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# new vistas

Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

**New Vistas** | Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

# EDITOR'S NOTE

*Volume 8 | Issue 1*

With the spring semester in full bloom, a new edition of *New Vistas* has arrived. This spring edition is the journal's biggest achievement yet—quite literally. In eight higher education (HE) and discipline-focused articles, emerging and established academics are engaging once again with the complex agenda of HE in its local, national and global contexts.

The first set of articles explores current issues within UK's higher education sector, starting with **Gamlath**, who considers sustainability-based careers and graduate prospects, arguing for sustainability and employability to be strategically embedded in HE curricula. Also looking at curriculum development, **Byrne and Weerawardane** discuss the importance of professional skills as part of HE education, suggesting a multi-dimensional approach to embedding these into modern degree courses. **Pan and Ressin** focus on degree apprenticeships; their article explores common challenges of work-based end-point assessments and proposes a set of recommendations for mitigating these challenges. The final article of the first set is by **Dinc**, who investigates different variables affecting students' engagement in online learning and their impact on satisfaction.

The second set of articles showcases the strength of disciplinary research at the University of West London, with **Henderson's** timely piece laying out some of the critical issues concerning the future of the BBC and public service broadcasting as part of the mid-term Charter Review that starts in April 2022. **Murji** shines a light on different approaches to thinking about diversity beyond race or using catchall terms and categories such as BME. **Robson** offers some unique insight into gender as a factor in changing attitudes to art market values in New York, and the key role of tastemakers in this process. Finally, **Olsen's** position paper argues for a structurationist understanding of advertising, outlining aspects of the reciprocal relationship between society and advertising.

This spring issue of *New Vistas* has explored important themes such as sustainability and employability, which are at the heart of not only the University of West London's own strategic priorities, but also imperative at a national level. In future editions, we look forward to exploring further such trending topics and reading about creative pedagogic approaches to learning and teaching, as well as disciplinary research from all areas within HE.

**Dr Dennis Olsen** and **Dr Dinusha Weerawardane**
*New Vistas* Editors

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## MISSON STATEMENT

***New Vistas* is published by the University of West London (UWL) and provides a forum to disseminate research, commentary, and scholarly work that engages with the complex agenda of higher education in its local, national and global context.**

**Published twice a year (with occasional special issues), for a broad (academic, international and professional) audience, the journal will feature research and scholarly analysis on higher education policy; current issues in higher education; higher education pedagogy; professional practice; the relation of higher education to work and the economy; and discipline-specific research.**

**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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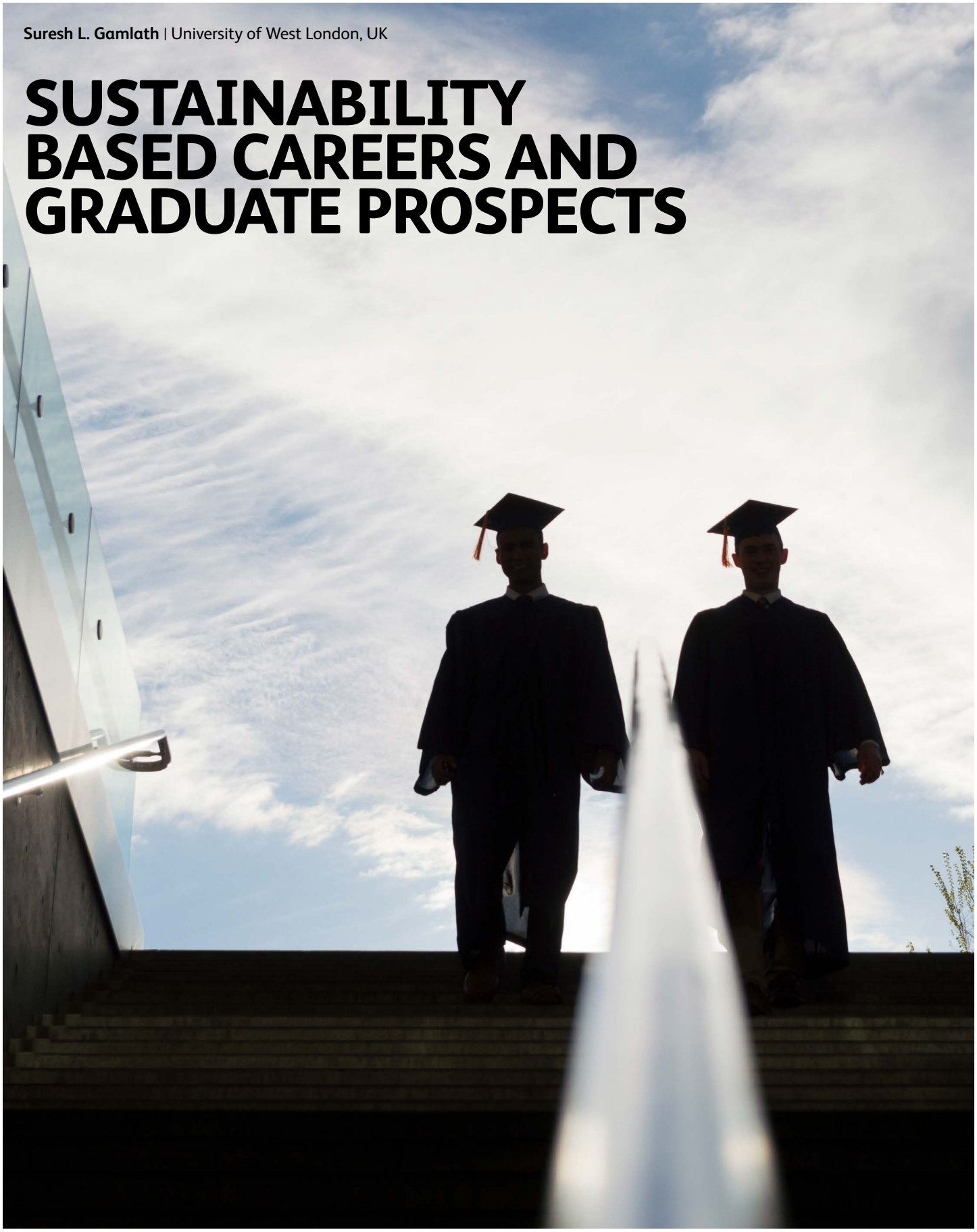
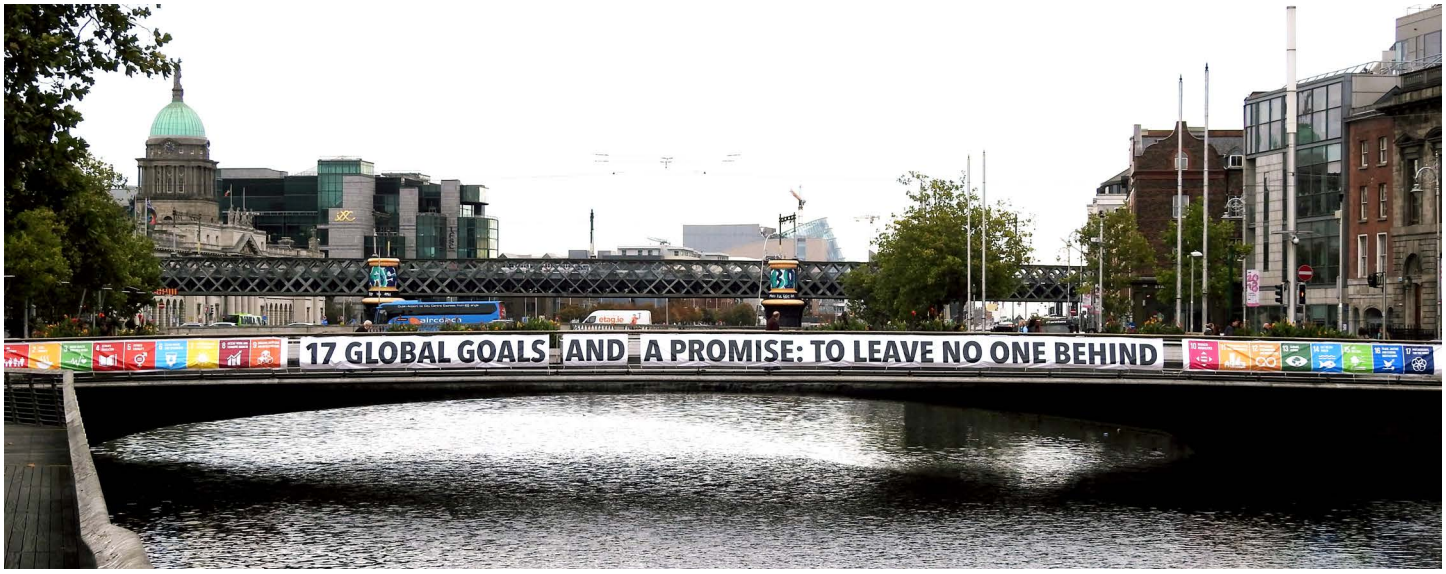
# SUSTAINABILITY BASED CAREERS AND GRADUATE PROSPECTS






***Abstract:***

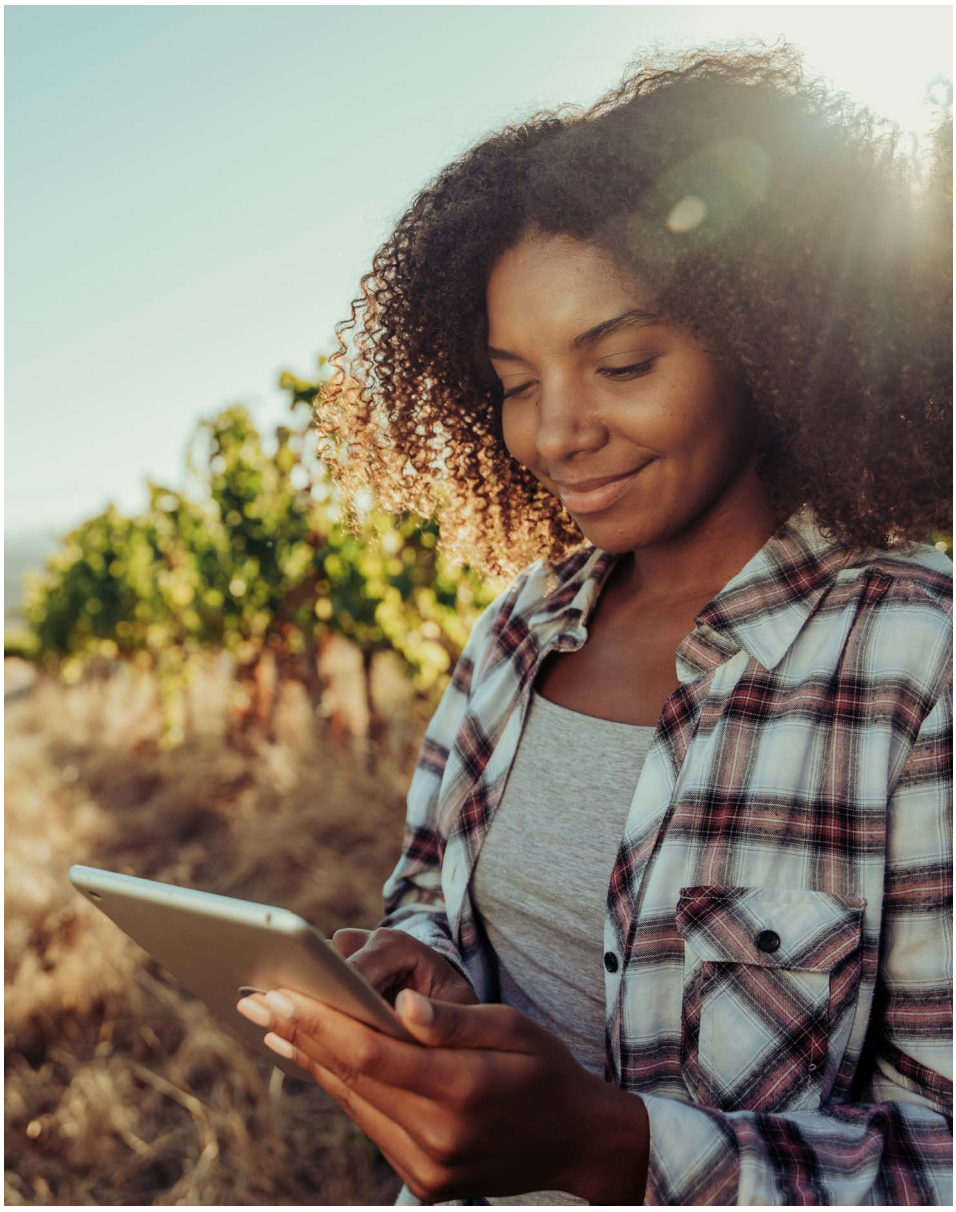
*The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals aim to create a sustainable global future through seventeen inter-related objectives that encompass the environment, social justice, and good governance. Countries are deploying national programmes to meet their sustainable development targets. Sustainability-based career roles are being created at a rate faster than employers can fill them. Recent evidence suggests that employment in sustainability sectors and related professions can provide more favourable opportunities for graduates seeking their first job. Universities are also called upon to do more about sustainability. They are increasingly coming under scrutiny from students as to their sustainability performance. Embedding sustainability in the curriculum and linking it to employability is needed to ensure the relevance of higher education to students and employers. Educators must also consider the efficacy of their pedagogy in teaching sustainability.*

*Some media networks dubbed the latest COP a 'fragile win', and criticisms abounded regarding the 'slow' pace of progress. However, the fact remains that nations now have little alternative but to move forward on the SDGs*

In September 2015, 193 countries, including Britain, adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that contain seventeen interrelated objectives to create a more sustainable global future. Two years later, the United Nations began formal efforts to measure, monitor and track the progress of countries towards the attainment of these goals. In November 2021, these goals were reaffirmed by the global community at COP 26 in Glasgow. Some media networks dubbed this latest COP a 'fragile win', and criticisms abounded regarding the 'slow' pace of progress. However, the fact remains that nations now have little alternative but to move forward on the SDGs.

