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Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education





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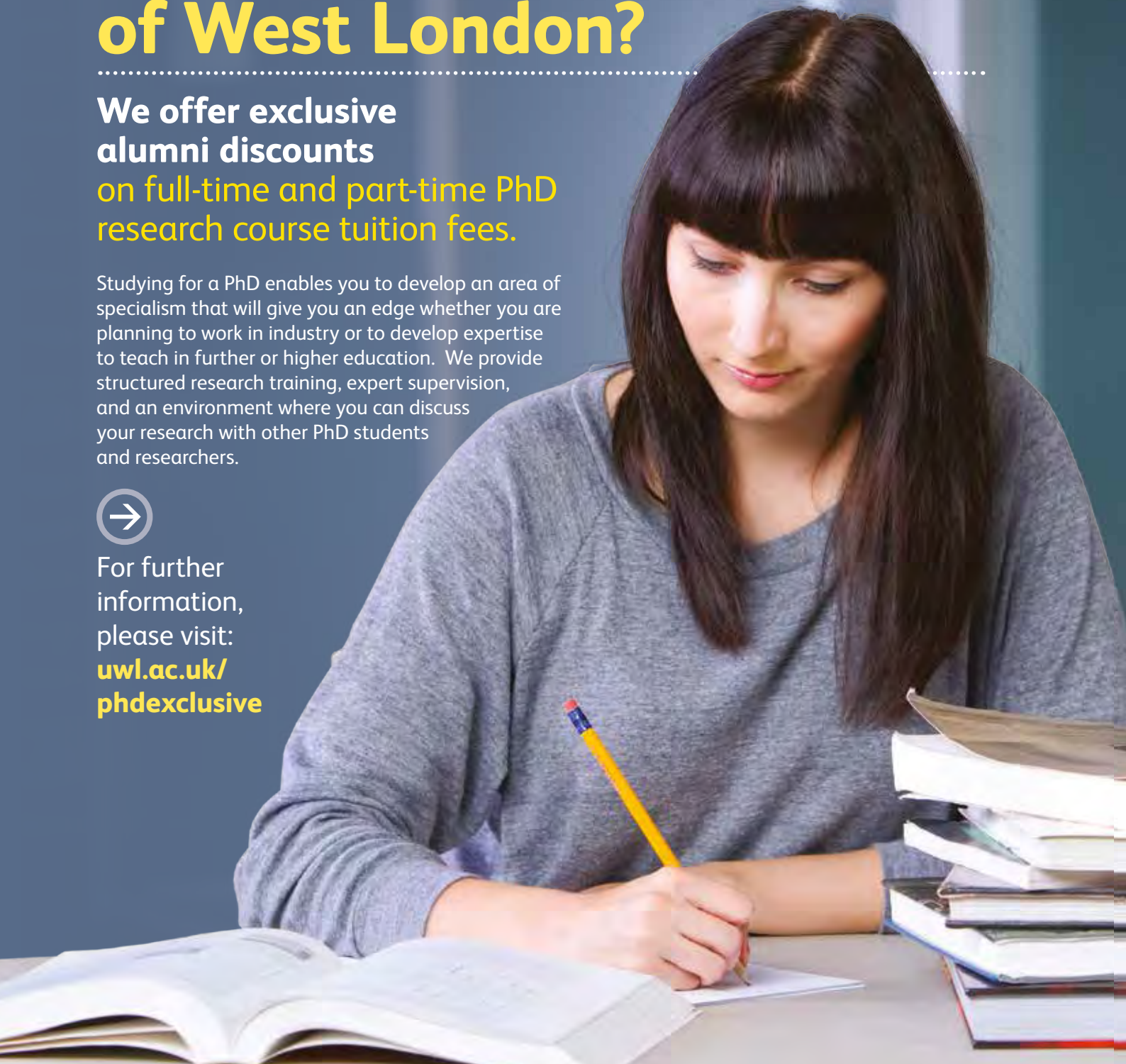
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New Vistas | Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

EDITOR'S NOTE

Volume 5 | Issue 1

Change is afoot in the editing of *New Vistas* – as the incoming editor, I have some big shoes to fill as previous editors, Joelle and Stylianos have set a high standard. A good editor should, beyond this introductory note, be invisible to the reader. This invisible hand is much like previous ideas about students; where we hoped to shield them from the politics and general shenanigans so that they could focus on their studies and enjoy their time at university. In this model, we imagined that students should see the graceful swan of Higher Education glide along the lake's surface and never see the frantic paddling of knobby legs and webbed feet below. Changing times mean that this scenario is no longer true and students are now more informed about the policies and practices of Higher Education than ever before and, like academic staff, want to examine the world they live in. As the new editor I hope to guide our authors to deal with big questions – asking them to take a new look at the world of Higher Education and ask, "What is going on?"

In this context, the contributors to this edition scrutinise many key aspects of Higher Education. We open with two articles that deal with creative inquiry – Pan discusses the serious issue of LEGO and Cordeiro examines project-based learning. Hatzipanagos and Tait also offer insight into modern pedagogy through the perspectives of professionals who have been involved with Massive Open Online Courses. From debate on overarching pedagogical issues, Alge moves the discussion to look at the human experience in a sensitive and richly insightful piece on autism and the law. In taking a new perspective on the topics of gender, sex, and society, Hine also offers a sensitive and thoughtful paper that discusses how we might encourage boys' interest in traditionally 'feminine' subjects. Attitudinal perspectives and norms are also the focus of Magne's article where students' attitudes towards accents of English are examined. The last article of this edition returns us to pedagogy, as Blair asks the question, "What is a lecturer?" Finally, we close with a profile of PhD student Abdulazeez Rotimi.

After a cold winter, cocooned in their academic shells, the new season and the possibility of sunshine seems to have stimulated our authors' minds. Spurred on by the changing season, this Spring edition of *New Vistas* is full of new, engaging and thought-provoking content that seeks to ask important questions about the very nature of Higher Education. Here we see a rich collection of original ideas emerging into the academic sunlight, ready for scrutiny, debate and deliberation. Of course, not all change is so progressive and not all change leads to insight and growth but, in a world of transformation, the task of examining the role, purpose and position of Higher Education has never been more important.

Dr Erik Blair
New Vistas Editor

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We welcome thought-provoking scholarly contributions from external and internal authors, with the explicit intention to give a voice to early-career researchers and scholars.

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CONTENTS

Volume 5 | Issue 1

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Editorial

EDITOR'S NOTE

1



Teaching & Learning

WHY DON'T YOU PLAY, SERIOUSLY?

Yu-Chun Pan

4



Teaching & Learning

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN MARKETISED HIGHER EDUCATION: FRIEND OR FOE?

Joao Cordeiro

8



Teaching & Learning

MOOCS: THE 'UNINTENDED' LESSONS

Stylianos Hatzipanagos & Alan Tait

14

Disciplines

AUTISM, CULPABILITY AND THE CRIMINAL LAW

Daniele Alge

18

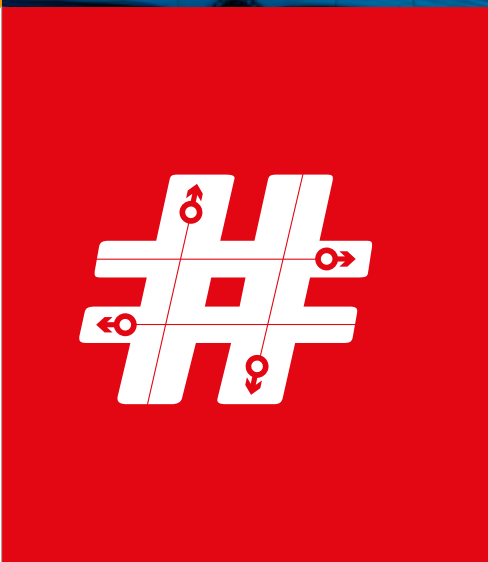


Teaching & Learning

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACCENTS OF ENGLISH

Viktoria Magne

32



Policy

PICK A NEW #LANE

Benjamin Hine

24



Student profile

UWL PhD STUDENT PROFILE

Abdulazeez Rotimi

44

Teaching & Learning

WHAT IS A LECTURER?

Erik Blair

38



Yu-Chun Pan | University of West London, UK

WHY DON'T YOU PLAY, SERIOUSLY?

Play is powerful. Playfulness gives us the space to explore and learn

Children learn how to interact with the world and how to express themselves through playing. As we grow older, we can sometimes forget how to learn through play. LEGO Serious Play (LSP) is a powerful method to facilitate reflective thinking and learning for people of all ages through purposeful play.

Play and learn

People learn in many different ways. Cognitive learning theory considers learning as a process, in which individuals process information and develop certain actions as a result (Mayer, 2002). Such cognitive activities involve the reorganisation of mental processes that develop human intelligence and can take place in various forms, including games. A game is a form of play with goals and structures (Maroney, 2001) and is just as useful in Higher Education as it is for younger learners (James, 2019). Play or playfulness is one of most important elements in gamification, as it allows individuals the freedom to explore and fail within boundaries (Nicholson, 2015). In a game-based learning environment, cognitive learning supports students to obtain specific types of knowledge (Wang et al., 2015). When individuals can play and have the freedom to explore questions and answers from various perspectives, they have wider access to possibilities that can often lead to creative solutions to logic problems (Gray, 2015).

In a conventional and linear learning session, individuals might feel that they should follow rules and guidelines to meet certain requirements and expectations and they might feel that there is only one 'correct' answer. Even indicative answers can sometimes limit an individual's creativity, since they still might want to be 'right'. Avoiding this type of right/wrong situation can help maximise learning opportunities. One way of achieving this is to emphasise the playfulness of learning. The playful mind state allows individuals to explore different avenues with fewer constraints. Such playfulness can be encouraged by having choices – where different personalities are able to choose what they want to play with and how they want to play it. A ludic learning space (Kolb & Kolb, 2010), in which individuals can feel free and safe to play

with their potentials and commit themselves to learn and develop, provides the environment for this playful learning.

Play with a learning purpose: LEGO Serious Play

LEGO Serious Play (LSP) is a method that aims to connect minds and hands to create a deeper understanding of the world and its surroundings via the use of LEGO bricks as metaphors (Kristiansen & Rasmussen, 2014). Metaphors can demonstrate the human cognitive process and provide a new way of expressing experiences and realities. LEGO Serious Play has been used intensively to tackle complex problems by many organisations worldwide, including Google and NASA. LEGO bricks can be seen as mediating artefacts/tools in activity theory (Engeström et al., 1999) to support dialogues and achieve goals (James, 2015). Instead of using words or diagrams to express themselves, students are encouraged to use metaphors with LEGO bricks to explore, construct and express. Individuals identify and build challenges and opportunities as they think, instead of planning everything out before building. The spontaneous approach allows each participant to continuously develop, reflect and enhance their views. The generic LSP workshops consist of several steps:

1. Introduction and warm-up activities to help students feel comfortable with expressing themselves metaphorically
2. Instructor poses the question(s) for discussion with students as a building challenge
3. Students build a model within a set time limit
4. Students share their stories with others and find connections amongst the models
5. Students reflect their explorations and constructions

The generic steps should be tailored to suit the purpose of the learning sessions. One of the most important considerations is how the questions (the building challenges) are structured. The building challenges should be crafted carefully. Instead of asking a big complex question, we can break down the questions into smaller modular or sequential questions such that questions allow individuals to form a shared understanding of what is to be explored yet provide the freedom to explore in their own ways.





During one of the sessions I ran, the students were asked to use LEGO bricks to create and present 'bad project managers'. Once students finished their demonstrations, they were then asked to modify their 'bad project managers' to 'good project managers'. The students presented their 'good project managers' and explained why the changes they made transformed bad project managers into good project managers. All students were able to complete the two tasks, and most were happy to share their LSP creations. It took some time for students to grasp the concept of using LEGO bricks as metaphors to express their views. Therefore, some simple exercises were used to let students familiarise themselves with the use of LEGO bricks. After the warm-up exercise, the LSP activities went smoothly and allowed students to express their opinions using metaphors. All students understood what they needed to build, but they each decided how they might define good and bad project managers and how they wanted to express this. Some students focused on personality; some focused on knowledge and skills; some focused on communication styles; some focused on the atmosphere in project teams. We had so many different answers to the same question, and all answers were valid. Through the storytelling, multiple perspectives were explained and exchanged amongst students. The explanation is the key part of the learning process, as it demonstrates how students learned through the use of LEGO bricks as metaphors. This process required them to express knowledge in their own ways, which reflected their cognitive process of learning and knowledge creation.

Social learning through LEGO Serious Play

LEGO Serious Play also facilitates communication and group problem-solving processes through exploring a subject by building 3D artefacts. The collaborative nature of LSP supports social learning theory, which views learning as a cognitive process that takes place through observation or interaction in a social environment. The structures, constraints, boundaries and identities of communities of practice can shape an individual's learning process (Wenger, 1998). Through the lens of social learning theory, people do not learn and develop knowledge in isolation. The interaction with others and the observation of fellow students or participants in the learning process also provides the context for students to construct knowledge. This storytelling and reflection part of LSP in particular enables social learning. The LSP workshop facilitators ask more questions based on stories with an aim to get students to reflect and share their thoughts more and more.





