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I have crossed an ocean

Letizia Gramaglia, Warwick University

This article captures my reflections on working in a large research-intensive university in Australia for just under ten months. I'll share key leadership insights I gained from working in a new institutional context and offer practical advice for others who are considering cross-institutional secondments. Ultimately, I hope to shed some light on the unique perspectives that come from such experiences and the potential for learning and collaboration.

Background and context

In September 2023, I embarked on a fixed-term secondment to Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. This was an exciting opportunity shaped by a perfect mix of timing and professional synergies. Warwick University, my home institution, shares a long-standing alliance with Monash. In 2019, I had worked closely with my counterparts in Australia to support the introduction of Advance HE accredited pathways. I visited Monash twice in the capacity of an external reviewer during their first accreditation cycle. In July 2023, following a series of Monash internal appointments, the post of Academic Director (Learning and Teaching) became available. This role mirrored my position at Warwick, and the chance to step into it felt too good to miss.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't nervous. I had never worked in another institution, and with leadership transitions underway at Warwick I worried I might lose the chance to stay visible and hold onto my leadership role. Luckily, my mentor and a few critical friends offered invaluable advice. They pointed out that I would return just in time to dive into the implementation of a new education strategy and could stay involved by contributing to developments and consultations from afar.

I set out to make my case: Monash needed someone who could hit the ground running and was familiar both with the institutional context and the role; the alliance between the two Universities would benefit through the knowledge exchange; I could deepen my understanding of teaching and learning in a globally connected institution and bring that knowledge back to Warwick; and last but not least, my personal leadership would benefit from stepping outside of the institution where I had been for the past 20 years and give me fresh perspective. Not only was the argument strong, I was also fortunate to have the backing of both the outgoing and incoming Pro Vice Chancellor (Education), so off I went.

Caveat 1: Secondments between institutions are an anomaly and, in my experience, Human Resources (HR) don't cope well with anomalies. The easiest and quickest way to progress things was for me to go on a career break from Warwick and be employed by Monash during my time there, with all the tax and pension implications.

Caveat 2: I was so worried about missing out on developments both at Warwick and across the United Kingdom (UK) that I made every effort to organise regular check-ins with key people and stay engaged with various initiatives. In hindsight, I should have minimised my UK-based commitments, especially considering the 11-hour time difference (which I eventually did after three months of evening meetings)!

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Cultural and professional learning

Beyond the usual stereotypes, experiences of cultural differences between the UK and Australia are, of course, deeply personal. In my case, they are shaped by my journey as a European who moved to England on a scholarship in 2001. Over two decades, I built a life and a career in the UK. This was a decision I never once regretted until I was officially classified as an economic migrant with 'settled status,' which, ironically, feels very unsettling!

In Australia, however, a country where a significant proportion of the population was born overseas and so many people have European roots, I felt right at home. More precisely, I was made to feel at home. I felt welcome not just by processes (onboarding with HR and Information Technology (IT) was seamless) but, most importantly, by people. It was the warmth and genuine hospitality that made my experience truly unforgettable, easing my transition into both the university and Australian life. And of course, the weather and the brightness of the sky – even on a cold crisp winter day – played their part!

Professionally, it was both a rewarding experience and a steep learning curve. I experienced a refreshing level of directness in communication, particularly in the workplace. I found this both efficient and effective, and so much easier to navigate compared to the more nuanced and indirect communication style so common in the UK. This helped me greatly in my endeavour to understand new governance structures, adapt to different higher education terminology, and get up to speed with Australia's Higher Education policy landscape.

Monash, Australia's largest university with over 80,000 students and 17,000 staff across multiple global campuses, operates on a remarkable scale. Its balance of devolved structures and centralised processes is fascinating. Change happens quickly, senior leadership faces high accountability, and the mindset is future-focused and dynamic. To navigate my institutional role effectively, I also wanted to grasp the positioning of academic development in Australia. Chalmers and Fraser (2023) offered a useful overview, showing the profession's shifting fortunes and its vulnerability to government agenda and regulatory changes – much like in the UK.

Of course, I dissected Monash's Strategy documents to map out the connection between vision, enablers and operations. I mapped out key sector stakeholders and governance, adding to my growing list of HE acronyms, and got up to speed with the political landscape of the country and its impact on the sector. In July 2023, just as I was signing my acceptance letter, the Australian Minister for Education unveiled the Accord Interim Report, the result of a year-long review of the country's higher education system. In February 2024, the highly anticipated Universities Accord Final Report was published, offering recommendations for enhancing the quality and accessibility of higher education (more on this below). The Reports gave me a timely glimpse into the evolving dynamics of the sector, enabling me to set the course for strategic advances in academic development, something I had successfully done almost a decade ago at Warwick in the aftermath of the November 2015 Higher Education Green Paper (BIS, 2015).

My take on the Australian Universities Accord

The Accord Final Report contains 47 recommendations for Government consideration and, in most cases, parallels can be drawn with our experience of the sector over time.

I am sharing here just three examples, tying them into broader themes relevant to the UK. I did this as a much broader exercise back in February and it gave me a sense of where the experience of academic developers in the UK could be best applied in working with colleagues in Australia, and where there might be opportunities for mutual learning and collaboration:

1. Excellence in Learning and Teaching (L&T) is increasingly framed as a regulatory priority both in the UK and Australia. The Australian Accord's proposal for a National Teaching Quality Framework, with regular reporting mecha-

nisms, echoes the UK's focus on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the Office for Students' (OfS) oversight of quality and standards.

2. The Australian Accord underscores the need for minimum teaching qualifications, recommending accredited training for PhD students and possibly expanding this requirement to all teaching staff. There is strong emphasis on universities needing to enhance professional development for academics, encouraging formal teaching qualifications such as PGCerts and Advance HE Fellowships.
3. Ongoing curriculum review is a key element of quality assurance, especially in a landscape where regulatory scrutiny has increased. The OfS in the UK places significant emphasis on ensuring that courses remain up to date and aligned with industry needs. Similarly, the Australian Accord calls for robust curriculum frameworks that embed digital literacy, creativity, collaboration, and communication. These skills are seen as vital for graduates who will be joining an increasingly complex global workforce. This shared emphasis on curriculum review and monitoring requires universities to support academic staff in designing and implementing responsive and relevant courses.

Academic development in Australia

To contextualise my reading of the University Accord recommendations through the lens of academic development, it might be useful to return briefly to the work of Denise Chalmers and Kym Fraser (2023) which I'll very briefly summarise here. They trace the 60-year evolution of Australian Academic Development Centres (ADCs) from small units focused on enhancing individual teaching practices to strategic institutional entities integral to university governance, policy, and quality assurance processes. This evolution is framed within broader changes in the Australian higher education sector, such as the shift towards mass higher education, government-driven quality assurance measures, and funding initiatives. Over the first two decades, the role of ADCs expanded to include not only teacher-focused initiatives but also research, which helped validate the scholarly status of academic development.

However, from the 1980s onwards, successive Australian governments introduced quality assurance mechanisms, driven by New Public Management principles, to ensure universities met efficiency and accountability standards, leading to a greater emphasis on systematic professional development and curriculum design until 2016, when cuts to national funding for teaching initiatives resulted in the downsizing or closure of many ADCs. Over the past decade, with the shift in focus from quality enhancement to quality assurance processes and performance reporting, the emphasis has been on curriculum innovation, assessment, and technology integration. As a result, institutions have come to depend heavily on professional staff skilled in online resources and instructional design, whilst under-investing in the academic development expertise needed to cultivate the theoretical understanding of teaching practices necessary to enable informed pedagogic decisions. Curiously, this has coincided with the establishment of an increasing number of teaching-focused academic positions within universities, and whilst processes and criteria have evolved accordingly, the gaps in knowledge and expertise to adequately support their career progression are problematic (Chalmers and Fraser, 2023, p. 18).

Inclusion and diversity: A broader perspective

Australia's approach to inclusion and diversity struck me as multifaceted. Australian universities host a significant number of international students. Monash has nearly 30,000 international students. In a multicultural city like Melbourne, this diverse demographic influences more than just the student body; it shapes the entire cultural landscape around the university. From food and shops to language and local businesses, everything has adapted to meet the needs of this vibrant community. It got me thinking about how essential these elements are in creating a sense of belonging and community for international students. In stark contrast to this, the rejection by a majority vote of the 'The Voice' referendum in October 2023, which aimed to formally recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the constitution, underscored the complexity of inclusion in Australia.

One of the more poignant cultural practices I encountered in Australia was the 'Acknowledgment of Country' – a way of showing respect to the traditional owners of the land during every formal event and honouring the Aboriginal connection to the land. It is also, most importantly, an explicit recognition that the land on which Australians live remains unceded, a significant reminder of the historical roots of privilege and a trigger to reflect on individual positionality. The structural barriers that impact on First Nations Peoples are reflected in higher education access figures – as a proportion of all domestic enrolments, Indigenous students represented just 2.1% in 2021 (AUAIR, 2023). The Universities Accord recommendations call for equity targets to address this, an important message in the post-referendum climate, and highlight the need for teaching models that accommodate diversity and growth.

Cross-institutional secondments: A path to growth

I am a great believer in collaboration, not only between individuals but between institutions. This is something which is not easily achieved in such a competitive market. There is so much we can learn from each other and so many opportunities to maximise our use of resources, yet there are very few formal opportunities to do so. As well as being a fertile ground for knowledge exchange, one of the greatest professional values of cross-institutional secondments is the opportunity to see your own university through a different lens, question your assumptions and interrogate your practice. Distance often provides perspective. By immersing myself in a different academic and cultural environment, I was able to reflect on strengths and avenues for advancement in both my previous and current context. I am acutely aware that opportunities

like this are rare, but something more easily accessible to all would be cross-institutional shadowing. Not the same, but possibly the next best thing.

Leadership learning and practical advice

When stepping into a new leadership role, especially one that has been successfully filled by your predecessor, it's easy to feel as though you must fit into an established leadership model. One of the biggest lessons I have learned is the importance of being true to my own style. Instead of trying to replicate the leadership of my predecessors, I found it more effective to be myself, build trust, and adapt without losing my core principles.