National governments, responding to pressure from civil societies, have committed to de-carbonisation and social regeneration targets. Developed countries are combining the re-building of their (COVID-struck) economies with sustainable development strategies (OECD, 2020). Organisations face increasing pressure from governments, consumers, and investors to improve the sustainability of their practices. As a result, employers are creating jobs in sustainability at a faster pace than they are able to staff them (Lombrana, Mathis and Lima, 2021). Universities and colleges too, are coming under increasing pressure to improve their sustainability performance (Bryant, 2021), not only in de-carbonising their campuses, but also their curricula (Hess and Maki, 2019). Sustainability rankings for universities could over time be used by students to determine their choice of institution and may even be used to determine funding levels. It therefore makes good 'business sense' for governments, public organisations, companies, and universities to incorporate the SDGs into their decision-making processes at all levels.

Terms such as 'Green', 'Sustainable', 'CSR', 'Net-Zero', 'De-carbonisation', are commonly used to refer to efforts aimed at attaining the SDGs and moving towards a more sustainable global future. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) are three broad terms used by 'socially responsible investors' to describe the incorporation of SDGs into investment decisions. Career roles that involve implementing the SDGs at a national, industry or organisational level also have a wide-ranging nomenclature: the term 'Green Jobs' refers to those occupations that focus on 'positions in agriculture, manufacturing, R&D, administration, and service activities aimed at substantially preserving or restoring environmental quality' (UN Environment Programme). The European Environment Agency's definition also includes the economy and human well-being related to the environment. 'Sustainability Jobs' include career roles that allow organisations to continue and prosper in their core business, while ensursing the environmental and social impact of their activities are kept to an acceptably low net-negative level. 'ESG careers' tend to focus on accurately measuring the environmental and social impact of investments – they include analysing supply/value chains, corporate operations, government policy, environmental/social projects. For the purpose of our discussion, we shall use the term Sustainability-Based Careers (SBCs) to include all career roles that have as their central purpose the attainment of the UN SDGs at a national, industry or organisational level.

**Growth of Sustainability Based Careers**

Investment in ESG and green sectors have enjoyed phenomenal growth in recent times (Gamlath, 2020). While inefficiencies exist, these sectors are expected to grow further, as investors demand greater accountability from corporate boards, and civil societies demand more action on environmental and social issues from their governments. The pressure on employer organisations to improve their sustainability performance may come not only from investors and governments, but also from employees. Companies find that job seeker perceptions of employer sustainability performance is a key determinant of employment choice. Therefore, in order to attract and retain much needed talent, employers must pay sufficient attention to their own sustainability credentials (Presley, Presley and Blum, 2018).

SBCs are not merely the product of sustainability transformation, they are a necessary antecedent to the attainment of SDGs—of which policy makers are well aware. In a press conference, the Deputy Energy Secretary of New York State emphasised that the transition to clean energy and net-zero carbon requires the creation of 'green collar' careers and not simply jobs in the green sector. New York State, which aims to generate all its electricity from renewable sources by 2050, has injected new investment into green technology and expects this sector also to create significant new employment opportunities. Critical to the transition is the creation of 'durable careers' in the clean energy sector (Ram, Aghahosseini and Breyer, 2020). In many cities around the world, the creation of SBCs is increasing with the implementation of sustainable infrastructure plans. In America, federal projects such as 'Rewiring America' is expected to create between 5 and 10 million new sustainability-based careers by 2035 (Whieldon, 2020). Ambitious proposals to invest billions in sustainably re-booting the economy, such as the $1.75 trillion 'Build Back Better' scheme in America, and 'Green New Deal' in Britain, would add momentum to the growth of SBCs.

**SBCs and Graduate Prospects**

Studies have found that SBCs on average tend to be more welcoming to recent graduates compared to non-sustainability-based jobs. A common challenge faced by recent graduates attempting to gain a footing on a career path, tend to be employer requirements for prior work experience. This proves to be an even greater obstacle for graduates from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those who lack suitable family or social connections. Recent graduates may find themselves pushed to the 'back of the queue' due to their lack of work-experience. SBCs can provide those without years of work experience a better opportunity to access their first career (Sulich, Rutkowska and Popławski, 2020). Earlier work by (Falxa-Raymond, Svendsen and Campbell, 2013) have also found SBCs to be 'potentially transformational' for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schemes that employ graduates, especially those with less opportunity to gain prior experience, may also help employer organisations to maintain (or improve) their ESG ratings (Gamlath, 2020).

Furthermore, the global shortage of talent for sustainability-based career roles (Lombrana, Mathis and Lima, 2021) is causing employers o be more flexible in their recruitment practices, which for recent graduates offer greater opportunities for on-the-job training and career progression (Xie, Zhu and Qi, 2020). The Falxa-Raymond study found that that SBCs also provide greater intellectual stimulation, socio-psychological benefits, and an increased sense of accomplishment, which is partly due to the uniqueness of the work. A societal benefit of careers in sustainable sectors, is that they tend to offer long-term, well-paid employment prospects for disadvantaged communities. These jobs tend to be far more secure and less likely to be transferred overseas (Whieldon, 2020).

*For pedagogy to be effective in preparing students for sustainability-based careers, it must be transformative, values-based and should challenge existing norms. Students must be engaged in thinking about complex systems, using real-world-based learning*

**Skills and Education**

Compared to other career categories, SBCs on average tend to involve higher levels of non-routine work and analytical skills; the less routinised work environment therefore requires greater levels of creative problem-solving (Consoli *et al*., 2016). The occupational boundaries in these types of roles are frequently shifting, and the division of labour is constantly being redefined. A distinct trait of sustainability-based careers is that they offer higher-levels of on-the-job training (and learning). Xie, Zhu and Qi (2020) find that on-the-job training in the 'green sector' translates positively into career growth. Of relevance to universities and colleges are issues about curricula and pedagogy in terms of what would better prepare students for such careers.

Embedding sustainability skills into the curriculum and linking them to employability is needed to prepare graduates more effectively for the new sustainability-based work environment and is a subject that is generating increasing attention among educators and academics, not least within university business schools (Winfield and Ndlovu, 2019). Universities are also important sites for resolving uncertainties about climate change and gaining a critically reasoned perspective on environmental and social issues (Hess and Maki, 2019). However, it is not only about what is taught, but also how it is taught.

For pedagogy to be effective in preparing students for sustainability-based careers, it must be transformative, values-based and should challenge existing norms. Students must be engaged in thinking about complex systems, using real-world-based learning. Traditional pedagogical approaches such as lectures and case studies must be redesigned. In evaluating the effectiveness of pedagogic methods, educators and regulators must substitute traditional *post-hoc* measures with more holistic methods such as the 'Good Practice Learning and Teaching for Sustainability Education (GPLTSE)' framework (Holdsworth and Sandri, 2021). Education must move beyond sustainability literacy and endeavour to equip students with relevant *capabilities*.

Disciplinary fields and the theories they expound should also be reviewed in the current context. For example, the principles of growth-based economics that are taught in classrooms, propose a negative relationship between employment and environment. To increase employment (i.e., to reduce unemployment) there must be economic growth, which is inevitably incompatible with environmental sustainability. Therefore, viewed from the prism of neo-classical economic theory, a paradox exists in the relationship between environment, growth and employment. New paradigms are needed to decouple environmental impact from economic output and to tackle unemployment without growth (OECD, 2020). Since 'green transition' tends to be associated with job-destruction, for example in the fossil-fuel sector, there have been calls for stronger actions to favour job-creation relative to environmental activities (Aldieri and Vinci, 2018). However, recent evidence suggests that job-creation in renewable energy would significantly outweigh job losses in the carbon-fuel sector (Ram, Aghahosseini and Breyer, 2020). Nations and industries find themselves in a major transition as the urgency of meeting sustainable development targets grows. In transitioning to a more sustainable future, there are complex implications for labour markets.

## Conclusion

The SDGs adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, set seventeen interrelated goals aimed at creating a more sustainable world. With whole economies transitioning to a more sustainable future, profound effects are being felt in virtually every sector. Organisations have had to re-map their production plans and reconfigure their work roles – with existing occupations changing and wholly new occupations being created (Consoli *et al*., 2016). SBCs are not merely the product of sustainability transformation, they are a necessary antecedent to the attainment of Sustainable Develop Goals (SDGs). Policy makers must therefore ensure that transition not only creates jobs but also stable careers (Whieldon, 2020). SBCs are set to grow, and demand is already outstripping labour supply on a global scale (Lombrana, Mathis and Lima, 2021).

While the perennial problem for graduates has been the lack of prior work experience to meet employer expectations when accessing their first careers, SBCs tend to be more welcoming to those without previous work experience. SBCs are also potentially transformational for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, offering greater opportunities to train on-the-job. Across career roles more generally, employers are looking for candidates who can add value to their organisations, and at interviews now tend to favour graduates with an understanding of sustainability (Winfield and Ndlovu, 2019).

British universities are called upon to do more. On the one hand, embedding sustainability in the curriculum and linking it to employability would prepare students more effectively for careers; another driver is student-expectations. With students becoming more sustainability-conscious, universities are expected do more in driving towards improving their sustainability credentials. In the UK, 140 universities signed up to sustainability commitments ahead of the COP26 summit. However, according to a recent survey by peopleandplanet.org (a student-led campaign), more than half of UK universities are not on track to meet their sustainability targets (Bryant, 2021). Employers are already feeling the impact of sustainability-conscious applicants in attracting and retaining talent; universities could expect to do the same as students may base their choice of institution on sustainability credentials, and regulators may follow suit. The sustainability agenda is expected to grow in importance for employers, educators, and graduates.

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**Key words**

Green careers, sustainable business, green skills, sustainability, graduate employment

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# A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO EMBEDDING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS INTO MODERN DEGREE COURSES

***Abstract:***

*This article focuses on understanding professionalism and the need to teach students about it, and includes a case study from the Claude Littner Business School (CLBS) at the University of West London. Teaching professional skills to students is of paramount importance as it has a direct impact on their career success. However, embedding it within curricula and making it part of the students' mindset is not so straightforward, as the concept of professionalism may often be affected by public perception. CLBS has employed a variety of pedagogical models and business approaches in doing this, such as horizontal and vertical integration through a spiral curriculum, experiential and reflective learning techniques, and has established HR practices such as onboarding and appraisal meetings, resulting in high submission rates and positive student feedback.*

Different meanings or perceptions of 'professionalism' are explored in this article, with a unique model presented by the authors to help define and contextualise the concept. The need for professionalism in education (i.e., the knowledge, skills and practices to which students must be exposed in order to become successful professionals in the future) is also investigated, with an analysis of some pedagogical models used to teach and embed professionalism in education. Lastly, it explains how the Claude Littner Business School (CLBS) has successfully followed a multi-dimensional approach in order to embed professionalism into their degree courses. In fact, it has gone beyond merely integrating professionalism in the curriculum to inculcating professionalism through the curriculum.

*Professionalism in education includes the knowledge, skills and practices to which students must be exposed in order to become successful professionals in the future*

**What is professionalism?**

Indeed (2021) has defined professionalism as having the skill, knowledge and confidence to perform a job to the highest standards that might be expected. This means taking a job seriously, being reliable and caring about responsibilities and successes. It could be argued that these attributes are demonstrated through the (development of) 'soft' or 'transferable' skills which are highly valued by employers. There are many definitions of what constitutes soft skills, but those most relevant to professionalism are effective communication, positivity, flexibility, problem-solving skills and leadership.

Public perceptions often affect the definition of professionalism. According to Romme (2016), professionalism can be defined as 'the alignment between the shared purpose (P) of management as a profession, the body of knowledge (K) these professionals have access to, the actual behaviour (B) of managers in terms of actions and decisions, and the expectations (E) of a variety of internal and external stakeholders'. In other words, creating a shared sense of professional purpose and responsibility, learning to see things from different perspectives, developing knowledge and relevant expertise, enabling cross-collaboration and broadening professional networks, while understanding the expectations of society or employers, such as non-financial performance measures, all influence the level of professionalism.

*There are many definitions of what constitutes soft skills, but those most relevant to professionalism are effective communication, positivity, flexibility, problem-solving skills and leadership*

The authors' definition of professionalism is that it is the perception that others have of us, and the behaviours and values which inform these perceptions. This is encapsulated in the diagram below.

