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Contents

Reflections on supporting Educational Development in Ukraine – Facing the educational challenges of war

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This article shares insights and reflections on a bespoke educational development programme for Ukrainian educational change leaders, which started in the summer of 2023 and is iteratively developed through co-creation with Ukrainian partners and participants. The programme aims to establish a strong cadre of educational leadership to support reform and reconstruction of an entire Education system under constant attack. It is written from a developmental perspective, with professional observations and personal reflections by the academic lead of the programme.

The Ukraine programme for educational leaders of all sectors in Ukraine was initiated by Dr Bo Kelestyn, Associate Professor in the Warwick Business School and herself Ukrainian. At the same time as bringing her own family to safety when the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine started, Bo connected with an organisation called the Ukrainian Leadership Academy (ULA) (https://ual.ua/en). ULA has worked for many years with young people but expanded their support to the government on transforming and reconstructing Education during the war. Thanks to Bo (on the right) (Figure 1), and Ivanna Kurtyk, ULA's Deputy CEO (on the left) the concept of a Warwick programme for Educational Leadership in Ukraine was born.

Figure 1   Ivanna Kurtyk and Bo Kelestyn

In September 2023, 40 participants came to Warwick for a residential start of their learning. It is a highly motivated group from all over the Education sector. Some are from relevant ministries, others lead quality assurance or similar organisations, and there are academics, CEOs of companies producing educational materials, leaders of Ukrainian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and even a Deputy Minister

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from within the Education and Science ministry. They joined a Summer School (postgraduate award), which is the start of an extensive programme, ultimately leading to Master's recognition.

Major national education sector developments in Ukraine before 2023

The challenge when working with professionals during a war is to ensure that every hour spent on a programme leads to learning that genuinely supports or alleviates the enormous pressure the participants are under. Research literature on what is known as 'post conflict education reconstruction' provides much insight, but also notes the complexity of each country and conflict context. Ukraine is unusual in terms of its economic and infrastructural strengths and the exceptionally high levels of education of the Ukrainian population. The length of the Russian occupation (of Donbas in 2014) before the full-scale invasion (February 2022) has also meant that Ukraine was already on track to change its education substantially, including the removal of Russian influence in the curriculum and Russian didactical approaches to teaching (Gresham *et al.*, 2019). Most significant has been the introduction of the New Ukrainian School (NUS), with a view to 'create a school that will be pleasant to go to and will provide the students not only with knowledge, as is the case now, but also with the ability to apply it in real life. The New Ukrainian School is a kind of school which is pleasant for students to be in. Their opinion is respected here, they are taught to think critically, not to be afraid of voicing their view, and be responsible citizens. Parents also like attending this school because cooperation and mutual understanding prevail here' (Ministry of Education and Sciences of Ukraine, 2019).

University-level change has been different in nature, but no less extensive. The HE sector in Ukraine is large and wide ranging in quality and standards of achievement. Indeed, academic integrity is a major issue (Osipian, 2017) which, due to the integrity focus of the Zelensky government, is exposed and intended to be eradicated. As part of this process, many public figures have come under scrutiny for the validity of their degrees, whilst others have chosen to rescind academic qualifications themselves. A wider discussion about the tension between university autonomy and accountability to society is taking place, alongside debates about the size of the HE sector, the role of private institutions and the academic standards of various institutions. Within universities themselves, there is also a recognition of the need to move towards European education models and teaching methods, qualifications and standards (Bologna), and the rethinking of the research-teaching balance necessary to support Ukraine during and after the war.

A programme for Educational Development and Leadership in Ukraine

The first part of our three-part programme addressed what we refer to as macro level (Potter, 2023): national strategy, policy, economics, society, infrastructure and laws affecting education and change. As the participants are such a diverse group, some of them are consummate experts on macro-level aspects of educational development in Ukraine, and their knowledge is an integral part of our teaching. Action Learning Sets allow effective exchange of knowledge as well as critical discussion. Indeed, the Learning Set experience – although a new method of working for the participants – has been extremely highly appreciated. New collaborations are already coming forward out of the connections made, but very importantly, expertise and insight are freely offered and eagerly received by Set members. After the residential, and during the online learning phase of the programme, the learning sets have continued and continue to receive positive feedback.

As the participants are co-creators, their input has created some remarkable changes to the programme. The academic terminology of 'post-conflict reconstruction' received strongly negative feedback as 'conflict' appears to lessen the severity of what was happening in Ukraine. Noting the nature of war and Ukraine's spirit for independence, the participants rephrased the term as 'post-victory' which has now become our accepted term. Another discussion formed around the appetite from some participants for solutions for the challenges faced, as opposed to an academic exploration of research, which led to an educational

discussion regarding the difference between didactic teaching and teaching focused on critical independent thinking. For the programme team it meant a better understanding of how to adjust our teaching for those uncomfortable with the inherent aspects of insecurity of the latter, such as encouraging dissenting voices and stimulating debate.

The second part of the programme takes place in January when participants return. For this module, participants will work in groups again, but this time in a case simulation – as the leadership team of an educational organisation, a regional school board, a civil service team, a quality assurance board and similar. Throughout the residential week participants will develop strategy for a programme of educational change, deal with major incidents (destruction of school, cyber attack, staff loss), address being challenged in the public sphere, and at the end of the residential, propose strategy and funding priorities to 'the Education Minister'. The focus here is on leading and steering an educational organisation, or what is termed 'meso level' educational leadership – but with direct linkage to macro and micro levels.

Figure 2   The project sweatshirt and logo

In this context, taught sessions cover crisis management, leading transformational change across an organisation, dealing with critical stakeholders, and managing and supporting staff and learners. All of these will be addressed based on expertise and case studies within a war perspective – often volunteered by displaced academics, educational developers and institutional leaders with experience on educational reconstruction in Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, South Africa and other nations.

At meso level, the challenges in Ukraine are extensive. Russian artillery attacks have destroyed many schools and institutions in the East. According to the August sector overview by the Ministry of Education and Sciences, 3241 schools and 214 universities were partially damaged and 341 schools as well as four universities were entirely destroyed. In total that means that 12% of all educational institutions in Ukraine have been physically impacted (Ministry of Education and Sciences of Ukraine, 2023). As a result, learners either miss out entirely, or move to other places of learning, increasing numbers across Ukrainian educational institutions. At the same time, the teaching

workforce is also severely affected, with educators displaced (both in Ukraine and internationally), called on for military service or moving into other employment where demands for employees with good communication, organisational and academic skills are better paid (military support infrastructure, regional and national bureaucracy and newly arrived international development NGOs, particularly). In the East of Ukraine, educators have also become casualties of war, either during Russian attacks, or through capture and murder during occupation, as during any war, educators and academics are too often seen as instruments of government.

There are many other complexities affecting educational leaders at meso level, but even just the combination of the loss of infrastructure and workforce creates direct demands for leading the development of new modes and methods of learning. Schools in affected areas that see their learner numbers increase need to reorganise their teaching delivery. Some schools teach cohorts in consecutive shifts during the day, thereby optimising the use of classrooms. Others increase online delivery of learning – especially in areas where there is constant artillery fire and families do not dare to send their children or young adults to school, college or university. In turn this creates a need for school and regional leaders to review curricula and develop effective online learning (coupled with demand for equipment, skills, and connectivity). For the longer term, Ukraine is now starting to build classrooms underground and increasing shelter provisions for children and teachers. For displaced learners the situation can be even more challenging, including keeping track of where children and young adults are and how they can be reached to continue their education. There are then specific challenges around accommodating displaced children who return, and importantly, making provisions for the resilience and sustainability of the teaching force.

The third part of the programme will take place towards the Summer of 2024. This time the focus will be on micro-level educational development. For the current situation in Ukraine, this relates to the development of curriculum and curricular materials, the design of new modes of learning, online and distance learning development and the educating and support of educators in the reform of classroom and online practices. With programme initiator Dr Bo Kelestyn being one of the major thought leaders on Design Thinking, the participants will benefit from her teaching during this module, noting how relevant that disruptive approach to educational design is to the desire of Ukrainian educators to work in student-centred and inclusive ways (Kelestyn, forthcoming). Inclusivity is a concept the participants have been particularly interested in. Within the Ukrainian context inclusive education relates to enabling full participation of learners physically affected by war (learners with disabilities). The UK HE concept of inclusion which covers a questioning of normative assumptions of students much more widely (race, gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, age and other) has raised extensive discussion and has since been warmly embraced. Remarkably, even before the first module was completed, some of the participants already formed a development project around inclusion of students around race and ethnicity, to be launched in Ukraine.

Reflections on leading and developing the programme

Whilst we as educational developers usually design and plan a programme well in advance of delivery, once in a while the content and approach of a programme has to be much more iterative and co-created with participants. It was certainly necessary for this programme, not least because 'educational development during war time' is not a much-taught topic. There certainly are Masters in Post Conflict Reconstruction, which address Education as one of the pillars of reconstruction, and Masters in International Development, which engage with the role of Education in more depth, and these have been inspirational. Research on Education during conflict and the experience of educators and learners does exist (Buckland, 2005; Milton, 2018), but the particular focus on *leading* education and transformation in-country during a war is limited. As stated previously, the particular Ukrainian context means there was even more of a need to develop a bespoke approach.

Our approach has been one of establishing a firm understanding of the needs of participants, which has been done through ample discussion with Ukrainian partners, an emphasis on ongoing evaluation with participants, and providing participants with choices of which content they determined they need to master. Assessment is playing a further part in this process. The first assessment consisted of group presentations on establishing priorities for educational change in Ukraine, underpinned by a professional practice and academic rationale. The second assessment invites participants to draft a project and leadership plan for transformational change in their area of work, again with an emphasis on rationale for the choice of transformation and engagement with stakeholders including learners. For such assessments, research ethics approval was agreed and used to inform the next steps of the programme – with proposals being agreed with participant representatives. Taking this iterative approach, as well as ample study of relevant research, we continue to develop the programme for relevance and rigour.

There are also empathetical and emotional aspects to working with colleagues affected in their work and personal lives by war, violence and threat. Teaching about trauma-informed teaching (Thomas *et al.*, 2019) leads to examples being given, which release complex emotions – both with participants and programme leads. At times, some participants have been understandably distracted, as their attention had to be on establishing the safety of family members, friends, staff, or their own homes. The conversations, presentations and case studies brought to the fore the realities of violence and destruction, and seeing the blueprints for underground school buildings underlined that particular attention to our ways of teaching and engaging with participants was required. They are tremendously driven and grounded in the realities in Ukraine, but despite their exceptional successes and impact, they are human too. And so we put humanity, time for thinking about leadership and personal resilience, as well as individual attention, at the heart of our ways of working. In particular, the Action Learning Sets engaged with guidance on how to support fellow participants (and colleagues) with contextual stress and pressures. We also made deliberate efforts to create a context for speakers and contributors, where emotional reactions were acceptable and supported. As the programme develops into a sustainable Masters, this aspect will become one of the key performance indicators.

Finally, and not unrelated, Bo and I have learnt the importance of cultural expression as an element of resilience and partnership. Throughout the first residential, the participants (Figure 3) used forms of cultural expression to become a coherent group and boost their personal commitment to education and independence. There were many ways in which this took shape – entirely instigated by participants during presentations, discussions and at informal moments. Most impressively, after the dinner on the final night of the first residential, the participants gathered outside and someone quietly started a Ukrainian song. When others chimed in, they formed a large circle and gently swayed to their own singing. Without naming it, but by cultural expression alone, the participants confirmed their bond and commitment to their common cause and future.

Figure 3   The residential participants

On a personal note

My own father (86) was a school age child in the Netherlands during WWII. Later in his working life he was a physics teacher, an educational developer and then Director of a technical school, and so his educational insights are well informed. When I asked him whether he felt the war had affected his own education, surprisingly, he felt it had not. Once we explored that in more detail, we found that the reality was different. In his case, living in a rural area, where the school building had been marshalled for military purposes, children were taught reading and writing between walls of straw bales, beyond which the cows stood – as their presence would keep the 'classroom' warm. After the war he was taught by unqualified teachers and he did not do well until he later studied as an adult. I believe he would have been an aviation engineer had better education been open to him. Instead, being the determined man he is, he spent his retirement restoring and flying pre-WWII planes.