Here is a shortlist of top tips I would give to colleagues who are considering a cross-institutional secondment, or simply joining a new institution:

1. Ask questions and listen: it's vital to ask questions, avoid making assumptions and find someone who can give you an honest view of the institutional culture. Understanding how leadership operates and the level of senior involvement in day-to-day matters will give you a strong sense of the environment
2. Balance your perspective: it's easy, as a newcomer, to spot gaps and inefficiencies. But it is extremely important to take time to understand why things work in the way they do and acknowledge what is already working well
3. Leadership *vs.* management: set clear boundaries and maintain the distinction between leadership and management. If you are in a leadership position, make sure you avoid getting bogged down in operational or performance management tasks
4. Prepare for transition: don't assume that everyone will immediately adapt to your leadership style. Whilst the change in circumstances will be exciting for you, it can be threatening or unsettling for others – take time to help them navigate the transition, especially when it comes to varying management approaches
5. Know your priorities: amidst the whirlwind of adapting to a new culture and workplace, don't lose sight of what matters most to you personally and professionally.

Conclusion

My secondment experience in Australia was both personally enriching and professionally transformative – I have crossed an ocean of learning which has made me into a better person and, consequently, a better leader. It provided me with a fresh perspective on relationships, inclusion, and institutional collaboration. It also taught me new ways to bring my authentic self to my professional role and to create an environment where others can thrive.

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The serious role of play...and love in educational development

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We met three years ago as two academics, relatively new to working as academic staff and educational developers. We joined our new posts from different faculties and disciplines: Aybige from the School of Arts and Aga from the Department of Social Care and Social Work. Coming from 'the faculty', what struck us both was how restrictive and, at times, rigid academic staff development could be compared to direct work with students we knew so well within our separate disciplines. We had always seen having a bit of fun as indispensable to engaging students. Playing charades, getting messy with paint, or organising field trips to paint graffiti for appreciation of the role of street art in social justice (Figure 1) were part of our learning and teaching practice. Hence, we naturally drew parallels between educational development and the teaching with students we knew so well within our separate disciplines. The land of educational development was…a little different!

Figure 1 Social justice and street art activism, 'MSWgoPlaces' graffiti painting with students, Leake Street, London

For a while, we felt like 'disciplinary migrants', somewhat stuck between management and our academic identities (Manathunga, 2007). Teaching the teachers, it turned out, was not just about promoting the best pedagogic practice, as it included promoting institutional vision, direction, and values, which are inevitably shaped by market forces. While working in higher education (HE) is largely influenced by various factors determining institutional contexts, educational developers are often the first to witness new expectations and priorities for changes or policy directives. This comes with the expectation to effectively implement them across their institutions. Finding the right 'package' and design to support academic staff in meeting expected benchmarks, and working with new metrics and data, are visible and essential parts of the job. Still, for both of us, while coming to terms with differences in our new educational roles, we stayed true to understanding university as a place to inspire and equip in order to confront the market-driven identity of HE institutions, and seeing this as the *raison d'être* in our new roles (Syska and Buckley, 2023).

In what follows, we propose pedagogies of 'Love' and 'Playfulness' as the antidote to pressures shaping modern educational development. While playfulness is a more familiar HE pedagogy, it is rarely discussed within the context of love. In fact, love seems frequently omitted when discussing HE practices altogether, despite its well-understood place as an integral element of pedagogic practice. We see love and playfulness as complementary and indispensable pedagogies that help us navigate our roles as educational developers in the dynamic and challenging context of HE.

Play in staff development

> *'A human being is only human when he is playing.'*
> (Shiller, in Bruhlmeier, 2010, p. 61)

A well-established body of literature on playful pedagogies extends beyond childhood education into higher education. In this context, playfulness is defined as a disposition or attitude: a way of engaging with contexts and activities that, while not inherently playful, still incorporate playful characteristics (Sicart, 2014). The literature consistently highlights the need to promote playful pedagogies in higher education to enhance the student experience while developing pedagogic practice, with numerous examples demonstrating a positive impact on learning (James and Nerantzi, 2019; Baechner and Portnoy, 2024; Nørgård and Whitton, 2025). For example, Nørgård *et al*. (2017) view playfulness as a signature pedagogy that can have transformative power. However, much of this literature focuses on interacting with students as 'maturing adults', with less attention given to playfulness when engaging with academics teaching, that is 'already mature adults', with a few exceptions (e.g. Whitton and Moseley, 2019). Interestingly, we noticed that the 'student' category readily justifies the use of play and playfulness, whereas engagement with academic staff tends to favour more 'serious business'. James and Nerantzi (2019) suggest that play is an uncommon pedagogy in higher education because of its perceived lack of rigour and educational quality, a view that is likely even more pronounced in the context of academic staff development.

We found that adopting playful approaches works best when engaging staff enrolled in structured educational programs, as it is not uncommon to see colleagues embracing their temporary student identities, which makes them more receptive to trying new approaches. When leading these programs, we discovered possibilities to scaffold playful activities in learning and teaching, as in James and Nerantzi's (2019) 'playground' model, constructing safe, playful learning spaces over time (Whitton, 2018). Continuing professional development (CPD) events that attract larger groups of staff from diverse disciplines proved to be more challenging in incorporating playfulness... which did not stop us from trying. Carr *et al*. argue that academic development regards itself as value-driven, high stakes, accredited, and reportedly important; therefore, for those in the 'serious business' of teaching academic teachers, playfulness might present a rather 'wicked problem' (Carr *et al.*, 2021, p. 63). Similarly, after trying playfulness with university lecturers, Loads (2019) finds 'it's not all plain sailing' (p. 201). While many of her colleagues see playfulness as 'liberating, restorative and fun', some hate it, 'feeling patronised and infantilised, or frustrated with what they see as a lack of rigour or of gravitas'.

Figure 2 Students' journey, teacher 'holds' the knowledge symbolic wooden hand

Why, then, should we insist on making space for playfulness in how we organise educational development events? For the same reason it is suitable for students: opening avenues for creativity, collaboration and reflection, thereby engaging 'time-poor' if not totally exhausted academics in activities that may remind them of why they chose their teaching careers in the first place. Equally important, as Koeners and Francis (2020) point out, playfulness has actual physiological benefits: it is good for wellbeing and mental resilience, boosts social intelligence, and improves cognitive flexibility and intellect. Most importantly, laughter and joy stemming from play can foster a positive outlook on the future, togetherness and creativity – all of which are much needed in academia. These factors give us a convincing reason to 'drop seriousness' as a key principle of playfulness (Faibish, 2025, p. 276).

Taking joy and laughter as central to playful activities, we observe a direct impact on relationship building. Lubbers *et*

al. (2023), in a recent study with more than 800 adults, find 'goofing' around, being silly, joking, and laughing are intrinsic to being a playful person, and this, in turn, has a positive impact on personal relationships. Furthermore, the authors point to Hannush for drawing connections between playfulness and love:

> *'Playfulness, humor, and laughter are corollaries of the capacity to love. Cultivating our capacities to be playful, to use humor, and to laugh together strengthens our attachment bonds. They stretch the depth and range of our ability to love.'* (Hannush, 2021, p. 375)

We find the connections between love and playfulness compelling, and we think these two, both seen as signature pedagogies, deserve further exploration in the context of education.

Love in staff development

> *'Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of love for the world and for people.'* (Freire, 2000, p. 89)

Discourses of playfulness and love speak through a similar language, yet they rarely find themselves discussed in the same context. The intersection of love and playfulness was first identified by an early educator, Pestalozzi, in the late 18th century. For its time, Pestalozzi's Pedagogy of Love was a revolutionary approach to children's education, focusing on love, care, and respect for each individual, encouraging self-activity and direct experience. Pestalozzi's love and care for his students (Rein, in Sellars and Imig, 2021) fostered their sense of wellbeing as individuals. It enabled them to work together and support each other, developing an understanding of mutuality. Although HE is situated far from children's education, Pestalozzi's holistic approach – engaging students' hands, hearts and souls – remains inspiring. He argued that pedagogies of love and ethics of care not only make students happier, develop their sense of belonging and guide them towards becoming more moral, democratic citizens; they also have a profound impact on cognition. Pestalozzi intuitively knew what neuroscientists have since learned about the brain: the key role affect and sensory experiences have in the learning process, justifying the importance of a holistic approach to education. Even more interestingly and well ahead of his time, he placed joy at the core of his Pedagogy of Love, arguing that 'no amount of learning is worth a penny if it suppresses enjoyment and motivation' (Pestalozzi, in Bruhlmeier, 2010, p. 36). Although play and playfulness only became significant in educational theory in the 20th century, Pestalozzi warned us early that 'knowledge is not the purpose but the result of the undertaking. Knowledge is a waste product, if you like, what is left over after we have occupied ourselves heart, soul and senses with some phenomenon' (Bruhlmeier, 2010, p. 98).

More recently, Davids (2025), drawing on the work of Lugones, discusses his 'loving playfulness' as a means to improve relationships among diverse students and educators. Highlighting the rigid expectations surrounding the identities of students and educators, Davids reminds us that having a loving, playful attitude is, as Lungones argued, 'an openness to being a fool…not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred' (Lungones, in Davids, 2025, p. 106). In the context of HE, maintaining openness to surprise could allow for a more 'at-ease' approach to being and thinking in the university, where 'letting go of preconceived and prescribed ideas' challenges the rigid structure of traditional student and academic roles (Davids, 2025, p. 107). Here, playfulness serves as a strategy to foster an open dialogue, while love is essential for establishing meaningful connections and embracing 'plurality in all its multifaceted colours and articulations' (Davids, 2025, p. 107). This emphasis on affirming learners' realities and accepting the diverse lived experiences navigated by both students and educators leads us to the notion of a 'dialogical stance', as explored in detail by Freire's work. In contemporary HE, often too preoccupied with metrics, Freire's words that 'love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue, and dialogue itself' are frequently overlooked (Freire, 2000, p. 89). Dialogue requires critical thinking, action, transformation and risk-taking. For Freire, only love enables such a 'practice of freedom' and equips educators with the courage to critique and challenge the *status quo*. Playfulness can offer us the tools to continue doing just that.

