findings from this were:

1. Most of the young people in question were not thought to have the maturity/cognitive abilities to exercise much agency in their information landscapes and would need someone to act as a facilitator to know how to use information effectively for the purposes of decision-making.
2. Whilst young people tend to favour digital sources of information, these do not have as great an impact as non-digital sources.
3. Gender stereotypes and cultural norms are prevalent throughout the life of young people, with the influence of these seen in children as young as two years old.

Implications

Findings from the study will be used to create outputs for Scotland's national skills agency, Skills Development Scotland who are funding this research, to help them develop their apprenticeship policies and inform their practice.

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Digital University Network Session

18:00 - 18:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1a

Please join us for this session if you would like to find out more about the Digital University network. One of the network convenors, Katy Jordan, will be present to informally discuss the network, introducing its work to-date and plans for the future. Everyone is welcome to attend and we look forward to discussing the next steps with you and hearing your thoughts about topics and events you would like to see within the network moving forward.

Postgraduate Issues Network Session

18:00 - 18:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1b

Postgraduate Issues Network: a chance to raise issues of interest with the Convenors

The Postgraduate Issues Network was established in 1995 to help interested parties find out about new developments in the field of postgraduate education and to interpret these for their own use and benefit, by means of seminar and workshop events, variously online or face-to-face. This growing network has many members (researchers, supervisors and research supporters of many kinds) including a number from around the globe, by virtue of participating in events.

The network offers its members more than a series of meetings: it aims to be a true network of mutual support in which ideas, concerns, materials and help are shared in a collaborative, collegial way, amongst all interested parties.

Newer Researchers Network Session

18:00 - 18:30 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Conference Room 1c

Our Newer Researcher network convenors will introduce the network and reflect on its activities to date, and how they are shaping plans for our schedule next year. This will be an opportunity to meet fellow newer researchers and to share your own ideas for NR network sessions.

Informal Buffet Dinner & Disco

19:00 - 23:59 Thursday, 7th December, 2023
Courtyard Suites 1- 4

This informal buffet dinner and disco are open to all delegates.

Registration, tea & coffee and exhibition viewing

08:30 - 09:00 Friday, 8th December, 2023
Courtyard Restaurant

Parallel Session 7:1

09:00 - 10:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 141

Chair Katy Jordan

286 Narrative CVs – evaluative storytelling and the construction of academic value(s)

Justyna Bandola-Gill

University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

In recent years, narrative CVs have gained prominence in the UK and internationally. This format aims to replace the traditional list-like CV and asks researchers for a descriptive story of their contributions to the field, leadership potential and wider societal impact. The key motivation behind introducing this format was to capture a wider variety of experiences and achievements beyond a narrow understanding of academic excellence. But do narrative CVs realise this promise? This paper starts to explore this question by focusing on the evaluative processes involved in the assessment of narrative CVs (as opposed to traditional ones). Employing an innovative methodology of vignette-based interviews, this study identifies different evaluative lenses mobilised in the assessment of narrative CVs, including story-listening (as opposed to story-telling) and veiled quantification. The paper offers key insights into the conceptual stretching of 'excellence' by exploring it as a process of addition rather than an extension.

Full paper

(Please note that this is work-in-progress. Please ask for the latest version before sharing or citing)

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a growing critique of research metrics (e.g., journal impact factors or citation counts) as promoting a narrow understanding of 'good' research (de Rijcke et al., 2016) and damaging research culture (Wellcome Trust, 2020). In response to this critique, UKRI (2021) introduced a Resume4Researchers, a new CV format aimed at reconfiguring the reward and recognition system. R4R – a single format for all seven research councils – rather than a list of publications or research grants, asks researchers for a descriptive story of their contributions to the field, leadership potential and wider societal impact. The goal is to move away from publication metrics and instead "to broaden the range of things that researchers and innovators get recognition for" (Frances Downey, cited in Lacchia, 2021). Hence, narrative CVs are indicative of broader changes in the research environment and offer an ideal lens for exploration of the formulation and assessment of what is of value in academic life.

And yet, despite this undeniable promise of narrative CVs, little is known about the processes of evaluation of these formats. Narrative CVs have been the focus of practice-based opinions and evaluations of the format's effectiveness (Meadmore et al., 2022; Hatch and Curry, 2020), but the scholarly work has been limited (Bordignon et al., 2023). This work-in-progress paper aims to address this gap by providing new theoretical tools supporting the understanding of evaluative inquiry in assessing academic CVs. Against this backdrop, this paper explores two questions: i) What types of evaluative inquiry are mobilised in the assessment of narrative CVs?; ii) How is the academic value constructed in the process of evaluation of narrative CVs?

Methods

This paper draws on vignette-based qualitative interviews to explore the differences in the assessment of standard and narrative CVs. The use of vignettes is an effective method for mimicking real-life experiences and exploring participants' interpretative processes (Jenkins et al., 2010). The participants were academics with experience sitting on the UKRI panels. Participants were presented with instructions to select one candidate to be awarded a fellowship and a short description of the terms of the fellowship. Participants were presented with a set of four 'mock' CVs: two standard CVs and two narrative CVs (based on an R4R template), each presenting candidates with traditional academic or broader profiles (e.g. impact or leadership). Interviewees were asked to assess the four types of resumes and select one candidate whilst narrating their thinking processes.

Emergent findings

The study is still ongoing, but the emergent findings point to complex dynamics of narrative evaluative inquiry. The key finding suggests that we can differentiate between the process of story-telling by evaluators who reconstruct the personal narratives from the traditional CV and story-listening/reading when they are presented with a story directly. These findings, on the one hand, suggest that peer review is inherently a practice of narrativization as the decision-makers "think in terms of stories" (Kaplan, 1986). On the other hand, it highlights the limitations of the use of narratives in evaluative settings. The interviewees discussed the CV in a relatively similar way, presenting relatively homogenous storylines. In this context, story-listening enabled more non-standardised stories and offered an opportunity for a richer explanation of the less standard career pathways. Nevertheless, the process of narrativization was largely driven by set categories of practice (such as research, impact, leadership, community service, etc.) and, as such, was, in fact, quite restricted.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted that even though narratives are often contrasted with numbers as opposite epistemic categories, the two were closely intertwined in the assessment process. For example, using numbers in the narrative CV format was generally seen as strengthening the storyline, and at times, numbers were even implied (e.g. in terms of 'high-ranking journals'). Therefore, the quantified academic culture is inescapable, even with the CV format change.

Finally, this study points to the complexity of the processes of 'expanding' the concept of excellence. Seemingly, the assessment of different forms of CVs encouraged the interviewees to appreciate a variety of different categories of practice, such as impact, mentoring or leadership. However, arguably, the evidence that these different categories are entering the evaluative inquiry as 'excellence' is, at best unambiguous. The interviewees assessed and evaluated various practices, nevertheless differentiated them from the concept of 'excellence'. Therefore, this concept expanded not by stretching but by adding 'excellence adjacent' categories.

Funding

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340 Uncovering the interplay between academic competence and knowledge exchange

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper employs the social learning concepts of Communities of Practice (CoPs) and legitimate peripheral participation to explore the influence of social definitions of competence and legitimacy upon academic engagement within knowledge exchange (KE) and motivations to participate in future boundary working (BW) activities. Adopting a case-study approach, it draws on 29 semi-structured interviews conducted across 6 UK universities to focus specifically on KE between the academic discipline of earthquake science and the third sector. By mapping the inward learning trajectory of the earthquake science CoP it finds competence to be displayed through engagement within and contribution to the community's practice. The analysis uncovers a perception that KE is often not conducive to gaining or maintaining competence and is perhaps detrimental to progression along an academic career pathway. As such, ambition to progress was found to discourage BW with motivations varying according to one's position within the community.

Full paper

Increased focus on the societal impact of academic research and apparent institutionalisation of Knowledge Exchange (KE) as a third mission of Higher Education Institutions has been well documented (Jungblut & O'Shea, 2023; Marzocchi et al., 2023); however, there remains a need for in-depth studies exploring the complex social processes surrounding this transition. As such, a recent special issue focused on KE within 'Studies in Higher Education' highlights a number of areas requiring further research which this paper seeks to address. Namely it explores "the motivations and intentions of academics towards KE" and considers "participation of a diverse set of academic actors" by looking across career stages (Marzocchi et al., 2023, p.678 & p.673). It targets one of the lesser researched KE stakeholders by focusing on academic interactions with the third sector (Marzocchi et al., 2023). Primarily; however, an exploration of the "tensions and trade-offs" (Marzocchi et al., 2023, p.673) between boundary working activities and more traditional definitions of academic competence lie at the heart of this paper.

Placing its exploration of academic-third sector KE within a broader conceptualisation of boundary work (BW), this research utilises O’Kane’s (2020) definition of BW “as a social process of participation and interaction across social worlds” which includes KE. This is in keeping with Marzocchi et al’s (2023) recognition of KE as a socially embedded process and Bozeman et al’s (2023) emphasis on the importance of interaction for research impact. Adopting a case-study approach, it employs social and situated learning theory in its exploration of the motivations and perceived abilities of a particular academic discipline (earthquake science) towards engaging in BW with humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). It builds on O’Kane’s (2020) findings that the two groups were struggling to build impactful BW relations and overcome one-off knowledge transfers. In particular, it seeks to delve into the suggestion that the associated challenges may be linked to incentives and rewards underpinning competence within the academic practice of earthquake science. In order to do this it employs Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) as an analytical lens to shed light on the inward learning trajectory of an earthquake science Community of Practice (CoP), and considers its influence on BW aspirations. The LPP process frames one’s desire to achieve legitimacy and competence as key to understanding individual motivations to engage within CoPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991); and while Wenger (2000) alludes that they may influence one’s ambition to participate across community boundaries this has not been explicitly explored.

This paper therefore set out to examine the influence of the LPP process and associated definitions of CoP competence on motivations and perceived abilities to engage in BW, along with current levels of participation. Adopting a contextualist perspective (Hislop, 2012) and formative approach, it answers calls for qualitative research into academic KE (Fazey et al., 2014; Thune et al., 2023). Data collection consisted of 29 semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals from 6 UK Universities and across varying stages of the CoP’s career trajectory from PhD student to Professor.

The analysis first identified the presence and nature of the three CoP components (as identified by Wenger, 2000) uniting the earthquake science community as a basis from which to shed light on social definitions of competence associated with their practice. It then mapped the CoP’s inward trajectory including progression from peripheral to full participant, identifying the novice, journeyman, master and old-timer as reflective of an academic career path. Within this it explored perceptions around the community’s access criteria and conditions for legitimacy, and found the CoPs social definition of competence to be attributed to 1) Engagement and 2) Contribution within the community’s practice which was predominately identified as having a research mission.

Findings uncovered variations within and across career-stage regarding the influence of LPP on actual participation and motivations to engage with NGOs, along with differences in perceived impact of such BW activities on individual competence. To a large extent these were linked to the level of desire an individual had to progress along an academic career trajectory, their need for job security and perceived KE capability related to their current level of expertise. Ultimately, there was a perception that BW may negatively impact one’s competence and potential to progress on an inward trajectory by affecting individual abilities to maintain sufficient engagement or contributions within the CoP. Other concerns were raised regarding impacts to reputational legitimacy with some interviewees having felt marginalised for past BW attempts.

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Parallel Session 7:2

09:00 - 10:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 139

Chair Andrea Cameron

364 Mature Student Motivation and Drop Out: Age-related patterns in experience.

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

How do the motivations of mature students interact with the factors which are associated with their increased chances of dropping out of undergraduate courses in Higher Education (HE)?

Whilst mature students may have common reasons for enrolling in HE, these motivations can change as they progress through the different stages of an undergraduate degree. Motivation may be heavily dependent on a students' context and their individual circumstances, perhaps even more so for students who are older than the traditional university ages. Age-related difference can, therefore, be a key factor effecting both initial and continuing motivations during HE study. This paper uses the findings from a longitudinal mixed-methods study to consider how differences in motivation can impact on mature undergraduate students decisions to drop out or persist with their studies.

Full paper

'our ridged structures mean that access routes to higher education take place outside the schooling system and apply to adults rather than teenagers. We do not seek to correct the effects of schooling immediately. Rather we wait until the alienation has weakened through the confused years () of the late teens. As people move into their twenties, maturity, family responsibility and career needs, come to the forefront and they become more susceptible to the benefits to be obtained by the qualifications provided by the higher education experience' (Wagner, 1989, p. 33)

As UK policy becomes increasingly preoccupied with educating people whilst they are young, mature students must be more motivated than ever to participate in HE, particularly given the financial risks. However, as Wagner (1989) outlines in the quote above the desire and readiness to study in HE occurs later in life for many, as circumstances and relationships prompt a range of motivations for enrolling on an undergraduate degree. A students' life-stage seems to have an initial influence on decisions to participate in education (Schuller & Watson, 2009) and also has been seen to contribute to ongoing motivation to help students complete their undergraduate degree (Foster, 2009). Mature students consistently continue to be twice as likely than younger students to drop out of their studies in HE in England and Wales (HESA, 2022; HESA, 2016). This paper uses the findings from a three-year mixed-methods study in a red-brick university^[1] to understand the impact motivation has on mature students in negotiating barriers that can influence drop out.

Student motivation can include a diverse range of elements and this presents challenges in defining, measuring and making comparisons (Breen & Lindsay, 2002), although themes of motivation are often apparent. Motivation can be instrumental in sustaining commitment (Carre, 2000) and reaching goals can be supported with motivational learning strategies (Leutner, et al., 2001) to help students to overcome barriers. Economic or family circumstances (Callender, 2008), a lack of belonging due to their background characteristics (Sutton, 2018; Reay, et al., 2010) and difficulties adapting to the routines and requirements of university life (Christie, et al., 2008) can hamper mature students efforts to persist with their degree.

This research tracked the motivations of an undergraduate year group during the three years of their degree. Yearly surveys were used to understand patterns of motivation across 7 disciplines (n=825). Experience of motivation was collected through termly interviews and monthly electronic diary entries with a small sample (n=10) from this year group.

Key differences were observed in mature students initial motivations when compared with their traditional-aged peers. In the survey mature students aged 25-29 were more focussed on needing qualifications for a particular job whereas those aged over 30 split their answers between wanting a challenge (25%), increasing their earning potential (25%) and 'other' reasons (37.5%). In contrast, whilst traditional-age students used all of the available responses, their answers were much more concentrated on the natural next step motive (46.9%). Interestingly there were many young mature students (aged 21-24) who also used this answer (29.5%), demonstrating similarities between younger mature students and traditional-age students. Employment goals demonstrated some consistent answers across the age groups. Many traditional-age students also selected reasons related to paid employment, such as I need this qualification for a particular job (23.6%) and to increase my earning potential (13.8%), which were also commonly selected by mature student age groups. In the interviews and diary entries it was apparent that one of the main differences was that older mature students (aged 30+) seemed to be more influenced by intrinsic or personal motivations: looking for fulfilment and achievement without necessarily having a specific outcome. In comparison younger mature students (aged 21-24) and traditional age students tended to have more instrumental and outcome-based motivations.

Initial motivations appeared to evolve for traditional-age students and younger mature students as they progressed through the stages of their degree. However mature students aged over 25 tended to consistently report their initial motivation throughout their studies. There were also differences between age groups in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Mature students' motivations for study and their experiences of employment and caring often acted as both motivators and barriers throughout their years of study. This insight could help universities better support mature students, by providing support to help them to mobilise their motivation to help them to become more resilient to barriers and more confident in pursuing their goals.

[1] Using the Department for Education (2016, p. 18) definition.

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365 Complexities in reflective pedagogical practices among adult learners

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This paper is part of wider research study from the experiences of mature adult university students from Black Asian and Ethnic Minority background in the UK. 63% of these learners were Black African, mainly female with an average age of between 45-54. The study is drawn from Dewey's (1910/1933) strategies on reflective thinking skills to promote reflective practice and improve their future lifelong learning goals following gaps in their learning. Data has been drawn from a mixed methods action research study. Despite years of experience, the project unearths complexities in the learners' backgrounds which has not been actively addressed in most studies. The students view this promotion of reflective practice and the pedagogical practices introduced, as an opportunity for personal growth where there is a growing sense of empowerment due to objects of knowledge acquired in the praxis.

KEY WORDS: Reflective practice; Lifelong Learning; Experiences

Full paper

Introduction

There has been a sharp rise in the number of mature adult learners being enrolled in higher education institutions (Caruth, 2014; Barshay, 2020). With adult learners constituting almost half of the student body today, what has been overlooked is the knowledge and years of experience these group of learners bring to these institutions. Higher education as a sector has continued with the same teaching and learning approaches irrespective of the changes in their student demography. What is not clear is whether there are any plans to make any adjustments on the curriculum that would meet the needs of this diverse student population. This paper is part of a wider research study where I seek to examine how a group of top up degree Health and Social Care adult learners in a UK university developed critical thinking skills to promote reflective practice and improve on their future lifelong learning goals by actively participating in their own learning through the application of different pedagogical approaches in a work integrated learning project. The study adapted Dewey's (1910/1933) strategies on reflective thinking in response to the gaps that emerged from the first cohort of learners' who lacked skills in the conceptual and methodological approaches to reflective practice.

Dewey's original conception of reflection can be summarised as 'a meaning making systematic, rigorous disciplined way of thinking that happens in communities through interaction; and requires attitudes that value growth of oneself and others' (Rodgers, 2002). Reflection as an active process relates to personal learning. The steps taken in drawing up pedagogical approaches that recognises different learning styles would benefit diverse learners. As majority of the learners were from Black Asian and Ethnic minorities with English as an additional language, I recognised the complexity of the learners' background and experiences in choosing a research method that included action research which requires participation that supports purpose and practice (Reason and Bradbury, 2008 in Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

Methods

The paper draws on a sequential mixed methods action research study where 188 responses were collected from online questionnaire survey followed by interviews from six focus groups conducted with adult learners from a UK Higher institution. In this mixed methods action research study, I frame my focus on how to promote reflective practice as a lifelong learning skill through transformative pedagogical practices. Four action research cycles were carried out which helped to improve praxis while allowing for an infusion of other methods into the course. The learners were sent online questionnaires on completion of the module. The data was statistically analysed at the conclusion of the survey using descriptive statistics and chi square, which determined a significant relationship among five variables that was representative of the pedagogical practices.

Next, I carried out seven focus group interviews from five different cohort of learners. Within this action research framework, the use of focus groups is particularly useful for generating some unanticipated responses (Chui, 2003, Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005 in Braun and Clarke 2013 p111). The topics in the focus groups included the application of pedagogical approaches, improving reflective thinking and feelings and promotion of reflective practice and lifelong learning. It was an open and conceptual discussion with a semi-structured interview topic guide.

Findings

Effective communication was viewed as the most important transferable lifelong learning skill by four of the six cohorts in the qualitative question in the questionnaire.

In the promotion of reflective practice and the pedagogical practices introduced, the key emerging concept is personal growth where there is a growing sense of empowerment due to objects of knowledge acquired in the praxis.

From the emerging results, the respondents show they have a contribution to make which they attribute to collaborative learning that provides a catharsis to face up to the complexities in their lives. Promoting reflective practice in their own work practice is more meaningful when they can relate it to their own experiences where they take ownership of their stories. It reiterates Dewey's acknowledgement of the importance of reflection that 'we do not learn from experience; we learn from reflecting on experience' (1933)

Since the data analysis is ongoing, it would be premature to make any conclusion at this stage; However, Dewey's relational view (Holdo, 2023) where the learners value the relationships that they build which bring a sense of purpose in their lives and make them feel more included as they are able to confidently express themselves based on the knowledge, they have acquired is a transformative process that would influence their lifelong learning skills.

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175 A longitudinal exploration of the impact of COVID-19 on Disabled and Neurodivergent students

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Teaching practices adopted in Higher Education (HE) during COVID-19 had mixed impacts on equity for the learning of disabled and neurodivergent students (DaNS; Disabled Students' commission, 2021).

This project implemented multi-method real-time longitudinal research to explore the experiences of DaNS during and post-pandemic. This presentation focuses on survey data administered to a sample of DaNS and nondisabled students, across three time points, across differing COVID restrictions.

Multifactor repeated measure ANOVAS found a statistically significant difference in wellbeing, loneliness, institutional support received, feeling forgotten, sense of community and belonging, and self-advocating for needs between the DaNS and comparison group across the three time points, with DaNS consistently scoring worse than their peers on these factors.

This research provides an evidence-based overview of the longitudinal impact of the pandemic on important factors for practice and policy regarding DaNS within HE, and provides recommendations to support learning equity based on this.

Full paper

The pandemic saw rapid changes to Higher Education (HE) delivery, and a turn to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) with little time to adapt, and subsequently little understanding of this impact. Empirical reports regarding first-hand experiences of the pandemic for disabled and neurodivergent students studying in HE did not emerge until 17-months after the UK lockdown began (DSC, 2021); despite speculation by Disabled Students UK (2020) of issues/barriers, and knowledge of suspected vulnerability to adverse effects from this situation for these groups, including:

- 1) Disabled people being at a higher risk of mortality due to COVID-19 (Bosworth et al., 2021; Shakespeare, Ndagire & Seketi, 2021).
- 2) The pandemic being accompanied by declining mental health and wellbeing issues, with a heightened impact on wellbeing of disabled people (68% of disabled people concerned for the impact of COVID-19 on their wellbeing compared to 48% of non-disabled people; OfNS, 2022).
- 3) Disabled students required to shield in seclusion more than peers to avoid adverse effects (OfS, 2022).
- 4) Technological accessibility when learning online acting paradoxically for disabled students (Steyaert, 2006), i.e., increasing elements of accessibility generally, whilst producing other barriers for technological accessibility.
- 5) Concerns of relevant theory regarding the academic success of minority group students (Jones & Stewart, 2016); particularly considering speculated issues of technological accessibility during COVID-19 for those with accessibility requirements (Botelho, 2021).

The lack of knowledge or research exploring the experiences of learners in HE was concerning, especially when ERT presented many technology and accessibility related issues (Jili, Ede & Masuku, 2021). These circumstances raised concern about the inclusivity and needs of disabled and neurodivergent students, therefore an exploration using real-time data was necessary.

This paper overviews a project utilising a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach and complex multi-method design to explore the impact of COVID-19 on disabled and neurodivergent students' learning and education. Longitudinal analyses of follow-up data explore key factors which emerged regarding factors in practice and policy, and models these findings for a framework of equity.

Initial findings were gathered via 22 in-depth unstructured interviews with disabled and neurodivergent students in April-November in 2021, regarding experiences of learning in HE during the pandemic. Key concepts from interviews included institutional barriers (lack of institutional support, feeling forgotten by the institution, some issues with delivery methods or technological accessibility- leading to student having to be adaptable), psychological distress (loneliness, poor wellbeing), and social elements (reduced sense of community and belonging, self-advocating for needs), in turn, impacting students' academic satisfaction.

Interviews informed longitudinal surveys collecting data from 307 students, including 165 disabled/neurodivergent students, and 145 non-disabled/neurotypical students at three time points; January- February 2022 (during the pandemic), in March- April of 2022 (after restrictions were lifted) and October- November of 2022 (during a new academic year).

Data were analysed using one-way between group ANOVAs, and multifactor repeated measure ANOVAS to observe the differences between groups for relevant measures, and explore how scores may have changed overtime. This project further maps these changes as we emerge into a post-pandemic world, and highlights what we must bring into future practice via an informed model of equitable learning.

The ANOVAS found that there was a statistically significant difference in wellbeing, loneliness, institutional support received, feeling forgotten, sense of community and belonging, and self-advocating for needs between the two groups, across all three time points, with the students in the disabled and neurodivergent group consistently scoring worse than their non-disabled peers on these factors.

Further, Path Analyses was used to test a model of these factors, which confirmed that institutional support, community and belonging, adaptability, and having to self-advocate, all predicted academic satisfaction, both directly and through the mediation of mental health for the disabled/neurodivergent student group.

The current findings show that there were multiple elements of concern for disabled and neurodivergent students' education during the pandemic, and these elements relate to aspects of the removal of formal accommodations/ support, issues with technological accessibility causing adaptability to become important. Students were having to self-advocate for needs, whilst coping with a removal of community, sense of belonging, and other issues around wellbeing, loneliness and mental health, which are modelled to predict disabled and neurodivergent students' academic satisfaction at university. These findings demonstrate that these issues remained almost 1 academic year later, and appear more concerning for disabled and neurodivergent students in comparison to their peers. This research project works to bridge the gap between speculation, knowledge and future action, and does so via modelling and evidence-based recommendations for HE going forward.

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Parallel Session 7:3 - Symposium

09:00 - 10:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023
Room 144

8 Addressing Structural Inequalities in Graduate Employability

Research Domain

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Rationale

Graduates in contemporary labour markets experience prolonged periods of transition from education into 'stable' jobs (with reliable incomes, career opportunities and social protection) and sustainable careers (where they are happy, healthy and productive over the course of their career development). Contrary to policy ambitions of a meritocratic society, expansion of higher education in the UK may have further reinforced social inequalities (Okay-Somerville, Allison, Luchinskaya & Scholarios, 2022). There are simply not enough high skilled entry-level jobs to absorb all university leavers. Within this context, there are systematic differences in access to career development opportunities and employment, at least at the start of graduate careers, based on demographic characteristics, including – but not limited to - gender, social and educational background, ethnicity, disability and domicile. The aim of this symposium is to draw conceptual and policy-related agendas for addressing structural inequalities that are in play for university graduates' experience of Higher Education and their employability.

