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The Journal of Research in Higher and Further Education 2014

Welcome to the second edition of the Journal of Research in Higher and Further Education.

The aims of this academically peer-reviewed publication are simple – to provide a means by which research, in all its guises, can be brought forward into the public domain, unbound by subject, but produced or supported through partnerships.

Following on the launch of the journal in June 2013 it is exceptionally pleasing that this edition outlines a National spectrum of research dedicated to exploring and furthering pedagogic knowledge across the FEC and HE sector. Each paper demonstrates new and different perspectives on Higher Education, its place within 'localised' market regions, and the implementation of techniques, technologies, and modus operandi which enriches the student learning experience. It also demonstrates the ability from those across the sector – many of whom are not provided the precious commodity 'time' – that research is not always a 'discreet' entity. Instead the exploration or advancement of pedagogy comes from the application and reflection of new ways of thinking. The sectorial changes in Higher Education continues to make the ability for those wishing to engage in research and scholarly activity problematic on occasion.

This is not necessarily an institutional 'want' – but is simply the outcome of continued and ongoing reform. This edition of the Journal has brought authors from around the country in outlining a further range of subjects – from Metacognition, to Georgian Countryside Poetry; from Applied Research; through to the experiences of International learners undertaking HE studies in an FE environment. All parties, including the University Centre Yeovil, remain dedicated to continuing the advancement of knowledge through research to underpin teaching, learning and enhancement. Once again, on behalf of the editorial committee we hope you enjoy this next edition, and our thanks are extended to all contributors.

Dr Paul Bailey
Director of Higher Education
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Editor in Chief

Editorial Committee 2014

SUPPORTING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN BIOSCIENCES WITH MOBILE TECHNOLOGY: STAFF AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

A pilot project in the 2013/14 academic year examined the practicalities of integrating mobile technology into teaching and learning in Higher Education. The aim of the initial 12-month period of this case study was to challenge ourselves as educators to implement mobile technologies into our practice to enrich and enhance traditional teaching methods. The purpose of this presentation is to share some of the developments at the half way point of the first year of the trial.

Reflective accounts of the project will be given from both the student and staff perspectives. Two Level 5 students from the FdSc Bioscience and Biochemistry cohorts will discuss their experiences of using mobile devices in a lecture and laboratory session, and also the use of these technologies to assist with self-directed study and work based learning.

Staff from the University Centre will share observations of student development including their use of the technologies to overcome troublesome knowledge 1, solve problems and take their learning experiences into new environments to promote informal and incidental learning[2].

Keywords: Mobile technology, digital literacy, informal learning

1. INTRODUCTION

The overarching remit of the pilot project was to enhance the digital literacy skills of students and their learning experience. Informed largely by the NMC (2012) Horizon Report, where mobile application (Apps) and tablet devices are presented as 'emerging technologies with considerable potential' and categorised as 'near-term horizon' with a 'time to adoption' of 12 months, the decision was taken to formally introduce these as part of the learning experience.

Prior to the commencement of this particular project, an internally funded working group was established, designed to consider and test opportunities to embed the use of mobile technologies as part of the curriculum. Teaching staff from across the University Centre were invited to submit a project bid, identifying how they would look to develop the use of Apps and tablet devices within their curriculum. The working group received external training and development from JISC RSC and colleagues from the University of Hull. All successful bids received an iPad Mini to support the progression of their enhancement activities.

2. APPROACH

The programmes selected to take part in this pilot project were the foundation degrees (FdSc) in Bioscience and Biochemistry. Managed and facilitated by the same programme team, these programmes were introduced into the University Centre provision in September 2012. Active engagement towards the working group as well as the ability to clearly demonstrate a range of strategies where the use of applications and mobile devices could be integrated was considered to be attractive factors when choosing a programme to pilot this project.

Managing the expectations of both staff and students was considered in the planning of this pilot project. Given the inexperience of the programme team in using mobile apps and tablet devices as part of their teaching practice, conscious decisions were taken to ensure that minimal pressure was placed on individual members of the team.

To manage the expectations of the students, the existing cohort of year 1 students were approached and informed of the proposed aims and objectives of the project. Information and guidance was presented to them, promoting this as an opportunity for them to develop their digital literacy skills through independent research activities. It was explained that as part of their final year tuition fees they would receive an iPad Mini along with £50 of iTunes vouchers. All 16 students enrolled on the programme agreed to complete the declaration of interest. Students agreed to pay an elevated fee to cover the cost of the tablet and iTunes vouchers.

The College successfully obtained an iTunes U Public Site License enabling the University Centre to publish iTunes U courses and subsequent resources. Once confident with the use of this platform, the decision was taken to replace the existing virtual learning environment (VLE - Moodle) with iTunes U in time for the start of the academic year. This advancement was not originally presented to the students, reinforcing the need to ensure that the staff team were comfortable and confident on the use of these new technologies.

The students enrolled a week earlier than all other programmes, ensuring that the tablets and vouchers could be ordered and received in time for the commencement of their studies. A workshop was arranged and delivered by the Programme Leader which aimed to familiarise the students with the iPad Mini, iTunes U and the associated Apps. The work-based and placement learning module would require all students to submit their portfolio as an e-book, making use of the Creative Book Builder application. No further expectations were placed on the students.

The students were directed to 4 additional mobile apps, presenting these as supportive tools for the development of academic and transferable skills. While these apps were promoted and would be used by members of the teaching staff, students would not be disadvantaged in any way if they chose not to use them throughout the academic year.

It is worth clarifying that on commencement of the project, there was no intention to collect findings and subsequently seek publication. While conscious decisions were taken with regards to the environment in which staff and students experienced the use of apps and tablet devices, no formalised methodology was established. As a result of interesting and though provoking observations throughout the year, informal discussions and focus groups have taken place with students to inform future developments and discuss any observations to date.

3. FINDINGS

The purpose of this pilot project was to trial the use of mobile technology to support teaching and learning within Biosciences. Table 1 summarises student perceptions from the pilot.

Table 1. Student perceptions of using the iPad to support their studies

FACILITATIVE	POTENTIAL BARRIER
Organisation	*New technology*
All in one place	More comfortable with old-fashioned notebook
Easy to carry	Put students out of their comfort zone
Quick link to internet	Push notification can be distracting
	Slow to take notes

Laboratory work	Rates of student uptake and development
Record practical processes	Some students progress faster than others and are pro-active at solving problems, whereas others do not make the effort and rely on the more 'developed' students
Keep record of results	Some enjoy the attention of not being able to do it
Internet access allowed them to reassure themselves of methodologies, and promoted discussion with peers	
Lecture content	*Connectivity*
Record for later play back	Download restrictions
ShowMe review videos	
Communication	*Formatting across platforms*
Helps to use the existing methods	Difficulty with viewing documents created using Microsoft Office
Share materials and notes	Printing
More likely to read something uploaded by peers to social networking or by staff to VLE as a time filler	

3.1 Facilitative uses of the technology

The main aspect that students have highlighted as being helpful is improved organisation and the benefit of the majority of their notes and reading materials being in one place. This has facilitated the likelihood of extra reading as some students have described the tablet as a 'time filler', and others described how they were more likely to read something uploaded by the lecturers in the form of a web-link with a 'I might as well read it now' attitude. Furthermore the students made better use of their existing social networking accounts (e.g. Facebook. LinkedIn and Twitter) to share relevant information online, which some admitted they were more likely to read than if a lecturer posted it as required reading (e.g. news articles, society blog posts, new research articles).

It would appear that some students have also inadvertently increased their external reading by being responsible for downloading (and sharing) subject specific Apps that cover aspects of the indicative content of the programme. These activities suggest the emergence and promotion of both informal and incidental learning. Marsick and Watkins[3] have suggested that such forms of learning can be a by-product of another activity, which adds further support to the tablet's use as a time filler to allow students to explore and share the vast amounts information attainable with the technology.

Students have commented that they like learning using the Apps as they are in animation form and easy to understand. Similar comments have been made about the way in which lecturers have covered some lecture content using drawings on electronic whiteboard Apps such as

ShowMe and Explain Everything. This cohort of students seemed to like the ability to pause and rewind an animation created by the staff and also play back whole lecture content, a process that has been termed 'lecture reflection' by other authors 4. The benefits of using pictures and animations to teach science in schools has been advocated in the literature as it may improve motivation 5, 6, and it has also been suggested to improve retention of information in undergraduates 7. It is thought by staff that these animations may help overcome troublesome knowledge 1 as they promote the understanding of biochemical processes and mechanisms without new terminology becoming a barrier.

3.2 Potential barriers associated with the technology

Some students commented that the use of new technology put them out of their comfort zone, which they deemed a negative aspect to the project. However the teaching staff could argue the case that a challenging learning environment can be conducive to student development, with support from previous research 8. This perception of a comfort zone resulted in a sense of apathy from some students towards the need to solve relatively minor problems with the technology. The first barrier noticed was difficulty taking notes during lectures due to the keyboard. Some students overcame this by downloading handwriting Apps or making fewer notes whereas others stopped using the tablet to take notes altogether. It was interesting that some students adapted their note taking style to take fewer notes during the lectures and return to the content via the means described earlier to make notes (i.e. lecture reflection). Evaluating the effectiveness of note taking was not within the original scope of this project, but it may be of interest to research in future whether the adapted note taking would improve learning, particularly as effective note taking has been suggested to be associated with student achievement in higher education 9. Other barriers included problems printing from the tablet in the absence of a compatible printer and formatting problems between Microsoft Office and iOS programmes.

Internet connectivity was at times a genuine issue, specifically when downloading materials. Early in the project there was a download restriction when students were connected to the college Wi-Fi network, and once this was addressed connection speed limited the ability to download. This problem was simply remedied by tethering to other devices or sharing the materials using airdrop.

4. CONCLUSION

Whilst acknowledging the potential barriers to the implementation of mobile technology discussed in this paper, all staff and almost all students concluded that the technology has proved facilitative to the programme. Table 2 identifies some recommendations from the team going forward.