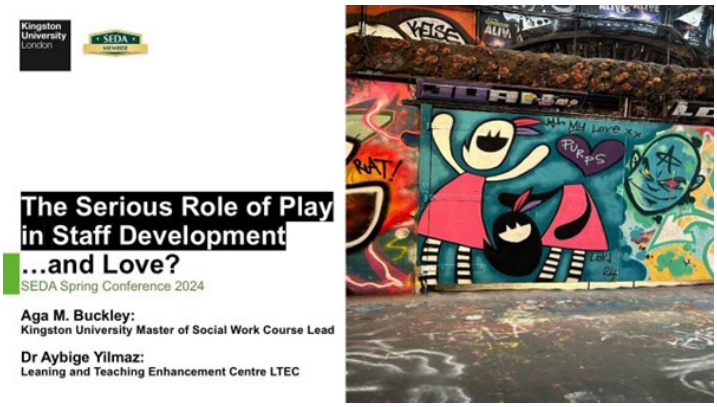

Figure 3 The Serious Role of Play…and Love? in Staff Development, SEDA Spring Conference 2024

As we reflect on the interplay of love and playfulness within higher education, we recognise these concepts' vital role in fostering a truly transformative learning environment. By affirming learners' and educators' realities and diverse experiences, we establish a dialogical stance for meaningful engagement and conversation. Freire would probably agree that there cannot be play without love. Educators must cultivate relationships grounded in compassion and openness, where love nurtures the courage to embrace innovation and progress. In turn, playfulness feeds the capacity to reinvigorate pedagogy as a passionate and compassionate practice (Nørgård *et al.*, 2017). They are, quite simply, inseparable.

Imagine Lugones's 'loving playfulness' embraced in teaching activities with students, as well as in meetings, workshops, webinars, and all other interactions we have with each other. As Nørgård and Whitton (2025) point out, we must reflect critically on our assumptions about universities now, more than ever. We love the vision of a progressive future for HE...one that 'prioritizes value curiosity, creativity and communality, over outcomes and league tables' (Nørgård and Whitton, 2025). Perhaps by acknowledging love and embracing playful ethos, we find a remedy for our relentless pursuits of quantifiable outcomes in our roles as educational developers.

With love, Aybige & Aga...Seriously!

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Reflections on the introduction of Problem Based Learning to the Sociology undergraduate degree programme at the University of York

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Introduction

In the second semester of 2023/24, the University of York's Sociology department introduced Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to their first year undergraduate Investigating Social Problems Module. The University of York Law School (YLS) provided support due to its experience of running an undergraduate programme which is built around the PBL model. The Sociology PBL sessions were facilitated by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) throughout the semester. This article provides reflections on the experience of these GTAs and suggests ways that training PBL tutors can be done effectively.

What is PBL and the role of the PBL tutor?

Problem-based learning is a teaching method in which students develop 'content knowledge, thinking strategies, and self-directed learning skills through experiential learning and facilitated, collaborative problem-solving' (Wang *et al*., 2016, p. 1; Hmelo-Silver *et al*., 2006, p. 100). The process uses 'realistic problems as the starting point of self-directed, small-group-based learning guided by a tutor who acts as a process guide' (Servant-Miklos *et al.*, 2019, p. 4). Its use began in Canada at McMaster University in the late 1960s. Maastricht University in

the Netherlands then adopted it in 1974 (Servant-Miklos *et al.*,2019). In terms of its origin, there is a view that it draws from Dewey's view that:

> *'The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and assist him in properly responding to these influences'* (Dewey and Small, 1897, p. 9).

PBL is different from classic teacher-led approaches to classroom learning. It requires scenarios to be designed effectively to allow students to identify the key issues at hand. However, the role of the tutor should not be underestimated. Due to the method, there are obvious differences in the nature of the role of a PBL tutor, and that of a teacher in the classic sense.

PBL tutors have an important impact on the process. Silen outlines that an ideal tutor is present while in the group. This provides the best opportunities for the tutor to pay attention to student-working processes and help develop them (Silen, 2006, p. 383). Doing this effectively will allow 'students to become increasingly competent through modelling, scaffolding, mentoring, structuring tasks and hinting without explicitly giving final answers' (Wang *et al.*, 2016, p. 2). This encourages collaborative knowledge construction, supports shared regulation, and maintains group dynamics (Hmelo-Silver *et al.*, 2006, p. 313). Öystilä notes that supportive tutors will 'question what learners say and give constructive criticism. They listen but are not silent, and they trust the students' (Öystilä, 2006, p. 177). Over time, the tutor will ideally be able to conduct the process of 'progressively retreating as students become more experienced with PBL yet continuing to monitor the group and make moment-to-moment decisions on the best time to offer support' (Wang *et al.*, 2016, p. 2). It was important to ensure the Sociology GTAs who would fulfil the role of PBL tutor were appropriately trained. While the GTAs had taught undergraduate modules previously, the PBL method is different from the style of teaching the more traditional seminar experience that is normally used within the Sociology department.

The contribution of York Law School (YLS)

As this was the Sociology department's first experience of PBL, YLS provided support to aid its implementation within the Investigating Social Problems module. YLS features PBL at the core of its undergraduate programme which has been built around the PBL methodology since the department was established in 2007.

YLS outlined its approach to the PBL process which involves a series of key steps that are applied to a scenario that is provided. These include highlighting unclear terms within a scenario, identifying key parties and their interests, outlining key facts and/or a chronology of events, analysing the scenario through a mind-map, and arranging the ideas captured within the mind-map, before drafting learning outcomes. This is followed by conducting independent research outside of classes to allow students to provide feedback on what they have found at the session that follows. Sociology GTAs observed YLS PBL in action before undertaking training ahead of commencing their role as PBL tutors. The intention was to illustrate how the PBL process works, as well as to highlight how more experienced PBL tutors operate. This was followed by training that was run by the Sociology department.

The training process

Training was devised for the incumbent GTAs. This was essential as although PBL aspires towards the development of self-directed learning, group leadership and support in terms of learning is required to achieve it (Öystilä, 2006, p. 176). Therefore, tutor training on group-leading is significant.

While the GTAs had prior experience of seminar teaching, none had delivered PBL sessions prior to observing it in action. There was some understanding of the process based on the information provided by the department, as well as through previous discussions with YLS postgraduate students. There was evidence of a perception that PBL is geared towards directing students to the 'correct' answer, for example to find and cite relevant information to allow them to produce a 'solution' to the problem. This was a concern amongst the GTAs on the basis that there is rarely one 'true' answer in sociological discussions, and because the focus with first year students is to encourage them to move away from black-and-white thinking and embrace different perspectives and concepts. As a result, it was unclear in their view how a PBL approach would translate to sociological scenarios on the basis that there is rarely a clear or obvious 'response' for the students to identify.

It was also noted that PBL is seen as a draw for Law students applying to YLS and that (theoretically) these students arrive prepared for, and expecting, this approach to teaching. As this is not the case for sociology students the view was that it is more likely that this style of teaching is likely to be different from what they might expect. There was also concern that their engagement and commitment to the process could be lower from the outset. In addition, engagement, and attendance amongst first year students was a pre-existing issue, meaning that it was unclear whether the introduction of a new method would help or hinder this. Also, it was highlighted that observing second year students whose grades count towards their final degree classification could well influence the level of engagement they display.

Observing YLS PBL provided an opportunity to challenge any preconceptions and begin to develop an understanding of the dynamics that could be expected within sessions. The GTAs each observed a PBL session conducted with second year undergraduate students who were familiar with the PBL structure and were therefore well placed to demonstrate it. As each GTA observed a different group, they were later able to combine their observations based on a variety of group dynamics.

The observations highlighted that PBL sessions are very process led. This included the role of the tutor as well as how students interact with one another. Also, how the student roles of 'Chair' (who is responsible for running the session) and 'Scribe' (who is responsible for recording discussions) should be carried out. This provided context on what to expect from students within the group, as well as how best to advise them to fulfil the role effectively. It was also useful to observe the level of tutor intervention within the group discussion,

as well as the ways in which this was done. Of note was the more advisory than instructional approach taken, for example, by prompting students with further questions, and re-directing them to more fruitful topics of discussion. It was also noted that the ability to share the observing experience with students during their first PBL session was helpful in terms of being able to reassure them that the process does work once they become accustomed to it.

While the observations were useful in preparing the GTAs for PBL sessions, the key reflection is the view that observing PBL with less confident groups with limited experience of PBL would have been more useful from a training perspective. This is because group dynamics and functionality are influenced by levels of PBL experience, as well as its stage of development (Dionne Merlin *et al.*, 2020, p. 6). The sessions that were observed included second year YLS students. While this was useful in terms of demonstrating how a PBL session 'should' run owing to their confidence and understanding of the process, it was noted that observing first year groups that 'struggled' more due to being new to PBL would have been more valuable. This would have allowed the GTAs to see how an experienced PBL tutor promoted student engagement without simply giving away the 'answers'. As the GTAs would be working with first year undergraduate groups with no prior experience, this opportunity would have been valuable.

Following the observation of PBL within YLS, the Sociology department ran a training session where the GTAs worked through the semester's scenarios in the role of the students. This gave them a clear insight into what the students experience when tackling those scenarios and allowed them to prepare for the issues students may face, as well as consider the guidance that could be required. It also enabled them to flag potential issues and misunderstandings within the scenarios ahead of delivering them in the role of tutor. This provided the opportunity for the GTAs to prepare for what they might face more effectively.

Experiencing PBL from the perspective of the student was particularly valuable for a tutor prior to undertaking the role. Of note was the opportunity to identify potential issues and misunderstandings that could arise from the scenarios that will be analysed. It also helped the GTAs to identify which conversations would help students develop their learning outcomes, as well as how to redirect these conversations if necessary. It also allowed the GTAs to better understand the roles of chair and scribe. All of this should be built into PBL tutor training wherever possible.

Reflections on the tutor experience

After observing YLS PBL and attending the departmental training session, the GTAs undertook their role as PBL tutors during semester 2. The intention of this section is to highlight some of the key observations made to identify ways in which the PBL tutor training process could be developed in future.

The view was that students grasped the PBL process relatively quickly and that in most cases they were able to run the sessions with minimal prompting within a couple of weeks. However, it was highlighted that this did depend on the group dynamic, as well as the level of attendance. The feeling was also that the biggest contributor to grasping the process was students having the confidence to take part in it with a willingness to volunteer ideas within the group. This aligns with the view that success of PBL will be influenced by student traits such as 'extraversion, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism' (Holen *et al.*, 2015, p. 84). Finding routes to encourage positive PBL behaviours in a supportive way should feature within tutor training. This could be achieved by using experienced PBL tutors to deliver training sessions and ensuring that the approaches they use in such situations are covered.