A pile of LEGO bricks is less scary than a microphone, pens and big blank flip charts. With colourful bricks, nothing looks bad! As a result, many students are more willing to try and share their thoughts. Play is powerful and engaging. With appropriate planning, play can enhance an individual's learning journey significantly

Engagement and participation with LEGO Serious Play

The majority of students engaged with the good/bad project manager session said that they did not expect to see LEGO bricks in the classroom, but they were pleasantly surprised by the task. LEGO Serious Play challenges individuals to express their views in a way that they are not familiar always with. Once past the initial shyness, they start exploring with LEGO bricks to create new and interesting metaphors. They often initiate the discussion between themselves without being asked. During the building process, it is common that students comment on their peers' work. The engagement amongst the group, in addition to their engagement with instructors, is valuable as it creates a learning community where social learning can take place. For students, visual presentation often helps them as well as others understand a subject better. Furthermore, the LEGO creations are visually pleasing, and many students enjoy taking photos and sharing them on social media. With the popularity of social media, LSP provides another opportunity to engage with students by offering something they might want to share with their followers.

Lowering the barriers for participation is yet another advantage of LSP. Some students might not be very confident in giving a short speech or saying something in front of others, because it can be scary to have to organise our thoughts and talk about it on the spot. Therefore, it is important that we find other ways that could be more interactive and engaging, such as group discussion or drawing ideas. But many students still might not want to draw because they fear they aren't artistic or creative enough. With LEGO bricks, it is harder to go wrong. We don't have to worry about whether we can draw a perfect tree or a person that is recognisable. We just put bricks together. If we don't like it, it can be easily taken apart and rebuilt. A pile of LEGO bricks is likely to be less scary than a microphone, pens and big blank flip charts. With the colourful bricks, nothing looks bad! As a result, many students are more willing to try and share their thoughts.

Play is powerful and engaging. With appropriate planning, play can enhance an individual's learning journey significantly. LEGO Serious Play brings playfulness through creativity and choice, yet it maintains seriousness by having clear goals. So, why don't you play, seriously?

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Learning, Pedagogy, LEGO Serious Play, Play

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PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN MARKETISED HIGHER EDUCATION: FRIEND OR FOE?

Project-Based Learning seeks to promote engagement and prepare students with critical thinking skills but pressures due to the marketisation of Higher Education may lead to some frustrating learning experiences

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an active learning method where students 'learn by doing and applying ideas, [engaging] in real-world activities that are similar to the activities that adult professionals engage in' (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2005, p.317). Although PBL methods enjoy greater popularity in pre-tertiary education, there are many examples which describe its use in the context of Higher Education (HE), in particular in the fields of Applied Sciences and Engineering (Perrenet, Bouhuijs & Smits, 2000). One explanation for this apparent trend is offered by Norton (2016, p.155), who suggests that, 'the employability drive has led to an emphasis on designing curricula that focus on graduate skills where pedagogies such as work-based learning, problem-based learning and skills acquisition take priority over more liberal-inspired values such as knowledge, wisdom and criticality'.

Whatever the reasons for adopting PBL in HE may be, this article explores its use based on pedagogy literature and my 10 years of experience as a media lecturer across three different institutions. The answer to the provocative question in the title (friend or foe?) may, in the end, be left unanswered, but I hope to have contributed insight to this discussion; in particular to the tension between pedagogy and managerial decisions dictated by the marketisation of HE.

The business of knowing

The choice of a suitable model of teaching and learning is inevitably linked to the concept of knowledge; a topic that has intrigued philosophers across time. For years, several schools have expanded the big tree of Epistemology – sometimes developing an existing branch, sometimes growing another one in an opposite direction. Objectivism, for example, is an epistemological theory that supports the existence of an objective reality that can be known independent

of the subjectivity of the individual. Elsewhere we find that Empiricism builds on the notion that there is an objective reality, and that we can understand it mainly through our sensory experience but that it is the systematic observation of the empirical evidence that accounts for the formation of knowledge. Whilst these approaches are relevant, and are the foundations of the scientific method - essential for us as researchers – other theories of knowledge have stated that the mere observation of events and phenomena are insufficient to explain how humans learn and create meaning.

Constructivism is one of these theories that 'recognises that reality does not happen preformed and waiting for us merely to copy a picture of it' (Kegan, 2009, p.44). Constructivism critiques the epistemological dualism that blindly separates the object from the subject, acknowledging that who (and where) we are – in all the complexity of what a human being can be – influences the way we know and produce meaning about the world. For lecturers, as promoters of knowledge, this distinction is of the utmost importance and opened the door for what has become known as a student-centred approach to teaching and learning. The mass of students in front of us in the classroom is no longer a homogeneous set of empty boxes ready to be filled with our sapient words, but a complex set of individual producers of knowledge bundled in different shapes, sizes and colours.

When I started my lecturing employment in China, teaching media-related subjects (such as Radio Practice; Video Practice, and Multimedia Programming), I was surprised when I learnt from my students that the phrase 'to study' in Chinese roughly translated to 'read out loud'. I never really confirmed this translation, but at the time – based on my initial (and limited) lecturing experience there – the idea of learning by listening and memorising







made perfect sense, as the students in the classroom were not, in general, as participative as my students in Europe. However, I soon realised that issues related with language and other cultural implications (for example, the fact that it is not common practice to question the lecturer in front of the whole class) were actually deterring students from being more actively engaged. When I adopted more active learning strategies, the engagement balance shifted.

Reflecting on the effect that my naïve etymological discovery produced, I realised that the Western tradition of teaching and learning was not far from the idea of reading out loud to an audience. The word *lecturer*, for someone, like me, with a Portuguese background, clearly brings up the association with the word *leitor* (reader), which – in the context of a classroom – is nothing more than the one who reads out loud. Although the lecture format is not incompatible with a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, active learning pedagogies tend to lend themselves better to the user-centred approach, as they are more malleable in accommodating students' idiosyncrasies and eventually allowing less 'academic' students to adopt a deeper approach to learning (Biggs, 1999).

In the field of pedagogy, Jean Piaget is one of the first authors to highlight the importance of the learner's experience to the cognitive process, but others have followed, emphasising that:

learners construct knowledge with their activities, and that they interpret concepts and principles in terms of the 'schemata' that they have already developed. Teaching is not a matter of transmitting but of engaging students in active learning, building their knowledge in terms of what they already understand
(Biggs & Tang, 2011, p.22)

On a similar note, and equally relevant to this case, is the concept of Situated Learning, a learning

theory based on the assumption that knowledge cannot be constructed independent of the context where the learning takes place, encompassing elements of culture, social interactions and engagement in activities. This concept, coined by Lave (1988), is based on the idea that what we call cognition is, in fact, a complex social phenomenon that focuses on the importance of engaging in an activity within a community. These two elements – 'doing' and 'community' – are central to my teaching methodology.

Problem-Based Learning

Although the jargon associated with Problem-Based Learning (PBL) – learning by doing, active learning, situated learning, etc. – may not be as pervasive across the education spectrum as one would expect, by the end of the 19th century, John Dewey was already pointing in this direction and argued that activities like manual training and cooking were 'fundamental forms of social activity; and that it is possible and desirable that the child's introduction into the more formal subjects of the curriculum be through the medium of these activities' (Dewey, 1897, p.78).

Throughout my last ten years working in HE, I have favoured a learning-by-doing approach, typically following a PBL methodology. This is, for most of the time, the obvious choice for me as the modules I teach are usually practical modules, where the learning outcomes emphasise the acquisition of skills to produce media artefacts (e.g. videos, radio programmes and videogames).

In PBL, projects must have two main components: 1) a challenge (question/problem) that organises and drives activities and 2) artefacts that are developed to embody the answer to the initial challenge and thus represent students' emergent states of knowledge (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). My approach to PBL generally starts with the definition

Adopting active learning methods in the classroom is a challenging, risk-taking exercise where so much can go well and so much can go wrong. To those willing to venture into this territory for the first time, get acquainted with the methods and practices through the literature, and through participating in workshops and training activities



of a task (project) during the first sessions of the module, which then drives all the subsequent activities throughout the unit. It also includes stating the 'rules of the game in a clear way' – introducing students to the available resources (equipment, facilities, support, etc.) and forming workgroups (media products are usually the result of a collaboration between multidisciplinary teams).

In the real world, media projects tend to follow an industry-standard production pipeline defined by three main steps: Pre-Production, Production and Post-Production. This industry process is incorporated into the module's delivery and assessment as project milestones, corresponding to formative and summative assessment opportunities. The conclusion of each stage is usually well defined, both in terms of the timing and outcome, and in each step, students reflect back on what they have produced and make informed decisions regarding the next stage of production. The incremental learning that students experience is represented in the contribution made towards the production of a final artefact. Throughout the whole process, hands-on activities are interwoven with (generally short) lecturing sessions, to provide students with the basic knowledge to tackle the sub-task ahead. Video tutorials and other task-specific materials are also made available online so that each group can access them during each sub-task.

Because learning through experimentation takes place when working towards the final artefact (which will be assessed), I usually have to emphasise the substantial weighting given to the work process in order to ensure students (especially in modules related to the Creative Industries) are not afraid to experiment or even to fail. All failure is a step towards success and the main 'sin' in PBL is failing to engage with the module activities, followed only by failing to learn from previous mistakes. This emphasises the importance of reflective practice in every step of the process.

As a full-time academic member of staff, I've taught in Portugal, Macau (P.R. China) and recently in the UK. I have prepared and delivered modules across all levels, from summer courses to Higher Education, including modules at bachelor, masters and doctoral levels. In all these contexts I've used the PBL approach, and although I've never conducted a systematic study comparing the success of PBL against traditional 'chalk and talk' approaches, PBL has led to excellent results, which are reflected in student engagement (attendance, participation, etc.); the quality of the work produced; skills acquired; student feedback, and my own motivation towards teaching.



Challenges and opportunities

Adopting active learning methods in the classroom is a challenging, risk-taking exercise where so much can go well and so much can go wrong. My suggestion to those willing to venture into this territory for the first time is to get acquainted with the methods and practices through the literature, and through participating in workshops and training activities. However, it is not only the novelty of the method which may be a challenge for some lecturers. Other factors beyond their control can be even more detrimental. Some of these factors may be attributed to the marketisation of HE.

One year working in the highly marketised Higher Education context in the UK made me rethink my whole PBL experience. Methods that I had perfected over the years were now eliciting mixed responses from the students and myself. Gary (2015) has introduced some of the reasons why PBL can be difficult to implement. I have enriched that list with my contributions while providing – when appropriate – the reasons why a marketised HE context can create further difficulties to this practice.

Resource demanding

PBL requires accessing resources in a semi-structured fashion. The facilities, equipment, literature and other technical resources needed for the module are dependent on the type of project a student chooses. This problem can be minimised by defining some boundaries to the project brief (which usually happens in the first year of study), but a complete fixed schedule of the activities (and therefore, resources) cannot be easily defined before the start of the module. For example, radio studios are not, by nature, optimised to sit large numbers (>15) of students at the same time, and even less to have a large group producing work for a long period of time (>1 hour). Nonetheless, it is important to have ad hoc access to the studio during timetabled sessions, so that students can use it when they their scripts are ready to record. This will happen at different times of the semester for each group/student, depending on their skills and project. In the marketised HE environment, the pressure to optimise room occupancy is pervasive. Allocating rooms that are not used in every session raises red flags in the attendance monitoring system and is usually seen as poor resource-management practice. Additionally, multipurpose rooms/studios (with AV display and recording equipment, computers, roundtables, etc.) lend themselves better to this kind of delivery than the traditional room layouts usually available in HE (lecture room, amphitheatre etc.).

Project-Based Learning is usually an exhausting practice for both student and instructor. Being an on-going process, it is not possible to simply disengage when leaving the classroom. The flow of communication between lecturer and student tends to continue in-between sessions, especially when the projects have a relation to real-world events

Difficult assessment

Using one set of assessment criteria to assess projects that are entirely different in nature (different medium, different topic, different group size, etc.) is challenging. Criteria tend to be rather abstract in the beginning and are later narrowed down to more concrete elements depending on the type of project. Students may find the criteria (and brief) too vague, and because some students tend to focus on the assessment rather than learning outcomes – a characteristic amplified by the conceptualisation of the student-consumer – this has the potential to make some students uncomfortable and confused. Additionally, rewarding students for their effort in experimenting and reflecting over their work process can prove to be a challenge. Submissions of media artefacts with lower production values may receive better marks if the correct work process; a reflective approach, and the achievement of learning outcomes related to graduate attributes (creativity, proactivity, etc.) are demonstrated. Finally, Project-Based Learning often involves the use of groupwork, which raises a set of complex issues related to ownership. All these issues can contribute to making the marking process of a PBL project a daunting task.