Table 2. Recommendations and areas for future development

RECOMMENDATIONS	AREAS FOR FUTURE TEACHING DEVELOPMENTS AND POTENTIAL PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH
Connectivity	*Future developments in teaching*
Check with institutional IT services for student restrictions	Map student development more closely to a digital literacy framework
	Critical assessment of freely available health assessment Apps
Student workshop	Purchase tablet compatible medical peripherals for laboratory teaching
Whilst the limited training encouraged some students to investigate possible uses and solve their own problems 10, others did demonstrate a sense of apathy and rely on other students. The more 'developed' students have suggested that we should in future arrange regular meetings to help and encourage those students out of their comfort zone	Work in conjunction with computing and engineering colleagues to develop CAD models to investigate possible implementation of augmented reality
	Investigate the transference of the technology into other programmes, as relatively little emphasis was placed on subject specific uses during this pilot
Compatibility issues	*Potential pedagogical research*
Download keynote and pages that have some cross-compatibility with Microsoft Office	Using mobile technology to identify threshold concepts and overcome troublesome knowledge
Save documents as PDFs to ensure formatting is not adjusted	Investigate the adaptation of student note taking to fit the technology

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POST-PASTORAL/ PRE-ROMANTIC:
THE PLACING OF GEORGIAN COUNTRYSIDE POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This paper will engage with the question of where to place Georgian poetry of the countryside within literary history and movements. This has not been an easy task for literary critics, as Jennifer Keith acknowledges, "Finding satisfactory labels for the poetry of the last decades of the Eighteenth century has proven particularly difficult." [1]

As the title suggests, this paper will first examine the development of pre-existing Pastoral conventions and concerns in three key poems of the period (William Collins' *Ode to Evening*, Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*) and consider in what ways they can be described as post-pastoral. The effects of the major social and economic changes taking place in the eighteenth century, in particular the growth of towns and cities and the increasing enclosure of common land, on existing pastoral views of the countryside will be considered, with reference to earlier pastoral texts.

The paper will then discuss the more controversial designation of 'pre-romantic' to these poets and their work. The biggest problem with this term is that, as Thomas Woodman argues, "the word implies that we view some very disparate and fascinating poets solely in the light of their proposed anticipation of what was to follow them." [2] Despite these difficulties, however, this paper will offer a defense of this designation, and argue that it can help illuminate the cultural movement from Pastoral to Romantic views of nature and the countryside which occurred over the second half of the eighteenth century which can be traced in the work of these poets.

1. INTRODUCTION

The early eighteenth century impulse to imitate classical models demanded formal rules for writers to follow. In literature this meant a new alertness to generic features as laid down by classical texts and critics. Pastoral, however, unlike tragedy and comedy, was scantily theorized by classical authorities such as Aristotle and Horace, so authors relied more heavily on the models provided by the works produced in the genre, pre-eminently the pastorals of Theocritus and Virgil. This neo-classical commitment to imitation and the authority of the ancients led to what was criticised as an artificial form of pastoral which deliberately rejected any attempt at mimetic representation of real rural settings and characters. The neo-classical master Alexander Pope argued:

"Pastoral is an image of what they call the Golden age. So that we are not to describe our shepherds as this day really are, but as they may be conceiv'd then to have been; when the best of men followed the employment."[1]

In practice this meant Pope's (and his followers') pastorals contained a mix of the Mediterranean and the English in their landscapes which were inhabited by shepherds bearing classically sanctioned names such as Amaryllis and Corydon.

There was another approach to literature in the eighteenth century, however, and the debate between those who favoured a Neo-classical approach and the Rationalists who rejected the authority of classical authorities in favour of invention and direct experience was fought in London's coffee houses and newly popular literary periodicals. Deliberately snubbing Pope's approach the rationalist Thomas Tickell argued for a more realistically British pastoral:

"For what is proper in Arcadia, or even in Italy, might be very absurd in a colder Country. …And in so fine a Country as Britain, what occasion is there for that Profusion of Hyacinths and Paestan Roses, and that Cornucopia of foreign Fruits, which the British Shepherds never heard of!"[2]

2. POST-PASTORAL

Although Georgian countryside poetry was less concerned with debates over generic exactness, as was most poetry of that period, nevertheless certain pastoral features endure in these poems. All the poems being considered in this paper see the countryside as a place of potential retreat, for example, although in the latest of our poems this has been radically undermined by economic and social change. They also all describe the moral lessons and spiritual sustenance the countryside offers and this is contrasted with the vice and corruption of urban life in both Gray and Goldsmith. These are the pastoral features that can be seen to have endured. The rest of this paper is concerned however, with what may be called the post-pastoral features all these poems share: A new focus on personal emotional responses, the evocation of place through naturalistic landscape detail and a more political social criticism can all be linked to the eighteenth century context of their composition.

2.1 Post-pastoral Landscapes

All these poems evoke more recognizably British landscapes than those found in previous English pastorals, ones which, moreover have been purged of classically inspired features and inhabitants. Their landscapes contain many typically British features, the presence of churches, heaths, hamlets, and water mills ensure readers recognize contemporary British settings rather than artificial classical locations. This naturalisation extends to the details of wildlife and plant life including sedges, hawthorn and bats, bitterns, and lapwings. Rather than the traditional shepherds these landscapes are inhabited by more recognizably British plowmen and milkmaids. In this these poets were clearly following the rationalist model of literature in which the poet's direct experience was more important than the imitation of classical models, but there were other cultural developments in visual art that may have influenced their depiction of setting.

According to Robert Jones the description of landscape in these poems was also influenced by developments in painting, especially the work of Claude Lorraine:

"Claude's landscapes are highly organized and represent distance …via an arrangement of bands of light and shade that recede from the viewer's gaze: first foreground, then brightly lit middle grounds, and finally darker backgrounds, perhaps revealing brooding hills."[3]

The view depicted by Collins in *Ode to Evening* can be seen to mimic these visual effects through verbal description. The poet "Views Wilds and swelling Floods,/ And Hamlets brown, and dim-discover'd Spires" The ordering of these landscape details moves from foreground to background, which become gradually dimmer and less distinct, just as in the new landscape painting. The new focus on detailed and more realistic landscape description in all these poems can also be traced back to the influence of John Locke's empirical philosophy which emphasized the role of sight and the association of ideas. This can be seen in the movement common to all the poems in which particularized description creates an association with a mood which then leads to the poet's reflections. So, in Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard, the scene is described in the opening four stanzas with telling details "Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight", this in turns creates a mood of "solemn stillness" which leads on to Gray's elegiac reflections on death and memory.

2.2 Sensibility

The importance of mood and reflection in these poems leads to a much stronger focus on personal emotion than was evident in earlier pastorals. This can be linked to another major cultural development in the later eighteenth century sometimes called 'the cult of sensibility'. "Sensibility" which once denoted merely the receptivity of the senses, came to mean a particular kind of acute and well-developed consciousness, which was marked and aroused through bodily signs such as blushing, weeping, sighing and even fainting. Sensibility in a person became invested with spiritual

and moral values as it lead to the ability to sympathise with others' sufferings, especially those weaker than you. Thus the new concern in Georgian literature for the poor and enslaved may have been based on enlightenment notions of equality but its expression was often based more on emotional than rational appeals. The influence of sensibility is clear in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* where Gray both evokes sympathy for the rustic dead whose 'frail memorials… Implore the passing tribute of a sigh" and for himself who, "gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear." Goldsmith similarly ensures we feel the plight of the one remaining inhabitant of the deserted village, through depicting her emotions as much as her miserable living conditions: "Forced, in age … To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,/ To seek her nightly shed and weep till morn." Although this unashamed appeal to emotion may strike modern readers as sentimental it does mean these poems included a stronger sense of contemporary social criticism than previous pastorals. Gray is aware of how poverty and a lack of education limit the opportunities of the rural poor, "Chill penury repressed their noble rage," and Goldsmith explicitly criticises the greed that lead to the enclosure of common land, "The man of wealth and pride,/ takes up a space that many poor supplied;" As Sussman suggests "In the face of the changes taking place in rural England, representations of pastoral life could acquire a political edge."[4]

3. PRE-ROMANTIC

Other developments in Georgian countryside poetry are better understood using the term pre-romantic, despite this being a highly contested term. These include the increasingly solitary and often alienated figure of the poet, the more sublime settings, and the centrality of nature as a powerful moral force. Although melancholy due to disappointed love was traditional in pastoral poetry, as was a mournful tone in pastoral elegies the strength of personal alienation, and sense of isolation conveyed by the poet speakers in these poems a more profound change in poetic mode. Marshall Brown has suggested that the "foregrounding of subjective consciousness and the subjective self is the primary and distinctive achievement of the poetry of the eighteenth century." Because this poetry attended self-consciously to the poet's own mental processes it inevitably led to the more isolated and alienated voice which Nandrea notes "moves these writers away from the literature of sensibility, marking a closer kinship with the Romantics".[5]

3.1 Self-conscious Subjectivity

Goldsmith's subjective self is given voice in *The Deserted Village*, offering a personal story that isn't at once relevant to the subject of the poem, "In all my wanderings round this world of care, In all my griefs – and God has given my share". The use of the hyphen suggests the poet's own voice breaking into the poem at this point, emphasizing the sincerity of the admission. This autobiographical strain is returned to in the poem's final lines where Goldsmith addresses Poetry, "My shame in crowds, my solitary pride. Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,/ That found'st me poor at first, and keeps't me so;" The solitary nature of the poet's existence is also a key feature of his subjectivity, "here as I take my solitary rounds." Gray's subjective stance is similarly isolated and alienated, the figure of the poet speaker in his poem is described as, "drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,/Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love." Although it became the dominant mode of address in Romantic poetry, these poets' willingness to insert themselves into their poems with the repeated use of "I" was a major innovation in the eighteenth century. Even in the less overtly mournful *Ode to Evening* the poet is solitary in order to muse on Evening more fully. This isolation not only allows for a more subjective voice to emerge, Irlam suggests it is also linked to another key feature of pre-romanticism, "solitude – the figure of the lonely and alienated poet – will become one of the primary vehicles for the sublime in poetry"

3.2 The Sublime

A taste for the sublime and the cultivation of its effects was evident across British culture in the second half of the eighteenth century. It led to a preference for more extreme landscapes than had previously featured in pastorals. This is particularly evident in Collins *Ode to Evening* where the poet follows Evening to an almost gothic scene, consisting of a "lone Heath", "time-hallow'd Pile", and "up-land Fallows grey." He also describes a view consisting of 'Mountains', 'Wilds' and 'swelling Floods' all more likely to inspire awe and terror than the farmscapes and managed nature of typical pastoral. Although Gray and Goldsmith's more typically pastoral settings initially lack these extremes they are consequently supplied by the imagery of deserts and oceans both poets resort to. Other sublime motifs can be traced in our three poets, in particular obscurity, darkness, solitude and silence. The very choice of evening as the setting for both Collin's and Gray's poems reflects a sublime preference for darkness and silence, although ironically this silence is signaled by the audibility of beetles and owls.