All the above attributes are measured and assessed by the receiver. It is thus important to assess professionalism according to the context in which it is required. For example, the level of professionalism and the form it takes would be different in a corporate or customer-facing business, compared to a back-office role.

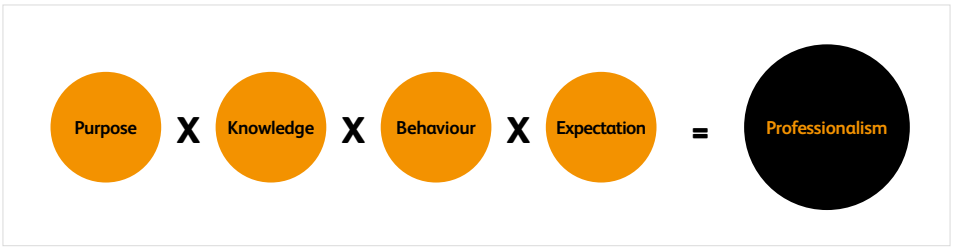


**FIGURE 1** The professionalism formula (Romme, 2016)

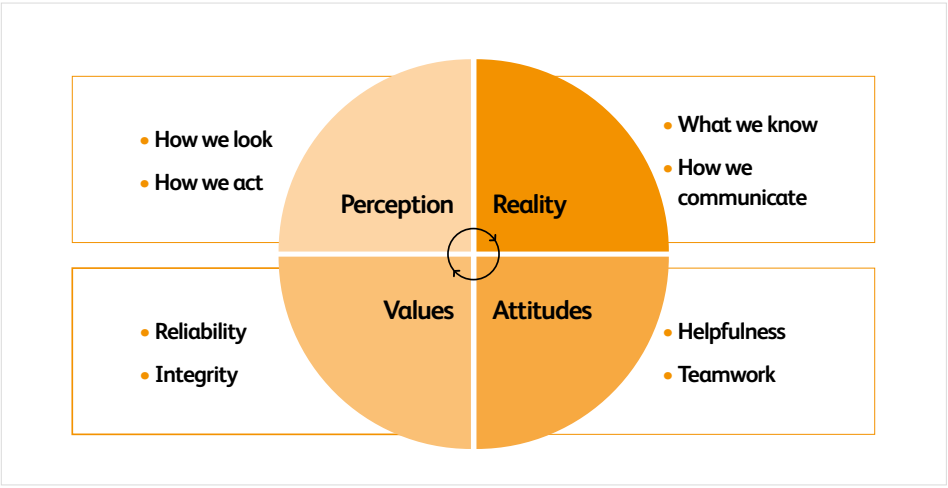


**FIGURE 2** Byrne and Weerawardane's Model of Professionalism in Practice

**The need to teach students about professionalism**

Fox (1992, p.2) stated that '[p]rofessionalism means different things to different people', which is certainly true, but it could be argued that there is a collective understanding of many of the attributes required to be professional in all career paths. For some professions such as nursing, medicine, law or accountancy, professionalism is often built into a code of ethics or regulated by a professional body, which makes it easier to integrate it into curricula. Developing the management discipline into a profession has been an ongoing challenge for many years, and it has been argued that the lack of professionalism and ethics is what led to major corporate scandals like Enron or Worldcom. Business schools around the world have been criticised for failing to educate students on their moral and social responsibilities (Romme, 2019), but this does not mean we cannot integrate an element of ethical professionalism into all curricula. Sullivan (2009) argued that teaching professionalism should not be restricted to a particular segment of the curriculum but should be included throughout the curriculum.

In a study carried out by Brooks *et al.* (2021), students set out the purpose of universities as having three main goals: *To gain decent employment, to achieve personal growth, and to contribute to improvement in society*. This fits nicely into the concept of modern higher education practice which moves from the idea of merely imparting knowledge, to helping students discover how to apply knowledge in the real world once they leave the safety and security of the education sector in order to achieve a successful career. It is evident that teaching professionalism skills fits into the first two of these goals. Students now expect value for their degree in terms of good careers and having the skills to succeed for the remainder of their working lives. It is no longer enough to impart technical knowledge of a topic or subject, the process must also support personal development and career progression. It is in this context that the higher education sector must continue not just to teach professional skills of which professionalism is a large part, but also to embed it as a modus operandi for students who enter the higher education sector.

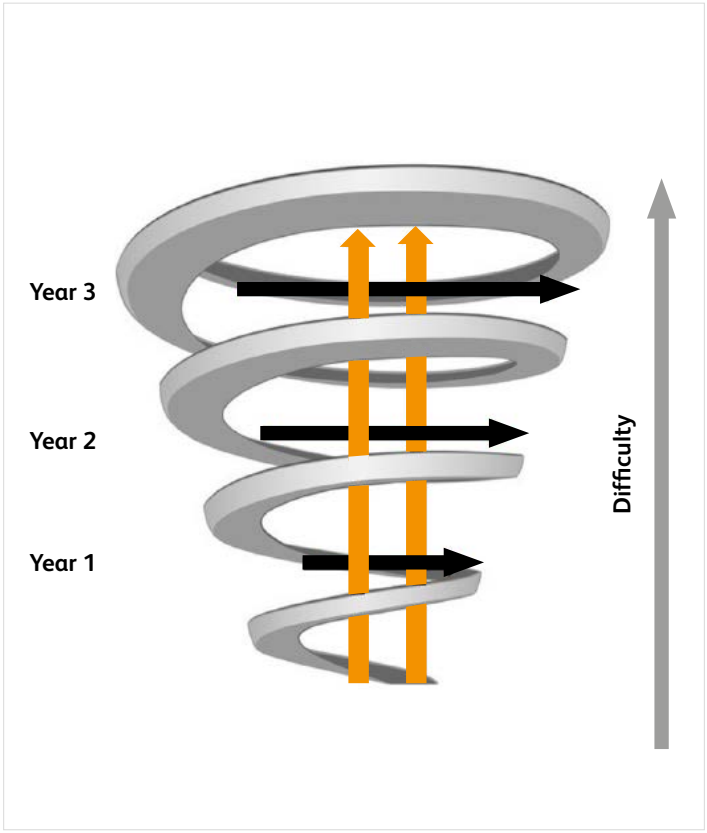


**FIGURE 3** Horizontal and vertical strands in a spiral curriculum

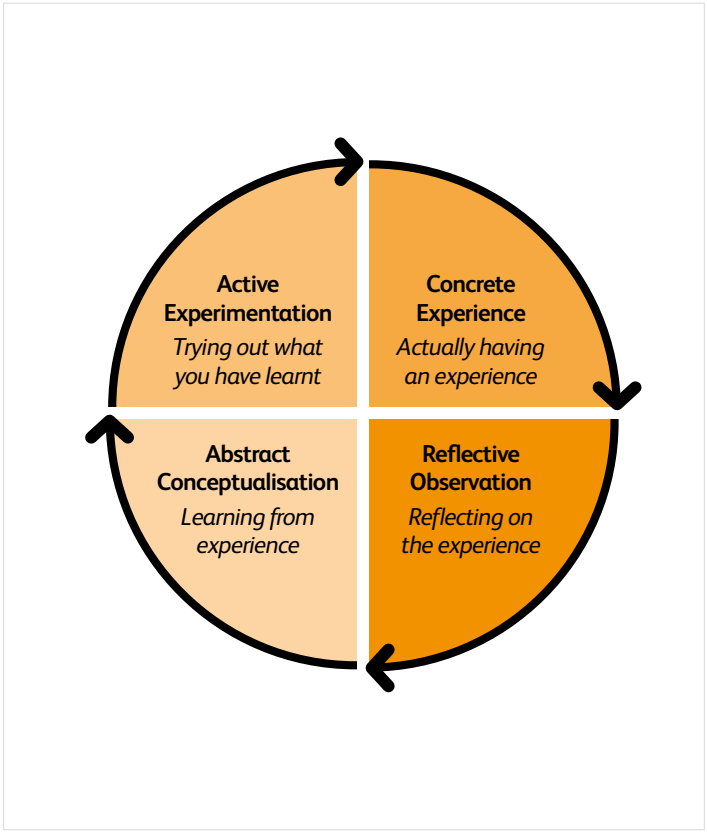


**FIGURE 4** Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

**Models that could be used to teach and embed professional skills**

*Horizontal and vertical integration through a spiral curriculum*

This concept was first introduced by Bruner (1960, cited in Ireland and Mouthaan, 2020, p.7), and has since been applied across various disciplines. In the context of teaching professionalism, horizontal strands in the form of professionalism and professional ethics can be introduced into the curriculum throughout a year across the different semesters, and then these topics can be revisited throughout the different years of the course through vertical strands, which gradually increase in difficulty as the student progresses, hence 'spiralling' upwards. The topics can be embedded either through specific modules solely dedicated to teaching professionalism and ethics, or even subtly integrated into other modules through assessments. The spiral curriculum has been established as a robust model and a sound motivational tool for enhancing student learning, because it 'activates prior knowledge, initiates interest and reinforces learning' (Mattick and Knight, 2007, cited in Coelho and Moles, 2015, p.162). The spiral curriculum empowers students to engage with modern pedagogies, while simultaneously enhancing their experience, and studies have shown that student understanding of the spiral curriculum improve over time, and that they appreciate the benefits of the spiral curriculum (Coelho and Moles, 2015).

*Experiential and reflective learning*

Experiential and reflective learning are other pedagogical approaches that can be used to motivate students, because they enable them to deepen their understanding and reflect on knowledge through their own experiences. This in turn helps them harness those past experiences to develop and improve their skills. These pedagogical approaches are, therefore, highly relevant to the delivery of professionalism in the curriculum.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, which is a 4-stage process aimed at understanding how new knowledge is acquired through experience and embedded through reflection, could be applied when teaching professionalism. For instance, as part of the curriculum, students could be asked to brainstorm their views on professionalism and how it can be instilled, which would activate prior learning and provide some structure for the task. They could then discuss their own personal 'concrete' experiences relating to professionalism in their workplaces. The students would then be encouraged or facilitated to reflect on the subject and express their opinions through discussion, again using their own experience. Reflecting on those experiences would stimulate their interest in the topic; they would be able to learn from those experiences and be motivated to try out what they have learnt.

This concept of reflective learning was originally introduced to educational development by John Dewey at the turn of the last century, and the idea of 'learning by doing' still has a place in teaching professionalism today (Rodgers, 2002). It has been argued that active learning leads to active reflection which in turn results in reflective practice, which is key to the development of professionalism in students (Ospina Avendano, 2021; Schon, 1991). It is a method for helping students to step back from their learning experience to reflect or critically think about how they can improve their performance going forward. The idea encourages students to remember what they have achieved so far and see development as an evolving process. This allows students to achieve at their own pace and also helps those with different experiences, different goals, and different ability levels to develop their professionalism, again at their own pace and in a manner that suits their individual aspirations.

**A case study from the Claude Littner Business School (CLBS):**

CLBS recognises the importance of not just teaching professionalism but embedding it as part of the mindset of students undertaking all courses. Although professional skills were already being taught on most courses, following an internal review of all courses in 2020, CLBS decided that it was time to give professional and employability skills a greater emphasis across all subject areas. Therefore, the existing Professional Skills module was revamped, and a new module called Workplace Employability Skills was introduced, with both modules to be delivered in each semester during the first year of study on all courses, when they next go through formal revalidation. The revised module on Professional Skills moved away from the traditional teaching of academic skills and abstract teaching of topics such as presentation skills, leadership and teamworking skills, to increase the focus on the application of these skills in a business environment. The aim was to develop emotional intelligence building on the work of Goleman (2020), and to demonstrate the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation, so that students would be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, monitor their emotions and remain calm in challenging situations, which are all essential professional traits they would require in the workplace (Peek, 2021). The philosophy was to help students to recognise strengths and weaknesses and to see them as a starting point from which they could develop during the remainder of their course.

**The module re-design focused on 3 key areas:**

These three areas were implemented using established business practices. To teach students what was required of them, an HR process known as onboarding, which is the action or process of integrating a new employee into an organisation, was used. Onboarding is a continuous process that proceeds after induction and helps to engender professionalism in the employee. Therefore, the first few weeks of the module focused solely on onboarding in terms of university life and linking it to business processes.

The second area was to embed professional behaviour in the students. Through consultations with employers and the course team, it was acknowledged that if professional behaviour such as attendance, timekeeping and teamwork skills were developed, they would improve engagement and in turn improve student outcomes. Therefore, the module focused on introducing the expectations of behaviour, and on showing students that rules are important in business and in life, and that they benefit the student in terms of results and that all businesses had high expectations in terms of professionalism.

