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SEDA
Woburn House,
20 - 24 Tavistock Square
London WC1H 9HF
Tel 020 7380 6767
Fax 020 7387 2655
Email office@seda.ac.uk

More information about SEDA's activities can be found on our website:
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Unboxing the Block: Supporting the staff transition to Block teaching

Kevin L. Merry, De Montfort University, Leicester, and **John Weldon,** Victoria University, Melbourne

Introduction

Historically, many universities have operated undergraduate and taught postgraduate degrees according to a modular system. A module is essentially an instructional unit that focuses on supporting student learning in a particular topic, including the assessment of that topic. Typically, students study multiple modules at once, requiring them to engage with, and divide their attention toward, several different topics, as well as work on several different assessments at the same time. The purpose of the modular structure is to provide students with greater flexibility and choice in relation to their learning on a course or programme.

However, due to the multiplicity of topics and assessments present in the modular structure, the need for students to continually shift their focus from topic to topic and assessment to assessment may result in a separation between assessments and learning and teaching activities, as well as students experiencing competing challenges and priorities (Nerantzi and Chatzidamianos, 2020).

A possible antidote to the issues caused by studying multiple topics at once is immersive scheduling, more commonly known as 'Block teaching'. In the Block model, students typically study one module, and thus one assessment at a time, usually over an accelerated or time-condensed period (Davies, 2006; Swain, 2016; Kofinas *et al.*, 2017). The immersive approach is intended to support students to explore topics in greater depth, as well as enabling them to develop a greater level of analysis and criticality over topics through applying a more concentrated focus (Kofinas *et al.*, 2017). Research has demonstrated that immersive forms of learning may support improvements in engagement, attendance and attainment among undergraduate students, particularly those from diverse pathways to entry as is often typical in UK HE (Daniel, 2000; Davies, 2006; Sheldon and Durdella, 2009; Dixon and O'Gorman, 2020).

The potential boost to student engagement and subsequent attainment provided by Block has led several UK universities to adopt the Block model at institutional level. A recent adopter of Block is De Montfort University (DMU), with the Block model being operationalised for Level 4 students from the start of the 2022/23 academic year. Blocks at DMU last 7 weeks and generally possess a standardised credit weighting of 30 credits, with students typically studying 4 blocks per academic year (see Figure 1). Individual teaching sessions may last up to 3 hours, with some sessions team-taught by several staff members. Assessment for each Block takes place within the 7-week time period.

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	Oct				Nov					Dec					Jan				
	Block 1								Block 2			XMAS			Block 2				
Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

	Feb		March					April				May				June			
	Block 3						EASTER				Block 4								
Week	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38

Figure 1 De Montfort University's undergraduate academic calendar 2022-23 showing each 7-week teaching Block

Despite the proposed benefits of the Block, the success of its application appears to depend considerably on the capability of teaching staff to effectively support learning within the Block model (Dixon and O'Gorman, 2020). Furthermore, making a success of the Block model also appears to place additional demands on teaching staff (Dixon and O'Gorman, 2020). As an educational developer supporting institution-wide transition to Block, staff have raised common and consistent concerns about the movement from a traditional modular system to the more immersive Block model. Typical feedback and questions from staff have centred on:

- *'Block may work in some universities or some subject areas, but it won't work in mine.'*
- *'How do I keep my students engaged during 3-hour sessions?'*
- *'How does pacing work in Block? There is far less time to think about assessment...'*
- *'How can I fit 30 credits of content into such a short time period?'*
- *'How do students absorb and make sense of content in such a short time period?'*
- *'How can I fit multiple assessments into such a short time period?'*
- *'How do I do formative assessment and give feedback with so little time?'*

To help answer some of the above questions, I've turned to an expert – Associate Professor John Weldon from Victoria University (VU). VU have practically pioneered the Block approach in HE, and with John having played a leading role in developing the VU Block model, who better to ask when it comes to overcoming Block teaching challenges? John, over to you!

Thanks, Kevin. The idea that 'Block might work perfectly well for you but it would never work for me' is a common initial response from academics upon hearing of the Block. It's an understandable response too; the idea of squishing a 12 to 16 week subject into four, six, or even seven weeks doesn't make sense. If that's all a move to the Block was, then I would agree with them – it won't work for me and mine either.

But the Block, as radically duration-focused as it may seem, is not about squishing or compressing what currently exists until it fits into some arbitrary new delivery schedule, it's about intentionally reimagining how we teach. The Block is a challenge to existing ways of creating curriculum in the very broadest sense of that term, that is, the 'totality of the undergraduate student experience of, and engagement with, their new program of tertiary study' (Kift, 2009, p. 9). In order to realise this understanding of curriculum, any move to the Block must be driven by a new, 'less lecture-centred and more student-centred pedagogy of interaction and activity' (Buck and Tyrrell, 2022) that puts the student first in all considerations.

Further, moving to the Block is a process, not a one-step move. Yes, at an axiomatic level, it's simply a timetabling manoeuvre, but it's one that requires so much thought and consideration that it becomes a catalyst for reflective change and action for all concerned. At an institutional level, engaging in that process entails examining and reimagining every aspect of university operations, from admissions,

to census dates, student welfare, reporting periods, fees management, student and staff welfare, and so on. From a subject/course or degree level it requires the adoption of a fresh approach to assumed pedagogical givens driven by the questions 'what are we teaching and why?' and 'how can we do it better?' (McCluskey *et al*., 2019).

When you're presented with the Block as a finished artefact, and often times out of the blue, it can be difficult to ask those questions of yourself as an academic. As academics we're used to the rhythm of a semester – it just feels right. We instinctively know where the assessments will fall, when to give feedback, how much content we can include, and so on. When we are shown something so challenging and radically different, without being invited to investigate how it is made and why, it's hardly surprising that we recoil, and we say, 'not for me!'

To many academics, the Block can also seem unnecessarily and arbitrarily constrictive when viewed for the first time and from the outside, but it doesn't have to be so. There are no rules about how long a Block has to be. Each institution that embraces the Block also contextualises it. Unlike the semester, which is fairly standard in format the world over, each iteration of the Block is uniquely adapted to its context. No two student cohorts are the same, each institution has distinct cultural and demographic needs; the Block affords institutions the opportunity to intentionally factor those concerns into its operational model, delivering a way of teaching and learning specifically designed for its own student body. The Block then, rather than being seen as a new orthodoxy, seeking to replace the rules that bind the semester with its own set of 'this is the way we feel it should be' strictures, should be seen as an ongoing state of becoming and questioning. More a conscience than a rule book.

And yet, it is still likely the case that the Block won't work for every institution – but that's OK. Highly successful universities with storied histories and reputations may see little value in reworking a *modus operandi* that has been delivering the goods for centuries, thank you very much. The Block is more likely to find a home in newer institutions, challenged with finding a way to make university more accessible and flexible for their students. At the very least, though, if the Block causes every institution to evaluate what it does, then it has done its job.

'How do I keep my students engaged during 3-hour sessions?' How indeed? Three hours is a long time. This is where a renewed approach to pedagogy and how this translates into the creation of effective learning environments is essential if your Block model is to be a success.

Many academics come into HE as subject-matter experts not educators; teaching is an afterthought and effective teaching something for Education students to worry about. Such academics will struggle to keep their students engaged on the Block, unless supported by their institutions via professional development that provides them with the tools they need to reimagine their classroom practice in this new environment. This work is crucial, it must be thorough and it must be supportive, if academics are to see it as beneficial and therefore buy in.

Here at VU, we initially looked at the work of, among many others, Chickering and Gamson (1987), Kuh (2008) and Kift (2009, 2015) to work out how best to create active and engaging HE classrooms. All emphasised the need for what amounted to an intentionally socially constructivist approach that actively involved students in the creation of their own knowledge. Emphasis was also placed on the importance of building student-to-student and student-to-academic relationships both through and around classwork. With this in mind, we banished the lecture. Completely. Instead, we asked educators to create learning environments that united students and academics in a journey of discovery, rather than a one-sided transmission of content.

We adopted a team-design approach, similar to that mooted by Bass (2012), and brought in education designers, library and other staff to help academics design their classrooms and the online spaces that support them. This required academics to re-envision themselves and their role in curriculum and pedagogical design. No longer the sole arbiters and decision makers, they found themselves part of a team that put student needs, in terms of content and the quality of teaching, firmly at the centre of all considerations. This wasn't an easy process for some academics, hence the need for structured support and professional development.

This support must evolve and it must be ongoing. It must also be reflective and open to change. At VU, we are now beginning to ask educators to provide detailed lesson plans that directly take into account the need for classes to be engaging and active. We ask them to consider location – do you really need to spend the full three hours in the classroom? Are there perhaps more engaging locations you might use? At the very least, could the students be set research tasks, that require them to visit the library, survey other students, and so on, and then to present their findings back in class? With no competing commitments and no need to get to the next class, is it even necessary to hold class on campus? Could you spend your days in a museum, workplace, or in a forest?

'How does pacing work in Block?' There is far less time to think about assessment… 'How can I fit 30 credits of content into such a short time period?' 'How do students absorb and make sense of content in such a short time period?'

Good questions all. Is the Block shorter than a semester? In very simple terms yes, but the more you think about it the more it becomes one of those 'how long is a piece of string' questions. Four to seven weeks is clearly a shorter duration than 12-16. But if you're only studying one subject in four weeks rather than four in 12, is there really that much difference? You're not actually losing any classroom time. Yes, students don't have 12 weeks to mull over a subject's content, but in the four weeks they do have, they have nothing else to think about. You can afford to go deeper into your subject matter as there are no distractions, you can move more rapidly through a subject as there is no forgetting curve – students are engaging with your content almost, if not, every day. Does that mean they potentially have more clear air-time to engage with your subject than they would on the semester? This is one of those situations where both

sides of the argument seem to stack up; the research, scant as it is, has tended to suggest for quite some time there are plusses and minuses to both models and that neither is definitively better or worse than the other (Kucsera and Zimmaro, 2010; Kops, 2014; Harvey *et al*., 2017; Dixon and O'Gorman, 2020; Turner *et al*., 2021).

Even so, it cannot be denied there is less time for cogitation on the Block; for letting concepts sit there in your subconscious working their way into your understanding. Given that, academics teaching on the Block are forced to cut fat from their subjects, by identifying clear learning outcomes and aligning their content and assessment directly to these. Block subjects, therefore, run lean. They're targeted and efficient in a way that semester units might not (need to) be.

Assessment needs to be similarly lean and targeted. It must be designed so as to provide students with as clear and direct a means as possible for them to demonstrate they have successfully met subject learning outcomes.

It helps if assessment is 'authentic' too (authentic being one of those buzzwords rendered almost meaningless through overuse that nevertheless is yet to be replaced with anything as apt). How readily does an assessment form align with what might be expected of a graduate in a workplace? How does it help students develop the communication, creativity, collaboration and problem-solving skills we all claim to be instilling into our graduates? How many graduates will ever again sit an exam or write an essay once they leave university – future academics aside?

The frequency of Block classes allows for the creation of a workplace-like experience: students meet and work with each other and their boss/educator day after day for an extended period of time as they would at work. This more work-like environment demands a new assessment regime, more akin to the way work is performed and assessed. Essays completed outside of class and exams held at the conclusion of a subject make no sense here, as they take no advantage of the strong and effective informal feedback opportunities created when a team of students and educators works closely together.

Taking advantage of informal feedback, and bringing the discussion of and work on assignments into the classroom is essential to effective assessment on the Block. No employer sends their employees away to complete a task completely on their own, refusing to comment on drafts and/or offer constructive advice along the way. No employer forbids employees from discussing their work with their co-workers either. Students learn to be constructively critical of their own and others' work by discussing it with their educators and peers.

Project-based assessments, group work and assessment pieces that scaffold one on the other are best suited to Block teaching. Such tasks allow students to test themselves in an ongoing, just in time basis, as they master a skill or concept. These are more easily melded into classwork and class time too. Further, and with academic integrity such a pain point for universities worldwide, this is important – it is much more difficult for a student to cheat while working on a project, especially when their educator is aware of the work they are doing, than it is in the writing of an essay that takes place away from scrutiny.

Ongoing assessment, if it begins early in a Block with formative and/or diagnostic pieces that can be graded swiftly, allows both student and educator to assess a student's needs and identify any gaps or support that may be needed almost from day one of a semester. In a more traditional assessment set-up, students might not receive and feedback until week 6-7, which is often too late. On the Block everyone knows very early on where they sit.

As interest in the Block continues to grow, particularly in the UK, it's important, both for those looking to implement change and those charged with learning how to educate on the Block, to ask themselves the questions covered herein. But more than that, key to any success on the Block is the understanding that, like a dog at Christmas, the Block is a pet for life. It requires commitment, constant attention and ongoing training and support.

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Kevin L. Merry (kevin.merry@dmu.ac.uk) is Head of Academic Development at De Montfort University, Leicester, and founder and chair of the United Kingdom and Ireland Universal Design for Learning Higher Education Network (UDL-UKI).

John Weldon (john.weldon@vu.edu.au) is Senior Academic Advisor to the Victoria University Business School, and founder and inaugural President of the International Block and Intensive Learning and Teaching Association (IBILTA).

My obituary for SEDA

Dr David Baume, founding chair, SEDA

I'm very proud of my career in academic development. And at 79, I'm sad that I will be leaving our work unfinished (as all work is, I know that), because of a recent and unexpected cancer diagnosis.

I've been proud to be a part of this organisation and emergent profession almost from its inception. However, I now realise, in many important ways, that I have wasted most of that career.