3.3 The Value of Nature

The value placed on nature in these poems is probably the most convincing evidence for their status as precursors of the Romantics. For Collins his experience of, "Fancy, Friendship, Science, and rose-lipp'd Health" all come from the gentle influence of nature in the form of evening. He also adopts the role of Evening's devotee calling himself a pilgrim and her a votress; in this he anticipates the Romantic belief in the benign influence of nature, and its ability to teach and inspire. Similarly for Goldsmith, the rural virtues include poetry which is somehow indistinguishable from a life lived close to nature. Woodman suggests that these poets express "fears that as society grows more sophisticated so it is in danger of growing more alienated from the true sources of feeling and thus from the true sources of poetry" which is the natural world [6].

4. CONCLUSION

These poets undoubtedly occupy a shifting middle ground between the classical certainties of the Augustan period and the fully blown radicalism of the Romantic Movement. They do not give the rural poor the kind of sustained attention that Wordsworth practiced, nor does their language offer a dramatic break with the poetic diction of their century. Collin's profusion of classical references, Goldsmith's balanced and ironic rhyming couplets and Gray's personified abstractions all fail to speak the 'real language of men' which Wordsworth sought to employ, nevertheless their emphasis on feeling, their appeal to personal experience and their recourse to nature as a source of consolation and inspiration means, as Nandrea argues, they can be "legitimately called pre-romantic"[7].

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THE EXPERIENCES OF EUROPEAN UNION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDYING FOR AN HE QUALIFICATION IN ENGLISH FE COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

Amongst all the recent discussions between journalists, politicians and HE providers about the impact of fees and visa requirements on EU and International students, little attention has been paid to the views of students from both groups who have chosen to pursue their HE in an English FE college. Whilst International students have always paid significantly higher fees than Home students (in universities if not colleges) this has not precluded growing expectations on their part around value for money. EU students in particular are often able to obtain HE qualifications in their own countries that are taught in English and which are recognised across Europe at a lower fee or no fee. In what is one of the first studies of its kind, the Mixed Economy Group of colleges (MEG) surveyed the views of a small group of EU and International students attending MEG colleges. This paper presents the students' views of the quality, value for money and cultural experience that they receive in return for their fees. For both groups, the perceived value attached to an English HE qualification often outweighs any financial disincentives – but institutions should not become complacent in terms of the totality of the offer made to these students.

Keywords: EU and International students, HE in FE colleges, Mixed Economy Group, Student Experience

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper draws on findings from a survey that was undertaken by the Mixed Economy Group in February 2013. It was part of a suite of enquiries into the student experience of HE undertaken in English FE colleges. It specifically sought the views of EU and International students (i.e. excluding students from the 'home' nations) who were pursuing a course of Higher Education in 2012-2013.

Higher Education finance and funding arrangements are changing rapidly. A new fees regime supported by student loans was introduced in autumn 2012. In a move to prompt a more diverse range of providers, FE colleges were encouraged to bid for student numbers, resulting in more than sixty new directly-funded institutions. Whilst International students are largely unaffected by these changes, EU students potentially face a significant rise in tuition fees, albeit one for which student loans are available in England. Like Home students, their expectations may rise in parallel to their fees.

It is not certain how many EU and International students are studying HE in English FE colleges. In April 2013, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published a report on the impact of Tier 4 students on FE colleges and the UK economy [1]. Whilst this suggested that some 9,494 Tier 4 students were attending English colleges, generating £46,200,000 income, it must be remembered that Tier 4 covers all post-16 study rather than just undergraduate and above.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) collects and publishes student data in its annual HEIFES return. This return collects student numbers from those institutions with a

funding agreement with HEFCE. It will therefore exclude those attending colleges with indirect funding and /or those following Non-Prescribed courses of HE. The current return[2] suggests that 1,717 International and 399 EU students were enrolled on prescribed HE courses in directly-funded FE colleges in 2012-2013. (In the same year, just over 64,000 Home students were recorded on HEIFES.)

EU students pay the same fee as Home students. In some cases, this will be higher than is the case in their own (EU) countries – in Germany, for example, most HE is funded by the state, with no fees being charged to the student. International students pay significantly higher fees for the same course than do Home students.

There has been increased concern at the impact of stringent controls imposed by the UK Visas and Immigration Service (formerly the UK Border Agency) on recruitment to UK HE courses.

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was completed by 33 EU students and 41 International students. Whilst the latter were attending their college for a longer period of time, some of the EU students were only enrolled for one or two semesters as part of an ERASMUS exchange programme. Students were asked their views on 4 areas: their present choices and future plans; their academic and cultural experiences; the nature of the academic support that they received and their overall impression of their HE in FE experience, including whether or not it represented good value for money.

Whilst our sample size is small, the investigation contributes to existing knowledge in this under-researched area. In particular, the report offers insights into the experiences of EU students: this group is often overlooked in such exercises or at best categorised as Home students due to their fee paying status.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Understanding student choice

Amongst EU students, obtaining an English HE qualification was the most important reason to study in England. International students rated the experience of living abroad and the enhancement of employability prospects as the prime reasons for choosing to study here. Both groups rated these three factors as the main reasons underpinning their choice to study in England. Unlike the EU students in the sample who either intended to go back to their home country or seek short-term employment in the UK, the data from International students suggests that a majority intended to study further in the UK, and then return to their home countries. Settling permanently in the UK did not seem to be a priority for either group.

The main three factors underpinning EU students' decisions to study HE in an FEC were 'the higher level of support provided at a college than at a university', 'lower fee to study at the college' and 'an inability to secure a place at a university'. The fee sensitivity of International students was mirrored in their identifying the lower fees charged by colleges as the key reason underpinning their choice to study HE in an FEC. The second and third most important reasons were higher levels of support and lower entry criteria respectively.

A majority of students in both groups chose their particular college because it offered their 'preferred course of study'. Student choices were also guided by the location and reputation of their college. The choices made by friends or siblings were not very influential in their decision making.

3.2 Academic and cultural experiences

Students were asked to share their views on a range of issues relating to their academic and cultural experiences whilst studying at their college. These included their expectations relating to diversity in the classrooms, level of support for English language, their course timetables, and their preferred ways of developing their understanding of 'British' culture.

A majority of students were satisfied with the clarity of their programme aims and structures and were convinced that their programme prepared them adequately for their chosen career. A clear majority from both groups (85% EU and 98% International) confirmed that their tutors knew their names and that they approach them for help. However, students appeared to be less satisfied with the mix of students in their classrooms as well as the level of support they received with English language.

A sizeable proportion of students in both groups (33% EU and 29% International) believed that there were too few 'English' students in their class and nearly 27% students from both groups expected a greater degree of diversity in terms of the nationalities of the students in their classes. A large proportion of International students (46%) believed that they require more support with their English language, although a notable proportion of EU students also expressed that they required assistance with their English.

Only 45% of EU respondents indicated their preference to mix more with British students, whilst a much larger proportion of International students (83%) confirmed their interest in more contact with British students.

3.3 Support from the College

In addition to their academic experiences, students were asked to share their perceptions of the support services within their colleges. This included library and learning resources, academic and social spaces, as well as careers and employment advice. Whilst a majority of students believed that the college library and resource centres (LRCs) were adequately resourced with books and learning materials, they indicated a clear preference for a separate LRC for HE students. 42% EU and 51% International students preferred a separate LRC for undergraduates.

A notable number of students from both groups (46%) neither agreed nor disagreed over whether they were satisfied with the level of information they received about pastoral support. This may be due to a lack of awareness of such support. Likewise, nearly 25% of students in both groups neither agreed nor disagreed with the quality of careers advice available, which may be attributed to students not accessing these services.

3.4 The overall student experience

As part of the survey, three key questions were posed to the students relating to their overall perceptions of studying at their colleges. A large proportion of students in both groups rated the overall experience to be satisfactory or very good (EU students -73%, International students - 88%). A larger proportion of EU students (67%), compared with International (59%) strongly confirmed that they would recommend their college to their family and friends. Finally, nearly similar proportions of EU (73%) and International students (76%) considered that their college was offering them good 'value for money'.

Whilst many colleges go to great lengths to accommodate the needs of International students, there is emerging evidence to suggest that EU students have a slightly different perspective on their experience of English HE delivered in FE. For example:

- 93% of International students seem to be satisfied with the clarity of programme aims and structures compared to EU students (79%)

- 98% of International students find their courses interesting when compared to 85% EU students. They were relatively more convinced than EU students that their course was preparing them well for their chosen career

- 85% of International students (compared to 67% EU students) were convinced that their teachers are generally well-informed about their subjects

- Only 5% of International students considered that teaching styles in their home countries were better than in England, compared to 25% of EU students.

Just as all International students cannot be categorized as having the same problems and issues, so EU students may arrive at the college with their own individual needs and expectations. Our research suggests that colleges should review the arrangements they make for EU students, perhaps taking into account the shorter duration of their courses.

4. CONCLUSION

This was a small-scale exploratory study and the results should be viewed in that context. However, a number of key issues are worthy of further consideration by colleges. Firstly, it is apparent that the competitive pricing strategies they adopt continue to offer an attractive alternative to an English university. Secondly, students value diversity in their classrooms. This has clear implications for college recruitment strategies. Colleges should also consider the nature and availability of student support services and their suitability for the differing needs of EU and International students.