**The module re-design focused on 3 key areas:**

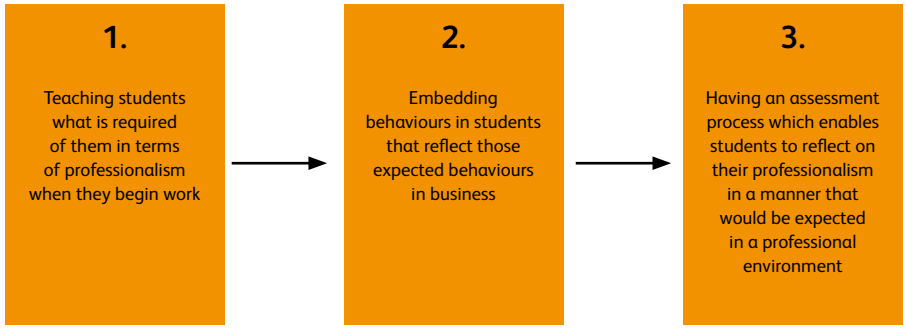


**FIGURE 5** Professional Skills module re-design

*The revised module on Professional Skills moved away from the traditional teaching of academic skills and abstract teaching of topics such as presentation skills, leadership and teamworking skills, to increase the focus on the application of these skills in a business environment*

*During their performance appraisal interview, students stated that they felt well-supported and that they were starting to think and act like a professional businessperson. Submission rates were over 95 % , and all students valued the opportunity to reflect on their progress*

The final area of focus was on the assessment process, and it was decided to follow a recognised HR process that is widely used in all successful businesses. The assessment was a performance review or an appraisal meeting. The rationale was that the module tutor would be the employer, and would reflect with the student on progress to date, understanding together what the student was doing well (and less well) and developing an action plan to help the student to develop going forward. The aim was to reward the demonstration of professionalism so that there were marks for attendance, timekeeping, engagement in class, the ability to self-reflect and professional perception. All these skills and traits were directly transferrable to the work environment and therefore highly relevant to students. This assessment was not confined to the Professional Skills module, but to all modules in the semester and any previous modules studied. An additional benefit of this form of assessment was that it encouraged the use of critical thinking, which is a key life skill for students. Weerawardane and Byrne (2021) defined critical thinking as the ability to think clearly and rationally, to assess the validity of ideas and understand the logical connection between them. It was therefore important that the performance review process encouraged students to think in detail about the connection between their behaviour at university and their future career aspirations.

In addition to the above, to support the development of professionalism in the curriculum, the authors compiled a tailormade 'bespoke' book on Academic Development and Employability. This book was designed to complement the student journey in the first year of study, covering the essential areas of expected development. It was given as a signed hard copy to each student at induction and started the process of embedding professional behaviour and expectations on the course and linking it to the skills required in business.

After studying the modules of Professional Skills and Workplace Employability Skills in their first year of study, expectations of the level of professionalism from students would gradually be increased during their subsequent years, for example through other modules such as Business Ethics, and with the professionalism element heavily embedded into various assessments. By revisiting the topic and various aspects of professionalism through such horizontal and vertical strands, students would be able to relate new learning to previous learning, which would further reinforce professionalism. Even at master's level, the school has introduced new modules such as 'Management Skills for Executives'. This module follows a similar approach to Professional Skills, but with a different assessment process. This recognised that students moving to master's level study had not developed these skills in their previous courses and that was preventing them from achieving the sort of job roles that they aspired to do.

Although it is too early to analyse the long-term effect of the new professionalism-related modules in terms of student outcomes, anecdotally there was a much higher level of attendance and much greater level of satisfaction with the course than previously. During their performance appraisal interview, students stated that they felt well-supported and that they were starting to think and act like a professional businessperson. Submission rates were over 95 % , and all students valued the opportunity to reflect on their progress.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is evident that there is a real need to teach and embed professionalism into higher education, as it is a key skill that prepares students for success following the completion of their studies. There are various pedagogical approaches to do so, and the application of some of those approaches/models have been explored in this paper, although the authors are aware that some institutions may favour other models. The Claude Littner Business School has applied a blend of pedagogical approaches and recognised business techniques to embed and teach professionalism through the curriculum to students who are planning to work in the business sector, regardless of their specific role. This approach encourages students not only to adopt a more professional approach, but also to understand how and why this is important in the business sector, and to gain theoretical but practically-oriented knowledge on universally endorsed management practices.

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## Key words

Employability, professional skills, spiral curriculum, professionalism in business, business education



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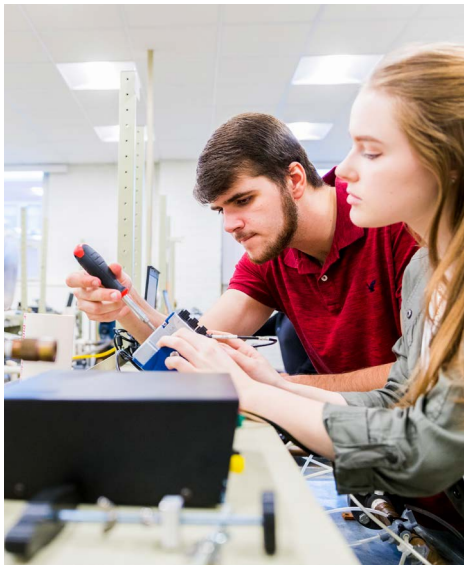
# DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP END-POINT ASSESSMENT DILEMMA

*The Balancing Act between Business Contribution and Academic Exploration*



***Abstract:***

*A growing number of learners join HE institutions through degree apprenticeships with a strong emphasis on both on-the-job and off-the-job training, with apprentices sharing time between lecture theatres and the workplace. In addition to meeting the degree requirements, the completion of degree apprenticeships requires passing a work-based end-point assessment (EPA). EPAs often include a capstone project that is equivalent to a project or dissertation and plays a crucial role in degree apprenticeships, but their execution is not without its problems. This paper identifies common challenges for EPA projects, including academia-business goal misalignment, external factors, confidentiality and commercial sensitivity, and gaps between expectations and experience. Consequently, a set of recommendations is proposed to mitigate the identified challenges.*

*Degree apprenticeships were designed by employer groups to ensure that training delivered by HEIs and other training providers meets industry needs. Many degree apprenticeships have been developed in recent years to satisfy the growing demand for skill training*

Degree apprenticeships are paid jobs linked to 20% off-the-job training and development, and may provide apprentices with degrees from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) when they successfully complete and pass the apprenticeships (GOV.UK, 2019). Degree apprenticeships were designed by employer groups to ensure that training delivered by HEIs and other training providers meets industry needs. Many degree apprenticeships have been developed in recent years to satisfy the growing demand for skill training. As of April 2021, there are 108 approved degree apprenticeships (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, 2021a).

Degree apprenticeships offer real-world learning that helps apprentices develop a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSB) through both on-the-job and off-the-job training throughout the apprenticeship. Each apprenticeship is developed in collaboration with employers, training providers, and professional bodies to ensure that it is appropriate for the specific industry and occupation (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, 2020). There are two types of degree apprenticeships: integrated and non-integrated. Integrated degree apprenticeships include an end-point assessment (EPA) that marks both the end of the apprenticeship and degree programme, and the apprentices must pass both. Non-integrated degree apprenticeships have a separate EPA, which tests the occupation's KSBs and is separate to the degree assessment.

At the end of the apprenticeships, apprentices are expected to demonstrate how they meet or exceed the KSB competencies listed in the apprenticeship standard at the End Point Assessment (EPA), which typically involves an EPA project and a portfolio consisting of work-based evidence, followed by a professional discussion. The EPA projects often play a crucial role in the EPA, as the apprentices are typically expected to demonstrate the KSB competencies in their EPA projects.

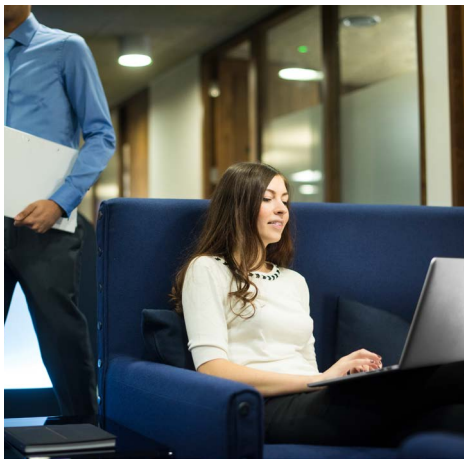
Due to the significance of EPA projects, HEIs tend to work with employers in advance to identify suitable EPA projects to ensure that KSB standards can be met. However, projects are by nature associated with a degree of uncertainty, which can be closely related to information availability (Pich *et al*., 2002). Therefore, this paper aims to identify the key themes and challenges associated with EPA projects and then provide a set of recommendations. We collected data from EPA project supervisors and apprentices to identify the challenges they faced, and we subsequently produce a set of recommendations to overcome the challenges.

## Relevant Work

### Degree Apprenticeships

The UK government aims to equip people of diverse backgrounds with the required skills and knowledge through an employer-led apprenticeship and technical education system. According to Universities UK (UUK) (2016), degree apprenticeships can be particularly attractive to non-traditional students and therefore support the widening participation goals for HEIs. Many UK HEIs have responded positively to the government drive for degree apprenticeships by becoming recognised and approved training providers. The increased offering of degree apprenticeship training providers across the country should have boosted the awareness and consequently uptake of degree apprenticeships. Additionally, the introduction of the apprenticeship levy for large organisations and the government contribution of 95% of the funding for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) provide an incentive for organisations to hire apprentices. Yet, despite the government push and a steady increase of degree apprentices, the uptake of apprenticeships remains lower than the government target (*Financial Times*, 2019).

Many factors contribute to the lower-than-expected uptake of degree apprenticeships. There are some employer concerns regarding degree apprenticeships, including benefits to the organisation, apprentice retention after completion,



selection of apprentices, employer involvement and commitment, and funding mechanisms (Hughes and Saieva, 2019). Rowe *et al*. (2017) stated that the recruitment process and expectation management can also be challenging for employers. Since degree apprenticeships are still relatively new to many organisations, it is not surprising that some have such concerns.

However, with the appropriate support infrastructure from HEIs, many employers can see the benefits of hiring degree apprentices (Hughes and Saieva, 2019). Apprenticeships could help businesses with their strategic workforce planning whilst utilising public funding (Higgs, 2021). This could be an effective way to upskill organisations by gaining training that would not have been available within the organisations. Apprenticeships could also contribute an opportunity to address the gender imbalance in the technology sector by offering a route to previously under-represented groups (Smith *et al*., 2020). However, apprenticeships are not panacea, and it requires employers to make suitable arrangements to benefit from them. Studies have found that the proper recognition of apprentices at work, appropriate work experience, and learning support are critical to apprenticeship success (Baker, 2019).

Degree apprenticeships are designed to be embedded in the workplace. With both on-the-job and off-the-job training aspects, degree apprenticeships focus strongly on work-based learning by demonstrating that the apprentices can apply knowledge and skills in a real environment, not a simulated one, and that they can develop appropriate professional behaviours via mentoring and interaction at work. Therefore, the following section will consider the application and challenges of work-based learning.

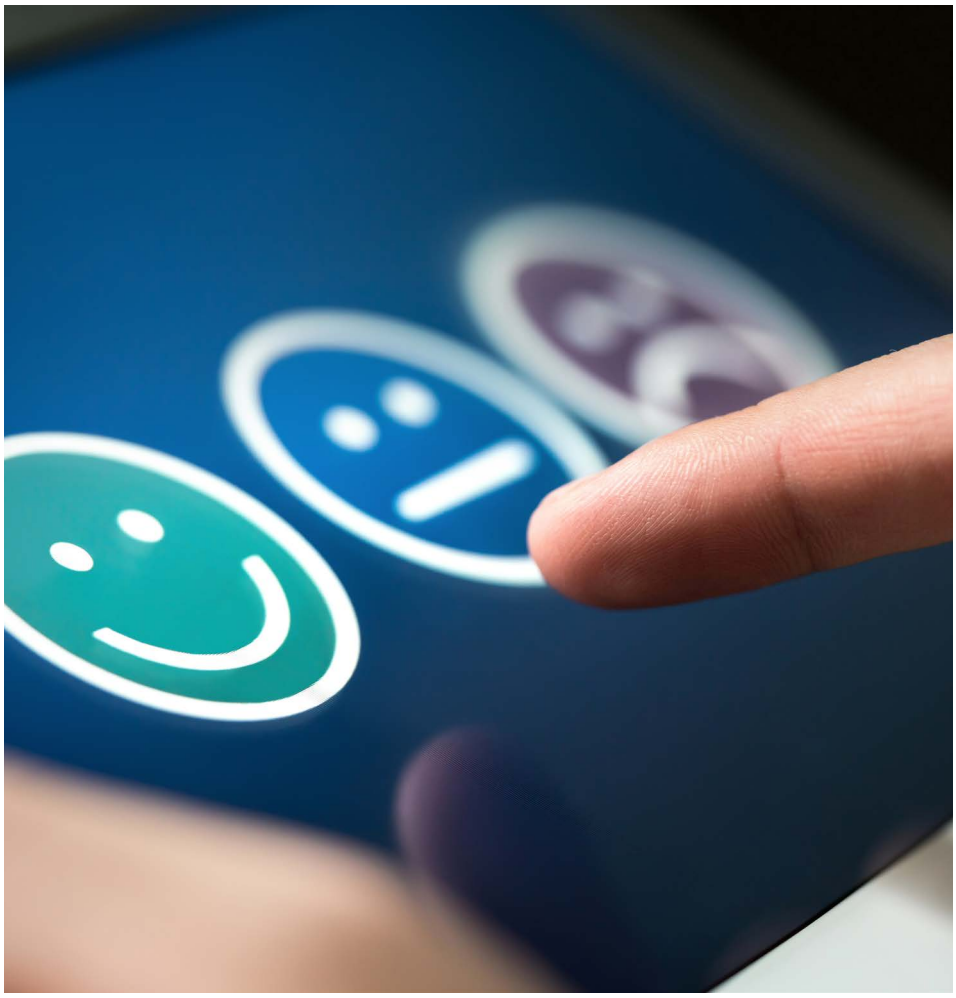
## Work-Based Learning

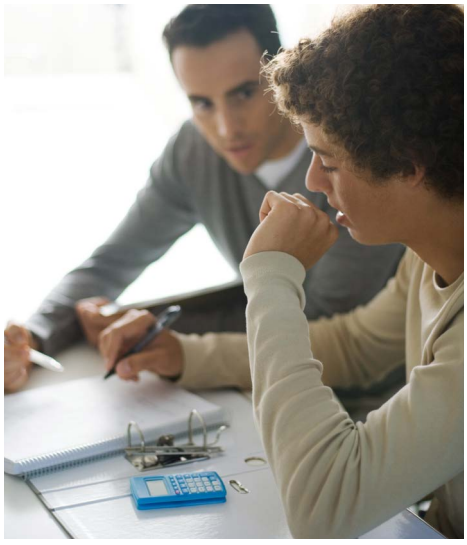
Work-based learning may refer to either a vague notion, such as any learning taking place in the workplace or happening as a consequence of professional work (Lester and Costley, 2010), or a more specific delineated concept such as structured learning as part of a professional role (Levy *et al*., 1989, p.4, as reported in Little and Brennan, 1996), where it takes place as part of the job role. However, dedicated learning outside of the professional role needs to take place as well. Little and Brennan themselves conclude that work-based learning is derived from experience gained during work-based activities.

