Teaching and learning pedagogies to enhance practice in Higher Education: a practitioner's perspective

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Abstract

The overall aim of the presented work is the enhancement of the student experience through creating conditions where excellent learning can occur both individually and through working in communities of practice. There was a mixed method approach taken within the studies, with a bias towards a more qualitative slant. Each study had an action research focus through the use of small scale case studies of teaching and learning in practice. A criticism of qualitative research and particularly case studies, is in relation to generalisation of the findings. However, case studies in teaching and learning are context specific and explore the activity as it happens and therefore can contribute to the broader picture, through examples but they cannot provide incontrovertible best practice.

The work presents two research objectives, the first being an exploration of the ways in which teaching and learning interventions can create conditions to support excellent learning. Within the studies presented in this thesis, the following are key headlines. PDP was found to be a positive addition to the curriculum in particular the activities of goal-setting and reflection. The intensive and bespoke transition programme delivered to the new students facilitated and enhanced student engagement. The module re-design which focused on authentic assessment, engagement, real-world learning and employability enhanced the student skill set. In addition to interventions to support students, the thesis also contains staff development activity. The two articles based on peer review found that, knowing and developing teacher immediacy plays a part in teacher development and can help

create better connections with students. Although different each of the articles presents examples which others might find useful in enhancing practice.

The second research objective considered how communities of practice for staff and students can support the conditions to enable excellent and purposeful teaching and learning. One of the articles focuses on an organisation set up to support teaching in higher education. It found that a support network can enhance knowledge and experiences and that a community of practice is one way of creating and maintaining groups of staff interested in teaching and learning. The articles on peer review show that this also has value at a more local level where teaching staff felt that by working together they had developed their individual approaches. This did not work for all staff and the study showed that this type of approach to staff development is very personal. Trust, honesty and commitment came out as important factors, which need to be fostered in a community of practice. For the students, working in peer learning groups (PLGs), connecting with each other very early on in their programme and sharing metaphors was found to have value. Learning in a university has been shown to be an isolating experience and working together has merits for both staff and students.

This thesis has been based on small scale case studies and has evidenced developments at a local level, which I contend is the only way to change and develop practice. However, from a knowledge and generalisation perspective my research now needs to broaden, to determine cultural and subject differences, as this will make the evidence more compelling across the sector. Two specific areas from this study that would benefit from further research are, PLG groups in different subject

contexts and staff working in communities of practice to support teaching and learning.

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1 Introduction and rationale

Striving to support people to learn in universities is not a new concept (Report to the European Commission, 2013) but recent imperatives have brought the issue to the fore as never before. Indeed, with the onset of the 2012 fee regime, universities are focusing even harder on ensuring that excellent teaching and learning is experienced in Higher Education. This is, however, not just the responsibility of the staff who deliver the programmes; it needs to be a dialogic process in which staff and students engage, interact and develop by collaborating and working together (Brown, 2012).

Each year, two and a half-million students (HESA, 2011) are taught in Universities across the UK. Each of these individuals has chosen their subject and their university, and enters with strong expectations for their future. Chickering and Gamson (1987) offered seven principles of good practice in undergraduate education which are still accepted as relevant today (Gibbs, 2012). These include contact between staff and students, active learning experiences, students working together and high expectations. This document explores various approaches I have taken through evidence-based practice to create the conditions for learning to occur in the ways Chickering and Gamson suggest for both the students and staff.

Teaching in higher education (HE) has many parallels with my initial career in the sports management industry, where I strove for excellence in the service I offered to customers. Continuous self-development and improvement has always been one of my core values and when I became an academic, this transferred into a focus on

creating the conditions where students could flourish and achieve their potential. A 2013 report to the European commission commenting on Higher Education notes:

> "*The ambition to greatly increase the numbers who enter and complete higher education only makes sense if it is accompanied by a visible determination to ensure that the teaching and learning experienced in higher education is the best it can possibly be*" (Report to the European Commission, 2013:12).

This ideology resonates with me, and the idea of delivering the best experience for all is the basis on which the work presented here has been designed and delivered. In my opinion, the student experience is only as good as the staff delivering it, and how the teacher views teaching is a key aspect of how students perceive and understand their course (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). This linking document draws together my published work in the pedagogy of HE and demonstrates how my interventions and approaches have enhanced the student experience and informed the wider field of practice. My research is based at the level of the intervention and falls into the category of case study research and within this I have taken an action research stance with a qualitative bias. I am a practitioner-researcher, my overall aim is to change practice, explore what this means for the participants concerned and then disseminate the main ideas to hopefully impact on a wider scale. Small scale qualitative research has its critics (Atieno, 2009), however, teaching and learning takes place at a local level and therefore this is the only place where meaningful data can be gathered. From this the key ideas can be disseminated, they may not be able to be replicated but certainly they can support others in developing practice.

As part of the largest ever funding initiative for teaching and learning in the UK, HEFCE in 2005 launched 74 Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) (HEFCE, 2011), one of which was based at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU). The LJMU CETL was the only subject-specific CETL focusing solely on Physical Education, Sport and Dance and was entitled, 'Learning to Lead: Leading to Learn' with the main emphasis being on developing leadership and employability skills. I was fortunate to be offered the role as one of two CETL leaders, and six of the seven articles, presented here, disseminate the developments in teaching and learning brought about through the LJMU CETL under my leadership.

Findlow (2008) proposes that innovative developments in teaching and learning have been growing rapidly in HE, but what is more uncommon and difficult to achieve is sustained improvement and systemic change across programmes, faculties and institutions (Treleaven, Sykes & Ormiston, 2012). In 2006, eighteen months into the CETL initiative, Gosling and Hannan (2007) reported that they had made little difference in institutional behaviour and at the end of the programme the legacy was found to rest with individual staff and institutions who embedded CETL developments, rather than the sector in general (HEFCE, 2011). My experiences at LJMU align with this view and I demonstrate through my work that there has been a legacy from the LJMU CETL which continues to impact on the student experience. In my opinion, staff and student communities of practice, are important in creating conditions for excellent learning to occur.

I learnt very early on during CETL that there is only so much you can do on your own, and if change initiatives are to be sustainable, staff need to commit to interventions and be prepared to change practice. This in itself is not an easy task and the key success factors I have found are perseverance, enthusiasm and a commitment to the outcome. Gibbs (2012) notes that departmental leadership of teaching makes a difference and teachers should talk about teaching and create a community of practice with shared values and approaches. Part of my contention is that the originality of my work lies in my ability to create conditions for both staff and students to form communities of practice and then to support these to foster their sustainability.