Economically challenging

Scaling PBL presents economic challenges to institutions, as it performs better under a low instructor-student ratio; by using assignments that are time-consuming to mark, and through the allocation of facilities that may not have full occupancy. Additionally, the nature of the projects may demand that other lecturers (with specific skills) are assigned to the module halfway through the term as guest lecturers or supervisors, making the overall budget for the module difficult to assess from the start.

Exhaustive practice

Project-Based Learning is usually an exhausting practice for both student and instructor. Being an on-going process, it is not possible to simply disengage when leaving the classroom. The flow of communication between lecturer and student tends to continue in-between sessions, especially when the projects have a relation to real-world events (for example, doing the media coverage for an event). Student availability outside the timetabled sessions is usually problematic, as many students have part-time jobs that occupy considerable chunks of their independent learning time. On the other hand, even if the bulk of the project is to be produced during the timetable sessions, attendance becomes a key element for the module (and therefore in the assessment). Institutions with a laidback attendance policy may struggle to implement PBL methods successfully.

Students' comprehension of the process

Students accustomed to more traditional teaching techniques and well-defined assessment briefs tend to find PBL briefs and methods slightly confusing and difficult to grasp. Ill-defined problems form the basis of some PBL assessment briefs, where students have to actively define the goals and production process for their project. It usually takes some time for students to be aware of their agency towards the assessment and overall content of the module, and to understand that their active participation in class activities is essential for their success.





PBL: friend or foe?

All the above difficulties are real (teaching) experiences, however they should not deter lecturers from pursuing active learning methodologies that may support students to engage with their learning at a deeper level. In order to set the right conditions for this method to work, there are some strategies that may prove beneficial. One is the effective use of online technologies for collaboration and communication between members of the group and the lecturer. Project management software widely used in the context of remote co-working can be a useful tool for managing and keeping track of the contribution of each student, while introducing them to a type of tool widely used in the industry.

A completely different approach is to remove quantitative assessment from the equation. The marking system works as an extrinsic motivation factor, which is said to hinder engagement at a deeper level with the module content. This problem is amplified in the neoliberal educational system where the student-consumer is more likely to form idealised expectations regarding the quality of their work; experience, and performance in Higher Education.

Thus, PBL may become a problem as assessment tends to be less objective than in traditional assignment briefings. A system where summative assessment plays a minor role could favour learning, especially in the field of Creative Industries where experimentation should be rewarded.

Problem-Based Learning is a fantastic tool in promoting engagement and preparing students with critical thinking and interdisciplinary transferable skills with which to solve the unforeseen problems of the future. Pedagogy research can be used as a defence against the marketisation of HE, by highlighting that many current practices (such as large class numbers) can be detrimental to effective student learning (Norton, 2016), and 'academics need to become more proactive, positively insisting that educational considerations should prevail over administrative convenience' (Biggs, 1996).



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Keywords

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MOOCS: THE 'UNINTENDED' LESSONS

What is the impact on practice in learning and teaching for academic practitioners and other professionals who have been involved with Massive Open Online Courses?

On a global basis by the end of 2018, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) had registered some 101 million learners on 11400 courses, produced by more than 900 universities (Shah, 2018). In 2018, 20 million new learners signed up for at least one MOOC, down from 23 million the year before (ibid.). Despite the slowdown, the number of paying users may have increased. This extraordinary phenomenon – some 12 years since the first development of MOOCs – has seen an online learning experiment evolve to a mass learning opportunity.

What marks a MOOC out from 'conventional' online learning is that limited professional academic time (sometimes virtually none) is allocated to guiding or supporting individual learners. Critics argue that MOOCs can be inferior to the university courses they mimic because they eliminate this support in terms of teacher-student interactions and involve limited student-student interactions (ExtensionEngine, n.d.). This is probably the biggest difference between other forms of online learning and MOOCs. However, the intense interest in MOOCs stems from relatively recent trends in online learning to enhance design features that support the self-regulated learner (Hatzipanagos, 2015) – self-regulated learning being the 'holy grail' of online education.

In addition to self-regulation, foci of debates on MOOCs have included:

1. understanding student motivation for enrolling in MOOCs: a significant factor that frequently stems from the desire of educational providers to benefit from any motivation the students had
2. the reasons for student non-completion: attrition rates are particularly high in MOOCs and significantly higher than rates in the distance learning sector
3. instructors' reasons for offering MOOCs: pedagogical and learning design motivations are an intense focus of discussion
4. the challenges involved for institutions and staff: frequently this refers to the logistics of

support; setting assessment, and providing feedback to big numbers of students

5. student behaviour in MOOC communication hubs, for instance discussion fora
6. the challenges of peer assessment: still contested by many in the educational community, peer assessment often comes across as a key element of the MOOC model
7. predicting student performance or dropout using statistical methods and learning analytics: the MOOC expansion took place in parallel with a renewed interest of using online environment data to analyse and predict student behaviour (Khe *et al*, 2018)

Critical debates have also included sharp criticism. Zavacki *et al* (2018) summarised the main points of criticism discussed in the academic community around the perceived disadvantages of MOOCs. These, beyond high dropout rates, comprised discussions about questionable course quality; unavailable course credits and accreditation of prior experiential learning taken elsewhere; ineffective assessments; complex copyright issues; difficulty in evaluating students' work; a sense of speaking into a vacuum due to the absence of immediate feedback from students; heavy demands of time and money, and a lack of student participation in interactive functions.

Rationale for our research

While the institutional motivation to engage with MOOCs is, in many cases, unclear, our understanding is that it included the explicit and progressive intention to offer lifelong learning opportunities at no or low cost; to boost the institutional profile; to recruit students onto formal programmes; to make money, and to keep up with the field in a major area of innovation. From a pedagogical point of view, our previous research outcomes indicated that MOOCs offer the potential for innovative instructional designs to support self-regulated learning, unlike approaches



in more 'traditional' Virtual Learning Environment-based online courses (Hatzipanagos & Tait, 2014).

However, this time, in our research we proposed to explore a theme which is as yet, as far as we know, broadly unexamined – namely the 'unintended' impact on campus-based teaching for those who had been involved in MOOC production and presentation. Our hypothesis was that involvement in online teaching through MOOCs would, for many academics, provide their first opportunity in online teaching, and that the modalities of multimedia and other MOOC learning design features might result in changes in attitude towards online pedagogies and learner support.

Methodology

To this end, with the support of the Centre for Distance Education, we interviewed nine academics from five universities and organisations who were involved either in the production or delivery of MOOCs (as MOOC directors of production, academic leads or in learner support) through the University of London supported partnership with Coursera. Our semi-structured interviews were based around the following core lines of enquiry:

Has your involvement with MOOCs had any impact on:

1. Your mainstream teaching? If so, in what ways?
2. Your professional priorities in teaching and research?

We transcribed and coded the collected data to identify dominant themes within these two broad categories.

Findings

The impact of MOOCs can be direct when MOOCs are embedded in the curriculum, either as foundation courses or as learning materials that engage learners in formal study. However, this impact can also be indirect and unintended, e.g. when learning design features of MOOCs challenge and enrich 'traditional' and more established teaching practices. In blended learning, the influence is on campus practices, e.g. introducing MOOC attributes into campus classes and associated online activities.

Impact on mainstream teaching

MOOCs seemed to influence the attitudes of the participants in this study towards 'on campus' teaching and their approaches to blended and online teaching. All the participants in this study believed that their engagement with MOOCs had an impact on their practice. A dominant attitude was that involvement, in part, changed classroom teaching and helped them to embrace new developments in faculty. Responses referred to the acquisition of digital skills; embracing innovations; reviewing key pedagogical practices in learning design on campus (including the use of multimedia); adopting automated assessment, and assessment



by peers. Five participants referred directly to embedding MOOCs into more 'traditional' online learning approaches leading to a transformation of the curriculum e.g. encouraging learners to engage with flipped classroom activities. The following statements from participants illustrate these attitudes:

'MOOCs made me reflect on the role of the teacher... made me think about being personally the conduit of information.'

'[I] combined [MOOCs] with flipped classroom to change on-campus practice.'

'[MOOCs] demystified online learning.'

'[MOOCs] introduced multimedia into campus classes.'

'[MOOCs] have begun to normalise online learning.'

All participants referred to embracing the use of multimedia (particularly video – being the dominant multimedia technology in MOOCs). Adopting assessment techniques and reinstating automated assessment as a 'valid' assessment format was commented on by six of the participants. Changing attitudes towards the use and acceptance of peer learning as an alternative assessment format and reinstating it as a summative, as well as formative, tool for evaluating learner progression and achievement was a key theme in comments by four of the participants. However, not all participants were positive about the adoption of peer learning on campus. As someone commented:

'[I] experimented with peer feedback on campus...not a very big success. On campus students are a bit 'jumpy' having peers giving grades...good for work in progress feedback and formative assessment...but final mark is given by me not a peer.'





Evidence suggests that MOOC involvement has challenged and enriched traditional teaching practice, in both established distance education programmes and on campus teaching activities

Impact on professional priorities in teaching and research

In this part of our research we looked for evidence that MOOCs overall played a role in influencing professional priorities for the participants of this study. In this respect it seems that a significant related factor was embracing change as career progression, and how this could impact on professionals' career advancement. Four participants referred to direct professional gain from their involvement with MOOCs.

Other comments on professional priorities referred to the adoption of teaching resources and engaging with a broader target population of learners:

'Made me aware of a wide range of resources for students.'

'I have developed capacity to engage with a wider range of students, e.g. refugees.'

In two cases it was volunteered that the focus on pedagogy in MOOC development had led to publications, and to exploring a new research area in addition to the core subject based focus:

'[I] have published for first time on learning and teaching.'

Participants also referred to the impact that their involvement had on their colleagues' attitudes towards MOOCs and their attitudes to evaluation, including the evaluation of their own practice. It seems that involvement with MOOCs was a catalytic factor there. The ones who were involved were happy to transfer some of the successful engagement with MOOCs to mainstream campus-based and blended learning practices. It must be said that according to our data, this was not always done successfully and there were cases where they did not achieve what they expected. An example of a limiting factor was given as the lack of digital skills and integrating MOOC content without sufficient knowledge of how good practice in MOOCs could be transferred to mainstream teaching. However, a motivating factor was the reduction of teaching workloads that could result from accumulated experience in MOOCs involvement. As an interviewee commented:

'We are getting better at this. We have a good grip now about managing the impact on people's workload.'

Conclusion

While our investigation was small scale it suggests involvement with MOOCs has indeed had indirect and unintended outcomes on mainstream teaching practice. There is evidence to suggest that MOOC involvement has challenged and enriched traditional teaching practices for the participants of this study in both established distance education programmes and on campus teaching activities. It has achieved this by:

- Supporting engagement with a wider range of learners
- Stimulating reflection on learning, teaching and assessment practice
- Reviewing professional priorities in learning and teaching

In addition to the range of motivations for institutional commitment to MOOCs, it may be added that MOOCs seem to play a change agent role by accelerating innovation with digital practices in both distance and campus based programmes.

The article is a summary of research undertaken in 2017 and 2018 for the Centre for Distance Education of the University of London.

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Online learning, open learning, learner support, learning design, professional development, digital skills

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AUTISM, CULPABILITY AND THE CRIMINAL LAW

Although the criminal justice system now strives to accommodate defendants with autism, the criminal law remains the domain of the 'reasonable man' and struggles to define culpability in neurodiverse individuals



Over the past decade, there have been considerable strides in recognising the issues faced by individuals with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (hereinafter 'autism'). Alongside social changes and increased public awareness, the criminal justice system has become alert to potential challenges inherent in dealing with autistic suspects, defendants and witnesses. However, the criminal law itself is based on the premise of the (neurotypical) 'reasonable man' and it is argued that this results in the potential for inconsistency and injustice. This article considers the relevance of autism to the criminal justice system, before providing a critique of the current legal tests to determine criminal intention and culpability (in particular regarding rape), when applied to defendants with autism.

Autism in the criminal justice system

The current diagnostic criteria for autism are 'persistent difficulties with social communication and social interaction' and 'restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests' (which includes sensory behaviour), present since early childhood, to the extent that these 'limit and impair everyday functioning' (DSM-5, 2013). These factors in combination, alongside the co-occurring learning impairments and mental health issues which many autistic individuals present with (Mannion & Leader, 2013), provide real challenges in determining the appropriate level of criminal culpability of individuals with autism. There is no evidence that autism itself is a causal factor in offending behaviour, but features of the condition may predispose some autistic individuals to have contact with the criminal justice system. These include poor understanding of social rules and cues, suggestibility, impulsivity, reduced ability to feel empathy, reactive aggression when anxious, and an obsessive pursuit of specific interests (Woodbury-Smith & Dein, 2014).