Structural inequalities in graduate employability have implications at the individual (e.g., hampering young people's knowledge, skills, abilities, and relationships development; lowering wellbeing; slowing career development, resulting in underemployment and reduced lifetime earnings), organisational (e.g., underutilisation of potential and reduced productivity) and at societal levels (e.g., social mobility) (Baldry, 2015; Green & Henseke, 2016; McQuaid, 2017). The proposed symposium brings together a multi-disciplinary group of presenters (from psychology, sociology, economics

and education) each of whom offer a unique conceptual lens to studying and addressing structural inequalities. The collection of papers each focus on different aspects of inequality in graduate employability, including the role of social disadvantage, gender, financial insecurities and employability of international students. The symposium is therefore highly relevant for questioning the efficacy of widening participation and marketisation agendas associated with expansion of higher education in the UK. Moving beyond the human capital-based approaches to graduate employability, the symposium aims to draw attention to social returns to education.

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Chair

Belgin Okay-Somerville

University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Discussants

Daria Luchinskaya

University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom

180 Is work experience during higher education gendered?: Access and outcomes in the UK

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

In this article, we compare the early career outcomes of women and men after completing their first HE qualification in the UK. We problematise the individualised concept of career and employability as dependent only on individuals' efforts and decisions ignoring structural constraints on their choices, and the role of employer demand in labour

market outcomes. We use longitudinal graduate tracking survey data from the UK (Futuretrack) to investigate graduates' transitions into the labour market. Using regression analysis, we investigate how the opportunity to access work experience activities during undergraduate education varies by gender. We then look at the labour market outcomes (getting a job, wages and perceived skills match) associated with different work experience activities. We find that access to and outcomes of work experience are gendered in the UK, shedding light on the gendered organisation of HE and labour market transition.

Full paper

Introduction

Work experience and the development of employability skills have become an essential aspect of higher education and early experiences in the labour market. However, the benefits are not evenly distributed among individuals (Hunt and Scott, 2018; Bradley and Waller, 2018; Bathmaker et al., 2013). Inequalities along social class and gender lines continue to affect students' participation in and outcomes of work experience activities. Consequently, if work experience activities continue to be uncritically promoted as a way for students to improve their chances of employment after graduation, this approach runs the risk of reproducing existing labour market inequalities rather than improving labour market outcomes for less privileged students.

Methods and analysis

In this study, we examine the early career outcomes of women and men who have completed their first higher education qualification in the UK. We question the notion of individualized careers and employability, which solely relies on individuals' efforts and decisions, disregarding the structural constraints they face and the impact of employer demand on labour market outcomes. We analyse longitudinal data from a nationally-representative graduate tracking survey in the UK (Futuretrack) to explore how graduates transition into the labour market.

The most popular type of work experience done by UK HE students was a structured work placement, undertaken by around 20% of respondents, followed by a sandwich placement (11%) and a vacation internship with an employer (9%). [1] Around a quarter of respondents also did unpaid work to get useful career-related experience. Over half of respondents did some form of paid work, whether for career-related experience or for the money only (54%). Only 19% of respondents did not do any work-related activity during higher education.

Through regression analysis, we investigate gender differences in accessing work experience opportunities (including a sandwich year undergraduate placement, shorter structured work placement/s integral to course, and a vacation internship with an employer, among others) during undergraduate education ($N \approx 9,000$). Next, we examine how different types of work experience activities are associated with labour market outcomes ($N \approx 5,000-6,000$), including job attainment, wages, and the perceived match of skills in their job. We also take into account whether graduates did any paid work while at university, and control for individual (e.g. socio-economic background, age, ethnicity, etc.) and HE-level (region, HEI type, subject studied, etc.) factors. We use logistic regression for all regressions, except for wages, where we use linear regression. To account for selection issues (if there is an unobserved and non-measured factor, such as 'motivation', that affects individuals' likelihood of taking on a work-related activity and their employment outcomes), we look at getting a job, wages and perceived skills match for graduates in employment only (Puhani, 2000).

Findings

We find that access and outcomes of work experience are gendered in the UK and report three main findings. First, we show that in the UK, women were more likely than men to do something than to do nothing

in terms of work experience. Only 7 per cent of women did no work-related activity at all compared to 22 per cent of men.

Second, we demonstrate different participation patterns by gender in different kinds of work experience during HE. Women were more likely than men to do a work placement, paid work for the money, and unpaid work, but less likely to do a vacation internship. While subject choices might be gender segregated, our analysis suggests that gender affects patterns of participation in work experience activities even after controlling for subjects studied.

Third, our results show that different types of work experience were associated with differential labour market outcomes. For example, vacation internships with employers (less likely done by women than by men) were positively associated with getting a graduate job, wages, and perceived skills match, while doing paid work only for the money was associated with a negative effect on wages and perceived skill match.

Discussion

Our study brings attention to the constraints of an individual-focused perspective on employability and reveals the gendered dynamics within higher education (HE) and the labour market, particularly concerning subject choices and career paths. We emphasize the importance of recognizing and addressing the gendered structure of HE and the labour market, as it perpetuates inequalities in the realm of work experience, within various institutional settings.

[1] The Futuretrack survey question underpinning these data was a multiple response question, here we report the unweighted percentages of respondents who undertook these activities (unweighted percent of cases, using `mrtab` Stata command). Respondents may have done more than one activity.

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259 Graduating in a pandemic without safety nets: The role of career competencies for sustainable start to careers

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This research examines the role of career competencies (as crucial career resources relevant for career self-regulation) for sustainable (i.e., happy, healthy and productive) start to graduate careers. Of particular interest is the efficacy of career competencies for university leavers who may not have financial and psychological resources / safety nets at the height of the pandemic, in 2020. The analyses are informed by a longitudinal study of 2020 UK university leavers (N=181). Findings show (i) how self-regulation of careers operates differently depending on one's psychological and financial safety nets; (ii) career self-regulation may work best under 'average' psychological and financial conditions; and (iii) career competencies may be best understood in relation to psychological and financial costs. Building on a significant career shock that was the COVID-19 for most university leavers of 2020, the findings highlight the interplay between an individual's career resources and their psychological environment.

Full paper

For young people transitioning from university to work in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was a traumatic career shock which impacted the course of life and career plans (Blustein et al., 2020). Groups with fewer financial and psychological safety nets were shown to be especially vulnerable in the pandemic context (Pierce, et al., 2021; Understanding Society, 2021). Such vulnerability patterns are likely to have exacerbated the uncertainty associated with university-to-work transitions. Within this context, this research examines the role of career competencies (as crucial career resources relevant for career self-regulation) for sustainable (i.e., happy, healthy and productive) start to graduate careers. Of particular interest is the efficacy of career competencies for university leavers who may not have financial and psychological resources / safety nets at the height of the pandemic, in 2020.

The study builds on the contemporary discussions on career self-management (e.g., Hirschi and Koen, 2021) as critical for career self-regulation in crisis situations, in this case the pandemic. This allows understanding of (i) which resources help a sustainable start to careers for university leavers (RQ1) and (ii) how financial and psychological resources differentially impact the efficacy of career resources on sustainable career outcomes (RQ2). We adopt the sustainable careers framework (De Vos, Van Der Heijden, & Akkermans, 2020) to examine sustainable start to one's career, focusing on resources relevant to happiness (perceived financial stress), healthiness (general mental health) and productivity (career competencies and career crafting).

Method and analysis

Two waves of a longitudinal study of 2020 UK university leavers inform our analyses (Time 1 (T1), Sep-March 2020, N=502; Time 2 (T2), March-May 2022, N=181). We used T1 sustainable career resources of financial stress (Netemeyer et al. 2018), general mental health (GHQ12; Goldberg, 1992) and career competencies (Akkermans, Brenninkmeijer, Huibers, & Blonk, 2013) to predict T2 resources of financial stress, general mental health and career crafting (Tims & Akkermans, 2020).

Analysis involved structural regression models with multiple group analyses on AMOS. Three-way interactions between sustainable career resources were computed using PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2022).

Findings

Findings support the model where each sustainable career resource at T1 predicted the same resource at T2 but no others, e.g., T1 general mental health was positively related to T2 general mental health only.

Multi-group analyses examining the efficacy of T1 career competencies on T2 sustainable career resources showed that career competencies were positively related to career crafting for those graduates who experienced average levels of general mental health and financial distress in T1, but not for others. Career competencies had a positive effect on T2 career crafting of those who reported average T1 financial stress, regardless of T1 general mental health (and vice versa).

Three-way interaction predicting T2 career crafting was significant. Among those who reported poor T1 general mental health, career competencies were more instrumental for T2 career crafting of those who experienced low T1 financial stress and least instrumental for those who experienced high T1 financial stress. For those who experienced good general mental health in T1, career competencies were most instrumental for T2 career crafting of those who experienced high T1 financial stress and least so for those who experienced low T1 financial stress.

Discussion

Findings show how self-regulation of careers operates differently depending on one's psychological and financial safety nets. More specifically, career competencies do not lead to 'gain spirals' in psychological and financial resources in T2. This suggests that sustainable career indicators (i.e., happiness, healthiness and productivity) may be related but distinct. Especially in key transition points, some indicators of sustainable careers may be experienced more strongly than others, depending on our personal and career resources, e.g., focusing on productivity at the expense of happiness.

Findings suggest that the career self-regulation may work best under 'average' psychological and financial conditions. For graduates experiencing insecurities in one area but not the other, we observe career competencies are instrumental in career crafting. However, the results do not show evidence for cumulative disadvantage - rather career competencies may have compensating effects for career crafting, i.e., building further career resources.

Overall, findings confirm the crucial role career competencies play for sustainable start to careers. Nevertheless, career competencies may be best understood in relation to psychological and financial costs. Building on a significant career shock that was the COVID-19 for most university leavers of 2020, the findings highlight the interplay between an individual's career resources and their psychological environment.

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264 The role of the university services in international student employability: A systematic literature review

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This paper examines the role of the university services in international student employability. While there has been focus on the wage and employment outcomes of international students following their graduation, the development of employability through engagement with university services requires further attention. A systematic literature review of 47 research papers was conducted. Findings show that international students do indeed experience unique challenges, e.g., accessing labour markets, especially in host country. Nevertheless, amongst the papers reviewed, only six research articles specifically focused on the role of the university services on the transition experience. Discussion in these papers centred around (i) the broader role of the universities and (ii) career service support. This literature review suggests that there are tensions between neoliberal and transitional approaches to international student employability. Employability development needs of international students lies very much on the intersection of degree-related skills and knowledge, and their personal and professional relationships.

Full paper

The higher education internationalisation policies have resulted in increased the movement of students across borders to obtain university degrees with the expectation of a beneficial academic and employment outcomes (Furukawa et al., 2013). It is recognised that international students have become increasingly mobile for career development (Tzanakou and Behle, 2017), yet there is limited empirical representation of their graduate outcomes of employment attainment and level related to their unique employability development. While there has been some focus on the occupation, wage and skill-level outcomes of international students following their graduation, the development of employability through the engagement with university services requires further attention. Within this context, this paper examines the role of the university in international students' employability. The overarching research question this paper aims to address is: how employability is studied in relation to international students in the existing literature? With a specific focus on: how is the role of the university in international student employability represented in the current research?

Method and analysis

A systematic literature review of 47 research papers drawn from the Web of Science database that were published in journal articles in English between 2001 and 2022 was conducted. The search terms were a combination of keywords related to "international student", "transition", "graduate" and "employability". An analytical synthesis of the included articles was conducted. The analytical framework was developed based on the research questions.

Findings and discussion

The majority of the articles included in the analysis examined the international graduate transition to the labour market and the role of stakeholders in graduate employability within the internationalisation of higher education. In general, international students have expressed specific employability-related needs while at university which include gaining employment experience, having services available for international student needs, help with understanding the job search process, a better understanding of cultural nuances through building social networks, support accessing the local labour market, and identifying employers who are accepting of international students (Linkes et al., 2018). Amongst the papers reviewed, only six research articles specifically focused on the role of the university services on the transition experience. Discussion centred around role of (i) the universities and (ii) career service support.

The role of the university in student employability has been widely debated: for some the institution is merely for the obtainment of knowledge and learning, for others higher education prepares future employable individuals (Lopez-Duarte et al., 2021). Particularly within the neoliberal agenda, there is an assumption and some empirical evidence that knowledge obtained from degrees will lead to higher wages and better job opportunities for international students, especially in their home country (Brooks and Waters, 2022). Within this context, the 'duty of care' of universities to support student employability is contested. As internationalisation continues to be a priority for many institutions, so has the call for the internationalisation of the curriculum to incorporate an intercultural dimension which prepare graduates to meet employer expectations on a global scale. Nevertheless, there is also tensions between university and academic staff understanding of the role of the university, and some staff may be reluctant to incorporate skills (Jones, 2013). Not surprisingly, some of the international student employability research focuses on post-study work visa issues (Tran et al., 2022).

Often career services are viewed as the gatekeepers of information to prepare students to transition from university to a career. While these are essential services, they can be homogenously delivered and not recognise the unique needs of the international student population (Linkes et al., 2018). In the case of international students, their needs often come due to acculturative stressors related to financial, academic, and cultural stress. One-to-one careers counselling can be difficult for international students due to a lack of language proficiency or differences in cultural nuances (Linkes et al., 2018; Sangganjanavanich et al., 2011). There is some evidence of the efficacy of group career counselling sessions for international students (e.g., reduced interview anxiety), as these eliminate some of the cultural barriers and serve to encourage networking and validating experiences (Linkes et al., 2018).

Conclusion

Despite considerable literature on graduate employability and international student experience, our understanding of how universities can support international student employability is still limited. This literature review suggests that there are tensions between neoliberal and transitional approaches to international student employability. With the increase of diversification and internationalisation agendas in higher education, the support provided for students to successfully navigate their employability development lies on understanding how universities facilitate employability through network and relationship development.

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Parallel Session 7:4

09:00 - 10:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Conference Room 3

Chair Pauline Kneale

62 'It made university possible:' exploring the opportunities created through online learning for commuter students to engage in higher education study

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Commuter students represent approximately 25% UK university students. They often have caring responsibilities; work part time; and / come from lower-socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, commuter students are potentially an important group for universities to focus on with respect to access and participation. Here we used first year students' residential status (i.e., whether they had relocated or were commuting to university) to capture data regarding students' attitudes toward online learning and academic engagement. Provisional analyses indicate differing behaviours in terms of study habits, peer collaboration and engagement with course-related activities according to residential status. They also indicate commuter students as holding positive dispositions toward online learning. These data may have implications for support that is provided to different student groups to create a sense of belonging and inclusion. We will consider this, as well as the role of online learning, in promoting the engagement of commuter students in this paper.

Full paper

Commuter students represent approximately 25% of those engaged in UK higher education (HE) (Maguire & Morris, 2018). These students often have caring responsibilities; work part time; and/ come from lower-socio-economic backgrounds - all characteristics reported to be underrepresented within HE (Thomas, 2020). Consequently, commuter students are potentially an important group for universities to focus on, with respect to access and participation. Interestingly, commuter students have been little researched and are often overlooked in policy rhetoric. This may partly reflect the lack of an agreed definition for commuter students (Maguire & Morris, 2018; Stalmirska & Mellon, 2022), and a presumption within UK HE that most students relocate into communal, campus-based accommodation (Thomas & Jones, 2017). By contrast, the norm in territories such as the USA is for students to attend their local HE provider (Pokorny et al., 2017; Thomas, 2020).

This study is based within a publicly funded, UK university, with a substantial proportion of undergraduates drawn from non-traditional or underrepresented backgrounds. Students drawn from underrepresented backgrounds can lack the social and cultural capital to succeed (Reay et al., 2010). Consequently, HE providers have made significant efforts to mitigate these challenges (Thomas, 2012). However, commuting adds a further level of complexity; for example, it has been reported that commuter students have a greater chance of not reaching their academic potential (Thomas, 2020). Various recommendations have been made to support commuter students (e.g. Thomas & Jones, 2017), with technology cited as potentially playing an important role (Buckenmeyer et al., 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic spurred technological advances in supporting students and engaging them in learning (UUK, 2022). Thus, it seems timely to examine the relationship between online learning and commuter students' HE experiences.

This study focussed on students in first year – a pivotal window for integration and success (Krause & Coates, 2008). Drawing on engagement scales developed by Krause and Coates (2008) for their seminal work on transitions to HE in Australia, an online survey addressed the following research questions:

- Is residential status related to attitudes towards online learning?
- Is residential status related to student engagement?

Methods

Commuter students were identified based on differences reported in home/ term time addresses, an approach used in previous literature (Webb & Turner, 2020). Though focussed on commuter students, data were also collected from first years who had relocated, to illuminate differing patterns of engagement according to residential status. Data were analysed using Chi-square tests to establish significant differences according to residential status.

Findings

Overall, commuter students viewed online learning more positively than their peers who had relocated. For example, they were more likely to agree that online learning 'improved skill development' (57% vs 47%), 'improved learning outcomes' (53% vs 43%) and 'provided a better learning experience' (53% vs 44%). Commuter students were also less likely to agree that online teaching 'doesn't offer the same social experience' (74% vs 82%), and that 'the student experience is not as good' (53% vs 66%).

The engagement scales data highlighted different adaptive behaviours and attitudes according to residential status. The Intellectual Engagement scale considers attitudes to study (i.e. whether students find the subject interesting, are motivated to study). Here, no significant differences emerged according to residential status. The Academic Engagement scale provides insights into study habits (i.e. when students study, time management). Significant differences emerged for most items, with commuter students showing more agreement with markers of Academic Engagement than relocated counterparts. Commuter Students were less likely to report activities associated with the Peer Engagement scale (e.g., 'regularly working with classmates outside of class on group assignments'). Moreover, Commuter Students were less likely to report 'feeling part of a group of students and staff committed to learning'.

Conclusions

These data suggest that residential status should receive greater attention in research and institutional monitoring. Differing patterns of engagement emerged depending on whether a student fully relocated or commuted to university. These data may have implications for support that is provided to different student groups to create a

sense of belonging and inclusion. More tailored approaches may be required according to students' residential status. Finally, the data highlight commuter students' positive disposition towards online learning. Thus, further consideration should be given to how quality online provision can be used to optimise engagement and learning amongst students who reside at distance from their HE provider.

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105 Unpacking the connections and complexities of UK commuter students' HE experiences.

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

In the UK around a quarter of undergraduate students are considered 'commuters', yet little is still known about this group (Donnelly & Gamsu, 2018). Existing research has focused on what unites these students; their shared challenges and experiences across the student lifecycle. Nevertheless, this approach ignores the heterogeneity of this student group; their demographic characteristics, access barriers and HE experiences. This paper unpacks these complexities, exploring what connects and divides these students in their experiences in the context of empirical multi-sited ethnographic research across three universities in the North East & Yorkshire regions of the UK. Combined with a theoretical approach of Actor-network theory (ANT) to highlight the connections between and across institutions, this paper provides an innovative approach for exploring this topic and consequently problematises and unpacks the connections and complexities of UK commuter students' HE experiences in order to provide a richer understanding of this group.

Full paper

The continued expansion of UK university provision, both in terms of the subject curriculum and flexibility for part-time and distance study, is attributed to increasing the number of university students who study locally whilst living at home (Finn, 2019). Around a quarter of students are believed to commute to their place of study (Donnelly & Gamsu, 2018), yet it is unclear if the effects of COVID (Hillman, 2022) and/or the increases in cost of living (Blake, 2023) will have affected these numbers. An absence of sector-agreed terminology means that definitions of a 'commuter student' differ across the sector (Thomas, 2020). This paper uses the term 'commuter students' to refer to groups of students that live in the parental/guardian home or own residence, the latter of which can be owned or privately rented.

Research on the experiences of commuter students is limited, attributed to the lack of definition combined with the assumption that students move away from home to attend university (Maguire & Morris, 2018). The existing body of research has primarily focused on presenting a homogenous picture of commuter students' experiences; marrying the similarities in commuter students' experiences. Travel to/from campus is regularly presented as stressful, tiring and time consuming (Stalmirska & Mellon, 2022). Timetabling of classes is often the biggest issue raised by this student group, along with a lack of staff awareness and support (Thomas, 2020). Commuters are also characterised as rarely participating in social & extra-curricular activities (Christie et al., 2005). Whilst potentially an accurate portrayal of some commuter students' experiences, it misses those who do not face these challenges, perhaps due to differences in institutional support or their chosen mode of transport. Consequently, it is important that heterogeneity in commuter students' experiences is further explored (Thomas & Jones, 2017) in order to highlight these gaps in our understanding.

A multi-sited ethnography (MSE) was employed to explore commuter students' experiences of HE in the North East and Yorkshire regions of the UK; regions that have high numbers of commuter students in attendance (Donnelly & Gamsu, 2018) yet are underexplored in academic research. The MSE comprised of three spatially distinct HE fieldsites: Institution A (small, Cathedrals Group), Institution B (large, Russell Group) and Institution C (medium, collegiate Russell Group). Data was collected through a combination of go-along interviews, participant observation and document analysis, with participants accompanied on their commutes and time on campus over a 6 month period. The use of ethnography to investigate this demographic group in a HE context is underutilised, yet a method that is valuable for considering the connections within and between sites (Marcus, 1995) whilst simultaneously acknowledging complex institutional, cultural and social influences (Pierides, 2010).

The research employs a theoretical lens of ANT to further highlight these interconnected, inextricable web of connections (Tummons et al., 2018) which commuters are influenced by, and thus embody, within the social world. Commuting to campus relies on a complex network of human (e.g. family members, academic tutors, university/home peers) and non-human (e.g. public transport, car parks, HE timetables) actants. Using ANT within this theoretical analysis allows for exploration into these assemblages, building a picture of the human and non-human connections commuter students have within their specific spatial and regional contexts and thus uncovering the complexity of their experiences in a way that has not yet been explored.

The findings presented in this paper derive from the primary research question 'What is being a commuter student like?' in which the theme of heterogeneity in relation to their lived experiences, both within and across their institutions, became apparent. This is particularly notable in their experiences of travel to and from campus, participation in social and extra-curricular activities and relationships with staff and the wider university. Experiences of travel to campus predicated on the convenience, availability and reliability of public transport in their region, in addition to institutional travel policies. A wide spectrum of participation in extra-curricular and social activities existed amongst participants within each institution. The reasons for (non)participation were complex and varied, often connected to strong (or absent) peer relationships at their HEI. Interaction and connection to their specific institutional spaces (departments, university facilities, academic classes) differed widely and particularly between students' experiences of the same institution which, in multiple instances, were in direct contradiction with each other.

These findings illustrate the experiences of UK commuter students with greater complexity than has been previously discussed, thus setting a precedent for future policy and academic research concerned with supporting and improving commuter students' experiences of HE.

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351 When Life and Learning Are Separated: The Experience of International Students Taking Online Master Courses

Daian Huang

Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

The number of international students who take online degree courses provided by UK Higher Education Institutions is increasing, and universities are currently developing and shaping the related policies and provisions. As students' voices are important for universities to develop their policies and provisions, this paper unpacks the learning experience of 23 international students who took postgraduate taught courses online. It was found that the students tended to separate their learning from their daily life, they did not successfully build global connections, and their learning was restricted by the technologies to a certain extent. It is recommended that universities should better understand the needs of their students, provide opportunities for students to extend their learning to their daily life, create space for students to have deeper communication with each other and build connections beyond their studies, and carefully choose the use of technology to minimise students' difficulties and barriers.

Full paper

As UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are now providing various online degree programme, the number of international students who study with UK universities but stay in their own country is increasing. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2023), about 140,000 international students enrolled in UK HEIs were based overseas and took distance, flexible or distributed learning in 2021/22, a rise from 120,000 students in 2018/19. Such phenomenon can be discussed using the concept of Internationalisation at a Distance (IaD), which includes forms of education across borders where students are separated from the educational institutions geographically (Ramanau, 2016; Mittelmeier et al., 2021). As internationalisation is one of the key practices in higher education, IaD, as a category of internationalisation, should be understood and developed further in UK universities.

Universities that offer such online courses believe, or at least promote, that their online courses could provide students with flexible learning opportunities, convenience to combine study with other live commitments, global connections and networks, and access to digital resources (e.g. University of Cambridge, 2023; The University of Manchester, 2023). As online education demonstrated various issues during the COVID-19 pandemic (de Wit & Altbach, 2022), this brings the questions: To what extent do such practices achieve the aims? How can universities further develop their online provisions and better support their online students? To answer these, this paper unpacks the learning experiences of these international students at a distance and informs related provisions and practices.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 23 online international students who studied at a UK university about their learning experiences in 2022/23. All my participants took Education-related Postgraduate Taught (PGT) courses: 11 of them took full-time online degree courses, 5 of them took part-time online degree courses, and 7 of them took full-

time online degree courses for one semester and changed their form of study to in-person. Thematic analysis was used to analyse participants' views.

As these participants stayed at home while taking the online courses, they tended to separate their learning and life. Participants perceived learning through online courses as an extra task that does not involve anyone else around them, and the boundary between their learning and daily life was clear: the learning only happened when they purposefully got online and accessed certain materials. Particularly for the students who took a theory-intensive course, they found it was hard to relate their learning to their other life activities. Participants who experienced both online and onsite learning confirmed that after they changed their learning mode, their learning and life were well integrated, that learning was a natural part of life, rather than something they needed to purposefully do with extra effort.