Reflecting on my early academic career, I routinely co-published as I learned the craft of writing for publication. As I built expertise and confidence, I have been writing independently, at the same time continuing to co-publish, particularly with less experienced authors, in order to help them develop in the same way that working with more experienced colleagues helped me. This document will demonstrate the originality, breadth and value of my contribution to the advancement of pedagogy in higher education. The Teaching and Learning Research Programme (2009) contest that work is significant and original when, a novel approach has been taken; it has ideas that are likely to stimulate interest and it has contributed to both research and practice. The articles that make up this thesis include all these areas, novelty will be demonstrated with the use of metaphors, a five week transition programme, students working in PLGs and the staff focus on teacher immediacy. The ideas developed through my work have stimulated interest across the Faculty, the University and

beyond and the work has impacted both in relation to research and its more practical implementation (Appendix 1 evidences this further).

The overall aim of the work presented here is ultimately the enhancement of the student experience through creating conditions where excellent learning can occur. The articles are a synthesis of approaches with different foci, which include discipline-based teaching and more educational focused development work. To demonstrate my contribution to the field, I am submitting seven peer reviewed research papers which are listed in Table 1. The articles are ordered and numbered in relation to the themes of the thesis. Details of the relative contribution by each author of joint publications can be found in Appendix 1, along with a summary of the key points in relation to the papers, the impact of the work and further dissemination that has taken place.

Table1: Refereed articles

Article number	**Reference**
1.	Nixon, S. (2013). Personal Development Planning; an evaluation of student perceptions. *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education,* 8(3), 203-216.
2.	Nixon, S. (2013). Using metaphors to aid student meta-learning: when you're learning at your best you're like what? *Creative Education*, 4(7A2), 33-36.
3.	Vinson, D., Nixon, S., Walsh, B., Walker, C., Mitchell, E. & Zaitseva, E. (2010). Investigating the relationship between student engagement and transition. *Active Learning in Higher Education*. 11(2), 131-143.
4.	Nixon, S. & Williams, L. (2013). Increasing student engagement through curriculum re-design: deconstructing the 'Apprentice' style of delivery. *Innovations in Teaching and Education International.* 51(1),

	26-33.
5.	Nixon, S., Vickerman, P. & Maynard, C. (2010). Teacher immediacy: reflections on a peer review of teaching scheme. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 34(4), 491-502.
6.	Nixon, S., Maynard, C. & Vickerman, P. (2012). Tired of teaching observations? A case study of one approach with a focus on communication and collaboration. *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.* 4(2), 84.1 – 84.17.
7.	Nixon, S. & Brown, S. (2013). A community of practice in action: SEDA as a learning community for educational developers in higher education. *Innovations in Teaching and Education International.* 50(4), 357-365.

2. Research Objectives

The research enquiry was practice-led, aiming to explore ideas about creating conditions for staff and students to be able to work at their best within higher education. Key elements include curriculum design; development of the individual and working and learning from each other in communities of practice. These interact, bringing together my thinking about the optimum conditions for learning and development in which students and staff can thrive and achieve their potential. These ideas derive from my subject specialism of sport where it is normal to work with individuals to maximise their personal achievements through goal-setting and continuous review.

The work presented here has two overall research objectives:

RO1: To explore ways in which teaching and learning interventions can create conditions to support excellent learning.

Articles 1-6 focus on curriculum and staff development interventions that were designed, implemented and evaluated to create environments where excellent learning could happen.

RO2: To consider how communities of practice for staff and students can support the conditions to enable excellent and purposeful teaching and learning.

Article 7 explicitly addresses communities of practice and this paper was written fairly late in the process of demonstrating the achievement of my PhD by publication outcomes as a capstone to illustrate my thinking. The ideas are also found implicitly in most of the other articles and underpin the inherent thinking within articles 1, 3, 5 and 6 and to some extent 2 and 4.

3. Methodology

The research approach of my portfolio of publications is diverse, as each study answered its own specific research question. A practitioner focused approach was taken through small scale case studies of teaching and learning in practice. Following my own passions and research interests, I have published outputs directly related to my day-to-day work and the practices and initiatives I was undertaking. However, I argue that because the research stemmed from my own work and from my interests, coherence emerged organically from the work. The methodology for each article will not be discussed in any depth here (these can all be found in the papers) and an overview and critique of the methods is offered in Table 1 (page 14). The focus of this section is the overarching ideology that has guided my approaches which will demonstrate the rationale behind my thinking.

The approach taken within the studies was mixed-method, with a bias towards the more qualitative slant. In an article on organisational change Garcia and Gluesing (2013) argue that qualitative research methods provide an ideal approach to understanding new contexts, how practices, structures and cultures evolve and how organisations design and implement changes to meet new challenges. Although this work is set in a teaching and learning context, fundamentally it is about change and therefore this approach would seem to be appropriate in relation to Garcia and Gluesing's (2013) ideas.

Teacher-led pedagogic research is an essential element in the scholarship of teaching (Kreber, 2013) which can support facilitating change and developing

practice (Robson, 2002). The research in this case is practitioner research which evolves from three main principles: learning from experience, cycles of reflection and action and self-directed learning (Yorks, 2005).

> "…*as committed adult learners, practitioners can contribute to a body of actionable knowledge while simultaneously building their own capacity for performance in their particular practice setting*" (Yorks, 2005:1220).

The articles in this thesis are small scale case studies and demonstrate in some way all of these elements with the overall intention to study the activity and perceptions with both an enhancement and dissemination lens (Elliott, 2007). The advantage of this type of research is that because the practitioner is inside the organisation they have a greater insight into it and can use new knowledge effectively within the networks (Coghlan, 2003). However, this in itself may cause difficulties and can counteract a critical and analytical perspective (Nielsen & Repstad, 1993), as the researcher can be too closely connected to the initiative being explored. To attempt to minimise these potential issues, a group approach was taken to many of the initiatives presented in the publications and where possible somebody external from the group was used to gather the data.

One criticism of qualitative research and particularly case studies is in relation to generalisation of the findings. However, Cronback (1975) argues that social phenomena are too context-specific to permit generalizability and it may not be meaningful when the study is on a particular situation and where the findings are to "contribute to the broader picture by filling a 'hole' in the whole" (Larsson, 2009:28). Stake (1994) suggests that where the situation in the case study is of interest no attempt needs to be made to generalize or build theories. This line of reasoning

assumes significance of the work which may be difficult to argue when the work is at a local level as in this case.

Flyvbjerg (2006) explores misunderstandings about case study research and suggests that this type of research is essential in understanding certain phenomena.

> *"a discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and that a discipline without exemplars is an ineffective one"* (Kuhn 1987:8).