The most challenging aspects of the PBL tutor role that were observed included effectively encouraging students to participate, particularly in terms of taking on the roles of chair and scribe. This was made more difficult in situations where students who were assigned to complete these roles did not attend. A lack of student participation also contributed to the tutors finding it difficult to be 'hands-off' when student engagement and contribution is low. However, it was also noted that over time this became less of an issue as students became more accustomed to the process. The issue of 'free riding', where students contribute nothing and instead rely on other group members, was also highlighted. Again, an effective training process which supports a tutor's ability to find ways to encourage positive student behaviours, particularly in terms of contribution to group discussions in an appropriate and effective way, would be very useful.

Other challenges included the suitability of the rooms that were used. It was observed that these standard seminar rooms were not as 'PBL friendly' as some did not provide an effective environment for student interaction. While this is potentially hard to tackle due to limited room availability, as well as a lack of bespoke PBL space, it is certainly a relevant consideration. Group size was also highlighted as a potential issue whereby greater student numbers created challenges in terms of cohesion and group dynamics. This suggests that finding ways to encourage attendance is something that should be considered as part of an effective PBL tutor training process. Again, this might include using experienced tutors to deliver training sessions to allow them to share their experiences of creating a positive atmosphere within PBL groups.

The view was that PBL offers a more engaging learning environment than a traditional seminar. It encourages practical skills such as teamwork and collaboration as well as individual responsibility. These also include active listening, allowing others to contribute to discussions, as well as working with people from different backgrounds who might hold different views. This aligns with the view that PBL develops self-directed learning by encouraging 'learner-centeredness and the creation of the collaborative learning culture' (Öystilä, 2006, p. 179). It was highlighted that the chair and scribe roles help to develop important communication, leadership, and note-taking skills. Of note was the view that PBL offers a place for students to explore and discuss their own perceptions of the topics that are covered. Also, that it facilitated some very insightful discussions about why students felt the way they felt. This allowed them to see the complexity

of social issues and apply real-life experiences and events to sociological theory. This is particularly interesting as the initial view of the GTAs was that PBL could be less suitable for more normative discussion-based issues.

It was observed that group dynamics have a notable influence on the PBL process. This is unsurprising as it has been argued that 'an understanding of group dynamics is vital not only for students involved in PBL, but also for the staff facilitating such groups' (Savin-Baden, 2000, p. 87). Where students were more confident and took the initiative to work together it was more successful. However, this is hard to cultivate as a tutor, especially where time spent within that group is relatively low. Where students had prior experience of PBL within a department where it is more embedded, they were more likely to demonstrate commitment to the process. These students were enrolled on the Law and Criminology undergraduate course which is run by the Sociology department in collaboration with YLS. Half of their studies in their first and second years are done through PBL. This means that they spend at least four contact hours each week working within their group. In contrast, within the Investigating Social Problems Module students spent two hours per week working within their group. It was even noted that these students outlined the level of planning and preparation required for PBL compared to other seminars and expressed that they felt 'pressure' to participate in PBL to avoid letting their learning group down if they failed to do so.

An additional observation was that the group dynamic forges social bonds and encourages students to engage more readily. This aligns with the suggestion that 'having the support of group members contributes to the development of feelings of belonging to the group and this feeling is reflected in the group's evolution' (Dionne Merlin *et al.*, 2020, p. 6). There is also a view that 'the educator could inform students about the elements that benefit group dynamics', and that helpful relationships and positive behaviours which make a positive contribution to group dynamics that foster a positive learning environment could be encouraged throughout the process (Dionne Merlin *et al.*, 2020, p. 6). Next, that making PBL work for students with social anxiety, or other reluctances or inabilities to interact with others, is challenging and that the chair and scribe roles apply additional pressure. Also, in cases where students did not embrace the PBL process, they stopped attending. It was also observed that some students disliked the approach simply because it differed from the traditional seminar approach that they were used to. Again, this highlights that strategies to tackle these issues would be a valuable feature in any training provided to PBL tutors.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is value in providing new PBL tutors with the opportunity to observe experienced tutors before they commence the role. This creates familiarity with the process, as well as the ways in which tutor interventions can be carried out in an advisory way. Also, that the ability to share the observing experience with students during their first PBL session was helpful in reassuring them.

The key takeaway is that observing PBL where the students are more familiar with the process is less valuable from a tutor development perspective. This is because where the group is relatively autonomous, the need for tutor intervention is reduced. Therefore, where possible, observations should involve experienced tutors running sessions with student groups in the early stages of their PBL experience.

It is valuable for new tutors to experience PBL from the student perspective. This provides an opportunity to identify issues that could arise within the scenarios and inform routes to guide students tackling those scenarios where necessary. Playing the role of the student should be built into PBL tutor training if possible. Finding routes to encourage positive PBL behaviours should also form part of the tutor training process, as should encouraging attendance and creating a positive atmosphere withing PBL groups. The impact of student anxiety about contributing on the functioning of PBL sessions should also be covered. This could be achieved by using experienced PBL tutors to deliver training sessions and ensuring that the approaches they use to achieve this are included.

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'A Place for Us' – Supporting disabled, dyslexic and neurodivergent students in higher education

Elisabeth Griffiths, Elaine Gregersen and **Jean Moore,** Northumbria University

Introduction

Disability is not a marginal issue, although it is often described as one. As a 'social justice issue' it continues to have a low profile in academia (Lawson, 2020) and is often overlooked in Higher Education (HE) in favour of other EDI initiatives such as Athena SWAN, the Race Equality Charter and LGBTQ+ networks. Disabled students make up a significant proportion of the student population, with growing numbers disclosing a disability, with reported under-performance; poorer outcomes on graduation; and the need for more support and adjustments (Office for Students, 2019). There has been a 105% increase in applicants to university sharing an impairment or condition in the UCAS application over the last decade, meaning disabled students now represent 14% of all HE applicants in the UK compared with 7% in 2012. 36% of students who declare a disability do so for a neurodivergent condition (including Specific Learning Differences (SpLD)), as reported by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2023). In addition, we know that students do not always declare a disability on their UCAS form for fear of discrimination (Griffiths, 2021). Students might also only realise they fit within the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010 when they get to university, and therefore the number of disabled students at university at any one time might be significantly higher than reported. Disability inclusion requires meaningful encounters with the lived experience of disability with an acknowledgment at a strategic level that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work.

Arising out of Griffiths' (2021) doctoral research into the lived experience of disabled students at Northumbria Law School, the 'A Place for Us' project brought together the Student Accessibility Team (Accessibility and Inclusion) with Law School staff and students and members of the Academic Technology Services (ATS) team at Northumbria University to create a Law School Disability Toolkit. The Toolkit was designed to be a training package of workshops and materials addressing disability questions arising in the context of Law, including 'talking heads' with disabled law students and alumni. The project gained momentum across the university with other interested colleagues engaging in the process. It has expanded significantly beyond the Law School.

In this piece, we discuss the origins of the project, how it was funded, the team we built around the project, how we designed to Toolkit, the award the project won, and how it expanded to a university-wide initiative.

The Law School context – The origins of 'A Place for Us'

Research conducted with disabled law students at Northumbria University reveals a complex transition through law school where identities are constructed and re-constructed on multiple occasions in different contexts. The research captured first - person accounts of the lived experience of disability in the Law School (Griffiths, 2021).

Law lecturers are influential in the student journey impacting student experience, engagement, and academic outcomes. The law curriculum is complex with Problem Based Learning modules, oral assessments (continuous and summative), and experiential learning in the Law School's clinic module – the Student Law Office. The research also revealed that disabled law students often have a poor understanding of where they fit in and there is often a poor sense of belonging amongst this cohort. These students often fail to see their future in the legal profession as the profession they seek to enter has a poor record on disability (Foster and Hirst, 2020) and mental health (Jones *et al*., 2020). Disabled law students should graduate knowing that talented, educated, and successful disabled people are 'expected' as opposed to 'unexpected' in higher status occupations like law (Foster and Hirst, 2020).

Griffiths' findings provided the impetus to do something practical to support those students as they transitioned through law school and into graduate employment. Her idea was to bring together a team of law school academics, students and professional services colleagues to design a Toolkit that could assist law teachers in supporting disabled students. The primary objective was co-creating a legacy, using the Toolkit to build inclusive professional cultures in the Law School and beyond (Lawson, 2020).

Building the 'A Place for Us' team

The project was funded by the Northumbria University Educational Enhancement Scheme, an internal grant scheme designed to support the development of new approaches to learning and teaching. The team consisted of interested individuals from the following groups:

Academic staff: Led by Dr Elisabeth Griffiths, who has taught at Northumbria University for over 25 years. Her research focuses on equality and diversity issues within legal education, the legal profession and employers more widely. Elisabeth also involved Dr Elaine Gregersen. Elaine has a PhD in lived experience research and is a National Teaching Fellow.

Student Accessibility Team (accessibility and inclusion): The

Student Accessibility Team provide a broad suite of support to students at Northumbria University, including individual support strategies, modified exam arrangements, one-to-one specialist SpLD tutorials and specialist mentoring, advice on adapted and accessible accommodation and the physical accessibility of university buildings, and the co-production of a Student Accessibility Plan which alerts lecturers to the students' specific needs. Historically, lecturers have not always been aware of the extensive work being carried out by the Student Accessibility Team. Even if there was some general awareness, academics would find it hard to link the support that the Student Accessibility Team provides with their own teaching practice. It often felt like the academics and the Student Accessibility Team were working in silos, despite best efforts and a general willingness to work together in the best interests of the students. Jean Moore is an SpLD Academic Tutor. Joss Barrowcliff is a Wellbeing Co-ordinator. Jean and Joss have a wealth of experience supporting disabled students through the Student Accessibility Team. They were a crucial part of the project team.