Learning by doing and on-the-job training are commonly used in both knowledge management and learning (Becerra-Fernandez *et al*., 2004). In a broader context, it is often applied to address specific issues such as skill shortages, youth unemployment and labour market participation for underrepresented groups, but also to achieve larger outcomes such as the reversal of income inequality or revitalisation of the manufacturing sector (Fortwengel *et al*., 2019).

In the UK, integrating work practice and academic learning can be traced back as far as the 1950s and usually took the form of courses with placement elements (so called sandwich courses). It enjoyed a particular revival in the 1990s and 2000s (Fortwengel *et al*., 2019). As academic degrees proliferated, HEIs shifted from the traditional ambition of being more than just learning for work, to an increased focus on professional requirements (Little and Brennan, 1996). For example, government consultations recommended that HEIs implement foundation degrees as undergraduate degrees between levels 3 and 6, combining vocational and academic elements to motivate the take-up of level 2

*In the UK, integrating work practice and academic learning can be traced back as far as the 1950s and usually took the form of courses with placement elements (so called sandwich courses), it enjoyed a particular revival in the 1990s and 2000*





*Thematic analysis is used to determine the patterns of feedback and concerns from both apprentices and supervisors, in order to identify the empirical challenges and ways to mitigate them*

qualifications and allow progression to further education (Department for Education and Employment, 1999). At the same time, the demand for some skills traditionally taught in HEIs had risen to the point where a shortage needed to be addressed. Work-based learning fits into this development, as it aims to facilitate both the general concept of life-long learning, and to teach or provide those skills in a format that is an alternative to the orthodox higher education model, and finds learners beyond the traditional clientele of pre-career school leavers. For instance, by providing learners for professionals already in employment (Lester and Costley, 2010).

Work-based learning programmes are usually structured through a learning contract specifying exactly the extent of structured learning, as well as the duties and contributions of learner, institution (e.g., a university), and employer (Lester and Costley, 2010). In this context, structured learning means a clear identification of what is to be learned, how it is to be learned (i.e., learning strategies), and how the learning will be evidenced on the conclusion of the programme.

However, work-based learning in higher education appears to be reliant on both political support and adaptation by employers, as otherwise it might fail (Fortwengel *et al.*, 2019). Further, work-based learning does not automatically conform to traditional higher education and usually requires the creation of new structures (Costley and Lester, 2009).

**Approach**

Feedback and insights from EPA project academic supervisors and final-year apprentices from a range of employers in both public and private sectors were collected and then reviewed through thematic analysis. The thematic system aims to identify the pattern of meanings and behaviours (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis is used to determine the patterns of feedback and concerns from both apprentices and supervisors, in order to identify the empirical challenges and ways to mitigate them. The sample was selected from the level 6 Digital and Technology Solutions Professional (DTSP) degree apprenticeship and the level 7 Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist (DTSS) degree apprenticeship taught at UWL. One-to-one interviews were conducted to collect the data. Based on the interview data, a few key challenge themes were identified and will be further discussed in the following sections.

**Challenging Themes**

Based on the interviews, the four following challenge themes for the EPA projects in degree apprenticeships were identified:

- Academia-business goal misalignment
- External factors
- Confidentiality and commercial sensitivity
- Gap between expectation and experience

Below, these themes will be elaborated on in more detail:

### Academia-business goal misalignment

The academic drive for knowledge advancement from the university might not always align with the value-creation needs in the business sector. Academic knowledge advancement aims to benefit the wider community by experimenting with and validating theories and frameworks. Whilst such an approach advances the body of knowledge, it might not provide the imminent empirical value creation sought by the business in question. In some cases, however, academic knowledge advancement and empirical value creation are fully aligned through the EPA project, and therefore, the implementation of the EPA project is given high priority and even receives additional resources. Nonetheless, in some cases, business as usual (BAU) needs could appear more urgent than academic knowledge advancement.

Such alignment often lies in the employer's perception of the level of usefulness of the EPA project. In some cases, the projects were fully aligned with the apprentices' BAU tasks, and they tended to spend most of the working hours (greater than 20%) on the EPA projects.

However, not all EPA projects are fully aligned with BAU, which is not necessarily optimal. Several participants mentioned that the EPA projects were referred to disparagingly as 'university work', by the employers although the EPA projects were work-based and had clearly defined business value. The term 'university work' certainly indicates that some employers or managers view the EPA projects as not directly associated with work.

For instance, one employer was facing financial problems and was effectively in a survival mode. It is thus understandable that all business resources would be diverted to activities that could either immediately generate income or reduce costs. Although the employers honoured the 20% off-the-job commitment and gave the apprentices time for their EPA projects, EPA projects normally benefit from a greater alignment with BAU tasks.

### External factors

External factors that are beyond the scope of the project could sometimes influence project viability. An employer needs to adjust its business strategy and position in response to its external environment, e.g., customer needs, regulatory change, etc. As a result, any project could become obsolete because of strategic change or could lose key project members through resignation or redundancy.

In some cases, the organisation could be forced to liquidate, which effectively eliminates the environment in which the project resides. Despite the risk planning for any project, such factors could still have significant impacts on the viability of the project. And there is no exception for EPA projects. For example, one apprentice was made redundant in the final few months of their EPA project. Although the apprentice was permitted to continue working on the EPA project so as to complete the degree apprenticeship, they took on additional paid contract work offers from their former employer to ease the financial burden. The additional work became the priority, which led to less time on the EPA project. As a result, the EPA project took longer than expected to complete and delivered reduced results. Curiously, most of the actual project work had been done by the time the apprentice started to focus on the work contracts, and a significant portion of the remaining EPA project work was formal (such as writing up existing results).

Most projects use output from other projects as their inputs. Therefore, the dependency on other projects could affect the project scope and schedule. For instance, one apprentice's EPA project required the input from external consultants that the employer had hired. However, due to the senior management team change, the appointment of external consultants was significantly delayed, resulting in the EPA project not being completed within the expected EPA end date.

*The academic drive for knowledge advancement from the university might not always align with the value-creation needs in the business sector. Academic knowledge advancement aims to benefit the wider community by experimenting with and validating theories and frameworks*

*Since EPA projects take place in a real work environment, many apprentices see EPA projects as an opportunity to finally work on their own projects, set their own goals, and make critical decisions*

### Confidentiality and commercial sensitivity

Virtually any professional context includes an aspect of confidentiality and commercial sensitivity. Usually, this involves the protection of information and processes, with the consequence that certain data cannot be collected, shared, published, or perused. Generally, sensitive areas include:

- Any kind and volume of customer data
- Use of proprietary, in-house-developed technology
- Licensed technology

The exact level of sensitivity and secrecy depends on the organisation, position, and subject area. However, a general consequence is that affected EPA projects need to obtain additional approval and review processes, impacting their practicality; that affected projects are infeasible to begin with; and that apprentices cannot demonstrate their abilities fully. It should be noted here that non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) are generally not a solution, but a red flag, as signing an NDA does not resolve the issue. Academically, HEIs are geared towards openly sharing subject matter and are unlikely to have the facilities and processes in place to guarantee commercial sensitivity, such as ensuring that all academic supervisors, examiners, and involved administrative staff have signed the same NDA.

### Gap between expectations and experience

When apprentices engage in a project, certain expectations would be formed, based on their understanding of the project. However, it is important to recognise that their self-formed expectations might not be realistic. As an individual participating in a project, they may not fully understand the environment and other factors that could influence its implementation and impact. Whilst the high expectations and enthusiasm could be a strong motive for individuals participating in the project, the subsequent realisation of their own unrealistic expectations would of course dampen the individual's motivation and effort in the project.

Since EPA projects take place in a real work environment, apprentices might expect their project outputs to be fully implemented and utilised. Many apprentices see EPA projects as an opportunity to finally work on their own projects, set their own goals, and make critical decisions. While this is correct, the objective of their project, such as what artefact to develop, or what data to analyse, is still subject to the same constraints as all other projects at the place of employment, and often quite a few more such as approval, progress review, etc.

While EPA projects meet the requirements set in the assessment plan, such requirements do not necessarily conform to the requirements or processes conducted in the workplace (or *vice versa*). In fact, for the purposes of actual assessment, it might be easier if the EPA projects were conducted outside the general project control framework of employer organisations, as otherwise, the controls and constraints placed on projects in a workplace setting might quickly overpower the requirements set in the assessment plan. Furthermore, this approach would defeat the whole aim of the EPA. Therefore, it is not uncommon for apprentices to experience EPA project scope or impacts being limited due to other constraints. Consequently, motivation could drop when apprentices inevitably gain a more realistic understanding of the value placed on their project within their place of employment. Resulting disappointment can dampen any motivation quickly.

*The perceived separation between university-work (off-the-job) and work-work (on-the-job) often lead to goal misalignment between universities and business, which eventually affect the EPA projects*

**Recommendations**

Based on the identified four challenge themes, this paper proposes a set of recommendations for mitigating such challenges. The recommendations were developed iteratively, based on the feedback from apprentices and tutors, as well as practical experience. The proposed recommendations are as follows.

### Higher integration of off-the-job and on-the-job

The perceived separation between university-work (off-the-job) and work-work (on-the-job) often lead to goal misalignment between universities and business, which eventually affect the EPA projects. This issue could be addressed by ensuring a higher integration of off-the-job and on-the-job training of the entire degree apprenticeship. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (2021b) proposed a similar change through the integration of on-the-job and off-the-job training.

Greater integration could lead to a greater proportion of apprentices' time on the EPA projects, as the EPA projects are more likely to overlap with BAU work. Seamless integration could overcome the barrier between university-work and work-work, which is sometimes observed as a challenge to successful EPA projects.

### Considering GDPR and commercial sensitivity during project inception

Protection issues of privacy and commercially sensitive material should be considered right away at project inception. For example, if the apprentice has signed an NDA at some point during their employment, any project proposal draft should be examined in terms of conflicts with the NDA. This might need to be done on the employer side, as the supervisor provided by the university may not be privy to the information covered by the NDA. Similarly, project proposals should be examined for potential conflicts with policies of the employer organisation.

A good general approach might be to have the project signed off by the respective employer stakeholders, e.g., data privacy officer, legal department, and apprentice mentor and manager; especially where clear rules have not been formulated, or protected organisational assets have not been identified explicitly.

### Integrate more risk planning as part of the project planning and development

External factors have been identified as a key challenge. Since EPA projects are real-world ones, there are inevitably some uncertainties that could impact their viability. While it is not possible to entirely eliminate such risks, major risks can be identified and mitigated to increase the likelihood of EPA project success.

A more structured risk-planning approach to EPA projects could be formalised by the EPAOs. Risk-planning templates and guidance can be integrated into the project proposal sign-off stage. Any major risk should have mitigation responses specifically allocated to responsible individuals, who could be the apprentice, employer, or tutor. The monitoring of the identified risks should be part of the project review meeting agenda. If any risk occurs, the three parties can decide and agree on the best course of action to mitigate the impacts on the EPA projects.

### Expectation management

Generally, it should be made explicit to apprentices that the purpose of the EPA project is to serve as an assessment and evidence of their learning achievements.