Case studies in teaching and learning are context specific and explore the activity as it happens. This is the only place that curriculum intervention and re-design can be measured to provide examples and ideas for others, which as Kuhn (1987) suggests is important for developing knowledge. Flyvbjery (2006) argues that the force of the example is underestimated and that good case studies can produce concrete context-dependant knowledge which has its place in exploring practice.

When exploring different researcher angles, Allwright (2005:357) suggests that practitioner research means "We research our practice (to be compared with the academic researchers research your teaching and with the action researchers research my teaching)". However, I argue here that practitioner and action research can be used together in essence to research our practice and our teaching. To me these two ideas enable an exploration of the planning and design elements of learning and the specific elements in relation to the student experience. Knowing what stance you are taking is crucial to the design of both the activity and the research, but this should not necessarily be constrained by trying to fit it to one approach or another.

Whilst being practitioner-based, the work also has an action research focus, as it is grounded in the local values and culture and therefore offers flexibility to local agencies and situations (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). Action research has no single definition (Hammond, 2013) however Corey (1949:519) suggests:

> "*In a program of action research, it is impossible to know definitely in advance the exact nature of the enquiry that will develop. If initial designs, important as they are for action research, are treated with too much respect, the investigators may not be sufficiently sensitive to their developing irrelevance to the ongoing situation*".

This purpose of the action is as important to me as the action itself, which is a key element of action research (Hammond, 2013), with the fundamental idea in all of the studies being about improvement and enhancement. The approach has been iterative and dynamic; I have developed initiatives, reflected on the outcomes and then purposefully decided to change practice in light of the findings.

Action research supports the argument for change or development (Schwandt, 2001) and the ideas used within these studies align in some ways with Lewin's (1946) original idea for action research, which was learning about organisations through trying to change them. In teaching and learning, this approach to research does seem to support change based on knowledge and reflection (Creswell, 2012), as supporters of this method (Robson, 2002) suggest that practitioners are more likely to make better decisions and engage in more effective practices if they are active in educational research. However, when it comes to disseminating to others local situations must be taken into account to ensure a best-fit.

Action research may be repeatable and of use for others (Elliott, 2007); however it cannot offer "…*anywhere, anytime answers*" or incontrovertible best practice (Hammond, 2013:7). The approach however is not without its critics who claim it is inward-looking and often of poor quality (Alderman, 1989), and, as in this case, the joint emphasis on action and researching the initiative may cause concern (Robson, 2002). In my case the action came first and the research was secondary which may have negated some of the issues if the two elements were to be undertaken by the same person at the same time. Where possible, the data was gathered by an individual from outside the immediate team, for example in the peer review articles, a research student was used to conduct the interviews in order to avoid this emphasis.

Within each study the participants all gave informed consent and agreed to the data being used in subsequent publications and the university's ethical guidelines were followed at all times. Participants were all anonymised to ensure confidentiality and all were given the right to withdraw from the studies at any time. All participants were volunteers from a relevant sample who were intentionally selected in order to explore the central phenomenon of each initiative (Creswell, 2012).

The methodology for each study was chosen to ensure it was the most appropriate to the situation and the research aims. Table 1, demonstrates an overview of the methodologies for each paper with a brief rationale.

Table 2: Overview of the research methodology for each publication

Article	Method	Rationale	Sample
1.PDP	Semi-structured face-to-face interviews at two points in time over a three-year period	Allowed for depth of questioning and for the same questions to be asked at both points in time with room to follow up on different elements. Often used in designs that are flexible in nature. Researcher-bias (Creswell, 2012) has been acknowledged.	One student from each peer learning group (n=7) interviewed twice over a three year period.
2.Metaphors	Elicited metaphors	The students' elicited metaphors were the data collection method in this study. Schmitt (2005) suggests that metaphors can reduce the complexity of information into a clearly structured pattern. Thereby condensing information into a form that others may recognise.	Six students chosen due to the experience in working with metaphors.

		The metaphors were facilitated by an external expert thereby reducing any bias which could have been caused by the staff member being present.	
3.Transition	Weekly focus groups and questionnaires	Questionnaires allowed for quick data collection across the year group each week and enabled the same questions to be asked each week to track development. Focus groups were undertaken at three points in time with the same student group. This method was chosen to access the information provided through the interactions of the students (Creswell, 2012) as well as the individual ideas.	Questionnaires were completed by the entire cohort who were in the data collection session. Focus groups were complied of a students from across the programme (n= 6-10).

		The researcher running these groups was not a member of the teaching team which may have enabled the students to be open in their responses thereby reducing bias (Robson, 2002).	
4.Curriculum design	Unfacilitated group video of experiences Online questionnaire	Each group was asked, without a member of staff present, to discuss the changes to the module and video their discussion. This was part way towards naturally occurring talk (Silverman, 2008) although it was framed by an overview of what the researchers wanted the students to talk about. Anonymous online questionnaires gathered perceptions about the experiences. This data collection method was chosen to remove any	All students on the module took part in the video (n=30). 84% of the group completed the online questionnaire (n=24).

		possible researcher-bias and to allow students to give their feedback honestly.	
5.Peer review (1)	Semi-structured face-to-face interviews	These were used to explore in depth the feelings and perceptions of the participants and allow for the flexibility of exploring some issues in more depth (Robson, 2002). Researcher bias was minimised by an external individual undertaking the interviews (Robson, 2002).	The four project participants who had completed the whole project were interviewed.
6.Peer review (2)	Questionnaires and interviews	These two methods were chosen to allow the staff to offer their perceptions of the strength of their feelings towards the project in the questionnaire. These findings were followed up in more detail in the interviews. Different time-periods were used to gather thoughts and	All project members (n=8) completed the first questionnaire. The four project participants who had completed the whole project were interviewed.

		feelings as the project progressed.	
7.Communities of practice	Elicited conversations	This used an open request for information where various key players were chosen and subsequently asked for their ideas and perceptions about the organisation. This allowed participants to add depth and not be constrained by the questions.	Seven members of SEDA agreed to take part, following an email request to those in senior positions. case study

Overall, a range of data collection methods have been used across the studies to gain an insight into a variety of interventions for both staff and students, all of which informed practice and moved the experience forward.

1. Research context and critical review of papers

> "*The most important question for educational professionals is not about the effectiveness of their actions but about the potential educational value of what they do, that is, about the educational desirability of the opportunities for learning that follow from their actions*" Biesta (2007:10).

My ambition for my work has been to change and develop practice to create conditions in which excellent learning can occur with the ultimate goal being the enhancement of the student experience. This has not taken a singular track, and the resulting body of work is multi-directional and has been underpinned by a determination, through the use of research-based practice, to explore the educational value of my practice (Biesta, 2007). The student experience is a wide-ranging term meaning different things to different kinds of students (Staddon & Standish, 2012), thereby suggesting that creating conditions for learning to occur needs to be fluid and flexible. This chapter which is structured around the two research objectives sets out my work within the context of current research, highlighting key findings in relation to creating conditions in which learning can occur.