Together we reflected on the parallels with what is happening to children in Ukraine now. The learning gaps experienced by displaced children and students, and those without schools or universities to attend, may be with Ukraine for the coming 80 years. And like my father, they may assume for a long time that some of the educational challenges in their life were their own shortfall, rather than the impact of war. We must do better.

We have to educate them. And yet, the resilience of current generations of Ukrainians and the ingenuity of the educational leaders on the programme gave us hope. Their commitment to bringing humanity, academic ambition and inclusion into the education of current and future generations is where the healing from this war can be found.

So this is for you, dad. Because education makes the difference.

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Students' values regarding the use of AI in higher education: A co-creation project that explores challenges and opportunities

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Artificial intelligence

Developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions in the last decade have increased, with a transformative influence on various industries, including health, manufacturing, and communications. The application of AI across these industries has brought different advantages, such as innovation, efficiency, and improved decision-making. However, it has also brought challenges related to such matters as the ethical and regulatory implications that need to be addressed as AI adoption grows.

One of the key industries that AI has been transforming is education, thus requiring the opportunities and threats to be subject to scrutiny. Educators' views differ, with some welcoming AI as part of the curricula, whilst others prefer more guidance or even a ban on using it. Hence, the literature recommends further research about its application in higher education, including the need for guidelines (Tlili *et al.*, 2023) and transparency (Mhlanga, 2023) to ensure fairness in its usage. Moreover, as most of the studies have been focused on the educators' points of view, there is a need to listen to the students' voices.

Project

This article attends to the above need identified in the literature by exploring the values of three MBA students and three lecturers at the Westminster Business School. We worked together on a 'student as co-creator' project that was carried out from March until July 2023, to analyse the impact of AI on students' productivity during their studies.

The aim of the project was to investigate the opportunities and challenges AI presents in business education, and how they can be harnessed productively and ethically to enhance student learning and success. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were formulated.

1. Determine the effectiveness of AI in increasing student engagement in business education
2. Identify ethical concerns and potential unintended consequences of using AI in business education
3. Uncover students' and staff's level of comfort and readiness to embrace AI tools and techniques in business education.

Methods

To structure this qualitative study the researchers applied auto-ethnography, for which the three MBA students and three lecturers used their own life experiences and the researchers' positions to interpret cultural experiences, beliefs and practices (Adams *et al.*, 2017).

The focus group was deemed to be the most suitable research method for this early stage of an explorative study in which participants exchange anecdotes and perceptions on each other's experiences

in an open and tolerant environment, to gather in-depth information and insights about a specific topic (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). We organised two focus groups on 24 May and 16 June. The lecturers identified the topics to be discussed and took notes of the participants' comments. One lecturer was the moderator, who facilitated the discussion and encouraged participants to share their views and engage in the dialogue. The focus group was structured in three stages as follows.

Preparation

From March 2023, the three lecturers coordinated with the students remotely about the project. This process involved gaining a better understanding of AI and its impact on higher education. An MS Word document was stored on the Microsoft 365 Cloud that contained information about AI definition, its characteristics, and some free AI tools that were available. Participants were encouraged to read this document, update its content and share information.

Focus groups

The team agreed to have two sessions on the following dates:

- 1st focus group: on 24 May. In this meeting, the team discussed topics, including the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools, the advantages/ disadvantages of using such as these in higher education, and how we can do so in an ethical way.
- 2nd focus group: on 16 June. In this meeting, we reviewed the findings from the previous session and discussed topics related to ChatGPT and assessment, university guidelines about using AI tools, and how to identify ChatGPT-generated text.

Analysis and dissemination of findings

We read through the focus group notes of both workshops and analysed the main findings. Thematic analysis was selected as the most suitable, trustworthy, and flexible method for data analysis (Nowell *et al.*, 2017) as it permits the identification, analysis and organisation of themes within a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Understanding values

The study of the role of students' values will shed light on attitudes and motivation towards the use of AI in higher education. The findings can be used to guide higher education institutions to determine how AI tools can be embedded in the curricula to provide a meaningful and effective educational learning experience.

Values are defined as a prioritised system of beliefs and desirable goals (Schwartz, 2011), desirable principles of behaviour that are used to compare, predict and assess current human behaviour. Whilst value prioritisation is relatively stable, it can change over time due to opportunities and pressures from the external environment and, more importantly, when they are aligned with the ideal self (Russo *et al.*, 2022).

Schwartz' theory of cultural values

To identify and analyse the students' values, for this explorative, we drew upon Schwartz' theory of cultural values (Schwartz, 2006), which provides a coherent value categorisation. It is one of the most cited theoretical frameworks when studying values (Russo *et al.*, 2022) and it is widely used in cross-cultural studies (Schwartz, 2016).

In his study, Schwartz analysed data from 73 countries that led to the identification of seven cultural value orientations that represent the individual and group beliefs, actions and goals that are desirable in a culture (Schwartz, 2006). These value orientations are organised into three bipolar cultural value dimensions that represent critical issues in society. As each value orientation is paired with an orientation with which it is in conflict, the structure of the value orientation forms a coherent circular structure that captures the conflicts and motivation between values (Figure 1).

These value orientations are intellectual autonomy, and affective autonomy, both of which clash with embeddedness, whilst egalitarianism clashes with hierarchy and harmony clashes with mastery. Within each of them is a group of distinctive values identified by Schwartz (2006).
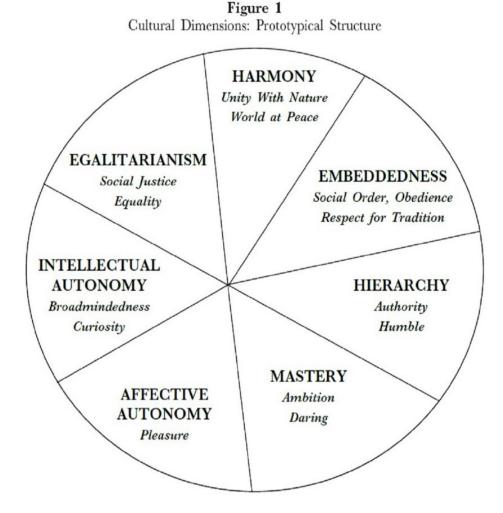

Figure 1
Cultural Dimensions: Prototypical Structure

Figure 1   Cultural dimensions: prototypical structure (Schwartz, 2006)

In terms of the *autonomy* value orientation, individuals prefer to follow their own ideas, abilities and preferences that circumscribe a unique behaviour. Some values in autonomy include pleasure and an exciting and varied life. There are two types of autonomy: intellectual and affective autonomy. In the former, individuals practice their own intellectual ideas by demonstrating the values of open-mindedness, curiosity and creativeness. In the latter, emotions affect the individuals' decision-making process as emotions help to make choices that align with our values and goals.

Regarding *embeddedness*, individuals understand that they are embedded in a collective society through social relationships that pursue shared goals. For that reason, they tend to keep the status quo and avoid actions that break the traditional order. The values that are practised include social order, respect for tradition, and obedience.

The value orientation of *egalitarianism* represents a scenario where individuals are willing to cooperate and demonstrate an interest in everyone's welfare. Some distinctive values include equality, responsibility, help and honesty.

The value orientation of *hierarchy* is demonstrated by individuals when they rely on hierarchical systems that determine responsible behaviour, and unequal distribution of power and roles. Individuals in hierarchical societies demonstrate values related to social power and authority.

The value orientation of *harmony* is seen when individuals try to understand and appreciate their surroundings, rather than change them. Some values that are practised include unity with nature and protecting the environment.

Finally, in the value orientation of *mastery*, individuals try to achieve group or personal goals, and manage and change their social environment. Key values demonstrated are ambition and success.

Findings

This research was aimed at analysing students' values on the impact of AI in business education. The significance of this project lies in capturing the students' perspectives on the effectiveness of AI in improving their learning experience and increasing their engagement; and

understanding students' and lecturers' readiness to embrace AI tools in business education. In this section, we present the key findings that emerged from the analysis of the focus group responses. The most common value orientations identified include the following.

Autonomy

Students demonstrated intellectual autonomy towards the use of AI in business education, as they practised two distinctive traits: creativity and curiosity. They perceived that AI tools can be used in a productive way, allowing them to express and enhance their creativity and curiosity in their studies, especially when completing their assignments, and thus improving student engagement. According to them, AI tools can be used productively in the following ways:

- Grammar checker: Students mentioned that AI tools, such as Grammarly, can help students improve their academic writing skills and proofreading, especially when English is not their mother tongue. However, the suggestions from these AI tools cannot always catch subtle errors or understand the full context of the suggested content
- Summary/briefing creator: Students pointed out that ChatGPT can be used as a summary/briefing creator to support the reading and understanding of long case studies and theoretical concepts. This summary provides key information and is easily comprehended by students. However, students need to carry out further research as AI tools can occasionally misinterpret context or omit relevant details
- Presentation facilitator: Some students mentioned that some AI tools can assist them in the creation of visually appealing presentations, organisation of content, sequencing of slides, as well as the generation and editing of speech scripts. Despite these advantages, students should review the content and layout of the presentations to ensure accuracy, relevance and professionalism.

Embeddedness

Students demonstrated embeddedness in that they understood that they are part of the student body as a collective

group and that social relationships are very important in shaping the delivery of a better learning experience. It is noticeable that, within the same cohort of students, there are subgroups that have different shared goals in different areas, including study, sports and friendship.

Students shape their behaviour based on the code of conduct that the university provides; they respect the authorities, processes and decisions in case of a breach of the regulations. Regarding the ethical use of AI tools in education, students have different views about clear guidance and regulation in terms of the following:

- Detection of plagiarism cases: As the university provides different internet-based similarity detection services, such as Turnitin and SafeAssign, some students requested software that has AI writing detection capabilities that can detect text/images generated by AI to identify cases of plagiarism. Students perceive that this software will support lecturers in providing a fair marking of assessment and respect for academic conduct
- Clear guidance of allowed AI tools: Students asked for a list of all the AI tools that can be used during their studies, and clear guidance on how they can use these tools in an ethical way. Idea generation, grammar checking, learning content, and lesson planning were identified in this regard. In addition, students are concerned that ChatGPT can produce similar content, and if they are encouraged to use it, then it may lead to increased plagiarism and collusion cases.

Schwartz (2006) argues that societies clash when practising autonomy and embeddedness value dimensions. In the current study, this clash is circumscribed around fairness in grading. Students demonstrate intellectual autonomy when they show creativity when working on assignments. However, the use of AI tools to practise this creativity should be aligned with the student code of conduct in order for a higher grade to be legitimate. Hence, to avoid the misuse of AI tools resulting in undeserved higher grades in assignments, students believe that lecturers should use an AI detector tool to identify cases of plagiarism.

Egalitarianism

Students demonstrated the egalitarianism value dimension when they expressed the view that they all should be treated as equals during their studies and should be honest with their academic practice. This would lead to the development of a trusting and collaborative space in which students could support each other, thereby having a better learning experience. For that reason, students should not take advantage of AI tools to obtain higher grades.

The students strongly valued qualities, such as equity, honesty and fairness, in relation to their studies and felt that these would facilitate the ethical use of ChatGPT. For example, using the tool as a supporting tool to generate ideas was considered acceptable, whereas using it to produce assessment content, with over-reliance on ChatGPT so as to obtain a higher grade, was considered very unfair.

In addition, students raised strong concerns in relation to equity for teamwork assessments, where some members use AI and others do not. For that reason, they expressed a preference for grades to be individual and that team-mates who do not follow honest practice and produce original content should be penalised.

Students shared a concern that an equal learning experience is in jeopardy when unethical academic practices when using ChatGPT are promoted on social media platforms, such as TikTok. This advertisement of these unethical practices can encourage some students to follow them and, therefore, there should be a regulation that penalises this type of advertisement.

Mastery

It was found that, students demonstrate ambition and success in their studies when trying to gain the highest grade and having a better learning experience. They expressed empowerment when using different support and tools to support their learning, but there was a notable concern that some peers may use AI tools in an unethical way to achieve this goal.