Although the university and course designers believed that students could gain global connections and networks (e.g. The University of Manchester, 2023), my participants disagreed with this benefit. Instead, they argued that the connections they gained online were different from their other connections, they only talked about their assignments and university-related tasks with each other, and they did not recognise their colleagues in the online courses as part of their social circle. Compared to the connections they had in their previous in-person studies, the participants believed that it would be hard to maintain the connections after their courses were completed.

Another important finding was that, although technology supported students' learning, there might be challenges caused by technologies. For example, students in China had limited or restricted access to Zoom, Google and YouTube, which were heavily used in their courses. Also, for students who took the courses on the other side of the world, the time difference between their country and the UK made it hard for them to get timely support when they needed technological help.

The implications of these findings provide helpful suggestions for supporting rising trends towards internationalisation at a distance. Firstly, universities could design their courses more practically, integrating some tasks that require the students to actively do in their daily life, so that students can expand their learning from only online to 'learning with living'. Secondly, the universities could organise more events, particularly face-to-face events, for the students to connect better with their colleagues, and further achieve the goal of 'gain global connections'. Thirdly, universities could think more about the possible technological challenges the students have and try to avoid using software that is not accessible in certain countries, or less developed and likely to require university's support.

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Parallel Session 7:5

09:00 - 10:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 145

Chair Camille Kandiko-Howson

138 Are we answering the question that has been set? Exploring the gap between examinations research and practice in higher education

Alex Buckley

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Despite a large amount of critical research literature, traditional examinations continue to be widely used in higher education. In this talk I will explore the role that methodology plays in the gap between research on exams and the way that exams are used. Drawing on Viviane Robinson's 'problem-based methodology' – which focuses on the need for researchers to engage with the priorities of practitioners – I will discuss the extent to which literature on exams published between 2016 and 2021 focuses on real-world assessment challenges. I will conclude that there is an absence of evidence about how practitioners make their decisions about assessments, which hinders the ability of assessment researchers to appropriately connect their work with practical assessment challenges. To make a difference, assessment research needs to live in the real world; a world which, at least as far as practitioners' assessment decisions are concerned, we do not yet sufficiently understand.

Full paper

Introduction

Assessment is an aspect of higher education where the gap between research and practice is often believed to be particularly wide. There is a sense that while the historical shift in focus from what teachers do to what students do (Barr & Tagg, 1995) has had considerable impact on pedagogy, the hold of traditional transmission-focused approaches has lingered longer when it comes to assessment and feedback (Winstone and Carless, 2020). Formal examinations probably represent the apotheosis of this reported disconnect between assessment research and the assessment methods that are actually used within universities (Chong and McArthur 2021). The issue discussed in this article is whether this gap between research and practice is partly due to the methodologies employed by researchers.

In order to evaluate methodology as a factor, I explore the application to recent research on exams of Viviane Robinson's 'problem-based methodology', which views insufficient engagement by researchers with practitioners' challenges as a key factor in the lack of uptake of educational research (Robinson 1998). It starts from the idea that the educational practices that researchers may wish to challenge and change should not be seen as irrational spasms or unthinking traditions, but as rational attempts to solve particular problems. As a consequence, researchers need to offer superior solutions to those very same problems if they want to contribute to the improvement of those practices. Just as students can perform poorly in exams because they answer the question they wish they'd been asked rather than the one they are set on the paper, the work of researchers can lack impact because they offer solutions to the problems they see, rather than the problems practitioners take themselves to face (Robinson 1993).

In Robinson's model, research that aims at improving practice should address either a) the accuracy of practitioners' beliefs, b) the extent to which an assessment practice satisfies practitioners' existing constraints, or c) the extent to which an assessment practice makes it easier to solve other problems that practitioners are concerned with.

Method

Literature on examinations in higher education published in the five-year period between 2016 and 2021 was reviewed to explore the extent of its alignment with Robinson's problem-based methodology. An initial simple search was undertaken using Google Scholar, followed by a systematic search within 28 'key journals' highlighted by Tight (2018). In total 43 relevant papers were found. The papers were reviewed to determine i) the constraint/s focused on, and ii) how they framed those constraints with regard to practitioners' concerns: whether they addressed the accuracy of practitioners' beliefs, how effectively practitioners' existing constraints are satisfied, or the relevance of additional considerations to practitioners' existing constraints.

Findings

The review found research that matches all three elements of Robinson's model, though the dominant strategy (in 17 of the 43 papers reviewed) is to address the effectiveness of assessment solutions. However, an equal number of papers (17), featured no explicit discussion at all of how the research relates to practitioners' assessment decisions. In addition, even where researchers do explicitly discuss the relationship between their work and practitioners' concerns, it is rare for relevant evidence about practitioners' concerns to then be cited; only nine of the 43 papers reviewed do so. Researchers almost always provide evidence that the issue they discuss is of importance to other researchers, but rarely do the same for practitioners.

It is widely recognised that there is a scarcity of research on how assessment decisions are made (e.g. Bearman et al. 2017), and apparently none on the decision-making processes that lead to the use of exams. If we don't know why practitioners choose to use exams in particular situations, it is hard for those conducting research on exams to provide evidence about how their research engages with those choices. Robinson herself is clear that the kind of practice-focused model she advocates depends on robust information about how practitioners frame their problems and make their choices (Robinson & Lai 1999).

If we want research to influence the rational decision-making processes of practitioners, lamenting the lack of innovation and improvement in assessment while failing to engage with the thought-processes that lead to decisions about assessment is unlikely to succeed. Offering better solutions to the problems that practitioners face is a more promising path to the change we would all like to see.

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265 Research trends in the higher education feedback literature since the 'new paradigm' shift to learner-centred feedback practices

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

The last decade has seen a shift in the feedback literature from a transmission-focused perspective to a 'new paradigm' of learner-centred feedback approaches. To understand research trends and 'hotspots' in the literature since this shift, bibliographic analysis was used to perform a science mapping of feedback literature within a higher education context. Web of Science's Social Sciences Citation Index was searched for literature on this topic since the new paradigm was first proposed in 2015. A keyword co-occurrence analysis was performed on 933 studies, and the following subtopics were identified: Student agency; self-regulation; online learning; student engagement; peer activities; student-supervisor dialogue; technology-enhanced feedback; assessment outcomes; e-feedback; and feedback information delivery modes. Research on peers as a source of feedback appears to dominate the field, so it might be beneficial to explore this hotspot further to determine whether the outcomes can inform and enrich future research in the other subtopics.

Full paper

Introduction

Historically, feedback was often defined in the literature as information about a student's performance, usually transmitted from the teacher to the student (Winstone et al., 2022). While the late 1990s saw a shift to focusing on what the student does with this information (Biggs, 1999), it was Carless' (2015) seminal work that first used the term 'new paradigm' to refer to feedback practices that emphasise students' active role in feedback processes. This led to a proliferation of feedback research being published in the last decade, particularly in higher education. Post-2015, research has tended to emphasise more learner-centred feedback approaches (Winstone et al., 2022).

Understanding the foci of feedback research since the new paradigm shift would be valuable, particularly in terms of uncovering the subtopics that have received priority. The current study used bibliometric analysis to perform a science mapping of feedback literature in higher education since 2015. This approach is "useful for deciphering and mapping the cumulative scientific knowledge and evolutionary nuances of well-established fields" (Donthu et al., 2021, p. 285). The aim was to chart research trends in the new paradigm feedback literature to identify research 'hotspots' and make recommendations for future research.

Method

The Web of Science's (WOS) Social Sciences Citation Index was searched for literature on feedback in higher education published since 2015. Titles and author keywords were searched for the terms "feedback" or "feed-back", then the following limiters were used: English only; education & educational research WOS topic. A total of 1461 records were manually screened to remove the following: Studies explicitly focused on children or school students, not higher education; professional development studies outside of the higher education context (e.g., training of school teachers, police officers, etc.); studies based in the workplace; studies on students' feedback about their learning (e.g., student evaluations of teaching). After this screening 933 records were retained for analysis.

The science mapping approach involved a keyword co-occurrence analysis being performed using the visualisation software, VOSviewer 1.6.18 (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). By producing a network map of author keywords and the connections between them, 'research hotspots' within a field can be identified (Zhang et al., 2022). Keywords that cluster together co-occur more in the literature, indicating that a distinct subtopic is represented by these terms (Chen et al., 2022).

Results

Only keywords present across five or more studies were included in the analysis to reduce the potential for 'noise' in the map. Ninety-one keywords were analysed after grouping together similar terms, removing generic terms (e.g., learning) and removing keywords that are not specific to a single cluster (i.e., because they should be relevant to all studies, such as 'feedback' and 'higher education'). Figure 1 displays the keyword co-occurrence network map.

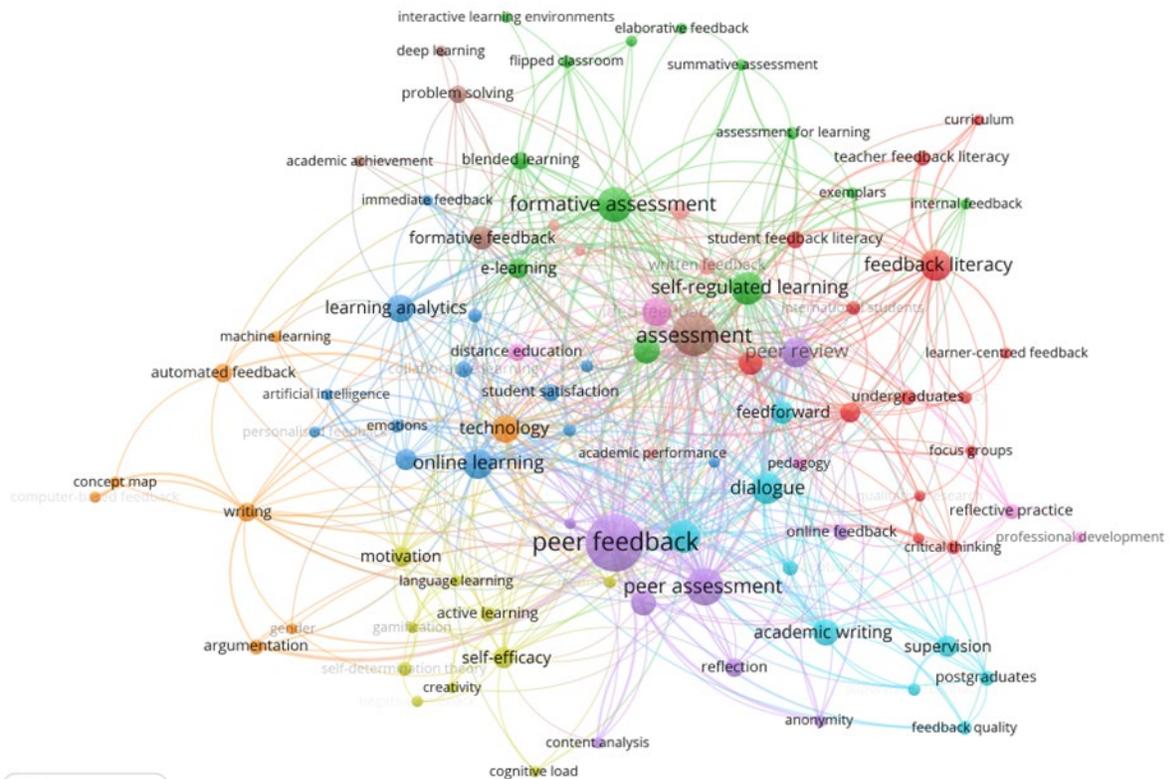


Figure 1. Keyword co-occurrence analysis network map.

Nine clusters (research hotspots) were identified. These are distinguished by the different colours in the map. A holistic interpretation of each cluster's focus was determined by making qualitative judgements about the associations between terms within a cluster (see Table 1).

Table 1. Research hotspots

Cluster colour	Cluster focus	Exemplar keywords (with occurrences)	Average publication year
Red	Student agency	agency (7) feedback literacy (41) self-assessment (23) evaluative judgement (5)	2020
Green	Self-regulation	self-regulated learning (43) formative assessment (51) assessment for learning (7) internal feedback (6)	2019
Dark blue	Online learning	online learning (35) learning analytics (30) immediate feedback (6) personalised feedback (5)	2019
Yellow	Student engagement	active learning (9) self-efficacy (19) motivation (16) self-determination theory (8)	2019
Purple	Peer activities	peer feedback (134) peer assessment (57)	2019

		peer review (36)	
Light blue	Student-supervisor dialogue	dialogue (38) supervision (18) postgraduates (10) supervisory feedback (7)	2019
Orange	Technology-enhanced feedback	technology (32) automated feedback (14) computer-based feedback (5)	2019
Brown	Assessment outcomes	assessment (78) academic achievement (5)	2018
Pink	E-feedback	video feedback (33) distance education (12)	2019
Peach	Feedback information delivery modes	audio feedback (14) written feedback (13)	2019

Discussion

Peer activities were the highest-frequency terms, suggesting that efforts to encourage students to generate feedback collaboratively are a priority within the literature since the move away from focusing on what the teacher does in feedback processes. There also seems to have been a move from focusing on assessment outcomes (the least recent hotspot) to developing student agency (the most recent hotspot) in their own learning. It may be beneficial to further unpack why research specifically on peer feedback is so prolific to understand whether some of the findings can inform and enrich other subtopics within this field.

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332 Shared language, shared values? An exploration of the embedding of policy discourses on learning & teaching and the illusion of ‘best practice’.

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

University research seeks to have an impact on policy but there are valid questions around the types of policy ideas that universities themselves choose to adopt and embed within their own policies and practices. In this paper, I refer specifically to policies around ‘learning & teaching’; that is, the field which addresses ‘good practice’ in teaching. To what extent do such policy ideas have a firm evidence base and are they really best practice? Or are they mainly responding to government agendas and a reflection of the socio-political context? Through analysis of policy texts and the way that ideas are ‘recontextualised’ into institutional guidelines and practices, I discuss discourses around ‘policy embedding’ and the notion of ‘shared language’ leading to ‘shared values’. I address the issue of who defines what good practice is and consider whether policy discourses around learning & teaching simply create an ‘illusion’ of best practice.

Full paper

University research seeks to have an impact on policy but there are valid questions around the types of policy ideas that universities themselves choose to adopt and embed within their own institutional policies and practices. In this paper, I refer specifically to policies around ‘learning & teaching’; that is, the field which addresses ‘good practice’ in teaching. This may be through national bodies disseminating policy ideas or, at institutional level, learning & teaching units supporting academics new to teaching or those who seek accreditation for their teaching in response to university performance indicators (Shaw, 2018). To what extent do such policy ideas have a firm evidence base and are they really best practice? Are they in fact mainly responding to government agendas and a reflection of the socio-political context? This paper addresses the issue of who defines what good practice is and considers whether policy discourses around learning and teaching simply create an ‘illusion’ of best practice (Horrod, 2023).

This presentation focuses on the ways that national policy ideas become embedded in institutional policies and practices. This includes the mechanisms, such as teacher accreditation schemes, that enable this embedding. It also involves an analysis of the discourses prevalent in learning & teaching policy. For example, the way that policy documents talk about the means of policy implementation itself in some kind of meta discussion; perhaps to enable

'compliance'. One discourse strategy I focus on is the emphasis on 'shared language' and the notion that shared language can lead to shared values and thereby presumably ensure that everyone is engaged in 'best practice'.

This paper is part of a wider study exploring how learning, teaching and assessment practices come into being; originating from a curiosity about the reasons for the adoption of highly diverse types of assignment (see e.g. McLean et al., 2017); for example, with external organisations' involvement; mix of professional and academic genres amongst others. The research mobilises concepts and analytical tools from both the sociology of pedagogy (Bernstein, 1990; 2000) and critical discourse studies (Wodak & Meyer, Eds., 2016) to develop a framework suitable for outlining the object of study as well as analysing discourses in policy texts. For example, the former includes Bernstein's ideas about the influence of the 'recontextualising fields' (including agencies related to government) on pedagogic practice. The latter in this case refers to a particular critical discourse studies' approach (the discourse-historical approach – DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) which provides the tools for different dimensions of textual/contextual analysis. The focus for analysis of policy texts are the long discussion documents produced by the HEA (now Advance HE) on their six policy agendas: employability; partnership; internationalisation; assessment; flexibility; access and retention. I also compare these with their short frameworks, Advance HE frameworks and institutional guidelines to explore how ideas are 'recontextualised' and become embedded.

In terms of findings, I discuss how policy documents attempt to develop a 'shared language' around, and thereby shared values and assumptions about, 'best practice' through extensive use of definition, models and examples as well as particular discourse strategies, including forms of argumentation, which seem to be specific to this field of learning & teaching. I also discuss some of the findings around how ideas are recontextualised from national to institutional level; demonstrating that universities adopt these policy discourses around learning & teaching in an often uncritical way. I draw on some examples of how policy itself is discussed as well as examples relating to the construction of the 'purpose' of higher education.

I return to the pertinence of Bernstein's ideas around recontextualisation (see Donnelly & Abbas, 2019), the obscuring of the origin of, and influences on, such policy ideas and the notion that ideas around what to teach, and how, are never 'value-free' (Bernstein, 2000) in order to discuss the implications of accepting ideas presented as 'best practice' uncritically. What are the consequences of aligning with, even changing one's practices to demonstrate allegiance to, what some might see as 'neoliberal' policy discourses such as partnership, employability and flexibility which speak to notions around enhancing the 'student experience' and improving 'teaching quality'? I also reflect on the often negative portrayals of teachers and teaching in such policy. Finally, I argue for the benefits of detailed textual analysis of policy (Fairclough, 2013), a re-evaluation of the seemingly positive-sounding discourses of learning & teaching policy ideas and argue for more evidence-based practitioner accounts of the reality of teaching in universities.

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Parallel Session 7:6

09:00 - 10:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 122

Chair Christine O'Dea

356 Higher Education Attainment: Comparing education achievement between A-Level and non-A-Level students

Linda-Marie Nakibuuka

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

This study examines the attainment disparities between A-Level only and Non-A-Level students in an attempt to understand to what extent students' prior qualifications predict educational progress and degree outcome. Using a mixed methods design, the study combines quantitative analysis and qualitative exploration of students' experiences. Preliminary results indicate significant performance differences between A-Level and non-A-Level students throughout their academic journey, with A-Level students consistently achieving higher grades. The performance gap narrows over time but remains significant, suggesting that purely academic pathways may provide better university preparation than vocational pathways. Further qualitative analysis will provide insight into students' experiences and their perceived preparedness. The findings will help to understand the factors contributing to attainment gaps in higher education and inform strategies to support students with different university entry qualifications.

Full paper

Research has shown an increase in the number of students who hold vocational qualifications, such as Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), entering higher education (Gicheva and Petrie, 2018). Although the admission of students with vocational qualifications is increasing, there is evidence (Shields and Masardo, 2018) that these students are less likely to graduate with a first-class or upper second-class honours, often referred to as a 'good degree', in comparison to those with academic qualifications, such as Advanced Level (A-level) qualifications.

An examination of empirical literature (Richardson, 2008, 2010, 2013; Gill, 2018; Shields and Masardo, 2018; Richardson et al., 2020) suggests that the factors that influence students' academic performance and attainment are complex, particularly for students who come into higher education under the auspices of widening participation. Although there is evidence indicating that some students from non-traditional academic backgrounds are successful in graduating with as good a degree as their A-level counterparts, there are still students with vocational qualifications not achieving this ambition (Shields and Masardo, 2018). Crucially, past research suggests that students' degree outcome does affect their post-graduation destination, as well as impacting their long-term employability and salary-earning potential (Lessard-Phillips et al., 2018). This illustrates that there is a clear and compelling need to understand the complex reasons for the attainment gaps between students with different university entry qualifications. Accordingly, this study intends to understand to what extent having non-A-level qualifications impacts educational progress and degree outcome in comparison to having only A-Level qualifications.

This study uses a mixed methods design whereby equal priority is given to the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative phase examines performance differences between A-Level students and non-A-Level students throughout their time at university and whether these differences persist even when students' demographic characteristics are controlled for. Furthermore, this phase seeks to test hypotheses and uncover any patterns or trends in outcome differences between students.

The aim of using qualitative methods is to understand students' experiences at key transitional points in their academic journey. Firstly, this work will look at their pre-university experiences, particularly their post-16 experiences. Next their transition into higher education will be examined, and ultimately their experiences in first year, second year and third year will be explored.

At the time of writing this paper, the analysis of the quantitative data is not yet complete. Early findings suggest that there is a statistically significant difference in performance between students with different qualifications in year 1, 2 and 3, as well as in final degree outcomes. Students with A-Level entry qualifications consistently had the strongest performance throughout, and students with A-Level/BTEC combination qualifications were ranked second in terms of performance, with BTEC students exhibiting the weakest performances.

There are some indications of the performance differences being widest in the first year, with the greatest differences happening between A-Level only and BTEC only qualification students. The difference between A-Level and BTEC students almost decreased by half in the second year and continued to narrow into the final year. However, the rate of decrease was not sufficient to close the gap by the end of the students' studies. Comparing A-Level and BTEC

combination students to A-Level students, the differences in performance decreased in the second year but increased slightly in the third year. Performance differences between BTEC and A-Level/BTEC combination students were found not to be significant. The performance gap consistently and substantially decreased from the first year to the final year, showing that having A-Levels did not seem to give the clear advantage to A-Level/BTEC combination students that it did for students with purely A-Level qualifications.

Preliminary findings indicate that from the outset, A-Level students consistently achieved higher grades than BTEC and A-Level/BTEC students, which supports findings of previous studies that suggested that purely academic pathways may provide better university preparation than purely vocational pathways.

Further explorations using qualitative designs will be used to gain more understanding of the students' experiences during the transition between the different academic years. At the time of writing this paper, qualitative data collection is ongoing; however, by the time of the conference, this will be complete, allowing for emerging themes to be presented. The findings could help shed light on the students' perceived preparedness and how that equates to the grade they receive.

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296 Ethical Consumers: students' potential to reimagine the 'student as consumer' model of higher education

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

The ethos underpinning the marketisation of HE assumes students become discerning consumers empowered to exercise choice about the 'university offer' in an educational marketplace and this is one means of addressing

inequalities in HE. We argue the 'student as consumer' model has reproduced inequalities of class and race that previously characterized HE. However, drawing on 53 interviews with students during Covid-19 lockdowns, an unforeseen potential for students acting as 'ethical consumers' emerged. Students demonstrated characteristics associated with being effective consumers investing time exploring options, contextualizing within prior experiences of education and planning their futures. They identified structural flaws in their schooling mirrored in universities; and, of being confronted by morally corrupt rather than economically free education markets. Ironically the neoliberal lens of 'choice' emerged as ethical rather market-led choices. Students identified patterns of inequality in higher education, specifically around race/racism and class, that dissuaded them from attending some universities.

Full paper

Much of the ethos underpinning the marketisation of HE assumes students become more discerning consumers by gaining the tools to exercise choice about the 'university offer' or 'university experience' in an educational marketplace (Marginson 2012; Tomlinson 2016). This paper highlights some unexpected consequences of the pandemic suggesting students could bring a greater critique of neoliberal universities to bear in the future. Ironically this happens through a neoliberal lens in which 'choice' aligned with the deliberate framing of students as 'consumers' emerges as ethical, rather than market-led, choices. The students in our research identified patterns of inequality in higher education, specifically around race/racism and class interests that mirrored their personal experiences of education.

This paper draws on research conducted with students in their final year of secondary education in the UK between April and July 2020 when the nation was in 'lockdown' in response to Covid-19 (Bhopal and Myers 2020, 2023). At that time students knew that the main series of UK examinations, A Levels, were cancelled and that grades would be awarded instead based on teacher assessment. The release of final grades was scheduled for August 2020. This research was interested in exploring the views of A Level students about the cancellation of their exams. In total 583 A Level students, (most of whom held ambitions to start university in September), responded to a survey questionnaire and these were followed up with 53 Skype interviews (Bhopal and Myers 2020, 2023).

One consequence of the enforced lockdown in early 2020 was that many of the students we spoke to demonstrated the qualities and characteristics associated with being effective consumers. They invested time exploring their options; understanding a range of constraints that would affect their opportunities; and, contextualizing these within personal experiences of education in order to assess plans for the future. In doing so they tended not to identify 'value' in the more overtly consumerist terms that have underpinned policy promoting the 'student as consumer' model (CMA 2015; OfS 2023). Instead they focused on concerns about their personal experience of education to date and how that might be mirrored at university.

The main concern of participants was that the new arrangements for teacher assessed grades forming the basis of their A Level results would result in unfairness. Students identified teacher favoritism, racism, classism and advantages related to independent (fee-paying) schools would all affect their results. In retrospect when A Level results were announced their concerns were proved correct. Looking beyond their expectations for A Level results, participants also identified a sophisticated understanding that institutional racism and classism was a prevalent characteristic of many universities.