Creating conditions to support excellent learning through teaching and learning interventions to create (RO1)

According to Gibbs (2012), there are strong indications that there is currently a rapid retreat from modularity towards more programme-level planning. Change at programme level is crucial, as it is here that polices and plans for the enhancement of teaching and learning must be put into action (Pearson & Trevitt, 2004). The connection of the modules in a curriculum design process where the "…*whole is*

greater than the sum of its parts" (Jessop, El Hakim & Gibbs, 2013:74) is the level where I think we can create excellent conditions in which learning can occur. In this section, programme level approaches to PDP and transition into university (articles 1, 2 & 3), curriculum design at modular level (article 4) and peer review to enhance teaching (articles 5& 6) are presented. Within this chapter each of these will be critiqued in relation to the relevant literature whilst answering the aims of the study.

Article 1 focuses on PDP as a programme level approach to supporting student's self-awareness and learning. PDP originated from the Dearing Report (1997) and was based on each student having a progress file within which they planned and reflected on their learning (Ward & Watts, 2009). However, Jackson and Ward (2004) believe that it is much more than this, with Jackson (2010) suggesting that PDP should encourage exploration of the underlying motivations, values and beliefs that underpin an individual's self-efficacy. It was the:

> *"…first attempt in UK HE to implement, by sector-wide agreement, a particular framework for enhancing and capturing student learning*" (QAA 2009:3).

PDP is the only approach to learning in UK higher education that is actively encouraged through a policy set out by the universities (Jackson, 2010) and as such, has a unique place in the student experience. Despite, or maybe because of this, it is, according to Clegg and Bufton (2008:435), a "*chaotic concept*" which is open to interpretation creating widespread variation in practice (Tymms, Peters & Scott, 2013). My understanding of PDP, which was derived both from personal experiences and the literature, is that it is a way of thinking to make sense of the world around

you which supports individuals to create the conditions in which they can learn and work at their best more of the time.

The literature exploring and evaluating PDP has two main themes, the process of undertaking PDP and the philosophy behind it (Quinton & Smallbone, 2008). Issues such as the socio-political influences (Tymms et al. 2013); interpretation and implementation (Hilsden, 2012); PDP models as preparation for a super complex world (Jackson & Ward, 2004); PDP and employability (East, 2005) and student experiences (Clegg & Bufton, 2008) are all debated and critiqued. The first noted mapping and synthesis review of PDP processes (Moir, 2009) found that most institutions adopted a prescriptive approach to implementation which was linked to course-specific outcomes (Gough, Kiwan, Sutcliffe, Simpson, and Houghton, 2003). However, although seen as rigorous, this review, in the opinion of Clegg (2005), offered little in the way of conceptual insight for the UK indicating that PDP is still an area that needs further research and understanding.

Despite the different foci, little is known about the effectiveness of the processes or the attitudes and beliefs of the participants (Rigopoulou & Kehagias, 2008). Longitudinal studies are required to evaluate the effectiveness of existing programmes (Quinton & Smallbone, 2008). Article 1 goes someway to adding to the body of knowledge in this area as it explores, over a three-year period, a set of students' perceptions of PDP as a process and what this meant for their own learning and development. This longitudinal approach is different than has been done previously and adds to the work being carried out in this area, offering curricular based solutions and approaches that may help others. Although small

scale the students chosen to take part were from across the cohort which ensured that different variations in approaches by tutors could be picked up. This article evidences the success of this particular approach to PDP, it must be noted, however, that this work examines PDP in the light of what was delivered to those students and therefore cannot be taken out of this context which is the nature of this type of activity (Hulme & Lisewskib, 2010) as the success of PDP is inextricably linked to how it is implemented (*ibid*).

In this work, the students' views of PDP positively changed over time. The key factors of goal-setting and reflection were highlighted by the students as having a place in supporting their meta-learning, self-regulation and self-awareness, which in turn was found to support them across their whole programme of study and beyond. Working in PLG's was positive, demonstrating that the ideas of communities of practice (RO2) has merit within a programme based approach to PDP. Overall PDP, as designed in article 1, can support conditions where individuals and groups of students who can work at their best more of the time. This work has been disseminated in a number of different forums (see Appendix 1) and key elements of the approaches can now be found within programmes across the Faculty, demonstrating the strength of the ideas.

Article 1 explores different processes and ideas that make up the whole PDP approaches whilst article 2 highlights one aspect of the process which is exploring, through metaphors, what students are like when they are 'learning at their best'. The development of a personal metaphor around 'learning at your best' was used as a pedagogic strategy to support meta-learning. Metaphors can support meta-learning

(Biggs, 1985) which, in turn, can help a student develop as a learner (*ibid*) whilst also supporting creative thinking (Cook-Sather, 2003). The use of metaphors can be a powerful tool as a curriculum activity to promote student learning (Willox, Harper, Bridger, Morton, Orbach & Sarapura, 2010). Enabling students to develop and understand their metaphors is not a well-researched area and the main focus in the literature is on teachers' metaphors (Alger, 2009; Mahlio, Massengill-Shaw, & Barry, 2010). The findings from article 2 align with those from Pate and Johnston (2013) who propose that metaphors are a potential pedagogical tool for the creation of communities of shared learning for students. Learning in universities remains an isolating experience where students are disconnected from each other (Tinto, 2003) and the idea of learning together is in some ways juxtaposition to the personal nature of PDP, but forming a community of practice for more active participation (*ibid*) can support student learning. This article shows students exploring their own self-awareness and understanding which is a different angle than has be taken by others and therefore adds an original element to the research.

The findings in Article 2 indicate that the students involved all felt that knowing and understanding their own metaphor and each other's was a useful tool in working together. The student group chosen for this paper was purposive as the students who undertook the exercise were all selected as they used to thinking in metaphors, therefore enabling the examples to be more detailed than they may otherwise have been. The metaphor exercise and the subsequent examples out of this paper can now be used by others in enabling the next group of students to use this as an approach both to help themselves and to work with others.

Article 3 focuses on the programme's approach to student transition into the university and the creation of learning conditions that support this crucial time in the student experience. Cook and Leckey (1999: 157) consider transition to be the "*greatest hurdle*" in higher education and lack of engagement at this point can lead to academic underachievement (Yorke & Thomas, 2003). Enhancing transition is widely accepted as a strategy for improving retention and success (Yorke & Longden, 2008; Tinto, 2012) and although these were important, my work was driven mainly from a concern about the lack of interest shown in the subject the students had come to study. There were some key pieces of research that stood out at the time (and still do); Longden's (2006) ideas about academic boredom, Yorke and Thomas's (2003) work on the first year experience, especially the importance of the first semester of the first year and from the US, Tinto's many studies into the importance of the first year.