Apprentices planning a project to resolve a specific problem they have observed at work, should be prepared for the possibility that while this problem might indeed exist, their employer may for various reasons dismiss the respective analysis or solution generated during the apprentice's EPA project, if it was not arrived at following the employer's project processes. Ultimately, EPA projects are still essentially academic. Generally, any expectation that one's solution will find productive application is more often than not disappointed.

## Conclusion

Considering the growing popularity of degree apprenticeships in England, it is imperative to understand the challenges faced by apprentices, in order to find a way to enhance the apprenticeship support mechanism. EPA projects are one of the most significant milestones in degree apprenticeships, and they can impact substantially on the results of a degree apprenticeship. However, there has not so far been much research in this area.

Accordingly, this paper identifies the empirical challenges related to EPA projects, namely goal misalignment, external factors, confidentiality and expectations. Consequently, a set of recommendations has been proposed. The identification of EPA project challenges provides important insights into degree apprenticeship, so that stakeholders can work together to develop a mechanism for supporting EPA projects in the future.

One of the limitations of the study is that while the results provide some insights into potential ways to address EPA project challenges, due to sample size, they should not be overgeneralised. The identified challenges and recommendations presented are based on a limited sample from several intakes of apprentices at one HEI. The aim is to generate an understanding of EPA project success factors to help us understand and mitigate common issues faced by apprenticeship students and related stakeholders.

Another limitation of the paper is related to the type of apprenticeships involved. Although this paper refers to data from two degree apprenticeships at different levels (levels 6 and 7), they are both in the 'digital' route. Therefore, the challenges identified might not reflect other apprenticeship routes, e.g., creative and design, business and administration, construction, etc.

The next steps for this study may entail a verification of identified challenges and recommendations with stakeholders from other HEIs following the same apprenticeship standard. Alternatively, new insights may be generated by conducting formal theory-generating research following a qualitative analysis method.

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**Key words**

Apprenticeship, end-point assessment, higher education, vocational education

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# VARIABLES AFFECTING ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE LEARNING

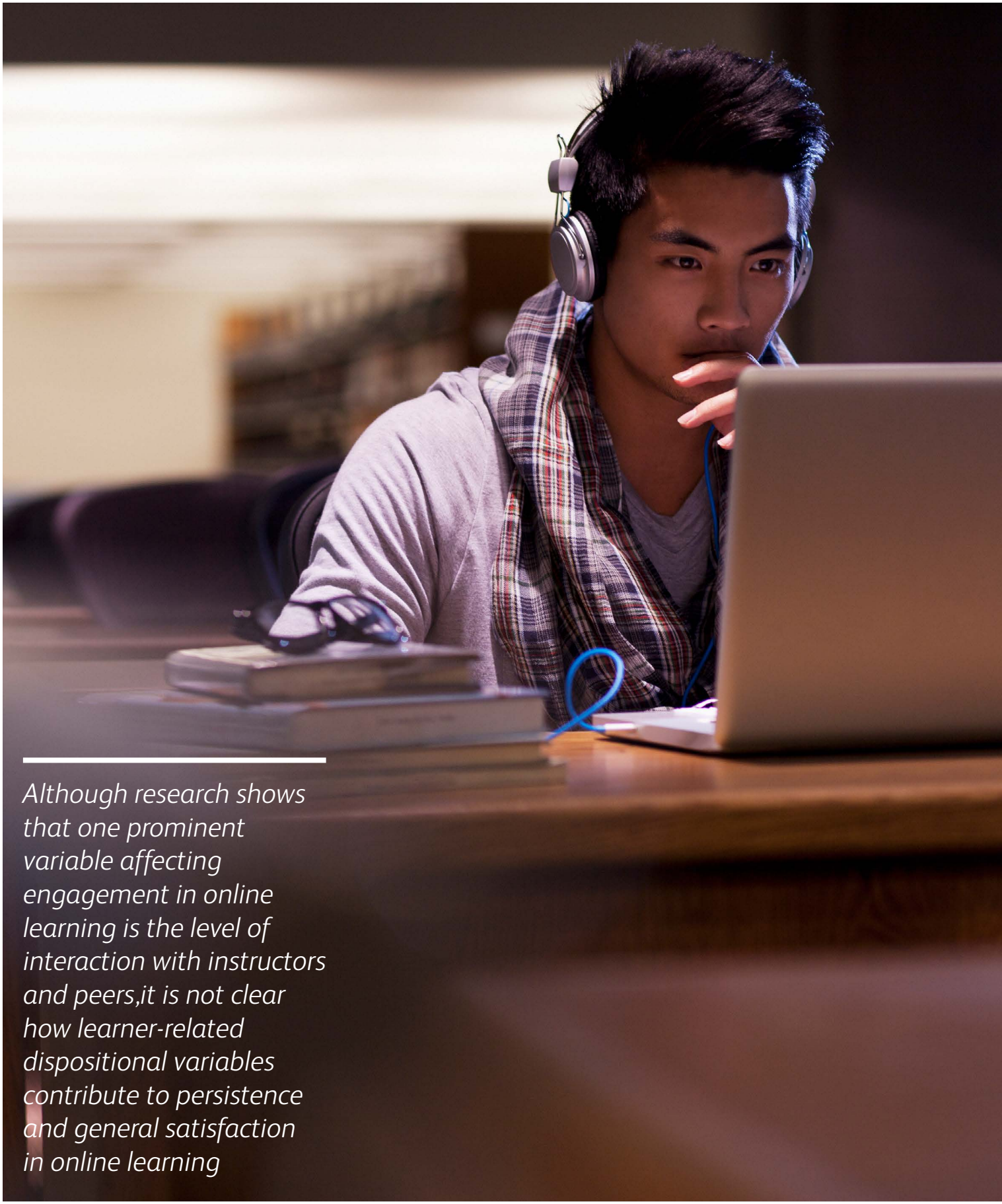
*A study into locus of control, self-efficacy, general anxiety and COVID-19*

***Abstract:***

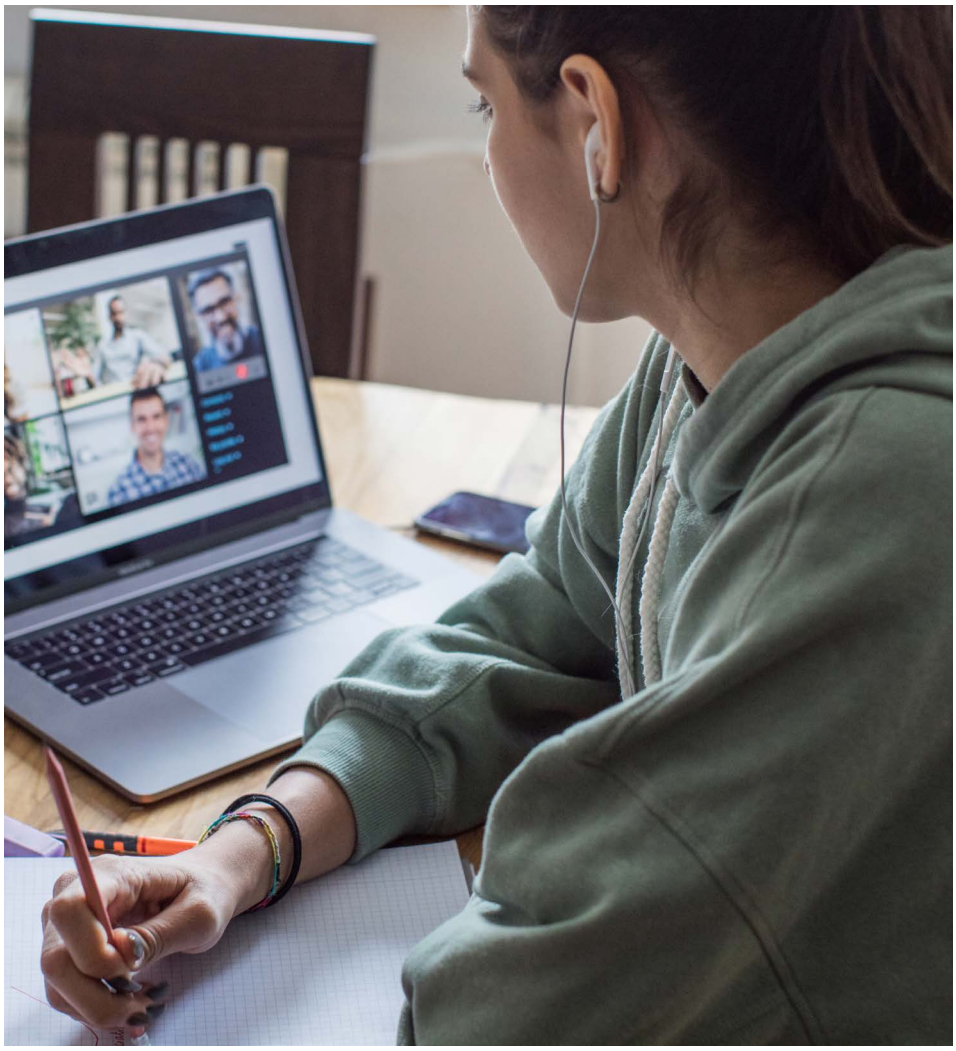
*Variables affecting online learning can be related to the individual or the situation. This study explored the contribution of both dispositional variables related to the learner and the situation, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and change of learning platform to engagement in online learning and the impact on general satisfaction. The findings support previous studies that investigated perceived self-efficacy and locus of control in online learning, and inform about the contribution of other variables such as anxiety and COVID-19 to constraining online learning. The findings can be used to inform online teaching methodologies and further highlight the importance of dispositional variables when considering the design of online teaching.*

Online education is commonly used to describe technology in all its forms, and is often referred to as 'e-learning', 'distance learning' or 'online learning'. Rosenberg (2000) defined online learning as delivering a course content to the end user through computers using internet technology. The positive impact of the online learning has been reported in a meta-analytic review, and is mostly due to its flexibility and convenience (Allen *et al*., 2002). However, Rovai and Barnum (2003) reported that online courses may be impersonal and misdirected due to inappropriate levels of interaction. This has been reported to constitute an obstacle among online learners who have no face-to-face interaction with peers or instructors throughout the coursework. The level of persistence among distant and online learners has also been shown to be different to traditional universities. For example, Tat-Sheung and Wong (2018) studied the factors affecting persistence among distant and online learners and found that students who perceived themselves academically weak considered stopping their studies at some point, while high-level students did not. Some of the recommendation made by authors to increase persistence included appointing mentors for distance learning students to support them in managing their time and to help them develop a sense of belonging. Croxton (2014) further confirmed in a literature review that student-instructor interaction appears to be the primary variable determining student satisfaction and persistence among online learners. Although research shows that one prominent variable affecting engagement in online learning is the level of interaction with instructors and peers, it is not clear how learner-related dispositional variables contribute to persistence and general satisfaction in online learning. These variables include locus of control, perceived self-efficacy as characteristics of the learner and general learner satisfaction as a learning variable.

Locus of control (LOC) refers to individual perceptions about whether they have control over the outcomes of events in their lives. Rotter (1966) defined internal locus of control (ILOC) as the belief in oneself, that one can control future outcome of events in one's life, while external locus of control (ELOC) is the belief that one has no control of outcomes of the events in their lives. Since individuals with ILOC believe that they have control over events in their lives, they tend to be more achievement-oriented, be active information and knowledge seekers, and this dispositional variable has been shown to be one of the key factors determining academic performance (Abdalla *et al*., 2019). ILOC has also been shown to be a strong determinant of engagement and persistence in distance learning (Joo *et al*., 2013). Suretha and Stanz (2004) compared the LOC of traditional face-to-face and online learners of Business Sciences course and found no difference in the locus of control of both learner groups. This could be due to LOC being a dispositional variable that is part of the person rather than a behavioural characteristic that changes with situation, such as different learning platforms. Rotter (1966) described LOC as a personality trait, referring to a person's stable beliefs of personal efficacy. Thus, individuals with high ILOC are expected to be generally more achievement-oriented. Cascio, Botta and Anzaldi (2013) further showed that online learning degrees are influenced by the combined effect of both ILOC and external motivation, such as continuing education credits. Fazey and Fazey (2001) postulated that independent learners attribute success or failure to themselves and therefore perceive themselves as in control of the outcome in an educational context. ILOC have been found to be closely linked with self-efficacy. This was another variable investigated in this study. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as the belief in oneself and in one's own capabilities to perform actions or achieve set goals. Self-efficacy has been revealed as an important factor associated with learning,



*Although research shows that one prominent variable affecting engagement in online learning is the level of interaction with instructors and peers,it is not clear how learner-related dispositional variables contribute to persistence and general satisfaction in online learning*



as it affects the level of effort, achievement and engagement in both traditional and technology-assisted learning (An *et al*., 2020). High self-efficacy and ILOC are assumed to be associated with some of the most important variables in online learning, where students are required to be more autonomous and teachers have less involvement (Joo *et al*., 2013).