In effect lockdown provided students an opportunity to spend time conducting further independent research into universities and reflect on their experiences and expectations of inequality. This research often revealed evidence that their chosen institutions might not serve their best interests (e.g. students discovered publicly available evidence of ethnic attainment gaps that would potentially adversely affect their degree results). Many students equated 'fees' and 'debt' to poor investments driven by short-term necessities. A repeated refrain in the research was that the pandemic robbed students of other opportunities leaving them with the sole option of going to university. Their engagement as active consumers in the HE market led to many students feeling they were confronted by an

educational market that was morally corrupt rather than economically free. Some even suggested they were having second thoughts about their chosen university and were considering options such as using 'clearing' to go to an alternative institution.

Whilst universities and policy-makers have identified longstanding institutional inequalities around race and class; policy and initiatives addressing such inequalities have had limited impact. Often policy designed to address inequalities, is itself reconfigured in practice to reproduce existing patterns of disadvantage; and, 'diversity' is promoted as a 'brand' feature largely evidenced within university promotional materials rather than in meaningful action (Bhopal, Myers and Pitkin, 2020). This paper argues there is the potential for a collision between universities which continue to foster pre-existing inequalities of race/ethnicity and social class and an emergent body of students more likely to recognize these structural inequalities shape the education economies they have to invest in. Ironically, the overarching direction of marketization could be thrown off-course by an emergent 'student as ethical consumer' unwilling to invest their time and debt in universities committed to protecting the interests of predominantly White, middle-class students.

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108 The shifting goalposts of Digital Technology Skills in Scotland

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

Digital technologies and skills are critical to economic growth and embedded in everyday life¹. This paper presents a work-in-progress study that examines the effect of education policy on digital skills within Scotland. Through literature analysis, exploring education policy over the last 10 years, this policy study found that despite numerous attempts and frameworks in place by the Scottish government, the digital technologies skills gap remains a challenge². Although the pandemic is seen as a catalyst behind the fast adoption of digital technologies across institutions and the population, it also slowed down the progress of Scotland's digitalisation and implementation of the Government's frameworks³ due to delayed infrastructure developments during this time. Over the last 10 years, the criteria and key areas included under the digital skills banner have altered significantly making progress difficult to track in an important area of policy development.

Full paper

Introduction

Scotland is an ambitious country with plans to be among the top 25% of most productive countries in the EU, to be the next digital capital of the world, and to achieve net zero by 2045. Digitalisation is regarded as the key method of achieving these aims, with digital skills adoption seen as core to driving forward this ambition⁴. Research shows that basic digital skills are required in over 75% of all job advertisements classified as 'low-skilled'⁵.

Throughout the last 10 years, the Scottish Government has introduced several measures and various initiatives to tackle skills shortages in the labour market^{7,8,9}. Most of the actions and frameworks involve higher and further education institutions collaborating with industry to create programmes that will satisfy the demand for critical skills. However, despite these initiatives, there are still significant digital technology skills gaps amongst the Scottish workforce^{2,4,6}.

The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the development of digital skills in both a positive and negative manner. The lockdown forced people to go online, developing key skills in online tools and methods of communication, acting as a catalyst for upskilling^{10,11}. At the same time, infrastructure development slowed halting the implementation of Scotland's Digital Participation Strategy^{3,12,13} and reinforcing the digital divide.⁷ A lack of digital skills acts as a barrier to work and the impact of the pandemic on online working, means these skills are needed for job success¹⁴. Much of

the work published in academic journals surrounding Covid examined the impact of the pandemic on education and individual experiences, with little work exploring the impact of digital skills development¹¹.

This short paper summarises findings into the development of education policy, including the keywords used and the growing relevance of digital skills in Scotland.

Methodology

The frameworks and policy documents introduced by the Scottish Government that impact Education Policy were reviewed from 2014 to 2023, with a specific focus on digital skills and STEM-related subjects. Additionally, a review of relevant white papers was conducted to establish to what extent these initiatives have been successful in achieving their key aims. The research questions are:

- What changes have been made to education policy in Scotland in the last 10 years?
- How are digital skills identified?

The rest of this paper reports preliminary findings from this review.

Digital technology skills – the evolution of demand

In 2014, the Scottish government presented its Skills Investment Plan in response to the prevailing digital skills gap and high unemployment rate amongst the young workforce^{8,9}. The current Education Policy was introduced in 2017 and does not directly address the lack of digital technology skills. Rather there are different frameworks and initiatives across multiple Government departments aiming to address digital skills gaps, via the provision of further or higher education, or directly upskilling the existing workforce^{15,16}. Since 2014, these skills have been changing in response to market needs, indicating a need for a degree of agility to be able to respond to these changes. Figure 1 presents the major shifts in digital technology skills, as well as the expected need for skills in the next 5 years. The figure highlights the changes, with some key areas dropping off and others being introduced with alarming regularity. This demonstrates that the market is changing faster than policy can keep up with.

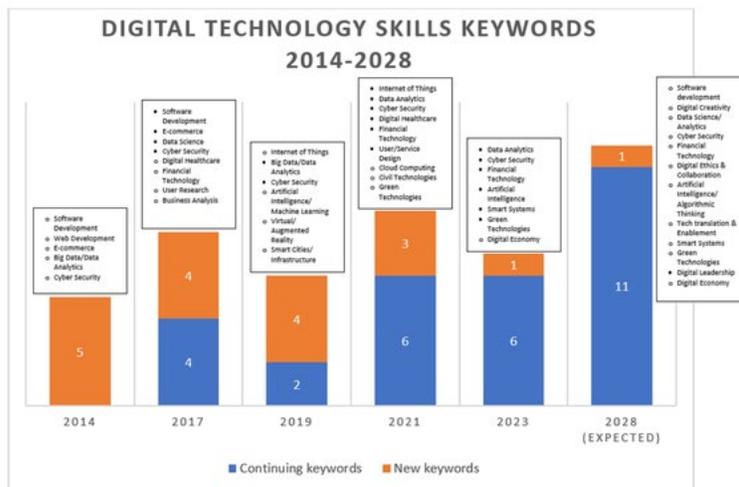


Figure 1: Digital Technology skills, keywords 2014 to 2028^{2,4,8,9}

Conclusion and Impact

Early initiatives aimed at addressing the skills shortages in the workforce have met with limited success, and in recent years the focus on digital skills has only intensified. The findings of this policy review indicate that despite various efforts to close the digital skills gap, it not only remains a challenge but is becoming more acute, especially within

more advanced fields. Digital skills policy faces constantly changing demands from both current industry and further advances in technology. This means that goalposts frequently shift and are likely to remain unstable and challenging. This short paper has highlighted the need for future studies to focus on the perspective of measurable outcomes of frameworks and the need for renewed efforts to close the gaps in providing a digitally skilled workforce.

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Parallel Session 7:7

09:00 - 10:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 140

Chair Michael O'Dea

124 Investing in degree apprenticeships: Analysing experiences through Conservation of Resources Theory

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Research Domains

Technical, Professional and Vocational Higher Education (TPV)

Abstract

Degree apprentices have reported finding work-life-study balance challenging. This study uses the Theory of Conservation of Resources (COR) to investigate the resources invested and gained by apprentices in the achievement of their goal of a degree while working. Interviews with final year apprentices (n=27) reveal the potential for apprentices to gain from their investment, even before they complete their degrees. COR Theory guides a Framework Method analysis. The findings indicate where more efficient involvement and investment, for example by workplace mentors, is rewarded with resource gain. Employers also gain resources, such as project outputs with the potential to save time and money. This situated perspective provides a new context in which to consider recent policy developments around graduate apprenticeships in Scotland, such as embedding Fair Work First principals. Our findings raise concerns for degree apprenticeship policy developments in England, such as reducing the minimum level of required off-the-job training.

Full paper

Introduction

In the UK, apprenticeship degrees were introduced from 2017, to increase productivity and social mobility (QAA, 2019). Apprentices are employed, with time away from work ring-fenced for higher education (HE) study (c.20%) and significant, assessed work-based learning. As apprentices are salaried and their HE fees are paid (Powell, 2023), they can complete their degrees without building up debt (QAA, 2019), widening access to the debt-averse and to those with commitments such as dependent families. Employers fund the apprenticeships through paying a Levy (Powell, 2023); influence the frameworks which govern the contents of the degrees; recruit apprentices and provide them with workplace mentors (Smith et al., 2023).

Degree and graduate apprenticeships are governed by evolving policies in England and Scotland, respectively, aiming to balance the needs of employers, apprentices, and “training providers”, such as universities. Policies stem from skills strategies which aim to increase the number of appropriately-skilled graduates, especially in key areas, such as Technology (SDS, 2023), but also inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Scottish Government, 2021).

Conservation of Resources Theory

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory arose from a desire to improve employee wellbeing by conceptualising and modelling workplace experiences, with the aim of reducing workplace stress (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011). The theory's basic premise is that individuals are motivated to acquire resources that help them to achieve their goals, organise their lives, and support personal development. Thus resources (psychological, social, physical, and situational) are things that people value in the pursuit of their goals. *Intrinsic resources* are valued as ends in themselves, while *instrumental resources* act to achieve positive outcomes and/or attain new resources (Singh et al., 2019). Resources can be acquired through self-development and increased status, while resource loss causes strain (Halbesleben et al., 2014). The *resource caravan* principle identifies that people and organisations with more resources are better placed to invest resources and gain more (Hobfoll, 2011). For example, Singh et al. (2019) use COR theory to understand the impact of coworker resources: coworker support and healthy coworker exchanges support employee development and performance, which, following the resource caravan principle, helps in the attainment of new resources, such as promotion. In our research, COR is used to frame our analysis of data from interviews with apprentices in order to understand the balances and challenges of resource investment and gain towards their degree.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were conducted online with graduate apprentices (n=27) in their final year of Business or Computing programmes at a Scottish university, in 2021-2023. Interviewees were volunteers; interviews lasted about 40 minutes and explored the apprentices' experience of the degree apprenticeship, especially the integration between work and study and role of workplace mentors. Interview transcripts were analysed via the Framework Method (Gale et al., 2013), coding and summarising text according to categories derived from COR theory, regarding apprentices / employers / university investing / gaining resources towards achieving the goal of graduating. Findings are derived from an overview of the resulting Framework Matrix.

Findings

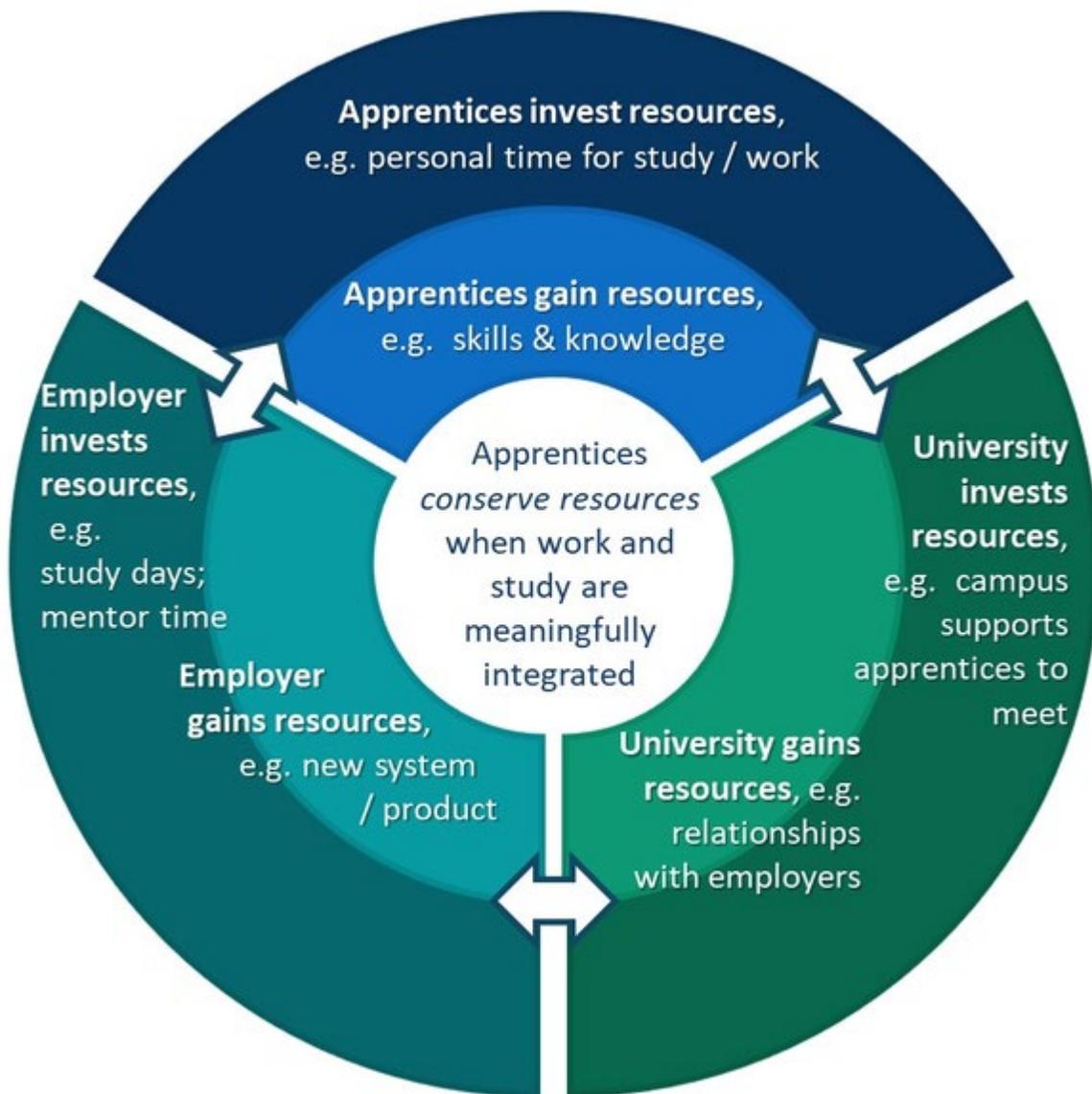


Figure 1: Example resource loss/ gain

The resources apprentices gained were: skills, knowledge, and opportunities; most gained autonomy and status via promotion. Beyond using their skills and providing labour in the workplace, the additional resource that apprentices contributed was their personal time, to study or catch up on work. Employers contributed the apprentice's study day (an average of one per week for these cohorts) and a mentor's time. Both coworkers and peer apprentices contributed crucial support. The university provided education, plus additional individual support, and campus opportunities enabling peer support and friendships. Employers and lecturers could help apprentices to conserve and gain resources through effective integration of their work and study, e.g. through identifying final-year projects to be implemented within the apprentice's work. One apprentice described choosing their project: "They were pretty confident that that's what I should do, because it had a huge client benefit as well." Balancing the multiple demands on their time was the biggest challenge for apprentices, especially when work or study required extra resources.

Implications

Our findings support Scottish Government policies to apply Fair Work First principles to apprenticeships (Scottish Government, 2021), as the apprenticeships prove to be a good investment. However, if Scotland followed English policy developments, which reduce the minimum off-the-job study time to 6 hours, (Powell, 2023) that would be a considerable threat to apprentices' work-study-life balance.

The COR approach offers great potential for higher education research: e.g., to understand the pressures on students and apprentices as they strive to balance the demands of study, paid work, and family/ personal lives.

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391 A comparative exploration of capabilities and wellbeing among legal apprentices and law students

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of the new degree apprenticeship (DA) pathway on the development of wellbeing and capabilities among aspiring solicitors. Does greater security around career prospects in the DA pathway enhance the wellbeing of aspiring solicitors compared to undertaking the traditional university pathway? What happens when instead of loans, debt and insecurity, law students have a salary, no debt, and secure job prospects? We adopted a capabilities approach intersected with an inequalities lens to analyse interviews with 23 aspiring solicitors on both the university and the DA pathways. The interviews explored access to and experiences of both pathways, including how participants were able to develop and convert their social and cultural resources into key capabilities. This provided a meaningful way to make sense of participants' experiences. The findings across both pathways demonstrate an emphasis on valuing agency and developing all capabilities.

Full paper

The Solicitor Apprenticeship (DA) pathway was introduced in 2016 as an alternative pathway into a professional occupation. The legal jobs market is competitive requiring significant length in both undergraduate and graduate training time but also shows quality markers as key differentiators in the labour market. Sociological research has demonstrated how differentiation in both the length (Maximally Maintained Inequality) and quality (Effectively Maintained Inequality) of education are influenced by social origin (Boliver 2011; Lucas 2001). However, this requirement to 'run faster, for longer' (Brown and Hesketh 2004, p. 228) in achieving any legal job, particularly the most desirable ones, has implications for wellbeing, even for those who ultimately succeed.

The dean of admissions at Harvard reflected on how the length and stress in achieving any professional status can lead to burnout, commenting:

It is common to encounter even the most successful students, who have won all the "prizes," stepping back and wondering if it was all worth it. Professionals in their thirties and forties [...] sometimes give the impression that they are dazed survivors of some bewildering life-long boot camp (Harvard College, n.d.).

We focus on access to the Solicitors' profession in England and, using the imagery of the quotation above, aspects of the 'lifelong boot camp' necessary to achieve this prize. This paper investigates the impact on individuals' wellbeing – understood as the capability to live the life one wants - from a shift away from taking a traditional undergraduate university pathway, and additional postgraduate qualifications, to undertaking the DA. How does a change in the training regime and the sort of 'boot camp' necessary for accessing a career in law impact wellbeing?

Wellbeing as Capability

In seeking answers to the research questions, we focus on individual capabilities, what people can do and be, their 'functioning' with regards to making choices they value and to achieve wellbeing (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2001, p. 291). We use the Capabilities Approach (CA) as a normative and moral framework for thinking about the freedom, agency and wellbeing of students on higher education and DA pathways (Wilson-Strydom, 2016, p. 135).

Putting capabilities and inequalities into practice

The capability approach intersects with research on inequalities and differences in economic, social and cultural capitals (for instance, Friedman and Laurison, 2019; Hordósy and Clark, 2018; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Reay, 2018). Previous research demonstrates the strong reproductive pattern in which social, economic, and cultural capitals shape educational choices and outcomes (for example, Abrahams 2017; Ball et al., 2002; Bathmaker et al., 2013; Harrison, 2018). We use the capabilities approach as an additional lens for framing and understanding inequalities. Sen (1980) discusses social justice in relation to the conversion of goods into capabilities and highlights that this can vary substantially between different people.

Integrating an inequality lens allows us to explore how capabilities can be used as a meaningful extension to the body of work on educational inequality and reproduction. Previous research by Walker (2006) created an ideal-theoretical list of five capabilities for equitable transitions to university, which we adapt for our analysis. These include: (1) Practical reasons; (2) Resilience; (3) Social relations and Social networks; (4) Respect; (5) Emotional and Ethical Integrity.

Methods

This paper draws on findings from a wider qualitative study of 23 aspiring solicitors in England from university and DA pathways. Respondents were recruited during 2017 – 2018 from a range of social and educational backgrounds, as well as a range of institutions (universities and law firms) to create a maximum variation purposive sample. Interviews lasted on average one hour. Analysis was informed by data from the transcripts and theory in an abductive approach.

Preliminary Analysis

The combined use a capabilities approach intersected with an inequalities lens afforded rich insights into the lives of participants and enabled the identification of constraints and enablers that could inform policy and practice with the aim of increasing capability development and greater equality of wellbeing for all aspiring lawyers. The intersection with how economic, social capital, knowledge and cultural capital and societal norms can constrain or enhance opportunities (Sen, 2001; Nussbaum, 2011) and was a useful additional theoretical tool. Thus, some participants were able to convert resources – such as networks – into vacation scheme placements. Constraints were encountered with regards to balancing opportunities and geography, with feelings of belonging in a new professional world.

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363 Chinese international students' silence in multicultural group work at a UK university: the fluid-construct nature

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Chinese international students' (CISs') prevailing silence in multicultural group work in UK higher education has been widely reported, and problematised, as academic deficits. Taking an inclusive stance of silence, this research re-evaluated the dichotomy between talk and silence and acknowledged their equal potential contribution to knowledge generation. Employing the Actor-Network Theory as the theoretical framework, this research conducted narrative interviews on 16 CISs at a UK university. The result showed that silence is not equal to soundlessness but could be verbalising behaviours, minimal talk, and regretting talking /messages sent during group communication and thus could sometimes be a way of engagement. Embodying the fluid-construct nature of CISs' silence, the research extended the dominant narrow understanding of CISs' silence from cultural and linguistic explanation and pointed out the necessity of a contextual-oriented investigation.

Full paper

Multicultural group work in higher education can be defined as a collaboration of two or more individuals from different cultural backgrounds assigned interdependent tasks and jointly responsible for the final results (Behfar et al., 2006). As the main way to get students from diverse backgrounds to work alongside each other (Wang et al., 2012) and create authentic intercultural encounters (De Vita, 2007), it is perceived as the ideal vehicle to foster intercultural learning (ibid), and bring academic, educational, and social benefits to both home and international students (Volet & Ang, 2012). However, such benefits do not automatically result from the diverse cultural composition of the student body (Yu & Moskal, 2019) and are 'still very much that, an ideal' (De Vita, 2007: 165). The unsatisfactory group working experience between domestic and international students is continually reported (Sawir, 2013), especially the lack of intercultural interaction (Huang, 2022) and the interactions at a very superficial degree, where CISs' prevailing silence has frequently been attributed (Volet & Ang, 2012).

Since the Western orientation values talking much more than listening and tightly connects talking to thinking, CISs' silence is often assumed equal to an absence of speech and disengagement (Kim et al., 2016) and CISs are frequently depicted as passive, uncritical, and rote learners (Wang et al., 2012). However, the interpretation of CISs' silence tends to be more controversial (Shao & Gao, 2016). Some academics highlight that neither talking nor silence

is a proxy of engagement or disengagement (ibid) and CISs' silence can also mean engagement in thought sometimes (Mclean & Ranson, 2005). Meanwhile, silence has increasingly been looked at in more complex ways (Bao, 2023), including some verbalizing behaviours (e.g. writing), linguistic thought (inner speech), whispering to him/herself (private talk), and talking to a peer without the intention to share with other peers (insider talk) (Bao, 2014). In this way, silence is not perceived as the absence of talk but as the absence of ideas shared in public but more evidence supporting this argument is required (Bao 2020).

While the dominant cultural and linguistic explanation of CISs' silence has been critiqued as over-generalized and too decisive (Ha & Li, 2014) in that there is no guarantee Confucian value still affects contemporary CISs studying in Western contexts in the same traditional manner and CISs' linguistic proficiency is not always poor or static (Ha & Li, 2014), more recent studies propose to view silence as a fluid construct and call for a contextual-orientated analysis. Meanwhile, as group work is sometimes digitally mediated through, for example, Google Docs and WeChat, silence can also occur in online communication rather than being unique to face-to-face contexts (Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2005). Thus, the non-human actors, such as laptops and mobile phones, should also be regarded as elements in the group context.

To better understand CISs' silence in multicultural group work, with a view to offering suggestions for pedagogical practice, following the theoretical framework of Actor-Network Theory, this research specifically took the group task, peer dynamic, and non-human actors into the research consideration and focused on two research questions:

1. What are the multi-faced forms of Chinese international students' silence in multicultural group work?
2. How is Chinese international students' silence co-constructed with relevant actors in multicultural group work?

To answer these, a qualitative single case study was conducted in MA Education programmes at a UK university and was embedded by two sub-cases, two education-related course units carried out in the second semester of 2022-23 academic year. Both were with a summative collaborative group assignment while showing visible differences in task load, group sizes, group formation and working duration. Qualitative individual narrative interviews with 16 CISs were conducted after they submitted group assignments. Taking individual CISs' silent practice as the unit of analysis and employing interpretative phenomenological analysis, at current early data analysis stage, the result found the various forms of CISs (corresponding to the first research questions) as:

1. verbalizing behaviours like noting taking or information searching during group discussion;
2. replying by memes in WeChat group;
3. chatting privately with a group peer;
4. talking/sending messages in public of the whole group but regretting/ withdrawing.

This result could be seen as evidence critiquing the dichotomy between talk and silence. However, due to the uncompleted data analysis of this research, the result answering the second research question could not be reported now but the fluid-construct nature and potential contribution to learning could be expected and might imply ways approaching CISs' silence for maximizing its learning capacity or taking silence into consideration of pedagogy.

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Tea & coffee, poster & exhibition viewing

10:30 - 11:00 Friday, 8th December, 2023
Courtyard Lounge

Parallel Session 8:1

11:00 - 12:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023
Room 139
Chair Daria Luchinskaya

150 TCoNTC – To Care or Not to Care Paper Series

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

This paper discusses a series of cross-disciplinary pedagogic research-pieces on the role of the concept of care in Higher Education and its perception by staff and students. It seeks to outline a series of research papers which are being developed, with the aim of contributing to the body of research on students' perception of care, the attitude of faculties towards the subject of care, the impact of care on students' learning, and how insights into the phenomenon of care can be used to achieve better outcomes for students.

The paper builds on previous research on the dimensions of care, students' perceptions of care, the relationship between care-oriented practices and identified learning differences, and the care-needs of particular groups of students as informed by those identified learning differences.

The authors will provide an overview of the whole research paper series, its key themes, the methodologies being adopted, and some initial findings.

Full paper

The TCoNTC paper series is a cross-disciplinary pedagogic research project on the role of care in Higher Education, and its perception by staff and students. This paper series will contribute to the body of research on students' perception of care, attitude of faculties towards the subject of care, the impact of care on students' learning and how care can be leveraged to achieve better student outcomes like increased student engagement, higher student performance and progression, better quality students, etc.