In addition, students demonstrate a mastery value dimension when they request a change in the assessment practices at the university due to the impact of AI in two distinctive ways:

- Academics should rethink assessments, focusing on authentic learning and developing higher-order skills, such as critical thinking/analysis, problem-solving *etc*. However, there is a risk of missing key learning outcomes, if the assessment design focuses too much on making it 'AI-secure' (Abramson, 2023)
- Students suggested that there could be a reduction in the use of written assignments and instead use more frequently other assessment types, such as presentations, debates, recorded pitches, and podcasts. Moreover, the assessment should embrace the use of ChatGPT.

Limitations

The findings of this study must be seen in the context of some limitations, including the following:

- The sample size: Greater numbers in the samples of students and lecturers could provide a different perspective regarding the impact of AI in higher education, which may limit the representation of the study body, generalisability of results and conclusions of the study
- Time constraints: At the time of the investigation, it was difficult to find volunteers to participate in the focus group. In addition, the difficulty of balancing study and work commitments had an impact on the number of meetings and participants.

Conclusion

For this study, the values of students at the Westminster Business School on the impact of AI on student productivity during their studies were explored.

Students demonstrated the value dimensions of autonomy, embeddedness, egalitarianism and mastery that shaped their position towards the use of AI tools in business studies. In general, there was a positive perception of the use of AI tools, but fairness in grading and the use of AI to achieve this will shape the ethical position of students towards AI.

As the literature has highlighted, there is a need for clear guidance in the use of AI tools in higher education. Moreover, a strong demand was expressed by students for software that can detect text/images generated by AI. If this

software is not provided, students may perceive AI tools as a potential threat to their learning experience if used in an unethical way to gain higher grades, thereby impacting negatively on fairness in their studies. Moreover, we as lecturers should reflect on the type of assessment components that we use in our courses and modules. Do they facilitate students expressing knowledge in different ways or do they overly focus on a specific component, such as written assessment? For that reason, we should develop an assessment that meets the needs of different learners, according to their visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinaesthetic preferences. This type of assessment could include, presentations, posters, podcasts, debates, simulation games, *etc*. Moreover, we should learn how to live with AI tools and embrace them in our courses. In sum, it will be very difficult to avoid their use in higher education, so we should focus more on minimising their unethical usage.

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A personalised approach to initial professional development: The Needs Analysis at UWE Bristol

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'Being talked through what academic development opportunities are available was really helpful in terms of understanding what would be most useful for me. There are lots of different opportunities at UWE, but they can be difficult to find, or it can be difficult to know what is suitable for me in my role just from reading a web page. I really liked that it felt quite proactive (compared to just using an online form or reading a page on the intranet)…I got signposted to some training opportunities which I think will be very useful and I probably wouldn't have gone for them without them. The meeting also gave me the impression that UWE, as an organisation, is committed to academic development and quality in teaching and learning, which gives me confidence and motivation to develop my academic practice (compared to other institutions I've worked in which comparatively weren't bothered).'
Needs Analysis participant feedback, September 2022

Overview

The Needs Analysis was a personalised initial professional development intervention developed in 2022 by the Academic Practice Directorate (APD) at the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol). It was designed especially for new academic staff at UWE, principally probationary lecturers and senior lecturers. It centred on each participant having a 30-minute one-to-one meeting with a facilitator from the APD. They discussed the participant's academic practice to date and looked to the new colleague's development over approximately the next year. Meetings included bespoke signposting to professional development activities relevant to that individual's needs and interests, including the most appropriate pathway through UWE's Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. New academics were encouraged to attend a meeting as soon as possible after starting employment.

It was a remarkably successful intervention which far exceeded our expectations. We ran 98 meetings across September 2022 to February 2023. 95% of participants agreed that the meeting was helpful, and 95% also thought that the meeting would influence their professional development (Table 1). The highly positive comment which opened this article is remarkably pithy, but it aligns to common themes in participant feedback.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I found this meeting helpful	76% (28)	19% (7)	3% (1)	-	3% (1)
I think this meeting will influence my professional development	59% (22)	35% (13)	3% (1)	-	3% (1)
This meeting was well organised	81% (30)	16% (6)	-	-	3% (1)

Table 1   Quantitative feedback from anonymous feedback forms completed by participants after Needs Analysis meetings. There was a 38% response rate (37 responses from 98 meetings)

Context: After the apprenticeship

The Needs Analysis intervention was conceptualised soon after UWE decided to stop delivering the Academic Professional Apprenticeship for its new academics. We had launched this apprenticeship programme with an embedded PGCert in 2019, and had enrolled almost 400 participants up until 2021. The process of designing and delivering this large-scale apprenticeship had been one of valuable learning, and we have written on this previously in *Educational Developments* (O'Leary *et al.,* 2019). The change of direction away from the apprenticeship (reverting back to a stand-alone PGCert) provided another valuable opportunity for reflection – to

consider which elements to retain.

We especially valued our apprenticeship's Initial Needs Analysis. This process was conducted prior to a participant starting learning on the programme. It was principally designed to check whether the participant was eligible for apprenticeship levy funding, and to recognise prior learning/experience and adjust study accordingly (ESFA, 2022). We also checked their initial confidence and competence against all of the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the Academic Professional Apprenticeship standard (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, 2022), and used this also to inform a plan of learning.

There were three main aspects of this process which we identified as of significant value:

- The focus this gave to personalising initial professional development to the individual and their circumstances. Colleagues could be directed to specific academic development opportunities. Some could be signposted to different routes through the PGCert (including accredited learning where appropriate). We valued especially how this support was available for every new academic, and not merely the more proactive and persistent colleagues
- Those situations where we had engaged in deeper conversation with a new colleague. Much information was gathered by forms due to the large numbers of participants and the mechanical nature of many of these checks for the apprenticeship. But some situations necessitated sustained discussion. These opened a dialogue to think through prior experience and what was most supportive and appropriate for that individual
- Information feeding into our academic development interventions. By reviewing the situation of all new academics starting at UWE soon after they had started employment, we had a detailed and timely understanding of the needs of new starters. For instance, some questions gave us quantitative data on digital confidence and we could then prioritise our support accordingly.

Proposing the Needs Analysis

We therefore proposed to retain an enhanced Needs Analysis post apprenticeship. We would of course remove the now unnecessary elements which focused on apprenticeship requirements, and focus even more deeply on the individual's development needs. We also aimed to trial having these as synchronous one-to-one conversations with a facilitator, as this aligned to what was most valuable under the apprenticeship.

A pivotal argument to secure senior management support was that it aligned strategically. UWE's Strategy 2023 and the linked People Strategy aims to put 'people at the centre' through 'personalised, inclusive and transformative' support (UWE Bristol, 2023b). A one-to-one Needs Analysis meeting for each new academic undeniably promotes a more personalised experience.

A common hesitation voiced at an early stage was the resource required. Various colleagues remarked that short one-to-one meetings with every new academic would require significant staff resource which we did not have. I have also heard similar comments from educational developers from other institutions who were interested in this project. However, our hypothesis was twofold:

- It was not in fact a large amount of time, providing everything was well designed and streamlined. From the facilitator's point of view, all of the discussion for each participant was usually completed within each person's 30-minute meeting slot. The admin was largely automated. We also ensured that the process was streamlined and efficient from the participant's point of view (see Table 1 with 97% agreeing that the meeting was well organised).
- This could be a time efficiency. We estimated that prior to the Needs Analysis, the 'average' new academic took up at least this amount of time from the APD team across their first year in-post, if not more, through various enquiries which could have been pre-empted by efficient signposting and timely information.

An example of this is regarding the more experienced new academics and their engagement in the PGCert. Across all Needs Analysis meetings, only around half of new lecturers and senior lecturers were signposted to complete the full PGCert (Table 2). The other half had circumstances which were explored in detail in a Needs Analysis meeting, leading to a more personalised recommendation other than the 'default' of the full PGCert. Without a process like the Needs Analysis, it is likely that many of these colleagues would have been confused; they may have launched multiple enquiries with different teams and may initially have started on a less appropriate route through the PGCert.

PGCert recommendation	Number of participants
Engage in the full PGCert (comprising Modules 1 and 2)	45 (48%)
Engage in only Module 1 of the PGCert (usually for staff on certain part-time or fixed-term contracts)	14 (15%)
Explore accredited learning against Module 1 of the PGCert, and engage with PGCert Module 2 (for staff who have done part of a similar PGCert, or have significant HE experience)	18 (19%)
Exemption from the PGCert (for staff who already hold a comparable PGCert, Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy [FHEA], or similar)	14 (15%)
Gain FHEA via UWE's experiential fellowship scheme (for highly experienced staff who cannot qualify for exemption)	2 (2%)
Total	*93*

Table 2   Percentage of participants signposted to each PGCert route

One aim of the Needs Analysis meeting was to help identify the most appropriate route through which each colleague could engage with UWE's PGCert (a requirement of academic probation), or similar. Table 2 shows the percentage of participants signposted to each route. (Note: this discussion did not form part of all 98 meetings; it was included in all meetings for those on academic probation, but was omitted for some who were not.)

To facilitate these meetings, the APD team put aside two hours per week of staff time, with different facilitators taking turns over different weeks. This small outlay of time created c.200 meeting slots per year. This provided around double the expected demand, given that UWE typically recruited around 100 new academic staff in a 'normal' year.

Mapping forms

Prior to a meeting, the participant was asked to map their confidence and competence against a simplified version of the Academic Professional Apprenticeship standard (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, 2022) using an online form. They provided a rank from 1-4 for each criterion. After ranking each criterion, the participant was then asked to reflect on their mapping and write briefly on 1) their main areas of strength in their academic practice, and 2) areas where they need to prioritise development. This helped to phrase the meeting constructively by directing the participant to think reflectively across the breadth of academic practice. The form was reviewed by the meeting facilitator before the meeting and was often used to help direct the meeting.

These forms also generated quantitative data on (predominantly) new academic staff across UWE, to give an insight into their areas of strength and development needs across the institution at that moment. There were 108 original responses (which exceeds the 98 meetings conducted, due to factors such as cancellations which were not rescheduled). The average (mean) result across all rankings was 2.8. The criteria which had the highest average were:

- Be enthusiastic, self-confident and self-reflective to operate effectively as an academic professional (3.4)
- [Research Specialist] The use of current theories, models, developments and issues in relevant areas of research literature (3.1)
- Communicate effectively to create interest, understanding and engagement among intended learner and/or academic professional audiences (3.1)
- Value and champion equality, diversity and inclusion (3.1).

The criteria which had a lowest average were:
- Relevant higher education regulatory, administrative and quality procedures and how they relate to their academic role (2.2)
- [Research Specialist] Major funding streams and programmes in relevant research fields (2.3)
- [Research Specialist] Develop and sustain links with industry and other external organisations to grow collaborations and develop opportunities to access funding (2.3).

This suggests that most new academics during this period felt more confident and self-reflective in their practice, strong in communication, and dedicated to equality, diversity and inclusion. Whereas they felt least confident regarding the administrative, regulatory and quality landscape.

Due to the teaching-focused nature of UWE, all participants were asked on Teaching Specialist Knowledge and Skills; but the Research Specialist Knowledge and Skills were only asked to colleagues who identified their role had a significant research focus. These results therefore suggest that UWE's new researchers were more confident regarding theories and developments in their discipline. Whereas they felt less confident regarding research funding and regarding links to industry and external organisations.

Meetings and signposting

The meetings were conducted either online or in person according to the participant's preference. It was suggested that the participant could invite any other colleagues to support them in this meeting, for instance, their line manager and/or probation mentor. Facilitators also made notes on a meeting form, and a copy of this was automatically sent to the participant along with a suggestion that they share this with their line manager and probation mentor to help inform parallel conversations. Participant, mentor and manager feedback was unanimously positive in respect to how smoothly and supportively this worked. Managers especially appreciated the exploration of personalised pathways with respect to the PGCert, and the signposting of a range of wider professional development opportunities.

Each 30-minute meeting focused on four topics:
1. The participant's background. Especially: their HE teaching experience, teaching qualifications and accreditation (including Higher Education Academy fellowships), research
2. Their work at UWE. Especially: their employment, probation, responsibilities over the next year
3. Their professional development over the next year (see below)
4. UWE's PGCert. Especially: their recommended engagement route (see Table 2), answering any queries.