Learner satisfaction is another important factor that determines learning engagement. Therefore, the main aim of the study is to explore the possible determinants of general satisfaction and engagement in online learning. A further aim is to explore the extent to which self-efficacy moderates (strengthens) the effects of ILOC on general satisfaction. Although these variables are important for learning, only some have been examined previously or they were assessed in different contexts such as blended or face-to-face learning. Furthermore, previous studies mostly looked at the direct relationships between these variables. The current study aimed to further understand the extent to which these factors moderate the effect on general learner satisfaction, which is an important factor affecting persistence. Moderation is a way of assessing whether a third variable influences the strength or direction of the relationship between two variables (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

In addition to these variables, current life events such as possible COVID-19-related anxiety, as well as trait anxiety, are other factors that can affect the satisfaction and engagement of the learner. COVID-19 has been identified as a new strain of a deadly virus discovered in 2019, which can cause individuals to experience symptoms varying from common cold to more severe respiratory problems and can result in death (WHO, 2020). Although some of the above mentioned variables such as LOC and motivation have been assessed in previous studies (Joo et al., 2013), it is not clear how these variables interact with trait and state anxiety,to affect engagement and general satisfaction. Furthermore, it is not clear how a change in learning platforms or delivery impacts on individual online learning. This is important to establish, as many learners all over the world who enrolled in traditional face-to-face courses had to move to online learning platforms at the beginning of their courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Some research has been conducted recently to understand the impact of this transition on learner achievements. For example, a qualitative research conducted in a South African university found this transition to be a hindrance, with students reporting not being able to realise the full potential of online learning, yet still being expected to submit assessments using these platforms (Mpungose, 2020). On the other hand, Rad et al. (2021) found that dental students and instructors reported both positive and negative effects of moving to online learning, with positives being more flexibility, autonomy, efficiency and convenience for both learners and instructors, and negatives being limited scope for interaction and learner engagement, as well as a lack of practical sessions. Moreover, Shah *et al*. (2021) did not find any direct influence of online learning on student engagement during the pandemic. However, mediational analysis revealed an indirect effect of online learning on student engagement through psychological factors, such that engagement depended on the extent to which students perceived their psychological needs as satisfied/not satisfied. Another recent research project also showed that individuals who were infected with COVID-19 experience psychological symptoms to a greater extent than those who were not infected, and that having ELOC related to reporting greater symptoms (Sugirvinsdottir *et al*., 2020). However, it is not clear whether those who report greater symptoms had prior mental health problems. Furthermore, it is not fully clear how moving learning platforms from face-to-face to online had an effect on engagement of all learners enrolled on different courses and the extent to which dispositional variables such as locus of control, prior chronic anxiety and COVID-19-related anxieties affected learner engagement and general satisfaction with their course.

In an attempt to address these questions, factors that were examined additionally were general anxiety and COVID-19-related anxieties and their impact on academic performance and general satisfaction. The study aimed to determine whether the academic performance of learners with prior chronic anxiety is affected to a greater extent by an unexpected life event such as COVID-19 pandemic, and whether learners believed that this had an effect on their performance to a significantly greater extent than those with no reported general anxiety. The study more specifically aimed to address the following questions:

*The study aimed to determine whether the academic performance of learners with prior chronic anxiety is affected to a greater extent by an unexpected life event such as COVID-19 pandemic, and whether learners believed that this had an effect on their performance to a significantly greater extent than those with no reported general anxiety*

a) Are there correlations between internal locus of control and self-efficacy?
b) Does self-efficacy moderate the effect of internal locus of control on general satisfaction?
c) Is there a difference in reported academic performance related to COVID-19 anxieties among learners with high and low general anxiety disorder?
d) Do learners with high-level general anxiety report a higher negative effect of moving from face-to-face to an online learning platform, compared to learners with low-level general anxiety disorder?

## Method

### Participants

The participants were undergraduate and postgraduate students studying different courses at the University of West London. All students in the study were initially enrolled for traditional face-to-face courses before moving to online education in March 2020. The sample consisted of 57 participants, with 48 females (M = 23.29 years of age, SD = 5.80) and 9 males (M = 26.88 years of age, SD = 12.83). The participants were a minimum 18 years of age and maximum 59 years, and were required to provide informed consent prior to participation. All measures, consent and debrief forms were uploaded on the online survey platform Qualtrics. A link was posted on research platforms within the university and emailed to students through the 'Psychology Learning Community' research page. The data was extracted from Qualtrics to SPSS for analysis upon completion of the data collection. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of West London, Ethics Panel.

### Measures

Internal, Powerful Others and Chance Scale (Levenson, 1981): The scale consists of three subscales, 'Powerful Others' which measures the extent to which an individual believes outcomes of events in their lives are due to powerful individuals. Example items include, 'Getting what I want depends on pleasing those people above me'. The second subscale, 'Chance' includes items assessing whether an individual believes events in their lives are outside their control, and includes items such as 'Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interest from bad luck'. The last subscale, 'Internal locus of control' consists of items that assesses whether an individual believes that they have control of events and outcomes in their lives and include items such as 'My life is determined by my own actions'. The items are assessed on a six-point Likert Scale on a continuum from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'.

### Self-efficacy (Pintrich and Degroot, 1990)

The self-efficacy measure used in this study was adopted from the Motivational Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. Nine items covering self-efficacy were used. Example items include 'I am certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course' and 'I expect to do very well in this class'. Items are assessed on seven-point Likert Scale with 1-Not at all true for me, to 7-Very true for me. Individual scores are calculated by summing the scores, with high scores indicating high self-efficacy.

### General satisfaction Survey (Strachota, 2003)

The General Satisfaction Survey is a six-item subscale adopted from Student Satisfaction survey. This subscale is used to assess overall satisfaction from technology-mediated courses. Example items include 'I feel that online courses are as effective as face-to-face courses' and ' I would recommend this course to others'. The scale items included a four-point Likert scale of 1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree, and 4-Strongly agree.

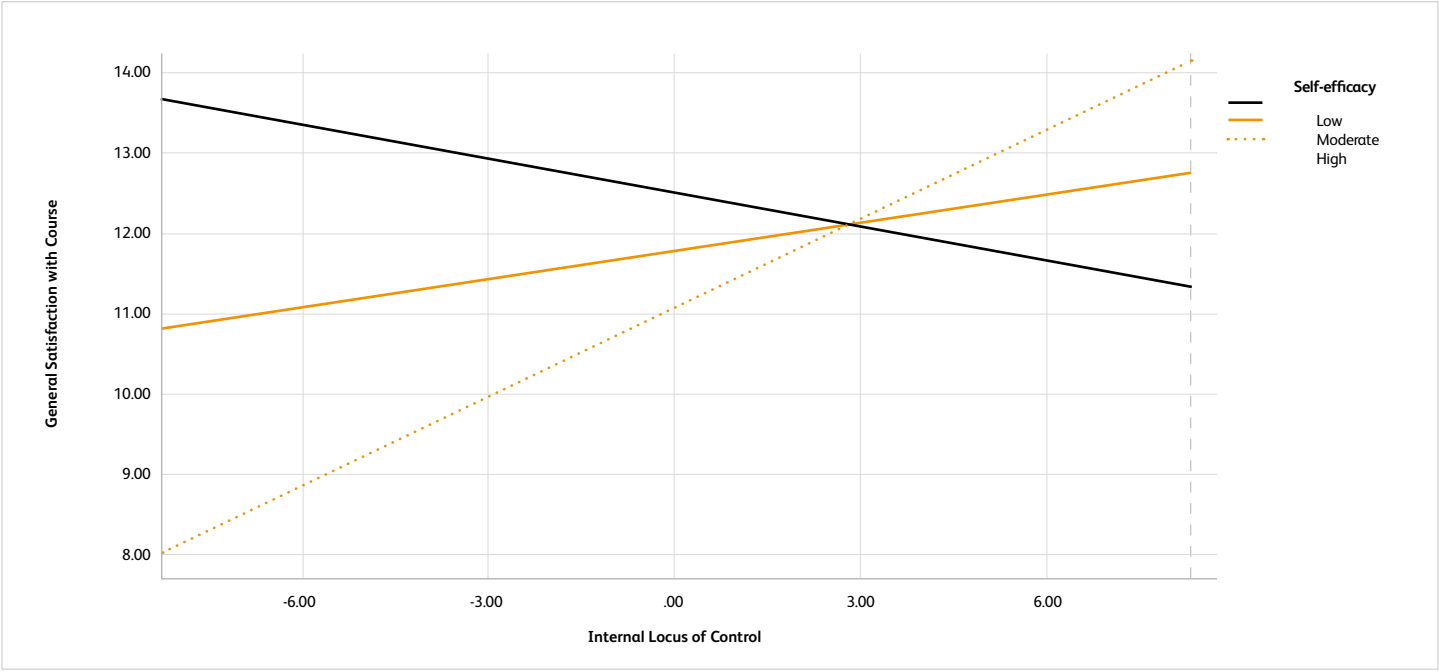



**FIGURE 1** Graph depicting the relationship between internal locus of control and general satisfaction with course at low (-1 SD), moderate (mean) and high (+1 SD) levels of self-efficacy

### General Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD) (Spitzer *et al.*, 2006)

General anxiety disorder scale (GAD-7) aims to assess the frequency of worry the person has been experiencing in the last two weeks. It includes items such as 'Trouble relaxing', 'Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge'. The items are scored on a four-point Likert scale with '0-Not at all' and '3-Nearly every day'. An overall score of '8' or above is considered as indicating probable anxiety disorder. This scale was used to understand whether individuals with chronic anxiety showed significantly more COVID-19-related anxiety (state anxiety), compared to those without pre-existing anxiety symptoms, and whether this significantly affected engagement with online learning.

## Results

### COVID-19, Online Learning, General Anxiety disorder, Self-efficacy and Locus of control

General satisfaction with the course did not correlate with self-efficacy, GAD or internal locus of control. However, self-efficacy yielded significant negative correlations with GAD ($r = -.26$, $p<.05$) and significant positive correlations with internal locus of control ($r=.45$, $p<.001$). The reported engagement in online learning, as measured by the number of sessions attended, did not show significant correlation with general satisfaction.

### Moderating effects of self-efficacy between ILOC and General Satisfaction

The moderation analyses showed a significant effect of self-efficacy in the relationship between ILOC and general satisfaction with the course. There were no significant main effects of ILOC or self-efficacy on general satisfaction. However, self-efficacy was a significant moderator of the relationship between ILOC and general satisfaction ($R2=.09$, $\Delta R2=.08$, $p=.03$). In other words, ILOC is a stronger predictor of general satisfaction for students with high levels of self-efficacy.

Furthermore, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA comparing the level of general satisfaction for students who reported either negative, positive or no change in their performance following a transition from face-to-face to online platform, revealed that students who believed their performance was affected negatively as a result of moving from face-to-face to online learning platform, reported significantly less general satisfaction with their course ($M=11.10$, $SD=4.39$), compared to those who reported a positive effect ($M=15.36$, $SD=6.60$) or no change to their performance ($M=14.77$, $SD=4.79$), $F(2, 56) = 4.28$, $p=.019$. The post-hoc analyses revealed that those learners who reported a negative effect on their performance as a result of a change in learning platform also reported the highest levels of general anxiety ($M=20.89$, $SD=7.10$), compared to those who reported no change to their performance ($M=14.88$, $SD=4.13$), $p = .02$, suggesting that general anxiety is an important variable affecting academic performance. The one-way ANOVA also showed that those learners who reported that their performance was negatively affected as a result of COVID-19-related anxieties were the learners who reported the highest general anxiety ($M=20.93$, $SD=6.66$), compared to those who reported no effect of COVID-19-related anxiety on their performance ($M=11.66$, $SD = 4.33$), $F(1,56)=16.00$, $p<.001$. This result further confirms that learners with chronic general anxiety were more vulnerable to situation-related anxiety and may find it difficult to adjust to changes in learning platforms.

*General anxiety disorder scale (GAD-7) aims to assess the frequency of worry the person has been experiencing in the last two weeks. It includes items such as 'Trouble relaxing', 'Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge'*

*We found that there was a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and general anxiety, suggesting that high general anxiety may have a negative effect on a learner's perceived self-efficacy*

**Discussion**

The study aimed to explore the extent to which different variables such as self-efficacy, LOC, general anxiety and COVID-19 affected engagement in online learning and overall general satisfaction of the learners. Firstly, we found that there were significant positive correlations between internal locus of control (ILOC) and self-efficacy. This is in line with previous findings such as Joo, Lim and Kim (2013). Learners with high levels of ILOC were also found to have high perceived self-efficacy. In support of the current findings, Sagone and De Caroli (2014) also found that the more learners perceived themselves as academically efficient, the more they expressed a positive representation of self-concept, and the more likely they were to perceive themselves as in control of everyday life circumstances. Furthermore, we found that there was a significant negative correlation between self-efficacy and general anxiety, suggesting that high general anxiety may have a negative effect on a learner's perceived self-efficacy. General anxiety is a variable that has not been previously researched in relation to self-efficacy and LOC in the context of online education. This is an important psychological variable that can affect both engagement in online learning and general learner satisfaction. General anxiety was included to assess the extent to which learners with chronic anxiety experienced COVID-19-related anxieties and the ways in which this impacted on their engagement in learning and general satisfaction. The analyses confirmed that there was a significant difference in the general anxiety of learners who reported that their performance was affected by COVID-19-related anxieties and those who did not report differences in their performance related to COVID-19. In other words, learners who scored high on the general anxiety scale reported negative effects of COVID-19 on their engagement in online learning. Moreover, learners who reported a negative impact on performance as a result of moving from traditional face-to-face to online learning reported low general satisfaction, and those learners who reported low satisfaction also reported significantly higher general anxiety, compared to learners who reported no change to their performance as a result of a change in learning platform. This result is in line with Shah *et al.* (2021) where psychological factors were shown to indirectly determine the influence of online learning on student engagement during the pandemic.