An educator to my core, I am using this obituary, personal and professional, to enable me and you to learn from my mistakes.

I was elected Chair of SCED, the Standing Conference on Educational Development, in 1990. Carole was a bit surprised, as she had asked me not to do anything unexpected at the AGM, but, hey ho.

SCED was shortly approached by the Society for Research into Higher Education's Staff Development group with a view to a possible merger. Delicate negotiations ensued. This was a merger, not a takeover, and led to the formation of a new organisation, the Staff and Educational Development Association. Carole led the negotiations to form the name, and the competition to devise the brilliant logo which still stands so well. A couple of years later, the new SEDA was approached by the remnants of the Association of Education and Training Technologies, which was dying. A graceful incorporation into SEDA was agreed.

SEDA had two successful mergers. And we had two failures. We substantially failed to absorb the academic talent and enthusiasm of the SRHE staff development group. And, we somehow managed to let slip through our fingers what had previously been the biggest learning and educational technology organisation in the UK higher education sector by far (AETT). After the burial of AETT (apart from taking over its journal) imagine this: a huge, successful Higher Education organisation committed to the advancement of education technology managed to die. Imagine that.

Two successes. Two failures. I take my share of responsibility.

SEDA has continued to have successes and failures. Its biggest success is simply that it has survived, as one of the earlier organisations in its field. It is still revered and respected among what I shall now call the wider higher education development community. And it had further successes, especially with regard to the Dearing Committee Report (1997). SEDA had previously (quietly, ambitiously) begun to train and accredit university teachers, a few thousand over several years. This was done on an entirely voluntary basis, but there was clearly enthusiasm for it. When Dearing came along, we decided to pounce. We gave good written evidence, and I think Liz Beatie's and my proudest moment may well be when we delivered our carefully crafted punchline to Sir Ron (later Lord) Dearing: 'Students have the right to be taught well.' The rest of his committee looked at him, and were nervous to see what he would say; he smiled that lovely, broad Scottish smile, and applauded. We suspected that we had won.

It was a mixed victory; SEDA chose to give away a substantial and remunerative part of its income, but in the greater cause of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, and therefore over a dramatic increase in the number of teachers to be trained and accredited, led by I think Paul Clarke and Sally Brown.

We had succeeded in helping to establish teaching in higher education as an emergent profession for the first time. From then until now, to the best of my knowledge, some 169,000 Fellows including 15,022 from outside the UK, have been trained, qualified and accredited to teach in higher education.

Triumph, surely? Well. Only partially, your honour.

Universities have a way of dealing with things they don't like (*i.e.* things from the Outside); the first thing they do is to say 'it's not necessary', the second thing they do is to say 'it can't be done', and the next thing they say, when they realise they are losing, is 'oh, well, we're doing it already'. And when that doesn't work, their final retreat position is to say 'okay, set up a minimum framework (if you must), but leave it to us; trust us,

we will take it from here, it is in safe hands'.

It is not in safe hands, and in my jaundiced but pretty well-informed opinion, what has happened to teacher accreditation/professional recognition, and therefore the professionalisation of teaching in British Higher Education, is that it has, despite the best efforts of the higher education development community, essentially been subverted by many universities almost to the point of meaninglessness. Some teachers and institutions take it very seriously and do it well; but too many others give a couple of classes and ask their lecturers to write, on a wet Saturday, a portfolio which shows that they meet the ambitious-looking-but-in-truth-minimal requirements for accreditation. I realise that I do not know what we know about the impact of teacher accreditation on teaching and learning. And I feel as though I – we – should.

I may be being terribly unfair here. I want to be wrong. But I don't think I am wrong.

I think the new body which has taken over responsibility for accreditation is serious and doing a good job (Advance HE). But, in summary, I think that SEDA has succeeded, because it still exists, having survived Covid. I also think it has failed, because the revolution is not merely unfinished, but it has, in too many institutions, been diluted near to the point of irrelevance.

So it (often) goes. But it bothers me, and it should bother you, too.

I also think SEDA succeeded and failed in another sense; SEDA exists, but we went wrong. We slowly drifted back into a nineteenth-century bureaucracy; not quite with quill pens, but with committees, and minutes, and meetings, and other committees, and other meetings. Meanwhile, scrabbling about in the basement, a large number of passionate enthusiasts were desperately trying to actually get good things done. And in many respects they succeeded. I shall not mention those many accomplishments here because, simply, I do not have time.

Yes, I am being critical.

We gave a management contract to the Association of Commonwealth Universities, which is often a very good bureaucracy. But I think we got buried. We got lost in the process, and I think we paid the price. And that price has been hundreds of thousands of pounds of the membership income. And, if I may, with apologies to all Chairs past and present – very much including me – little of any true leadership. Little, if any, sense of direction.

Let me contrast this with the Association for Learning Technologies, which seems to run on a fairly small bureaucracy but which has, above all, a committed, powerful, effective leader. ALT is led. SEDA is drowning in bureaucracy. This has been particularly disastrous for the following reason.

Technology is an essential servant of Higher Education, but it must not lead. We never sufficiently clarified or identified what we meant by academic development in higher education. Astonishingly, we clarified what we meant by teaching in HE, but we didn't do the same for academic development. We developed the others. We failed to develop ourselves.

We did have some triumphs and we should be proud of our contributions to them; the pre-Covid SEDA conferences were superb, earned a lot of money, and were excellent, provocative events. The SEDA JiscMail, which costs virtually nothing to run as far as I can see, has been one of the most powerful forces for academic development and change in this country.

But, somehow, also, we lost it. Big time. We professionalised teaching. We failed to define or professionalise development. When was the last time you saw a job advertised which said 'professional educational developers required'? I don't think very often.

> We devised a qualification scheme for ourselves, for us professional developers. That got hysterical in the early stages, by the way. We had a very thorough assessment process: we didn't mess about, we didn't go about awarding each other the badges, we had clear outcomes, clear values. We had a very good accreditation scheme for developers. But we had a ludicrous moment in the early stages where we came to sign the certificates of accreditation for SEDA Fellowship, and Carole (then Chair of the accreditation committee) and I (then Chair of the organisation) signed our own and each other's certificates.
>
> Yes, we did laugh about it.
>
> But, we anticipated it. Professor John Cowan, our fierce and unassailable scheme External Examiner, sat through the rigorous interview process and additionally signed our two certificates. That was eccentric, principled, proper. SEDA at its shiny best. We tried, even when it got very, very difficult, and very slightly silly.

Unfortunately, the accreditation of academic development became a SEDA cottage industry of its own with very restricted access. I think this was a mistake.

This isn't an ALT obit, so I'll close that part of the discussion, except to say I think ALT have been more successful than SEDA because they had a leader. When it comes to technology and academic development, learning is what matters. Development is what matters. Improving learning is what matters.

Educational technology is a magnificent, essential servant of educational development and improving higher education. It is a disastrous master. I think, with the greatest possible respect, technology has become the master. I think it is taking over. I think there are far more educational technologists around in higher education than there are educational developers. And I have the highest technical respect for them. Many of them are knowledgeable and enthusiastic educationalists. However, there is the danger that technology becomes the focus and education fades. Technology as the master can leave teachers feeling helpless, lost, lonely, baffled – inadequate in relation to the technology and educationally disempowered. I think it's gone badly, badly wrong. It may yet be retrievable.

However, because of the book I'm currently racing to finish (in the words of the great Iain Banks, 'I am officially Very Poorly'), I feel we've gone wrong in a much more profound way. My career, for over thirty years, has been to improve teaching in higher education. I have done some good work in that area.

And I think I got it half-right, by realising it wasn't just about teaching, it was about course design. And it was also, as Sally and Phil and many other excellent people have said, about assessment. But I didn't put it all together. I didn't realise that *the fundamentals are not about teaching.*

Teaching is irrelevant. It's about *learning.*

That's a cliche that's been around for a hundred years, and many developers get to it at some point. When we realise this, it hits us like a club! 'It's about learning!', and everyone nods politely, and says slowly, as one does to someone one likes who has received a blow to the head, 'Yes. Could you please tell us how to teach better?'

I believe the fundamental mistake we've made (as well as all the other fundamental mistakes) – the fundamental mistake I've made – is to concentrate on completely the wrong thing. And that's why I say I feel as though I've wasted most of my professional life. Because I've wasted it trying to improve teaching, and it was, as clear as I can say it, *the wrong thing to do*. I do not know what we know about the impact of teacher accreditation on teaching and learning.

Now, there's a book coming (or at the very least a long series of articles, depending on how far I can get with it). I passionately want to do this. I passionately want to get the ideas out there, though I know I may not have time. Because if we can concentrate on learning, the world will be a different place.

The book is called *Please Stop Teaching.*

I know how to do some of it (and I'll get as much of it complete as I can, but that's a book, not an obituary).

I don't want this to be an obituary for SEDA. My great fear is that it should be. I don't want this to be an obituary for development in higher education, but it could be. And if you're reading this, I'm going to need your help, because I won't be able to finish this project. But you can. So can you please give it a go? Can we please not slump back to teaching? Can we please stick with learning?

This is a call for action. I will not complete my book, *Please Stop Teaching*. But I do want it completed.

I want it completed by like-minded, passionate disruptors in Higher Education. I want it completed by people who believe that we fundamentally must stop teaching. I want it completed because it matters. It is important.

The book is important because it is learning that matters most. That's not sentimental drivel, that's of profound importance. Teaching damages. Teaching disempowers. Teaching prevents learning. Teaching stops people thinking that they can legitimately learn, other than through being taught. Teaching is horrible in all manner of ways.

I envy you, who will carry this quest forward.

PS. I missed something. What will be also vital for the survival of development in higher education, and the development community in higher education, is *cooperation*. Not merger, not takeover, just fleeting, principled, frequent, lively, intense appropriate cooperation, between the many, many tens of small development associations working across higher education. They will make it work. They will be reluctant to cooperate – because I'm not talking takeover, I'm talking cooperation. Organisations can slump into their own little piles, become their own cosy silos. Pick your tired but appropriate metaphor.

It's not all that bad, and it doesn't have to be that way. I've had some successes working with ALDinHE, the Association of Learning Development in Higher Education, and others have had successes too. But the principle has never quite stuck. It's never quite taken off. But I've found a few fellow troublemakers, in various organisations, that feel as I do and have enjoyed similar successes. Finding the right degree of cooperation, without threat, will be gold to the overall success or failure of our community's mission. I've written about this, I've published about it, but I haven't done enough.

Because it's not a thing one person can do. It's certainly not a thing that this person can do. But a practical, non-squishy form of cooperation is what'll get it going.

An obituary for SEDA? Or a call to arms for a new, bolder, braver, cooperative way to take the mission forward?

Over to you, team. Good luck. I want you to succeed.

Dr David Baume

David died on 5 July 2023.

David and Carole Baume

David asked three colleagues to reflect and comment on his obituary

Peter Hartley, Mary Fitzpatrick and **Helen King**

Peter Hartley's reflections

David

Let me start with your opening line: you have every right to be proud!

Your obituary got me thinking about my very early days – as an HE student (first in the family), and then onwards into 'teaching', starting as 'Assistant Lecturer Grade 1'.

From a learning and teaching perspective, they were *not* 'good old days.' Fairly common issues included: very limited learning resources (no VLE as backstop); vague or non-existent assessment criteria; little or no concern for assessment feedback; next to no scholarship of learning and teaching; and so on.

Where would we be now without good folk like yourself who started asking awkward questions about what we were aiming to achieve, and why were we doing it that way? And you continued to ask them.

There is so much positive and innovative activity in present-day HE, but I agree that we have not 'finished the job'. We still see too many practices based on tradition and 'myth' rather than theory and evidence.[1]

Could SEDA have avoided your 'missed opportunities'?
I doubt it.

Successful mergers usually start from some shared culture and objectives. In their early days, we did not have that synergy with either SRHE or ALT. They had different priorities and lacked the strong collaborative spirit which led me to SEDA. I lost touch with SRHE but stuck with ALT – part of their success story is how well they developed their agenda to create a strong community spirit.

Perhaps we *could* have brought our respective tribes together, but only with *very* significant effort. We would also have needed to overcome broader constraints, such as the way institutions treated our educational tribes as silos with different statuses. For example, how many HEIs have IT specialists with strong interests in learning and teaching as influential members of the senior management group?

You raise another related question – could SEDA have kept the training/development function? Again, I don't think so – the politics of the time were against it.

We cannot rewrite history but we can influence the future. As you point out, shouldn't this be one of the key roles for SEDA in the future – enabling and encouraging collaboration between the different agencies and silos? And we could/should do more to support collaborative initiatives within the SEDA 'family'. It is ironic that many recent educational initiatives have come from SEDA stalwarts but not within the SEDA umbrella or badging.

Professionalising teaching?
You suggest this is often 'subverted'. I have also seen examples of rather 'minimal' CPD in learning, teaching and assessment. A recent article in THE (June, 2023) may have re-ignited this debate which will (and should) run and run.[2]

Professionalising development?
You suggest that SEDA 'failed to define or professionalise development'. Perhaps this is not such a bad thing. Any systematic definition would have reflected circumstances which no longer apply. HE is confronting challenges which we have never seen before (e.g. from Generative AI). As a result, we *all* need to redefine our roles as tutors and assessors.

Another thought – do we have a clear map of education development and its current role/status in UK HE? I remember previous SEDA surveys. What happens now? I cannot find relevant clues on the SEDA website.