Topic 3, on their professional development, varied significantly from participant to participant. The mapping form was used to identify interests and priorities. The participant and facilitator (and mentor and/or manager, if present) then worked together to signpost activities which may work towards these.

This was aided by a 'Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Signposting Sheet', an online resource which listed and linked to 49 formal CPD activities offered by UWE (UWE Bristol, 2023a). Each activity was relevant to aspects of academic practice; they ranged in subject from learning and teaching to leadership and management, and ranged in format from workshops to online guides. Opportunities beyond UWE and ideas for informal CPD activities were additionally signposted. By compiling this in one place, the CPD Signposting Sheet responded to frequent comments from UWE staff that it was difficult to navigate the various systems used by different teams to identify what CPD opportunities existed, and prioritise which were most useful to them (note for instance the quote at the start of this article). It also helped facilitators to stay up to date with UWE's CPD offerings, made signposting quicker and easier, and also meant that the participants (who were often new colleagues) could more legitimately contribute to this conversation.

As the signposting for each participant was entered into their meeting form, this also provided data on which CPD activities were most commonly signposted; which could perhaps imply demand (Table 3).

Common CPD recommendations	% of participants signposted
UWE's Introduction to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education programme	48%
UWE's Programme and Module Leader Development programme	45%
UWE's Improvisational Skills for Teaching programme	31%
UWE's experiential Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship scheme	13%
UWE's internal research funding schemes	12%
UWE's annual Festival of Learning	12%
Higher Education newsletters and magazines (e.g. Times Higher Education, Wonkhe, etc.)	11%
UWE's Higher Education Pedagogies, Policy and Practice Research Network	11%
UWE's Researcher Development programme	7%
UWE's leadership and management programmes, courses and schemes	7%

Table 3 *The Initial Needs Analysis meetings signposted to professional development activities beyond the PGCert. The most frequent activities signposted are shown*

Feedback

There was an unexpectedly large demand for these meetings. In the first three months, we held 75 meetings. This was significantly more than the 50 we had intended to schedule during this period, and we still had a waiting list. When we released and announced new dates, these dates were usually fully booked within 24 hours.

Where we had capacity, the Needs Analysis meetings were also open to all other staff at UWE. Of the 98 meetings, 83 (85%) were from our core audience of probationary academic staff. The remaining 15 (15%) were from either longer-established academic staff or professional services colleagues whose work included elements of academic practice. As we rarely had spare capacity, our hypothesis is that there was even greater demand from these non-core groups.

Themes from the participants' qualitative feedback suggest several main strengths (see Table 1). Each are listed below with examples of feedback:

- The Needs Analysis made UWE seem like a friendly, caring and supportive employer: (In response to 'what worked well in this meeting?') '[The facilitator's] detailed insight regarding my professional development and the genuine empathy and care [they] showed in this meeting.'
- Building participant confidence: 'Firstly, having my words reflected back helped build my confidence in my existing abilities. Secondly, the advice received regarding how I can move forward in my teaching career was considered, detailed and persuasive.'
- Identifying useful development activities: '[The facilitator] showed me a more simple way to access CPD modules which I had no idea about. Truthfully I had been finding navigating the learning modules very difficult, so this was an "instant win".

- Comments frequently included explicit mention of the CPD Signposting Sheet: '[The facilitator] has been particularly helpful and his guidance has been precise and to the point. I have also been offered a single webpage where key CPD matters could be addressed and resolved. I am thankful to this colleague for providing me with such high standard guidance in my new academic environment.'
- Aiding with clarity, direction, decision making: 'It was very helpful and a clear trajectory has been outlined. I highly recommend these meetings as they are hugely beneficial. [The facilitator] was fantastic at explaining and very accommodating.'
- Feeding into conversations with managers, to help development: 'I have particular points I can give feedback to my manager to support my pathway to a permanent role.'
- The one-to-one format and flexible structure was frequently praised: (In response to 'what worked well in this meeting?') 'The one-to-one nature. The host really listened and tailored their guidance.'

Themes from participant feedback suggests the following developments would be most appreciated:
- More time for the meetings
- More useful to schedule these closer to the start of employment
- Follow-up meetings with the Needs Analysis team.

Final reflections

One of the most useful, but least tangible, aspects of the Needs Analysis was how it helped to promote a culture of professional development across the institution. As educational developers, we often hear comments such as 'I don't have time for my own development'. The Needs Analysis worked to combat this. When it worked at its best, a new starter came to meet our educational development unit soon after starting in post and made this useful connection with someone who could continue to support them. We listened to their background and their reflections on what support they needed to do their current role and to develop further. Their manager and mentor were engaged in the process, explicitly prioritising their development from the early days of their role. As with the quote which opened this article, it could motivate a new colleague to prioritise their development and introduce them to a culture where reflection and development is the norm.

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Reflections on 'losing' an institutional partnership

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Partnerships have long been a part of the internationalisation of higher education and can offer many benefits to participants. In terms of pedagogy, they can bring together students from different geographical locations, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and different disciplines, to work towards a common goal and in the process learn to see the world from different perspectives, to challenge their assumptions and communicate respectfully with individuals who may not share their views and approaches. For researchers, working across national, ethnic, linguistic and disciplinary cultures can produce innovative ways of framing an issue and of investigating it, and potentially increases the impact through widening research networks and channels of dissemination. Traditionally, such partnerships have been premised on international mobility, involving visits and exchanges of students and academics, though the growth of technology in education has led to online 'telecollaborations' and the growth of Collaborative Online Learning (COIL) or Virtual Exchange (VE), accelerated by the Covid pandemic.

These rich rewards of international partnership working, of course, do not come easily. As Koehn and Obamba note (2014, p. 25), collaborating 'long enough to build the institutional capacity and human capabilities needed for autonomous project leadership and positive societal outcomes' requires commitment from both sides. Many SEDA members will have worked in international partnerships, and some will have worked with partners in the Global South. When partner institutions are from both the Global North and Global South, particular challenges arise in negotiating the power differences between them, since each has its own mission, and is situated within regional, national and supranational societal and geopolitical power structures. Recent calls for the de-colonisation of research partnerships have highlighted the tendency for such partnerships to be exploitative on the part of Global

North institutions, whose research can be extractive, unidirectional and which only benefits the powerful, thus maintaining colonial power structures (Chiavaroli, 2022; Fransman *et al.*, 2018). The partnership we will explore here was cognisant of this critique from the outset, and we committed to taking a 'decolonial' stance, which we attempted to embed throughout, from defining the research problem through to the research outcomes, and everything in between, including the methodologies, decision-making and on what the funding is spent. Given the challenges, it's not surprising that some international partnerships will be more successful than others and that over time other priorities may change, and one or both partner institutions will decide to move on, to other initiatives or to collaborations elsewhere.

In 2015, I (Bill) started working with staff from the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG). I was managing a pre-sessional course in English for Academic Purposes at the University of Glasgow. Each summer, many engineering students from all over the world would study there, trying to

improve their English language skills in order to enter their chosen course in Engineering. Their counterparts at IUG, staff and students, agreed to work from home during their own holidays, with groups of our students, looking together at engineering challenges in Gaza and exploring context-appropriate responses. The student groups exchanged ideas via Skype, Zoom, email, WhatsApp, and presented their proposals, together, in the final week.

The Gazans knew that, for them, because of travel restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities, studying abroad was the unlikeliest dream, but they took the chance to work with people beyond the Strip with both hands, and sometimes the international students based in Scotland learned a little about the magnitude of the issues facing their partners. Figure 1 (2018) shows a doodle from a Thai student, trying in week 1 of the course to get his head around the fact that Gaza has no postal service, and how the local people have had to adapt as a consequence.
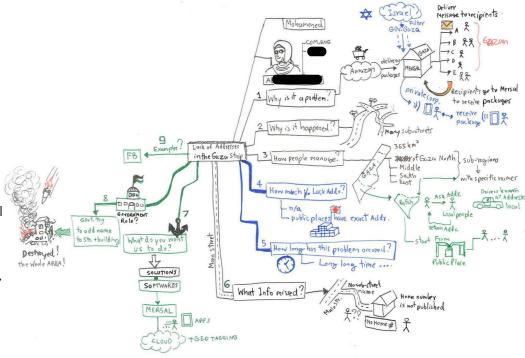

Figure 1   Thai student doodle

From just one week of talking to fellow - engineering students in Gaza, it seems he'd learned so much about covert control (top right) (Figure 1) and outright punishment (bottom left).

The students studying in Scotland moved on to their chosen engineering courses, and I had five years of rewarding, stimulating work every summer. And the Gazans? They worked with us just for a chance to talk to people beyond their prison walls – I always wondered whether this was a fair exchange. They were willing to do so much in return for so little.

Three years ago, I moved on to a new position, at Northumbria University, and (of course) my colleagues and friends at IUG were eager to develop our collaboration. It was there that I met Caroline and given that she shared my interests in language and intercultural communication, I invited her to join the partnership.

Our second, and current, project with IUG takes a decolonial stance and looks at whether English as a Medium of Education is a help or a hindrance to female engineers in Gaza. The overarching aim is to enhance the career opportunities for women in Gaza, given that they face so many intersecting inequalities. In 2023, a group of Palestinian academics and students came to Northumbria to work on the project for 10 days with us and our students.

Broadly speaking, we found that while both academics and students are at first keen to stress the importance of the English language and cross-cultural communication to enable them to take part in the 'global circulation of knowledge', when talking to the researchers at Northumbria, and when we probed further during female only, loosely structured interviews, there can be a sense of loss – of identity and of the ability to really understand the needs of the local community, since the resources are all in English. Stories revealed the bias, prejudice and discrimination women had faced in both the Global North and South, stemming from the intersection of their gender, religious and non-native speaker identities in a male dominated environment. Nevertheless, the women participants showed remarkable pride and resilience in their achievements and there was a feeling of solidarity between the participants from different parts of the world. We were conscious, however, of the power differences and the colonial baggage of the English language and its influence on the findings, and so a final round of interviews was planned to be carried out in Arabic by a Syrian-born, female academic at Northumbria, in which we surmised that the women might be able to express their feelings more freely.

What happens if you find an overseas partner that is a pleasure to work with, that meets deadlines, proposes interesting ideas and tells you up-front what they can and can't do? If one project leads to a better one, until you cannot conceive of your research without them? If you look forward to future work knowing that anything you propose will be met with candour and enthusiasm and will be moulded into something much better than your original idea? Then what happens if your research partners move from being acquaintances, to trusted colleagues, and then to friends? The relational aspect of long-term partnerships cannot be underestimated, in our experience. And then, what happens when you wake up one morning, to video footage on social media showing the bombing of your partner university, images of it as a massive hole in the ground, the staff and students you've grown to know and trust being bombed, starved and driven from their homes?

Our interviews with students weren't cancelled, they just didn't happen – we received harrowing e-mails from staff-members who made it clear that their priorities were survival rather than research. When electricity allowed, even more awful calls from the normally most stoic of colleagues told us of the terror among their family and their students. The sense of trauma was palpable. But the word that most hit home to me was this one word, from one colleague: 'abandonment'.

While there has been some support from our university colleagues at local and national level, we as academics still need to do more to show that we aren't abandoning our colleagues. Moreover, I (Bill) feel a personal responsibility. For eight years I've had the privilege of working with my Gazan colleagues, and a kind of warm glow, a feeling that I was hacking a university feeder-system that depends on wealthy international students, via project-work with the Global South. But Andreotti *et al.* (2014) make a telling point – why is it that universities are willing to allow projects such as these? Might it be that they are allowing just enough leeway that the real changes that are needed – political solutions – don't take place. In short, who's hacking who? And the bombings that the Thai student learned about five years ago are now so much worse.

Education is perhaps the single most important hope for a better future. This is now seriously threatened. Palestinian women are among the most educated in the Middle East and North Africa region (Education International, 2023). The majority of educators in Gaza are women. The destruction of education

Figure 2   Gazan students engaging in teamwork, Northumbria University, June 2023

is the destruction of knowledge, power and hope and all of the experience the mainly female educators have built up. We cannot abandon them.