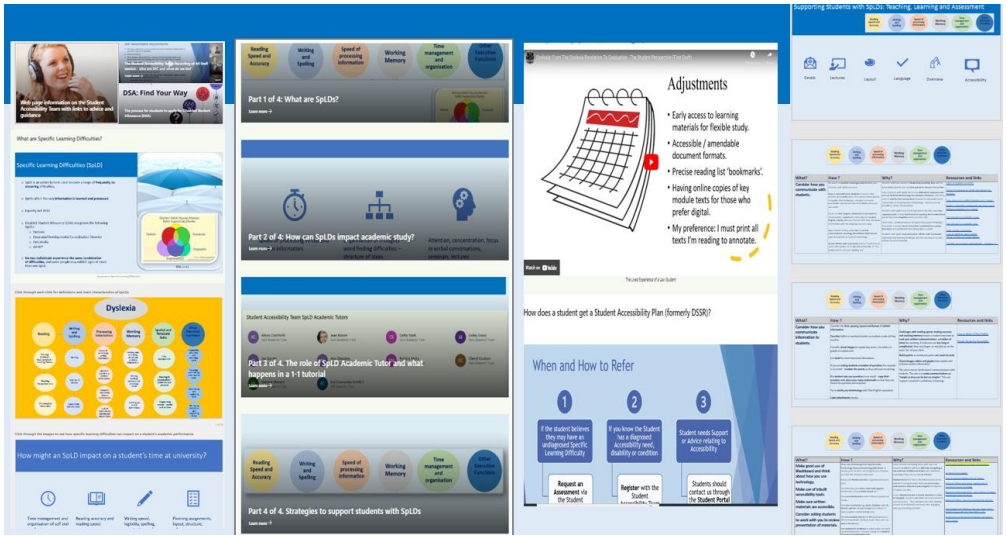

Figure 1 The original Toolkit

Academic Technology Services team (ATS): At Northumbria University, ATS provides support for learning technologies through training, innovation and the sharing of best practice. ATS also creates engaging and interactive learning resources to support new and existing academics, whilst managing IT solutions and software for teaching spaces and research, and supporting all IT queries online and face-to-face. We knew that we wanted to develop a fully functioning, well-designed resource which integrated with and had the same 'look and feel' as existing university systems. Andrew Welsh from ATS was a key part of the collaboration, helping us to ensure that the Toolkit was accessible and aligned with the University's design principles.

Student voice: Working with the Student Accessibility Team (Access and Inclusion) we found several law students who had an interest in improving disability culture in the Law School and wanted to be part of the project team. To ensure confidentiality, we are being careful not to provide any identifying information about the students. However, it is important to note that the students were integral to the design, content, and, ultimately, wider academic engagement with the Toolkit. Student voice was key to the collaboration.

Designing the Toolkit

The project team took part in several co-design strategy meetings. With a view to enabling co-production of the Toolkit, the students were invited to talk about their own experience of disability in the Law School, working with the Student Accessibility Team, and their wider reflections on life as a disabled student in HE. Like, Liddiard *et al*. (2019), and in the context of our project, co-production was used as a means of bringing a group of academics together with a range of partners (the 'A Place for Us' team) to produce outcomes (the Toolkit) that would not be possible or desirable in the context of research with and for disabled students. The meetings were designed to be welcoming, relaxed and accessible, with an excellent array of refreshments including pizza, finger foods and desserts.

The project was carried out in accordance with ethical integrity and approved by the University Ethics Committee. In HE, we tend to ask students questions about their experiences to improve our practices without fully thinking about the potential emotional labour involved for them. From the outset, as a project team, we were determined to incorporate student voice with their full consent and for them to feel they had ownership of the project. All students were provided with a participant information sheet and consent forms which they were invited to read and ask questions about in advance of the meeting.

The sessions were audio-recorded, but consent was obtained from the students before this took place. The students were reminded that they could withdraw their consent, or indeed withdraw from the project, at any time for any reason. Members of the project team also undertook follow-up sessions with the students and created video/audio content with them for use in the Toolkit. We wanted any training materials, or 'toolkit' we created, to have the students' lived experience at its centre, being true to the rally cry of the Disabled People's Movement – 'Nothing About Us Without Us' (Charlton, 2000, p. 3). Although it is important to point out that this rally cry also 'requires people with disabilities to recognise their need to control and take responsibility for their own lives' (Charlton, 2000) and the students involved were keen to participate despite the emotional labour involved.

Showcasing the prototype Toolkit

We invited staff from across the Law School and the Student Accessibility Team to attend a workshop where we showcased the prototype Toolkit (Figure 1) and sourced feedback. As we

prepared to start the workshop, we became aware that there were unexpected numbers of staff arriving. It transpired that colleagues from across the University had heard about the Toolkit (and the workshop) and had come to learn more about it. We almost ran out of space and chairs. This was our first clue as to the significant level of interest in the Toolkit and the work we were doing.

Inclusivity award

Shortly after the initial Toolkit launched, the team was nominated for and won a Northumbria University Inclusivity Award. The Inclusivity Award is for colleagues and teams who recognise, value and celebrate diversity and collective expertise, and who practise and promote fairness, transparency and mutual respect by asking for and listening to feedback. The panel noted how the team collaborated to provide a catalyst for change within the Law School and across the wider university. We mention this award because part of our mission was to raise the profile of disability within the University and improve awareness of the lived experience of disabled students and the methods that can be employed to inculcate positive change. Awards nominations (and successes) can contribute to profile-raising and greater awareness.

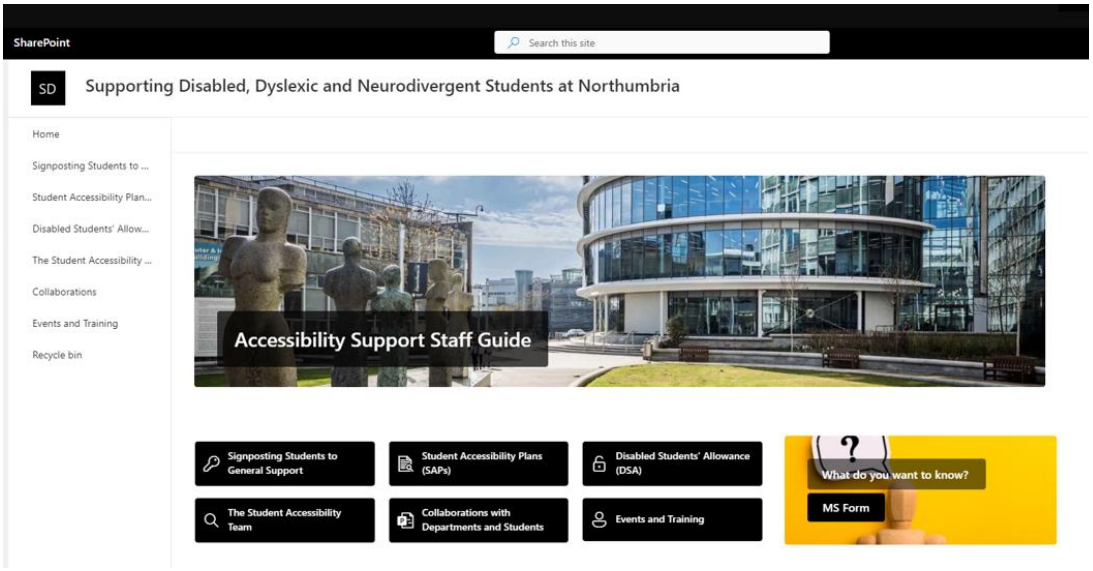

Figure 2 The current Toolkit

Beyond the Law School – Expansion to a university-wide Toolkit

Whilst the intention behind the Toolkit remains the same, the design and the level of content has evolved significantly. Today, the Toolkit (Figure 2) is a creative, living repository where information is stored and updated for colleagues to refresh their knowledge. It is also available across the University. Rather than being limited to the Law School, the Toolkit is now available on Northumbria SharePoint site through the A-Z links on the staff intranet. The site houses information on Student Accessibility Plans, guidance to support students and their learning, multi-media content from staff and students, candid video testimonials, podcasts and talking heads that have been viewed hundreds of times.

Student voice remains at the heart of the Toolkit and we have been delighted by the feedback received from the students who are part of the project team:

> *'This has made the student feel like THEY are the focus and not the university itself. It feels like the student has shaped the journey that the project has gone on, the experiences have shaped the questions and the way this has been developed from. I don't feel like I've needed to fit into a box of expectation – the project has allowed the student themselves to explore their disability personally – rather than just fitting to a specific structure – this has been perfect!'*

> *'I don't believe the project would have been as beneficial had is just discussed accessibility generally. In the future I recommend more faculties reflect on their own specific teaching and carry out projects similar to this one. Having recognisable law members of staff participating within the project has also really helped, it makes the project feel like it's being taken seriously and it's not just another thing that's being done "for the sake of it".'*

When it comes to the outputs of co-production, Foster (2024) links success to the extent to which disabled people feel genuine ownership over the outputs. The feedback we have received indicates that we have been somewhat successful in this regard.

Discussion and conclusion

'A Place for Us' has amplified the voice of disabled law students and their lived experience; provided an opportunity for staff and students to work collaboratively and constructively towards enhancing student success; and dissolved barriers and stigma for disabled law students.

The project has also provided a catalyst for change within the Law School and across the wider university. For example, Northumbria University has now built a team of paid Student Inclusion Consultants to enhance lecturers' teaching practice. Student Inclusion Consultants, like the students involved in this project, have lived experience, or a strong understanding, of the barriers that our under-represented students may face whilst at university. They work closely with staff to address barriers and enhance the

student experience.

Whilst several initiatives nationally are in progress spearheaded by the Disabled Students' Commission (2020-2023), progress on disability inclusion in HE is slow. Awareness is building but practice often falls short. The Disabled Student Commitment (Disabled Students' Commission, 2023) reflects a long-standing call for HE providers to self-audit with their students any gaps in delivery and to action these and make progress that shares expectations with their disabled students. We agree with this sentiment. It is important for each institution to meaningfully engage with their disabled students to co-produce research and associated outputs and this was the approach we took with the Toolkit. As discussed previously, a one-size-fits-all approach does not work.

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Supporting staff to develop microcredentials: Reflections from Abertay University

Julie Blackwell Young and **Jack Hogan,** Abertay University

In 2023, we were fortunate to be awarded a SEDA small grant to evaluate the work we had been leading in supporting staff to develop microcredentials. In our context, these microcredentials were initially 5-credit, fully online mandatory modules aimed at supporting student success and transition into the first year of an Abertay University degree programme. These microcredentials became known as the MySuccess modules. This was a new delivery format for the university (for more details see: Millard, Blackwell Young and Hogan, 2023). Our final report with a summary of the evaluation of the staff development is on the SEDA webpages (Blackwell Young and Hogan, 2024).

This article is written from the self-reflections of Julie Blackwell Young and Jack Hogan based within the Abertay Learning Enhancement (AbLE) Academy at Abertay University. Julie is Head of Teaching Quality and Learning Enhancement (AbLE Academy) and has worked across several roles in higher education at five UK HEIs. These have included lecturing, academic advising, programme leading, quality and academic development roles. Jack is a Lecturer in Academic Practice and joined Abertay initially to work exclusively on the MySuccess modules implementation. Prior to this Jack worked in a student engagement and employability professional services role.