Defining our constituency
Another issue is our membership constituency. When I moved from academic teaching, most SEDA members I met worked in Educational Development units/departments. But I had a faculty position and the rapid growth over the next few years was in these roles (e.g. Associate Dean). As Conference Committee Co-Chairs, David Walker and I tried to persuade SEDA Executive that we needed to specifically attract this new and expanding group. I don't think we ever did. The language of the SEDA website (and many of our documents) still largely reflects the 'golden age' of Ed Dev units – and that age has passed.

Bureaucracy, leadership and technology
I was not involved in SEDA decision-making when we signed with ACU so cannot comment on that history. We need to look forward and learn from agencies like ALT and ALDinHE whose structures helped them to respond to the pandemic and develop more proactive future planning. Developing new/better organisational processes must be an urgent priority for SEDA in 2023/24.

You highlight progress made by ALT. They have some specific opportunities in their ability to attract funding, but their key advantage has been exceptionally agile leadership allied to an effective management structure.

In contrast, SEDA has spent too much time over the last few years struggling to plug holes in the budget caused in part by 'legacy' structures – practices which worked pre-pandemic but which could not adapt quickly enough. And we have not used technology as effectively as we could/should have.

Re your comments about educational technology, I foresee a positive future if we approach it sensibly. Generative AI can support initiatives that you would approve of. For example, the recent TED talk from Khan Academy[3] featured AI to 'coach' rather than 'deliver' tutorials, offering learning opportunities we have not seen before.

Please Stop Teaching?

We all need to consider this carefully.

Your offer a call to action which has all the advantages of a good slogan: it is short and memorable; it challenges our assumptions and invites us to reconsider them; and it invites us to peel back the layers of the learning and teaching 'onion' and explore its layers and depth. As I have little or no artistic skills, I will have to rely upon Generative AI to provide the images for the T-shirt.

And finally

To respond to your challenge and other issues you raise, SEDA needs to re-invent and re-invigorate its role and membership offer.

Another impetus to re-invent comes from increased competition in the education development 'marketplace'. As well as projects from AdvanceHE, ALT, and ALDinHE, consider recent initiatives from Jisc which are effectively educational development.

As you say, we need more 'practical, non-squishy...co-operation'. For example, we now have the SEDA/Jisc Student Partnership Impact Award[4]. Co-operation and collaborations like this may well be key to a positive future for SEDA.

And a final personal note to/for David

It was a privilege to comment on your text. Thank you.

Those of us in the twilight of our careers will do our best to keep the flames burning! And there are a healthy number of 'young agitators' to pick up the tab.

I am deeply sorry that I will not have the chance to discuss these arguments further with you over a glass of wine (or several) at the next SEDA conference.

References and links

1. Mark Childs and I have recently delivered workshops on current myths in Higher Education (please contact us for further details/discussion), and we also recommend the texts on 'urban myths about learning and education' from Pedro De Bruyckere, Paul A. Kirschner, and Casper D. Hulshof (2015 from Elsevier and 2020 from Routledge).
2. See at: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/do-teaching-fellowships-actually-improve-teaching
3. See at: https://www.ted.com/talks/sal_khan_how_ai_could_save_not_destroy_education
4. SEDA/Jisc Student Partnership Impact Award. See details at: https://www.seda.ac.uk/professional-development-opportunities/student-partnership-impact-award/

Peter Hartley is a Visiting Professor at Edge Hill University.

Mary Fitzpatrick's reflections

To echo Peter, it is a privilege to respond to this provocation, and I do so as a more recent member of SEDA than both Peter and Helen. I cannot overstate how welcoming was the network of colleagues that I met at my first conference in November 2012. Immediately, it was clear to me that this was a fantastic community of colleagues, predominantly from the world of educational development, where the sessions I attended answered and raised questions for me in equal measure. This struck me as a special organisation, one which had lots to offer a relatively new ED like me. It is indeed a respected organisation, David, and rightly so. Yet there is so much more potential to allow for engagement with the wider educational colleagues and faculties. Certainly, the move to online conferences provided a golden opportunity to increase the profile of SEDA among academic communities across the international context, with many delegates who were not the typical SEDA delegate profile. A welcome increase in diversity of delegates which we need to develop further.

SEDA provides a community of practice for those of us in educational development and related roles. However, as we know, the titles of the roles and functions are not universally agreed nor recognised in the way that researchers, academics, or administrators tend to be. While the SEDA PDF can be useful, there has been little progression in relation to professionalising the work of those in educational development which is universally understood. A clear definition of purpose and role of those working in educational development would be a good starting point for a broader consultation. Can SEDA envisage a clear career progression for Educational Developers that could provide transparency of status?

Professionalisation of teachers in HE, or lack thereof, certainly bothers me! There are various approaches across the international context. Yet, what you describe on the rushed portfolio is not far from the reality. Surely the role we have as teachers is to ensure that we can indeed facilitate student learning, yet we are not necessarily encouraged to learn as students ourselves. Quite the dilemma indeed.

SEDA has no end of members who are willing to engage and contribute, however the capacity to do so is decreasing each semester. This operating model is no longer sufficient (as you say, David). Meetings and minutes generate plans and actions, but there is little time or scope to progress these. It has now become an urgent priority for SEDA – which it has been for years – yet the priority is to *action* the decisions and implementation. Conferences and Events should not be, and thankfully are no longer considered to be, income-generating activities to cover administrative contracts, but a member benefit. This change in perspective offers incredible opportunities to increase membership and international engagement. SEDA needs to be instantly recognised, thought of, and considered when learning and development in HE is mentioned. There is a role for SEDA, and a leadership role at that, but it needs a profile that can be created in collaboration with others. Agreed, David.

Mary Fitzpatrick SFSEDA is the Head of the Centre for Transformative Learning at the University of Limerick.

Helen King's reflections

David: as always you are inspirational, supportive, encouraging and thought-provoking with your words.

Over the last few years, whilst I have been Co-Chair of the SEDA Executive Committee, I have been thinking a lot about SEDA's position within the wider higher education enhancement landscape. What is our place in the sector? Who are our community? What is our value within the sector? And, most importantly, how can we best achieve our charitable objective of 'the advancement of education for the benefit of the public particularly through the improvement of all aspects of learning, teaching and training in higher education through staff and educational development'?

In answering these questions, it is useful to remind ourselves that SEDA is a values-driven organisation, committed to educational development, and underpinned by these values:

- Developing understanding of how people learn
- Practising in ways that are scholarly, professional and ethical
- Working with and developing learning communities
- Valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity
- Continually reflecting on practice to develop ourselves, others and processes.

We rely heavily on volunteers (>70 individuals across our various committees) to plan and organise the activities that enable us to meet our charitable objective. However, as David discussed, we also choose to pay for additional support for our administration, finance and governance. The funding for this comes from charging for some of our activities and for having a membership system which offers additional value to institutions and individuals. Which brings us back to the question of what is our value within the sector?

As an organisation, we regularly reflect on our various activities, their currency and suitability. We also survey our members to find out what they want. But this emphasis on activity moves our focus away from our values and is less helpful when trying to 'think outside the box'. For our recent Exec Committee awayday, I drew on a standard template to review our business model, to articulate our business proposition and to consider what do our customers need. Firstly, who are our 'customers'? As an organisation, we feel strongly that these are not just those colleagues with an educational development job title, but that it is everyone who inspires, supports and enables development and change in higher education. It is my suggestion that these colleagues (staff and, in some cases, students) need the following:

- *Help* to support their work:
  - o Information and guidance to enhance learning, teaching and assessment in HE
  - o Information and guidance to help them in their roles of supporting change in HE
- *Credibility:*
  - o Professional recognition for their role
  - o Accreditation/badging for courses they provide related to enhancing learning, teaching and assessment
- *Belonging*:
  - o Community of practice/network
- *Advocacy*:
  - o A voice to represent and champion their expertise within HE providers and more widely across the sector.

I hope that thinking about our activities in these terms will be useful to SEDA for identifying our place within the sector, and for innovating, planning and prioritising.

David reflected on SEDA's leading role in the development of teacher accreditation. I believe that we are now at a pivotal stage where we could have an enormous influence on accreditation for our community, for those who inspire, support and enable development and change in HE. We have recently launched our Student Partnership Impact Award in collaboration with Jisc, the first of its kind to provide a sector-level recognition for students' contributions. And, for over 20 years, we have had our own SEDA Fellowship which recognises staff contributions. This Fellowship is internationally unique in its offering of professional development and recognition for these types of roles. And yet, due to our business model and capacity, there are currently only ~140 Fellowship holders. I would like to add my own provocation to David's: is SEDA prepared to take the leap required to make SEDA Fellowship (including Associate and Senior categories) *the* badge of credibility for those in educational development roles?

At our SEDA Exec meeting, our discussion also turned to who we communicate with within HE institutions. At the moment we channel everything through our institutional contacts as these are the colleagues who are practically (and strategically) implementing educational development activities. But, thinking about the advocacy role suggested above, we should also be communicating with senior leaders to enhance their understanding of the importance of educational development and the value of those colleagues in their institution that inspire, support and enable development and change.

As to our place in the sector, 2023 is SEDA's 30th birthday – we have persisted and delivered on our charitable objective throughout a period of enormous change in higher education. In October, along with the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) who are also 30 this year, we are hosting a 'meeting of minds', bringing together around 20 organisations across the UK and Ireland who have a role in enhancing learning and teaching in higher education. To stimulate the conversations at this meeting and help us to look forward to the next 30 years, we will be introducing two provocation pieces inspired by David's call to 'stop teaching'. The first will look at the revolution in generative AI and its impact on students' learning and assessment; themes such as metacognition and assessing the process, not just the product, are likely to come to the fore. The second piece will consider the corpus of literature that underpins our professional recognitions (e.g. HEA Fellowship) and qualifications (such as PGCerts). Anecdotally, I would say that these are mostly

traditionally based on a social science view of learning and teaching. Increasingly, however, there is an interest in the sector on neuroscience, playful and compassionate pedagogies, and other ways of considering how people learn.

Thank you, David, for your considerable impact on SEDA and higher education. I am delighted that your influence continues and is included within *Educational Developments* to keep us on our toes for years to come.

Professor Helen King NTF PFHEA SFSEDA is the Director of Learning, Innovation, Development and Skills at Bath Spa University.

What will sustain us in the storms to come: Listening to and learning from the experiences of teaching staff during emergency remote teaching

Donna Lanclos, Independent Consultant, and **Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin,** and **Tom Farrelly,** Munster Technological University, Ireland

Introduction

In Part 1 of this article, published in the previous edition of *Educational Developments* (24.2), we described the background to this project, our methodological approach, and started our discussion of emerging themes with the sections on Resources and Support, and Time and Labour. Instructors did not need to be confident in being able to fully use all of the technology, but did need to be confident enough in being supported by their peers, and by their institutional support staff, that they would try. They gained confidence to try unfamiliar things and encounter students in unfamiliar places (online) with the help of formal and informal communities of practice, and relationships with support staff. In Part 2, we discuss the theme of Trust and Relationships, before turning to a reflection on the role of institutional context in how teaching staff feel confident, or at least capable, in situations of rapid change and uncertainty – which we have not seen the last of. We also point to actions that MTU has taken during and since the pandemic emergency to meet the needs of support and teaching staff. In reporting our findings, we identify participants based on what discipline they lecture in, but not by name.

Findings: Listening to voices, Part 2

Trust and relationships

Several lecturers noted that they already had trusted relationships with their students, so when Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) began, they were less anxious. Success or failure occurred in a pre-existing connection, and so there was trust that they could figure something out, much as they would have in physically present circumstances. More anxiety coalesced around what might happen with new students in the new academic year who were not necessarily new to the institution, but new to the lecturers in question:

> *'...[it] is just so much easier when you have a relationship developed and to get to know people and even to get to know people's strengths, but equally, you know, where they might need a bit of support, that is going to be a little bit more challenging, you know, when you're not sitting down face to face with somebody.'* (Nursing lecturer)

> *'...everything is online [now], but everything went online 10 weeks into the semester, almost where we had trust relationships with students established, you know, and where the students had been in class. So I have much more fears around what's going to happen in September when I meet a whole new cohort of people that only know me as, as a face and a voice, and I am lacking that in my idea, very essential group interaction.'* (Business lecturer)

Some lecturers were confident in building relationships with students online, but many we spoke with emphasised that their good online connections with students originated in relationships they established while encountering them in campus buildings, classrooms, and labs. They noted that it takes time to produce good quality online experiences, and that online experiences are also not produced in a vacuum – a supportive and informative group of colleagues and supervisors is an important component part of environments that generate an effective online experience.

Concerns for how to stay engaged or build connections with students were accompanied by concerns about staying engaged with peers and colleagues in a persistently online environment. Lecturers remembered meeting their peers on campus, in hallways, in cafes, engaging with each other such that things would then happen, including in class. These connections simply didn't happen in an online-only environment during ERT, and so resulted in the loss of these opportunities to chat in the building with colleagues, and have insights generated by those chats' impact on teaching. It is not that such connections cannot happen in online contexts, but that they need to be planned, and the labour for such planning needs to be accounted for.