Some research has been done on the dimensions of care (Velasquez et al., 2013), students' perception of care (Meyers, 2009) and the need to care for particular student groups like refugees (Lenette, 2016), school leavers (Wilson et al., 2019), non-traditional students (Holmegaard et al., 2017), etc. However, there has been limited research on staff's perspective of care, their attitudes to care, motivations for care and potential impact of care on students. This study is therefore aimed at exploring these concepts with the ultimate goal of providing demonstrated insight into how teaching pedagogies around care can be effectively designed, translated, and transferred unto active teaching practices across student cohorts in Higher Education.

This conference paper will give an overview of the four interconnected papers which the authors are planning and will provide both an overview of identified key themes and the mechanism required to draw some of these together.

There are currently four papers planned in the series. The first paper seeks to critically assess the various definitions of care in a bid to set a good background for the research as the topic is explored further. In this paper, the concept of care will be defined and explored via an analysis of observed teaching practices.

The second paper would build on the findings of the first paper's establishment of a clear and comprehensive definition of care. The garnered understanding of the different perspectives on care will serve as a bedrock to seek a deeper understanding of the motivations of care as evidenced by various teaching colleagues. Four main research questions would lie at the heart of this second paper: Do Higher Education staff care? If yes, why do they care? If yes, how is that care manifested? If no, why do they not care? These questions will help unravel the interconnections between observed core values and philosophies that guide various teaching practices in Higher Education.

Once the study's researchers have been able to establish the facilitators behind motivations for care and their attendant pros and cons, they will then turn their attention to identifying effective strategies necessary for implementing an active culture of care in academia. The focus of this third paper is to delineate the mechanisms necessary to enact the concept of motivation to care via the practice of active coaching in Higher Education.

The fourth and final paper in the series brings the line of inquiry around care and the enaction of care to a head by extrapolating the findings of the first three papers unto the wider Higher Education environment. As awareness about the concept of care, the motivations to care and the coaching activities that facilitate the enaction of care are raised, the last paper of this anthology will explore practical approaches to normalising care in Higher Education. This would close the loop of analysis by disseminating findings on individual teaching pedagogies to the wider teaching sphere, with the potential end of further influencing individual teaching pedagogies.

In this conference paper, the authors will discuss the mixed methodologies being used for the first paper and will conclude by reporting some of the key findings which are beginning to emerge in this four-paper series. They look forward to presenting the individual findings for each stream of work in subsequent years.

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231 Care-Full Evaluation: navigating ethical challenges in policy and program evaluation with an ethics of care

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

The evaluation of policies and programs within and across higher education institutions in Australia and the UK is a field of applied research increasingly guided by toolkits, frameworks, organisations, and government policies and statements designed to support increased evaluation practice. This constellation of forces typically presents key tools of evaluation – such as credible evidence, rigour, expertise, accountability - as technical, uncontested, “value-free” terms with a clear, singular meaning and purpose. Work in the scholarship of evaluation has attempted to reclaim these tools as “value-full”, politically charged and requiring decisions regarding their deployment. Recently, the notion of ethical conduct has appeared more prominently in these frameworks. In this paper, we illustrate how the four dimensions of an ethics of care (attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness) provide entry points for constructing shared participatory evaluation spaces and can also guide critical reflection and learning with regard to evidence, rigour and accountability.

Full paper

The evaluation of policies and programs within and across higher education institutions in Australia and the UK is a field of applied research increasingly guided by toolkits, frameworks, organisations, and government policies and statements designed to support increased evaluation practice. This constellation of forces typically presents key tools of evaluation – such as credible evidence, rigour, expertise, accountability - as technical, uncontested, “value-free” terms with a clear, singular meaning and purpose. There has been important work done in the scholarship of evaluation to reclaim these tools of evaluation practice as “value-full”, politically charged and requiring debate and decisions on how to deploy them (Schwandt and Gates, 2021). Recently, the notion of ethical conduct has appeared more prominently in these frameworks and policies. The Australian Federal Labor Government in 2023 invested \$10 million to establish an Australian Centre for Evaluation to ‘improve the volume, quality, and impact of evaluations across the Australian Public Service’ which will shape federally developed frameworks including with higher education (e.g., Australian Department of Education, 2021). The evaluation toolkit associated with this announcement calls for evaluation that is ‘robust, ethical and culturally appropriate’. In another context, the UK federal government established a What Works Network that guides the sorts of approaches taken up by What Works Centres such as the Transforming Access and Student Outcomes hub for higher education. This group also state the importance of ethical considerations, with a view to delivering ‘best practice in research/evaluation while respecting the rights of participants and minimising to potential harm’ (TASO, 2023). There is no doubt the need for foregrounding ethical considerations in evaluation practice in higher education is long overdue, yet, in a similar way to the deployment of other evaluation tools, ethical conduct is often presented with little depth, nuance or need for debate on how it might be deployed in an evaluation context.

In this paper, we propose an approach for navigating the ethical questions that underpin evaluation practice. Drawing on Tronto’s () work on an ethics of care, we explore how her four dimensions of care (attentiveness, responsibility,

competence and responsiveness) offer helpful provocations on how to approach evaluation, what type of questions we might ask, and on whose terms these questions are crafted. The context for this exploration is the work of equity and widening participation in higher education. We draw from a widening participation program within an Australian university, sharing from attempts to navigate the challenges of normative orientations within processes of evaluation, and we develop this in relation to our own commitments to pedagogical methodology.

Reclaiming My Place, is an arts-based initiative delivered in partnership with community-based service providers by the University of Newcastle's Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education. The program engages with women who have lived experiences of gendered violence and stalled education histories. The initiative seeks to open up opportunities for engagement in education pathways and in lifelong learning more broadly. The evaluation of the program was designed around methodologies that seek to generate new knowledge but also to highlight practices that may (unintentionally or otherwise) function to limit or circumscribe the development of new knowledge. This is described as a pedagogical methodology and its intent is to acknowledge evaluation (and research more broadly) as a process where learning and new knowledges are generated in contested contexts and to offer ways to navigate this contested terrain. The role of the pedagogical methodology is not to create some level playing field of knowledges but rather to prioritise and create a space for the traditionally invisibilised knowledges of the participants of the program. Such an endeavour relies on relational evaluation practices that prioritise participation. Tronto's approach to an ethics of care allows for a fine tuning of what to consider important in participatory evaluation methods and can guide practice towards efforts to avoid patronising or hierarchical forms of care that can play out in evaluation, particularly when focused on equity and widening participation initiatives in higher education.

In this paper, we illustrate how the four dimensions of an ethics of care (attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness) provide entry points into constructing shared participatory evaluation spaces that can also guide for critical reflection and learning on the key tenets of evaluation of evidence, rigour and accountability. Exploring carefully these building blocks of an evaluation through the perspective of the program participants allows for pedagogical moments for all involved and the co-construction of program knowledge that is guided by the people the program is intended to benefit.

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92 The 10 wellness spheres to support student and staff health and wellbeing in a modern post 1992 university

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Wellness spheres are an established concept and used in business, industry, health and education designed to improve the wellbeing of the individual and society. The number can range from anything from five to ten. 'Poverty' can occur in each of them and happens when someone does not have the personal attributes and capabilities that help or sustain one in adverse circumstances which include knowledge, skills and experience.

Poverty can be reduced and mental health and wellbeing improved Through the provision of relevant and timely advice, support and guidance.

This paper will provide a rationale for why the specific 10 wellness spheres were adopted at UEL; how they map to the study life cycle and the University Mental Health Charter; and the practical and interactive 'one stop shop' versions for students and for staff that have been created to help them access information, advice and support that is in one place.

Full paper

When we discuss poverty in higher education, which is prevalent at the moment due to the cost of living crisis, financial poverty is often focused on and the impact it has on other areas such as accommodation, food and social activities.

However, 'poverty' can be experienced in many more areas that contribute to ones health and wellbeing. These areas are wellness spheres (also known as dimensions) that include for example, emotional, physical and social wellness. Poverty within these spheres can occur for a range of reasons including not having the resources due to background and life experiences, which is important for individuals, to navigate the wellness spheres successfully.

The Joseph Rowntree Trust define poverty when 'a person's resources are not sufficient to meet their minimum needs' (Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2014). There are many different definitions for what constitutes a resource but for simplicity, I will refer to them as personal attributes and capabilities that help or sustain one in adverse circumstances which include knowledge, skills and experience.

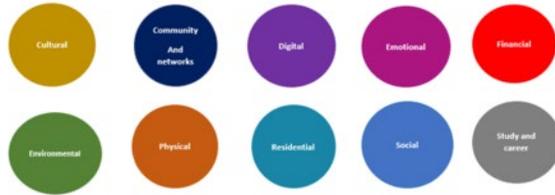
Poverty experienced across a range of spheres can impact on mental health and wellbeing. To maximise wellness and help reduce the poverty in higher education of students and staff, it is important to provide key advice, support and guidance to increase an individual's knowledge, skill and experience to help assist them succeed in all areas of their life.

Wellness spheres are an established concept and used in business, industry, health and education. They are designed to improve the wellbeing of the individual and society. The number of spheres can range from anything from five to ten. The common spheres incorporated into most models include emotional, environmental, financial and physical. They can also include spiritual and intellectual.

At the University of East London, using my Student Experience Transitions Model (Morgan 2011) that I developed 18 years ago, I have mapped the wellness spheres across the core areas of university life that students and staff engage in and that are part of the University's vision to help create wellness awareness amongst students, staff and graduates to help them maximise their potential and contribute to society (see Diagram 1). The wellness spheres reflect and are respectful of equality, inclusion and diversity in a multicultural community environment.

Diagram 1

10 Wellness Spheres



In universities, we produce a lot of helpful information, support and advice but it can often feel silo'd and overwhelming because there is so much and it can be hard to access. So a core aim at UEL in enabling students and staff to be able to access and engage with the key information, advice and support available in one place, was to create a practical and interactive one-stop-shop navigation page for the wellness spheres. Working with colleagues from across the institution, we populated each wellness sphere with core information. One was created for students and another for staff.

This model was part of our University Mental Health Charter submission, awarded in late 2022 by Students Minds and the spheres have also been mapped to the UMHC Themes. This model is incorporated in the Kickstarter, Pre-arrival and course welcome university events for new students, and reorientation and outduction activities to remind students of what they need to consider in the upcoming year in order to stay well, fit and healthy. If we can explain clearly what wellness is, what the benefits are, and provide accessible information, it is easier to encourage students and colleagues to engage with it.

This presentation will provide a rationale for why the 10 wellness spheres were adopted at UEL; how they map to the study life cycle and the University Mental Health Charter; and the practical and interactive 'one stop shop' versions for students and for staff that has been created to help them access information, advice and support that is in one place.

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Parallel Session 8:2

11:00 - 12:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Conference Room 3

Chair Richard Race

329 Conceptualizing, Strategizing and Advertising: Student Perceptions of Accessing Higher Education Institutions in the UK

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Despite British admissions systems adjusting to dynamic social contexts, socioeconomic/cultural configurations and academic access are inextricably linked. Further, widening participation initiatives often intervene too late to yield any equalizing results. The aim of this study is to understand how students of diverse backgrounds conceptualise the ideal university applicant, perform as this ideal applicant and the information sources that underpin these actions. The intersecting elements of the British university application process are used in the design of this research with participants producing an outline/personal statement and participating in a mock interview to replicate the application process. These methods offer insight into the social foundations that underpin a students' understandings of how to advertise themselves during the admissions process. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field are used to interpret participants' constructions of ideals, performance as these ideals and recognition of reputable information sources.

Full paper

Context

Numerous scholars explain the prevailing state of inequality in higher education as being due to a culturally embedded conceptualization of "merit" that justifies the exclusion of particular groups from accessing universities (Alon, 2009; Burke and McManus, 2011; Warikoo, 2016; Reay, 2018). According to the meritocratic narrative, individuals are rejected from institutions on the basis that they lack the qualifications and/or characteristics that the institution associates with merit and are thus unsuited for the university. Despite the definition of "merit" changing over time, it tends to advantage particular groups, often named as the white, middle classes (van Zanten, 2009; Kenway and Howard, 2022). This domination occurs, in part, because their children are brought up knowing how to "play the game" of university admissions strategically, so any deficits that appear on the application are overshadowed by accomplishments (Stevens, 2007; Brooks, 2008; Boliver, 2011; Hurst, 2013). While educational institutions adhere to changing priorities via national policies (McCormick and Zhao, 2005; Social Mobility Commission, 2019), this does not change the fact that these priorities, however unique they appear, are still determined by the portion of the population that have dominated higher education for decades. Practices that allege to evaluate an applicant in a more holistic capacity, have gained increased attention (Jones, 2012). These mechanisms, however, still require that benchmarks set and reproduced by the dominant culture within universities be met. Yet, the expectations and values of universities are only easily interpretable to those that are habituated to see them, meaning that outsiders are unlikely to identify with these values without some alternative exposure to them (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1978; Reay, David and Ball, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

Bourdieu's concepts of capital accumulation, habitus and field are effective devices to analyse student engagement with university application processes by linking ones social background to their familiarity with certain rules and selection of strategies. Identification of the rule-makers (university gatekeepers) and understandings of the rules themselves (strategies to gain access) are specific to the individual, as are their different cultural, social and economic capitals (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1978; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013). Differences in type and amount of capitals signal individuals as belonging to a particular group whether they intend to produce that perception or not. Students exposed to environments that replicate university are more likely to accumulate capitals that are valued by universities as well as understandings of the "rules of the game" or the strategies to grant them access. Since understanding the rules facilitates effective performance, the subconscious development of behaviours that fit the cultural milieu, or Bourdieu's habitus, is another feature linked to access.

Methods

Research design was constructed to replicate university evaluation mechanisms to gain a robust overview of the student experience with accessing university. Using a case study design, five state schools with varying socioeconomic/cultural demographics were recruited with 6-15 participants each. A demographics questionnaire focusing on socio-economic background was completed by all participants. Next, each participant outlined their conceptualisation of the ideal applicant, listing the characteristics, experiences and achievements that they perceived both themselves and the ideal applicant to have. An outline of a personal statement was drafted which illuminated strategic advertising in a written format, as well as sections on included and excluded information (Jones, 2012, 2014; Wright, 2015). This product was used to elucidate how participants employ the strategies in their repertoire to disguise their perceived deficits, and which deficits they perceived to be worth disguising (White and Lowenthal, 2011). Finally, mock interviews were conducted to gauge the familiarity of each participant with the social conventions of academia and provide an alternative platform for advertising.

Preliminary Findings

Data analysis flowed between examining empirical data and theoretical concepts to identify patterns in particular schools and across the five institutions. Themes occurring across institutions were analysed to discover how students of varying social backgrounds performed a similar ideal in different ways. Findings suggest that participants understand the ideal as hardworking, passionate, involved in extracurriculars and work experience. To evaluate the degree to which participants operationalised their capitals, habitus and field knowledge to fit this ideal, three categories were created: The What, The How, and The Why. "The What" encompassed participants who identified *what* universities value. "The How" narrowed to participants that applied their capitals, habitus and knowledge of the field to explain *how* they cultivated these valued characteristics and embodied them more broadly. "The Why" evaluated only participants that operationalised their capitals, habitus and field knowledge and tailored them to a university, explaining *why* they make them an ideal candidate.

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35 Revisiting the Robbins Report at 60: education for citizenship versus education for consumerism?

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Research Domains

Higher Education policy (HEP)

Abstract

The Robbins Report (1963) remains revered as a symbol of state-funded 'social democratic' HE expansion, when HE was understood as a social good to prepare students for citizenship. At the same time the report is apparently contradictorily held by others as heralding the 'marketised' or 'neoliberal' funding regime oriented towards meeting national economic needs.

This paper demonstrates how in the Robbins Report education for citizenship and education for consumerism were intertwined. It argued that students' freedom to choose and to expect a return on investment in their education should be central to the size of HE. But students also needed a broad interdisciplinary education to best deploy their specialisms in the good, free society of liberal capitalism, a society under threat in the shadow of the Cold War. Robbins' holistic assessment of the value of HE points to one way to combat narrow economic assessments of the value of HE.

Full paper

The Robbins Report (1963) continues to feature prominently in policy debate. Its axiom that HE should be made 'available to all those who are qualified by ability and attainment ... and who wish to do' regardless of their class or gender is still passionately defended. The report recommended expanding HE from 216,000 full-time students in 1962-63 to 507,000 in 1980-81. Students would receive a mandatory grant covering the costs of their education. To pay for this, the report calculated the proportion of GNP devoted to HE would need to double. It remains venerated as a metonym for social democratic expansionism.

At the same time, the report is also revered as heralding today's 'marketised' funding regime of student loans. Speaking at events marking the 50th anniversary of the report, David Willetts argued the HE policy implemented by his twenty-first century coalition government was not antagonistic to the vision of the Robbins Report: rather, it extended it. Others supposed that the new 2012 student loans system in England was one that 'Robbins would have approved'. Lionel Robbins was a famous neoliberal economist, a close ally of Friedrich Hayek.

These two funding regimes are often considered as diametrically opposed. The prevailing narrative of the development of HE policy assumes that an earlier post-war interventionist HE regime characterised by high levels of public funding gave way from the 1980s to a 'marketised' regime.

However, histories of post-war Britain are increasingly unsatisfied with such 'rise and fall narratives'. Such narratives depict neoliberalism as too much of a conspiratorial force which seized power in 1979 to resist the progressive redistribution of resources ensuring education for citizenship, or are self-aggrandising stories of policy actors who sought to compel complacent and inefficient universities to respond to genuine, market-indicated national and economic needs for skills. Instead, historians have begun to examine how a more diffuse cast of historical actors in post-war Britain came to accommodate the priorities of the market. This paper re-historicizes the Robbins Report as part of this new appreciation of the dynamism of post-war liberalism.

The existing literature on the Robbins Report tends to assume that the economic case for expansion of HE was secondary to a social case, and that 'the individual citizen, not economic man or the mass consumer, was at the centre of the Robbins inquiry'. However, these categories are not so easily disentangled in the report.

The report was an early adopter of the then unorthodox idea of calculating potential returns on individual 'human capital'. Students, the report held, were inherently capable of knowing and pursuing their best interests. By making an assessment of the return on investment in their human capital, they would participate in the 'division of labour', raise productivity by specialising, and help to engender the prosperous 'good society'. The size of HE, the report argued, should be determined by students' freedom to choose, their 'wish', and not on central government 'manpower' calculations. While grants were initially a necessary state investment to remove psychosocial barriers to young people and their parents, especially of girls, to investing in education, over time as attendance grew the justness of the distribution of the burden of taxation on the general population would diminish. Eventually, graduates should be expected to repay a portion of the cost of their education through a loan.

This did not mean reducing HE entirely to skills acquisition. The report's recommendations were predicated on expansion being in broad liberal courses developing 'general powers of the mind'. The committee were particularly concerned with 'overspecialisation'; while specialisation was a necessary part of the division of labour, it increased mutual dependence whilst decreasing mutual understanding. The committee argued that in order to best make use of the powerful modern knowledge, students needed an interdisciplinary, broad understanding of modern society. In the midst of the Cold War, they particularly meant understanding the virtues of liberal capitalism and the importance of

'freedom' to choose - precisely the same freedom students were exercising in the pursuit of their own self-improvement by attending HE. Education for citizenship and education for consumerism were one and the same.

Revisiting the foundations of current understandings purpose and governance of HE exposes some underlying assumptions that remain prevalent in discussion today. Robbins' holistic assessment of the value of HE points to one way to combat narrow economic assessments of the value of HE, as institutions increasingly market themselves as enabling students to respond to the 'grand challenges' of the twenty-first century - climate change, of AI, and global inequalities.

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152 Student Activism, Plural Citizenships, and the Political Purpose of the University

James Harrison

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Research Domains

Student Access and Experience (SAE)

Abstract

Citizenship, as a political and educational rather than legal concept, is rarely discussed in the UK higher education sector. This paper explores the troubled relationship between higher education and the concepts of citizenship and

citizenship education, and the complications presented to this relationship by the persistent phenomenon of student activism. Informed by a holistic conception of plural and multiplex citizenship, as well as by the work of Jürgen Habermas on higher education, this paper sets out the conceptual underpinnings of a doctoral research project in which the disruptive potential of student activism provides a lens through which to consider the question of the political purpose of the university, as well as diverse forms of citizenship in HE, as they are experienced and practised by students. The paper concludes by outlining the methodology of a substantive piece of ethnographic fieldwork designed to investigate the questions posed in this paper.

Full paper

Citizenship in Higher Education

The concept of citizenship (broadly defined here as ‘the basic human equality of membership’ of a political community [Marshall 1950:7]) has historically sat uneasily in the UK HE landscape. While ‘education for citizenship’ in primary and secondary schooling has often been posed as a political imperative (Crick 2000), the question of citizenship in HE is more complex. Not only are HE students overwhelmingly adults, of majority age to vote and therefore legally recognised as politically mature (Scott 2022), but also (within the UK context) a large proportion of students are not ‘formal’ citizens of the country in which they are studying (HESA 2022).

Broadly speaking, two primary discourses of citizenship are prevalent within British HE policy and practice: ‘academic citizenship’ and ‘global citizenship’ (Horey et al. 2018; Albia and Cheng 2023); both of these discourses, by focusing on communities other than the nation-state, avoid the more substantive political issues raised by other conceptions of citizenship, which delineate political membership on more exclusive characteristics (Cohen and Ghosh 2019). In contrast to approaches which consider differing visions of state and non-state citizenship to be discrete categories of social affiliation, this paper works from the perspective that citizenships are plural, multiplex, and overlapping, and can be experienced at different social levels simultaneously. The notion of ‘active’ or political forms of citizenship, centred around the individual citizen as a bottom-up constituent of the polity (Habermas 1995), by comparison, are rarely used in an HE context, in contrast to policy and practice in primary and secondary education (QCA 1998; Crick 2010).

Student Activism and Citizenship

Despite the long-acclaimed ‘demise’ of British student activism suggested across academic and media commentaries (Brooks et al. 2015, 2016; Raaper 2020a, 2020b), evidence suggests that a culture of ‘disruptive’ student activism persists across UK HEIs (Abrahams and Brooks 2019). It is arguable that student activism, broadly construed as active pursuit of a political or social cause, represents one of the strongest performances of commitment to a community, even if that activism manifests as opposition to the community’s existing leadership or institutional arrangements (Walzer 1970). Yet the reactions of university leaders to more disruptive (though peaceful) forms of activism often range between caution and hostility (e.g., Hall 2023).

This paper suggests that the forms of ‘political consciousness’ (Habermas 1967, 1971) promoted in institutional discourse and policy, in contrast to the plural and radical citizenships likely demonstrated by student activists, are broadly analogous with Habermas’s notion of ‘civil privatism’: a ‘safe’ form of citizenship, which elides the constitutive nature of the citizen, and promotes the expression of discontent via ‘institutionally provided opportunities’ (Habermas 1973:75) – in this context, for example, delegation of representative status to students’ unions increasingly integrated into the decision-making apparatus of the university itself (Klemenčič 2014). Conceptions of citizenship which promote a political, activist approach to students’ interests with respect to issues on and off the university campus represent not only a direct challenge to the authority of university leaders, but also an indirect threat to the marketised, neoliberal HE system which underwrites that authority and the stability of the institutional status quo. It is this fundamental tension which underpins the central question posed by this paper as part of ongoing research: How are citizenship(s) understood and practised by student activists and institutions on the university campus?

Methodological Approach

The substantive portion of this project will take the form of (broadly) institutional ethnographic fieldwork (Smith 2005) with multiple student activist groups at a UK HEI. This fieldwork, comprising participant observation, interviews and digital ethnographic methods, will run alongside a study of institutional texts including policy documents and value statements, in order to explore student activist and institutional experiences and constructions of citizenships.

Expected Findings

Preliminary social mapping exercises conducted for this project suggests that citizenship acts in various political communities occur throughout the institutional architecture of the university: not merely in advertised opportunities for student engagement or consultation, but across a wide variety of situations in which students voluntarily invest in the communal life of one or more forms of political community which overlap on the university campus. These exercises have also suggested that forms of acts of citizenship within the institutional structure of the university can broadly be situated upon two scales: (1), between inward- (i.e., university-) and outward-facing orientations; and (2), between disruptive and service-focused orientations. I expect to have more extensive empirical findings to discuss at the SRHE Conference, as substantive fieldwork will by then have commenced on the project.

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Parallel Session 8:3 - Symposium

11:00 - 12:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 144

15 Doctoral admissions research in UK higher education: Foregrounding complex processes, cultures and inequalities

Research Domain

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Rationale

Within UK higher education, stakeholders have identified intersectional inequalities in access to postgraduate research. Barriers are faced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic students, gender minorities, and those with disabilities, amongst others, and there is a desire to shift these disparities (Department for Business, 2018; Lindner, 2020; Institute for Community Studies, 2022; NEON, 2022). Admissions processes have been identified as a site of investigation and intervention to transform inequalities in doctoral education (Milkman et al., 2018; Spencer-Oatey, 2020). There is a particular need to understand where inequalities surface in application rates, university offer gaps, funding status, and student offer acceptance.