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Co-designing a module with students and staff from different universities, time zones and cultures

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Introduction

Aiming to support universities to take decisions around educational design based on their local context and needs, we developed a discipline-agnostic framework for international, online curriculum co-design workshops. The framework evolved during the design of a project to enhance undergraduate modules on designing, assembling and dismantling spatial structures.

The aim of the project was to surface international perspectives around the constraints and affordances of learning and teaching on civil engineering modules, and to explore ways of incorporating insights and ideas into future teaching.

The challenge for the core project team, which consisted of two digital learning designers (DLDs) and a module leader (ML) in civil engineering at the University of Surrey, was to develop a space which would rapidly support generative, potentially transformational, design conversations between students, tutors and practitioners across different time zones, languages, and cultures. Twenty-five staff, students, and industry experts from Iran, Mexico, Brazil, Spain and the UK were invited to attend two interrelated two-hour online workshops.

It was established early on that the workshops would take place online to enable participation by geographically dispersed participants without incurring travel costs and to minimise time commitments, as well as to support sustainable practice. The escalation of the global pandemic at the time made online delivery essential.

Theory and context

Writing broadly about design thinking back in 2008, Sanders and Stappers predicted that co-creation increasingly would be essential to create 'tangible visions of new products and/or services' and that design skills would become 'even more important … in mankind's drive to address the challenges of global, systemic issues'. As DLDs we believe that the three strands identified here by Sanders and Stappers (*i.e.* design thinking, co-design and internationalisation) can strongly reinforce each other and significantly enhance any aspect of curriculum design. We used these three elements to underpin our framework.

Learning design

Learning design (LD) at its simplest, can be defined as:

> '*The process by which teachers – and others involved in the support of learning – arrive at a plan or structure or designed artefact for a learning situation.'* (Beetham and Sharpe, 2020, p. 6)

We used many principles from online LD in the design of our workshops (see 'The framework', below). For example, we drew on elements of *carpe diem* (Salmon, n.d.) and Community of Inquiry (Garrison, n.d.) frameworks to scaffold our workshops, taking a structured approach to activities and building in staged opportunities for sharing and reflection. We also drew on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which focuses on parity of experience for users, through, for example, including icebreaker activities designed to create an inclusive, welcoming environment in which people could make rapid connections. We felt that this was particularly important given that: the majority of participants had not met before; participants may have had different expectations of different roles (we wanted to reduce any perceived hierarchies between, for example, staff and students); and our learning design and codesign approaches may have been unfamiliar to some of our participants.

We encouraged participants to adopt a learning design mindset to designing assessments and activities in the second workshop. We asked students and teachers to identify 'threshold concepts' (Meyer and Land, 2003) they had encountered in their learning or teaching, and to design learning activities which could support students to transition through the 'liminal spaces' surrounding these concepts.

A key challenge with LD is that, often, it is not an established practice within universities, or it may be confused with the orchestration and planning of learning – there is no doubt both are essential to LD but they are just two constituents of the many faceted area of effective LD (Goodyear and Dimitriadis, 2013). Researchers such as Peter Goodyear (2015) have documented the urgent drivers at a macro level behind adopting a design-led approach.

Co-design: Students and staff

Co-design approaches, in combination with student-staff partnerships, are increasingly adopted in HE and recognised as inclusive practice. Cruz *et al*. (2023, p. 17) assert that 'in contested times of social, ecological, and political crises and uncertainties, co-design may provide answers that are feasible, consensual, adaptable, and transformable for inevitable change'. We created an environment where teachers and students could learn from each other's perspectives: for example, by sharing ideas anonymously through digital posting boards in order to mitigate any potential power imbalances.

As Bovill *et al*. (2015, p. 203) note, however, striking 'a balance between inclusion and selection' is a common challenge 'in the early stages of co-creation' and often staff may be drawn to invite students whom they know

will engage, rather than drawing from a true representation of the student community (e.g. including students from marginalised backgrounds). Also, students who put themselves forward are more likely to have sociocultural capital and privilege-based confidence (Mercer-Mapstone *et al*., 2021).

In our case, because of project timescales, all attendees were hand-picked by the ML. We acknowledge the impact this may have had on the equity of our co-design. However, we also believe it is better to collaborate with students who may have been recruited directly rather than not to work with students at all. Where this applies, it is important not to generalise that workshop outputs will be appropriate for all students. We would also recommend using diverse recruitment methods as far as possible in future projects and to consider paying students for participating in workshops.

Internationalisation

For many, internationalisation of curricula is key to creating more equality of opportunity. According to Cook-Sather *et al*. (2014), cross-cultural partnerships in HE can break down structural inequalities and hierarchical power dynamics by cultivating student and educator connections with others who do not share their cultural, educational, or socioeconomic background. Shekhawat *et al*. (2022, p. 118) further state that international partnerships that support 'heterogeneity, inclusion, diversity of beliefs, and equality' can create a more 'just' world.

For both co-design and internationalisation, however, there are potential challenges in aspiring to include many voices. Tight (2014), for example, highlights that the internationalisation of HE beyond the West is often predicated

on elements of Western HE models. Craciun (2018) points out that, at that time, 80% of countries worldwide did not have any national higher education internationalisation strategy and those that did were predominantly European. Arguably there is still a considerable distance to travel before the internationalisation of higher education can claim to be truly global in an equitable way.

Through our workshop design we hoped participants from all backgrounds felt sufficiently at ease to express themselves and to recognise the value of their input. Equally, we did not aim to impose outcomes and learning and teaching (L&T) designs through the project; rather, together we sought to create a library of ideas/design patterns which participants were free to adapt to their own contexts.

Further, we wanted to recognise the importance of internationalisation in curriculum design by surfacing the different threshold concepts that apply in different environments (for example, understanding how building regulations in different countries may affect the design of a building), and the value of being able to navigate local contexts and communication.

The framework

The framework consists of four stages: set-up, co-design, disseminate and prioritise. The following section describes the framework components, workshop designs and example activities at each stage. The framework builds on an array of research and approaches, as described in the previous section, which led to a diversity of approaches and activities.

Table 1 presents a summary of the four stages and key steps required for each stage.

Phase 1: Set-up   **Preparing the project**
Step 1, Agree key project team and reflect on context, aims, process of collaborating and timeline
Step 2, Form international group of participants/collaborators (staff, students, employers and/or industry perspective)
Step 3, Agree guiding principles for workshop design and develop workshops
Estimated time: • Planning and design meetings with core project team, 2-3 hours   • Designing the workshops, up to 4 hours   • Recruiting, communicating and co-ordinating workshops with participants, 2-3 hours

Phase 2: First learning design workshop Collaborative discovery and reflective change
Step 4, Provide staff and students with the opportunity to reflect on current module LD activities: • Hopes and fears for workshop • Appreciative inquiry, to identify challenges in the module, what is going well and potential enhancements • Scaffolded reflection about different educational dimensions of module such as live teaching sessions, assessment and feedback, use of virtual learning environment
Step 5, Provide students with the opportunity to share ideas separately from staff and anonymously, then come together to share with wider group
Step 6, Project team reviews workshop and decides focus of next workshop
Estimated time: • Run learning design workshop, 90 minutes • Debrief workshop 90 minutes • Prepare second learning design workshop, up to 4 hours
Phase 3: Second learning design workshop Co-design and proactive change
Step 7, Share ideas and visualise module design Provide LD activities for participants to: • Map out learning outcomes • Identify threshold concepts • Map out assessment and feedback • Design learning activities • Peer feedback on learning designs
Step 8, Carry out learning design activities which target areas of focus e.g. assessment or learning activities
Estimated time: • Run learning design workshop, 90 minutes
Phase 4: Debrief, disseminate and prioritise
Step 9, Amalgamate ideas, acknowledge areas that could be explored further, share a summary with all participants
Step 10, Provide flexibility for participants to incorporate changes taking into account their L&T and university context
Estimated time: • Collate and disseminate ideas gathered during the learning design workshop, up to 4 hours • Debrief project with core team, up to 2 hours

Table 1   The framework

Phase 1: Set-up: Preparing the project

The 'Set-up' stage starts with the core project members reflecting on their context, project aims and preferred approaches to collaborating online while creating a sustainable timeline (Step 1). Useful things to consider at this stage are whether your project will focus on a specific educational challenge which you have already identified and have evidence for, and/or whether you would like to create space for new ideas and challenges to be identified and reviewed. From an inclusivity perspective it is also important to make sure that the focus of the project is something which all participants can relate to.

Next, it is important to form your international group of participants and collaborators consisting of staff, students and (where possible) employers (Step 2). If it is difficult for staff to use existing connections, they could use conferences/ educational events to 'recruit' colleagues who teach similar subjects.

Lastly, the 'Set-up' stage should be used to create the workshop designs and agree the facilitation approach (Step 3). We believe that it is important that your personal and professional values, along with principles grounded in theory and research, influence your choices for the workshops. Given that the project is taking place online, it would be helpful to choose tools which have accessibility statements and test these yourself before the workshops. Also, prepare alternative ways for participants to engage with the activities during the workshop and communicate about these in advance.

Before completing the 'Set-up' stage, you could also share workshop activities in advance and support rapport building before meeting online, e.g. through a shared, asynchronous space online where they can share photos from their universities or short biographies/ introductions.

Phase 2: First learning design workshop: Collaborative discovery and reflective change

As part of Workshop 1, steps 4 and 5 of the framework include mainly the activities of the first learning design workshop, and Step 6 consists of reviewing participants' responses from the workshop to decide priorities for the second learning design workshop. The focus is to reflect on existing approaches to L&T that both staff and students have experienced. This is supported through semi-structured discussions using appreciative inquiry techniques (e.g. what works, what could be improved) and through using anonymous digital whiteboards.

Step 4 aims to provide staff and students with the opportunity to reflect on challenges, and potential enhancements. Before starting the activities, the facilitators demonstrate the digital tools being used. The first activity, which draws on design and student-staff partnership principles, creates space for all participants to anonymously share their 'hopes and fears' about taking part in the workshop. Its purpose is both to put participants at ease and give them a chance to try out the technology. The second activity provides the group with the opportunity to share what they most value in the current module/course, and what could be improved on. The last activity from Step 4 scaffolds participants' reflection in relation to suggested themes such as live teaching sessions, asynchronous learning, use of digital tools, assessment and feedback and communication. We found that some of the questions needed to be adapted slightly for staff and student contexts: for example, we asked students: 'What aspect of the assessment and feedback most supported you to learn and progress?', whereas we asked staff: 'What aspect of the assessment and feedback do you think most supported your students to learn and progress?'. Using different digital whiteboards for staff and students makes it possible to gather opinions anonymously and without factors such as power dynamics influencing participants' contributions. For this reason, Step 5 is really important and consists of providing students with the opportunity to share ideas separately, then come together to share with the wider group.

For the last step of Phase 2 (Step 6) the core project team reviews participants' answers and identifies patterns which could be further explored in the second workshop.

Phase 3: Second learning design workshop: Co-design and proactive change

As part of Workshop 2, Step 7 includes a sequence of learning design activities which all require the use of a digital whiteboard; this allows participants to collaborate and visualise their ideas. The initial focus is on mapping learning outcomes, followed by highlighting threshold concepts, which were explained to participants as 'bottlenecks', concepts or areas that are often challenging for students to engage with and learn.

We then asked participants (in Step 8) to ideate, discuss and, using a digital whiteboard, collaboratively gather ideas for assessment patterns and supporting activities that they felt could support the students' transition through the liminal space of uncertainty towards clarity. We shared an interactive timeline of the UK module with participants and asked them to work in groups to populate it with the ideas they felt could be most successful.

Phase 4: Debrief, disseminate and prioritise

This phase involves collating and carrying out a thematic analysis of all the answers gathered through the digital whiteboards (Step 9). The core project team produces a summary document which can be shared with participants, and each academic is encouraged to focus on the changes/ideas that best fit their educational context (steps 9 and 10). What is essential to this stage, is that there are no fixed, set conclusions or sets of required changes to be identified as overall; the key focus of the co-design project is to generate different ideas and approaches which can then be implemented and/or adapted by each member of staff to suit their own contexts.