As indicated in our previous writing on this initiative, the majority of the MySuccess microcredential developers were (and still are) professional services staff. Therefore, part of the opportunity and excitement of this work was constructing a development programme for staff with immense subject knowledge but limited experience of this kind of content creation and delivery in a format that was new to the university. The contribution of Scott Cameron in the initial development workshops should be acknowledged.

As part of this grant, we undertook an individual self-reflection exercise, and then used those self-reflections as a basis for a recorded reflective discussion between the two of us about the initiative and what we did to support the staff developing the MySuccess modules. It is that self-reflection that forms the focus of this article. It is worth noting that, in this

initiative and reflective exercise, Jack had a dual identity. He had only just started working at Abertay and was thrown into not only understanding the development of the MySuccess initiative (which had already started), but supporting staff in developing their modules whilst simultaneously having to develop his own MySuccess module (ABE101 Being Successful at Abertay). Therefore, Jack speaks from both perspectives.

In this article, we want to surface some of the tensions coming from trying to develop staff support on a new initiative with a group of staff who primarily are not used to working on producing credit-bearing modules. This follows the format of our self-reflection exercise and so is based around the questions we asked ourselves.

Question 1: What did we want people to get out of the staff development support?

Jack's starting position was: 'I personally wanted all of us to develop confidence in our own practice'. As noted earlier, many of the developers were professional services staff, who did not have much (or any) experience of creating and delivering credit-bearing modules. This was also Jack's first lecturing role having come from a professional services background, and he felt this was really helpful because, 'the majority of people we were working with and supporting were people whose roles very much looked similar to my previous role. I think there was something I understand in the mindset and the challenges of designing and delivering learning and teaching activities'.

Therefore, for Jack, his dual role as developer of staff and of a MySuccess module was particularly important: 'I was almost walking side by side and there wasn't this idea of we know what's right and come along. It was very much, we're all learning this together'.

Julie's thoughts were, 'I think I wanted people to have a sense of confidence…to feel that they weren't alone'. Julie has spent more years in academia and in staff development. Having been at Abertay for six years at the point this work commenced, Julie had knowledge of the systems, including the virtual learning environment and institutional expectations around teaching and learning. She also has a background in online and distance education and had used this in co-leading the work to develop the institutional principles on online and blended learning, as well as leading the work to support academic staff to pivot their teaching online during the pandemic. Therefore, Julie had more confidence and a solid foundation to build on in terms of supporting this newly formed group of microcredential developers.

Question 2: Why did we take the approach to the staff support that we did?

The approach is articulated in our project report (Blackwell Young and Hogan, 2024) but in essence, included online workshops of all the microcredential developers together, pairing of microcredential developers, online resources (including a self-paced workshop), templates and 1:1 support.

Jack was very aware of his role in making the MySuccess modules work as a cohesive experience for students: 'At the forefront is we want to develop microcredentials. That's what we were developing, but because we were focusing on first year, it was about developing a coherent mini programme and not just a collection of random microcredentials. I think that is ultimately why we took the approach'.

Jack's role is to oversee the microcredentials and, therefore, his focus has been very much on that whole perspective and making that clear to microcredential developers and the university community. Whereas Julie had a slightly different perspective in terms of the approach based on her knowledge of the colleagues that we would be supporting.

She reflected: 'From my perspective, the way I was approaching this is that all the people who were creating microcredentials and creating content knew their stuff inside out. It was about harnessing that and helping them to be able to take all that knowledge and understanding and just develop it in a slightly different way from what they were used to. I think that's the exciting bit'.

Julie was also able to draw on her experiences of supporting staff during the pandemic: 'Part of it was we had something that we had developed for academic staff in the move to online that we knew worked. We had a framework which we knew worked. We had some activities within workshops and templates which again, we knew had worked. We weren't trying to be developing stuff totally from scratch'.

Being able to harness existing staff development approaches and ideas was a useful base on which to develop the support for this new initiative. Julie also had existing relationships with many of the microcredential developers, which Jack did not. However, he was able to use his new position at the university to ask those questions that Julie took for granted, which was helpful in shaping workshops and supporting 1:1 sessions. Therefore, we were both able to use our strengths in shaping something that would have been better than either of us working alone.

Question 3: What was the easiest bit of the support to create?

This required quite a lot of reflection but was a good question as it made us think about what our strengths had been and what we already brought to the table.

This was very clear for Julie: 'For me it was probably the templates [on how to structure asynchronous learning activities] because they were already in existence, and I had to modify those… They were adapted from some existing templates out in the sector. So, I hoped that they should be useful, but they did need to be tweaked because they were based around a 20-credit module or based around people delivering sessions that were a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous, which these microcredentials were designed not to have any synchronous delivery'.

However, for the microcredential developers, Julie reflected that asynchronous delivery was the

most challenging aspect as this was the delivery mode they weren't used to; therefore, this support on how to structure asynchronous delivery was particularly important.

This was a bit more challenging for Jack who didn't have that experience from previous work with staff on adapting to online learning. Therefore, building those relationships was where Jack focused efforts, 'because I was new the easiest bit was learning from others, having conversations, finding out how things worked and doing that through developing my own microcredential alongside…And I think that then helped build those relationships'. Therefore, Jack was learning how to create asynchronous learning opportunities alongside the other microcredential developers and was able to use that experience to support others.

Consequently, our combined perspectives came together to complement each other.

Question 4: What was the hardest bit of the support to create?

Given human nature and its tendency to focus on the negatives, this was an easier exercise.

Jack said: 'I've got lots. I'm going to start with the obvious one. This was from my own experience and others because of that switch from designing asynchronous delivery, it was essentially using the VLE, not having a clue how to do it'. He adds, 'we could upload files and PowerPoints because most of them were used to that drag and drop. That's great for in-person delivery. But actually, the instructional design element and making that happen in that particular VLE was, I think, a struggle'.

This is a facet of the fact that Jack was new to the institution and the VLE so did not have that existing knowledge to draw upon either as a module leader creating content or in supporting others. However, as many of the microcredential developers also had limited experience with using the VLE, his insights into how to navigate it as a new user were particularly valuable in framing that support. As Julie had more experience in using the VLE, her experience is different: 'My input was all on the support side. And hopefully getting people to understand what we were trying to do and why we were trying to do it this way. Especially when it wasn't the natural way of working. That's where the workshops became really important...I'm not sure until developers actually started creating stuff that they necessarily realised the implications of the delivery mode. And it would require them to think about it differently from how they had in the past. Those workshops then became really, really important because that was the point at which we were bringing people together and making sure that there was that common understanding'.

Therefore, for Julie, creating support that also helped people understand the vision was challenging, which links back to Jack's comments earlier about trying to make sure there is a coherent suite of MySuccess modules that work together rather than stand-alone pieces.

Julie goes on to say, 'the tone of the workshops had to be spot on. Because you needed people to feel supported, not overwhelmed, but also be quite clear about what the parameters were that they could work within'. Therefore, that supportive element was particularly important, setting clear boundaries (as the university had agreed a set of principles as outlined in Millard, Blackwell Young and Hogan, 2023). Therefore, whilst this provided a handy framework, some also found it quite constraining as they couldn't just develop their module in any way they pleased. This required some radical rethinking in how they usually delivered materials, *e.g.* those in the Learner Development team were used to working 1:1 with students with writing produced by the students which wasn't possible in an asynchronous microcredential with potentially hundreds of students taking it.

We also reflected that we could have been more constraining in terms of increasing the coherence across the MySuccess modules, but Jack reflects that this could have been demotivating to developers as well: 'What I realised and keep realising, keep reminding myself, is focused on the really important things. I think at the time of developing, at this point, if that had happened, that would have switched an awful lot of people off because there was already quite a few non negotiables. And I think if we had started to add more and that just would have gone against the very philosophy and the relationships that were so integral'.

This highlights the difficult balancing act that we had to go through as staff developers between pushing people to do what we felt was best but also acknowledging where the limits of that should be in order to keep the overall initiative a success, particularly when we were asking colleagues to do so much that was outside of their usual duties. What we are now seeing is that the microcredential developers are sharing their practice and adopting things that have worked well in one module into another module of their own accord. Therefore, that consistency is happening more organically, which in hindsight, has worked better and has helped create a community of practice.

Question 5: What was the most exciting bit to work on?

We felt this was important to capture as we can sometimes get so caught up in the challenges and practicalities that we don't spend time thinking about the fun and exciting aspects of working to support staff. The personal aspects of working with staff came through very strongly here.

Julie felt: 'The workshops…were quite fun. It was an opportunity to be a bit creative…But also, seeing people using the stuff that we were covering in the workshops. It's always nice to get that sense of – I've done this to try and help somebody and it's working'. This captures the sense of accomplishment that comes from working on support that is actually doing what you set out to do.

For Jack, the sense of newness was a key factor which included building new relationships and being at the start of creating something unique:

'Building relationships [was] thoroughly enjoyable, getting to know people, getting to understand how the university works from being a new member of staff. And the second thing was putting it together, especially ABE101 [the only mandatory MySuccess module "Being Successful at Abertay"]. It was certainly a steep learning curve, but it was a really exciting and enjoyable one. I think it helped having that energy of starting something new'.

Question 6: What were some of the challenges and how were these overcome?

The creation of the MySuccess modules was done very rapidly and this was a big challenge for both those creating and those supporting (and for Jack – both aspects). This meant that some frustrations with the timing came our way, although we hadn't set the timings. Jack reflects that one issue with the timing was the time available to test the modules: 'I think if we had more time, we could have done more testing which would have helped enhance at that point as well. And gather that feedback from students and maybe utilise quotes from students to build into the module like we have got now from the feedback we've received from students. The first year versions of them to the third year versions look and feel different because we've got all of that knowledge and understanding'.

However, Julie wonders whether more time would have made the modules better:

'If we had had more time, would the microcredentials be substantially better than they were at launch? And I don't think they would have been. I think people would have just eked it out over a much longer period of time, but still been really stressed about it and still probably left everything to the last three weeks anyway because that's how we all work'.