Global knowledge production about inequalities in doctoral admissions is dominated by US-based research (e.g. Posselt, 2016). While these studies offer valuable critical analyses (e.g. of gatekeeping, ideas of merit and diversity), the US doctoral admissions system has important differences when compared to the UK. For example, while US scholars of doctoral admissions examine the use and abuse of Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) tests, holistic admissions, and the decision-making practices of admissions committees (Squire, 2020), these processes may be less relevant to the UK doctoral education system which involves different kinds of programmes, admissions criteria, and evaluation procedures. Equally, the histories and discursive constructions of social inclusion/exclusion also differ between contexts, as do the legal requirements which shape how institutions (e.g. universities, funding bodies) might intervene.

There are several arguments for increasing the profile of UK doctoral admissions research which are threaded through the papers in this symposium. First, there is a need for research that examines the taken-for-granted practices of doctoral admissions. While national statistics offer insights into who is and who is not accessing doctoral education (Office for Students, 2020), there is a need to examine doctoral admissions processes as an ordinary part of university life. The second argument relates to the first: examining the minutiae of doctoral admissions allows researchers to address questions that are difficult to answer from afar, such as who makes decisions that influence graduate admissions, how decisions are made, and what values (articulated or otherwise) shape this decision-making. Third, there is a need to deepen understandings of which communities may be disadvantaged through current doctoral admissions practices, advice cultures, and what the mechanisms of exclusion may be.

This UK-based symposium showcases current research on inequalities in doctoral admissions from a variety of perspectives and methodological orientations.

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Chair

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131 The role of doctoral programme directors and professional services staff in managing pre-application doctoral communications (PADC): Enablers and gatekeepers in doctoral recruitment?

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Before submitting formal applications to study, prospective doctoral students often contact university staff to seek information and feedback. Despite such communication being commonplace in many disciplines, this stage of the admissions process remains informal and largely unregulated. Previous research on formal admissions revealed concerns about inequalities and exclusions that routinely occur. We argue it is necessary to extend consideration to inequalities that may occur at the pre-application stage. This paper reports on a multi-method institutional case study investigating the perspectives of supervisors, doctoral programme directors (DPGRs) and programme officers (POs). In this paper, we contextualise pre-application communications within wider admissions literature, share key findings about the role of DPGRs and POs in pre-application communications, and draw out key implications. The paper argues that pre-application communications are an important consideration in terms of inclusivity, and that a fuller understanding of all of those involved in screening and gatekeeping processes is needed.

Full paper

Introduction

Researchers have identified a host of concerns relating to inequities in doctoral admissions, such as access to admissions information (Dangeni et al., 2023), exclusionary admissions criteria (Ghose et al., 2018; Potvin et al., 2017), inconsistent evaluative processes (Squire, 2020), and ambiguities surrounding merit and diversity in admissions (Posselt, 2016). To date, the focus in the field is formal admissions procedures, with informal processes remaining neglected. Pre-application doctoral communications (PADC) are under-considered in doctoral admissions literature, with any existing studies tending to focus on communication between prospective applicants and potential supervisors (e.g. Milkman et al., 2015; Sabet et al., 2021; Spencer-Oatey, 2021). In contrast, there has been limited consideration of communication that may occur between prospective applicants and other departmental role-holders. The purpose of this paper is to explore the roles and experiences of these role holders: doctoral programme officers (POs) and directors of PGR (DPGRs).

The study

This paper emerges from a wider empirical study conducted at a UK Russell Group university which explored the actions and perspectives of different institutional actors in relation to PADC (www.warwick.ac.uk/PADC). The project investigated the actions and perspectives of supervisors, academic doctoral programme directors (DPGRs) and PGR programme officers (POs). This paper focuses on the two latter role holders, who were studied through online, semi-structured interviews with POs (N=8) and DPGRs (N=12) to explore departmental pre-application practices. They were asked questions about three broad themes: descriptions of their role in PGR admissions to map their responsibilities, practices and processes in their departments; questions about their role in PADC to understand the ways in which they engage with potential applicants; and questions about how their involvement in PADC practices may have EDI implications. This paper presents an inductive analysis of interview data. The study received ethical approval from the University of Warwick.

Findings

1. Nature of PADC

The study found that DPGRs and POs were primarily contacted by email, and that the key thematic foci of communications included queries about eligibility and entry requirements; funding and scholarships; how to identify a potential supervisor; proposals and research topic feedback; application timeframes; visas and healthcare issues; and accessibility. The roles that DPGRs played with regard to the pre-application process varied greatly across the institution, ranging from a high level of involvement to limited contact with potential applicants. POs also played a diverse and layered role in the pre-application doctoral communication process, and most were involved in managing the day-to-day queries that are sent to the programme's resource account from potential applicants and checking the applications as they come through the university admission portal. While taking distinct roles, both POs and DPGRs contributed to admissions decision making, such as by selecting whether or not to forward initial inquiries on or engage in in-depth dialogue.

1. Inequalities emerging through PADC

Many POs and DPGRs accepted that gatekeeping occurs during PADC. However, gatekeeping was not generally considered to be a negative or exclusionary process; rather, 'screening' was described as a necessary part of admissions. However, there were other gatekeeping points where EDI was more of an obvious concern, for example in relation to who was positioned to make these kinds of decisions, which types of communication were considered to be 'good enough' to be forwarded or responded to, and judgements made about suitability based on initial approaches alone. Both POs and DPGRs identified that mature students or professionals returning to study, applicants with different educational backgrounds, those with qualifications from non-UK institutions, and applicants from Global South contexts seem to encounter greater barriers in navigating PADC.

Discussion

In order to understand potential exclusions that occur within doctoral admissions, it is necessary to investigate the role of all departmental stakeholders in pre-application communications. While the perspectives of supervisors have had greater focus in the literature to date, this paper explores the perspectives of DPGRs and POs, recognising the active and complex role they can play in this process, as well as the diversity of arrangements across institutions, departments and disciplines. By researching the roles that DPGRs and POs play in PADC, this paper attempts to map a broader picture of the admissions ecosystem and highlight potential points at which minoritised and under-represented applicants might be excluded before even applying.

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132 '5 secrets they won't tell you': Analysing YouTube Advice Videos on Contacting a Potential Doctoral Supervisor

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Aspiring doctoral researchers seeking guidance about locating and contacting a potential supervisor can access a range of advice, including institutional webpages, independent blogs, advice books and social media. Much guidance can also be found freely available on the internet, where videos are presented by 'insiders' including current/past students, academics and institutions. This paper analyses advice videos about initial supervisor contact found on YouTube. Situating the videos as texts in the doctoral advice genre, it analyses a sample to gain insight into their style, types of advice, contextual positionality and how they utilise notions of authority to communicate expertise. The paper demonstrates that whilst there is a wealth of doctoral admissions advice on YouTube that might be helpful, particularly for those without existing knowledge or the privilege of networks, these videos contribute to a complex advice market that requires critical scrutiny in terms of motivation and message.

Full paper

Introduction

Doctoral advice is a broad field of self-help materials and enquiry. As scholars have noted, there is advice available for various phases of the doctoral journey (Oliver, 2004), and these texts have also been interrogated to discern how advice both abates and exaggerates concerns about the challenges of doctoral study (Kamler and Thomson, 2008). A domain that is particularly susceptible to concern is pre-application doctoral communications (PADC), which are the queries and conversations that take place between applicants and staff prior to formal application. PADC is not only a source of confusion (Kim and Spencer-Oatey 2020), but also a site for potential exclusion and bias (Milkman et al. 2015). It is therefore unsurprising that there are an array of advice videos about how to find, contact and secure a supervisor. This paper outlines a study of these YouTube videos, their styles and their pedagogies, and positions them within the scholarly conversation about the rhetorical construction of doctoral advice.

The study

This study, which was part of a wider study of PADC (www.warwick.ac.uk/padc) undertook a search of YouTube videos focused on the topic of “How to contact a potential PhD supervisor” (including variants on this phrasing). It then sought to establish what types of advice are given in YouTube PADC guidance videos, and to identify common features of the PADC video advice. After a rigorous search process, a corpus of 100 videos was developed. Videos included in the study all had over 100 views, were in English only, and no more than 10 years since posting. The ten videos with the highest views were then selected as a sample and then subjected to thematic and discursive analysis for this paper.

Findings

This paper presents a sample of ten videos in order to paint a picture of popular advice about how to locate, contact and secure a supervisor. Views in the sample ranged from 31,717 to 429,749 at the time of writing. The sample included three videos from institutions (University of Kent, Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Graduate School Western Sydney University) with the other seven being presented by academics or students who run PhD advice and experience accounts, or what could be termed ‘doctoral influencers’.

Whilst some videos had a sense of national context and the different process in, e.g. Humanities and Sciences or the US vs the UK (Clark, 2016; WeDesified, 2020), there was an observable tendency to generalise the complex relational aspects of gaining supervisor endorsement, for example, ‘5 easy steps of getting a PhD’ (Clark, 2016), ‘5 secrets’ about supervisors (Stapleton, 2020) or ‘best format’ to email (WiseUp Communications, 2022).

Institutional videos favoured multiple speakers, either in the form of colleagues in dialogue or shifting from shots of students and academics covering different topics, possibly representing notions of academic community (Western Sydney University, 2015). Dialogue was also the presentation style of one ‘influencer’ who spoke to a fellow doctoral student (Onyina, 2022), but the rest of the sample featured individuals speaking directly to the camera. Influencer accounts reflected a strong sense of ‘brand identity’ – channels have a name, visual identifier/logo, and one even had merchandise for sale (Stapleton, 2020).

In addition, the study was concerned with how authority was constructed. In doctoral influencer videos, authority was often suggested through unsubstantiated claims about PADC: ‘80% of emails...end up in trash’ (Infosessionswithkingsley, 2020); suggestive pronoun use to position supervisors as secretive and on another side: ‘all of the things they don’t want you to know about them’ (Stapleton, 2020); and notions of being an insider based on personal experience or autobiographical detail. Although it can be helpful to hear personal stories of success, it was possible to locate conflation between personal preference and general advice: ‘they are not going to care...I don’t really care unless you’re highly accomplished or you’re a superstar’ R3cipracity Team, 2018)

Discussion

Supervisory PADC is an important informal stage of the admissions process. This paper critically explores PADC advice freely available on YouTube to better understand how advice is circulated in the context of global higher education. Although these videos are potentially helpful for applicants, it is important to bear in mind that there is also money to be made on YouTube from advice in similar ways as is possible in other advice markets, for example advice books (Thompson and Kamler, 2008). Arguably, the proliferation of advice about how to ‘break in’ to a doctorate does not address the underlying problem of opaque institutional processes.

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195 'Knowledge or Skills': the implications of different conceptualisations of the purpose of the doctorate for admissions

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Research demonstrates that there are notable differences in approaches to doctoral admissions and the criteria employed to select doctoral candidates across various disciplines (Mowbray & Halse, 2010; Mantai & Marrone, 2022). This paper examines how approaches to admissions are rooted in fundamental conceptions of the purpose of the PhD. Drawing upon 44 interviews conducted with academic staff at the University of Oxford, the findings focus on two disciplinary clusters distinguished by their core epistemological and ontological assumptions. We highlight how these assumptions, in turn, shape the fundamental understandings of the purpose of doctoral studies (knowledge production or human capital production) and influence the criteria and processes utilized in admissions procedures.

Full paper

Introduction

Prior research has examined various aspects of doctoral admissions, including institutional procedures (Jung et al., 2023) and skills requirements (Mantai & Marrone, 2022) as well as faculty conceptions of merit (Posselt, 2014), their gatekeeping practices (Nguyen and Blalock, 2013) and logics of evaluation (Posselt, 2015). However, at the core of admissions are the specific criteria against which applicants are assessed, which hinge on the perceived purposes of the PhD. Because it is less clear how criteria link to underlying assumptions about the doctorate, this paper examines: 1) how departments at the University of Oxford conceptualise the purpose of a PhD in their disciplines, and 2) the ways in which the purpose of the PhD is reflected in doctoral admissions processes and practices.

Methods

This paper stems from a larger project on doctoral admissions at Oxford and Cambridge. This paper is based on 44 interviews with academic faculty from eight departments from a range of disciplines and one Doctoral Training Centre (DTC) at Oxford. This paper draws on responses to questions about how PhD applications are assessed, and what doctoral research potential looks like. Data was inductively analysed, first within and then across cases using the principle of constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) for informal meaning-making. Through further iterative analyses encompassing the entire data corpus key factors shaping participants' conceptualisations of the purpose of a PhD.

Findings

The findings suggest that disciplinary epistemological and ontological underpinnings shape understandings of the purpose of the doctorate and, in turn, the ways in which doctoral admissions are conducted. Two distinct clusters of approaches emerge, broadly aligning with the domains of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (AHSS) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM).

Knowledge Production

In AHSS, participants viewed the purpose of the PhD as broadly centred around knowledge production; the goal of the doctorate is to make a significant contribution to knowledge in the field. The researcher is intimately connected to

and bound up in the research, making the PhD an individual endeavour, and the thesis primarily conceived of by the doctoral researcher.

This framing of the PhD is reflected in admissions practices where the research proposal is often the most important piece of an application, assessed for knowledge of the field, potential contribution, and feasibility. Because each student has a distinct project, having a supervisor with relevant expertise means that supervisors must have the expertise, capacity, and willingness to supervise a project, and thus are instrumental to selection decisions. Further, while all doctoral students must have certain skills (e.g. writing proficiency, critical thinking), less emphasis is placed on technical skills.

Human Capital Production

In STEM, conceptualisations of the purpose of the PhD focused on becoming a researcher. Research in these disciplines typically takes place within lab or research groups, meaning that while the doctoral project is owned by the PhD researcher, the research may be part of a larger overarching project, and emphasis is placed on developing skills and expertise. Research is therefore more group-oriented than in AHSS.

The focus on human capital development is reflected in the admissions process. PhD applicants generally apply for pre-defined projects or join specific research groups, and while a few departments also allow applicants to propose their own projects, few exercise this option. Thus, these disciplines tend to be more 'person-centred' and assessment focuses on the CV and interview, towards identifying the extent to which the applicant's academic profile (and motivation/passion for the topic) fits with the lab/research group. Because applicants apply for existing projects, and may be offered their second or third choice, there is more variability in the role of supervisors in assessment; some departments consciously limit supervisor involvement, while others have applications assessed by research groups, which may include potential supervisors. Further, some research requires specific disciplinary knowledge and technical skills that are essential for successful completion of the project.

Conclusion

Disciplines understand the purpose of the PhD differently, based on underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions. Thus, the heterogeneity in admissions processes and practices is valid; disciplinary difference means that doctoral admissions cannot be standardised across disciplines. At the same time, doctoral education is at an inflection point, situated within a larger discourse about the knowledge economy, post-PhD careers, and skills development, meaning that the traditional conceptions of doctoral education are shifting. It is important that we continue to examine how the PhD is transforming, what implications this has for the purpose of the doctorate, and what criteria define a successful PhD applicant.

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197 Factors shaping inequalities in the doctoral admissions process

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This paper reports findings from a study examining how decisions to offer doctoral places are made and the factors that shape unequal doctoral admissions outcomes. As part of a wider project to develop fairer doctoral admissions at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, we undertook case studies of sixteen departments and two doctoral training centres across both universities. These focused on mapping the formal and informal doctoral admissions processes and practices that shape admissions outcomes. Data included semi-structured interviews with stakeholders involved in doctoral admissions and analysis of key admissions documents. We identify six key factors that shape selection decisions. However, findings also illustrate disciplinary variations and that selection decisions are embedded in highly complex social and institutional systems. Therefore, inequalities in doctoral admissions cannot be attributed to a single root cause, but are located in complex dynamics embedded in organizational culture, norms and behaviours. Approaches to disrupt these must be holistic.

Full paper

Introduction

Global HE systems have undergone significant, rapid expansion over the last fifty years (Trow, 1973; Cantwell et al., 2018), reflected in exponential growth in postgraduate education. However, despite this growth, in the UK, racially minoritised and low-SES students are less likely to progress into postgraduate degrees and receive offers for doctoral study at the most selective institutions when compared with white and more affluent peers (Wakeling & Mateos-González, 2021). Doctoral admissions are relatively under-researched and under-theorised (Posselt, 2016), but it is critical to understand the processes that underpin selection decisions to address access issues. While previous research has examined the skills, attributes, and competences required to pursue doctoral studies (Jung et al., 2023; Michel et al., 2019), and has brought attention to disparities in access to doctoral studies (Wakeling & Mateos-González, 2021), this paper explores inequalities as a process and their embedded nature within the admission system.

Methods

We conducted case studies of 16 departments and two DTCs (Doctoral Training Centres) across Oxford and Cambridge to map admissions systems. Departments were selected to represent a range of disciplines. In each case, 5 to 8 stakeholders involved in doctoral admissions, including doctoral students, were interviewed. Interviews focused on the formal and informal processes and practices that influence admissions decisions, and were triangulated with relevant documents, such as admissions criteria, and admissions procedures. Data were analysed within and across cases to identify commonalities and variations in admissions processes and beliefs about the nature of a doctorate. The findings below focus on results from the cross-case analysis.

Findings

The analysis highlighted significant inter- and intra-disciplinary differences in admissions practices across both universities. Selection decisions and unequal admissions outcomes are rooted in interrelated system dynamics shaped by organisational behaviours, institutionalised norms, and deep-seated assumptions about merit, potential, and the purpose of a doctorate. Within this space, we identified six aspects of formal and informal admissions processes that are critical to selection decisions and potentially contribute to unequal admissions.

Knowledge and understanding of application process

Equal access to information and social capital is a challenge for applicants. In particular, students who completed prior degrees at Oxbridge draw on networks and institutional knowledge to create applications that conform more closely with (often unarticulated) academic norms.

Initial supervisor contact

Supervisor contact is a critical yet largely unregulated phase of admissions. While many departments encourage candidates to contact supervisors prior to application, the nature of this contact varies across departments and individuals: some supervisors focus on indicating supervision capacity, while others provide extensive comments on research proposals. There are significant risks of screening applicants outside formal admissions processes.

Initial screening

Once submitted, applications are processed centrally and shared with departments. Initial screening then takes place to filter out 'weaker' applications. Our research suggests that if criteria used at this stage are overly rigid, particularly in the form of arbitrary quantification or attainment, 'cliff edges' are created and candidates from nontraditional backgrounds can simply 'fall off'.

Allocation of applications

Following initial screening, applications are passed to assessors for evaluation. The importance of this phase varies by discipline. Allocating an application to a supervisor without relevant expertise (or a perceived lack of expertise) can lead to automatic rejection based on the assumption there is no supervisory capacity or subject fit. This can be problematic, particularly if there is no clear mechanism for reallocation.

Assessor evaluation

This is the most critical stage of admissions in all disciplines. Many departments use interviews and criteria which place different levels of importance on the 'person' or the 'project'. The more rigid the criteria (the more focused on fixed measures of attainment), and the more rigidly criteria are applied, the more likely marginalised candidates are to be rejected. Further, biases may emerge, particularly where selection criteria are unclear.

Final screening

A final screening ensures the number of offers recommended by assessors corresponds with the maximum number of offers departments can make. This often involves a ranking system. This can create another 'cliff edge' that can undermine previous use of contextual information if certain academic criteria (e.g. related to attainment, etc.) are applied rigidly.

Conclusion

PhD admissions are part of a complex social and organisational system. No single factor drives selection decisions or unequal outcomes; inequalities are entrenched in and reproduced by admission systems dynamics and organisational behaviours, perpetuated by institutional inertia. Improvement and disruption of the system requires a holistic approach involving the introduction of initiatives across multiple points in the admissions system, focused on shifting organisational behaviours and the values that underpin them.

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Parallel Session 8:4

11:00 - 12:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 140

Chair Ella Taylor-Smith

187 Creative Lives: A Qualitative Study of Students' Creative Biographies

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Research Domains

Learning, teaching and assessment (LTA)

Abstract

Creativity is often included as a buzzword of 21st century curricular goals alongside innovation and entrepreneurship. How do we teach it? How do students perceive it? This presentation shares the results of a phenomenological study exploring college students' creative life stories. How do they define creativity, the arts, and their own aesthetics relative to their past experiences, current field of study/major, and future plans? The research design included modified biographic narrative interviews with 25 undergraduates. This research provides insights on the ways that personal arts and creativity narratives inform students' understanding of critical thinking, personal freedoms, and their membership (or not) in creative communities. Implications include a discussion of the democratic potential of the explicit inclusion of creativity in the curriculum.

Full paper

Creativity is often included as a buzzword of 21st century curricular goals alongside innovation and entrepreneurship. Tied to notions of critical thinking and problem-based learning, creativity is used as a pedagogic tool, an assessment criteria, and occasionally a strategy for engagement in curricular and co-curricular programming. Most of us are familiar with creativity workshop activities including solving problems with rubber bands and pipe cleaners. Other

assignments that celebrate creativity are found in the humanities and the arts proper: writing creative non-fiction, telling a digital story, mapping an imaginary terrain, and other flights of fancy to push students to think “outside the box”. What kinds of aesthetic literacy and experiences do the students bring to these activities?

What is the connection between creativity in the life course, the collegiate curriculum, and student development? This presentation shares the results of a phenomenological study exploring students’ creative life stories. How do they define creativity, the arts, and their own aesthetics relative to their past experiences, current field of study/major, and future plans? The goal of the project was to focus on students’ life experiences with arts and creativity to explore what kinds of aesthetic literacies and personal conceptions of creativity students bring to their collegiate experience.

The context for this study is an American public research university in a small city that draws students from the six state area of the greater Ohio River Valley region. The university is considered less selective with a large first generation college student population. Typical of universities in the United States, students are required to complete thirty credit hours (approximately two years of study) of general education coursework including, in this case, an unusual requirement of a course in “arts and creativity”. All students who completed their “arts and creativity” course in person, on campus following the pandemic lock down (AY 21-22) received a survey invitation to participate in the study. 215 students completed the survey which included demographic information, details of their academic major, type of general education course they had chosen, as well as their contact details. Of these, 25 were purposefully recruited to achieve a diversity of gender, major field of study, and type of general education experience. They were then invited to participate in a zoom interview of approximately an hour following a modified biographic narrative interview protocol.

The first and only instruction for the first half of the interview was: “Tell me your arts and creativity story; start whenever you’d like and discuss any aspect of your story you’d like to tell.” Once the student had finished their initial narrative, the interviewer would probe to elicit more details about particular parts of the story. The interview would then turn to college; and, the student would be asked, “Tell me about your Arts and Creativity college story; what A&C class did you take and what did you do?” Again, the student would tell their story and the interviewer would ask clarifying stories. Because the college course discussed in the second half of the interview was contextualized by the students’ life story covered in the first half, the students would often compare and contrast their course experience with their arts and creativity history. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparative approach of thematic analysis.

As an anthropologist who studies post-secondary credentialing and student success with an undergraduate degree in art history and studio art, this project is personally interesting. I brought to my reading and re-reading of the data my knowledge of college student development, post-secondary curriculum, and art education. The students described rich histories of participation in both fine arts and informal creative practices throughout their lives; yet, they often separated these rich narratives of personal creativity from their academic lives as college students. They described their previous creative practice as freeing; a space where they could be “authentic”. They also described collaborations in their creative work; times that arts and creativity gave them a sense of belonging. Yet, again, sometimes this freedom and sense of community was shut down when they reached college because they could not or were not able to continue to participate. Their experiences with purpose-built arts and creativity courses in college were mixed. This research provides insights on the ways that personal arts and creativity narratives inform students’ understanding of critical thinking, personal freedoms, and their membership (or not) in creative communities. Implications include a discussion of the democratic potential of the explicit inclusion of creativity in the curriculum.

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200 Conceptualising the sustainability agenda in higher education

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

Sustainability and sustainable development have become ever-present ideas in higher education. Universities around the world now commonly build principles of sustainability into their mission statements, strategic planning, curricula and organisational structures. Yet the increase in action and debate hides a lack of clarity as regards what sustainable development is, and how, if at all, universities might support its realisation. This paper presents a theoretical exploration of these questions, putting forward a conceptual frame for understanding the range of ways in which the sustainability agenda can be realised. It distinguishes between three forms of engagement: projective – the fostering of sustainability in the outside society through teaching, research and community engagement; expressive – integration of sustainability principles into the functioning of the institution; and constructive – critical engagement with the concept of sustainable development itself. Implications of this framework are drawn out for practice in higher education institutions in the contemporary era.

Full paper

In recent years the idea of sustainable development has moved from the confines of geography textbooks and UN declarations to the centre ground of higher education rhetoric and strategy. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular have become a common framework around which higher education institutions (HEIs) both map their activities and actively align their work. Sustainability has become an apparently consensual idea around which to gather the diverse actors and functions of the institution, and provide a public justification of its existence (Chankseliani and McCowan 2021; McCowan 2019).

Yet despite this apparent consensus, there is a lack of clarity both as regards the notion itself and the ways in which higher education can engage with it. This paper presents a theoretical exploration of the notion and its relationship with HEIs, leading to a framework for both understanding and shaping future engagements. It distinguishes between three forms of engagement: projective – the fostering of sustainability in the outside society through teaching, research and community engagement; expressive – integration of sustainability principles into the functioning of the institution; and constructive – critical engagement with the concept of sustainable development itself.