The literature on students' transition to university is burgeoning (Pampka, Williams and Hutcheson, 2012), dealing with various aspects of transition including both social and pedagogic. Joining a university can be an exciting and frightening time and in their review of the transition literature, Harvey, Drew, and Smith (2006) highlight emerging themes around performance; success; persistence and support. The transition designed and evaluated in article 3 aligns with three of these four themes, with persistence being a more student based factor, and offers approaches to supporting those new into the university. Support was a key factor in this approach to transition and personal tutors and small group teaching were found to be important to the experience. Undertaking this form of transition can be resource-

hungry and place great demands on staff (Yorke & Longden, 2008) and this needs to be considered in any transition intervention.

This mixed-methods article gathered data over the five week period of transition with a specific focus on relationships with self, others and the discipline which were highlighted as gaps in the literature. The key findings were that interventions that are intensive and bespoke can facilitate and enhance student engagement and therefore can create conditions were learning can occur. It is acknowledged in the paper and here that these findings were from a relatively short-term piece of research and that impact on a wider scale would need to be investigated. However, since the positive nature of this type of transition has been highlighted, other programmes have used these ideas to adapt their own practice, indicating that the work has significance for others. Appendix 1 shows further dissemination of this practice.

This work now moves onto changes at a modular level that can help create conditions for excellent learning to take place. Article 4, explores curriculum design at a module level with a focus on authentic assessment, engagement, real-world learning and employability. Authentic assessment was one of the foci of this work, as this has been found to be highly motivating for students (Sambell, McDowell & Brown, 1997). The engagement element was designed around the structure of the module, the teaching delivery and the ongoing assessment. Pickford and Brown (2006) propose that engaging students fully, so they enjoy the experience, can have high learning payoff and this was certainly the case here. This type of approach is thought to change the way students experience the curriculum and the way they are taught (Gablenick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990).

A mixed method design was used to capture the student's experiences and their voices were important so they were asked to record on video cameras their thoughts on the module. To try and reduce bias a member of staff was not present. Alongside this a questionnaire was completed which explored the key aspects of the re-design. As this experience had happened to this particular group, the sample although small was completely appropriate. The findings showed that the re-design had created the conditions in which the students felt they had learnt and developed their employability skill set. The overall proposition put forward in article 4, is that innovations in curriculum design require planning, evidence-based rationale, staff commitment and most importantly they can work.

Creating conditions for excellent learning need to happen at all levels, programme and modular, to ensure a holistic approach across the whole student experience focused on staff and students working together for the good of the whole.

> "*To effect systematic change in higher education requires a sophisticated blend of management, collegiality and simple hard work over a prolonged period of time*" (Robertson, Robins & Cox, 2009: 32).

The focus for improvement across the sector for the past decade has been largely on individual teachers and their practice, with little real emphasis on the programme team or on curriculum design at programme level (Gibbs, 2012). The focus needs to be at this level if changes to the student experience are to happen. Pegg, Waldock, Henry-Isaac and Lawton (2012) suggest that, due to the increased value placed on the student experience, there is a greater need for a shared community of learning

focused around a degree programme, encouraging staff and students to work together towards a common objective.

However, the student learning landscape is driven by the staff that design and teach the programmes and conditions must also be created where they too can learn and develop. Teaching is a core function of higher education (Barnard, Croft, Irons, Cuffe, Bandara, & Rowntree, 2011) and enhancing teaching quality has been high on the UK and International agenda for the last decade. The Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) state as part of their principles that enhancement must be a mainstream activity (HEFCE, 2013). The QAA Quality Code for Higher Education states that:

> "…*in order that teaching and support for learning remains effective, staff reflect on their practice and consider how it might be changed and improved*" (QAA 2012:12).

Teaching is normally an individual activity and due to the pressures of teaching loads, student care, generating research articles, HE academics rarely have the opportunity to talk about teaching quality and what this means for them (Feigenbauma & Iqani, 2013). Peer review can be a solution to this and offer the opportunity for peers to interact, learn, and adopt new relevant teaching practices (Thomas, Chie, Abraham, Raj, & Beh, 2014). Peer review which provides feedback on learning and teaching activity is an effective strategy for academic development (Bell, 2001) that has the potential to enhance teaching quality (Harris, Farrell, Bell, Devlin, & James, 2008). My work in this area has been particularly around individual teaching styles and working with others through peer observation of teaching to enhance practice.

As the student body diversifies and expands, the teacher may struggle to keep pace with their needs (Skelton, 2005) and therefore development becomes ever more important. Fitzmaurice (2010:54) discusses teaching as a practice which she argues:

> "…*moves us beyond a narrow and mechanistic view of teaching built around the adoption of effective strategies to one that is broader in scope and takes into account the complexity and contextuality of the work*".

Exploring our teaching with others in a developmental way, I believe, can support us to adapt, change and focus on the learning needs of the students. Articles 5 & 6 explore different aspects of a project which used peer observation of teaching as a way to enhance individual teaching practice through personal development and working and learning from others. Although not about the students per se, it is ultimately focused on creating conditions in which learning can occur. Article 5 focuses specifically on aspects of communication style and teacher immediacy, and article 6 extends this theme and explores a model for peer observation and working with others to develop teaching efficacy.

Gosling's (2002) ideas around peer review are widely mentioned in the literature (Thomas et al. 2014; White, Boehm, & Chester, 2013) and his third model named peer review, relates to peers observing each other to provide insights and support teaching in a reciprocal way which was the rationale around the work presented here. Peer observation of teaching is a well-established practice within HE (Gosling, 2002) which has been found to be effective (Prezas, Shaver, Carlson, Taylor, & Scudder, 2009) with the primary aim being to bring about changes in teaching practice (Blackmore, 2005). This concept is used in article 5 as the scaffold for the

work on enhancing teacher immediacy, with the aim of offering a different focus for peer observation that may be useful to others. Teacher immediacy is an American concept developed in the 1970s by Mehrabian (1971) and is about reducing the physical distance between communicators. It includes behaviours such as eye contact, using names and other verbal and non-verbal cues. Research in this area (Pogue & Ahyun, 2006; Schutt, Allen & Laumakis, 2009; Baker, 2004) suggests that immediacy is one of the most important types of teacher behaviour to influence students. In the UK there is comparatively little written about this area of teaching, and the articles presented here therefore add an original angle to the knowledge base, but only, it is important to note, from the perspective of the teacher.