Conclusion

This was an immensely rewarding and illuminating project and an approach we would recommend to anyone involved in LD.

In summary, the framework embodies principles from LD, co-design and internationalisation, including the importance of challenging hierarchies and the value of visual and collaborative representations of learning journeys and co-creation of learning activities with an international perspective.

The authors are hoping that, by acknowledging what influenced the design and implementation of the framework, readers will be confident to use and/or adapt our approach depending on their aims, and educational context. The authors welcome people getting in touch to discuss the framework and/or to share how they have used it or further developed it.

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Talking to White people about race: Conversations about structural advantage

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Introduction

Sheffield Hallam University is committed to race equality and is currently exploring issues of inclusivity, belonging, unconscious bias and differential student outcomes as strategic priorities. There is a need to discuss the impact of the structural advantages of Whiteness, but these topics are often difficult and uncomfortable to discuss. Our project aimed to start the conversation in a supportive and informed way and meaningfully address these issues. Colleagues within a large department, the Academy of Sport and Physical Activity, were supported through an intervention to raise their awareness of Whiteness, the insidious impact of White privilege on organisational infrastructure, and to share pedagogic insights to feed into ongoing institutional work about race equity and eliminating the ethnicity degree-awarding gap. After initial anti-racism development activities, we wanted to support colleagues to make a step change in their understanding of structural advantage and White privilege.

Three of us worked together to facilitate the work and research: one racialised as of African descent from the Caribbean and two racialised as White. We had distinct roles in the University: an educational developer, the head of department, and the deputy head of department. We all worked at Sheffield Hallam University during the time of this activity.

To support colleagues in moving beyond their degree of comfort and into a place for bringing about change (Austen and Jones-Devitt, 2018), we used the book *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race,* by Renni Eddo-Lodge (2017) as a stimulus material that would be a suitable level of challenge for a group of academics new to the topic.

We carefully considered the process of engagement, the expectations of participants, and we sensitively developed the questions that we asked about the experience of reading the book.

In this article we explain the process that we used, the main outcomes learnt, and our recommendations for educational developers working in a challenging area of change.

Methods

Institutional ethics approval was gained (ER17401018) and signed informed consent was obtained in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The participants provided written informed consent and were free to withdraw at any point. We built upon earlier work by colleagues which examined how to support challenging conversations about racism and critical Whiteness (Austen and Jones-Devitt, 2018).

Phase 1

At an all-staff workshop we brought in expert colleagues to deliver materials and activities about anti-racism. At the end of the session we explained the study objectives and invited colleagues to take a copy of *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*. 70 copies were made freely available for Academy of Sport and Physical Activity department staff members. Books could also be obtained after the session for colleagues who wanted time to think about participating or for those who could not be at the session.

On receipt of the book, each participant was asked to engage in the following:

1. Read the book within a 3-month timescale
2. Offer insights in response to an email request following the 3-month reading time frame (Figure 1)
3. Volunteer to take part in a workshop at the end of the 3-month period to discuss thoughts and potential actions
4. From the workshop discussions, identify the key actions for development and anti-racist action in the department.

Phase 2

Participants were sent an email prompt (Figure 1). The purpose of emailing the prompt was to function as a check-in and reminder for participants, to allow participants the opportunity to reflect on what they had read, and to proactively create a sense of psychological safety to enable engagement in conversations which often challenged their own embedded belief systems.

> We hope you have managed to read some or all of the book *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge. I have attached the letter and information sheet to this email for your reference.
>
> As part of the project we would now like to collect your initial thoughts about your pedagogic insights, or any insights that you wish to share, after reading the book. If you could email me by <date 2-3 weeks in advance of the workshop> as we will be using your anonymised and collated comments to inform the workshop. Your comments will be anonymised to ensure that they are not attributable to you in any way.
>
> I hope that you can attend on <date of workshop>, but your comments will be invaluable regardless. If there is sufficient interest, we will look to run another session for readers who are not able to come on <date of workshop). Let us know your thoughts.

Figure 1   Email template requesting insights prior to the workshop

We analysed the initial email responses using content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016) and shared the common themes as the basis of the workshop discussion.

Phase 3

A summary of the common themes from the email comments were shared with participants in the workshop as PowerPoint slides displayed on screen and presented with a full description by one of the facilitators. After presenting the themes, participants were asked to form small groups of up to 5 and given A3 sheets with the following questions (Figure 2) printed on them. A note taker was nominated who took notes onto the A3 sheets.

> Discussion Questions (in pairs/groups)
>
> - What do you think of the overall approach as a method for engaging with concepts of racism?
> - Do the thematic findings resonate with your thinking?
> - What additional insights can you share from your experience?
> - Why does it appear that taking direct and/or strategic action in this area is so hard?
> - What pedagogic insights or actions can we draw from our conversations today?
> - What do you think of additional pedagogic insights used within the wider sector (see example on table)? Would these work at this University? Are these relevant for this department?
> - If you could only choose one thing to take forward, what would it be?
> - Anything else you wish to add?

Figure 2 The questions discussed at the workshop

Content analysis was undertaken on the notes that had been scribed on the A3 sheets.

Outcomes

18 individuals, all racialised as White, took copies of the book and returned signed consent forms. Further individuals took the book but did not return consent forms and are therefore unknown. An additional two individuals withdrew from the study after taking books and took no further part in any activities.

All 18 consenting participants were then contacted to provide comments after three months. Seven participants returned email comments. Three participants indicated that they had not yet had a chance to read the book. Seven participants did not respond. One participant responded that they had read the book and would return comments but did not eventually return comments.

Content analysis of the emailed comments

The analysed comments were themed into four areas: discomfort and use of language, how to communicate about racism, the learning and understanding gained through reading the book, and taking action with a greater awareness and understanding of racism and structural advantage.

Discomfort and language:
- There was discomfort about the overall topic and the title of the book itself was described as divisive
- The use of 'language' was raised as a concern and feelings of being accused of being racist. Similarly worries about the use of 'BAME' and 'ethnic' as terms for people of colour
- The scale of the 'cultural problem' was often raised with concerns about other disadvantages and discrimination also being problems that should be dealt with. The scope and scale of the 'problem' was felt to be overwhelming
- There was heightened awareness of the need for positive use of inclusive language in the classroom.

Communication:
- The book could be used to start conversations with colleagues and/or friends
- There is a need to create safe spaces for students and staff to talk about racism.

Learning and understanding:
- A positive feeling of being more informed and having an increased understanding
- An increased understanding of institutional and structural racism
- A heightened awareness of the 'Whiteness' of background, experience, and privilege
- Scientific and numerical subjects were seen as challenging to take an anti-racist approach to
- Worries about perpetuating systemic disadvantage in the classroom
- A need for us to seek to understand the historical context of racism.

Taking action:
- There is a challenge with taking positive action due to fear or overwhelm
- There is a need for CPD about anti-racist practices.
- The department was beginning a curriculum redevelopment activity and many recognised that there was an opportunity to take an anti-racist approach to learning and teaching through curriculum redevelopment.

Outcomes of the workshop

The participants of the workshop thought that the approach was sound, with the leadership approach being viewed as a positive. Reading the book was difficult and challenging for most colleagues and further support for the reading process would have been welcomed, e.g. small group discussions on specific chapters, and reading groups to work through the book. As an exercise in change management, it was suggested that relevant change management principles and practices should be considered for future interventions to maximise impact and change over time.

The book title was felt to be somewhat provocative, and this created reaction and conversation. This was mainly positive, but others thought it might be a barrier and act as creating a micro-aggression in colleagues racialised as White.

Challenges with taking direct action in this area:
- There was a general concern about the scale and complexity of the problem. Requiring everyone to be open minded, curious, keen, and willing to learn and adapt practice
- Changes in staff culture are needed and colleagues need to be supported on a journey as anti-racist practitioners
- More support centrally is needed with colleagues feeling that this should be a top institutional priority. Anti-racism work was seen as not being prioritised enough at university level
- Colleagues wanted more time and space to talk about anti-racist learning and teaching approaches with less of a focus on metrics and more on the topic and talking about the topic. The data can fluctuate when students of colour numbers are low, and the issue still remains regardless of small numbers
- Colleagues would welcome more space and time to keep the conversation going.

Pedagogic insights or actions:
- The challenge of creating safe spaces in the classroom was discussed and seen as a specific CPD need
- Issues relating to formation of student groups for class-based, formative and summative tasks need careful consideration. Other issues of classroom management may need to be considered to avoid perpetuating biases and structural advantage
- Colleagues wanted more anti-racist elements in all curricula, and support in how to do this meaningfully
- Student demographics influence advantage or disadvantage in many ways, so colleagues wanted to develop compassionate pedagogical approaches. Ensuring that every student can bring something different to the classroom so we can all learn from each other
- Colleagues wanted to increase their skill and confidence in ensuring teaching is actively anti-racist
- It was recognised that academics often need more belief in the capability of our students. Awarding gaps are not representative of a student deficit.

Actions to be taken:
- Keep the conversations going
- A consistent programme learning outcome about equality and diversity in all courses will provide a good starting point

- The importance of resourcing this work with staff time, budgets, and CPD
- The need to share practice and celebrate success
- The need to learn from other universities who are making an impact in this area of work
- Provide staff with ideas of changes to make, from simple changes like inclusive images in presentations to more complex changes in inclusive learning design
- Develop vocabulary to challenge racism
- Implement anonymous marking where possible to avoid any structural advantages
- Question the background to science/knowledge and where the data/theory has come from (de-colonise the curriculum).

Conclusion

Using the book as stimulus material was effective in initiating conversations about race in a non-confrontational but direct way. The key outcome from this was that the conversation moved beyond awareness to the changing perceptions that were evidenced in some of the feedback and discussions already noted. Although participants committed to reading the book over a 3-month period, some colleagues read the material quickly, and others had not read all of the book during that time, or had only just finished reading the book before the workshop. This had a negligible impact on the learning/engagement because it emerged that finishing the book was not critical to the success of the intervention, and the primary aim of creating a space for conversation about challenging topics and participants was achieved as those who had read the book could fill in gaps for those who had not.

The key themes through the email comments were about talking and sharing in a supported way. Having time to talk and being supported through conversations was critical to moving forward with action in a confident way. The email comments had given participants an opportunity to share their thoughts relatively privately and the anonymised content analysis meant that they could see their experience of reading the book had been shared with others.

Based on our experience of this intervention, we provide the following recommendations to guide this work.

Recommendation 1: Provide alternative methods of engaging in the materials such as audio book versions, or use shorter versions (podcast, summary articles etc.) for an adapted approach for shorter timescales or where participants are less likely to engage in reading a whole book.

Recommendation 2: Use an email prompt for insights and comments prior to meeting to create a content analysis to feedback to all participants and form the basis of the conversation. Sharing common themes meant that initial conversations could be structured, and participants did not need to initiate the topics for discussion. It was a safe way to encourage participants to share and discuss.

Recommendation 3: Provide at least two opportunities to discuss the materials. One initial workshop to explore the materials together for the first time, and a second opportunity to revisit the materials. Two opportunities would allow for further thinking and reflection time to allow participants to

fully explore themes that they found most challenging.

Recommendation 4: Encourage participants to commit to their own response to the workshop question 'If you could take one thing forward, what would it be?', and revisit the personal commitments at a future session, giving support for action rather than checking adherence.

Recommendation 5: The convenors for the activities should be active and experienced anti-racist practitioners. They must be equipped to challenge while being sensitive. Facilitators may be of different ethnicities, but it should not be left only to people of colour to support colleagues racialised as White to learn about racism and structural advantage. The role of leaders racialised as White is as important as people of colour to lead discussions and facilitate spaces to ensure openness to challenge and change.

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A holistic approach to building a community of learners: Implementing and reflecting on shared responsibility and building meaningful relationships in the classroom

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Introduction

In 2021, following, and as a result of, the Covid-19 pandemic, many Year 3 undergraduate students needed to quickly acquire the skills to engage in on-campus experiences and to learn how to benefit from in-person learning with their peers. This case study contains a description and reflection on an attempt to act fast and provide such positive experience to those who had their first on-campus learning only as part of their third year. It details a holistic approach to speedily building a community of learners by sharing responsibility with students and letting go of power, as well as strengthening the potential of peer support and peer knowledge towards meaningful relationships. Independent of the pandemic context, the case study could prove useful when teams feel that a cohort is not coming together and hence is missing out on some academic and social experiences.