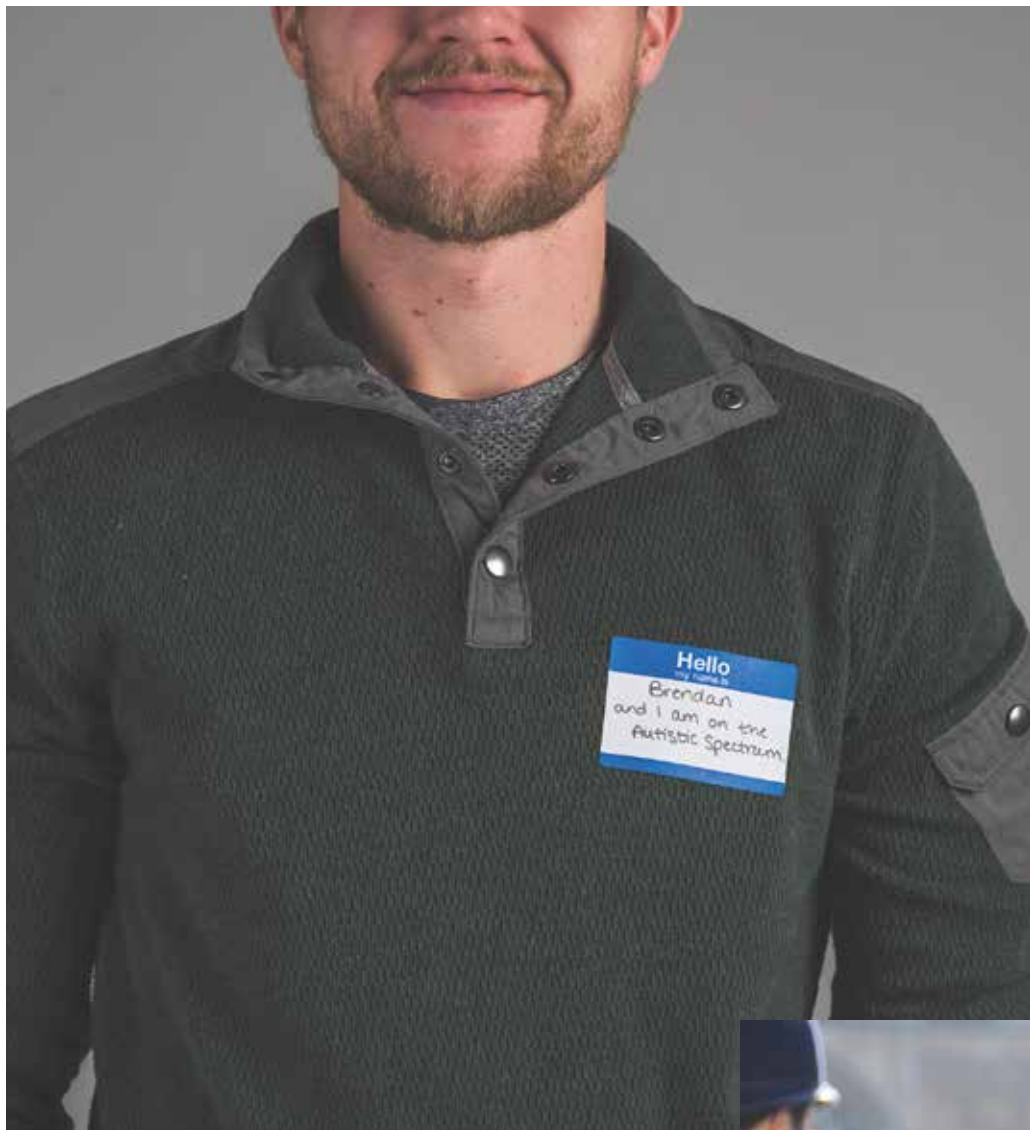
There is no evidence that autism itself is a causal factor in offending behaviour, but features of the condition may predispose some autistic individuals to have contact with the criminal justice system

The criminal justice system in England and Wales has responded with a range of guidelines and best practice recommendations for professionals within the criminal justice system, for example, toolkits and training for advocates, police and the judiciary (Allely, 2015). These developments are welcomed, although inconsistencies and gaps remain. For example, women and thus female suspects and defendants with autism may present differently and are underdiagnosed and underrepresented in the research (National Autistic Society, 2015). Nonetheless, despite progress within the criminal justice system, it is the criminal law itself which determines whether certain behaviours amount to an offence, and there are no specific provisions for autism or related neurodevelopmental disorders in criminal legislation. However, case law such as Gary McKinnon's high profile battle against extradition to face computer hacking charges (*McKinnon v The United States of America* [2008] UKHL 59) has highlighted some of the tensions in reconciling autism with understandings of criminal culpability and punishment.

Mens rea and the 'reasonable man'

In order to ascribe culpability, the criminal law relies on two fundamental elements: the *actus reus* (guilty act) and the *mens rea* (guilty mind). Although there are some exceptions, it is a basic tenet of English criminal law that both elements must be present in order for a defendant to be guilty of an offence, but it is the *mens rea* which is key, and provides the moral justification for punishment (Horder, 2016). The definition of *mens rea* varies greatly, and, depending on the offence in question, may be dependent upon a defendant's intention, recklessness, or occasionally, negligence. These categories of *mens rea* are in turn interpreted differently across different offences so that, for example, recklessness in criminal damage is defined differently to recklessness in manslaughter. The result is that a variety of objective, subjective and twofold tests operate within the criminal law, in order that juries and the judiciary may assess the culpability of a defendant's 'guilty mind' against the specific criteria for the offence with which they are charged.

Critics have long argued that this renders the criminal law irrational and unprincipled, but that the ostensible justification for this lack of consistency is that it allows justice to be done in individual cases (Horder, 2016). However, it is argued here that even where a defendant's



subjective state of mind may be considered as part of the *mens rea*, the law's assumption of neurotypical cognitive processes and social communication operates against autistic defendants. It is an established principle of criminal trials that unless a defendant is unfit to stand trial, they are considered to be able to function within a normal range of cognitive abilities (Horder, 2016). Fitness to stand trial is defined as the ability to give, receive and understand instructions relating to a criminal trial (*Robertson* [1968] 1 WLR 1767); a low bar which many autistic defendants, even those with moderate learning difficulties, will pass. They will thus be judged against the criteria of the law's 'reasonable man', who is not an 'ordinary' man but rather a legal fiction, capable of weighing up actions carefully and rationally (Moran, 2003).

Mens rea, rape and autistic defendants

By way of an example of how presumptions around *mens rea* may impact differently on autistic defendants, it is instructive to consider the *mens rea* of rape. The literature on autism's relationship with offending has identified sexual offending as

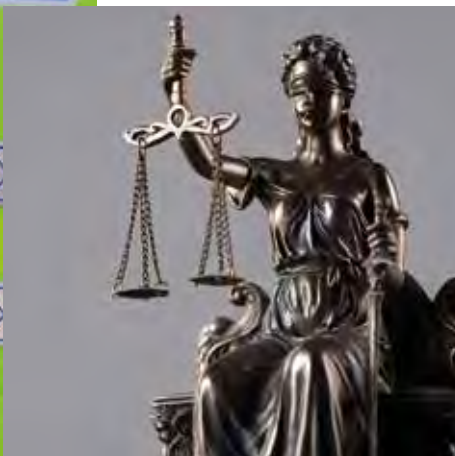


In order to ascribe culpability, the criminal law relies on two fundamental elements: the actus reus (guilty act) and the mens rea (guilty mind). Although there are some exceptions, it is a basic tenet of English criminal law that both elements must be present in order for a defendant to be guilty of an offence, but it is the mens rea which is key, and provides the moral justification for punishment

a potential issue, given the social communication inherent in an understanding of consent (Cea, 2014). The Sexual Offences Act (2003, s.1) provides that in order to be guilty of rape, a defendant must intentionally penetrate the complainant's mouth, vagina or anus with his penis, without a reasonable belief in the complainant's consent. Two issues arise here: firstly the meaning of an 'intentional' penetration, and secondly how the law determines a defendant's lack of reasonable belief in consent. Regarding the requirement for an intentional penetration, it can be argued that impulsivity and a lack of understanding of bodily boundaries and privacy (Attwood, 2007) could lead to a defendant not being able to form the *mens rea* of intentional penetration. Nonetheless, case law to date has defined this provision as relating solely to the physical act; an understanding of the consequences is irrelevant (Ormerod & Laird, 2018).

The second issue is more complex. How can we reliably assess an autistic defendant's culpability for an offence whose *mens rea* is the absence of a reasonable belief in another party's state of mind, when it is precisely this lack of understanding of social communication and empathy which forms part of the diagnostic criteria for autism? Section 1(2) of the Sexual Offences Act provides that '[w]hether a belief is reasonable is to be determined having regard to all the circumstances' and it is this caveat which renders the *mens rea* not wholly objective, which is relevant to autistic defendants. Lord Justice Hughes ([2013] EWCA Crim 3) gives the example of a situation in which reasonableness of a belief could turn on a defendant's ability to read subtle social signals, and indeed in Sultan ([2008] EWCA Crim 6) the defendant was granted a retrial after evidence of his Asperger's Syndrome had not been considered by the jury in the course of his rape trial.

However, the characteristics of a defendant which may be considered in the course of establishing a reasonable belief are far from settled. A 'wholly irrational' or 'delusional' belief in consent is unlikely to be deemed reasonable (Horder, 2016), but the line between an autistic defendant's obsessive compulsions and the jury's perception of an irrational or delusional belief may be a very fine one. Freckleton (2012, p. 372) argues that the key to such cases is expert evidence about the 'nexus between such conditions and accused persons' criminal responsibility'. Given the wide spectrum of the condition, some autistic rape defendants will have an adequate understanding of consent; some may, depending on the context, and others may have extremely limited understanding despite functioning well in other respects. The only workable standard of 'all the circumstances' then becomes a subjective one, supported by medical evidence. However, this was not Parliament's intention in drafting the law, which was expressly intended to achieve a more objective *mens rea* for rape; the appellate courts are likely to be presented with further difficult cases as a result.





Conclusion

Despite an increasingly nuanced understanding of autism within the criminal justice system, the criminal law struggles to apply consistent and objective criteria to the criminalisation of autistic defendants. As the example of the *mens rea* for rape illustrated, case law has made allowances, but these are piecemeal, and subject both to judicial discretion and the faith of the jury in expert evidence. It may not be possible – nor desirable – to legislate for the full range of human responses to situations which fall under the remit of the criminal law, but the law's continued reliance on the 'reasonable man' looks increasingly fragile.

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Keywords

Criminal law, justice, autism, courts

Despite an increasingly nuanced understanding of autism within the criminal justice system, the criminal law struggles to apply consistent and objective criteria to the criminalisation of autistic defendants



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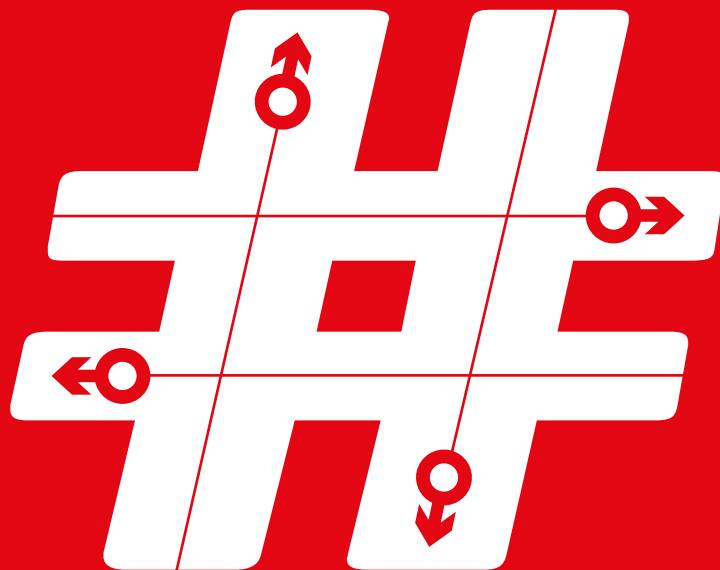
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PICK A NEW #LANE

How can we increase boys' participation and interest in Literature and Language, the Arts, Nursing, and Education and Early Years?



Whilst campaigners have justifiably concerned themselves with increasing young girls' participation in STEM, an equally important equality issue has thus far been overlooked. There has been little to no interest in promoting young boys' participation in traditionally 'feminine' subjects and careers, like the Arts, Literature, Nursing, Early Years Education, and the creative industries

Whilst the importance of encouraging girls and women to enter and participate in subject areas and professions typically dominated by boys and men is now widely-acknowledged, initiatives promoting movement in the opposite direction are yet to take shape. So how can we encourage boys' interest in traditionally 'feminine' subjects, and why does it matter in the first place?