In the first of these modes, sustainable development is something that HEIs help to bring into being, most commonly through teaching their students to be sustainable. This provision is sometimes integrated into existing courses, and conceptualised as a modification of professional training (i.e. the formation of sustainable engineers (Mitchell et al. 2021)), or involves the creation of new courses. In other cases sustainable development forms part of the general civic and personal learning of all students, and may occur outside of the accredited syllabus.

While the main way in which HEIs project themselves is through their graduates, there are also the areas of research and community engagement. The contributions of these areas to society have been the subject of significant attention in the UK and elsewhere in recent years through the ‘impact’ agenda, which has expressed itself in the policies of research funding and evaluation (McCowan 2018). HEIs now commonly map their various research and community engagement activities in relation to sustainable development, and particularly the SDGs.

Yet we can also see educational institutions in a different way, in having a real existence and value in themselves, in the here and now. HEIs are communities that matter – despite their transience – independently of the future and external benefit they produce. This idea can be understood as the expressive as opposed to the projective function of education. Much of the attention in this area has been focused on the carbon emissions stemming from international student mobility (see the analysis carried out by Shields 2019), and to a lesser extent staff mobility for conferences and fieldwork (e.g. Bjørkdahl et al. 2022) – leading to not a little soul-searching in institutions caught between the financial and reputational necessities of internationalisation and their guilty consciences.

These two modes capture much of what educational institutions do. However, there is an assumption in both of them that the ideas or purposes are predefined or externally generated. We might then point to another function of HEIs that is to generate new ideas about what is to be projected or expressed. For this we can employ the term ‘constructive’. The notion of sustainable development is in fact a ‘shell’ concept, with its substantive meanings varying dramatically in moral and political terms. It represents a coming together of two hitherto separate strands of thought and action: firstly, national or international ‘development’ – as in the economic, political and social progress or improvement of societies; and secondly, the protection, conservation and regeneration of the natural environment. Yet the apparent win-win between these two ideas masks possibilities for continuing global injustices, making the constructive role of universities crucial in interrogating the concept.

Importantly then, the role of higher education in relation to sustainability is not only a one of impact, but also of critique and reconstruction of the ideas underpinning it. In this process, we can see an important regaining of protagonism for the institution. In remaining committed to sustained enquiry and deep reflection, in dialogue with action, and in the context of epistemic pluralism and diversity of ideas, higher education can lead a critical interrogation of the notion of sustainable development, and its re-imagination, setting in motion a positive societal contagion that may give us a chance of finding a way out of the current ecological crisis.

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390 University identity: statutes and architectures

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

Drawing on Baudrillard's work on simulacra, this study aims to contribute to the OI literature by examining the statements and symbols of university identities. In a competitive environment, isomorphic processes challenge autonomy and standardise cultural processes. The well-established OI literature reflects a growing interest in organisational dynamics and is mainly limited to entrepreneurial organisations. While logos and slogans have been studied, statutes and architectures have been less explored. This research focuses on two Italian private universities. The results show that university identity is embodied in core values shared by the community. University culture is expressed through identity statements in the statutes, thus revealing the cultural matrix. The representation of identity through buildings, symbolic artefacts and location leaves impressions on stakeholders. Finally, statutes and architecture function as signs when they are not so far from the core values due to isomorphism. A new model of identity tools is proposed.

Full paper

This research investigates the role of statutes and architectures in shaping the organisational identity (OI) of universities. In a competitive environment, distinctive identity traits become crucial to strengthen the ranks of a quantitatively growing and qualitatively evolving community caused by isomorphic processes that challenge autonomy and standardise cultural processes in a neo-liberal vision. Current OI literature reflects a growing interest in organisational dynamics and is extensive and well-established. However, studies are confined mainly to entrepreneurial organisations; the literature on university identity is relatively new in higher education research. This study aims to contribute to the OI literature by examining the statements and symbols of university identities. If branding processes have been deeply studied with their tools being examined in depth (trademarks, slogans etc.), in contrast, statutes (statements) and architectures (symbols) appear to have been less explored. My fundamental research question (RQ) aims at exploring this gap: how universities shape their identity through statutes and architectures. From my central RQ, I investigate three additional sub-questions: RQ1 How do the core values shape a university's identity? RQ2 How do the statements of identity shape a university's image? RQ3 How do a university's identity and image shape its reputation?

To analyse these concepts, this research will focus on a sample of two Italian private universities and adopt a dual case study approach. The dual case approach allowed to highlight analogies and differences: both are niche universities but different in core mission and location. The research method combined semi-structured interviews and visual prompts. The data sources consisted of semi-structured interviews with governance members, faculty

members, managers, students, and other stakeholders; the corpus of internal laws; the maps of the campuses and tiers, and photos of the buildings. The data analysis offers a cloud of words and a triptych of photos.

Informed by Baudrillard's work on simulation and simulacra, the literature of organisational identity dynamics theories and higher education studies are combined, highlighting how the role of statutes and architectures interplay between organisational identity, image and culture in a university's identity representation. My work analysed the expressing and impressing shifts of identity dynamics emerging from Hatch and Schultz's seminal work (2002) and Ravasi's revision (2016), moving from core values to identity statements, from identity statements to desired image, from desired image to reputation. The literature analysis highlights the relationship between the organisational dynamics and the four phases of Baudrillard's (2009) decomposition of the image: starting from the "sacramental order", where the sign represents proof of identity, and advancing to the "hyper-reality", where the sign is a pure simulacrum having no relationship to reality.

The findings reveal that the university's identity is embodied in the core values shared by the academic, student and managerial community. The sense of belonging cements the community's bricks, consisting of professors, staff, and students, until after graduation. This feeling also boosts the defensive force of the members against attacks on the university's reputation. Second, the university culture manifests itself through identity statements reported in statutes; these represent the university community's cultural background. To reduce the risk of identity dilution, the legal documents that report identity claims need to more correspondent to the institution's core values. The identity representation provided by buildings, symbolic artefacts, and localisation leaves impressions on community members and stakeholders. Finally, statutes and architectures function as signs if they are not taken so far from the institution's core values as to lose a connection with reality by the mimetic, normative and coercive isomorphism effect. The findings suggest that identity tools such as statutes and architectures must be linked to identity management if there is a desire to minimise dissonance between the university's core values and its representations and avoid misrepresentations that could create false impressions in stakeholders.

This research is relevant from a university governance perspective: preserving a distinctive identity by ensuring coherence between the different expressions of core values. To improve governance processes can be suggested: expressing the identity of the university community in statements can help to highlight core values. The internal regulation system, controlled by the intermediary's agency, must more directly reflect the values pursued. The omissions, probably due to controls, lead to unintended removals. The external physical constraints must be used and valorised as opportunities for cultural links.

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Parallel Session 8:5

11:00 - 12:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 141

Chair Tony Armstrong

252 International students and everyday multiculturalism: Rethinking 'connection' through evaluating the mundane

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Research about international students has long considered their social network compositions, often assuming that friendship with home students equals a positive transition. Critiques are often made, both in scholarship and practice, of the tendency for international students to form friendship networks with fellow international students. Such friendships are often assumed to mean limited engagement with local communities or host cultures. This research counters these deficit narratives using the sociological framework of “everyday multiculturalism”, which considers interactions with multiculturalism in small, mundane ways in daily life. Through a photo-elicitation narrative interview approach, data from 41 students are used to conceptualise how everyday living creates a sense of cultural learning and belonging. The implications provide considerations for the ways that grand gestures like friendship may miss the meaningful intercultural encounters that students experience in everyday life, while offering suggestions for how institutions can better facilitate positive social learning experiences within local communities.

Full paper

Research about international students in higher education has long considered the compositions of their social network formations (Kudo et al., 2018), often with assumptions that friendship with home students equates with a positive sense of belonging (e.g., Gareis, 2012). Critiques are often made, both in scholarship and in practice, of the tendency for international students to form friendship networks with fellow international students (McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017). Such friendships are often assumed to mean lack of engagement with local communities or cultures in their host country (Yu & Moskal, 2018). For instance, an evaluation of friendship formation in Australia argued, “international students form a parallel society made up of fellow international students that has no clear connections to (multicultural) Australian society or culture” (Gomes, 2015, p. 517). These approaches, however, limitedly equate grand gestures such as friendship as indicative of social and cultural engagement, thereby painting international students through a deficit lens as ‘unassimilated’ or ‘unconnected’.

To counter these narratives, this research evaluates international students’ connections to their local communities through the lens of ‘everyday multiculturalism’. Everyday multiculturalism is a sociological framework for exploring the ways individuals encounter, enact, and engage with multiculturalism in small, mundane ways in daily life. It is described by Wise and Velayutham, 2009, p. 2 as “explor[ing] how cultural diversity is experienced and negotiated on the ground in everyday situations.” This focus on “the micro-sociology of everyday practice” (ibid, p. 3) provides a lens for understanding how ordinary life in multicultural spaces involves, by nature, small moments of encounter as one goes about their day. Through this lens, even commonplace acts such as riding a bus (Bovo et al., 2022), eating at Nando’s (Bennett et al., 2021) or making small talk at school (Meetoo, 2020) leads to small multicultural engagements that together develop one’s sense of other cultures and places.

The everyday multiculturalism lens allows us to see international students’ connections with and sense of belonging to their local communities in new ways, interrogating deficit assumptions that assume them ‘missing’. It also allows for

considerations of how universities become 'micropublics' (Ho, 2011) and sites of everyday multicultural encounters. This study sought to evaluate this through the following research questions:

1. How do international students experience everyday multiculturalism within their local communities?
2. What is the role of everyday multiculturalism in facilitating international students' sense of belonging within their local communities?

To address these questions, this study employed a photo-elicitation narrative interview approach. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to submit a selection of photographs that they felt represented their multicultural experiences within their local communities. These were used as interview prompts, whereby participants were asked to share stories about their everyday encounters in the city they live in. The interviews took place across four cities in Germany, two larger cities (over 500,000 population) and two smaller cities (approximately 100,000 population), one each in the east and west, allowing for a comparison of 'place' and its role in facilitating everyday multiculturalism. In total, 41 students from 24 different countries were interviewed, representing a wide range of national identities and identities beyond the national container (gender, race, socioeconomic status, etc.).

At SRHE, multimedia findings will be presented combining participants' stories with photographs. The findings outline the multivariate ways that international students engage with multiculturalism in their everyday lives. Participants highlighted the ways that small, mundane encounters – taking out bins, petting dogs, hearing music outside places of worship – provided meaningful opportunities to learn about the local multicultural community. International students also outlined how they contribute to multicultural society in small ways, such as picking up litter, supporting neighbours with chores, or initiating small talk. Everyday encounters were also shown as opportunities for self-evaluation of students' achievement of 'belonging' in their local community, such as learning how to order at restaurants or understand traffic rules. The findings also consider how everyday encounters may serve as confirmations of stereotypes about local residents or act as vehicles for experienced racism and othering in local communities.

Together, the findings push against notions that international students form a 'parallel society' by not engaging with their multicultural hosts (Gomes, 2015). Instead, this study conceptualises how international students are multicultural society, while simultaneously navigating through it. The implications provide considerations for the ways that grand gestures like friendship may miss the meaningful intercultural encounters that students experience in everyday life, while offering suggestions for how institutions can better facilitate positive social learning experiences within and sense of belonging to local communities.

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244 Reflections on the complexities of using participatory methods for higher education research in South Africa

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

In participatory research projects, gatekeepers play a key role in facilitating access to potential participants and research sites. However, the relationship built between researchers and gate keepers can be fraught with tensions that disrupt the quality of research. In this paper, we reflect on the challenges we faced in building a cooperative relationship with a community-based organisation. Our reflections are based on a project where photovoice was used to explore the pursuit of higher education for youth from an informal settlement in South Africa. In these reflections, we highlight the importance of enabling the development of narrative capabilities through photovoice (Walker and Mathebula, 2020) and argue that narrative capabilities should be foregrounded in the normative descriptions of applying photovoice in higher education research (Mathebula and Martinez-Vargas, 2021) particularly in the South African context.

Full paper

Although aimed at empowering participants and reducing power inequalities between researchers and beneficiaries, participatory research projects can contribute to the reproduction of the injustices they attempt to rectify. This is often replicated in cases when the relationships built between research stakeholders reproduce power imbalances and result in outcomes that benefit researchers and funders more than the communities they seek to serve. As African scholars who have been working with participatory methods in higher education research and youth studies in South Africa and Zimbabwe, we enter research relationships with the aim to enrich human development outcomes for all stakeholders. However participatory projects involve differently situated actors who have diverse worldviews, come from different geographic, cultural, and socio-economic contexts and are thus guided by varying ideologies and goals. Moreover, factors such as funder expectations, tight time frames, funding and bureaucratic processes often hinder the full achievement of valued outcomes as envisioned by local communities.

Building and maintaining cooperation between stakeholders in participatory projects is therefore a complex challenge, and while participatory research can and does contribute to capability expansion and epistemic justice (Walker and

Boni, 2020) we are aware that for it to do so, the relational dimension of knowledge-making and knowledge-sharing processes should be fostered by an imperfect ethics of care. This is particularly important when the goal is to enhance the narrative capabilities (Watts, 2008) of participants, by allowing them to construct and share their stories in ways that they have reason to value. However, methodologies such as photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1997) are often imposed on research participants (without giving them a wider range of storytelling methodologies to choose from) and they do not celebrate storytelling modes that are less reliant on technology, and more indigenous to the global South (e.g., folklore, oral histories). Equally, themes and areas of research are dictated by funding bodies and/or researchers' interests and not always negotiated or aligned with communities' priorities, needs and interests.

This paper therefore explores what it would mean for relationships founded for the purposes of participatory research to be mutually beneficial and sustainable, although imperfect in praxis, in the face of dynamics that often privilege the agendas, positionalities, skills and knowledge of researchers or facilitators of higher education research projects. The paper also critically reflects on how the effective freedom to tell one's own story, or narrative capability is shaped by the methodologies typically employed in participatory research projects involving youth. How can we think about relationships that look different and that support a cooperative space to foster the narrative capabilities and agency that diverse stakeholders value contextually during and beyond participatory projects? In taking up this question, our paper draws conceptually on the capability approach (Sen, 1999), but specifically on Michael Watts' work on narrative capability, to unpack the challenges and opportunities to initiate and maintain cooperative research relationships and foster narrative capabilities between actors differently situated within: non-profit and community-based organisations; higher education institutions; and local communities.

We thus discuss the possibilities and limitations of enhancing narrative capabilities through photovoice (Walker and Mathebula, 2021) by reflecting on the successes and failures of partnering with a community-based organisation for the purposes of research. We describe the challenges faced in building a productive relationship and working with a community-based organisation in our SRHE-funded project (2022-2023) that explored the dynamics of pursuing higher education in contexts of socio-spatial exclusion. The project involved 12 youth from an informal settlement/developing township in the Free State province of South Africa. The community-based organisation acted as a gatekeeper to the community from which the youth come, and photovoice was used to explore what attempts to access higher education looked like for the youth, and how this was affected by where they come from. The data collection methods involved an introductory workshop, individual interviews, a series of photovoice workshops, group discussions, and a public exhibition. During the photovoice workshops the youth received photography training, and documented through photographs their past experiences, present opportunities, and aspirations for higher education. A key objective of photovoice is to stimulate critical dialogue. However, discussions that were politically charged, or critical of local government were discouraged by the community-based organisation, and so the youth were hindered from freely telling their stories during the workshops, thereby challenging the autonomy of the participants and researchers. In this paper we address these, and other complexities of employing participatory methodologies in higher education research projects in South Africa.

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196 The Research Landscape and the Development of Research Assessment Framework in Vietnam

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Research Domains

International contexts and perspectives (ICP)

Abstract

Excellence in research is vital to the socio-economic development in Vietnam. The purpose of this study is to understand the current research environment in Vietnamese universities and to seek the views of academic leaders about an assessment framework which will promote research development. Sixty-six academic leaders responded to a questionnaire designed for this study. It is shown that the financial investment of research is very limited in universities. The research environment may be hampered by the small number of PhD students. There are also often no post-doc appointments who constitute a major engine driving research. Academic leaders believe that outputs, research environment and socioeconomic impacts should be assessed, although the use of impact factors should be discouraged. Moreover, it is suggested that emphasis should be placed on assessing and developing the research environment to support long-term growth.

Full paper

Introduction

Excellence in research is vital to the socio-economic development (Meek et al 2009) and the aspiration of Vietnam to become an upper middle-income country by 2035. Vietnam's ISI-indexed (International Scientific Indexing) journal articles have increased more than 10-fold from 1986 to 2015 (Nguyen et al 2011). However, its level of activity is still low compared to other regional peers (World Bank 2020). The total number of Vietnam's ISI-indexed articles was only 28% of the outputs of Singapore and Malaysia. Moreover, Vietnam's public funding allocation to research has increased recently but remains low, representing only 0.53 percent of GDP in 2019 (UNESCO 2022). This refers to funding allocated to all research institutions and not only the universities. The exact level of funding in universities is unclear.

There is currently no national framework for assessing research in Vietnam. Universities tend to carry out their own internal assessment using criteria which are not consistent across the sector. However, many countries have developed national frameworks, e.g. the UK Research Excellence Framework (UKRI 2021). These assessment tools can help develop strategies in building capability, informing funding allocation, monitoring progress, and enhancing the socio-economic impact of research and knowledge transfer (Sivertsen 2017).

An assessment framework will need to be fit-for-purpose for the current state of research development and supported by the academics to be assessed if it was to be developed and implemented effectively in Vietnam. The purpose of this study was therefore to understand the current research environment in Vietnamese universities and to seek the views of academic leaders about research assessment,

Method

A questionnaire was especially developed for the purpose of this study. Invitations were sent to all universities which are under the management of Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), or accredited by agencies recognised by MOET. Academic leaders (defined as dean/head/director of faculty/school/research institutes) were requested to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire had two sections. The first section included questions related to the research environment of the academic units of the respondents. In the second section, the views of the respondents in designing a future assessment system were sought.

Results

Sixty-six academic leaders responded to the questionnaire (>50% response rate). Forty-one of them were from northern Vietnam and the rest from either central or southern Vietnam. 64% of the respondents were from the science and engineering disciplines, 20% from economic and social sciences, and the remaining from a variety of other disciplines.

It was revealed that the average annual research expenditure of 54% of the academic units surveyed was less than 1 million Vietnamese Dong (approximately £34,000). 49% of the academic units of the respondents had less than 5 PhD students and 78% did not have any post-doc researcher appointments. Most respondents (>80%) would use metrics such as impact factors as well as peer review for assessing the quality of research. They would also assess the research environment and the socioeconomic impacts of research.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study provides new insights into the current state of research development of Vietnamese universities because previous data were drawn from all research institutions and not focused on universities only. Our findings corroborate with those of previous reports and it is clear that the financial investment of research is very limited in universities. The research environment may be hampered by the small number of PhD students. There are often no post-doc appointments who are highly skilled scientists and a major engine driving research (Powell 2015).

Most respondents indicated that they would assess outputs, research environment and socioeconomic impacts, as in the case of the UK REF. However, the use of impact factors in assessing output should be discouraged as recommended by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (<http://www.ascb.org/dora>), because it does not reflect the quality of research outputs (Lutz et al 2016). Moreover, as most Vietnamese universities are in their early stage of research development, it may be argued that more emphasis should be placed on assessing the research environment to support long-term growth.

A limitation of the current study is that the data obtained are largely representing the universities in northern Vietnam and the opinions of the academics from the science and engineering disciplines.

It is concluded that there is a strong need to develop a fit-for-purpose research assessment framework in Vietnam. This study has provided useful information to support such development.

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Parallel Session 8:6

11:00 - 12:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 122

Chair Fadia Dakka

118 Employability as Learning Outcomes in Master's Degree Programmes: Cases in Education and Engineering Fields

Jisun Jung

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

What are the learning outcomes of master's degrees in the Education and Engineering field? How do the learning outcomes at the master's level incorporate employability? Based on the qualitative document analysis, the learning

aims and outcomes across all master's programmes in Education (n=81) and Engineering (n=95) in Hong Kong were reviewed. Keyword and thematic analysis were used to describe employability as learning outcomes at the master's level. The results showed that master's programmes in two fields emphasize an interdisciplinary approach as the essential employability. They focus on applying disciplinary knowledge to other disciplines and professions. In addition, most programmes highlight the recognition of programmes from the professional association and promote the license or qualification students can obtain upon degree completion. For the skills, they tend to emphasize the transferable skills in the learning outcomes; the curriculum content heavily relies on the technical skills.

Full paper

Attaining an advanced degree is a means of achieving more significant academic, economic, and social opportunities. Increasing numbers of people are pursuing master's degrees today to improve their knowledge, skills, competency, and employability (Baker, 2011; Gallagher, 2016). Traditionally, a master's degree was seen as a pre-doctoral step with a vital research component or as the minimum qualification to teach in the tertiary sector. Gradually, the concept of 'mastery' has changed and now tends to focus more on the local labour market demands (McInnis et al., 1995). The types and titles of master's degree have diversified as it has become the common credential for a professional certificate in several fields (Glazer-Raymo, 2005). More and more master's programmes integrate employability as their learning outcomes.

Identifying learning outcomes at the master's level has several issues. For example, there are conflicting views about what master's students should learn. For example, it is debated whether a master's degree should provide specialisation or broader knowledge, highlight theory or practice, and focus on field-specific knowledge or transferrable skills (Gallagher, 2016). There are also contrasting views on whether the master's degree should emphasise future career or personal development. For example, the degree can be an instrument for developing a highly educated workforce and improving employability. However, some scholars believe that the labour market should not overly impact students' learning at the master's level; instead, the learning experience should enrich students' personal and professional development (Hu et al., 2016).

This research will focus on the following research questions: What are the current learning outcomes for master's degrees in the Education and Engineering field? How do the learning outcomes at the master's level incorporate employability? Education and Engineering master's programmes have similar characteristics in terms of history, development, and current challenges. Historically, the two fields developed from traditional, research-focused master's degrees: Master of Arts and Master of Science. However, they have become more specific with the increasing demands of professions and now place greater emphasis on the integration of theory and practice than on traditional research components. Both also have large professional associations that influence the supply-demand of the labour market and professional development. In both fields, several occupations require a master's degree as a prerequisite. In both fields, new demands for master's programmes have emerged in recent years with a strong emphasis on fieldwork, practicums, hands-on experience, and employability. On the other hand, the two fields have different characteristics. Although both are in applied science, according to Becher and Trowler (2001), education is a soft science, and engineering is a hard science. In education, many students focus on their careers relating to teaching or as educational administrators, and most master's programmes focus on the continuing professional development of teachers (Deem & Lucas, 2006). On the other hand, in engineering, the career path of graduates is heterogeneous in terms of working sectors, tasks and positions, and the size of organisations (Nilsson, 2010).

This study applied qualitative document analysis. For the data collection, it explored the stated learning aims and outcomes across all master's programmes in education (n=81) and engineering (n=95) in Hong Kong. Programme websites were reviewed to collect information on the stated mission and aim of the curricula and learning outcomes. Keyword frequency was used to describe the master's programmes' learning outcomes and employability. Key phrases that describe general learning outcomes, knowledge, skills, and attitudes were identified, and the concept of employability as learning outcomes was constructed.

The preliminary findings showed that master's programmes in two fields emphasize interdisciplinarity as a learning outcome. Most programmes focus on the application of knowledge to other disciplines. In addition, most programmes highlight the recognition of programme learning from the professional association in the field or promote the license or qualification that students can obtain upon degree completion. For the skills, they tend to emphasize the transferable skills in the learning outcomes; on the other hand, the curriculum content heavily relies on the technical skills in their specific fields.

Designing good quality learning outcomes in master's degrees by integrating employability will affect the design of learning content, teaching methods, and assessment at an institutional and programme level. For example, current requirements for master's degrees are based on coursework, thesis, or internships, and this study will ask whether all programmes should follow similar requirements or develop new areas to enhance students' learning and employability.

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248 Reflexive Narratives in the Third Space: A Morphogenetic Approach to Understanding the International Student Transition to the Labour Market

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

This paper uses critical realism and postcolonial theories to investigate underlying socio-cultural mechanisms driving international students in their decisions and actions when transitioning from university to employment. For international students coming from the Global South (Asia, Africa, and Latin America), studying in a university in the Global North (US/UK/Germany) requires multiple steps of action involving a lot of money, effort, and time. Also, it places them in a consistent state of uncertainty and identity struggle from systemic racism, insecurity, and structural

integration. This research utilises Homi Bhabha's (2004) concept of 'hybridity', and Roy Bhaskar's (1989) critical realist 'stratified ontology' to rethink international students' employability and provide an alternative perspective to understand the realities of the international student path to employment. The findings present the conditions that have enabled students to transition to the workplace and the underlying narratives behind the complex structure-agency interplays in their transition.

Full paper

Introduction

Since the Dearing report in 1997, there has been a growing emphasis on enhancing graduates' employability skills in higher education. While initiatives have been implemented to support student employment, the focus on graduate employability has neglected the challenges faced by international students in benefiting equally from their higher education. These challenges include obtaining work authorizations, paying immigration fees (Gopal, 2022), reintegrating into their home country's structures (Li, 2012), and adapting to a job market with shifting requirements (Clarke, 2008; Bridgestock, 2017). The uncertainties surrounding international students' transition experiences have prompted this research. The study aims to explore the internal conversations of international students during this phase and propose alternative paths to facilitate their career transitions. This paper is prepared for the SHRE Conference as a work-in-progress empirical/data-based research for my doctoral degree at the University of Cambridge.