Both EU and International students arrive with different expectations and needs. Although for some colleges, recruitment of non-UK students is a key area for development, for others it is very much a peripheral activity. Senior managers therefore need to consider how overseas recruitment fits with their overall college strategy. If it forms an important or growing part of it, how can an appropriate level of resources be allocated not just to the recruitment process but also to supporting and advising students on their academic journeys?

For International students in particular, there are obvious and important issues around the college's relationship with the UK Visas and Immigration Service and, in particular, how the on-going requirements for monitoring and compliance are to be managed.

In the very competitive global education market, there are sensitive decisions to be made as to appropriate levels of fee and the impact of any change on recruitment.

Once they are enrolled at the college, supporting overseas students raises a number of issues for staff. Where those students form a significant part of the student community, dedicated specialist staff may be needed with knowledge of the needs of students from a range of countries. This may include providing language support and cultural awareness but teachers may also need help in making appropriate adjustments to their teaching methods, especially where the student body has previously been less diverse. When non-Home students begin to attend the college in larger numbers, new support arrangements will be required, including ensuring that those students gain the experience they want of British life and culture.

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London's coffee houses and newly popular literary periodicals. Deliberately snubbing Pope's approach the rationalist Thomas Tickell argued for a more realistically British pastoral:

"For what is proper in Arcadia, or even in Italy, might be very absurd in a colder Country. …And in so fine a Country as Britain, what occasion is there for that Profusion of Hyacinths and Paestan Roses, and that Cornucopia of foreign Fruits, which the British Shepherds never heard of!"[2]

ASSESSMENT AND CONTINUAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Assessment is seen as a measure to examine competencies, attainment or performance. It is the logical end to a sequence of processes that provide knowledge and allow feedback through assessment to measure whether knowledge has been secured, but more than this, used meaningfully. Therefore the aim of this article is to identify reasons why assessment is a valid tool in providing continual development of student's performance. Using a programme of study based on a cohort of Higher Education students, the range of assessment identified is there to engage the student in learning both the subject and techniques to enhance future performance, especially as the students are marked using a HEI marking schemes. It is also identified as being a performance indicator for future augmentation of writing and research techniques.

Should summative assessment be the only method? Assessment acknowledged here within the article involves both summative and formative methods, formative being used most to enable student development by providing feedback, summative assessment only occurs at the end of a module with an examination. Should feedback be an essential element in this process, evidence would suggest that feedback including criticisms on course work and examinations being fed back in both written and verbal formats is a key component in development; it is not unusual for students to improve not only year on year but assignment by assignment by using these methods. It can be argued that assessment at its best will engage the learner and motivate them, therefore the it is important for any assessment, that the reason or requirement for assessment has to be shown, once students see the need for assessment and value of feedback it can change the individual's behavior, so therefore the critical factor for success is making the student aware of the assessment strategy and its importance.

Keywords: Assessment, performance, feedback, behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Performance management is used as a tool in the workplace and, as a key component in that workplace, to measure by examination competence and attainment and therefore the performance of the given individual. Without this type of performance indication it can be argued that the individual would not change their behavior and performance which would be required to succeed fully in the workplace. Taking this realistic system into the educational arena it is therefore logical to assume that by providing students, though feedback in varying formats indications of performance, both positive and negative, that this could only enhance and provide continuing mechanisms to enabling enhancing the overall performance that they could possibly achieve. In essence there is also an element of training involved in the system as well, whilst not doing the work for the individual you are teaching them to improve their techniques. Whilst most narrators would agree that assessment is an important tool in the educator's repertoire its use as a performance enhancer is not always used to its fullest advantage. The feedback should be specific in its content and provide the ability to improve. In this manner the improvements should be a review of both past efforts with a view to enhancing future efforts. To link this with the work place, this would be the changing of behavior, like the employee the student without discussing and reviewing performance their behavior is unlikely to change and they will continue to produce a level of work which, if it had been addressed, could have been improved upon. The key component of using the feedback is, as Jonsson (2012) states, ……not only are factors such as quality of information and timing important but also that the students need to be open to the feedback and know what to do with it".[ ]

2. FINDINGS

2.1 Communicating the Concept

It is therefore important that if the goal of influencing behavior is to be fully utilized that the quality, timing and receptive nature of the students are addressed fully as this will enhance the student experience, gain trust and produce intended changes in behavior and performance. The first key step in this procedure should therefore be the initial student acceptance of the principle of feedback and its intended outcome, which although ultimately for their benefit, is not always viewed in this context by the intended recipient. This initial interaction is normally an interesting experience as, depending on the student back ground, could cause some interesting exchanges depending on their previous experiences. The diversity of student backgrounds, ethnicity and experiences can be a major barrier to the rapport being built. In the authors experience on their courses the diversity of students is relevant to the task in hand, having students from such diverse backgrounds as both Eastern and Western Europe, China and Africa does bring an element of skills and technique into the way that the rapport is built. Overall though the interaction and explanation of the concept has, in the author's experience, to be enhanced by the quality of the feedback, the delivery of the given feedback in a well thought out situation which will ultimately gain trust and a working relationship between student and tutor. The concept is therefore one of a long term strategy as opposed to the short term. The openness of the feedback is of paramount importance, the individual then understands after a while that you, as the assessor and helping them and not purely trying to belittle their work.

Additionally the actual feedback should be linked to genuinely clear learning outcomes, especially in year one of the course where, much of the groundwork for the future should be undertaken in terms of building confidence and a skills base. Furthermore, `learning outcomes, like objectives before them, must differ according to the level of teaching and learning concerned` (Hussey & Smith 2002) [ ]. Bearing in mind what Hussey and Smith have said the student must be made aware that there are levels of performance that they can aspire to this gives an added dimension to the relationship between doing the academic work, being provided with feedback and performing. The dimensions are critical in most instances to the performance as most students need to see that there is a reason to aspire to higher achievements and the learning outcomes can provide this, although these objectives should not become too prescriptive. In many instances the right mix of assessment will also have an influence of the student body, variety between essays, presentation and examination are key elements as it provides individuals to excel at something so becomes a motivational tool in its own right. As with anything if the right basis for performance is made clear at the outset, there is, in the author's experience, only the individual's academic ability that could limit or impede the student and their individual performance and therefore progress. With the cohort of students mentioned in the abstract there are a number of reasons why they are on a college Higher Education course and not at the same course at a university. To go into the reasons here would not be suitable but many of the reasons involve these individuals having a crisis of confidence so to build confidence back into these individuals the way that performance is handled by the institution and the individual lecturer is of paramount importance if they are to progress onto their converted university place. The students concerned here can which by attaining a high performance level overall in two years, move onto the final year at a university to complete an honors degree. So having discussed academic performance there is also the element of training to be considered as well, these students need to be made aware of and given every opportunity to gain the skills that they will need in their final university year.

2.2 Influencing Behavior

In most instances one of the first criteria to be removed from the performance journey should be the ego of the individual and the element of competitiveness which is a general reminder of the social context that the student has been used to. The journey through the performance

enhancement should be one that the individual takes alone, not one where competitiveness is a key indicator, yes it is good to feel that you are as good as others but this can also lead to feelings of isolation and alienation because the individual feels that everyone else is better than them. In addition to this there is also the element of focus, this is focusing on the grade rather than the essential element which should be the feedback, the essential tools for the future, whilst the mark is an indicator of performance this will not in many instances change unless the individual uses the feedback to enhance their skills for future work. The grading has, at least for the students in the authors charge, increased on a gradual basis as their confidence and skills increase. Although grading is not the only criteria of the feedback and performance journey it is a motivational tool which can and is used by the author to increase future performance. Each assessment gives the individual the opportunity for growth, improvement and increased confidence, this then provides a platform for future growth and increased performance.

Should feedback be applied to all elements of assessment, logically and in practice the simple answer is yes. In the student cohort that the author is responsible for there is feedback, both written and verbal for all assessments whether these be essays, presentations or examinations, for the presentations this also carries an instant feedback element and a feedback is enhanced as in all instances it is given by the two markers who are invariably used for these types of assessment. It is noticeable in the area that the author works in that the rapport built up between student and tutor is a key aspect of the process of performance management. The key aspect of trust is of paramount importance and this trust can, in many instances be hard one, depending on the student background. Therefore the first year of the course is the key one, it is in this period that the trust is built, the ethos of performance ingrained and the skills set for the future practiced. It is a definite and positive overall outcome if there is seen to be an increase in attainment on the journey in which the student and tutor have begun as this will provide positive reinforcement of the silks and techniques being used.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion most aspects of this assessment process and relative performance related issues are, and can in the authors experience both in business and in education, be linked to the way in which employees, student performance is measured which is then linked with the way that the individual is trained to do the job at hand, no assumptions can be made unless proven first, and the basics must be solidified and then built upon. Can one assume the individual can write an essay, use referencing or conduct analysis or provide argument? In most instances, the answer is no, the individual even if they have been exposed to any of these elements has not done any of them at the level to which they are being asked to perform. Most students need the time in the first year at least to gain some mastery of the elements of writing to a good standard, using research to provide argument, use an adequate referencing system so therefore the individual must be trained, coached and worked with to attain the required levels needed to gain the coveted reward at the end of the course. This is then built upon in year two to enable the progression of skills in that individual's repertoire. The only way that this can be accomplished is by working with the individual instigating assessment and then providing adequate feedback for improvement. This is not the tutor doing the work for the individual, it is staff working on the qualification providing the individual student with the wherewithal to complete, at a competent level, a higher education qualification which, in the author's frame of reference leads onto a final year entry to a mainstream degree qualification at a top twenty university. More importantly the cohort being discussed would not, have been admitted to the higher level qualification without proving themselves on the course discussed here. Finally then, assessment and performance should be linked together and used to play a pivotal part in the student journey in higher education, by working with them on techniques and skills, for want of a better word, training them, the individual can and does do better than they perhaps may have done without this.