Getting girls into STEM

For several years, a critical awareness has blossomed regarding the importance of getting girls into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) subjects and careers. Specifically, a number of grassroots, charity-backed, and government funded initiatives have emerged to encourage girls and young women to branch into these traditionally 'masculine' disciplines. Such programmes (like girlsintostem.co.uk, or the WISE campaign) have arisen within a broader context of increasing equality and liberation for women and girls worldwide, particularly in Western democracies, and are based on both Liberal and Socialist feminist principles emphasising freedom of choice and economic empowerment respectively as essential in the pursuit of equality. This has been complimented by an increasing evidence base suggesting that, whilst biological influences on gender identity are not immutable, gender differences in behaviour, including subject choice, are largely shaped by the environment (O'Siochru, 2018).

The necessity of such campaigns is supported by both statistics and research. For example, whilst most STEM subjects receive an equal share of male and female entrants at GCSE level, the numbers skew dramatically at A-Level in favour of boys (take Computing 88%, Physics 77%, Economics 68%, and Mathematics 62% as examples; Joint Council for Qualifications, 2018). This trend continues at degree level (e.g., 82% of Computer Science undergraduates are male; HESA, 2017) and in the associated occupations and industries (e.g., only 16% of IT Professionals are women, ONS, 2018). Such patterns are identified as reflections of outdated patriarchal values and roles which label such subjects and professions as 'better suited' to men and their associated abilities, which in turn restrict and discourage girls from choosing STEM career paths. Indeed, research supports the idea that agents in the environment (such as parents and teachers) directly shape and influence girls' choice of subject at school and beyond (see Blakemore, Berendaum & Liben, 2009, for review), and that such messages influence girls' estimations of their own abilities (which are not reflective of

actual performance; Salikutluk & Heyne, 2017). It is therefore no wonder that so many organisations are now interested in addressing the dearth of girls entering into STEM professions, both in order to honour commitments to gender equality and freedom of choice, but to also increase access to the considerable earning potential attached to careers in these disciplines.

The missing picture

However, whilst campaigners have justifiably concerned themselves with the important task of increasing young girls' participation in STEM, an equally important equality issue has thus far been overlooked. Put simply, there has been little to no interest in promoting young boys' participation in traditionally 'feminine' subjects and careers, like the Arts, Literature, and health sciences, or in getting them into traditionally female-dominated careers, such as Nursing, Early Years Education, and the creative industries.

The lack of discourse around this issue is deeply surprising when examining the complimentary statistics for these subjects and professions. For example, for almost every 'male-dominated' subject at the STEM end of the spectrum, a 'female-dominated' counterpart exists at the Humanities, Language, Literature and Arts end. Indeed, as Table 1 (page 29) highlights, the problem of female-dominated subjects at A-Level and within Higher Education is just as pervasive, and extreme. Examining a few select areas in more detail further highlights the extent and gravity of the issue.

Literature and languages

In their excellent 2018 Psychology Today article, Schwanenflugel and Knapp present some of the most worrying statistics surrounding boys' engagement with reading. For example, that boys have scored lower than girls in reading at all grade levels every year since 1992, and that the gap grows larger as children grow older (Schwanenflugel & Knapp, 2018). The authors also provide some of the reasons why boys, on average, make a slower start in reading, and may have more trouble engaging with reading as an activity. Importantly, they highlight the disconnect between the expectations we place on boys to be highly physical and outdoorsy, and the quiet, calmness of reading, which may discourage boys from developing an interest from a young age. Their observations, which are supported by an increasing number of reports and studies, are particularly alarming when considering the importance of early reading on later school success.

The lack of boys choosing to pursue subjects related to literature and language (as well as modern

language subjects), is reflective of their disinterest, and may both result from, and contribute to, the labelling of these subjects as 'feminine'. For example, only 24% of students taking English Literature A-Levels were male, as were only 31% of students studying English Language. Modern languages fare no better, as French, Spanish, and German all enjoy more female than male entrants (33%, 32% and 39% male students respectively). This pattern is reflected at both degree level, where women make up around 70% of undergraduates pursuing a 'languages' degree (HESA, 2017), and in occupational statistics, with women making up 60% of authors, writers and translators (Office for National Statistics, 2018). In short, reading has a boy problem.

The Arts

This attritional pattern is reflected in another typically 'feminine' subject area – the Arts, with boys comprising only a quarter of those taking Art A-Level in the UK. Figures for performing/expressive arts are even more striking, with boys making up only 8% of entrants (a total of 126 boys across the country). This is again reflected in uptake at university level, with only 36% of those taking degree programmes related to 'Creative Arts & Design' being male (HESA, 2017). And, whilst men are healthily reflected in some arts occupations (such as entertainers and presenters, musicians, and photographers) they constitute less than 8% of dancers and choreographers nationwide (Office for National Statistics, 2018).

The stigma surrounding the Arts begins in childhood, as detailed by Doug Risner (2009), in 'What we know about boys who dance', stating 'From an early age, many young girls are encouraged to pursue dance as a gender-appropriate activity, whereas it is something largely avoided by boys, who are rapidly learning and synthesising appropriate male behaviour, which generally means avoiding all that is feminine, homosexual or un-masculine to any degree' (p. 62). In other words, as outlined for reading above, boys are likely to absorb gendered information from the environment which either directly or indirectly positions activities like the creative arts and dancing as inappropriate for them, as boys; messages which are often reinforced by important figures in the environment, along with the media. In this sense, such subjects are deemed as either not aggressive, loud or physically challenging enough for boys, or that they are too physically/emotionally expressive or flamboyant.



Nursing (and Allied Health Sciences) and Education/the Early Years

Along with artistic pursuits and reading, boys also receive discouragement from engaging in pretend play relating to 'lower status' care roles, including childcare. This includes, for example, interacting with dolls, and playing 'house' with peers (or rather, discouragement against playing any kind of father role that isn't solely constructed around work, or being a 'provider'). Such dissuasion occurs within the context of broader parental disapproval of boys' gender atypical play, and in the policing of their feminine behaviour (Kollmayer, Schultes, Schober, Hodosi, & Spiel, 2018). As such, it is argued that boys are often prohibited from developing skills centred around nurturance and care, as well as related emotional and socio-cognitive capacities such as empathy.

It is therefore no surprise so few boys consider careers in Nursing and the Education sector, particularly the Early Years. For example, only around 10% of nursing students in the UK are male (HESA, 2017), with this figure directly reflected in the 11% of registered nurses who are male (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Such low figures are echoed across a whole suite of 'caring' professions including Midwifery, Health and Social Services, Healthcare, Psychology, Social Work, therapy professionals and other healthcare associate professions. Teaching and the provision of childcare suffer similarly uninspiring numbers. For example, in 2018 only 2% of UK workers in early years settings were male, with two out of every three councils stating that they employ no men at all in these roles (Hemmings, 2018). Moreover, only 26% of teachers in primary (15%) and secondary schools (38%) are men (Office for National Statistics, 2018), suggesting that, whilst male participation appears to increase as children get older, such careers are still overwhelmingly female-dominated.



Masculine stereotypes of being authoritative, self-assured, ambitious, and more logically minded supposedly therefore place men in a better position to enter more scientific and business-oriented professions



Patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity

So where are all the men? Ironically, the same explanation can be given for both the dearth of males choosing the subjects and professions described above, and the under-representation of women in STEM subjects. In that, both phenomena stem from the notion that particular traits, activities, roles and professions are associated with either men or women. For example, characteristics associated with femininity such as being kind, sensitive, nurturing, emotional, caring and attentive supposedly place women in a better position to fulfil societal roles relating to care, such as nursing, teaching and childcare – both paid and unpaid. Masculine characteristics of being authoritative, self-assured, ambitious, and more logically minded supposedly therefore place men in a better position to enter more scientific and business-oriented professions.

In brief, the two principal issues with patriarchal explanations of gendered behaviour are as follows. Firstly, gender expression and biological sex are often conflated or too strongly linked (that is, that men and women are presented as only capable of displaying masculine and feminine traits respectively, or that displaying such traits is only appropriate for one sex). Such ideas purport that this is the way individuals are biologically programmed – ignoring environmental explanations. This approach results in, and is further strengthened by, the second issue; the presentation of the two sets of characteristics as binary (that is, that masculine and feminine behaviours are mutually exclusive, and that one must principally display either feminine or masculine traits). This acts in a limiting capacity for various behaviours – as individuals feel falling into one category excludes them from the other.

Such issues are exacerbated by the politicisation of gender ideology and debate, as well as the complex and undefined nature of the

relationship between biological sex and gender identity and behaviour. However, regardless and arguably because of the complexity of that relationship, it can and should be argued that, even if some or most of our gendered behaviour does have some relationship to biological sex, no individual should be disbarred or discouraged from displaying any form of ‘gendered’ behaviour, be it masculine or feminine, if they are capable of doing so. It can further be argued that enough evidence now exists to demonstrate a significant learned component to gendered behaviour, and that the conceptualisations of masculinity and femininity, and associated appropriateness of behaviours for men and women, are, in part, constructed. Indeed, one of the principle outcomes of multiple feminist movements is the acknowledgement of the existence of a socially constructed gender ideology, and that, when challenged, women are capable of displaying whichever feminine or masculine traits they wish, providing they are presented with the opportunity.

Problematically, within such a framework, value is not only assigned based on congruent versus incongruent performance of gendered behaviour, but to the differing sets of behaviours themselves. Put simply, the construction of gender outlined above also places a greater value on masculine traits and characteristics, particularly those characteristics viewed as most honourable and admired, otherwise known as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). Importantly, this means that society views many masculine traits as inherently desirable, and boys in particular are encouraged to orient themselves to and strive towards such an archetype. Moreover, this model also presents feminine characteristics as carrying low value and status, not only in terms of societal perceptions of those behaviours, but in the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards associated with them (for example, the lower status and pay afforded to many female professions).

Understanding gender in this way carries two important implications. Firstly, it explains why feminist scholars have been able to successfully argue for the liberalisation of behavioural repertoires available to women – for whilst this violates a pervasive societal pressure for gender conformity, this is to some extent compensated by the performance of [masculine] behaviours that are still societally valued. Secondly, it explains the absence of a parallel debate concerning the relaxation of male gender role norms, as the performance of feminine behaviours is judged in the context of the lesser societal value placed on such actions and the compromise to hegemonic masculinity ideals.

It's time to talk boys

The arguments outlined above therefore present a tremendous challenge for scholars, businesses and individuals in the fight to pursue a true equality agenda; one which incorporates and values freedom of choice for boys and men as well as girls and women. But several arguments present as to why it is time to stimulate discussion surrounding boys' participation in typically 'feminine' subject and careers:

Some arguments have been put forward regarding the existence of a possibly unique male contribution to various industries, particularly in the education sector and improving experiences of school for young boys. Such proposals either: outline the unique contribution of male teachers, purely by virtue of being male; highlight the influence of male role models on boys' perceptions of school, academic achievement and positive masculinity, or both. Both arguments centre around male teachers as mediators between a restrictive and incompatible school environment and young boys, as those who are uniquely situated as having 'been through' the experience of boyhood and associated masculine expectancies. This also positions male teachers in a powerful pastoral position, as many boys might only feel comfortable talking about sensitive, intimate or sexual issues with another man. Similar representations are made regarding nursing, where some male patients may feel more comfortable with a male nurse. And whilst such arguments are usually rooted in the problematic essentialist assumptions outlined in the previous section, they should not be overlooked, as, whether due to biology, socialisation, or both, the childhood experiences of boys and girls are often markedly different, and this may provide a unique insight for men in these professions.

Even if the contribution being made by such men is not unique to being male, it is unique to them as individuals, and they should feel free to give it. In this sense, and in line with radical feminist theory to liberate everyone from an unjust society by challenging existing social norms and institutions (Willis, 1984), it is important to address the issue of choice for both men and women in the context of gendered behaviour. Thus far, as the party more significantly disenfranchised from more highly rewarded occupational choices, the conversation has largely centred around increasing avenues of participation for women. However, challenging barriers to choice for both men and women benefits everyone, as it serves to erode the oppressive gender structures which benefit no-one.

By institutionally, societally and individually promoting freedom of choice in this way, the

experiences of those already within gender 'atypical' professions will also improve, as stigmatisation and stereotypes are both gradually eroded. This is important in preserving the occupational choices of those individuals who have already chosen to defy societal expectations, and to protect their job satisfaction and professional longevity.

Finally, encouragement of such discourse and increased participation by men in 'feminine' subjects will also likely alleviate anxiety and gender-role stress in younger children who wish to enter gender 'atypical' professions. Indeed, children experience a high level of strain in navigating their membership to differing social groups, and in maintaining performance of behaviours deemed as congruent to that membership. The more we can remove this tension the better.

Getting boys to pick a new #LANE

So, how do we get boys engaged in these areas? The steps outlined below provide some directions in meeting this challenge.

In a world characterised by technology and social media, having a catchy, coherent and effective centre point for a campaign is crucial. For example, the hashtags of #STEM and #GirlsInSTEM on platforms like Twitter have made it easy for efforts from multiple bodies and organisations to become synthesised, and easily located. This article therefore proposes #LANE (Literature/Languages, Arts, Nursing, Education/Early Years) and #PickaNewLANE as the hashtags around which to centre this a corresponding movement for boys, and to provide a singular voice for those wishing to support this cause.