In 2023 we are all too familiar with the phenomenon of seemingly endless online meetings that only allow for operational discussions about tasks. Little time is given for the human work of settling in, checking in, and providing space for productive small talk. Deliberate choices have to be made in online environments to provide that space, such as setting up a channel for people to encounter each other, whether it is in Discord, or a Teams channel, or some other digital venue, for asynchronous opportunities to bridge the gaps left by current online meeting culture:

> *'You know, I think being a lecturer is quite an isolated role…you know, you can spend all day talking, come home, you know, with, with, with no voice and not have spoken to anyone all day, if you had a busy day. So what I mean, because you just go from class to class, to class, to class, you're talking for a living, but you might not actually talk to anyone all day. So it can be quite an isolated type of role.'* (Computer science lecturer)

The isolation of lecturers from each other impacts not just what they teach, but how. This is not just a problem that emerges from ERT. Before the pandemic emergency, it was clear from what lecturers said that their experiences with service teaching made them feel disconnected from their peers who were teaching on the same programmes. Being brought in for 'one-shot' teaching isolates people, and can have the effect of not feeling able to take chances, or connect their practice to other people's practices. The atomisation of teaching as a result of modularisation has an impact, and teaching online might have the effect of amplifying this atomisation to the detriment of the student as well as staff experience.

Discussion

> *'I think as well, maybe the thing I find difficult to change is just students where they're coming from, which is this kind of being a little bit fearful. I think sometimes people don't even want to put into the chat box in case they spell a word wrong or, you know, and maybe going forward, we need to work on that in first year with students that are actually online, learning is going to be a fact of life. Anyway, I think it's been accelerated now. It's all common, a lot quicker, but once they're out there in the real world, whether they're in marketing or accountants, they're going to be doing a lot of this kind of thing. They'll do a lot of their CPD training in the office. So they need to feel confident about that themselves.'* (Marketing lecturer)

This lecturer speaks to the collective fears and lack of confidence that many of us share at this moment, this point more than three years into the latest global pandemic. It makes sense that trust and relationships are major concerns emerging from our analysis. The implications are that choices must be made across institutions to combat atomisation (of academic and support programs) and isolation (of people). Examples can be the formal and informal communities of practice that we set up pre-pandemic at MTU, as well as the more technical work involved in using the VLE to present a 'course level' view of academic programs rather than the default list of separate and unconnected modules that is usually presented.

There were consistent concerns about resources and support provided by the institution to both teachers and their students, and how political and economic conditions might shape their options. What is sometimes reduced to a visibility problem that can be solved with publicity is actually evidence of a need to build relationships, among teaching staff across disciplines, and among teaching and educational support staff, within and across institutional boundaries. Participation in communities of practice and mentoring schemes should not be classified as 'extra', but should be defined as a core work activity, key to the provision of effective teaching and learning experiences. Advice offered to MTU staff during the pandemic around the importance of creating learning communities (see, e.g. Munster Technological University TEL, 2021), has been embedded as a standard principle for all online and blended teaching and is now foregrounded in help articles, resources and training sessions. Staff also need to feel a sense of belonging, that they are in a collaborative group who will support them.

Providing persistent spaces for connection and community requires a choice to define reflection, connecting with colleagues, and learning as work. It is important to make sure that expectations of that more pastoral, community-minded categories of work fall equitably on all members of staff, so that they are not disproportionately taken up by marginalised and minoritised members of staff.

Expanding the capacity of the educational technology and instructional or learning design teams can meet the increasingly complex needs of lecturers with regard to digital practice. Embedding and distributing as much expertise as possible in formal and informal communities of practice and mentoring schemes is crucial. Our work revealed the presence in MTU at a departmental level of informal support groups, and they in turn are an important way to support lecturers who might be unsure about what is possible, and who need to do 'something digital' anyway.

Changing practice requires, above all, time. And time is only available if there are enough people in the system to give each other time. We cannot staff for the minimum, there needs to be reserve capacity to provide 'room to grow', to respond to change and to respond to changing demands to, quantitatively and qualitatively, 'do more' or to simply try new things. Institutions that strip staffing down to bare bones cannot claim to be truly focusing on the teaching or the student experience – or any kind of experience that needs people to be at their best, and well cared for by their institutions. On the other hand, institutions that recognise the importance of fully funding enough teaching and instructional support staff to provide reserve capacity for change will reap the benefits of staff who can give time and attention, not just to the immediate task before them, but to strategically working with the people around them to fully realise their potential.

We did not find in our analysis any evidence that people are somehow incapable, or that there isn't good practice already in classrooms and labs, online and in buildings. If there is a problem to fix (we would argue there isn't but rather a situation to navigate), it's one of figuring out how to allot time, support, resources and labour so that the important and crucial trusted relationships can be given time and space to develop within and across educational institutions, and also to recognise as important work activities such as chatting in hallways, meeting for coffee, and spending time in discussions about how things feel as well as how they operate. At MTU we have organised and facilitated a series of online and hybrid events with guest speakers and participants from around the world designed to prompt thought and discussion around key topics and opportunities at the intersection of technology and learning (e.g. 'EdTech Seminar Series', from February to April 2021; 'Dx in HE', in March 2022; 'Growing Digital', in May 2022; see also Farrelly *et al.,* 2020). Gathering around a place and a point in time can focus energy and generate new enthusiasm for work that has been ongoing, as well as for work yet to be done. Events such as this are vital if we are to truly learn from the experience of the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns. We need to have open discussions with all involved, reflecting and learning from the events and planning for the future.

Conclusions

We found in this project that people who were already engaged online were willing to expand their online practices and to think experimentally about what digital learning could be like. It is worth asking, in any institutional context, how these kinds of individuals can be identified, and then significantly supported and connected to their peers as a resource for continuing development of online teaching practices. What does building on existing good practice, and connecting it across the institution look like, such that pockets of excellence could inform the entire organisation, rather than remaining in specific departments or modules? Current practitioners who are confident in online contexts will be key to developing an institutional culture that centres the role of digital in creating effective and creative opportunities for education in the community.

People need connection – to each other, to their institutions, and to their students. Isolation is the enemy of engagement and wellbeing. Recall the lecturer whose teaching work within a module was shared with several colleagues, even before the pandemic emergency. Not all departments structure their teaching responsibilities as shared ones, and thinking carefully about how to break down the isolation of lecturers, especially those teaching first year students, is something that should require the involvement of instructional designers and educational developers. Support staff can extend and enrich the capacity of teaching staff to do this work in a connected way.

The argument for ensuring that teaching staff connect to each other, as well as to those staff who support teaching, is that it builds capacity for insight and creativity across the institution. People, when connected, can feel confident that even if they don't know what to do, they know someone who can help them figure it out. It is difficult to overstate the desire that people have to feel that they can go to a trusted person when they are dealing with the unexpected. Educational support staff can and should be some of those trusted people. They can be sources of care, and evidence suggests that many already are.

It is not new to say that becoming a trusted person requires relationship-building, but it remains the case. Trust is a crucial component of relationships that allow for people to try new things, to risk attempting something that might not succeed, and to be candid with what actually happened and why (Lanclos and Phipps, 2019). Trust is a necessary component for reflection on what needs to change, and also what needs to say the same.

Trust is also something still lacking among some lecturers who are concerned that the extra work they have done during the emergency around technology wrangling, course preparation, lecture recording, and online communication facilitation — for example — will end up being redefined as 'normal' work with no allowances for the fact that it took (and takes) more time 'on top of' traditional teaching. One challenge to recognising this work is that many institutions define 'teaching' as what is visible in classrooms or in the VLE, less so the more invisible work of preparation and technology wrangling.

Educational development professionals can and should play an important part not just in supporting that less visible work, but in making arguments to the institution and to the wider system about what that work entails. It is easy to reduce the practice of teachers to content delivery or contact hours, but people involved at the 'coal face' of teaching know better. Support and teaching staff can and should work together to be transparent about the true labour requirements of teaching and learning in both online and in physical spaces.

We above all recommend that people in education support positions do what we did in this project, even if they do not have the resources for an entire research project:

- Listen to people
- Ask them how it's going and be ready to hear the good, bad, and unexpected
- Don't ask about the tools or guidance you provided
- Ask them what they are actually doing
- Get to a point where they will answer you honestly
- If all they ever do is tell you how great you are, they don't trust you yet
- When they are coming to you with the things that don't work that are not just tech buttons to push, then you are in
- Listen to people, care about what they tell you
- Ask follow-up questions
- Ask about things that you don't already know
- Ask open-ended questions.

Prove that you are listening and learning from that by not punishing people for telling the truth, and also by making changes where you can and then telling them about the changes, and why you made them.

Our experience, in conducting this research as well as in previous projects, is that people will tell you that they are glad to have a chance to talk and think about what their practices are, have been, and could be. Our research project was experienced as an act of care, by the participants.

Terms such as VLE or LMS, synchronous and asynchronous, Zoom, Teams, Hybrid, Hyflex and so on, all became part of the lexicon of teaching and learning during the pandemic. In that sense it is too easy to think that our collective response was about the utilisation of education technology. But that emphasis on technology misses the point. At the heart of our response were people and relationships, that's what you really need to understand: what people did, how did they feel and why did they do it. Given enough trust and time, people will tell you how they feel about their practices, what they want to do, and what they feel they have to do. Their felt and emotional experiences of their work (and yours) are important to know and understand, especially in our contexts where change is frequent and precarity constant. Knowing how people feel and why they feel that way is key to effective support and engagement.

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Donna Lanclos (donna.lanclos@ gmail.com) is a consultant and anthropologist; **Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin** is the Head of the Department of Technology Enhanced Learning, and **Tom Farrelly** is a Social Science Lecturer and Academic Developer, both at Munster University.

Poetry as a pedagogical tool: Unveiling the undergraduate experience

Sam Illingworth, Edinburgh Napier University, and **Mala Radhakrishnan,** Wellesley College, Massachusetts

Introduction

As the authors of the recent study, 'I am here because I wanted to shine: how poetry can be used to better understand undergraduate students' first-year chemistry or related course experiences' (Illingworth and Radhakrishnan, 2023), we are thrilled to have the opportunity to delve deeper into our research and its implications for the broader educational community. Originally published in the *Chemistry Education Research and Practice* journal, our study embarked on an innovative journey, employing poetry as a medium to gain a more profound understanding of the experiences of undergraduate students in their first year of chemistry or related courses.

The genesis of our study was rooted in the recognition that traditional methods of gauging student experiences often fall short of capturing the full spectrum of their journey. We hypothesised that poetry, a form of creative expression that allows for a uniquely personal exploration of complex emotions and experiences, could provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the undergraduate journey.

Our study involved a group of first-year undergraduate students enrolled in an integrated chemistry/biology undergraduate course at Wellesley College in the United States. Toward the end of the semester, we asked these students to write poems reflecting on their course experiences. We collected a total of 30 poems, each offering a unique perspective on a student's journey. We then conducted a thematic analysis of these poems to uncover common ideas, coded by labels, and to subsequently group these labels into categories, using a methodology called poetic content analysis (Illingworth, 2022). This innovative approach allowed us to gain a nuanced and integrated understanding of the students' academic, social, and emotional experiences.

The results of our study were illuminating. The students' poems revealed a rich tapestry of experiences, emotions, and insights that went beyond the academic realm. They spoke of the challenges and joys of learning, the sense of community they found, the emotional journey they embarked on, and the process of identity formation they were undergoing.

We are now describing this prior study in *Educational Developments* to share these insights with a broader audience. We believe that our findings have significant implications for academic and educational developers across all fields and disciplines. By understanding the student experience in its entirety, we can develop teaching strategies and support systems that address not only the academic aspect of education but also the emotional, social, and identity aspects.

Furthermore, our study underscores the value of creative expression as a tool for understanding student experiences. We found that poetry provided a unique and powerful

medium for students to express their experiences and emotions. This suggests that incorporating creative expression into the curriculum can provide valuable insights into the student experience and offer students a meaningful way to reflect on their learning journey. The central premise of our research is that poetry, as a form of creative expression, can provide a window into the emotional, social, and academic experiences of students. In particular, in our cohort, it revealed the complex interplay of knowledge acquisition, community building, emotional expression, and identity formation that characterised these students' experiences.

Understanding the undergraduate experience

The undergraduate experience is a complex journey that involves not only the acquisition of 'knowledge' but also the development of a sense of 'community', the negotiation of 'emotions', and the formation of 'identity'. Our research, whilst limited to a relatively small sample size, highlights these four categories as key aspects of these students' undergraduate experience, as revealed through their poetry.