The case study demonstrates the impact of building a community to enhance the whole learning experience, resulting in improved student attendance and engagement within the classroom environment, and in marks that exceed expectations when compared to the previous year. Academic skills, as well as employability and life skills, were acquired and practised through the application of co-design and a deep commitment to active learning. Shifting power and responsibility to students, using co-design, peer review formative assessments and intensive group work were at the core of the approach. At the same time, quick and effective application of constructive and honest two-way feedback to assess the process and make adjustments supported both lecturer and students.

The text will describe the process and its encouraging results, and will then offer an honest reflection from the point of view of the lecturer. The case won the university's Excellence in Teaching Award in 2022.

Context

The 2021/2 Year 3 cohort has been part of the group most affected by pandemic-related turbulence across the higher education sector. Students expressed frustration with lost opportunities, missed on-campus interactions, and were prone to feeling disengaged despite significant efforts from the university and the team. On top of that, the module at the centre of this case, Global Health, had only one assessment, requiring students to submit a 4000-word essay. As a lecturer, I was particularly concerned that students may struggle with this requirement in the context of the pandemic and their academic skills.

At the same time, the content of the module and the diverse backgrounds of its students called for an inclusive approach to support the learning. The booked rooms, all fit for seminar work, allowed the consideration of ongoing and deep active learning.

The module had 11 teaching weeks, with four hours planned for each session.

Theoretical underpinning

The context of the pandemic was the main trigger to try and develop a toolbox to transform classes into mini-communities, and with that, achieve better attainment. However, the idea has its roots in theoretical and empirical social research over the past 60 years, and its fruits are likely to be evident in many other contexts.

From the early writings of Lev Vygotsky (1962) and the development of sociocultural theory, it is clear that one of the most effective ways to learn is through the establishment of communities of learners, where meaningful interactions take place, and learners are offered opportunities to discuss, collaborate and engage in two-way feedback. A more recent approach, 'Community of Inquiry' (Garrison *et al.*, 2010), calls for those communities to be arranged less around the lecturer/teacher, and more around the learners themselves. Combining the two places the focus on building meaningful relationships with the less authoritarian lecturer, alongside meaningful relationships amongst students, utilising the ongoing discussions, constant collaboration, and clear and useful feedback.

As part of the community-building paradigm, the approaches and methods chosen have all been thoroughly researched and are considered elements of the gold standard for education and learning: co-design/creating and other participatory approaches (Bovill and Bulley, 2011); active learning and especially its link with Community of Inquiry (Stover and Ziswiler, 2017); peer-review activities (Nicol *et al.*, 2014); and ongoing formative feedback (Irons and Elkington, 2022).

Aims, objectives and measurements / indicators

The assumption at the heart of the journey was that a sense of belonging to a community will result in better attendance and engagement, which, in turn, will lead to a quicker and smoother acquisition of skills, as well as to cooperation with formative assessments. The combination of skills and formative assessments was assumed as a path to better attainment.

Aim 1: To secure students' enjoyment and sense of belonging:

1.1) Attendance: at least 80% attendance for most of the sessions, evidencing students' desire to be part of the group

1.2) Engagement: at least 80% of students taking an active part in class and expressing themselves verbally or non-verbally through discussions and activities, recorded by the lecturer at the end of every session

1.3) From belonging to skills: at least 50% of the end of module evaluations mention key words that link community building practices with success/achievements or life/employability skills.

Aim 2: To secure high engagement in formative assessments:

2.1) At least 80% take part in both the first and second peer review exercises.

Aim 3: To secure the best attainment possible:

3.1) No fails

3.2) Module average similar or higher to the year before (with less developed academic skills, students will do well to achieve at least as high as the previous cohort)

3.3) Individual marks: students with attendance of 50% or more achieve within or above their average band in year 2.

The approach and the actions

All citations, below, are from the class, emails, and the end-of-module evaluation.

Sharing responsibility for success and enjoyment
Shared responsibility through co-design of the assessment – in Week 1 of the module, students were asked how they would like to use their 4000 words for the assessment. An exercise was designed to initiate and collect students' ideas. In Week 2, students made a collaborative decision about the assessment structure and design. Many stated that they feared the responsibility, and that 'there will be no one to complain to if we fail'. Later in the semester they expressed a sense of pride for planning their own assessment, and how the responsibility pushed them to work hard.

Shared responsibility through partial co-design of the curriculum – after Week 5, when most of the core subjects had been covered, students had an opportunity to decide on two extra subjects to be taught. The discussion was vibrant, and they chose two that were close to their heart: Global Health and Nutrition, and Global Health and Women. Both sessions had 90% attendance and 100% rate of engagement.

Shared responsibility for change through collecting and acting on weekly feedback – at the end of each session, from week one, students were invited to express their thoughts about the session in an anonymous form. With time, they learned that their feedback was addressed promptly to make adjustments for the following week. As time went by, the level of openness and honesty increased, with students expressing themselves freely and with less inhibition. Following students' feedback, changes were brought in to the length of activities, the form of group work, the provision of materials before the sessions, and the timing and length of breaks and more.

Shared responsibility for creating a sense of community outside the class through weekly email correspondence between sessions – after every session, the lecturer sent an email to students with a very short recap, and reminders of the best moments of the class, emphasising the funny, the unusual, and the humane, and adding words of encouragement and empowerment. Many chose to answer those emails with their own memories and gratitude:

> *'Because your emails are always filled with words of encouragement and support, even after the semester is over, I still check my inbox to see if you sent any emails.'*

Building meaningful relationships with other students
Ongoing commitment to active learning and group work – every session, from Week 1, included very little passive learning, which was dedicated to setting the scene and to offer context and background. Between 60-80% of the time was planned around group work, group presentations/posters,

group problem solving and group discussions. The PowerPoint presentations from the module show an average of 20 teaching slides for a four-hour session, including those that explain exercises, demonstrating how much time was dedicated to students working on their own in comparison to passive learning:

> 'I realised that I learn more when you give us things to do rather than standing in front of the class and lecturing.'

Peer-review as the main formative tool on two separate occasions – as preparation for the assessment, students were asked in advance to bring their essay plan to the class for Week 8, to give and receive peer-feedback using predesigned forms. Following that, they were asked to reflect on the feedback they have received, and fill in a form with the issues that needed to be addressed. The lecturer did not provide any feedback on the work itself, only on the reflection and action plan, in a way that prompted respect for peers' feedback and the shared responsibility for the potential success.

In Week 10, students could bring two pages of a more detailed version of the essay plan, and present it on a classroom table. Throughout the 4-hour session, students went between all the works, giving structured feedback using predesigned forms, and learning about the different case studies that students critically analysed. At the same time, the lecturer gave individual feedback and announced it when a student did especially well, so others could approach the student and learn from them.

Interestingly, the students finished their own rounds after two hours and had been offered to leave if they had already received the individual feedback. Surprisingly, none wanted to leave, stating they enjoyed each other's company and wanted to stay and chat:

> 'The peer-feedback felt empowering and helpful. I never felt left out and writing the essay was not daunting.'

Shared planning and delivery of the end-of-module Global Health party – In Week 1, the lecturer stated that the last session would be a Global health party, to celebrate the 15 cultures and traditions we all came from, in a class of 22 students. The shared project accompanied the module and was a moving display of friendship, respect and joy, with students dancing, singing, sharing artefacts and food and explaining how they related to health and wellbeing:

> 'Thank you for the party, I've never thought I will dance and sing in class to finish a module, and I loved learning about my friends' backgrounds through their objects and dishes.'

Results and their links with the objectives and indicators

1.1) Attendance in class in percentages: objective achieved with 55% of sessions above 80% attendance, when students were still required to self-isolate in many cases (Table 1).

Attendance rate	Percentage of sessions
70%	45%
80%	25%
90%	30%

Table 1   Attendance in class

1.2) Recorded engagement in class: objective achieved – lecturer's records show that all sessions had between 90% and 100% engagement. Over 11 weeks the engagement dropped from 100% to 95% in only 3 sessions.

1.3) End-of-module-evaluation mentioning of recognised links between the module's design and success/skills: objective achieved, with 70% of forms identifying those links. Note that students did not know their marks/achievements when completing the form.

For example:

> 'Peer feedback was brilliant and gave me ideas on how to enhance my work'; 'The feedback received for essays was also highly beneficial and made me feel so much more confident with my work'; 'The methodology/teaching approach is exceptionally good, it pushes students to interact, the best way to learn'; 'Even the shyest student like me participated in critical discussion'; 'I loved the emails, they were a constant reminder to be on top of my work.'

2.1) Attendance in peer-review exercises: objectives achieved, with 80% for the first exercise and 90% for the second. Most absences were Covid related, according to students' emails.

3.1) Cohort marks – No fails: objective achieved.

3.2) Cohort marks: objective achieved, average of 55, 2 points higher than the year before.

3.3) Individual marks within or higher than expected band, based on year 2 marks: objective achieved. 14% achieved a mark that was three bands higher than their Year 2 average; 18% achieved a mark that was two bands higher than their Year 2 average; 23% achieved a mark that was one band higher than their Year 2 average.

The students who achieved beyond expectations had a combined attendance rate of 85%, which was much higher that those who did not (63%), suggesting that the class experience was at least partly attributable to the improvements implemented in this module. No student received a mark that was lower than their Year 2 average.

Reflections on the process and results

As a lecturer, the process was satisfying and rewarding, seeing results from one week to the next. Students grew in confidence and in expressed closeness to each other, whilst their work improved and the active learning in class was smoother and more enjoyable, the more students knew what to expect.

Surprisingly, the act of letting go of power and shifting responsibility and authority to students proved to require much mental and emotional effort. As students were not used to making so many decisions and taking so much responsibility for their learning and relationships in the class, the process required many explanations and preparation, as well as managing the dynamic in the class. Learning to trust the students meant facing the unknown and uncertain, which took a lot of mental energy. While having to prepare fewer slides seemed to be less work on the teaching front, preparing active learning was more demanding altogether, and the time invested in total was far greater than in other, more

conservative, ways of teaching.

It is also worth mentioning that the level of investment could not be stretched over more than one module in a semester, in my opinion. The mental demands are great, not just for the lecturer but also for the students, and they might struggle if requested to demonstrate the same level of commitment and investment across a number of modules simultaneously. Teams who might consider the approach should take into account the resources of the team as a whole and those of students.

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The English Academic Professional Apprenticeship: How it started…how it's going

Elizabeth Cleaver, Independent HE Consultant

I was recently asked by a client if it was worth implementing the Academic Professional Apprenticeship (APA). While I had some personal and anecdotal evidence to hand, I thought that five years since its approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships (as it was known then, now IfATE), it was timely to go out to colleagues in the English sector to ask, 'how is it going?' So, I put a multiple-choice questionnaire to the members of two Jiscmail lists (the Heads of Educational Development Group (HEDG) Forum and the HEA Principal Fellows Forum):

After a few years of development and operation of the Academic Professional Apprenticeship, I am wondering how many English institutions:

A) Developed and continue to deliver the APA successfully

B) Developed the APA but are thinking about stopping

C) Started to deliver the APA but stopped delivery

D) Decided not to deliver the APA in the first place.

Please respond to me directly answering A, B, C or D (or maybe there is an E?) with any explanations you can add.

What follows are my own personal reflections on the APA – now and then – augmented by the helpful information offered by colleagues who kindly responded to my request. I'm asking for your indulgence as I invert the usual meme – and begin with 'how it's going'. We'll come to 'how it started' a little later. It's also important to note that at the time of writing, the APA Occupational Standard is currently undergoing revisions and adjustments 'to make it more workable' (in the words of one of the respondents). Any future developments will therefore be subject to changes agreed by the Trailblazer Group (made up of higher education

representatives) and IfATE as part of this process.

So 'how's it going' out there in the English sector?

In response to my information request I received 29 responses, which broadly group as shown in Table 1.