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APPLIED RESEARCH – CONVERGING STUDENT, STAFF AND PARTNER ASPIRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

We report our experience developing a culture of research-based learning and teaching at Cornwall College's Newquay campus, which predominantly delivers FdSc and full- and part-time BSc degrees. Applied research is carried out on topics of interest to industry partners. We highlight two approaches - working with industry partners and field courses - that involve students working with staff at all stages of the research. The immediate relevance of applied research is apparent to students, staff and industry partners and therefore engages everyone. Such research also facilitates engagement with the underpinning curriculum, both the academic background to the research question and also the techniques needed to carry out the research. We report two projects funded by a staff research grant scheme - small projects that have led to further (external) funding and the development of more extensive programmes with students. Overall, applied research engages staff and students with real world issues and challenges, develops wider student skills through teamwork with staff and peers and allows students to gather valuable experience to help their studies and their prospects for employment.

Keywords: applied research, engagement, industry partners, quality, HE ethos

1. INTRODUCTION

It is becoming widely appreciated that high quality college-based higher education is closely linked to student and staff engagement with research and scholarship [1, 2]. For example, the HEA states that such engagement "lies at the heart of a high quality student learning experience" [2] and QAA recognize that it allows students to experience an "HE ethos" [1]. We present brief examples that illustrate our experience developing a culture of research-based learning and teaching at Cornwall College's Newquay campus. This campus predominantly delivers zoology, surf and marine FdSc and full- and part-time BSc degrees. In developing the HE ethos at Newquay we have focused almost exclusively on applied research because such research readily engages industry partners, students and staff. We highlight research carried out with industry partners and on field courses because these two approaches have somewhat different aspects, although both involve students working with staff from research design through to peer-reviewed publication. Applied research has several key features that help to engage students and staff with research and scholarship. First, the immediate relevance of the research is apparent to both students and staff and that relevance helps to ensure engagement with the research. Second, applied research facilitates engagement with the underpinning curriculum, because the academic background is clearly linked to the research question, as are the techniques needed to carry out the research (from statistics, experimental design and report writing, through sampling and data collection methods, to specific technologies such as GIS). Third, applied research naturally involves industry partners, which in our degree areas include local offices of national charities and statutory bodies as well as businesses. The involvement is essential to identify research questions that are important to the partners and this establishes the shared goal between staff, students and partners. Fourth, working with partners on such shared goals allows close contact between students and those in careers that students may aspire to (perhaps analogous to the contact in HEIs between researchers and undergraduate project students). Such contact also illustrates a range of graduate careers to students.

2. APPLIED RESEARCH WITH INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Most applied research at Cornwall College Newquay is carried out with significant input from industry partners. Such research is either led by staff or led by partners and students (with staff supervision) and is explained below (2.1, 2.2). Staff have also been externally funded to carry out applied research contracts individually (see example in 2.1) and as part of a team from several organizations (e.g. [3]).

2.1 Staff-led

The "Valuing Camel" project is an example of staff-led applied research. It was a study of the perception of the value to cyclists and walkers using the Camel Trail in North Cornwall of four animal and four plant species found on the trail. Trail users were asked to complete an image-based questionnaire and given information on which species were native, which were invasive non-native species, and the environmental impacts of invasive species. The project idea originated during discussions with the Environment Agency's national lead on invasive species and it was developed in subsequent close collaboration. The project was funded by the staff research fund (details in 4). The main expenditure was employing a part-time student (mainly during the vacations) to produce the questionnaire and collect responses from Camel Trail users. The results have informed the developing national strategy on invasive non-native species. The results have also been published, with the student and industry partner as co-authors [4], and presented at the 7th European Conference on Invasive Alien Species [5] (attendance was funded from Newquay's staff cpd budget). Furthermore, the project led to a successful application for national funding to set up a local action group (the Student Invasive Non-Native Group - SINNG) that employed as project coordinator the Valuing Camel student researcher (on graduating from our BSc Applied Zoology course). SINNG (www.sinng.org.uk) was awarded "best example of innovation in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) course or training programme" by the NEF Institute of Knowledge and Innovation in 2012 and the coordinator was recognized with a Careers South West STEM award in 2013. Subsequent research by SINNG, the coordinator and the member of staff has involved a number of HEIs and national organizations. SINNG's activity was also instrumental in securing a research contract from the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency. The Valuing Camel project exemplifies converging staff, student and partner aspirations: academic output in the form of publication and conference presentation for staff; engagement and career development for students; and relevant information for the Environment Agency partner. It also demonstrates that modest pilot project funding (less than £1500) can lead to fruitful longer term collaboration with diverse benefits, including funding income of over £100,000.

2.2 Partner and student-led

Applied research is also carried out as a timetabled part of HE courses (overcoming the issue of making time available specifically for research), for example as part of the FdSc and BSc research project modules. A consequence of the close proximity of Newquay Zoo and its status as a partner organization of Cornwall College is that many students carry out research for project modules at the Zoo on topics that are of interest to the Zoo. A specific example is a BSc Applied Zoology student who studied a group of crowned lemurs Eulemur coronatus that were part of the Zoo's lemur feeding experience, i.e. Zoo visitors enter the enclosure with a keeper and feed the lemurs. The student's project looked at the effect on lemur behaviour of visitor feeds compared with keeper only feeds. Newquay Zoo was keen to have the study conducted to contribute to their multi-species study of the effect on animals of such public interaction experiences. The project module requires students to present a report on their research at an internal conference to which partner organizations are invited. Newquay Zoo's representative commented on the high standard of talks and suggested that the student present the lemur study at the 5th UK and Ireland Regional

Environmental Enrichment Conference in Edinburgh [6]. Cornwall College Newquay funded travel and the conference fee. The student's talk was well received and she commented that the conference was the best thing she had done in her life so far. She is considering continuing to Master's level research, and publishing her results. The convergence between industry partner and student aspirations is clear in this example. While college staff are unlikely to be co-authors on this study, they have published research conducted at zoos [7] and therefore in the longer term their aspirations will also converge with those of the partner and students.

3. APPLIED RESEARCH DURING FIELD COURSES

Scholarly activity funding (see 4) to allow a member of staff to participate in a field course in Sabah, Malaysia led to the development of an annual research-based field trip open to all adult Cornwall College science students and run over a vacation. Students attend preliminary briefings about the research to ensure they are fully informed about fieldwork on arrival in Borneo. The primary projects are based on 4 areas; resource partitioning in primates, freshwater fish ecology, forest frog survey techniques, and riparian bird territory mapping and distribution. The field centre, owned by Cardiff University and run in conjunction with Sabah Wildlife Department, is located in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary; a sequence of fragments of forest along the Kinabatangan river bordered by oil palm plantations. Projects focus on the effect of fragmentation and the efficacy of the forest corridors along the river, linking with long-term projects run by Cardiff. Students and staff work as a team gathering and recording data and preliminary analysis is shared in the field. During the trip, students are also exposed to other ongoing projects at the field centre such as human - crocodile Crocodylus porosus conflict management, nocturnal slow loris Nycticebus spp behaviour, and palm civet Paradoxurus hermaphroditus populations in palm oil plantations. As well as developing field techniques, these projects widen their view of conservation and options for future study and employment. The relationship between staff and students working together changes the view students have of scientific discussion, review and debate and the opportunity to network with other research teams at the field station is encouraged. Throughout the trip the wider conservation issues of a tropical country with a growing population and developing economy are explored, creating opportunities for students to view the realities and compromises often required of conservation programmes. Many students have little experience of long-haul travel and associated cultural and environmental differences so their immersive experience broadens their horizons in a social context and changes their approach to their studies on their return to the UK. There is evidence to suggest that learning through this type of activity is retained and the additional experiences such as community living [8] and confidence building are developed and lasting [9, 10].

4. ACCEPTANCE OF RESEARCH IN THE HE IN FE CONTEXT

One indication that research and scholarly activity has an accepted role across the Cornwall College Group is the existence of the staff research fund. This is a competitive fund that encourages innovative and inspirational ideas that fit with the strategy of the staff member's curriculum area and that benefit students. Over the last three years, ten to fifteen projects have been funded annually, with individual awards of up to £1500. The proportion of projects awarded to Newquay staff has doubled from 27% in 2011-12 to 55% in 2013-14. A second such indication is the support for staff to undertake higher degrees (currently 11 staff registered for MSc degrees with a research component and 8 for PhDs) and support for staff and students to present at national and international conferences (see 2). A condition of college funding for research and conference attendance is reporting to all staff on this activity. The natural context for such reports at Newquay is our annual research and scholarship conference, usually lasting a full day. Partner organizations, other interested bodies, students and staff from other campuses are invited to the conference; therefore it plays an important role in gaining wider acceptance for research and scholarly activity within the college.

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FACILITATION OF METACOGNITION THROUGH LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

"The use of Open Source software to support a social constructionist epistemology of teaching and learning within internet-based communities of reflective inquiry" PhD title (Dougiamas, 2002:7), was the main driver behind the construction of MOODLE. Since then the open source nature of Moodle is a significant characteristic that sets it apart from other Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Blackboard and Enable. Jonassen (1999) advocates that the ideology of constructivism which asserts that knowledge and reality are built inside the learner is a paradigm that parallels that of open source software, in which the users/lecturers shape, or have the opportunity to shape, their own content. By nature then, Moodle has the flexibility to be customised and improved by the user. Due to the tangible nature of the platform there can be discrepancies how MOODLE and LMSs are utilised to promote higher order cognitive skills, including the process of metacognition, analysing one's thought processes. Pedaste (2012) argues if metacognition is considered to play a greater role in the cognitive behaviour and construction of knowledge in learners it is feasible to argue that prior knowledge serves as a central factor for the integration of new information in learning and problem solving situations (Ifenthaler, 2012). Thus, to develop learning environments in an open source platform, it is crucial to find an adequate degree of external control and leaving possibility of self-regulation to the learner. Therefore, providing a podium to serve and facilitate planning for learning and prearrangements for future performance is of paramount importance within both FE and HE (Schmitz & Schmidt, 2007). The Aim of this paper is to provide a literature review of the promotion of metacogitive learner engagement through open source learning environments in HE and FE with the intention to provide evidenced based examples for adoption into class/lecture or programme delivery.