Knowledge, as one would expect, is a central theme in the students' poems. The students expressed their experiences of learning new concepts, grappling with complex ideas, and the satisfaction of understanding. They also highlighted the challenges and struggles they faced in their learning journey, providing a nuanced view of the learning process, as exemplified by this excerpt from a student's poem:

> *'My ideas of the natural sciences grew and developed...*
> *And lastly, the material of this course*
> *From electron orbitals to DNA replication*
> *From the myriad of models with their grand limitations*
> *From spending hours on Pymol staring at amino acids*
> *To deciphering PCR lanes in evaluation*
> *I had so much fun learning about you...'*
>
> (Poem 8)

Community is another significant theme that emerged from the students' poetry. The students expressed a sense of belonging and camaraderie with their peers, forged through shared experiences in the classroom and beyond. They spoke of friendships formed, support received, and the sense of being part of a team. This highlights the importance of fostering a sense of community in educational settings, as it can enhance the learning experience and provide a support network for students:

> *'But everyone showed that they indeed really cared*
> *For the professors, the class, and also to me*
> *I have found friends I can sit with under a tree*
> *A hug a day keeps all of the pressure away*
> *Every time we meet I have so much to say*
> *I can't help but imagine, us the chaotic bunch*
> *When we're old ladies gossiping over lunch'*
>
> (Poem 4)

Emotions are vividly expressed in the students' poems, providing a raw and honest glimpse into their emotional landscape. The students expressed a range of emotions, from pride and determination to frustration and self-doubt. This underscores the emotional journey that accompanies the academic one, and the importance of acknowledging and addressing these emotions in an educational context:

> *'When your self-esteem's wrapped up in whether you do good*
> *or bad, it gets kinda hard to not get so sad'*
>
> (Poem 23)

Identity formation was another key theme that emerged from the students' poetry. The students expressed their struggles with imposter syndrome, their sense of self in relation to their peers, and their evolving identities as they navigated this challenging science class in their first semester of college. This highlights the importance of recognising and supporting the identity-formation process in students, as it can significantly impact their academic experience and overall wellbeing:

> *'Doubts stir,*
> *Thoughts whirl,*
> *Imposter syndrome occurs'*
>
> (Poem 17)

What was also particularly pleasing about this study was that many of the students would, unprompted, use scientific language creatively in their reflections, thereby demonstrating that they engaged with the course material in a sophisticated and unexpected manner. For example:

> *'Sometimes I feel I don't belong*
> *I should learn to be less*
> *My energy is just a sign*
> *of my unstableness'*
>
> *(Poem 5)*
>
> *'As words started to escape my professor's lips*
> *My positive emotions began to dissipate*
> *Like photons leaving an excited electron*
> *Returning it to its ground state'*
>
> *(Poem 3)*

Implications for academic and educational developers

The findings of our research have important implications for academic and educational developers. Firstly, they highlight that the student experience is indeed an integrated one and that students' experiences in an academic environment are clearly not just academic (Kahu, 2013). This holistic understanding can inform the development of teaching strategies and support systems that address these various aspects.

Secondly, the study underscores the value of creative expression as a tool for understanding student experiences (Carbonaro *et al.*, 2008). Poetry, in this case, provides a unique and powerful medium for students to express their experiences and emotions. This suggests that incorporating creative expression into teaching and learning strategies can provide valuable insights into the student experience and offer students a meaningful way to reflect on their learning journey.

Thirdly, this approach highlights that students truly notice and

appreciate when there is a sense of community (Nistor *et al*., 2015). The poems also suggest that the sense of belonging and support that comes from being part of a community can enhance the learning experience and contribute to student wellbeing. This suggests that strategies to build community and foster peer relationships should be an integral part of educational development.

Our work also brings attention to the emotional journey that accompanies the academic one (Beard *et al*., 2007). It also demonstrates how students are willing to express both positive and negative emotions through poetry, highlighting that this medium could yield information to enable educators to provide emotional support and related resources more adequately. The student poems collectively suggest that emotional intelligence should be considered in educational development, alongside academic skills and knowledge.

Lastly, our work demonstrates how poetry can be used as a tool within higher education to enable students to explore their own learning and teaching journeys. Whilst the narratives that emerged from our study should not be over-generalised beyond the students that we worked with, the concept of using poetry itself as a methodology/tool for exploring narratives is something that is easily adaptable to any classroom or learning environment and which we would encourage others to pursue.

Educators can benefit from how we have used poetry in our classroom setting and consider doing so in their own teaching strategies. Providing opportunities for creative expression can allow students to express their emotions and reflect on their learning journey. Furthermore, the use of poetry as a tool for understanding student experiences suggests that creative and innovative approaches can be valuable in education. Educators can consider incorporating creative elements into their teaching, such as creative writing, art, or music, to enhance learning and provide different avenues for students to express and reflect on their experiences.

Practical guidelines for using poetry in the classroom

The use of poetry as a pedagogical tool can be a powerful way to enhance learning and understanding. Here are some practical guidelines for incorporating poetry into your classroom:

- *Introduce poetry as a form of expression.* Start by introducing poetry as a form of expression. Explain that poetry is a way to express thoughts, feelings and experiences in a creative and personal way. Encourage students to be open and honest in their poetry and reassure them that there is no right or wrong way to write a poem
- *Engage with existing poems***.** Find some poems that relate to your course material or to the people in your field and read them aloud to the students. Ask them for their honest opinions on what they liked and/or disliked about the poetry and remind them that there are no wrong or right answers
- *Provide prompts.* Provide prompts to guide students in their poetry writing. The prompts can be related to the course material, or they can be more general, encouraging students to reflect on their experiences, emotions, or thoughts
- *Create a safe space.* Create a safe and supportive environment for students to share their poetry. Encourage students to listen and respond to each other's poetry with respect and empathy. This can help to foster a sense of community and mutual understanding among students
- *Incorporate poetry into course reflections.* Incorporate poetry into course reflections or assignments. This can provide a unique way for students to reflect on their learning and express their understanding of the course material
- *Use poetry as a discussion starter.* Use student's poems as a starting point for class discussions. This can provide a way to delve deeper into the course material, discover shared or diverse course experiences, and explore varied perspectives and interpretations
- *Encourage creative thinking.* Encourage students to think creatively and express their thoughts and feelings in unique and personal ways. This can help to foster creative thinking and enhance learning.

Limitations and next steps

Like all studies, our research has its limitations. Firstly, the small sample size of our study, which focused on one atypical course, limits the transferability of the particular categories found here to other classrooms. While the insights gained from the students' poems were rich and illuminating, they represent the experiences of a specific group of students in a particular context. Therefore, caution must be exercised when applying these findings to other contexts.

Secondly, the subjective nature of poetry analysis may mean that others could arrive at different emergent narratives from the same poems. Poetry is a deeply personal and subjective form of expression, and the interpretation of poetry can vary greatly among individuals. While we strived to analyse the poems in a systematic and objective manner, our interpretations are inevitably influenced by our own positionalities and biases.

Thirdly, our study does not compare reflective poetry with traditional methods of understanding student experiences, nor does it explore the benefits of reflective poetry for students. While our findings suggest that poetry can provide unique insights into the student experience, further research is needed to compare this method with traditional methods and to explore the potential and relative benefits for students.

Lastly, our study included only English language poems, which potentially creates a bias towards certain attitudes or behaviours. Language can significantly influence the way individuals express and interpret experiences, and by including only English language poems, we may have overlooked the experiences and perspectives of non-English speaking students.

Despite these limitations, our study opens several avenues for future research.

Firstly, to address the small sample size, we plan to replicate our study with other classes and students; the barrier to doing so is low because the approach itself is not specific to any

course or discipline. This will allow us to test the transferability of our findings and to explore the experiences of a broader range of students.

Secondly, to mitigate the subjective nature of poetry analysis, we plan to involve other coders in the analysis process. This will allow us to compare different interpretations and to enhance the reliability of our findings. We also plan to use focus groups to help further validate our understanding of the students' experiences and interpretations of their poems.

Thirdly, to explore both the benefits and challenges of using reflective poetry for students, we have begun to use focus groups as an avenue for students to evaluate their experiences using poetry in this way. We hope to continue this qualitative assessment approach and add more quantitative metrics to provide useful information that enables us to further refine our approach to mutually benefit both educators and students.

Lastly, to address the limitation of only including English language poems, we plan to explore how we might diversify our selection to include poems in other languages. This will allow us to explore the experiences and perspectives of non-English speaking students and to gain a more inclusive understanding of the student experience.

Conclusions and collaborations

In conclusion, while our study has its limitations, it also opens exciting possibilities for future research. It showed that for this cohort of students, their education was not just about imparting knowledge, but also about fostering community, acknowledging and addressing emotions, and supporting the identity-formation process. It is about understanding and supporting the whole student, in all their complexity and individuality. We look forward to continuing our exploration of poetry as a pedagogical and reflective tool and to contributing to the understanding of undergraduate experiences in their complexity and diversity.

We invite all educators and educational developers to consider the use of poetry as a useful tool in their classrooms. In our experience, using poetry in this way has not only provided valuable insights into the student experience but has also enriched the learning environment. It has allowed our students to express their thoughts and feelings in a creative and personal way, highlighted the importance of community and belonging, and provided a unique avenue for reflection and understanding.

If you are interested in collaborating, or if you have any questions or thoughts about our research, we invite you to get in touch. It is crucial that we holistically acknowledge the student experience, actively cultivating a sense of belonging. As such it is imperative to recognise and address emotional complexities and foster support mechanisms for the process of identity formation. In doing so, the profound potential of creative expression should not be overlooked, given its capacity to offer unique perspectives into the student's journey.

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Sam Illingworth (s.illingworth@napier.ac.uk) is an Associate Professor at Edinburgh Napier University, and **Mala Radhakrishnan** (mradhakr@wellesley.edu) is a Professor at Wellesley College, Massachusetts.

Designing mandatory workshops for postgraduates who teach

Hazel Corradi, University of Bath

Background of the institution and PGWT teaching

Like many research-intensive universities, we have large numbers of doctoral students who we rely on to support teaching. Doctoral students can be paid on fractional or occasional contracts to lead seminars, support or take a more leading role in lab or computer lab classes and lead workshop-style tutorials. They can also be employed to mark (usually non-credit bearing) work. The university expects each department to induct and support their postgraduate teachers in the tasks they are employed to do. In addition, postgraduate teachers are also expected to do a one-day introductory teaching workshop at or near the start of their teaching, usually provided by the central development team. In order to support all postgraduate teachers, the team would run 8-10 of these workshops over the year for up to 30 attendees at a time.

Background to the workshop

This introductory teaching workshop had run for a number of years when I was asked to take over its organisation and its redesign a few years ago. I was aware of some aspects of the session from having gone in to support parts around 'demonstrating in labs', being a scientist. I also inherited a collection of shared PowerPoints that had been made with plenty of cartoon images and activities to get the postgraduate teachers to think through what they might be trying to do. The overall learning outcomes for the day, as listed on an early slide, included describing what underpins effective teaching and learning support in HE, with the hope that in future they would be able to apply the techniques they had learnt about to their contexts and then evaluate their effectiveness. Activities to support this learning included discussing expectations and how they, as students, learn, and discussing scenarios, issues and tasks involving explanations and micro-teaching. Importantly, the workshop always included a brief chat from representatives of the student welfare support team to explain to the postgraduate teachers what support there is for distressed students, and how to refer any distressed students they come across in their classes to the support centre. The session split into groups in the afternoon to allow the postgraduate teachers to focus on discussing how to run seminars, how to demonstrate in labs, and/or sometimes an option to discuss maths teaching.

Reflecting on feedback and experience

At the point when I took over the planning, I had time to rethink our approach. As part of this, I was able to attend a newly convened small group of interested parties from the doctoral college, the student union and the staff union, as well as some students, to discuss issues around the recruitment, training, support and conditions of postgraduate teachers. As someone who at various points had been a postgraduate teacher and a lecturer who worked with postgraduate teachers in computer labs and maths workshops, I was able to provide a range of insights. But what was useful to me, was to find out about the annual survey of experiences of postgraduate teachers the student union ran, and what the feedback was on the one-day introductory teaching workshop. Although the data was not comprehensive, the feeling was that students found the workshop too general and too theoretical.

The feeling of generality was understandable as a one-day workshop could never specifically address the teaching situations of students from across many departments. The complaint that it was too theoretical was not true from an objective standpoint, as the course only briefly touched on key theories around learning outcomes, constructivism, the zone of proximal development and reflective practice. However, the majority of our postgraduate teachers are scientists and engineers for whom these ideas must feel a long way from their home discipline. Additionally, as I knew from my experience of being and working with postgraduate teachers, they did not all necessarily aspire to be teachers, but often agreed to help out in labs primarily either to support their PhD supervisor or earn some money. Therefore, their expectation was more practically focused. Another issue I was aware of was that doing marking was often the biggest worry of these students. They felt that they might not know enough, and in some cases, struggled to know how to mark work, or worried about how long it took them to mark. Obviously, this hadn't been addressed in detail, as in a generic one-day workshop teaching students how to mark in every discipline, or for every module leader, is not possible.

The new workshop design

As an academic staff developer, there are many things one can do to support postgraduate teachers, and I am aware of institutions that have much longer courses, or courses that are linked to HEA fellowships, but this re-design needed to work within the resource and university regulations that were already in place, and that meant providing, at most, a one-day workshop. Even so, I was aware that the training that the postgraduates would probably benefit most from, would be a bespoke course for their discipline, run by their department. This would address two aspects of the feedback the students' union collected: that of the generality of the training, but also feedback that suggested some students did not feel a part of their department teaching teams. But as there had never been an expectation that departments would deliver any specific training for their postgraduate teachers, this was not something I could enact by myself. Some departments did have academics that specifically coordinated and supported their postgraduate teachers, and a few did run training for them. In other departments, support and guidance were provided as and when by module leaders, which meant, in practice, that some students were well supported and there were other times when things fell through the cracks.

So, at least as a first attempt, my only option was to work with the content of the workshop. In doing so I decided the most important principle I wanted them to grasp was that learning is about what the student does. Particularly as they will all be 'teaching' in settings designed for active student learning (labs, workshops, seminars). To achieve this, I would either model the teaching activities they might be doing themselves, so they could experience participating in them, or where possible, get the postgraduate teachers to try out the teacher role. This would build on the activities I had inherited, but where possible, make it even more practical. The other main choice I made in order to facilitate this, was to split the workshop into two alternative workshops depending on the type of teaching the postgraduate teacher was likely to be doing. From my long experience at the university, I knew that whilst postgraduate teachers in health and social sciences often had to lead seminars by themselves, and be responsible for the planning of them, postgraduate teachers in science and engineering often only worked as a group, with a lecturer, and did not have any creative input into the design of the session. Their role was to support students through conversations with individuals and small groups. This split of the workshop into two alternatives meant that each class could then focus on the activities that were most useful for that type of teaching, and that the workshop would hopefully feel less general, as we could spend time talking about 'leading seminars' and 'demonstrating', rather than the more generic 'teaching'.