No movement or campaign is effective without substantial support from reputable and powerful bodies. Just as with the campaign to get girls in STEM, there needs to be a recognition of the issue from governmental and charitable bodies; as well as a desire to provide both the funding and the political will to address the issue. This will be difficult, due to the issues outlined above in recognising this as a problem at all, and due to the subjects and career areas involved. However, the arguments put forward in this piece should capture the attention of any who truly claim to be in favour of gender equality.

Educational bodies, from Early Years settings up to Higher Education institutions, have a role to play. In earlier settings such as primary and secondary schools, institutions and educators should promote and encourage flexibility in subject choice, and provide impartial career advice to both young boys and girls which cater to the child's interests, rather than their sex. Admittedly, this is not easy to distinguish, as children's experiences are often shaped





Increased participation by men in 'feminine' subjects will also likely alleviate anxiety and gender-role stress in younger children who wish to enter gender 'atypical' professions

Subject	Male Entrants	Female Entrants	Total	% Male*
Computing	9075	1211	10286	88%
Physics	29422	8384	37806	78%
Mathematics (Further)	11577	4580	16157	72%
Other Sciences	1919	792	2711	71%
Economics	21211	9599	30810	69%
ICT	3871	1772	5643	69%
Design and Technology	7227	4221	11448	63%
Mathematics	59270	38357	97627	61%
Business Studies	19633	13234	32867	60%
Physical Education	6724	4583	11307	59%
Political Studies	9393	8571	17964	52%
General Studies	1726	1696	3422	50%
Music	3145	3106	6251	50%
Geography	16310	17228	33538	49%
Chemistry	25574	28560	54134	47%
Critical Thinking	12	14	26	46%
History	21803	27134	48937	45%
Media/Film/TV Studies	11288	14096	25384	44%
Other Modern Languages	4096	5577	9673	42%
German	1220	1838	3058	39%
All other subjects	3849	6223	10072	38%
Classical Subjects	2134	3523	5657	38%
Biology	23495	40324	63819	37%
Irish	122	210	332	37%
Law	3967	7298	11265	35%
Spanish	2680	5575	8255	32%
English Language	5615	12434	18049	31%
French	2646	6067	8713	30%
Drama	3362	7877	11239	30%
Religious Studies	5837	14690	20527	28%
English Language & Lit.	2684	6992	9676	28%
Communication Studies	314	848	1162	27%
Psychology	14845	44863	59708	25%
Art & Design Subjects	10683	32351	43034	25%
English Literature	10425	33865	44290	24%
Sociology	8001	26872	34873	23%
Welsh	114	422	536	21%
Performing/Expressive Arts	126	1394	1520	8%

TABLE 1: Number of Male and Female Entrants for A-Level Subjects in the UK

* Subjects with over 60% male entrants are shown in white text, and those with over 60% female entrants are shown in black text





by socialisation processes, but educators should make every effort against exacerbating this process, instead making young children and adolescents aware of their choices and options. Likewise, universities have a role to play in increasing the participation of men on particular courses, through advertising, role modelling and even financial incentives.

Role modelling, across all of the #LANE areas, is particularly important. Many young children look to role models within the environment to learn gendered information; thus, providing young boys with examples of men engaging with the subjects and careers outlined above is important in teaching them that such pursuits are open to them, as boys. Research using reading as an example supports this approach, as boys who were recommended books by their father, and who felt they could talk to their father about what they were reading were more likely to be avid readers themselves (Merga, 2014).

However, none of the above will be effective until our individual and societal perceptions of 'appropriate' gendered behaviour change. In this sense, the most effective campaign for promoting boys' participation in these subject areas and careers begins within the home – as parents afford increasing flexibility in behaviour to both their young boys and girls. For example, by providing young boys with more diverse and less restrictive representations of masculinity, or by giving less emphasis and attention to traditional gender roles overall, we may begin to promote a new freedom in boys' behaviour, similar to that afforded by an increasing number of young girls.

This approach must also be reflected at societal level, starting with a fundamental reassessment of patriarchal gender structures which place lower value on traditionally feminine characteristics, values, interests and occupations. Until this happens, few adolescents, male or female, will make the active choice to enter into professions which carry lower status and financial recompense, particularly in the demanding world in which we now find ourselves.

Just as girls should have the right to hypothesise, test, and experiment, boys must have the right to nurture, create, and teach if they choose

Meeting the challenge

On face value, the question of increasing boys' involvement in traditionally 'feminine' subjects and careers like the Arts and Nursing is one of simple gender equality. On closer inspection however, myriad issues present in understanding why boys may become disinterested in such pursuits, and in meeting the challenge of rectifying the current landscape. However, an important message from the reflections provided above, is that such issues are never neatly divided between boys/men and girls/women. Instead, it is the same constructions which serve to disadvantage and restrict *both* groups, albeit in different ways, and with differing associated outcomes and injustices. Therefore, the drive to increase boys' participation in #LANE subjects and careers is worthy of our attention, as, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr, 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'. Indeed, just as girls should have the right to hypothesise, test, and experiment, boys must have the right to nurture, create, and teach if they choose.

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STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACCENTS OF ENGLISH

In the multicultural context of a post-92 university, the student body resists the urge to make broad evaluative judgements based on a speaker's accent

This report presents the results of a pedagogical intervention conducted at the University of West London with a group of first year undergraduate students. Previous research in social psychology and sociolinguistics indicates that language attitudes play an important role in how groups of speakers are perceived and evaluated based on their accent (Garrett, 2010). Given the multicultural nature of the University of West London with a large population of ethnic minority students; international students, and members of staff from across the globe, it was important to elicit students' attitudes and beliefs about native and non-native accents of English. The task here was twofold: first, to elicit overt attitudes towards native and non-native accents of English and second, to prompt a critical reflection on the experience of providing accent judgements.

English as the lingua franca

Seventy five years ago the American linguist Edward Sapir (1933) predicted that 'one of the great national languages of modern times, such as English or Spanish or Russian, may in due course find itself in the position of a de facto international language, without any conscious attempt having been made to put it there' (p. 169). In the contemporary world, that 'great national language' is English. Most intercultural communication is conducted in English and English has gained a dominant role in many international domains such as politics, business, culture, research and education (Pennycook, 2017). This international spread of English has had important implications for speakers of English as an additional language as English is often used as a means of communication between speakers who do not share the same first language. In other words, English is used as a lingua franca to communicate with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. However, there are negative attitudes towards non-native varieties of English especially in educational domains (McKenzie & Gilmore, 2017).

Attitudes to English

Since Labov's (1966) seminal work on the social stratification of English in New York City and the process of stigmatisation of certain linguistic features found in American varieties of English, language attitudes have become a core concept in sociolinguistics. In the UK, language attitudes studies began in the 1930s with Pear's (1931) study – in which BBC radio listeners were invited to supply personality profiles of voices heard on the radio. The result showed that different forms of British English triggered a variety of social evaluations. Since then these stereotype-based judgements of voice have become the main focus of further research in the area of language attitudes.

From more than 80 years of research into language attitudes, it has been established that listeners can make an evaluative judgment based solely on speaker voice qualities. Research also suggests that non-linguists are willing to evaluate different language varieties and assign positive or negative personality traits to speakers of those varieties (McKenzie & Gilmore, 2017). Such reactions can have far-reaching consequences for the speakers of different varieties of English such as a negative outcome of a job interview (Rakic, Steffens & Mummendey, 2011); linguistic discrimination in court (Lippi-Green, 1994), and stigmatisation of foreign accented English (Janicka, Kul & Weckwerth, 2008).

In educational contexts, negative attitudes towards linguistic diversity may affect teachers' perceptions of students' abilities and may result in standard accent bias (Pantos & Perkins, 2012) and even affect Higher Education accessibility (Ryan & Giles, 1982). In light of the above discussion, it is important to understand students' attitudes towards different varieties of English given the number of international students and staff at the University of West London.

A variety of methods has been used to elicit language attitudes, but the matched guise technique (MGT) has been particularly influential. The idea

In educational contexts, negative attitudes towards linguistic diversity may affect teachers' perceptions of students' abilities and may result in standard accent bias and even affect Higher Education accessibility





with MGT is to circumvent the observer's paradox by using a covert method of attitude elicitation. The procedure is built on the assumption that speech style triggers certain social categorisations that will lead to a set of group-related trait-inferences (Gilles & Billings, 2004). For instance, a voice classified as 'French' will predispose listeners to assign a set of personality attributes or qualities to the speaker. A classic model of MGT entails listening to a series of recorded speech samples of the same text read aloud by a number of bilingual speakers with the same level of proficiency in both languages. First, they read it in English and then a translation equivalent in French. Listeners or judges then evaluate the personality characteristics of each speaker using voice cues only, for qualities such as intelligence, friendliness, ambition, honesty, sincerity, and generosity. The main advantage of this technique is that it allows eliminating the effects of the more idiosyncratic features of speech such as rate, loudness, timbre, and pitch.

The matched guise technique also has a rigorous design which allows only one manipulated variable (e.g. accent), so that only this variable remains to explain variable patterns of response among listeners. As a result of research legislation that emphasised research ethics, a modified version of the MGT known as the verbal guise technique (VGT) was adopted with speech samples provided by authentic speakers of each variety rather than one speaker using different guises. For the purposes of the reported intervention, the VGT was employed to collect voice samples. Each speech sample was provided by an authentic speaker of a different variety of English reading the same text to keep the content of the message constant and to reduce the variability in terms of vocabulary and grammar used.



A classic model of MGT entails listening to a series of recorded speech samples of the same text read aloud by a number of bilingual speakers with the same level of proficiency in both languages. First, they read it in English and then a translation equivalent in French



Research design

The intervention was conducted at the University of West London where much of the student population, in regards to Higher Education, is from a 'non-traditional' background. In other words, the majority of undergraduate students would be the first to attend university in their family. Students participating in the intervention were enrolled in BA (Hons) Education Studies and Early Years Education. The courses consist of four levels (3-6) that are designed to prepare students to work in the area of Early Years and Education in the UK.

Eight recordings were selected from the author's corpus of digital recordings to act as stimuli for the intervention. Each sample was selected to represent an accent of English found in London. Two samples were provided by female Spanish speakers of English; one by a Chinese male speaker; two by French male speakers of continental French; one by a female speaker of Quebec French; one by a male speaker of Standard American, and one by a female speaker of Southern British English. Each speaker was asked to read and record the same text in English that was chosen by the author and deemed age and context appropriate. The read aloud task maintained the same grammatical and vocabulary structures to keep the focus of the intervention on the accent of each speaker and not their grammatical accuracy. All eight speakers were university students and were approximately of the same age. The speech samples were similar in length ranging from 15 to 20 seconds. They were presented to the student-participants in a lecture theatre over the central sound system.

Prior to the intervention, the students were asked to indicate their age, gender and first language on a pen and paper questionnaire distributed individually. Thirty two Level 4 students aged between 18-40 participated in the intervention. All participants were full time students. There were 11 non-native and 21 native speakers of English. Drawing on the verbal guise method of attitude elicitation, the student-respondents were asked to complete two tasks. The first was a keyword task in which they were instructed to write down their first reactions as they listened to each of the eight accents. The second task invited the student-respondents to reflect on their rating experience by answering the following questions: 1) What was the experience like for you? 2) Has your perception of foreign accents changed in any way after the exercise? 3) Would you recommend this exercise to raise awareness of the diversity of English? Why? Their written responses were collected at the end of the intervention for analysis and evaluation.

Linguistic features

Following Garrett (2010), the responses were coded to establish the pattern for the comments. In line with the previous research in language attitudes and based on the coding results, the keywords were grouped into four categories: Linguistic features; Affective (positive and negative); Status and social norms, and Comparison. The responses varied greatly in their level of detail and language used to describe each accent.

Linguistic features. This category includes non-technical descriptions of each accent. The keywords varied from naming the nationality to detailing the exact phonological features such as the sound "th" in "that".

Affective. These keywords varied from positive to negative. Positive comments included comments such as "good English", "nice" or "easy to understand". Negative comments included descriptions such as "dull", "monotonous" or "difficult to understand".

Status and social norms. These features included such elements as level of education and correctness (e.g., "intelligent", "educated in an English school", and "posh").

Comparison: Some comments were comparative in nature. For instance, keywords included words such as "similar to" or "like". This category included the highest number of responses as it is often easier to compare your English to that of the other using yourself as the reference point.

Native and non-native English

In order to see whether native and non-native groups of speakers were perceived equally, a further analysis was conducted by looking at the groups of keywords pertaining to the native and non-native voice samples.