Keywords: LMS, Moodle, Meta cognition, Plug-ins

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective delivery and facilitation of learning processes in Higher and Further Education are under continuous influence by many external factors; for example, social trends and technological changes (Ertl, et al, 2010). One of the main drivers of change has been produced by the application of ICT and new emerging technologies which have been used in several areas in order to improve different activities, processes and policies within an educational context. What is questionable is the transformational impact ICT applications in learning delivery has had in comparison with other processes such as MIS, registry and marketing (Mott and Wiley, 2009)

Prensky (2001) argues that digital literacy is a necessity and is one of the main barriers to the lack of transformational adaption by institutions. Bennett (2011) reiterates this by highlighting that teachers and the more mature students are 'digital immigrants' and the younger generations of students are 'digital natives'. This then could be seen to imply a gap for practice, it highlights the difficulties that may arise in order to utilise new technologies to their intended stature. It has also been illustrated by García-Peñalvo (2011) that lack of connection in the learning environment is another obstacle for transformational adaption, executing the differentiation between the formal, non-formal and informal environments moving from 'actuality to virtuality' can make it difficult to improve learning processes. This can be due to tutor and learner ability to centralise activities to only one context. Thus this highlights a deficit in teaching strategies for the adoption and application of technological applications to aid learning.

2. LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Regardless of the barriers to ICT as a learning and facilitation platform, the majority of HE and FE institutions utilise some form of LMSs. Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is the choice of LMSs of both Higher and Further Education institutions; this is primarily due to the fact that it is a low cost option and offers wide spread usage and collaboration through its open-source nature to develop and enhance functionalities. For the purpose of this paper, the LMS referred to will be Moodle. The architecture of Moodle emphasises the creation of student-centred online learning environments. Thus Moodle has been described as a platform "created through participation rather than via publishing" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 45). Jonassen (1999) reiterates this through advocating the ideology of constructivism thus asserting that knowledge and reality are built inside the learner. This is a paradigm that parallels with open source software in which the users/lecturers shape, or have the opportunity to shape, their own content. By nature then, Moodle has the flexibility to be customised and improved by the user. However this is not to discard Blackboard even though not an open source entity it can also be customised through the functionalities. The functionalities can be seen to be limited in their scope for user development and procurement due to licencing restrictions.

In actuality use of LMS is restricted to institutional contexts because users prefer other tools and technologies for learning activities. Social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter are students preferred medium of interaction and can be seen, according to Deng and Tavares (2013), as becoming an integral part of students' lives. Thus the implementation of these systems should according to Chavan and Pavri (2004) be adapted or utilised to meet the evolving and changing demands of learners or they risk to being rejected. LMS must move away from current usage models of course management systems where file exchange is the predominant activity and transform, arguably, into Personal Learning Environments (PLE) and must be opened to integrate the activity that is performed in those new environments. As learning within LMS's are focused on participation within a community-base of activities such as creating, sharing, co-construction and collaboration, it is thus vital for learners to explore and engage on multiple levels.

LMS have the optimisation to scaffold and enhance learning. LMS such as Moodle and Blackboard have the integrated capacity to engage with learners in asynchronous mediums. Differentiated features and functions, allow learning to be composed in means that suits every learners needs. However due to LMS being underutilised by many teachers the impact may not be apparent for in-class students but it may have a detrimental effect on learners who come into higher and further education with expectations of utilising technologies to inform and guide their studies. As a result, according to Boekaerts (1997) the predominant mode of LMS is a repository which does not offer or promote autonomy within learners neither does create it a medium in which learners can learn about their own learning.

3. METACOGNITION

For learners to effectively manage their own learning and become full participates in online enquiry metacognitive skills are of utmost importance. The rationalisation for this is amplified by Bransford, et al (1999) who found that effective learning transpires when learners reflect upon their own abilities and engage in self-regulatory skills, and therefore acknowledge limitations in their own learning and utilise their strengths. Therefore assisting learners to acquire meta cognitive skills of planning, monitoring, and evaluating the learning processes. Reflecting upon the aforementioned underutilisation of LMSs by both tutors and learners impacts upon the equipage of these lifelong learning skills and negates the opportunity to provide and scaffold for learning (Dabbagh, 2004). According to Schmitz & Schmidt (2007), to develop learning environments in an open source platform, it is crucial to find an adequate degree of external control and leave possibility of self-regulation to the learner. Therefore, providing a podium to serve and facilitate planning for learning and prearrangements for future performance is of paramount importance within both FE and HE.

4. BARRIERS TO LEARNER PARTICIPATION

In order to successfully facilitate metacognitive skills for learners in both HE and FE; there must firstly be regard paid to the rationale behind students' participation and non-participation in online learning utilising current technologies.

Student prior experience can be a barrier to participation, therefore limiting the higher order thinking skills that could be promoted through a LMS. Prior experiences can be argued to be the basis of formulisation of attitudes towards technologies. Learners have a generalised opinion of Moodle as a mode for learning, it is structured, tutor lead and lacking in the freedom of expression and autonomy. However teacher attitude cannot be overlooked, as the teacher can be seen to reiterate and consolidate through a vacuum of insecurity of usage, may seem to transpose their unrealistic ideologies and reaffirm learners already existing preconceptions that Moodle is not user friendly. Vonderwell & Zachariah (2005), confirms this notion and underscores the importance of a need for a user-friendly interface, although without tutor technological openness and competence it can be argued that no interface will be seen as user friendly.

Moodle, according to Cheung et al (2008) has the perception by learners to be a formal and academic system which facilitates on an onus of obligation to use functions such as discussion boards with high academic skill due to the moderation by teaching staff, this can be seen with other LMSs and is not limited to just Moodle. In addition Moodle is conceptualized by learners as a virtual arena to download course materials, instead of one for uploading files for sharing and for augmenting communication. LMSs such as Moodle according to Hamuy & Galaz (2010) are seldom used for no more than disseminating information rather than promoting and structuring meaningful activities that advocate interaction. Although since the inception of LMS, technologies have evolved from simply allowing the sharing of files and dissemination of information to more recent technologies that allow a much greater level of interaction. Namely the emergence of Massively Open Online Course (MOOC) which integrates functionalities that whole courses can be delivered online without negating the pedagogy of constructivism. Therefore Moodle should be conceptualised and used as an arena which advocates social construction of meaning rather than a filing system.

5. USE OF FUCTIONALITIES TO AID METACOGNITION

In order to provide a review of functionalities (plug in's) available for facilitators to promote metacognition, Key features of Moodle 2.X must be explored.

Moodle has a set of core functionalities which can be recognised via the add activity or resource link on course pages. Functionalities which are commonly used are restricted to the resource option in the process, whereby tutors can upload course materials and therefore consolidate the assumption that LMSs (Moodle) are predominately utilised for disseminating information (Hamuy & Galaz, 2010).

Moodle can be used to facilitate distributed learning activities in web based formats and pedagogical constructs thus situating interactions in authentic context supporting engaging and meaningful learning. Moodle can scaffold the acquisition of metacognitive skills and self-regulatory skills. Core functionalities under the activity repository offer a range of pedagogical actions that can be chosen to enhance and promote metacognitive acts.

The key plug ins that offer asynchronous activity include the use of discussion boards, forums, wikis and blogs. The pedagogical values online discussions have been advocated by Barnett-Queen, et al (2005) as providing learners' with the reflective ability and skills of critiquing. Discussion boards and forums are a vehicle for distributed learning that learners can engage at a time suitable for them and learning can be developed and guided with context and meaning. Articulation of ideas, conceptions and prior experiences on a topic can be reflected upon and

shared allowing peer comments facilitating self evaluation upon ones own thinking. Hoskins and Van Hooff (2005) have testified that active usage is link to academic performance. This is consolidated by Huang et al (2011) where a distinct correlation was reported between the achievement of key learning intentions and online engagement in discussion boards and forums. By nature then participation is a necessity for effective discussions.

Opportunities for cognitively challenging activities can be provided in different Moodle plug-ins that facilitates learners to think about and represent particular topics in multiple ways. Utilising one example, the Blog plugin provides opportunities for participants to create and organise and reflect upon information and topics. Individuals have the autonomy to determine what information is used through the insertion of pages, and through collaboration to make a shared sense or meaning. With Moodle 2.X, Blog entries can be commented on by users and provides a platform to evaluate work. Thus the active and in-depth processing of new information and reflection on topics promotes both "higher-order thinking" (Cummins et al., 2007).

Collaboration and social interaction can promoted and facilitated through the OU Wiki plugin allowing learners to work with peers to formulate ideas and hypotheses on subject specific topics. Scardamalia & Bereiter (2006) highlight that the Wiki plug in in Moodle 2.X creates a more consistent format with other more well-known domains such as Wikipedia, thus allowing interconnectivity of ideas through hyperlinks. This provides constructivist pedagogy to allow the development and accommodation in inter relating information. Although from a teaching and learning perspective the Wiki tool needs the requirement of users to maintain it and for teachers to build a learning environment which recognises it as a valuable source.

From a practice perspective both Moodle and Blackboard offer the ability to regulate learning through structured blogs and journals however experience dictates that participation is limited. Users whom engage in these activities display reflective learning and through assessment show a deeper understanding of the topic. Tutorial plug in on Moodle enables self regulatory behaviour as learners reflect upon their own learning needs and book a time slot with the tutor to discuss their learning needs, from practice the success of this activity lies in the promotion of autonomy in the learning cycle. Other plug ins such as mind map which is limited to the platform of Moodle when structured by the tutor allows learners to pre reflect upon the topic prior to the lesson. This builds a foundation upon which new information can be assimilated deepening the depth of debate and discussion.