Learning by doing – Seminar leaders

The training for seminar leaders remained a one-day workshop and covered the range of activities they might need to engage with, from planning to delivery to evaluation. As this group

was mostly in disciplines allied to education, it made sense to signpost some of the theory as the group members were more likely to appreciate it. But to get it out of the way, and to make a contrast to active teaching, I delivered it cold without any introduction for 20 minutes at the start as an example of what not to do. If I had more performance ability, I might have tried to do it badly deliberately, but probably what I achieved was 'OK but not particularly stimulating'. The fun part was finishing and then asking them to critique what I'd done. I would always start by asking for the positives, as I thought they might not want to start their interaction with me in criticism, and then once we'd got going, get onto what is less ideal about lecturing, moving onto considering when students learn the most and the advantages of activities and active learning.

After that, the class was a series of activities including planning a learning session and a microteaching experience. In the afternoon, we would move to an explicit seminar format where I, or another student, would facilitate a seminar discussion on the topic of facilitating seminars. I found a great reflective (and short!) paper by Andrew Wilson (1980) where he discusses the various ways in which he has developed his seminars over time; the students were asked to read this before they came. The paper itself contains several good ideas they could try, but by attempting to discuss it as a seminar we quickly identified other common difficulties, such as, some not having read the paper, others being shy to talk, and not giving enough time to all the topics. By prompting the postgraduate teachers to share their experience of seminars they had been in as a student, we were able to share good practice, but also model how they might get their students talking in their classes.

The last section started with a free-form test where I asked them to write down all the things they had learnt that day. This was to prompt reflection and to help them rehearse ideas that they might want to take away, but it also provided a bridge into discussing marking. After the brief 'test', I asked them to swap their papers and mark their peers. They usually found this faintly ridiculous, with good cause, as I hadn't said what to mark it out of or offered any criteria. There was often a felt need to make fun of the process to lighten the tension and to remove the gravity from anything they wrote on the script. Usually, no one wanted to give a bad mark, but there was a split between those that decided just to give A and write 'excellent', and those that went for a more nuanced 'B+'. Obviously, they were aware that these marks were meaningless, but it provided a good gateway into discussing marking and how we know what marks to award for a piece of work. Obviously, I still couldn't tell them how to mark work in their departments, but I did make sure they were aware of where the responsibilities lay for supporting them with and checking the marking (the module leader), and gave them a list of questions to ask (e.g. are there marking criteria, what is the expected average mark for this type of work, who else is marking this, is there a marked example, is there an opportunity for standardisation?), if they were ever assigned marking without instructions.

Learning by doing – Demonstrating

My suspicion was that the 'too much theory' complaint had probably come from the scientists and engineers who did demonstrating. So I thought maybe the best way to increase engagement was to remove all mention of theory altogether, and just present the key learning as activities. As the scope of their role was less, I thought we could then make this workshop a half-day workshop, to reduce resentment, with the idea that if they then went on to take a more responsible role in teaching, or were genuinely interested, they could take the other workshop at a later point.

To illustrate the key point of learning by doing, we would take a poll of which activities they felt they had learnt the most from on their degree, and usually these would be active ones such as coursework or projects. From there, it wasn't too hard to argue that with the correct encouragement, students might also be able to learn in labs and workshops, even if their experience of them had not been uniformly good.

The other two key activities of the session were to get them to practise asking questions in a response to a question, rather than giving an answer, to encourage their students to think for themselves. The first of these activities focused on the sorts of questions that might get asked in a laboratory session, whereas the second focused on the sensitivities of doing this in a math/calculation worksheet scenario. The latter can be particularly challenging, both because of the postgraduate teacher's potential lack of confidence with the material, meaning they might only know how to do it 'their way', but also because some students lack confidence with calculations and find it easy to give up. I would try and convince them that it is better in a workshop for a student to work out one example on their own (or with a partner), than to 'cover' all the material on the board, especially if that had already been done by the course leader. We also discussed marking, but as I hadn't really taught them anything, the ruse of a test wouldn't have worked. Instead, I asked the postgraduate teachers to generate questions in groups about aspects of marking and feedback they were worried about, and we then discussed these as a class.

In both training options, we still invited the student welfare support team to share their messages, we discussed options for collecting feedback for reflective practice, and I advertised the opportunities to pursue an associate HEA fellowship if they were keen.

Did it work?

Gratifyingly, the year we launched it, most of the sessions went to plan with students getting involved in the activities. Small in-class evaluations showed that many students were content with the new design and enjoyed the activities and the discussion. Even better, the students' union survey suggested that the students who had attended the newer version of the training had perceived it as more relevant and practical. I was all ready to start fixing other issues with the training, such as the timing of the sessions and the few cases where students had not known which training to attend, when COVID hit… but that's another story.

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Dr Hazel Corradi is an Academic Staff Developer at the University of Bath.

Imposter phenomenon in academic developers: Stories, sparring and solace?

Tom Cunningham, Fiona Kennedy and **Tracy Galvin,** Glasgow Caledonian University

Introduction

This article shares our story of using a digital storytelling methodology to enhance our practice. We are all senior lecturers in academic development at Glasgow Caledonian University, but with varied backgrounds and diverse routes to our current roles. As a new team (with two of us joining the university recently), in a sector emerging from the challenges related to the pandemic, we hoped to use digital storytelling as a means of connection and team building. Interestingly, a common narrative emerged in all three of our individual stories: imposter phenomenon. This is something which we all had fought against, and continue to fight with, in our careers.

The structure of the article is that Section 1 (Stories) outlines the methodology used and why we used it, Section 2 (Sparring) explores our findings, in particular highlighting our ongoing sparring with our imposter thoughts, and Section 3 (Solace?) draws on recent literature to argue that imposter thoughts are, perhaps, not universally detrimental, but might help in key aspects of our roles. We conclude by sharing two reflections on the applicability of the digital storyboarding approach we adopted.

Stories

Digital storytelling has been used in a variety of settings. Educational outcomes have been reported as including increased learner confidence, critical thinking, collaborative abilities, technical skills, and development of research skills. Learning opportunities are afforded through the process of creating and producing the digital story, whilst communication and collaboration both support engagement with the planning and sharing aspects of storytelling.

We used an established digital storytelling methodology to explore our routes into academic development (Wu and Chen, 2020). Digital storytelling tends to follow a broadly similar format involving storytelling and sharing, storyboarding, story creation, and finally a return to storytelling and sharing (see Figure 1). Whilst appearing somewhat rigid in structure, the digital storytelling process often is punctuated by a return to the storytelling and sharing stage. The nature of regrouping with others allows individuals to share progress, ideas, and experiences, in a collaborative environment.

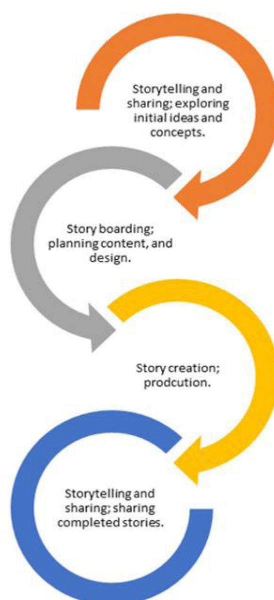

Figure 1 The digital storytelling process

Stage 1: Exploring initial ideas and concepts

The first stage in digital storytelling is focused on participants coming together, sharing ideas, and exploring initial concepts and ideas. The mantra 'share stories, listen deeply', coined by Jo Lambert, founder and executive director of Storycentre (2023), exemplifies the expectations associated with this preliminary stage in storytelling, with participants each being given a chance to talk about their unique take on a topic or theme, with others listening actively, and responding accordingly.

Having identified that we wanted to learn about our career paths, we came together to discuss our initial thoughts on an agreed question: 'What led us into academic development?' We each told our story, listened to each other and asked questions to help us understand more about the decisions that had informed our careers to date. It became apparent at this initial stage that our experiences were richly diverse, therefore listening deeply was not difficult to achieve. Our conversation flowed openly and easily, prompting us to share additional detail related to our career journeys.

At the conclusion of our initial session, we agreed to go away and create individual digital stories that reflected our unique paths. We allowed ourselves the choice of how we would design and produce our stories and agreed a timeline for coming back together as a group to share our stories in a 'show and tell' type session.

Stage 2: Storyboarding

The storyboarding stage involves the planning of the digital story in terms of content and assets (*i.e.* images, illustrations, *etc*.). Acting as a graphic organiser, the storyboard provides a means of conceptualising the beginning, middle and end of the story, therefore offering a logical structure. The key points of the story are captured in sequence allowing the narrative to evolve. Assets are identified to represent and communicate the content of the story and are noted at the relevant part of the storyboard.

Working individually, we developed our own storyboards, planning our content and assets accordingly. In relation to the content of our stories, we used our initial story-sharing session to inform our thinking and give us ideas about the specific part of our career narrative that we would like to share. We opted not to return to the story-sharing group after storyboarding or story creation, with the aim that we would share our digital stories and reflect on the process of planning and creating these, in our planned show and tell event.

Stage 3: Story creation

The story creation stage involves the curation of visuals and audio and the production of a digital story. Whilst

technical skills are a component of story creation, there is a plethora of digital tools, apps, and platforms available to support a diverse range of digital literacies. Story creation is a creative process, with the look and feel of the story crafted by the individual. At this stage in the digital storytelling journey visuals are selected or created, narratives are recorded, and music is sourced – all dependent on the design created by the individual and reflective of their own choices and decisions.

Having agreed that we would each select our own tools for story creation, we embarked on the production process independently. Again, we did not regroup to share progress and found ourselves fuelled by our curiosity as to how we would all approach the design and production of our digital story.

Stage 4: Sharing completed stories

The final stage in digital storytelling is the sharing of the end product. At this point, individual stories are presented, with group members returning to the Lambert and Hessler (2017) concept of listening deeply. In contrast with the beginning of the process, story sharing is facilitated through engagement with the digital media rather than being presented by the individual as a set of ideas, as they did at the start. The sharing of digital stories offers an opportunity for celebration and exploration of the stories and brings the storytelling journey to a close, though individuals can of course take their stories and share them with other audiences of their choosing.

Our three stories were diverse in terms of design, structure, media used and the ways in which we produced them – including the use of video, music, and interactive art. Even this difference told a story in that one was mostly a PowerPoint images and voiceover, another a vodcast with text and upbeat music, and the third a Flipgrid with mostly text and some images. This opened up interesting discussions as to why we had selected specific formats in addition to providing us with a rich insight into the complexity of our respective career journeys into academic development. Our discussions revealed similarities permeating our stories, as well as the differences in our paths to date.

Sparring

Our stories revealed differences in our routes into academic development. One of us fell into the role almost by accident, having moved from a traditional academic department into widening access and student support. Another made a conscious decision to enter academic development for the joy of teaching in HE, instead of taking on more administrative leadership roles in their original discipline. Another who started in teacher education made more of a natural sideways move when the post was divided into lecturing and academic practice.

Despite these differences some common threads between us were revealed. The deeply personal nature of our stories each emphasised the importance of context and the world around us, and how that has shaped our careers and lives. We did not consciously set out to share stories of trauma or challenge in our lives, but due to the safe space established and the trust we developed through conversation, we all shared our lived experiences. This allowed us to connect as people and not just as work colleagues or academic developers. Doing this helped create empathy and emotional connection, fostering a deeper understanding of our thinking and taught processes. In sharing stories, we helped create a sense of community, continuing into further supporting one another and collaborating on different projects. Increasing our sense of belonging as part of a community, allowed us to develop resilience not to fear making mistakes, feeling vulnerable, or having internal or external conflicts working in a continually changing environment and within a role that is often seen as firefighting and fixing the problems of others.

The key theme which featured in each of our stories was imposter phenomenon (IP). Often referred to as imposter syndrome, IP leads individuals to believe that they do not deserve the success they have achieved or belong in the role they have attained. For us, IP appeared in different ways in our routes into academic development. One of us felt that academic development was not recognised as 'real' teaching, that without formal training or qualifications for the role it could never be as respected as much as 'genuine' teaching. Another was worried that colleagues would see them as a failed academic, someone who couldn't make it in their discipline so turned to academic development as another, fallback, option. They worried, therefore, that no one would listen to their perspective or value what they had to say. Another worried about their academic credibility as a senior lecturer with them having a doctorate level qualification. Would staff respond negatively if they knew this?

These imposter thoughts were, both individually and collectively in our discussions, challenged. We are all experienced in critical reflection, able to rationalise our value and worth. An ongoing sparring emerged: between imposter thoughts and other positive, evidence-based, thoughts about the effectiveness, impact, and scope of our work. We know from feedback and recognition how effective we have been supporting staff colleagues, we have received teaching awards and other professional recognition, we have each presented at international conferences and published in peer reviewed journals, and all of us have contributed to other development work in the sector. The ongoing sparring between our rational and justified knowledge on the one hand, and the emotional and personal doubts on the other, was revealed through our conversations. We each felt we had made progress in challenging our IP, but that it was an ongoing challenge.

These discussions enabled us to reflect on the scale of, and expectations on, academic development work over the past three years. Significant demands have been placed on academic developers due to the pandemic to be the 'superheroes' of learning and teaching (Boyd *et al*.. 2021; Cunningham and Cunningham, 2022). We had to, almost overnight, become experts in online, blended and hybrid learning and lead institutional-level changes. More recently, the rise of generative artificial intelligence has seen academic developers once again

placed on the front line supporting academic staff to meet new challenges. We reflected that this, for us, has exacerbated this sparring with IP.