Article 5 explores the participants' perceptions on three aspects of immediacy; voice and verbal qualities; body language and location and environment, and found that all three aspects added value from the viewpoint of the staff to the staff / student interaction. The study finds agreement with the US studies (Pogue & Ahyun, 2006) that knowing and developing teacher immediacy plays a part in teacher development, creates better connections with students and can be a crucial part of the learning for all parties. The second overall finding was that teacher immediacy was a valuable aspect to be considered in any peer observation of a teaching scheme, and was worthwhile noting in relation to the enhancement of the student experience. Further study is needed, however, to confirm these findings; nevertheless this is valuable in creating the conditions for teachers to teach at their best which can only support the students in their learning.

The second study stemming from the work (article 6) on peer observation and teacher immediacy, explores the staff perceptions of being involved in the project. This is deemed to be an important area on which to focus, as it may be useful evidence for others setting up similar schemes. Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006) view professional learning as systemic, they see it as interplay between individuals and their environments, and this project certainly fits into this view.

This paper offers a different model for peer observation of teaching than has been previously published, using an external communication expert, a buddy of the individual's choosing and a wider group to share ideas with. As already highlighted in article 5, immediacy factors were positively received and seen as useful, as was the multi-layered feedback about teaching which created new learning for some. The use of a buddy, when it worked, was perceived positively, the key being the relationship that was created between the two individuals. Not all the buddy relationships worked for a number of reasons. This type of approach to staff development is very personal and trust, honesty and commitment came out as important factors, which Connelly, Jones and Jones (2007) found to be true in collaborative work.

The way that peer review of teaching is viewed by academics is interesting, as Taylor and Richardson (2001: xi) suggest:

> "…*most academics express few concerns about peer scrutiny of research activities*", yet "*they tend to be sceptical of any process of peer review involving teaching*".

Chester (2012) believes that staff are generally positive towards peer review, this she thinks indicates a willingness to engage. However, Keig and Waggoner (1995) offer an alternative view and believe it is contentious and problematic area and is not always seen as positive. They include issues to do with perceived lack of reward for teaching, whether this was a good use of time, intrusive nature of what is seen to be individual approaches as well as ideas around academic freedom as reasons for this. Despite what staff might think, the pressure to engage in review of teaching and learning is an emerging reality (Taylor & Richardson, 2001).

Peer review of teaching is seen as a means of improving teaching quality through sharing good practice (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005). Both articles presented here explore aspects of peer review from a viewpoint of a small group of staff who held teaching and learning roles, which meant that there was a positive bias towards this type of interaction, which is a recognised limitation of these papers. Within my work, the focus is on quality enhancement rather than using peer review as a quality assurance mechanism. This, Jackson (2002) proposes, is more transformative and concerned with adding value and improving quality. From this project a set of resources were built to support staff from across the institution in exploring their own immediacy and to offer a different perspective on peer review.

A critical element of this is the development and maintenance of collaborative and mutually supportive cultures (Eison, 2002). If we are truly going to deliver a holistic and connected curriculum then it needs to be approached at that level by the whole teaching team. Gibbs (2013), writing historically about educational development, suggests that there are limits to the extent individuals can affect teaching and

learning if colleagues and other programmes are more hostile to change. Seeking to engage staff in ways that foster collaboration rather than hostility has been a central aspect of my work.

> "*Studies of why some departments are much more educationally effective than others have tended to identify the role of leadership of teaching, and the health and vigour of the community of teaching practice, rather than seeing the whole as being no more than the sum of the (individual teacher) parts*" (Gibbs 2013:7).

At this point in my own work I am now convinced that working together is crucial and this is the slant I am now exploring as I continually strive to create conditions where excellent learning can occur.

<u>Communities of practice to enable excellent and purposeful teaching and learning (RO2).</u>

The final theme in this section, considering how communities of practice can support and enable excellent teaching and learning (RO2), encompasses the majority of the studies. Working with others, in the ways shown in the articles, aligns with the concept of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where people come together in a process of collective learning, in a shared domain of endeavour (Wenger, 1998). The basic premise is:

> "*Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly*" (Wenger, 2006:1).

Article 7 is a little different from the others being presented here. It has been included as the concepts of communities of practice offered within it were found to

be at the heart of the whole ideology about creating conditions in which excellent learning can occur. The study itself is exploring 20 years of the Staff and Educational Developers Association (SEDA), an organisation set up to support teaching in HE, as a community of practice. It demonstrates the need for a support network to enhance knowledge and experiences and communities of practice are one way of creating and maintaining groups of staff interested in teaching and learning (Sherer, Shea & Kristensen, 2003). SEDA emerged as an organisation to support staff working in the field of educational development who were often isolated and working singly (Wisdom, Lea & Parker, 2103), and this network has been found to be vital, hence the organisation flourishing 20 years later.

Wenger (1998) proposes that communities of practice are a combination of three elements that develop in parallel, these are the domain, community and practice, the idea being that we "…*do things together*" (Lave, 2008:285). By their very nature they are about sharing and connection between individuals (Wenger, 1998) and this is not always the case in universities for either students or staff. What has been found in this body of work is that working in this way has value for both groups, and can help create the conditions in which learning can occur. However, this doesn't just happen, strategies and processes need to be put in place to build and support the community.

The first of Wenger's communities of practice characteristics is the domain, which he suggests is an identity defined by a shared interest (Wenger, 1998). This interest has to be fostered, students working in PLG's (article 1) and sharing their metaphors for a better understanding of each other (article 2) was found to have value. Thomas

(2012), exploring transition into university, believes that creating connections and a sense of belonging between the individuals is crucial. Article 3 shows evidence that the transition process adopted in the programme did just what Thomas (2012) suggests and links to article 1 which shows students working in groups to develop both themselves and each other. At a modular level, this sense of working together for a common purpose can also be developed and was found to enhance the learning experience (article 4). Staff when working together for a common purpose (articles 5 and 6) believed that this benefited their own practice.

The second characteristic, proposed by Wenger (1998), is in relation to the community that is formed where individuals engage in joint activities and discussions to help and support each other (Wenger, 1998). For the students this has some issues, as when grades are allocated the culture is not necessarily about sharing knowledge. PLGs are a way of developing this approach when the aim is to develop a group that can see the benefits of sharing and learning together (article 1 and 2). For the staff, the same conditions apply. For teams to really be a community, they need to want to learn and interact with each other, which may not always be the case. Article 6 shows the positive benefits that can be gained by working together, alongside the issues that may hinder progress, whilst article 7 demonstrates how a community can support development across the sector.