6. CONCLUSION

The academic value of facilitating optimum learning experience in order to develop self-regulatory skills is undeniable. Research has highlighted the correlations between online engagement through structured LMSs and metacognitive skills in the promotion of academic success. However consistency across teachers is not apparent. There are clear barriers to full active participation namely the user interface of Moodle which advocates a tutor led repository where course related materials can be found. Integrating features of more commonly used social media platforms such as Facebook may give Moodle and other LMSs the user facelift required to change student's misconceptions of value of Moodle as a learning tool and its ease of use. However for successful facilitation of metacognitive skills there is the onus on the transformational adoption by tutors to utilise the functions and Plug ins already available for use to promote these required skills. Only through true value, institutional precedence and adequate training can tutors have the driving force needed to acknowledge the platforms available to nurture 'digital natives' through mediums which are natural and of paramount importance to the development of self. Therefore it can be stated it is not the LMS itself that facilitates meta cognition but it is the way the tutor structures available functionalities is the precursor.

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MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS (ABOUT THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM)

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"The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all we learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling" Dewey 1924:60

ABSTRACT

Education managers make judgments in complex and uncertain circumstances where it is not always clear what to do for the best. This paper attempts to describe a single case with particular attention given to 'instances in action' (Simons, 2009: 5). The purpose of this paper is to present an account of subjective experience. It is therefore, essentially an act of communication, which has to be accessed by subjectivity, not objectivity. The motivation for the study is pragmatic, in that it is hoped that the experience of the research and understandings of it will not only be of use in developing our own practice, but that it may also be of interest and use to education managers and teachers in the sector, interested in the improving teaching and learning through practitioner research.

The case study focuses on a three- year partnership of a Peer Research Review and Development Group consisting of 4 College-based Higher Education providers in the East Midlands. They set out to explore 'what makes outstanding teaching and learning of a Higher Education lesson in a Further Education environment'. Over three years they have explored a range of Joint Practice Development (JPD) approaches to fracture given assumptions and develop a range of approaches to pedagogy as well as creating conversations between teachers in organisations all wrestling with the same issues. At the same time these approaches have provided a useful way to encourage teaching and support staff to reflect on their practice against the UKPSF, and in that reflection are being encouraged to set the future agenda of the group's activities.

Louden pointed to the importance of paying close attention to how proposed education reforms relate to teachers' everyday understandings and experiences of their work. From a practitioner-researcher perspective, he regarded teaching as a struggle to discover and maintain a set of routines and patterns of action, which help teachers address familiar classroom problems and respond to new ones. These responses he argued are in turn shaped by the teacher's biography and the professional context in which they work. Following Gadamer (1975) Louden couched this predisposition to shape responses to new problems from 'historically sedimented patterns of action' (Louden, 1991, p. xi) in terms of 'horizons of understanding' (Louden, 1991, p.xii)' which he argued influence possibilities for change.

This case study explore how three managers of College-based Higher Education in these institutions began to try to find ways of influencing change.

Keywords: Partnership, management decisions, collaboration, JPD, courage, equality

1. INTRODUCTION

Education managers make judgments in complex and uncertain circumstances where it is not always clear what to do for the best. This paper attempts to describe a single case with particular attention given to 'instances in action' (Simons, 2009: 5). The purpose of this paper is to present an account of subjective experience. It is therefore, essentially an act of communication, which has to be accessed by subjectivity, not objectivity. The motivation for the study is pragmatic, in that it is hoped that the experience of the research and understandings of it will not only be

of use in developing practice of those authoring, but that it may also be of interest and use to education managers and teachers in the sector, interested in the improving teaching and learning through practitioner research.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 The Case In Point

For the past three years four Colleges of General Further Education (FE) in the Midlands have worked together to explore how they can improve teaching practice in College-Based Higher Education (CBHE). Louden (1991) pointed to the importance of paying close attention to how proposed education reforms relate to teachers' everyday understandings and experiences of their work. From a practitioner-researcher perspective, he regarded teaching as a struggle to discover and maintain a set of routines and patterns of action, which help teachers address familiar classroom problems and respond to new ones. These responses he argued are in turn shaped by the teacher's biography and the professional context in which they work. Following Gadamer (1975), Louden couched this predisposition to shape responses to new problems from 'historically sedimented patterns of action' (Louden, 1991, p. xi) in terms of 'horizons of understanding' (Louden, 1991, p.xii)' which he argued influence possibilities for change. The Higher Education Managers at the four institutions were brought together in trying to respond to that basic premise.

However, what may have come from a place of values and beliefs only began with the opportunity for the respective institutions to gain funding for responding to those conversations. This promise of potential funding may have been the catalyst to get the partnership moving and led to fewer questions from other leaders and teachers in the institutions about activities that were taking place. When the group formed in 2011, there were many informal discussions happening in various corridors of various colleges, at collaborative partnership meetings and conferences, instaff rooms, and in a range of committee meetings. The discussions were charged about creating a 'HE ethos', central to which was a notion that Higher Education teaching in FE was different from entry level – level 3 teaching, and even in some ways different to QCF qualifications for professional formation at level 4-8 (for example ILM or CIM). Little of the discussion was based on empirical evidence, but more a sense of 'disturbance' (Dewey, 1916, p24) that the discussion had not been had and the paradigm was one that was sat there waiting to be created.

Those working in CBHE felt that the model of management in their respective Colleges was one of senior teams running the argument and unions protecting the interests of their members. However, as Coffield (2014) states there may have been two models of educational leadership which were co-existing. Those managing HE in the Colleges wanted to focus not on this first model but on a second model; one where staff, teachers and managers wanted to be treated as equal members of the same profession. Therefore, when the Learning skills Improvement Service (LSIS) made money available to develop HE in FE Peer Review and Development (PRD) Groups, it seemed too much of an opportunity not to set out to do something which could stand on the ground of 'co-existence' while not being perceived as a threat to any other underlying tensions. Through an agreement to bid for LSIS funding the colleges – who are not in any other peer group with each other – formed a loose partnership to move CBHE forward, initially through the development of a 'teaching and learning conference'.

It was agreed that they would set out to answer a very simple question at the conference: 'What Makes an Outstanding HE in FE lesson'? The title itself was designed to be arresting and provocative; it assumed that most colleges had a Higher Education offer which was about 10% of turnover, so the development of any ethos would remain rooted in what is now SFA (Skills Funding Agency) and EFA (Education Funding Agency) activity. It implied that the process of

'deep' learning was restricted to one lesson at a time, and the title itself implied that there was one simple solution. Of course that was not the case. However, the point was to be controversial and encourage a crescendo in the language and discourse with which Higher Education was perceived in the respective institutions. It was hoped (without an established method or methodology) that ideas to encourage intellectual risk taking could develop along with challenging activities (the Piaget notion of cognitive conflict), and ways of listening to students discussing their beliefs about education could be found.

The conference began with a compelling keynote speaker in the form of Professor Frank Coffield. For the first hour the forty teachers that attended the conference on the hot spring day contributed to lively discussions about how, as a body of professionals, things could be done differently. The talk covered two main areas; how we move learners to higher levels of study (for example by using Anderson and Krathwohl's redefinition of Bloom's taxonomy) and on how the World (post a reduction of GDP of more than 6.6%) had changed in its perceptions of the value of education. By drawing on the work of Ashton, Launden and Brown (2010), and accepting 'knowing-that' is more important that 'knowing-how' (Ryle 2005; p63) delegates were able to think about what higher level study actually looks and feels like. In their evaluations of the keynote teaching staff were able to articulate how their understanding of new research could influence their practice. For example, there had been discussion of Alexander's perceptions that dialogue had a more critical role in pedagogy than was thought became an idea that was celebrated (teachers said if they could apply the Russo-French schools technique where talk is cognitive and designed to create more probing exchanges, then it could have a significant impact on learning). Teachers could articulate that the impact of increasing waiting times after questions could create a critical approach to move learning forward. Perhaps a weakness of the conference was not following ideas like this up to see if they had been put into action (indeed, sometimes following up the impact of ideas discussed may remain a weakness of the group). Nevertheless, emerging ideas and approaches were beginning to be articulated.

After the keynote, colleges split into groups and presented some interesting approaches to teaching and learning they had taken. At this moment three teachers in the room described the atmosphere as 'electric'. No longer were the issues being wrestled with independently, they were in the open. The conference organisers had arranged for presentations by HEFCE, QAA, the HEA and others but that contribution needed to be in a different space. The space for the day should have remained with the teachers but that conversation was cut short. All the evaluations showed that this was the bit that encouraged, nurtured and enlightened the participants. It was Dewey in action – 'education for renewal' (1926; p72).

2.2 Where to go next

Technically the funding finished at the end of the conference and the group should have disbanded. That was not an option though – 33 teachers were asking for opportunities for the conversation to be continued. Those involved understood that 'education is an ethical activity' (Gregson; 2014) and so needed to carry on the work.

One of the most interesting discussions at the conference focused on the new platforms for ILT. This became a real theme during discussions over lunch and coffee. Therefore, the group turned to the Joint Practice Development (JPD) model to try to move the work forward. JPD:

'takes account of the existing practice of teachers who are trying to learn new ways of working and acknowledges the effort of those who are trying to support them. It also underscores the necessity of mutual engagement, which lies at the heart of the complex task of opening up and sharing practices with others'.

Fielding et al (2005:72)

Gregson, describes the guiding principles of JPD as:

- Not a 'toolkit' or a 'recipe for success'.

- A set of principles which can be used to guide good educational research and practice.

- An approach that accepts the power of knowledge gained from educational research to improve educational practice.

- Something that seeks to balance that knowledge with local knowledge and insight.

- When students, teachers, educational leaders and researchers learn from one another as they experiment with putting research findings into practice - real and sustainable educational change can happen.