Solace?

Imposter thoughts, and the role they play, have long been recognised in academia. 'Imposter syndrome' often comes up in the classes we teach, and the discussions we have with colleagues. It is, as Wilkinson (2020) notes, often something we are just expected to accept, deal with, or simply to tell others we all have at some point or another. It may even be seen as something funny, or even a rite of passage for academics.

However, the underlying effects of imposter syndrome – from sleepless nights to stage fright, as we have recounted in this paper – are not, nor should be, considered comedic or 'a fact of life', and should be addressed (Wilkinson, 2020, p. 30).

Rudenga and Gravett (2019) demonstrate the prevalence of IP in academic developers. They discuss the nuances involved; whereas IP often features in early career or early transitions for 'traditional' academics, routes into academic development are (as we have shown) often varied and different, coming at different stages in careers. Some might not have experienced IP when teaching students in their discipline, only for it to emerge when teaching staff. Given this prevalence and scope, they argue for increased awareness of, and empathy for, IP within the academic development community.

The prevailing wisdom is that IP is overwhelmingly detrimental to individuals. There is no doubt, reflecting on our experiences, that our imposter thoughts have been difficult and challenging for us to overcome. Most often we could have done without them. Recent literature (Tewfik, 2022) has, however, argued against the view that IP is uniformly detrimental. Imposter thoughts may, sometimes, lead to enhanced interpersonal effectiveness through what Tewfik calls 'other-focused orientation'. This is because such thoughts take us away from our perspective to the perspective of others about us. This can, she argues, have positive outcomes in terms of how others see us, and how hard we work in certain contexts.

There may be some solace for us, then, as academic developers. Our imposter thoughts might, in some cases, make us more attuned to and sensitive towards the needs and thoughts of others. Perhaps, in some cases, these thoughts make us more effective listeners and more effective developers, and, indeed, seen to be more effective in the eyes of others. We may also be motivated to work harder, or smarter, to meet others' expectations. If so, there is a potential upside to having some imposter thoughts.

IP is undoubtedly a challenge for those who have it and can cause great pain and doubt. The thought here is to consider how imposter thoughts may sometimes help with the personal connections vital to our role as academic developers. Our reaction to this was to feel (a little) relieved, but also that we should be kinder and more forgiving to ourselves. The last three years have been particularly challenging, so we should reflect on the good as well as the difficulties.

Conclusion

If we can take some solace in the, albeit limited, value of IP in relation to our roles, what about the applicability of the digital storyboarding methodology we used? We will end with two thoughts on the process.

First, we found value in the sharing of our stories with each other. This came both from the crafting and the telling of our stories, as well as the listening to each other. In this way, our findings mirror that of Kensington-Miller *et al*. (2015), that the process of sharing our stories can be both productive and healing for us as academic developers. This might not provide the answers, if indeed such a thing is possible, but it did help us understand each other and the complexities around our roles.

Second, while we started with the intention of enhancing our understanding of ourselves and each other in relation to our careers, the digital storytelling process enabled our awareness of the ways in which we approach projects and allowed us to find out and share more about ourselves, helping us to develop and connect as a team. As we move forward, informed by our positive experiences of using digital storytelling, we are keen to explore how our imposter thoughts change over time, and the impact this has on our work.

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Tom Cunningham (tom.cunningham@gcu.ac.uk), **Fiona Kennedy** (fiona.kennedy2@gcu.ac.uk), and **Tracy Galvin** (tracy.galvin@gcu.ac.uk) are all Senior Lecturers in Academic Development at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Staying afloat: Designing an academic buoyancy workshop to bridge the gap between study skills and student wellbeing in an arts university

Benjamin Olsen, Arts University Bournemouth

Introduction

Student mental health is a key concern in contemporary higher education, with demand on services doubling between 2015 and 2020 (Hughes, 2020), and nearly half of students feeling that mental health difficulties negatively impact their university experience (Pandey, 2022). This has consequences for learning and academic performance and the relationship can be seen as transactional, *i.e.* it works in the opposite direction, with poor academic performance affecting general wellbeing. There is a clear need to decrease stressors and build resilience in our students, and this is particularly urgent in arts universities where 'the likelihood of a mental health problem…is three times that of the general population' (Shorter *et al*., 2018, p. 5).

This article seeks to address the gap between academic support and wellbeing provision, and explore whether a proactive workshop, which promotes a toolkit of skills that aim to increase academic buoyancy, can help to bridge that gap. It is suggested that such a workshop can improve both academic performance and general wellbeing. I will begin with a definition and discussion of academic buoyancy, and a brief contextual literature review before documenting the design and creation of my own academic buoyancy workshop. I will then reflect on the process and discuss the results from a small-scale feedback questionnaire.

Academic buoyancy

Academic buoyancy can be defined as 'students' ability to successfully deal with academic setbacks and challenges that are typical of the ordinary course of school [or university] life' (Martin and Marsh, 2008, p. 3). It focuses on the 'inevitable ups and downs of everyday life in the academic context' (*ibid*.). These ups and downs can include things like poor grades, perceived negative feedback from tutors, dips in motivation, anxiety leading to procrastination, time management of multiple projects, high stress, and low confidence – things which can affect all students, including students in creative arts disciplines.

Students can become more buoyant 'through the development of positive cognitive, affective and behavioural orientations to school and academic life' (Martin and Marsh, 2009, p. 354). Abdellatif (2020, p. 2366) found that 'high academic average students have a high level of academic buoyancy', demonstrating that it is a valuable quality to promote, and goes on to recommend developing academic buoyancy for undergraduate students 'to improve their abilities and skills in dealing with academic pressures and challenges and to solve their problems flexibly'. Gareth Hughes, co-author of the University Mental Health Charter (Hughes and Spanner, 2019) believes 'we can support our students by helping them to identify practical and effective ways to improve their wellbeing and learning'.

Academic buoyancy is related to, but differs from, the field of academic resilience, a more recognisable term. Academic resilience concerns certain groups of students who face chronic background adversity in their life, such as poverty, racial inequality or disability, and describes their capacity to overcome that adversity in their academic performance. While academic resilience focuses on a section of students, academic buoyancy addresses issues that affect all students. I wanted my workshop to be suitable and inclusive for all students, whether they face any background external adversity or not. It is expected that effective academic buoyancy provision would have a positive effect on academic resilience anyway. It may be important here to note that resilience and buoyancy are inevitably linked with students' existing cultural and educational capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and that perhaps not all students would need this kind of workshop. However, I believe that many students would benefit from it.

An academic buoyancy workshop would seek to emphasise good practice in students' academic experience, not in their lives outside university (general wellbeing), and provide a toolkit of practical skills and ways of thinking to use in their studies. Hughes (2020) describes an anxiety loop (Figure 1), in which increased anxiety leads to avoidance or poor study skills and subsequent poor academic performance, which in turn leads back to increased anxiety.

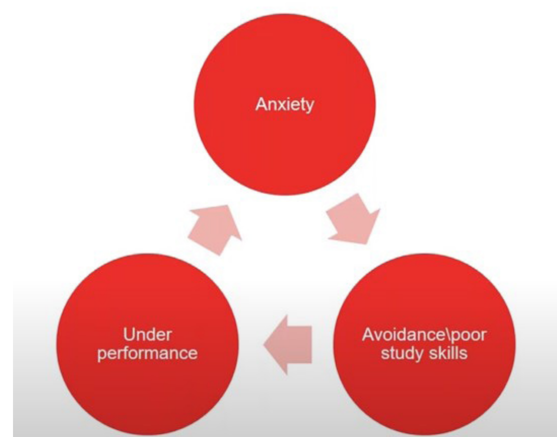

Figure 1 Hughes' anxiety loop (2019)

Hughes suggests that if you intervene and change the loop you can attempt to make it positive, thereby improving performance and wellbeing at the same time. A workshop on academic buoyancy represents such an intervention. Kritikou and Giovazolias (2022, p. 10) state that 'feeling supported and having optimal learning experiences during their [students'] academic life is meaningful, life-enhancing, and resonates in students' later lives', which suggests that academic buoyancy provision has the additional benefit of better preparing our students for life post-university, resonating with the wider issue of employability and Graduate Attributes in Higher Education (Advance HE, 2020a).

Academic buoyancy is aligned with positive psychology, which 'focuses on how interpersonal and ecological factors create nurturing environments and positive institutions' (Kritikou and Giovazolias, 2022) and also with Self-Determination Theory, which 'assumes that humans are active, working to integrate new material into their own sense of self' (Jeno *et al*., 2018).

Not everyone agrees with an intervention of this kind. Tewell (2020, p. 138) links such an approach, as well as the wider field of positive psychology, to an outdated deficit model of education, which 'focuses on learners' weaknesses, including the knowledge, motivation, or cultural values that they presumably lack'. This can require marginalised learners, or those with less capital, to put in the most work, thereby maintaining inequality and masking structural problems by blaming the individual rather than the system. However, I believe that Tewell's suggestion of taking larger social factors into consideration can co-exist with a workshop offering tools to improve buoyancy. As well as working to change the system (long-term), we can usefully equip students to flourish within that existing system in the meantime (short-term), no matter how unsatisfactory it is currently.

These skills would no doubt be best taught in students' courses as part of their curricula, as 'the literature is unequivocal that high impact student learning occurs when communication skills are integrated within disciplinary learning and assessment' (Maldoni, 2017, p. 105). However, due to timetable pressures and the fact that many universities operate the 'bolt-on' approach to Study Skills provision and academic support (White and Lay, 2019), an extra-curricular workshop of this kind could be the only/most suitable context.

Designing an academic buoyancy workshop

According to Martin and Marsh, an academic buoyancy workshop needs to '(a) explicitly [address] students' problem-focused coping in response to (b) their everyday academic hassles, stressors, and strains' (2008, p. 9). The underpinning concepts that I wanted to include, based on my research into academic buoyancy, were *positivity, engagement, motivation, (reduced) anxiety, reflection* and *feedback*. These ideas correlated with Martin and Marsh's (2009) '5 Cs' of intervention: control, confidence (high self-efficacy), coordination (high planning), composure (low anxiety) and commitment (high persistence), but are more useful and practicable as stages for a lesson and enabled me to prepare a lesson plan.

The structure of my workshop:

1. I planned to begin the workshop by outlining Carol Dweck's Fixed and Growth Mindsets (2014) accompanied by a Mindset Questionnaire to personalise the topic. This activity would address the concept of *positivity* and enable students to consider the benefits of a growth mindset.
2. Next, I planned to present the notion of building an emotional connection to the students' work. Intrinsic, emotional connection leads to *engagement*, enjoyment, and increased wellbeing (Hughes, 2020). Through personalised discussion, I wanted students to consider their connections to their own work.
3. Then, I intended to emphasise the value of an iterative process to students' creative work, but also their written submissions. This section included a poem which I would offer to the students to read aloud or read aloud myself if no volunteers. Along with an open, sharing discussion on tips to combat procrastination, I wanted to address the principle of *motivation* to work consistently and iteratively throughout projects, avoiding last-minute stress close to deadline.
4. I then included some of my own institution's materials on planning and time management, factors which are important to buoyancy (Abdellatif, 2020, p. 2363; Martin and Marsh, 2009). I planned to emphasise the use of a weekly planner, to-do lists and the concept of planning backwards from deadlines (Figures 2 and 3). This control over an assignment would seek to *reduce anxiety*.

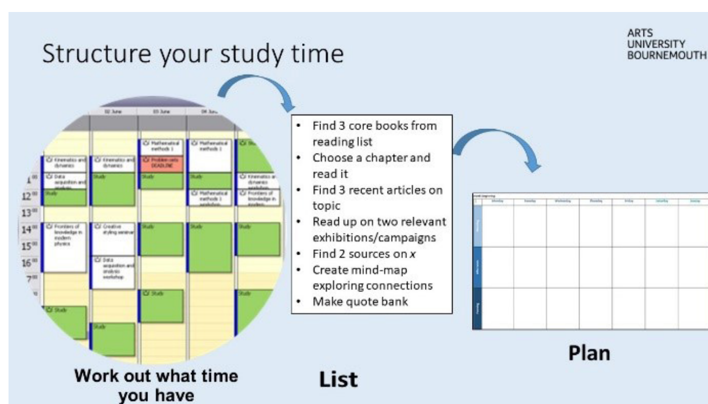

Figure 2 Time management advice (2023)

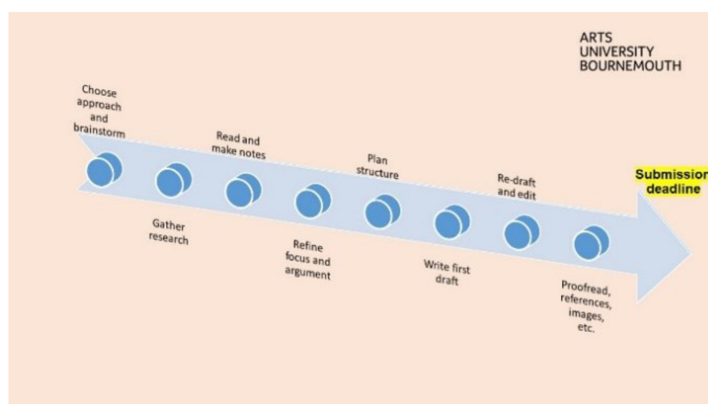

Figure 3 Assignment Timeline (2023)

5. Next, I planned to focus on the practice of *reflection*, using a Jelly baby tree (Figure 4) to lead some guided visualisation questions, with students reflecting in their notebooks. Reflective learning helps to increase confidence and positive attribution (when students realise their success is down to themselves) (Hughes, 2020). I tried to keep the exercise general and up-beat, offering scope for students to reflect deeply if they wanted to, or on a more surface level if there was a possibility that reflection could counter-productively cause anxiety. 'Emotions may affect reflections negatively…[and]…it behoves us to introduce Reflection sensitively' (Martin, 2020).
6. I planned to finish by addressing tutor feedback on assignments and link this with fixed and growth mindsets to facilitate a discussion on positive ways to engage with *feedback*.