One thing we considered was that the notion of a lack of time became something for those developing the MySuccess modules to hang some of their other frustrations upon as it was an aspect of creation that was consistently mentioned by the microcredential developers during the process. This is where consistent positivity and 'cheerleading' of the work the microcredential developers were engaged in was a particularly important part of our role even in the face of some quite vociferous pushback. These were also partly overcome by the fact that Jack was given space in his workload to work specifically on this initiative. This meant he was able to dedicate time to really supporting the microcredential developers: 'I was able to invest that time. And in some cases, I remember saying to people, send me over that Microsoft Word form, I'll spend a couple of hours. I'll copy and paste content into my learning space for you, if that's going to be helpful and go a bit above and beyond setting up quizzes. I remember having two-hour teams calls with X and the X team going, okay, let's build the quiz. What do we want? How do we want it? And exploring options and doing those types of things, which I think they were definitely appreciative of, because they weren't alone'.

That mention of people not being alone echoes what Julie said at the beginning of her reflections under Question 1 and shows the importance of walking alongside those we are supporting. It can sometimes mean holding space and being at the forefront of venting, but by working through it with our colleagues we can support them in creating something that may not have felt possible.

Concluding thoughts

Our self-reflection came whilst we were collecting the data from the microcredential developers about their experiences, so was, at that stage, based on our perceptions of that experience. The experiences of the microcredential developers themselves are outlined in the end of the project SEDA report (Blackwell Young and Hogan, 2024) and will be further explored in future publications including wider influencing, advocating and implementing roles required to make this possible. Therefore, this article was about our experiences as a team consisting of an experienced staff developer and someone who was just stepping into this role. We also had differing amounts of experience with Abertay as Jack was brand new in post and Julie had been working at Abertay for six years when this work was done. Finally, Jack also had the dual experience of supporting whilst developing his own MySuccess module.

We hope this article resonates with others involved in staff development, especially in supporting a cross-institutional initiative and also those working in the academic development of professional services staff. A microcredential staff development toolkit will be available on the SEDA website in the coming months.

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Blended Learning Solutions in Higher Education: history, theory and practice

by Neil Hughes
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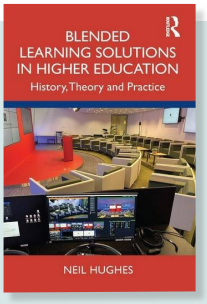

Neil Hughes' *Blended Learning Solutions in Higher Education* provides a refreshing and insightful examination of the blended learning model, exploring its historical origins, theoretical foundations, and practical applications. Hughes dives into the blended learning approach with a critical lens, challenging popular assumptions about its universal effectiveness while offering a balanced perspective on its potential and limitations.

The book is structured around several key contributions. First, Hughes conducts a critical review of the empirical evidence often cited in support of blended learning, particularly within higher education. His analysis reveals that, although frequently celebrated, much of this evidence is limited in scope and applicability. By focusing on specific contexts, Hughes suggests that the efficacy of blended learning cannot be assumed across different educational settings, inviting educators and policymakers to view it as one of many possible approaches rather than a universally superior model.

One of the book's unique aspects is its use of the Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework, which Hughes applies to trace the social and historical origins of blended learning. He documents how, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, a convergence of social and technological factors – driven by various advocacy groups – contributed to blended learning's adoption, particularly in North American universities. This historical perspective is particularly valuable for readers interested in how educational models evolve through sociopolitical influences, rather than merely through technological advances.

Hughes also addresses the impact of 'Black Swan' events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which accelerated the shift to blended and hybrid learning. He explores how the post-pandemic landscape has heightened the demand for flexible teaching and learning approaches, as students and educators seek new models that balance online and face-to-face engagement. Hughes' conceptualisation of blended learning as a complex, socially mediated practice is both timely and practical, especially as educational institutions worldwide grapple with establishing quality standards and governance structures to support blended learning.

The book also introduces the MIRACLE framework – Mode, Integration, Research, Activities, Contexts, Learners, Evaluation – as a tool for designing and evaluating blended learning environments. This practical framework is a notable asset, synthesising best practices to aid educators in creating blended learning models that are adaptable, inclusive, and research-driven.

Overall, *Blended Learning Solutions in Higher Education* is a thought-provoking read that challenges educators to take a more nuanced view of blended learning, going beyond the hype to consider the complexities and context-dependent nature of this model. Hughes' balanced critique and practical insights make this book a valuable resource for educational developers, university administrators, and anyone involved in shaping learning and teaching strategies in higher education.

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What makes an educational developer?

Silvia Colaiacomo and **Stuart Sims,** University of Greenwich

In the winter of 2024, we (the authors) reopened the much-loved Pandora's box of educational developer identity (or academic development? This is one of the questions!). The debate around who we are and what we do has been going on for a long time (Mori *et al.*, 2022) and across different geographical (and hence contextual and policy) locations. Lately, the debate has had a new resurgence of interest. Wilson and Popovic (2024) considered the shifts and changes the HE sector is going through, and the more and more explicitly professionalised nature of leadership in education and its 'enacting machinery'. The search for a clearly defined identity is not an easy challenge to tackle; the nature of the job itself is to respond to changing needs, the role is in a state of perpetual flux and having to align to a plethora of fashionable narratives that do not always appear consistent.

Flipping perspectives

Against this backdrop, we decided to approach our search from the perspective of the 'enacting machinery', rather than starting from the lived experiences of colleagues. We thought this may provide a good opportunity to reverse perspectives and add clues to our identity jigsaw. When HE institutions recruit educational developers, who are they looking for? How are they constructing the roles through job descriptions, expectations and assumed spheres of influence? Or even more pragmatically, where

are educational developers placed in institutional constellations? What are their opportunities for progression? In a nutshell, we thought of recomposing identities by travelling backwards, and then by tracing the steps that link the job description to the everyday reality and fabric of the roles.

In the opening months of 2024, we monitored three well-established recruitment platforms for HE jobs, using the search terms 'academic develop', 'educational develop', 'higher education', 'academic enhance', 'learning', 'learning and teaching', 'learning develop'. The adverts these searches produced were all reviewed to filter out anything irrelevant to our remit of educational developer roles (e.g. 'software developers'). This left 15 job opportunities for educational and academic developer roles advertised in the UK and Ireland between January and February. These comprised both research- and teaching-intensive institutions. At the SEDA 2024 Spring Conference, we delivered a workshop on the professional trajectories of educational developers that started with a presentation of our preliminary jigsaw findings. Whilst the responsibilities that the roles entailed were broadly aligned in scope and expertise, considerable variations appeared in job names (from senior lecturing to adviser posts), contractual agreements (only two of the jobs were fully academic, including research responsibilities and a consequent progression route), affiliations (from library services, to quality assurance teams, to central directorates to academic departments), and salary scales (with differences spanning over three different salary bands).

SEDA Spring Conference and workshop outcomes

The workshop unfolded by intertwining the findings and the experiences of colleagues/participants in the room to add further details to our identity jigsaw. We used Mentimeter to ask the audience how they defined their current roles. There was an interesting mix of responses split between job titles (with 'Lecturer' being the top response) and those more about the function (with 'Leader' being the most common), but also a range of responses along the lines of 'connector'. There was also a handful of more despairing comments like 'unclear' and 'frustrating'. Most colleagues attending the session came from a background in social sciences and/or humanities with virtually no representation of STEM subjects. We may perhaps infer that STEM specialists drift towards higher paid roles, or maybe that they find it difficult to belong to a professional/academic context that is *de facto* shaped by discourses (even languages) stemming from the realm of social sciences, education and teaching. And if this is the case, how representative are we of the diverse and multi-layered university communities? Do we need more diversity? Do we risk alienating those who are not 'like us'?

The focus that the review of job descriptions gave around what universities are saying they want these roles to do only demonstrated enormous variety. This was similarly reflected in the room when asked, 'who sets the agenda in your role/unit/institution around educational development?'. For many this was a member of senior management (e.g. Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor), although a few of these responses had question marks following, indicating some uncertainty. Some cynicism came through with other responses saying, 'by others usually ignoring evidence we provide' and '*literally no idea*', and others articulating the lack of clarity directly, for example, 'complex – sometimes me, sometimes set by institutional bodies or designated colleagues'. There are potentially many reasonable explanations for why there are different answers to who sets the agenda, but the pervasive lack of certainty or confidence is more concerning.

Our workshop audience was evenly split between age groups and career stages. And here we noticed, anecdotally, another developing trend. Whilst the old guard came to invent their role from a background in faculty work or teaching, the new guard happens to be born as developer as a coherent outcome of their training. At the same time, some of our junior participants appeared not to be aware of the implications of being on professional services rather than academic contracts, and displayed a hands-on attitude towards their duties that certainly can be seen as a marker of professionalisation – but how critical?

A framework for impact and progression

Needless to say, we do not want to make gross generalisations based on such small and captive sample, or suggest lack of critical awareness in many highly competent and engaged colleagues. But it is fair to ask how the role is developing, in a professionalised but fragmented landscape of institutional cultures and structures. Do we set, enact or even implement educational agenda? Do we need a sector-wide framework to guide our work and evaluate our impact? What would that framework look like and what would its key pillars be? Food for thought and a bit more research. As a start, we suggest the following key pillars that unite the variety of roles in this area:

1. Context sensitivity
2. Influencing rather than just implementing policy
3. Focusing on projects/interventions that bring together an understanding of research and practice
4. Evidenced through qualitative and quantitative data
5. Focusing on sustained outcomes.

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An unexpected case study of reflective practice: Horatio Nelson

Gary F. Fisher, University of Derby

Reflection and reflective practice is a core tenet of every profession from educational development to nursing and beyond. Models such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, the CARL Framework, and Driscoll's 'What? So what? Now what?' approach serve as structured approaches to guide this practice. However, the widespread adoption of reflective methodologies has occasioned some resistance. Surveys of practitioners within the field of nursing – a profession that has engaged in particularly widespread and rigorous adoption of reflective approaches – have revealed scepticism concerning the value of profession reflection and inauthenticity in the manner in which practitioners approach reflective exercises (Coward, 2011; Mahon and O'Neill, 2020). Within the field of educational development and learning design, some have argued that particular reflective models are overly rigid and can lead to superficial reflections on the part of practitioners (Fallin, 2021).

This resistance invites a broader examination of the history and relevance of reflection. As a case study, I look in an unexpected, but valuable, direction to a figure who is not often connected with the topic of reflection: a hero of the United Kingdom's Royal Navy, the iconic custodian of Trafalgar Square in London, and the man whom Lord Byron called 'Britannia's God of War'. I propose to consider the reflective practice of Viscount Horatio Nelson.