The native group of speakers was represented by two accents: Southern British English and Standard American English. These accents proved to be the easiest for the student-respondents to recognise as they named them correctly 99% of the time. Most of the comments simply stated the speakers' nationality or described the voice samples in favourable terms such as "clear" and "intelligent". The British accent was described variously as "wonderful", "clear", "soft" and "posh". However, there were some negative evaluations of the American voice sample, which could be explained by the political situations in the world today with the US dictating the political climate. There were participants describing the American accent as belonging to Trump or as "dull", "monotone" and "difficult to understand". Overall, the students noted the clarity of the native accents, which translated into being a first language speaker and not a learner.

English native speakers often expressed a high degree of empathy with people whose first language is not English by acknowledging that they might experience difficulty in using English. Some participants even found the non-native accents more pleasant than the native speaker accents. They insisted on the importance of comprehensibility rather than nativelikeness or as one student-participant put it, “the message is more important than the accent”

The non-native group of speakers included two speakers of continental French; one speaker of Quebec French; two Spanish speakers from South America, and one Chinese speaker of English. These accents proved to be more difficult for the participants to recognise with the exception of the Chinese voice sample. Despite the difficulty in naming the exact country of origin of each voice, most participants were able to indicate the non-native status of the speakers. The majority of the voices received mildly positive comments aimed to encourage and support the speakers. The notable exception was the Chinese voice sample, which was singled out as “incorrect” and “not fluent”. Overall, the comments mostly related to the speed of delivery with the slow delivery attributed to a lower level of proficiency in English. One speaker of French received predominantly positive feedback with comments such as “clear” and “easy to understand” but he was still recognised as a non-native speaker of English based on the intonation contours.

In sum, second language speech was generally perceived as less easy to understand when compared to native speaker speech. Keywords used to describe the samples focused on the effort required in processing the speech. Several respondents attributed the perceived low levels of English proficiency to the lack of exposure to English or to an earlier stage of second language acquisition.

Impact of the task

Students’ written responses to whether they would recommend the accent evaluation task as an awareness raising exercise were collated and coded for recurring themes. According to the results, the student-participants found the experience transformative and helpful in becoming more aware of the diversity within the UK, London and the University. As one of the participants noted, “I used to stereotype people who had a foreign accent. But now through this activity I realised that I shouldn’t stereotype people because their accents are different”. The students strongly recommended the activity as a way of raising critical language awareness and tackling linguistic prejudice: “This kind of activity understands foreign language more. Especially among young people where they tend to label or stereotype quickly”. One of the students wrote that, “we assume that we do not have any bias until we are asked to judge someone based on their voice and we actually do it based on how someone sounds”.

The non-native student-participants, in particular, enjoyed the activity as a way of creating a sense of comradeship between non-native speakers of English who reported that the

exercise made them feel good about their own accent. They also called for the acknowledgment of the differences between speaking first and second language and the difficulties associated thereof. The non-native respondents also asked to stop equating accent with bad grammar. They called for making the general public more aware of different accents and linguistic diversity especially in the parts of the country outside of London.

Some student-respondents insisted that their perceptions of foreign accents had not changed because they were already positive. In part those attitudes were explained by family background or the multicultural context of London – with over 300 languages spoken on a daily basis. One of the participants explained that you would need a little more patience to understand accented English but everyone should be encouraged to do that. Another student felt very strongly about it: “No, it hasn’t changed. I still believe everyone is the same and shouldn’t be judged by the way they sound or where they come from” or as a different respondent put it, “it doesn’t matter to me if you have a foreign accent”.

In their reflections, English native speakers often expressed a high degree of empathy with people whose first language is not English by acknowledging that they might experience difficulty in using English. Some participants even found the non-native accents more pleasant than the native speaker accents. They insisted on the importance of comprehensibility rather than nativelikeness or as one student-participant put it, “the message is more important than the accent”.

One student would not recommend the activity because there was not enough diversity and all accents sounded clear to her.





Reflection

Research in the area of language attitudes acknowledges the existence of language stereotypes that might result in negative attitudes towards certain varieties of English. However, there are not many practical applications of those studies that look at more classroom-oriented interventions. Reflecting on the experience from the perspective of a non-native speaker of English and a university lecturer, I believe there is a need to continue to work towards raising students' critical language awareness. Given the results of the intervention, we need to keep emphasising the importance of diversity, multiculturalism and multilingualism. Despite slightly less positive overt evaluations of the non-native voices, there were mostly positive attitudes observed in the reflection part of the intervention. The student-participants wanted to be seen as open to diversity and multiculturalism. In their reflective comments, they refused to stereotype based on the first language background or accent.

Conclusion

In the multicultural context of a post-92 university, there is a need to raise language awareness among student population. The present intervention was designed to elicit underlying language attitudes and stereotypes associated with native and non-native accents in English held by Level 4 undergraduate students at the University of West London. Contrary to previous research in language attitudes, the student participants in this study were quite reluctant to make evaluative judgments based on speakers' accents; perhaps due to the diversity of their own peer group. The qualitative comments demonstrate that students appreciated the opportunity to look closer at their deep-seated attitudes and reflect on them in a structured environment. Such interventions allowed students to question the notions of language and identity in the safe environment of a structured classroom. Whilst the findings here present a picture of a student body that resists the urge to make broad evaluative judgements based on a speaker's accent, issues related to multiculturalism, super-diversity, and multilingualism still need to be explored in more detail - through actively involving students in critical discussions and reflections, especially in the context of a multicultural university.

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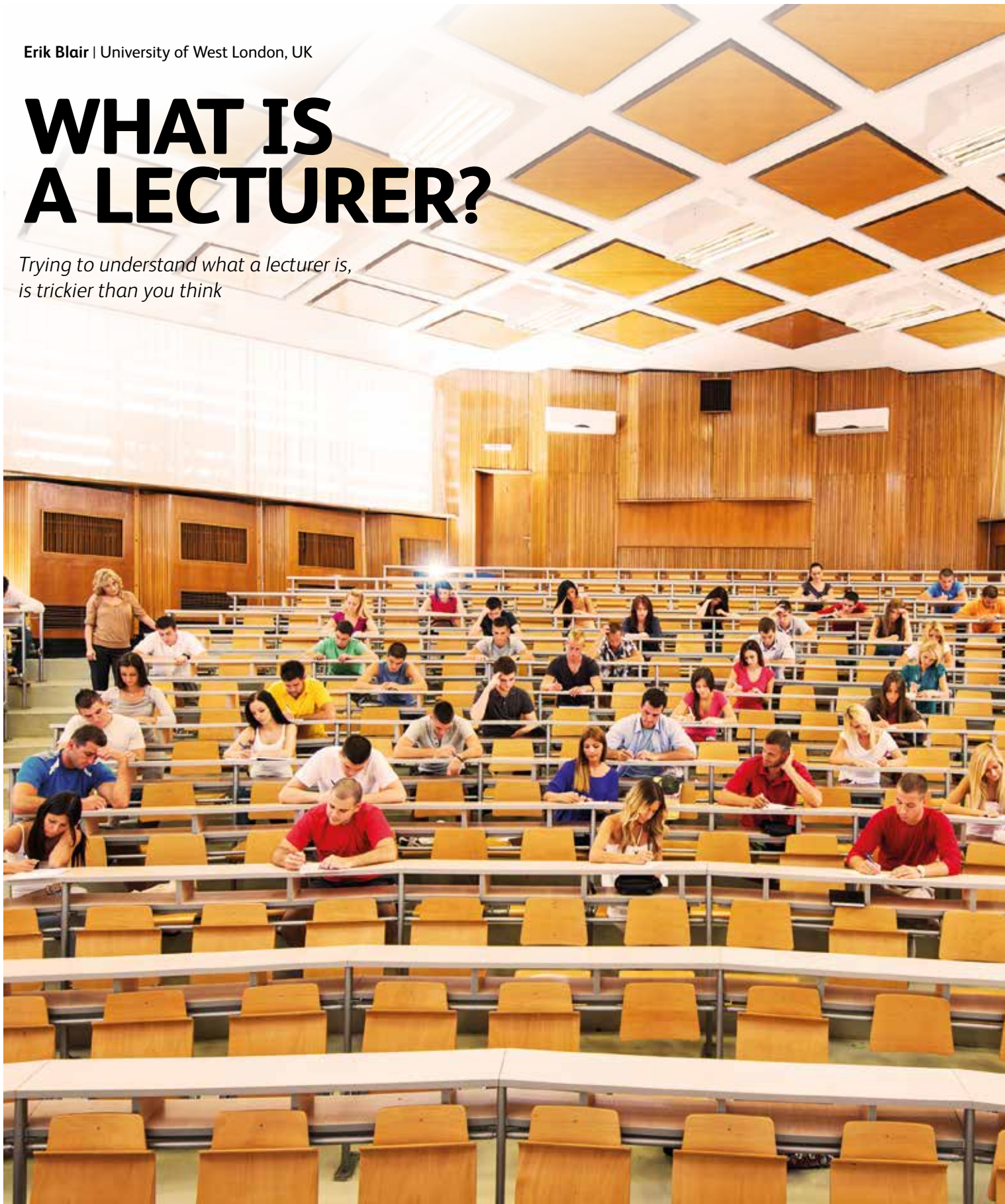
Keywords

Language awareness, attitudes, accents

Erik Blair | University of West London, UK

WHAT IS A LECTURER?

Trying to understand what a lecturer is, is trickier than you think





Becoming a lecturer 'is not a simple matter, with almost a decade required to prepare an individual for even an entry-level role' (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012, p.876). With so much effort involved it might be worthwhile trying to find out just what a lecturer is. A quick internet search using the term 'lecturer' will give you a surface definition but this definition might be somewhat limited in scope – focussing on the duties and responsibilities of working in Higher Education. Here I dig below surface definitions and start to explore the interaction of various personal and professional definitions. In doing so I hope to move the conversation beyond a discussion of what a lecturer *does* and instead focus on exploring what a lecturer *is*.

Disciplinary roots

Everyone who teaches in Higher Education has their own approach to teaching and, because everyone who teaches in Higher Education has had a personal experience of being taught, almost everyone has their own understanding of what a lecturer might be (and almost everyone has something to say about teaching). However, being a lecturer is not just one easily defined thing. Many individuals develop their conception of what it is to be a lecturer in Higher Education through engaging with their pre-formed ideas about how their subject should be taught and learned. Their understanding of the role is rooted in their passage through their disciplinary learning. These discipline-specific thoughts can be both conscious and subconscious but they tend to be limited in their scope – focussing on the story of how one individual became an expert in one particular aspect of one particular discipline. Further, the philosophical underpinnings of pedagogy are often individual and disciplinary rather than institutional or universal.

Being a lecturer in the 'supercomplexity' (Barnett, 2000) of a modern university is much more than just being a scholar within a certain field. To understand what it means to be a lecturer involves problematising how we might conceptualise learning; examining what we think education is for; questioning our own identity as academics, and situating ourselves within the modern world. Here I try to make sense of the academic environment through what Bourdieu (1984) calls 'exoticising the domestic' – where things that are taken to be common place or regular activities are examined afresh. Doing so allows the significance of everyday academic roles and identities to be examined in relation to the space in which Higher Education takes place.

As well as engaging with the knowledge base, lecturers may have learned the methods, modes and practices of their subject in a number of ways: this may have happened through their own studies; through practical experiences; through personal reflection, or through some blend of these. For some, their pedagogical approach has been carefully constructed through scrutiny of educational theory; critical reading of educational literature, and reflective practice. Many develop their practice by studying

towards formal qualifications such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education. But there are also a great many lecturers in Higher Education who developed their practice tacitly and built their understanding of their role through direct on-the-job experience. No matter which route individuals have taken to arrive at the place called 'lecturer' it is their destination that sets out the requirements of their role. These requirements are often outlined in job descriptions but the tasks undertaken by a lecturer can also be rather nebulous and difficult to capture. Once we begin to exoticise the domestic we begin to capture what it is to do the work of a lecturer and, from this position, start to problematise the rationale for our activities.

Becoming a lecturer and doing the work of lecturing are not only personally negotiated experiences. If lecturers take different journeys then they will be differently tainted by their experiences but working within a shared institutional system tends to have a normative effect. Foucault (1986:23) suggests that 'we live inside a set of relations' therefore any discussion of meaning and any interpretation of what a lecturer might be also needs to consider communicated norms within the context of Higher Education. These norms are the result of, amongst other things, governmental and institutional directives; student expectations; graduate outcomes; departmental and disciplinary cultures, and the various needs of the various stakeholders.

A rose by any other name

Say the word 'lecturer' you might get a mental picture of what you think teachers in Higher Education look like, you might even get a picture of how they dress; how they act, and what they do. Most people can create their own definition of a lecturer - though these definitions are often narrow and prejudiced by personal experience. However language can change its meaning according to its application in a specific context and the 'game' being played with the language, therefore the meaning of the word 'lecturer' is likely to depend on who is using the word and the specific conditions in which they find themselves. In his analysis of private and public language, Wittgenstein (1953:5293) tells of two boys – each with a matchbox containing what he calls a 'beetle'. They agree never to look inside each other's matchbox and also agree that they both contain a beetle. In this analogy we see that the thing that is a 'beetle' is private to each boy but that the term only has meaning through its public use. It does not actually matter what is in the box and the word 'beetle' now means 'the thing inside the box'. In a similar way individuals (lecturers, students and the public at large) discuss the thing inside their head that they call 'lecturer' (their beetle).