Figure 4 Jelly baby tree: Art therapy with children and young people (2017)

Overall, I tried to pitch the workshop as a toolkit of skills and ways of thinking that could be used to mitigate academic setbacks and negative emotions and, if used regularly and diligently, could protect against risk from future academic challenges. Perhaps it could protect against adversity while it is minor and before it can turn into something major. Martin and Marsh present buoyancy as the 'ongoing proactive frontline response to [minor] academic adversity' (2009, p. 357).

The workshop – reflections and feedback

My pilot workshop took place in April, in-person on campus. It was attended by five students from different courses and levels. The students signed up through choice. The low attendance may have been down to the time of the year, it being the start of the summer term and so soon after Easter. Students may be entering 'the home straight' rather than seeing the need to equip themselves with better general academic skills. On reflection, I wonder if October would be a better time for this type of session, when students have a whole academic year ahead of them.

I endeavoured to make the workshop relaxed and informal by having an unhurried start and some informal chat as people entered. This was easy in a small group and fostered a psychologically safe learning environment (Advance HE, 2020b), creating the opportunity for discussion throughout the session. From a tutor's perspective, the session went well, with students active and engaged. I created two feedback questionnaires to capture the student perspective. Both questionnaires were adapted from Martin and Marsh's academic buoyancy 'items' (Figure 5), with some of the wording changed to suit undergraduate students.

Appendix

Academic Buoyancy Items

(Time 1 Cronbach's α = .80; Time 2 Cronbach's α = .82; Test-retest r = .67)

"I'm good at dealing with setbacks at school (e.g., negative feedback on my work, poor results)".

"I don't let study stress get on top of me".

"I think I'm good at dealing with schoolwork pressures".

"I don't let a bad mark affect my confidence".

Figure 5 Martin and Marsh's academic buoyancy 'items' (2008)

I used a five-point Likert-type scale (strongly agree-strongly disagree) and the questionnaires were anonymous; I asked students to leave them in a pile at the end of the session. The data is self-reported, which raises issues of impression and bias, but in a small-scale study of this type, that seemed inevitable. The first questionnaire was designed to establish whether students thought there was a need for an academic buoyancy workshop, and was delivered at the start of the session (Figure 6).

Pre-session

1. Please tick an answer for the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am good at dealing with study stress	○	✓	○	○	○
I feel calm and in control of my uni work	○	○	○	✓	○
I feel confident when I receive an assignment	○	○	○	○	✓
I am good at dealing with setbacks (e.g bad marks, negative feedback on my work)	○	✓	○	○	○
I think I am a resilient student	○	✓	○	○	○

Post-session

1. Please tick an answer for the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think using these tools will help me deal with stress	○	○	○	○	✓
I think using these tools will make me more confident	○	○	○	○	✓
I think using these tools will help me feel in control	○	○	○	✓	○
I think using these tools will make me more resilient	○	○	○	○	✓
I think these tools should be taught regularly at university	○	○	○	○	✓

Figures 6 and 7 Pre-and post-session questionnaires (2023)

Results – pre-session questionnaire

Three out of five students ticked Disagree for the statement 'I am good at dealing with study stress'. Three out of five students ticked Disagree for the statement 'I feel calm and in control of my uni work'. These results could be seen as establishing a need for academic buoyancy input to help students better deal with stress and anxiety. Three out of five students ticked either Agree or Strongly Agree to the statement 'I feel confident when I receive an assignment'. This could be interpreted that those in the sample did not feel they needed help at the outset of assignments. Results for the statement 'I am good at dealing with setbacks' were mixed, offering no pattern or insight. Four out of five students ticked Disagree or Strongly Disagree for 'I think I am a resilient student'. This can be seen as representing a need for academic buoyancy/resilience input.

The second questionnaire was designed to establish whether there was a perceived benefit to the session, and it was delivered at the end of the session in the same anonymous way as the first (Figure 7).

Results – post-session questionnaire

The statements were: *I think using these tools will help me deal with stress. I think using these tools will make me more confident. I think using these tools will help me feel in control. I think using these tools will make me more resilient. I think these tools should be taught regularly at university*.

All students ticked either Agree or Strongly Agree to all statements. The results of this questionnaire could be seen as proof that students in the sample perceived a benefit from the workshop. However, in such a small sample and intimate setting, it might be wise to exercise caution and consider issues of politeness, shyness, and bias. It would be interesting to re-issue the questionnaires in larger groups in the future.

Conclusion

In summary, the literature suggests there is a need for, and a benefit to, input on academic buoyancy skills for university students, and particularly our students in creative arts universities. Academic buoyancy is a fundamental aspect of students' experience and is connected to the wider issue of student mental health in higher education. From my own practice in the privileged setting of one-to-one tutorials with students, I also see a need for greater help in developing buoyancy skills, such as time management and responding constructively to feedback. My workshop was successful, albeit on a small scale, and the feedback seemed to support the necessity and benefits of academic buoyancy input. The results of the pre-session questionnaire supported the hypothesis that there is a need for academic buoyancy provision, and the results of the post-session questionnaire established that there was a perceived benefit to the workshop among the cohort. In the future it would be useful and informative to run the workshop again with a larger sample and at a different time of the academic year, perhaps at the start of term, when engagement and motivation levels may already be high. Overall, I believe academic buoyancy to be a valuable topic of research in creative arts higher education.

Figure references

Fig. 1. Hughes' anxiety loop (2019) [webinar, screenshot] (at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07HwfTi1DPg).

Fig. 2. AUB Study Skills (2023) 'Time management advice' [PowerPoint slide], in possession of the author: Bournemouth.

Fig. 3. AUB Study Skills (2023) 'Assignment timeline' [PowerPoint slide], in possession of the author: Bournemouth.

Fig. 4. Jelly baby tree (2017) [online image], at: Art Therapy with Children and Young People (available at: https://twitter.com/arttherapynorth/status/830890552807796736).

Fig. 5. Martin and Marsh's academic buoyancy 'items' (2008) [pdf], from Martin, A. J. and Marsh, H. W. (2008) 'Academic buoyancy: towards an understanding of students' everyday academic resilience', *Journal of School Psychology*, 46(1), pp. 53-83 (accessible at: https://tinyurl.com/2s3h7bak).

Figs. 6 and 7. Olsen, B. (2023) Pre- and post-session questionnaires [photos], in possession of author.

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Benjamin Olsen (bolsen@aub.ac.uk) is a Tutor in the Study Skills and English for Academic Purposes team at the Arts University Bournemouth.

Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Leadership in Higher Education:

Case Studies from UK and Australia

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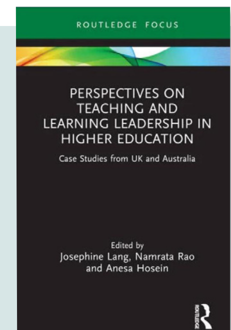

This new volume, the second to be published in the SEDA Focus Series, comprises seven case studies of leading and leadership in teaching and learning drawn from a variety of UK and Australian HEIs with an Introduction and Conclusion by the editors.

As Professor Elizabeth Johnson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic at Deakin University, points out in the Foreword, leadership in higher education shares common ground with leadership in other creative contexts, but it does have unique demands which are explored in these very interesting case studies.

These case studies, then, are a welcome support for any existing or aspiring leader of learning and teaching. In the first case study, 'Pragmatic leadership for collaboration in a competitive sector: the case of sigma', Duncan Lawson describes his teaching and learning leadership development through the establishment of a centre (sigma) to support higher education students with statistics and mathematics across disciplines. Along the way, he reflects on his experiences in other academic leadership roles and explores the values that have informed his leadership practice that focus on the transformative impact of higher education rather than its increasing marketisation. Essentially, he argues that effective academic leadership should be pragmatic.

In the second case study, 'Leading for inclusivity: peer-assisted learning and internationalisation', Gita Sedghi describes two case studies: peer-assisted learning for challenging subjects and peer mentoring for international students. In both cases, she describes both successes and also the importance of learning from failures and she too refers to the importance of values and capabilities in becoming an effective leader, describing how her leadership skills in learning and teaching, including influencing change, clear vision, communication, inclusivity, networking and resilience, were shaped through her 'leadership journey' and developed.

Lucia Zundans-Fraser in the third case study, 'Stepping stones towards higher education teaching and learning leadership: a case study on becoming a Deputy Dean', examines her pathway to having the leadership position of Deputy Dean. She reflects on the 'leadership journey' that took her to where she is now and the principles and values she now holds as an academic leader, including the importance of continuing to research and publish, of modelling inclusive and collaborative practice, and mentoring others. She sees change management as being at the heart of all of her leadership roles supported by building partnerships within and outside the university.

Silvia Colaiacomo and Tom Sharp, in the fourth case study, 'Opportunities and barriers to leadership in student support services: a case study of inclusive assessment', provide an alternative exploration of what it means to be a teaching and learning leader. In their description of an academic and a professional services partnership in developing more inclusive assessment practices, they are a reminder that there is a difference between being a leader and the qualities of good leadership.

In the fifth case study, 'Be(com)ing an academic leader: A case study on a collaborative partnership for external peer review', Josephine Lang describes a very personal leadership journey that she has been on. She acknowledges that there are many examples of what constitutes the characteristics of good academic leadership but prefers the work of Juntrasook (2014), who provides an alternative way to make meaning of academic leadership for teaching and learning that he arrived at in his study of extended narratives of academic leaders. He generates four categories of meaning about leadership in academia:

1. Leadership as position
2. Leadership as performance
3. Leadership as practice
4. Leadership as professional role model.

She concludes that, whilst there may be a movement away from describing academic leadership characteristics, she still needs to refine her repertoire of skills and capabilities through formal and informal learning and through action learning.

In 'Leading as an international academic: a case study of a casual teaching team', Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh explores his evolving leadership style as a transnational tutor working in a very different culture to that of his native society. Above all, he demonstrates the importance of leaders building good relationships with those they are leading.

The final case study, 'A leadership quest in teaching and learning: a case study of building capability and competency', is where Barbara C. Panther describes a series of 'quests' she has undertaken in her leadership development. Principally informed by Scott *et al*. (2008), Barbara Panther describes her quests as Quest Challenge 1: Knowing teaching and learning as a discipline; Quest Challenge 2: Knowing teaching and learning in other disciplines; Quest Challenge 3: Knowing when I needed companions for the quest; Quest Challenge 4: Knowing and influencing the culture of an organisation; followed, finally, by an Epilogue where she stresses the importance of maintaining professional development as one's leadership situations change.

In the concluding chapter the editors identify common themes that run through the chapters including the importance of working collaboratively and the importance of building relationships. To these one might also add the common themes of:

- Academic teaching and learning leaders having to work with responsibility but not power; learning how to 'manage up' (Lawrence *et al*., 2022)
- The importance of knowing one's own leadership values
- The importance of becoming an emotionally intelligent leader…
- ..and the importance of becoming an inclusive leader and developing cultural intelligence
- The importance of recognising different leadership styles and finding out how people like to be led
- Academic leadership involves working with change – personal change, departmental change and institutional change (Potter *et al*., 2020).

References

Juntrasook, A. (2014) '"You do not have to be the boss to be a leader": contested meanings of leadership in higher education', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 33(1), pp. 19-31.

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Potter, J., Devecchi, C. (eds.) (2020) *Delivering Educational Change in Higher Education: a transformative approach for leaders and practitioners,* SEDA/Routledge.

Scott, G., Coates, H. and Anderson, M. (2008) 'Learning leaders in times of change: academic leadership capabilities for Australian higher education', University of Western Sydney and Australian Council for Educational Research (available at: https://tinyurl.com/467x636x).

Steve Outram is an HE Researcher and Consultant.

SEDA News

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9-10 November 2023

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SEDA is inviting expressions of interest to join its next Fellowship and Senior Fellowship cohorts, which will start on 15 October 2023 and finish in late March 2024.

Fellowship and Senior Fellowship of SEDA are internationally recognised forms of professional recognition in the field of educational development. Fellowship is aimed at educational developers who make significant strategic contributions to their institutions and who have significant impact on the community of developers within their own institutions. Senior Fellowship is aimed at educational development leaders who make significant strategic contributions to their institutions and who have significant impact on the community of developers beyond their own institutions, in research and professional practice.

Both are obtained through a written portfolio outlining how the SEDA values impact your work, how you meet the Specialist Outcomes, and how you plan for and undertake your own professional development. Full details can be found on the Professional Development pages of the SEDA website.

The Programme Leads are Arushi Manners, FSEDA (manners.ed.dev@gmail.com) for Fellowships and Erik Brogt, SFSEDA (erik.brogt@canterbury.ac.nz) for Senior Fellowships. If you are interested, please send the appropriate diagnostic form (also on the web pages) to them by 1 October 2023 and they will be in contact with you to discuss your application.

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