Theoretical Framework

By merging social realist theory, a critical realist perspective, and post-colonial theories, in this study, I offer an alternative path to disrupt dominant power structures that have overemphasized ways of thinking about employability, particularly one that overemphasizes what students can or cannot achieve through their skills, but more towards the underlying barriers that they need to navigate. This study draws on how the international education experience itself limits or influences their transition as they negotiate their culture and identity in the space of in-betweenness (Bhabha, 1994). Using Archer's Morphogenetic Approach (1995), I consider both structuralist and individualistic perspectives on social change in the higher education setting. Incorporating student agency in the study of higher education is not a new approach, as it has previously been conducted by researchers, such as Case (2013), who has previously followed the morphogenetic cycle to research student learning in higher education. This research similarly uses the same approach, but to explore international students' reflexive narratives in their transition to work.

Methods

This research paper combines a comprehensive literature review and empirical qualitative data. It reflects on semi-structured interviews of 23 international students collected from participants from various Asian, African, and Latin American countries, who have transitioned to full-time employment after studying in the Global North, either by staying in the host country of their university or home country. After the recorded interviews were transcribed and uploaded to Atlas.ti, a coding system was built to systematically assign codes to specific portions of the text, ensuring consistency and traceability throughout the analysis. This uncovers underlying themes associated with the phenomena. Using both Abductive and Retroductive analysis with Atlas.ti, the research explores alternative explanations and the generation of new hypotheses. Reliability and validity were ensured through member-checking, and follow-ups post-interviews to ensure the accuracy of the analyses. These narratives were also triangulated with other documents collected throughout the fieldwork, such as recruitment postings, university documents, news articles, researchers' fieldnotes, and resources shared by participants.

Emerging Findings

Analysis revealed that many international students felt disadvantaged and segregated by the recruitment and work authorization system after graduation. Challenges included employers' reluctance to hire international students due to additional administrative work and universities' limited support in navigating work authorization processes. The authorization process was described as complex and emotionally draining, leading to feelings of career entrapment. Many students were reluctant to return to their home countries due to the transformative impact of their university experiences. Themes such as compromising qualifications for income, code-switching identity, and negotiating one's identity emerged from the narratives.

Practical Implications and Discussions

One theory that has emerged and is currently being developed suggests that the preparation for international students' career transitions does not commence during their final two years of university. Instead, it begins right from the moment they choose their field of study and career direction, as these decisions have a direct impact on the type of work authorization they will receive. In the US, limited time forces students to apply to any available opportunity, rather than choosing a career based on their degree. In the UK, even after finding a job, stability is uncertain due to the lack of guarantee for permanent placement sponsorship and the risk of being let go in budget cuts. These circumstances threaten equality and justice for opportunities.

Conclusion

The research highlights the struggle for stability among international students and emphasizes the need for an alternative career path that goes beyond job fitness. It proposes hybridity and reflexivity as key elements for international students to solidify their career identities. Rethinking the role of universities can potentially liberate students in their career paths and provide equal opportunities for success and belonging.

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217 Assessing the Role of Teamwork Skills in Cybersecurity Graduates' Perceived Work Readiness

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Research Domains

Employability, enterprise and graduate careers (EE)

Abstract

The rapid growth of the cyber security field has led to increased demand for cyber security graduates from higher education institutions. However, industry criticism regarding graduates' perceived skill deficits has sparked a debate on the types of skills that higher education should prioritise: 21st century skills or technical cyber skills. To explore this, a survey was conducted with 95 cyber security undergraduates in Australia, investigating the role of teamwork skills – a key component of 21st century skills - in shaping graduates' perceived work competence and social intelligence. Using structural equation modelling, the study identified significant associations between students' perceived teamwork skills, and their work competence, and social intelligence, explaining 48% and 57% of the respective relationships. These findings underscore the necessity of incorporating teamwork skills within cybersecurity curricula across higher education programs, to holistically prepare students for the multifaceted challenges of the modern workforce.

Full paper

Introduction

The 3.4 million global cyber security workforce deficit, growing yearly by 26.2% ((ISC)², 2023) has spurred universities to expand specialised cyber security programs. Despite this, the industry criticises graduates for lacking work readiness and essential hands-on proficiency required for the profession (Chillas et al., 2015). McGettrick (2013) emphasises that effective cyber security education must incorporate practical components, not solely rely on theory. To handle unpredictable scenarios, students should develop problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, teamwork skills, and technical cyber security expertise.

Work readiness aims to prepare individuals with the essential skills and attributes needed to succeed in a work role requiring minimal supervision or training (Borg & Scott-Young, 2020). The emphasis on skills rather than knowledge has grown in the 21st century (Caballero et al., 2011; Hyslop, 2011). However, there needs to be more research investigating these skills, specifically in cyber security graduates within higher education. This study seeks to explore the significance of teamwork in relation to graduates' work readiness.

Method

A sample of 95 students in Australian universities completed a self-report survey which assessed perceived 21st century skills in cyber security. The survey included reliable scales (see Table 1) for work readiness (Caballero et al., 2011) and teamwork (Lower et al., 2017). Within the work readiness scale there were different factors contributing to work readiness including social intelligence and work competence which are used in this study. A confirmatory factor analysis using the R statistical package ensured that the measurement model was an appropriate fit and then structural equation modelling substantiated the associations. Model fit indices and items used are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Items for latent constructs by Caballero et al., 2011

Work Readiness- work readiness scale developed by Caballero et al., 2011	
<i>Factor 1 – Work competences</i>	
1	I have a solid theoretical understanding of my field of work.
2	I set high expectations for myself.
3	I consider myself technically competent to work in the field of cyber security.
<i>Factor 2 – Social intelligence</i>	
4	I can express myself easily.
5	I can communicate effectively with others.
6	Developing relationships with people is one of my strengths.
$\chi^2 (8, N=85) = 8.739, p= 0.365, CFI = 0.994, RMSEA (90\% CI) = 0.033 (0.000-0.134), SRMR=0.050$	
Teamwork scale developed by Lower et al., 2017	
1	I feel confident in my ability to work in a team.
2	When working in a team, I value the contributions of my team members.
3	I treat my team members as equal members of the team.
4	I am good at communicating with other team members.
5	I make an effort to include other members of my group.
$\chi^2 (5, N=95) = 8.129, p= 0.149, CFI = 0.965, RMSEA(90\% CI) = 0.081 (0.000-0.178), SRMR=0.044$	

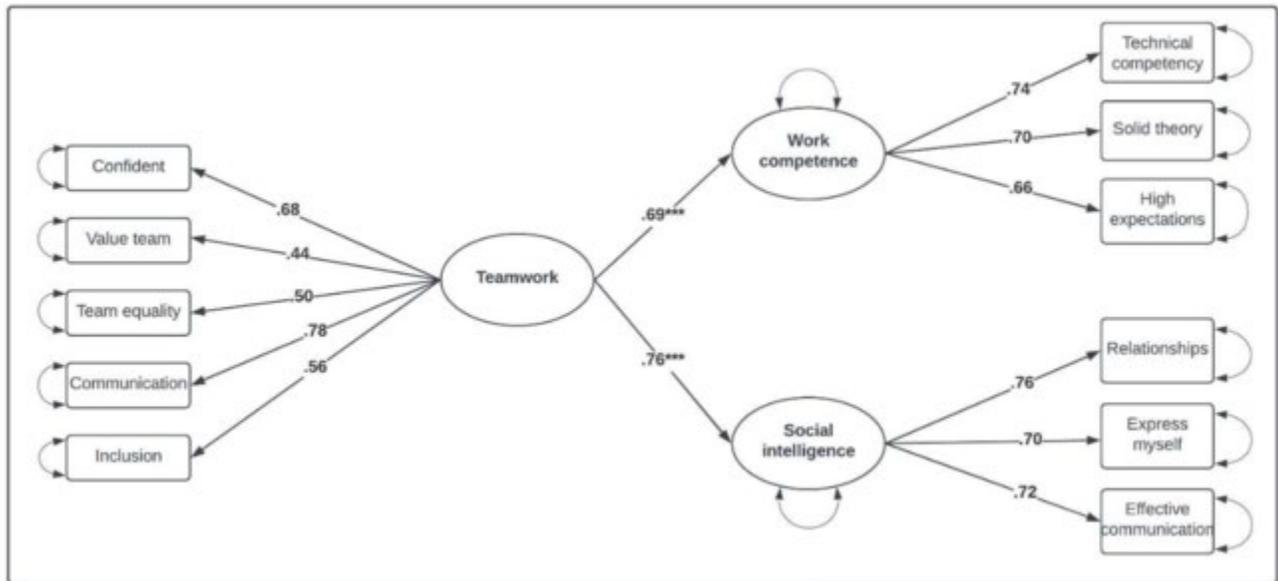
Results

Confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement indicated a good fit (see Table 1). Factor loadings are shown in Figure 1; all factors loaded at or above .5 except for valuing teamwork at .44. Due to previous scale validation this item was retained (Lower et al., 2017). The recursive structural equation model indicated a good fit with standardised estimates.

As displayed in Figure 1, our study unveiled a strong positive link between students' self-perceived teamwork skills and their work competence, indicated by an unstandardised coefficient of 1.362 (SE=0.318, $p < 0.000$; 95% CI 0.738-1.986). The model explained 48% of the variance in the relationship. Similarly, a significant positive association was found between students' teamwork skills and social intelligence unstandardised coefficient=1.332 (SE=0.333, $p < 0.000$; 95% CI 0.680-1.984), accounting for 57% of the relationship.

Figure 1

Research Model with Associations between Teamwork and Work Readiness



Note: Structural Equation Model with Standardised Estimates for teamwork, work competence and social intelligence. Model fit $\chi^2 (42, N=95) = 45.45$, $p = 0.330$, CFI = 0.998, RMSEA (90% CI) = 0.01 (0.000-0.077), SRMR=0.06.

Discussion

Our findings demonstrate a significant positive association between students' perceived teamwork capabilities and their self-assessed work readiness. This readiness encapsulates competence in technical skills, a robust theoretical foundation, high self-expectations, and the social intelligence required for expressing ideas, communicating effectively, and developing relationships. The data emphasised the importance of feeling competent in teamwork for graduates to consider themselves work ready upon graduation. Notably, teamwork constituted just over half of the relationship with social intelligence, a crucial component of work readiness. This strong connection is understandable considering that effective communication, self-expression, and relationship-building are vital elements within the construct of social intelligence, contributing significantly to successful teamwork.

These findings hold significant implications for evaluating cyber security courses in higher education, particularly in light of industry criticism regarding graduates' perceived lack of skills (Jackson, 2016) and dissatisfaction with university programs (St. Clair & Girard, 2020). The existing literature on the IT sector and skills highlights the importance of focusing on 21st century skills in higher education courses (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018) due to their transferability and high perceived value.

Conclusion

These findings are crucial for developing cyber security curricula. Providing ample opportunities for students to develop teamwork skills enhances their perceived work readiness for the cyber security workforce. Emphasising teamwork in the curriculum prepares students for the industry and improves their career readiness.

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Parallel Session 8:7

11:00 - 12:30 Friday, 8th December, 2023

Room 145

Chair Richard Davies

353 Academic inbreeding and faculty research capabilities: exploring tenure track rules and mechanisms in four traditional universities in Peru, Chile and Colombia

Monica Bonifaz

Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The relationship between academic inbreeding and scientific productivity show that the results may be considered inconclusive, however this is not a minor phenomenon and deserves greater attention from alternative perspectives. This study analyzes how endogamous practices emerge and formalize within tenure track systems, shaping the research capabilities of their academic communities. To do so, a comparative case study of the tenure track systems of four traditional universities in Peru, Chile, and Colombia was conducted. Our analysis reveals that unclear or misaligned signaling to institutional goals, low institutional representativeness in the composition of evaluation committees, the absence of external peers, and weak incentives or control mechanisms throughout the academic career trajectory are conducive conditions for academic inbreeding. In these cases, the formation of academic communities with low research capabilities and the development of elites were observed, to the detriment of the development of critical masses of professors with robust research capabilities.

Full paper

In Latin America, academic inbreeding has not yet sparked concern for studying the relationship between endogamous practices in universities and the research capabilities of their professors, and very few studies have been conducted in the region focused on the relationship between academic inbreeding and scientific productivity (Horta et al. 2010; Rabossi, 2015; Grochocki and Cabello, 2022; Borenstein et al., 2022). The present study has identified a gap in the literature concerning academic inbreeding and its relation to endogamous practices within tenure-track systems. This study explores how these practices, with a particular emphasis on examining the design of hiring processes of the tenure track systems of four traditional universities in Peru, Chile, and Colombia.

We pose the question on what are those specific rules and mechanisms that foster academic inbreeding and examine whether they are associated with diminished research capabilities among faculty members in tenured and tenure-track positions. We propose an analytical framework supported by the concept of academic inbreeding as a phenomenon that emerges from hiring processes characterized by internal connections and relationships within an institution, resulting in limited mobility within the academic community (Gorelova & Yudkevich, 2015), and the concept of academic tenure as the appointment institution for faculty, based on the collegial governance of the tenure track system within the university (Brown, 1997, 2001; McPherson & Shapiro, 1999).

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, employing the comparative case study (Levy, 2008). Findings from qualitative analysis have been triangulated with findings from descriptive quantitative analysis. In this regard, four cases have been selected: a Chilean and a Colombian university and two Peruvian universities. The four cases meet the following criteria: they are traditional universities, privately owned and non-profit, and were founded before the liberalization reforms in their respective countries. Additionally, all four universities have academic career statutes based on the tenure track system and have a collegial governance model, which implies that members of the academic community participate in the hiring processes.

The qualitative analysis was based on the comprehensive analysis of the statutes and regulations that govern the tenure track in the four selected universities. To carry out this analysis, the thematic text analysis technique has been employed (Kukartz 2014). And for the descriptive analysis a database was constructed with information from 1551 professors, their profile data and their production registered in Scopus between 1998 – 2017; all professors belonging to the four selected universities were active in the academic career until June 2019. To ensure the validity of the sample and minimize the impact of factors such as size and particularities of each discipline, information was collected only from professors in the specialties of Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, Medicine, and Psychology.

In order to evaluate whether the four universities succeeded in cultivating communities of professors capable of generating knowledge and driving research during the analysis period, a logarithmic (\ln^{10}) distribution analysis was conducted on the sample of professors who had one or more publications within that period. The choice of a

lognormal distribution allowed for examining the probability distribution of variables that can attain considerably high values, such as the total number of publications per professor. This approach enabled the observation of the formation of academic communities with research capabilities and the median number of publications among the sampled professors.

The results of the analysis qualitative analysis showed that in both Peruvian cases requirements were low, and processes and incentives allowed the emergence of endogamous. While in the Chilean and Colombian cases higher requirements and incentives to stay in the tenure track were observed. In the same way, the logarithmic distribution (\ln^{10}) of publications recorded in Scopus from the sample of professors ($n=1551$) during the study period (1998-2017) show that Colombian and Chilean cases have managed to form critical masses of professors with research capabilities (medians of 17 and 24 respectively), while research development in the two Peruvian cases relies heavily on the existence of elites capable of producing a significant portion of knowledge generation in their universities (medians oh 6 and 7). (Bonifaz, 2021)

The findings demonstrate that setting high requirements for entry and progression in academic careers, forming different committees for each evaluation stage in the tenure track, involving external peers (beyond the department and the university), and establishing incentives and control mechanisms contribute to reducing the discretion of evaluators and, consequently, the endogenous practices that prioritize affinity, social or power relationships (Horta, 2022). In this way, an academic community is formed with the credentials and capabilities to carry out research functions in alignment with institutional objectives.

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327 The collaborations you do not get by pressing a button: hierarchical tensions in large collaborative research clusters in the social sciences and humanities

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

The collaborative turn in STEM and particularly in Big Sciences is well-consolidated and more recently it has also reached the SSH (Olechnicka et al., 2019) as the collaborative model based on large research clusters has been translated – if not imposed – onto the SSH alongside excellence agendas (Borlaug & Langfeldt, 2020). This qualitative study deploys grounded theory approaches and includes 30 informants belonging to all academic ranks. Preliminary findings reveal the ubiquitous presence of hierarchical tensions, but what are they properties? Where can they be found? What does it mean for collaborations? I suggest to approach these tensions across spaces and places (Livingstone, 2003; Massey, 1994), in formal collaborative settings or informal spaces; delving into the access to the research cluster; and comparing experiences beyond the research cluster. Hence, this paper also sheds lights on the impacts excellence agendas have on the collaborative practice in the SSH.

Full paper

I will present at the Conference the second paper I am currently working on as part of my doctoral research project. The collaborative turn in STEM and particularly in Big Sciences is well-consolidated and has been in-depth studied. More recently, however, this turn has reached the SSH (Olechnicka et al., 2019) and the collaborative model based on large research clusters has been translated – if not imposed – onto the SSH alongside excellence agendas such as the German Excellence Strategy (Borlaug & Langfeldt, 2020). This study approaches collaborations through qualitative and grounded theory lens by interviewing 30 participants across all academic ranks. It deploys an

asymmetrical research design (Stöckelová, 2016) as it focuses on three research clusters belonging to the SSH and one STEM cluster. It assumes that collaborations are neither bad nor good and that 'multiplicities' of doing of collaborations and articulations – yet unexplored for the SSH – are possible (Mol, 2002).

The so-called Excellence Clusters in the SSH have by far more than 100 members belonging to all academic ranks and are structured around research areas (RA). Each RA has its own research seminars with varying criteria regarding the participating academic ranks. One significant tool to foster interdisciplinary work across the RAs are the inter-area research seminars, which can be applied by any of the cluster's members and are funded for a defined period of time by the cluster. Remarkably, preliminary findings reveal the ubiquitous presence of hierarchical tensions when collaborations are done by the informants – and not only at the collaborative formats within and across the RA. What are the properties of these hierarchical tensions? Where can they be found? What does it mean for collaborations?

I suggest to approach hierarchies across spaces and places (Livingstone, 2003; Massey, 1994), exploring the explicit or underlying hierarchical mechanism and the tensions they create in relation to the doing of collaborations in the SSH. The following spaces have been identified.

First, formal collaborative spaces such as those described above are a central element of the research clusters. Here, the imposition of the seminar's topic, the almost compulsory participation, unequal gender relations and trust issues create hierarchical tensions. Especially distrust seems to be strongly related to these tensions as some of the study's participants express serious doubts on the academic quality of these seminars as a consequence of what is perceived as imposed decisions that erode the needed trust for engaging in collaborations. Second, and in contrast, in informal settings, at the research cluster's corridors or at its common rooms, the absence of hierarchies also underscores the importance of trust and mutual learning for establishing collaborative relations.

Third, the very access to the research cluster is based on mechanisms that can be described as hierarchical and that might create from the beginning a strong dependency relation. For instance, doctoral researchers do not choose their topic, but apply to previously decided topics. One professor remarks how this undermines the "creative drive", stressing that in other countries early-career researchers do not apply to positions with a predefined topic. In that very relation, a fourth aspect refers precisely to the comparisons made by the informants. Accordingly, collaborative work has other hierarchical dynamics abroad. This points at different academic cultures in the SSH and how different hierarchical or less-hierarchical relations create different collaborative dynamics.

By approaching these different spaces, a typology of hierarchical tensions within the research cluster will be created. Such a perspective allows to explore in-depth new and established ways of collaborating in the SSH. Furthermore, these dimensions are approached by focusing on participants across all academic ranks, rather than using ranks as a dimension in itself. By creating a typology of hierarchical tensions that delves into specific associated mechanisms, this paper also sheds light on the way how excellence agendas influence the doing of collaborations in the SSH.

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149 Academics' Understanding and Experiences of Leadership in Omani Higher Education

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Research Domains

Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract

This qualitative research explores how academics at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Oman understand and experience leadership. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and analysis of secondary documents were used to collect data.

The findings indicate that senior academics (deans and assistant deans), predominantly identify themselves as "leaders" framed within a wider discourse of leadership. In contrast, faculty staff at lower levels of the organisational hierarchy tend to view senior academics as 'managers'. By contrast, thematic analysis reveals that the experiences and descriptions of organisational work practices by both groups are strongly influenced by bureaucratic-administrative processes and personal networks. As such, the study highlights the complex and contradictory nature of organisational life practices, characterised by the coexistence of personal networks within a largely buried bureaucratic model under the weight of a leadership discourse embraced by senior academics and a contrasting management discourse perceived by other academics.

Full paper

The present study delves into the understanding and experiences of leadership within the context of higher education (HE) in Oman. It investigates how leadership is understood by academics (deans, assistant deans and faculty staff) at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS). It also seeks to unravel the academics' experiences of leadership and its complexities associated with organisational work practices.

In the past two decades, there has been a rise in academic literature concerning leadership in higher education, as evidenced by the works of Bargh et al. (2000), Spendlove (2007), Bryman (2007), Middlehurst et al. (2009), Bryman and Lilley (2009), Lumby (2012), and Thompson and Miller (2017). It is widely argued that the managing higher education institutions has undergone significant changes in the current century compared to the past (Bargh et al., 2000; Deem, 2004). According to Santiago and Carvalho (2008), the emergence of a managerial approach in modern education has consequences for the operational procedures of higher education institutions. Common (2011) argues that the Omani culture is characterised by a blend of contrasting elements, namely, autocratic leadership approaches in hierarchical contexts and towards those who are considered outsiders, and participatory decision-making processes within the in-groups of kinship and tribal affiliations.

The subject of educational leadership and management practises is a widely discussed and globally recognised topic. However, there exists a dearth of knowledge regarding this topic in the Middle East, specifically in Oman. The limited research that has been conducted in this area has primarily focused on schools, as evidenced by studies conducted by Al-Masqari (2018), Al Belushi et al. (2019), and Hammad and Bush (2021). Despite the existence of a few studies on leadership and management in Oman, such as those conducted by Common (2011) and Al Balushi (2012), there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the fundamental nature of leadership, as well as its interpretation and application within the context of higher education. Thus, the Omani higher education context presents a promising avenue for research. Rather than imposing preconceived notions of leadership, the present investigation examines the subsequent two research questions:

RQ1. How do academics at the UTAS understand leadership? RQ2. What are the UTAS academics' experiences of leadership?

The research was carried out in Oman, encompassing a total of eight colleges, consisting of four Colleges of Technology and four Colleges of Applied Sciences, all operating under the auspices of the UTAS. Every college possesses a distinct campus. Thus, these colleges dispersed across diverse areas within the Sultanate of Oman. They provide diverse academic curricula, encompassing fields such as engineering, international technology (IT), and business studies. Every college is administered by a dean who supervises its internal operations, aided by two or three assistant deans.

The study employed an exploratory qualitative methodology, with a sample size of 46 participants comprising 20 senior academics and 26 faculty staff. Consequently, the decision was made to conduct interviews with deans, assistant deans, and faculty staff, in addition to organising focus groups and analysing relevant documents, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the situation at hand (see Table 1). Prior to conducting the main interviews, pilot interviews were conducted with six participants in order to refine the focus of the research and formulate the inquiries for the primary interviews.

Table 3.1. Summary of Research Design.

Research Aim	Research Questions	Sample	Sample Size	Data Instruments	Data Analysis Approach
To contribute to the existing knowledge of leadership by exploring how academics at the UTAS understand leadership, and experience organisational work practices.	RQ1. How do academics at the UTAS understand leadership?	Academics (Deans, assistant deans, & faculty staff)	46 participants	Semi-structured interviews	Inductive
	RQ2. What are the UTAS academics' experiences of leadership?	Academics (Deans, assistant deans, & faculty staff)	46 participants	Semi-structured interviews	Inductive
				Focus groups	Inductive
				Documents	Deductive

The results of the thematic analysis indicate that the perception of leadership among academics is primarily associated with leadership styles that are characterised by distribution and collaboration. The discourse surrounding the hierarchical duties of higher education officials, specifically deans and assistant deans, was primarily characterised by a wide utilisation of leadership discourse. On the contrary, the faculty staff held the perception that senior academics primarily functioned as managers. Notably, academics' experiences and descriptions of leadership-related organisational work practices were mainly about bureaucratic and administrative processes, with an emphasis on the managerial features of these processes. Furthermore, a considerable number of the study's participants underscored the noteworthy impact of personal networks on the day-to-day functioning of their respective organisations.

Theoretically, this study reveals discursive tensions and complexities of bureaucratic-administrative procedures with managerial emphasis in the Omani context, considering the interplay of political and social factors. In practice, the perspectives highlighted by participants in this study, including distributed leadership, flatter organizational structures, delegated authority, autonomy, standardized procedures, and leadership training, will shape the nature of leadership and management in Omani higher education as part of the ongoing educational transition, aligned with the Omani Vision 2040.

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Closing Remarks

12:30 - 13:00 Friday, 8th December, 2023
Conference Room 1

with Prof Rob Cuthbert and Prof Helen Higson.

Join us as we conclude this year's conference by sharing our highlights and reflections.

Lunch

13:00 - 14:00 Friday, 8th December, 2023
Courtyard Suites 1- 4