	Pre-92	Post-92	New uni
A - Developed and continue to deliver	1	3	1
B - Developed but thinking of stopping	1		
C - Started to deliver but stopped	1	5	2
D - Decided not to deliver in first place (or have paused for thought…)	4	5	6

Table 1   Questionnaire results

It's important to note that the sample is self-selecting and, due to relatively low numbers, clearly can't reflect the experiences of all institutions in the English sector. However, the responses I received certainly provide us with useful insights on progress to date, and challenges encountered along the way. Here are a few of the key messages from respondents, some of which may resonate closely with your own experiences and circumstances.

The journey is still just starting

Those who were successfully offering the APA (Group A) noted factors such as the fact that the Trailblazer group was currently revising the Occupational Standard, the achievement of a first full good Ofsted Inspection, and 120 apprenticeship successes as a positive milestone along the APA's journey. Interestingly, a

number of those who self-identified with Group D also noted the emergent nature of the APA. A common message here was a decision to 'wait and see' how things panned out, before deciding next steps.

Too costly and burdensome?

The APA was noted by colleagues in Group C and D to add significantly to the admin and workload needed to promote and run existing Level 7 PG Certs in Higher Education Learning and Teaching (hereafter PG Certs). This included:

- Impractical year-long logging work needed to remain compliant with funding rules
- Additional staff time (both for tutors and apprentices) needed to engage with the expectations of at least 20% off-the-job training time
- The need for two parallel courses (apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship funded) due to the strict eligibility requirements for apprenticeship registrations
- The need to continue to provide a recognised PG Cert academic award (which has established sectoral value) for those registered on the APA even though this award cannot be formally integrated. This can lead to over-assessment and additional work for everyone
- The need to run the course over 18 months, when many PG Certs are just one year.

This bureaucratic burden is certainly something that has been noted more broadly in relation to degree apprenticeships when compared with traditional degrees (WonkHE blog, May 2022), and many of the points raised above are on the radar of both the Department for Education and IfATE.

Colleagues additionally cited issues such as large proportions of ineligible international staff and/or the requirement for staff to produce evidence of a Level 2 pass in Maths and English as factors that made the APA unfeasible in their settings. Further, the need to assess everyone for prior learning (as the apprenticeship model only allows for the funding of 'new' learning) is not only costly but also leads to income from the levy being smaller than projected.

No real appetite?

A number of the largest group of respondents (Group D – not delivering) identified that there was no real appetite for another qualification for academics in their institutions. Ultimately, Advance HE Fellowship Schemes and/or PG Certs were deemed to be good enough. Why develop an externally configured and controlled qualification such as the APA when degree-awarding powers/AHE accreditation offer each institution opportunities to locally configure and validate a set of recognised and less bureaucratic awards?

So where does this leave us?

Given the numbers who reported they are not/no longer delivering the APA are significantly larger than those who continue to do so, I thought it was worth a few personal reflections on why this might be the case. Importantly, these go beyond the simple explanation of bureaucratic burden. I'll be interested to hear your views. Maybe I have ignored, underplayed or over-egged some of the big issues for you? Maybe it's simply too soon to come to any firm conclusions about success or otherwise? Any conversations that we generate now have the potential to be both timely and useful

as the Trailblazer Group continues to work on the review and revision of the APA occupational standard.

'How it started': Some recollections and thoughts on the evolution of the APA

I was involved in the latter stages of the original English Higher Education Trailblazer Group working on the first iteration of the Academic Professional Apprenticeship (APA) Occupational Standard (Level 7) published in 2018. My overriding memory of that time is that it took an inordinate amount of toing and froing with IfATE, or the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) as it was known then, to agree the 'standard' and associated fee band. Sadly, we were not able or willing to align enough as a sector to integrate existing PG Certs into the Occupational Standard and its assessment plan. Why was this? Put simply, we couldn't agree or prove as a sector that the PG Cert was a mandatory requirement (the 'hard sift' rule) for any individual who wished to teach in higher education. This is not only a reflection of the very varied nature of our sector but, if I am honest, also a reflection of a very commonly held cultural belief (across mission groups) that in contrast to school teaching, the teaching element of the academic role does not, and should not, require a formal qualification. More on this later.

Add to this the fact that the politics and landscape of the sector at the time (including the separate development of a Researcher Concordat and a range of other specialist disciplinary and professional accreditations) meant that the complexity of the early career academic role was extremely difficult to capture. This, arguably, resulted in an occupational standard that for many was too long and complicated, yet paradoxically was also too generic and unrelated to the needs of specific settings.

Without an 'integrated degree' element, the APA introduced a new unknown and untested 'qualification' to an already complex and busy early career arena, where a common qualification was already deemed by many as unnecessary. Further, as a higher apprenticeship (without degree integration) we weren't able to assess it internally but needed to appoint an independent End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) to undertake this work. This not only sat uncomfortably with universities (as awarding bodies) but added an additional delivery cost.

Given this, it seems odd that we pursued this in the English sector, doesn't it? The most straightforward answer to this question is that a number of higher education institutions are subject to the Apprenticeship Levy (0.5% of annual pay bills of large employers with pay bills of over £3 million). For many, it was viewed as a way to 'claim back' this levy payment; not to do so would mean institutions defaulted to paying twice by paying the levy *and* paying for staff development eligible for levy funding. Of course, there were many other (internal) reasons why individual institutions adopted the APA – not least the ongoing challenge of academic development being a non-income-generating part of a university and a top-slice 'cost' to faculties, colleges and schools. As I discussed in a SEDA blog (May 2022) this is one of the many reasons why centres for learning and teaching can be precarious places to work. The APA offered the siren call of an independent income and concomitant financial security.

A 'heutagogical' hurdle?

So, let's return to my point above – the belief held by many that the teaching element of the academic role does not, and should not, require a formal qualification. Here I think it's worth reflecting briefly on what I believe is the heutagogical challenge at the very heart of this problem.

What did you say?

If you are anything like me, you'll constantly have to look up terms like heutagogy. It's not something that can be found in a mainstream dictionary, and however much I read the definition, it seems to elude me when I need it most. In brief, heutagogy is a relative newcomer to the lexicon of learning and teaching (what is it with these Greek words?). It's a noun that was coined some 20 years ago (Trove, 2001) and is often associated with the study of learners at the highest stages of learning who have moved beyond self-directed learning, to become self-determined learners able to decide *what* to learn, but *when* to learn and *how best* to learn.

Our heutagogical HE culture

Given the numerous qualifications held by our academic teaching colleagues, it's probably unsurprising that many already (some consciously, some subconsciously) see themselves as having reached a heutagogical level of learning. And many of them have…more on that later.

It's probably also important to note the broader heutagogical working cultures within which this professional learning sits. Academic colleagues sit in a pretty unique position in the UK workforce with many having opportunities to apply for promotion on a rolling basis, not based on a role vacancy at a higher job level. However, clearly this is not a given. To ensure the promotional criteria are met, the individualistic endeavour of academia expects colleagues to self-direct and self-determine their career trajectory and associated professional development to build towards personalised career success. In many instances this involves 'learning' and extending knowledge and understanding through the processes of disciplinary or practice-based enquiry, research, dissemination and peer review.

Now, if I had had a hot dinner for every time an academic or an academic leader told me that academics in each subject area themselves were best placed to decide how best to teach their own disciplines, I'd be rather well fed! I still vividly remember one particular meeting with a head of department, called because an early career colleague had failed to engage with the PG Cert. The head of department was clear that research was the only reason for promotion, the colleague in question was quite capable of teaching their subject, and as such everything else was a waste of time. Of course, what was missing from this argument is a recognition that this is never solely about the academic and their promotional journey. Good student experiences and successful student learning journeys are key goals and priorities too. And to meet these, we need to think carefully not just about what we teach but also *how* we teach it and how we foster and support our students' learning.

I know I am preaching to the converted here – many SEDA readers already recognise that becoming expert in the content of our teaching *and* the process of our teaching can require quite different literacies and skills. Arguably, reaching a heutagogical level of learning in both may require significant changes in our highest levels of learning (our ways of understanding, discovering, knowing, thinking and doing) and a whole different set of theories and literatures (Cleaver *et al.*, 2018). Yes, there are some important contextual markers and norms that must be considered (what we often term disciplinary pedagogies), and there are many skills that are transferable between disciplinary expertise and disciplinary pedagogies. Equally, there are many that are not. It often seems odd to me that in an academic world that increasingly reveres the benefits of interdisciplinary and interprofessional learning and understanding to solve 'real world complex problems', we are often unable or unwilling to take this approach to address our own learning and teaching problems and practices.

Some lessons from the past, for the future

So, we are back to our starting point – my reflections on the success or otherwise of the APA. I fully recognise that we are still in the early stages of developing and implementing this new qualification; it's taken over two decades for PG Certs in HE Learning and Teaching and Advance HE Fellowship Schemes to establish in many institutions following the recommendations of the Dearing Report (1997). And 25 years on, many of these established qualifications and schemes still live a precarious existence, have come and gone or, in some institutions, never managed to establish in the first place. Which helps to explain our 'hard sift' problem.

I really wish the Trailblazer Group well. We have learned a lot since the first Occupational Standard was developed, and I am certain that anything that emerges will enhance and improve on what has gone before. I also genuinely believe that the IfATE and the Department for Education work currently under way will try to reduce some of the current bureaucratic burden. But I feel that neither of these will address the elephant in the room. Until we can agree as a sector that some form of teaching development and/or qualification is important and necessary for *all* who teach and support the learning of our students, then our heutagogical culture will continue to work against us. In such a context, the take-up and development of these qualifications (whether the PG Cert and/or the APA) will remain a nice-to-have, rather than a prerequisite for academic *and* for student success.

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Elizabeth Cleaver (ecleaver.co.uk) is an independent HE consultant at Elizabeth Cleaver Consulting.

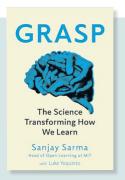# Grasp: The Science Transforming How We Learn

by Sanjay Sarma and Luke Yoquinto
Paperback
321 pages
Robinson, 2020
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ISBN-13: 978-1472139115

During COVID, Bob Dylan released, in the same year as this book, a single: 'Murder Most Foul'. An epic song of five verses and running out at 16 minutes and 56 seconds (so long that the resultant album was spread over two compact discs) with 172 lines of lyrics. It is a *tour de force*, working songs titles, lyrics and politics into the story of the assassination of JFK.

I reference it here as this book is also a *tour de force* of information about teaching, learning, cognition and memory. It is paperback sized and runs to 262 pages of text, over 100,000 words (which gives an idea of the font size, also there are no images, except for the clever brain made of hands on the cover). There are a further 37 pages of footnotes. Like the Dylan song, it is densely packed with material, yet again like the song is strangely compelling.

The first section of the book (pp.1-140) takes the reader on a journey through a range of educational theories, summarising each and considering their application. The narrative starts with the polarising debate between 'effort' and 'interest' and moves on to Dewey *vs*. Thorndike (satisfying and discomforting effect), through behaviorism (the author works at M.I.T.), cognitivism and constructivism via inert knowledge, theory and many other topics including a fascinating insight into the neuroscience of dyslexia. The chapter titles are revealing: (i) layer one: the learning divide, (ii) layer two: slugs cells and school bells, (iii) layer three: revolution, and finally (iv) layer four: thinking about thinking. Sarma notes about 'a lifelong relationship with learning', that 'two systems-level research threads hold particular promise. One has to do with the physical architecture of memory storage in the brain. The other concerns how fundamental motivating drive, such as curiosity, intersect with those stored memories' (p. 60).

The second section (pp. 141-217), entitled 'Mind and hand', 'gather[s] up of our abstract scientific knowledge and put[s] it to work in the real world'. As with the first part there is an historical review; this covers monitorial education (as opposed to a classroom-based and age-banded one), which is quite fascinating. Sarma notes of the current system which moves pupils in age groups, 'that we are unable to say how they might fare if they moved at a more optimal pace' (p. 167) *i.e.* in a system of mastery learning.

The depth and detail of this book are both its strong point and an issue. It is not an entry-level book for educators, it is rather a revisit, refresh and reconsider stimulus for people who have been teaching for a few years. As such, aspects of it would resonate with most academic developers, and also then challenge further practice development.

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SEDA News

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