Language is also context-bound: the context of Wittgenstein's example was a game played by two boys but two zoologists working in the tropical rain forest of Trinidad and Tobago would play a different 'game' and have a different understanding of 'beetle'. From this we can see that the word 'lecturer' has a private meaning but that it can only make

sense if others share a similar understanding of the word – in this way, language is private-shared and no one person can decide on the ‘true’ meaning of any term. Here we find that, whilst we might all have our own different versions of meaning, these various ‘meanings’ are often not so different and can overlap with the meanings of others. This vast Venn diagram of meaning then holds a practical truth of what a lecturer is at its middle – where there is broad agreement (even if this agreed definition is hard to conceptualise or verbalise).

What is the point of Higher Education?

As well as attempting to conceptualise their own role within a Higher Education institution, lecturers might also take a step back and examine what they see as the purpose of Higher Education. Some might consider their role to be focussed on the transmission of knowledge; some might see themselves as the co-creators of knowledge, and others will have a less formulated conception. Many people assume they know what the word ‘education’ means and what ‘education’ is, but are we all sharing the same definition or is this another beetle in another box?

Different schools of thought have sprung up concerning education. Two of these schools can be defined as the Traditional school and the Progressive school. Traditionalists believe that education should be about teaching for specific/extrinsic aims, often concerned with an individual’s function or role in society. The Traditional school of education has all the desks facing front, all the students in silence and the lecturer instructing them. In Traditional education students are taught answers not processes. In the Traditional school students raise their hands to answer questions not to ask them. Traditional education is about raising individuals who will fit into society and work for the common good. However, Progressive thinkers believe that education should be about enlightenment. Here education has broad aims and is intrinsically worthwhile. Progressive education is connected to self-development, self-fulfilment, self-actualisation and ‘ideas of person’. Progressive education is about allowing students to grow and meet their ‘true’ potential.

Both systems have positives and negatives. Progressive education is positive in that it develops systems of thought that are open-ended and personal – but if we encourage people to think for themselves then we must be ready for them to draw all sorts of conclusions. Traditional education is sometimes looked down on, as it seems to focus on developing systems of doing. It is about routine and can even lead to ‘boredom’ but on the other hand Traditional education is less likely to be corrupted by ideals and is more likely to lead to student employment.

Beyond all this, we might wish to consider what our students want. Attending university to learn to be a lawyer, film-maker or economist might involve some ‘narrow’ activity where key skills and first principles are taught, and many students appreciate this tangible learning. Others might want something a little more stretching and feel inspired to grow as thinkers. The



truth is probably somewhere in between – students will learn facts, figures, theories and formulas but they will also develop critical thinking skills and, in doing so, they will become more employable. So one of the jobs of the Higher Education lecturer is to support all this development rather than try to impose their own epistemological perspective. Part of being a lecturer, therefore, is personally negotiating what Higher Education is; negotiating what others might think Higher Education is, and learning to position yourself in this context

The blurring of academic roles

If attempting to find sense in this balance between meaning, perspective, politics and one’s own place in history is not hard enough, then we might also consider that jobs undertaken by lecturers are not fixed commodities. Kinser (2015) discusses how the various aspects that make up the perceived academic role have been ‘unbundled’ in the modern university, so that tasks that once belonged together and were the responsibility of one lecturer have now been split up and passed out to people who have more expertise in particular fields. Among the drivers of this fragmentation are the rapidly-changing workforce demographics; the repurposing of certain Higher Education institutions, and a movement to more hybrid forms of teaching, learning and research (Coates & Goedegbuure, 2012). Therefore academic institutions have had to refocus and notions of academic task have had to be re-thought.

The university is not one unified body, rather it is made up of academic tribes and territories (Becher & Trowler, 2001). With the unbundling of professional roles there can no longer be a simple binary division of academic and non-academic role, instead lecturers are left with roles that are blurry around the edges. In navigating their way through this new environment, lecturers find that their job roles are contested rather than affixed.





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Where lecturers were once expected to perform all aspects of academic practice, there has now been a movement to displace these all-rounders with professional staff who specialise in a particular aspect of the academic role (Blair, 2018). We can see this in the division of the university workforce and the growing number of colleagues who have roles that focus on one particular aspect of the three key aspects of Higher Education: teaching, research and service. For some, this trinity was always a matter of tension as they tried to navigate three positions that they did not feel equally comfortable in and the segregation of role has allowed them to focus on areas of particular strength. For others, this division has been seen as a weakening of their academic autonomy. Some see lecturing as teaching; some see lecturing as the creation and transmission of knowledge, and some have a more complicated personal understanding of the role – all have a preference whether conceptualised, espoused or enacted.

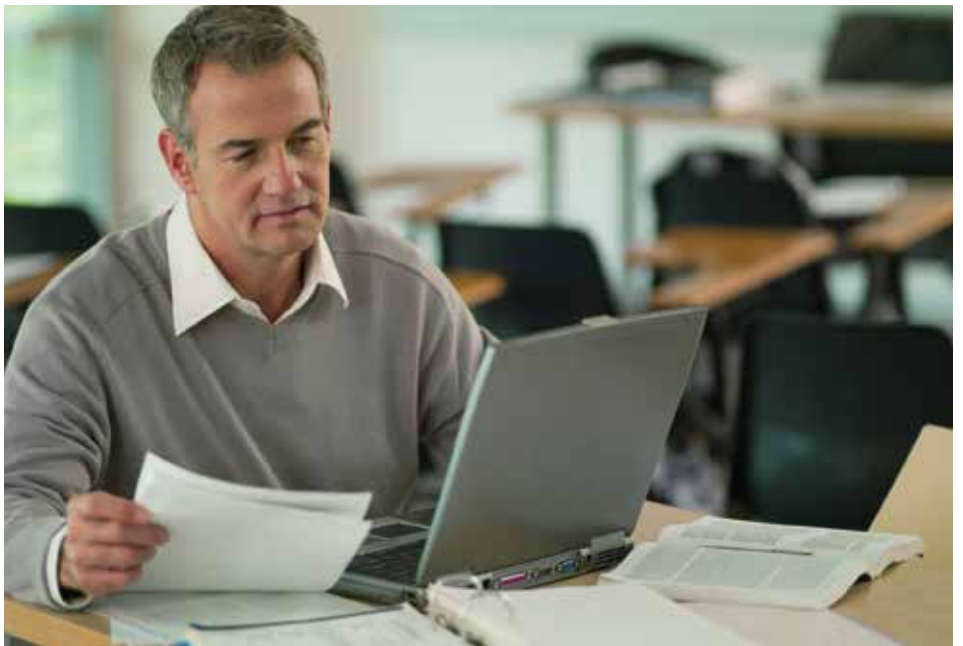
Academia is a contested territory that entails constant struggles over the symbols and boundaries of authenticity... In other words, questions of authenticity and legitimacy are central to the formation of social relations within the academy – with individuals and groups competing to ensure that their particular interests, characteristics and identities are accorded recognition and value (Archer, 2008, p.386).

What do lecturers do?

New iterations of institutional structures and the uncertainty of academic identity have led to a 'disruption of expectation and inconsistencies in the personal projects of academic staff' (Elkington & Lawrence, 2012, p. 59). The blurring of roles and the unbundling of academic practice may have given rise to a feeling of personal insignificance and a sense of disengagement (Briggs, 2005) as blurred boundaries and a reconfiguration of institutional and academic norms leave lecturers without a distinctive and easily definable role. Macfarlane (2011) considers the unbundling of lecturing practice to be damaging to the established wisdom of what it means to be an academic and reports that this unbundling has led to a 'two-directional flow of professional support and academic staff into new para-academic roles' (p.63). In practice, this means that the tasks undertaken by one lecturer in one institution may be divided and shared amongst the professional and academic staff in another. This might also occur within an institution – leaving job roles 'similar but different' depending on departmental needs.

With fluidity in the field of Higher Education; multiple interpretations of what education might be; personally negotiated definitions, and inconsistencies in what universities are for, the task of 'being' a lecturer has become harder to categorise. The function of the modern university exists in a state

Academic work has historically involved teaching, research and service. But under each of these headings lie a multitude of tasks that range from administration to revenue-raising



of flux – affected by, inter alia, finance and funding, government policy, employer desire and student expectations. This movement had led to ambiguity within university lecturing roles – roles that are now locally rather than globally defined. Academic work has historically involved teaching, research and service. But under each of these headings lie a multitude of tasks that range from administration to revenue-raising. Such a breadth of activity means that it is hard for one lecturer to truly understand their role – let alone for there to be a common conception of academic activity and academic identity. Trying to get a handle on what lecturers actually do has, over time, become more difficult and, in recent years, conceptions of academic identities have become more complex, more ambiguous and more fragmented. With this, the tripartite identity (teaching, research and service) has started to fragment. So, if we once knew what lecturers did (and this is debated), we now have a less clear image of what is involved in academic work.

When we ask, “What is a lecturer?” we might initially develop a list of some of the tasks that lecturers undertake. But this is a weak model of understanding. We may have become complacent and started to simply assume that we understand what it is to be a lecturer. Exoticising the domestic offers us the opportunity to problematise our individual journey through Higher Education and our individual perspectives on Higher Education. The super-complicated, multi-modal fluidity of Higher Education means that we cannot truly become a lecturer. Instead we are constantly involved in the process of *becoming* a lecturer – a process that involves our own understanding of the world and interacting with the expectations of others. We each have a beetle that we each call ‘lecturer’. Instead of negotiating to find the universal definition of what a lecturer is, we, first of all, need to open the box and take time to examine our own meaning.

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Keywords

Identity, roles, Higher Education




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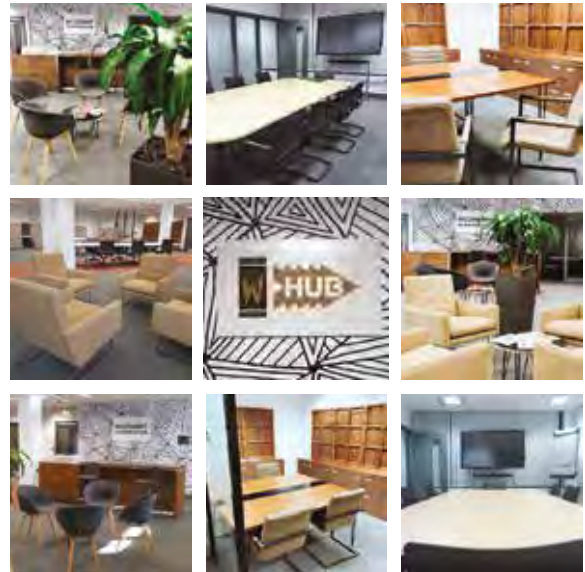
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STUDENT PROFILE



Abdulazeez Rotimi

Course
PhD in Civil Engineering

Year completed
2018

Title of thesis
Impact of the Uses of Various Technologies on the Thermal Performance and Energy Efficiency of UK Hotel Buildings: Application to Hilton Hotels in the UK

The complex and wide-ranging effects of global warming as a result of anthropogenic climate change are now widely acknowledged. Generally, global warming major mitigation strategies are geared towards reduction of greenhouse gases emission especially carbon dioxide (CO₂). This has resulted to the formulation of several measures to ensure cleaner sustainable energy sources and efficiency in all facets of human lives. The United Kingdom is one of the leading countries taking bold steps towards reducing CO₂ emissions and has an ambitious target of reducing emissions by 80% by 2050. To achieve this goal, the government has put a great deal of attention towards ensuring energy efficiency in buildings (residential and commercial) as they are responsible for at least 47% of overall CO₂ emissions.

In the UK research has focused on improving the thermal performance and efficiency of dwellings because they account for most of the existing buildings and statistics have shown that they consume more energy. Commercial buildings account for a sizeable proportion of this building energy consumption and this trend will probably continue to increase.

Abdulazeez's research evaluated the impact of various energy efficiency measures and technologies on the thermal and energy performance of UK hotel buildings. Using 'whole building' dynamic simulation software Abdulazeez examined Hilton hotels with a focus on the knock-on effects that energy efficiency technologies have on the overall energy performance and efficiency of UK hotels, either installed individually or in various combinations.

The study employed a quantitative research approach underpinned by the thermal analysis simulation of various case study hotel buildings to address the supposition that dynamic climatic conditions; building energy consumption estimates; building energy efficiency improvement strategies, and building thermal behaviour can be appropriately simulated to enhance the energy efficiency of commercial buildings and abate the unfavourable effects of global climate change.



Using 'whole building' dynamic simulation software Abdulazeez examined Hilton hotels with a focus on the knock-on effects that energy efficiency technologies have on the overall energy performance and efficiency of UK hotels

Supervisors:

Dr Ali Bahadori-Jahromi and Dr Anastasia Mylona

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