This seemed an ideal approach to adopt, given the democratic nature of the work the group was starting to foster. A bid was submitted to JISC to explore the uses of ILT to promote engagement and higher levels thinking skills. A JPD model was developed where the Colleges would work with the team from the Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training at the University of Sunderland (SUNCETT). The SUNCETT team were not advocates of steamrollering notions of 'best practice' through the sector. They work on the assumption that everyone's situation and circumstance is different and this needs to be acknowledged. After all, once everyone has been steamrollered who is left standing? Over a period of a year the Colleges met three times to design and plan action research on ILT, with up to five members from each college working on separate but related projects. The projects ranged from 'flipped' learning to interesting uses of blogs to map learner progress. The days were punctuated by good humour, and at the end another conference was arranged. This time there was one keynote in the form of Diana Laurillard, Professor of Digital Technologies at the Institute of Education and the rest of the time was given over to teachers presenting the results of their own action research. Again, each College brought about 10 teachers to the conference, providing abundant opportunity for the sharing different approaches.

2.3 Other collaborations and support

The group continued to discuss other themes. For example, when the Key Information Set (KIS) was introduced, the Association of Colleges (AOC) came and presented to managers, data managers and others about approaches they could take to the management of the KIS. It was another example of how solace was found in putting challenging policies and ideas into action. The group was one of the first that the AOC presented information about the KIS to.

Despite the sense of 'togetherness' the group has fostered, there have been some tensions regarding how to develop the group. This is partly because it emerged from a set of informal conversations. Traditionally, such groups are established by very senior managers, which it was felt could put, instantly, barriers up. While the group had not operated with such barriers, for its work to continue to be taken seriously, there was an idea it needed to become more formal. In understanding where the group may go it was important for the Colleges to understand the context it was working in. In 2012/13, the number of undergraduates studying in the East Midlands totalled around 126,000 and the four Colleges continue to share this HE market with 8 Universities, 15 other FEC's and a University College. Each of the PRD network institutions is more or less similar in scale and offers a mixed economy in that they blend their own HEFCE Student Number Control allocation with strategic University Partnerships. It is evident that each College has evolved different modes of managing their HE portfolios and these differences are best understood in terms of a continuum ranging from a more centralised HE operation with related resource to a structure whereby HE is fully devolved within the general FE curriculum

areas and meeting the expectations of HE regulatory bodies is carried out through a process of HE coordination. Regardless of these structural differences the partners within the network express: commitment to widening participation; a flexible University-level offer that is local and affordable; better staff to student ratios, and staff development, and quality assurance processes that emphasises pedagogy, as key strengths.

A further shared characteristic of each PRD College is that a disproportionate amount of strategic, operational and regulatory knowledge is commonly held by one or two key members of management. The combination of this dynamic and a culture of constant sectorial change enforced a need for collegiate openness and a shared sense of professional support which underpinned the formation of the PRD network. Beyond the practicalities of applying an understanding of central government initiatives the Group realised that cooperation on less reactive and potentially more important issues would benefit the emerging forum. Within the last three years of operation, key personnel within the network have changed but there has been no shift from the original four colleges involved. As described, the exact machinations of how the PRD came into existence are not precise and use of the term 'members' has been deliberated avoided. The vague and organic nature of formation and collaboration continue today.

Against this backdrop the Colleges have considered whether or not to formalise the partnership. The debate has been one of what it is trying to achieve. Should it do the work that other organisations seek to do? Should it keep a focus on teaching and learning? Through a process of meetings, discussions and head-scratching the group concluded that its work increasingly focused on teaching and learning and developing applied research cultures. Therefore, it has decided to remain a 'loose' association but to move towards a notion of peer research and review. It is beginning to call itself a 'Peer Review and Research Development (PRRD) group. The prime and unspoken assumptions of the current PRRD are the sharing of similar philosophies on pedagogy, higher education that prioritises the needs of learners and a firm belief in the validity and future of CBHE. While no exact outcomes have been agreed and the debate continues as to whether adding organisations will dilute the 'change nature' of the current set up or whether remaining as we are will see us progressively become more stale and ineffective. Progressing towards a different form of organisation with increased intervention in securing the involvement of more Colleges may appeal as a norm. However, it would appear that the current arrangement of self-organisation within a loose framework of four Colleges heightens autonomy at the same time as diminishing self- interest.

2.4 Tractability

What has been remarkable about the group is the 'tractability' (Sarson 1998:3) it has achieved. Even when money has looked sparse, it has been committed to carry on its work. This is mainly because of those underlying values of trying to encourage teacher to become models of 'independent Critical thinkers' (Coffield 2012). Gregson, in the 2014 conference summed up a the shared understanding of what we are trying to achieve as a PRRD group:

"When we ignite the first spark of interest in our students, when we fire their imagination, when we watch them develop a sense of belonging, when we see them realise the possibilities offered by the subject or craft they have chosen to pursue, when we observe how they have developed a passion for and pride in their work, when we watch them grow in confidence, when we see them recognise the virtue of doing something well for its own sake, when we know how we have contributed to all of this …we begin to become good teachers and good educational researchers ."

Core to the group's activities has been how to turn these sentiments into real concrete actions. Indeed, the ongoing 'conversation' saw, towards the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, the emerging of themes to enhance how to live those values. There were wide ranging discussion including how to develop the 'student voice', scholarship in CBHE, the potential for developing an HEA-accredited CPD framework and a continued desire to explore the 'internal goods of (higher) education'.

The group's interest in better understanding how to best capture and work with the 'student voice' expressed itself in plans for a conference for student reps. Each college had clearly experimented with a number of student voice vehicles and mechanisms with more or less success but a level of dissatisfaction with ownership and impact remained. Further, the group explored the two parallel issues of scholarship in CBHE and the increasing commitment within universities to teaching staff gaining Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation, with many institutions designing and accrediting in-house CPD frameworks that could lead to lecturers gaining accreditation at a range of levels. As a result of these discussions, the group determined to support two events in 2014: a 'Student Voice Conference' and a conference exploring 'The Inner Goods of Higher Education: CBHE Scholarship and HEA Accreditation'.

The PRRD group presented 'Enhancing the College-based HE Voice – A Conference for Student Reps' on the 4th April 2014 which was attended by 16 student representatives from the partner colleges supported by staff from all four colleges. Student reps heard from the NUS about the student union and how it can be strengthened in CBHE and from the QAA about the role of students in the HE Review process. Facilitated discussions enabled the student reps to share current practice and suggest ways to improve engagement with their colleges to enhance learning opportunities. Suggestions included improved training for student reps, better access to, for example, information about the college's financial accountability, and improved collaboration with student reps at partner universities.

2.5 An opportunity to expand the JPD model

While the seemingly separate but parallel issues of scholarship in CBHE, the HEA accreditation process and the desire to explore the genuine 'inner goods of education' were discussed at length by the PRRD group, the conference that emerged in May 2014 was to consider all three themes, under the title: 'Enhancing Practice through Improved Research.' The event included keynote speakers from SUNCETT, and a College with large and significant HE provision, while two of the managers from the PRRD colleges summarised outcomes from a recent HEA event and the UKPSF respectively. Opportunities were also provided for delegates to examine their own practice in the light of the UKPSF.

Professor Maggie Gregson's keynote address set an inspirational tone for the day that challenged traditional, expert-led, information transfer approaches to CPD, calling for a more collaborative and teacher-led approach to the enhancement of educational practice, with the Joint Practice Development model cited again - this time to a much wider range of teachers. Delegates noted the contrast between this approach and the Case Study presented by a larger College, where extensive work had been undertaken as part of a strategic 'Journey to Excellence' in the creation of a HEA-accredited CPD framework supported by institutional targets for the development of professional practice. Juxtaposed to both approaches was the presentation by PRRD managers that highlighted the emphasis placed by the QAA on the need to define and apply the terms 'higher' and 'scholarly' in capturing a HE ethos in CBHE. While the UK Quality Code notes that scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education, it was suggested that the work of Boyer (1990) in defining models of scholarship could perhaps be updated to include a model more appropriate for CBHE.

The presentations stimulated a good deal of energy and discussion amongst delegates as well as a groundswell of momentum in taking the first steps towards a submission for HEA accreditation. However, delegates and PRRD group members alike, while recognising the external drivers to the gaining of HEA accreditation for CBHE teaching staff, particularly with QAA review looming, were acutely aware that any 'programme' put in place should carry the spirit and momentum of a 'bottom-up, teacher-led approach which had the potential to carry forward genuine scholarly activity. In reviewing the day with Maggie Gregson, the PRRD group members began to distil from the contrasting approaches presented, a conceptualisation of a JPD-based model of 'CPD' that could be operationalised to engender a more genuine, practitioner-led approach to research and scholarship that, by implication, would provide opportunities for HEA accreditation, while avoiding the less favoured 'prescriptive', management-led drive for 'accreditation outcomes'.

Yet again the relevancy of working together shone through. At the end of the conference the group committed to further work to define and develop the JPD approach during the forthcoming year and to convene a further day the autumn as an opportunity, in the meantime, to continue work on HEA submissions. The PRD group still remained unsure whether or not it needed to formalise. However, once again, it recogised it was more important to do something than to procrastinate on structures it may or may not adopt.

3. CONCLUSION

The discussions around what the group is and what it might become, have also attempted to define some of the ingredients that make it exciting and vibrant. The list of reasons that have been developed to try to explain the energy of the Group is not necessarily exhaustive but may include: Firstly, a sense of trust, admiration and respect for those working in the respective institutions. Unlike many conferences that have been attended, members of the group approach discussions with honesty rather than a sense of 'my response to this issue is better than yours'. This level of vulnerability then permeates to the teachers who provide a second ingredient. They are willing to be vulnerable, to take controlled risk and to try new things. This creates for an expansive atmosphere which fizzes with ideas. Thirdly, there is always good humour from speakers, researchers, teachers and others. This keeps a sense a perspective to the work, and it becomes something people want to do. Fourthly, by trying to be deliberately provocative it becomes acceptable to discuss the 'elephant in the room' with a shared sense of determination to resolve the problem. Lastly, for those working in CBHE it gives a space to understand that we are all equal and all wrestle with the same decisions. It is a place where steamrollers are banished! That sense of collaboration can be deeply empowering when faced with the structures and demands of government, the private sector and the institutions members come from. Those involved in that collaboration may grow in terms of institutions, or groups of people within current intuitions may grow or it may shrink, as long as the work remains meaningful, so will it as a space to move CBHE in the region forward.

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