The final characteristic is the practice of the community, and Wenger (1998) highlights that what is important is the sharing of resources which include experiences, stories and tools. This, Wenger believes, takes time and sustained interaction. Zhoa and Kuh (2004) suggest that learning communities help students

by enabling them to be with the same group for an extended period of time, creating social interactions. In this type of experience the students are asked to become responsible to each other in the pursuit of knowledge and should become mutually dependant (Tinto, 2003). A degree is a substantial individual achievement but enhanced further, I would argue, if it is achieved by using all the resources available and working with others to support everyone. Within article 1 the students at the end of their studies felt that working together and with others had become more important to them and had more value aligning with the findings of Zhoa and Kuh (2004). I believe that teaching should not be about re-inventing wheels but exploring what works and sharing this and articles 5 and 6 show how a group of staff came together to develop both themselves and resources for others to use.

In summary, within this chapter the key threads that draw this work together have been explored with the focus on creating conditions for individuals to learn and flourish. This has been shown through a number of different approaches, interventions and strategies, for both students and staff, with the idea of working together in communities of practice at the heart of the philosophy.

2. Conclusion

This work represents a journey I have taken in HE from my initial role as a classroom practitioner, which continues today, to a position where I am now well-placed to create conditions for excellent learning to take place for both students and staff. Crucial to this is the belief that:

> "…*teaching and learning in higher education is a shared process, with responsibilities on both student and teacher to contribute to their success*" (Report to the European Commission, 2013:18).

In the period since 2009, in which time this work has been undertaken, I have changed, developed and, I would argue, enhanced the learning experiences of students not only in the programme in which I work but across the Faculty, the University and beyond. My oeuvre represents a significant body of work, adding to the literature in the field in the UK and beyond, with an impact that is progressively being demonstrated. It is my contention that, while there remains much to be achieved, I have proposed a variety of interventions which can support the creation of the conditions in which successful learning for both staff and students can be achieved. This has concentrated on processes and structure which support individuals and teams, both staff and students, to achieve their maximum potential, by setting achievable but stretching goals and always aiming for continuous self-improvement.

My research objectives for this study developed out of the articles with the aim:

RO1: To explore in what ways teaching and learning interventions can create conditions to support excellent learning

RO2: To consider how communities of practice for staff and students can support the conditions to enable excellent and purposeful teaching and learning.

The core ideas being around programme approaches to creating conditions for excellent learning, the development of staff to support these changes and working together through communities of practice to scaffold the learning. Within the interventions explored in the articles, the benefits for students working in small PLGs, or communities of practice, was highlighted. Article 3 demonstrates that effective transition programmes can enhance cooperation between students and encourage commitment to active learning, and article 1 shows that the PLGs had a greater value to the students as they progressed through their degree. Goal-setting and reflection were found, in article 1, to support the learning and article 2 showed the role that metaphors can play in meta-learning and understanding self and others. At a more modular level, article 4 highlighted how authentic assessment and a complete curriculum re-design can create conditions to engage students in a deeper level of learning and support connections between students.

All these changes have been driven by individuals and teams of staff and conditions are needed for this group to also change and develop. Through the work on peer observation and communication skills, a small group of staff developed their own skills. Working together and with a buddy came out as a highlight and is another example of the idea of the community of practice and what can be developed from this position. Having said all that, none of these interventions or initiatives has been without issues and lots of barriers and problems have been faced along the way.

Change is not easy and the programme approach to curriculum delivery has not naturally been the way that universities have operated (Gibbs 2012). The literature in the area suggests that leadership of teaching (Robertson, Robins & Cox, 2009) is key to creating and sustaining change and a programme level focus for the both the curriculum and staff team has been found to be beneficial in the included studies. Article 7 shows how, through communities of practice, staff can support each other and work together across the sector for the potential enhancement of all aspects of teaching and learning. This article states that:

> "*The effective shared practices that have emerged from this community have a wider reach than its members and affiliates, impacting on university communities worldwide*" (Nixon & Brown, 2013: 362).

In presenting here the outcomes of ten years of practice and five years of publications, it is gratifying to note how a changing pedagogic environment has helped progress some of the key themes to which I am committed. Invariably, the submission of these publications represents a single moment in time, leaving many questions unanswered and much more investigation needed in future years. I remain committed to being an active member of communities of practice in teaching and learning, to which, I hope, this work makes a modest contribution.

3. Future work and recommendations for further study

This study has discussed communities of practice as being a positive part of the teaching and learning landscape and further investigation is now needed to develop the body of work in this area. Two specific areas from this study that would benefit from further research are, PLG groups in different subject contexts and staff working in communities of practice to support teaching and learning. The work represented here has led me to a future direction, based around the development of communities of practice and specifically working with students as co-creators. This, to me, is a natural progression for my work and it aligns fully with contemporary trends to make students a more active part in curriculum design, delivery and evaluation. This is evidenced by the QAA's (2013) insistence on students' involvement in all areas of their study and their goal for every student to have the best possible learning experience. At a more local level, this also aligns with my own Faculty's and Institutional goals for the future.

This thesis has been based on small scale case studies and has evidenced developments at a local level, which I contend is the only way to change and develop practice. However, from a knowledge and generalisation perspective my research now needs to broaden to determine, cultural and subject differences, as this will make the evidence more compelling across the sector. The HEA (2014) propose innovative pedagogies as one of their key work streams moving forward and the University is focusing on improvements to the NSS, where teaching on my course has been highlighted as a problem area. I need in the future to run the ideas across programmes, rather than just staying in my own, in order to increase the

generalisability of my work which may then offer possible ideas for others looking to change and develop their practice.

The questions I am particularly interested in exploring in the future are:

- ways in which staff and students together can enhance the curriculum and design teaching methods that are fit for practice and engage and enhance learning;
- ways in which PLGs as communities of practice can support the whole student experience;
- how to advance curriculum enrichment, exploring how individuals and teams can be encouraged to adopt a more collaborative approach emulating the best practices of communities of practice.

Continual research-informed development is needed for all parts of the system to flourish. Teaching and learning in HE is, in my opinion, an honour and a privilege and we need to ensure we are enabling all individuals to develop to their full potential and work at their best more of the time.

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5. Appendix 1

Contributions to submitted articles with explanation, impact and resulting wider dissemination.

1. **Nixon, S. (2013). Personal Development Planning; an evaluation of student perceptions. *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education,* 8(3), 203-216.**

This article demonstrates my ability to design and evaluate student learning at programme level, and illustrates that Personal Development Planning (PDP) can and does make a difference to the individual student experience (RO1 & 2). Key parts of this particular PDP process have been adopted and adapted by other programmes within the Faculty and across the wider university, showing evidence of impact on colleagues, as well as on the measurable improvement in student performance as indicated by course retention and internal and external benchmark data.

Additional dissemination of this work

Book chapter;
Nixon, S. and Walker C. PDP-inspiring capability. In Buswell, J. and Beckett, N. (eds) (2009). *Enhancing student centred learning in business and management, hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism*. Newbury. Threshold –Press Ltd.