Introducing Horatio Nelson

Figure 1 Portrait of Horatio Nelson (National Maritime Museum)

During the late 18th and early 19th century, Nelson led the Royal Navy to multiple key victories over Britain's enemies during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars before being killed in his moment of ultimate triumph during the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. There are various qualities that his biographers often identify as being particularly praiseworthy. They celebrate his incredible daring when personally boarding and assaulting enemy ships during the Battle of Cape St. Vincent (1797). They marvel at his tactical innovation during the Battle of the Nile (1798), when he outmanoeuvred and destroyed Napoleon's navy. Most commonly, they praise his immense physical courage and unflappability during the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), in which his willingness to place his own person within the line of fire ultimately cost him his life.

Yet, for each of these successes Nelson experienced an equally dramatic failure. By the end of his life Nelson had been blinded in one eye, his stomach had been punctured by a shard of exploding wood, his right arm had been shattered and amputated below the elbow, and he lived with chronic complications from a barely-survived bout of malaria. This litany of injuries reflects a career punctuated by as many setbacks as triumphs. These setbacks include a failed expedition up Nicaragua's San Juan River (1780), in which fewer than 20% of his men survived, as well as an abortive invasion of Tenerife (1797) that was comfortably repelled and resulted in Nelson's own arm being injured and, ultimately, amputated.

One could reasonably argue that Nelson experienced such setbacks with as much frequency, if not more, than he experienced success. I argue that his successes were not in spite of these failures, but perhaps because of them. This is because after each instance of failure, Nelson underwent a process of authentic, impactful, and transformative reflection. More than his daring, innovation, or courage (all of which were qualities held in abundance by many of Nelson's comrades and enemies), I argue it is his capacity for robust introspection that distinguishes Nelson as a unique historical figure. The record of his letters sent to comrades, peers, and loved ones reveals a man who confronted his experiences honestly, drew tangible lessons from them, and transformed his practice as a result. One vivid example of Nelson's reflective practice comes from May 1798, when he had been tasked with locating and destroying a vast French expeditionary fleet Napoleon had convened in Toulon on France's southern coast. Commanding the British fleet from his flagship, the HMS Vanguard, Nelson departed Gibraltar on 9th May 1798 and, in his eagerness to engage his enemy, sailed directly into a catastrophic and avoidable storm. His fleet was scattered, his flagship suffered critical damage and was almost wrecked, at least one man under his command was killed, and Napoleon's vast fleet escaped unscathed into the Mediterranean. It was, quite possibly, the worst conceivable manner in which to begin the most important task Nelson had been set thus far in his career. It also provides a distinctive window into Nelson's reflective thinking when faced with such challenges, and highlights the role that this thinking, not just his military brilliance and daring, played in enabling Nelson's exceptional successes.

Nelson's reflective approach

Nelson's personal response to his disaster is recorded in a letter to his wife, Fanny, dated 24th May (Naish, 1958). This letter shows Nelson's keen reflective mind at its most effective. In a few short paragraphs he offers a robust, concise reflection that, coincidentally, almost perfectly aligns with Gibbs' reflective cycle (Figure 2).

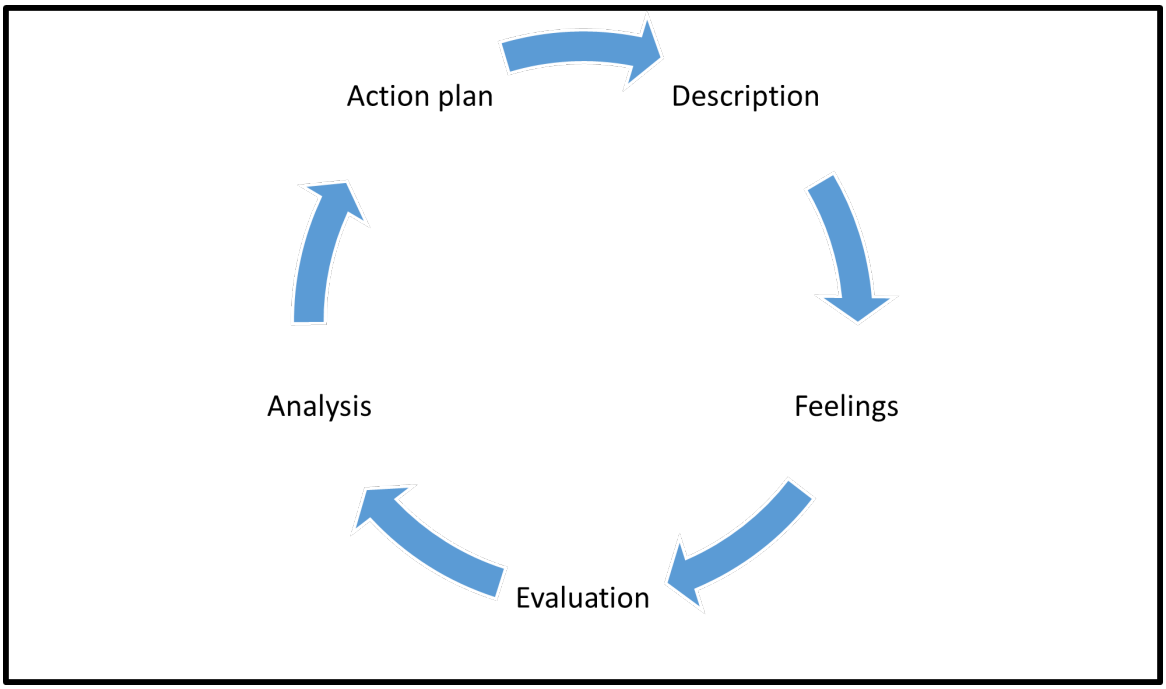

Figure 2 Gibbs' reflective cycle (drawn by the author)

He first describes the event in the third person, outlining how one evening he was 'walking in his cabin with a squadron about him' and by the next morning found 'his ship dismasted, his fleet dispersed, and himself in such distress'. He then evaluates the event, accepting the failings of his command but also celebrating the success with which his remaining vessels had found safe harbour. He analyses the experience, making sense of the manner in which he and his comrades acted and, in particular, praising the conduct of one Captain Alexander Ball. From this analysis, Nelson draws conclusions about his leadership and resolves to improve as both an officer and a man. Finally, he sets an action plan: completing repairs, making contact with the remaining British ships in the region, and heading to a pre-determined rendezvous point from which to continue his pursuit of the French fleet. Without consciously intending to, Nelson creates a piece of reflective writing of which any professional, regardless of field, would be proud.

Nelson's subsequent actions prove the value of these reflections. After repairing his flagship and reconvening his fleet, Nelson pursued Napoleon's expeditionary force across the Mediterranean. On 3rd August that same year Nelson would intersect and destroy Napoleon's fleet during the Battle of the Nile. Captain Ball, the officer Nelson identified as particularly deserving of praise following the storm, was empowered and entrusted with key responsibilities and was responsible for the destruction of the French ship *L'Orient*, the single largest warship in the world at the time (Figure 3). Napoleon's aspirations to invade Egypt were thwarted and British dominance in the Mediterranean secured. This success was not completed in spite of Nelson's initial setback, but rather enabled by the learning and actions that Nelson drew from that experience.

Figure 3 The destruction of L'Orient (private collection)

This is but one example of the immense wealth of reflective thinking Nelson performed throughout his career. Some of the outcomes of these reflections were more directly tangible than others. For example, when his injured arm was amputated by his ship's surgeon one of his key reflections concerned the coldness of the surgeon's saw when it cut through his bone. As a result, he occasioned a shift in naval policy to require surgeons to warm their tools prior to use. Throughout the successes and setbacks Nelson encountered, this active, rigorous, and transformative reflection remains a constant.

The transformative power of authentic reflection

Nelson's story serves as a compelling reminder of the power of authentic reflection. Through his letters and decisions, we witness a leader who confronted his failures with humility, learned from them with rigour, and acted on those lessons with transformative resolve. It was not only his courage, daring, or tactical brilliance that cemented his place in history, but his unparalleled ability to grow from adversity. His reflections were not exercises in perfunctory routine; they were acts of profound self-examination that shaped his character and practice, leaving a legacy far beyond his battlefield triumphs.

In a time when the value of reflective practices may be questioned, Nelson's example underscores their importance. He demonstrates that true reflection goes beyond surface-level acknowledgment of success or failure – it is about cultivating insight, driving personal and professional growth, and ultimately striving for excellence in the face of challenge. Nelson's life and letters are a testament to the transformative potential of reflective practice, not just for military leaders of his time, but for all professionals today.

As we navigate setbacks and challenges in our own fields, we would do well to remember Nelson's words to his wife Fanny after escaping the storm:

> *'I hope it has made me a better officer, as I feel confident it has made me a better man.'* (Naish,1958, p. 396)

References

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SEDA News

Save the Dates!

SEDA Spring Conference

Empowering voices: Innovations in student engagement for higher education success
15-16 May 2025

Hosted by Liverpool John Moores University

The event will bring together educators, practitioners and researchers to explore innovative strategies and best practices in enhancing student engagement as institutions, organisations and individuals strive to create inclusive and supportive environments that empower all students.

Keynote speaker: Tansy Jessop, PVC Education and Students at the University of Bristol.

For more details, please visit the following page on SEDA's website: https://www.seda.ac.uk/seda-events/seda-spring-conference-2025/

Booking open now!

Student and staff working in partnership: Co-creation in higher education
SEDA, International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) and the University of Greenwich co-hosted symposium.

Monday 9 June 2025

Keynote speaker: Gemma Mansi, Associate Professor in the Vice Chancellor's office at the University of Greenwich.

More information on the SEDA website: Students and staff working in partnership: co-creation in higher education

Booking opening soon!

Reminder!

Student Partnership Impact Award
SEDA, in collaboration with Jisc, has created the Student Partnership Impact Award as an international recognition of students who have had impact at their universities relating to Educational Development.

This award is open to national and international students of higher education level of study, who are/were engaged in developing or enhancing an element of education or services at their university, college or students' union. This award is open to graduates reflecting retrospectively on their engagement too, limited up until 12 months post-graduation.

Deadline: Tuesday 1 July 2025 23:59 (UK time)

For more information: https://www.seda.ac.uk/professional-development-opportunities/student-partnership-impact-award/