Conference presentations;
Nixon, S. Walsh, B. and Walker, C. When you are learning at your best you are like what? *Paper presented at the 5th European First-Year Experience conference*, Belgium (26th – 28th May 2010).

Nixon, S. and Walker, C. When you are learning at your best you are like what? Connecting the student learner through PDP. *Paper presented at the HEA conference* (30 June to 2 July 2009).

Walsh, B., Nixon, S. and Walker, C. Learning Journeys; supporting the student learning experience. *Paper presented at the 4th European First-Year Experience conference, Netherlands* (13th – 15th May 2009).

Nixon, S. and Walker, C. When you are learning at your best you are like what? Connecting the student learner through PDP. *Paper presented at the Learning to be Professional Through a Life-wide Curriculum, Surrey* (31st March – 2nd April 2009).

2. **Nixon, S. (2013). Using metaphors to aid student meta-learning: when you're learning at your best you're like what? *Creative Education*, 4(7A2), 33-36.**

In this article I explore one particular element of the PDP process which uses metaphors as a way of creating self-awareness and new knowledge. This fits in with one of the central themes of this published work which is concerned with creating conditions for excellent learning (RO1). The article shows how, through developing individual metaphors, students can start to understand their own idiosyncratic ways of working, means of developing themselves as learners and conditions needed to work well with others (RO2). The students' visual metaphors have been transformed into a mural on one of the walls in the Faculty and the next stage in this project is to build a resource for other programmes to use and widen the examples of students 'learning at their best'.

3. **Vinson, D., Nixon, S., Walsh, B., Walker, C., Mitchell, E. & Zaitseva, E. (2010). Investigating the relationship between student engagement and transition. *Active Learning in Higher Education*. 11(2), 131-143. (Contributions; 40%: 40%: 5%: 5%: 5%; 5%).**

Following joint activities with colleagues to enhance the student experience on arriving at university, the study team collected data to enable dissemination of our work on transition and the student experience, as these early weeks are crucial to student engagement, retention and success (Yorke 1999). This article explores the

results of a radical overhaul of the approaches to student induction that I led, and offers a programme-level model of transition which enhances students' subject curiosity, engagement with staff and peers and academic ability (RO1 & RO2). The results of this work show an example of sustained change and intra-institutional impact, since the entire Faculty now runs some form of transition programme based on this one. Although relatively recently published, this article is already being cited by others (Google scholar 16 citations May 2014).

Additional dissemination of this work

Conference presentation;

Walsh B., Nixon S., Vinson D. Investigating the relationship between student engagement and transition into Higher Education Paper presented at the 24th International Conference on The First-Year Experience, Manchester, (21- 24 Jun 2011)

Walsh, B., Cock, D. & Nixon, S. (2009) 'Challenging the status quo: student engagement and transition in higher education. HEA conference, Manchester (30th June – 2nd July 2009)

Nixon, S. (2008) Re-thinking the concept of induction – the student perception. European 1st Year Experience Conference, (7th-9th May 2008)

4. **Nixon, S. & Williams, L. (2013). Increasing student engagement through curriculum re-design: deconstructing the 'Apprentice' style of delivery. *Innovations in Teaching and Education International.* 51(1), 26-33. (Contributions; 80%: 20%).**

Together with my teaching colleague, in this article I describe the ways we implemented change at a modular level to create the conditions to enhance the student learning experience (RO1). This article evidences changes in delivery, structure, assessment and feedback to support learning linked to more workplace-type activity. The model piloted and redesigned here has been rolled out to other modules across the programme and across the Faculty, again providing evidence that the ideas are considered, robust and capable of creating conditions for the enhancement of learning.

5. **Nixon, S., Vickerman, P. & Maynard, C. (2010). Teacher immediacy: reflections on a peer review of teaching scheme. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 34(4), 491-502. (Contributions; 60%: 20%: 20%).**

6. **Nixon, S., Maynard, C. & Vickerman, P. (2012). Tired of teaching observations? A case study of one approach with a focus on communication and collaboration. *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.* 4(2), 84.1 – 84.17. (Contributions; 60%: 20%: 20%).**

I led the work on which these two articles are based with two LJMU colleagues. The project involved a wider group of staff from across one Faculty who wanted to develop their skills and abilities as teachers and communicators (RO1 & 2). The ideas show an alternative perspective on the development of the individual, this time from the staff rather than student viewpoint, because if we are to build the capacity of the system we must support the development of all its elements.

This project has since been extended through the development of video resources and accompanying workbooks (housed on the university VLE) with staff development sessions being facilitated across a number of different faculties. I chose to publish the second of the two articles outside the UK, to enable me to engage with

a wider international audience, thereby ensuring that ideas developed in my university could be shared in a wider context.

Additional dissemination of this work

Staff development resources developed which are hosted on the University VLE in relation to peer review and immediacy. Staff development session delivered across the University.

7. **Nixon, S. & Brown, S. (2013). A community of practice in action: SEDA as a learning community for educational developers in higher education. *Innovations in Teaching and Education International.* 50(4), 357-365. (Contributions; 60%: 40%).**

I was invited by my co-author to significantly contribute to this article due to my expertise in thinking around communities of practice. Working with colleagues with much greater experience in the field provides opportunities for me to fine-tune my own ideas, while adding experience-led context from my own work. It has been included here, as it shows the importance of communities of practice and the developmental aspect of the staff experience within HE (RO2).

6. Articles

Nixon, S. (2013). Personal Development Planning; an evaluation of student perceptions. *Practice and Evidence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education,* 8(3), 203-216. Accessed at: http://community.dur.ac.uk/pestlhe.learning/index.php/pestlhe/article/viewFile/160/264
Nixon, S. (2013). Using metaphors to aid student meta-learning: when you're learning at your best you're like what? *Creative Education*, 4(7A2), 33-36. DOI: 10.4236/ce.2013.47A2006
Vinson, D., Nixon, S., Walsh, B., Walker, C., Mitchell, E. & Zaitseva, E. (2010). Investigating the relationship between student engagement and transition. *Active Learning in Higher Education*. 11(2), 131-143. **DOI: 10.1177/1469787410365658**
Nixon, S. & Williams, L. (2013). Increasing student engagement through curriculum re-design: deconstructing the 'Apprentice' style of delivery. *Innovations in Teaching and Education International.* 51(1), 26-33. **DOI:**10.1080/14703297.2013.845535
Nixon, S., Vickerman, P. & Maynard, C. (2010). Teacher immediacy: reflections on a peer review of teaching scheme. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 34(4), 491-502. **DOI:**10.1080/0309877X.2010.512077
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