Another aim of the study was to explore the extent to which self-efficacy moderates the effect of ILOC on general satisfaction. The findings confirmed that self-efficacy strengthened the effects of internal locus of control on general satisfaction. Although previous studies confirmed the direct relationships between self-efficacy and ILOC (Abdalla, Abdelal and Soon, 2019) and general satisfaction (An *et al.*, 2020), the way in which self-efficacy effects this relationship was not researched. The findings confirm the previous literature showing the effects of ILOC on general satisfaction, and further shows that this relationship is strengthened through self-efficacy, suggesting that learners who believe that they are in control of the events in their lives are generally more satisfied with their course, and this effect is stronger for those with high self-efficacy. These results can be used to inform course designs and delivery. Supporting students in judging themselves positively may improve their perception of self as academically efficient, which in turn may improve motivation and engagement in learning and general satisfaction. This was also supported by previous studies (Sagone and De Caroli, 2014). In further support of the current findings, Joo *et al.* (2013) showed that supporting learners to succeed may reduce the attrition rate. However, in contrast to previous findings, internal locus of control and self-efficacy did not predict persistence in Joo et al. This shows that persistence and satisfaction may be influenced by different factors. Lastly, age, gender and level of study was not found to predict general satisfaction in this study. This finding is in line with previous studies. Cole and Shelley (2014) measured the level of satisfaction in online learning and also found no statistically significant differences in the level of satisfaction based on gender, age, or level of study. Furthermore, partially online courses were rated as somewhat more satisfactory than fully online courses in that study.

Overall, the current study revealed that the ILOC and self-efficacy has important effect on general satisfaction with the course. Furthermore, learners with anxiety may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of situational changes such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Adapting to other changes such as moving learning platforms from face-to-face to online may be more difficult for learners with high general anxiety and they may require additional support.

Lastly, the current findings should be considered in terms of limitations of the study. For example, there were only nine male participants in the study and the data was collected from one university in London. Also, students were originally enrolled for traditional face-to-face courses and had to move to an online platform and adapt to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this was considered by assessing the impact of a change in learning platform on perceived academic performance and, studies with fully online learning yielded similar results about self-efficacy and ILOC on general satisfaction, the findings may have been different if the study had been conducted in a fully online university. Furthermore, including grades for the assessment of engagement and a measure of persistence would have provided a more comprehensive view of the findings. Following up learners who participated in the study to see if they continued their enrolment would provide a more in-depth understanding of satisfaction and engagement.

In conclusion, the findings could be used to inform instructors about the importance of dispositional variables such as ILOC, self-efficacy and anxiety levels of the learner on general satisfaction. The findings can also lead to designing more effective strategies that focus on personalised support to help learner achievement. Support can include more constructive feedback to increase motivation, perceived self-efficacy and control of the learner, which can lead improvements in engagement and general satisfaction.

Lastly, considering that learners with general anxiety are more vulnerable to changes in the situation such as moving the learning platform, and the COVID-19 pandemic, these students may require further emotional and academic support to increase self-efficacy and therefore general satisfaction. Thus, this empirical study contributes to the knowledge base related to developing online learning and informs about psychological variables which affect learning and satisfaction. The findings may encourage policy-makers in higher education to consider learner's psychological needs within distance and blended learning.

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## Key words

Internal locus of control, self-efficacy, GAD, COVID-19, higher education



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# YOU, ME, THE BBC AND THE LICENSE FEE

***Abstract:***

*This article lays out some of the critical issues about the future of the BBC and public service broadcasting that will be discussed in the mid-term Charter Review starting April 2022. A theme that will be central is the future funding arrangements, with the intention to abolish the license fee already announced by the government minister responsible for the review. The challenge is to ensure that any alternative to license fee funding supports a richer and more relevant public service broadcasting sector.*

It is apparent that, as it celebrates its centenary, the BBC in its entirety—as an institution, as a global and domestic service provider, and news outlet—divides opinion. The broadcaster is accused of political bias from both the Left and the Right. Although such complaints have long existed, they are now more complicated and febrile as the political lines of the home nations of United Kingdom have realigned. In recent years, the BBC has been accused of being pro-Remain, and by others of giving the largest platform to unelected Brexiteers; from smearing Labour leaders to being a socialist outpost; and now, from not holding Boris Johnson to account to giving too much coverage to parties in No 10. However, the tendency for these arguments to centre on the license fee, precludes an essential debate about the function of 21st century public service broadcasting. This debate needs to include a far wider discussion about a reconfiguration of public service media and its funding mechanism, as well an idea that is presented in 'The BBC and Beyond' manifesto, that has been submitted to the mid-term Charter review which begins in April 2022.

In the current climate, the BBC and public service broadcasting are under threat. The ideological underpinning and rationale for the BBC and a strong public service sector has been eroded by the values of neoliberal conservatism that have also allowed a multiplicity of alternative 'news sources' to flourish in an unregulated environment. Channel 4, the commercially funded public service broadcaster is in danger of being privatised, and the BBC license fee is constrained to a rate substantially below inflation, whilst approaching the mid-term Charter review that includes future funding arrangements.

That the preferred position of the Conservative government is to change the funding model of the BBC was made explicit in a recent tweet by Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries (2022), who announced the end of the license fee prior to the start of the mid-term review. Whatever decision is made about the license fee or how it is levied, there is still an urgent need for radical media reform and more effective regulation, to respond to misinformation, multiple providers and the prevalence of anonymous or fabricated sources. Other issues with the BBC in its current formation are the continued under- or misrepresentation of many communities and groups and some individuals, the gender pay gap, and the legacy of a culture that has allowed abusive behaviour to continue unchallenged. As well as addressing all the above (!), a pressing issue for the BBC is the mid-term Charter Review April 2022. What follows is a contextualisation of five of the major concerns that the BBC needs to address for the mid-term Charter review. These are the governance and management of the organisation, the license fee structure, the relevance of its output, and technology.

## Governance and Management

The British Broadcasting Company was formed in 1922 as a commercial conglomeration of radio manufacturers who were granted a national



monopoly license to broadcast. The Managing Director, John Reith proposed a public service broadcast system to be offered by the British Broadcasting Corporation that came into being on January 1st, 1927. Since then, the BBC has been financed by a license fee set by the government, under the auspices of a Royal Charter established to ensure independence from government (Briggs, 1961). The Charter is renewed every ten years and now runs alongside the 'across the sector' agreements established by the regulator, the Office of Communications (Ofcom), mediated by the BBC Governors (BBC, Governance).

The BBC Board has three staff roles, the Director-General, the Chief Operating Officer and the Head of Content. Two of those positions are occupied by women. There are 4 executive positions, including the Director General, currently Tim Davie, the others are invited by the Queen, via recommendations from ministers. The 10 non-execs come through an application procedure, and should include governors for the devolved nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, although dishearteningly latter post is vacant. The nine (three women, six men) non-staff board members originate from a narrow range of backgrounds, broadcasting, academia, culture and most frequently and anachronistically as well as inappropriately for a public service broadcaster, is finance, with four of the non-staff members, including the Chair, from backgrounds in the City. Between them, the members of the Board have accrued the honours of a Professor Dame, a Professor CBE, a Sir with a CH suffix (Member of the Companions of Honour) and two further Sirs. The most recent appointments, who took up their posts on January 1st, 2022, are both men of colour with backgrounds in finance, one is a Sir and the other sits on the Panel of Senior Advisers for Chatham House, the Royal Institute for International Affairs (BBC, BBC Board).

There are many issues with the BBC—not least it still needs to become 'overseen' by a far more representative range of the population than this list of eminences suggests. This is further compounded by the over-representation of public school men and the elite-university educated in the upper tiers of the BBC and what is increasingly often seen as an overly, or indeed overtly cosy relationship between politicians and political journalists, which has led to a revolving door, where BBC journalists become government media advisors and spokespeople. These include the now-disgraced Allegra Stratton, one-time political editor of *Newsnight*, and extend to Guto Harri, BBC chief political correspondent (2002–2005) and now Director of Communications at No.10 (February 2022–?). In some cases, people then return to positions of power in the BBC such as Sir Robbie Gibb, an ex-editor of *BBC Westminster*, who became Director of Communications at No.10 (2017–2019) and now sits on the BBC board. Many of the concerns about the news agenda relate to the stories that are covered (or not covered) and the ways in which they are framed, and follow on from the decisions that are made by or reported on by people far removed from the realities faced by so many.

**License Fee**

The abolition of the license fee was one of outcomes that was expected to emerge from the Peacock Committee, and its report in 1986 acknowledged that although it was a far from a perfect solution, in the absence of a realistic alternative, the license fee remained (Seaton and McNicholas, 2009). It seems that only a paucity of creative thinking would come to the same conclusion 36 years later.

As it stands, there are four central objections to the license fee. The first is that those who support free-market media identify the license fee as a

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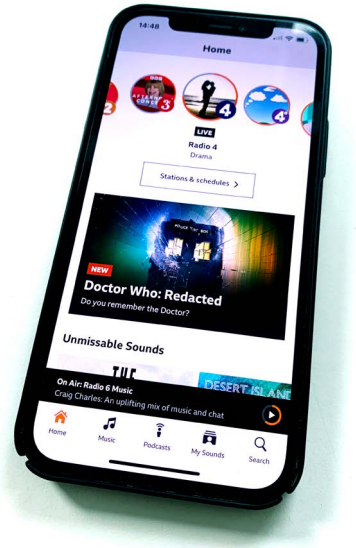
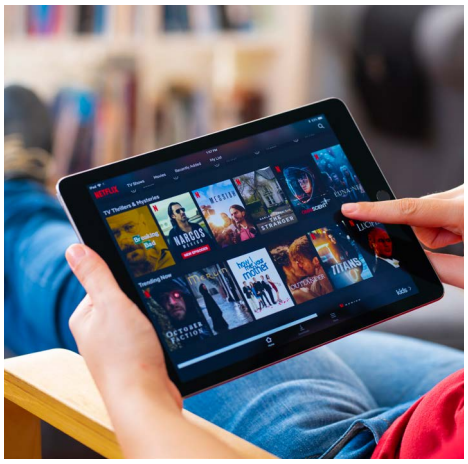
public subsidy that grants a substantial competitive advantage to the BBC, a global media company with a successful commercial arm (a point that will be returned to). The second has supporters on both the Left and the Right: that a license fee per household unfairly burdens single-person households. The third objection is that people with limited digital access are paying for content that they cannot access. The final one is the common association of the license fee with the older technology of television, which no longer accounts for the vast majority of BBC output. For example, on 4th February 2022, the nine national BBC television channels transmitted a total of 183 hours of content. When you include the television content of the devolved nations (BBC Scotland, ALBA and S4C), and the output of the 11 national radio stations, five nation stations that cover Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales including alternative language output, and 40 local radio stations, a further 1324 hours of BBC content was broadcast, taking the total broadcast hours to 1507 in a 24-hour day[1]. In addition, assuming you have digital access, there is the substantial online provision of bbc.co.uk, 'one of the most extensive and most frequently visited news websites' that provides national and local information (Barwise and York, 2020, p.30). BBC iPlayer provides access to live, time-shifted, exclusive and archival content—currently 2500 programmes (Zdraveska, 2022) and Sounds does the same for radio nd podcasts. In addition, BBC Films makes a substantial contribution to the UK film industry by buying first broadcast rights, Radio 1 and 1xtra have specific provisions to nurture, promote and grow emerging UK musical talent. All of this contributes to the success and vibrancy of the UK creative sectors and their global reputation. It is simply no longer feasible for the license fee to be levied solely on television; what also needs to be considered is whether it is appropriate that such an extensive contribution to public service media be made by a single organisation, particularly one dealing with the many issues listed above.

As well as the domestic services, the BBC has an international reach from the days of the Empire Service (1932–65), now the BBC World Service, a 24-hour radio station that attracts a weekly audience of 473 million and produces a substantial amount of content in over 40 languages for a wide range of national and local audiences (BBC, 2019). There is also the advantage of a shared language and many cultural references with Australia and the US, where the BBC sells broadcast rights to high-profile programmes such as *Dr Who* (BBC1 1963–89, BBC1 2005–present), and royal and sporting events such as tennis from Wimbledon, that the broadcaster has covered since 1927. More mundane programming attracts a different audience, such as the long-standing format *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC1 1979–present) which is very popular in the US where the original airs as a programme on the PBS channel, alongside an American version of the format produced by WGBH (a Boston-based PBS. The popular formats of MasterMind (1972–present) and *MasterChef* (BBC 1990–present) and their celebrity spin offs are currently produced in 29 of the 60 countries to which they have been licensed. More recently, there are partnerships with SVOD services such as Netflix, Amazon and Apple, and other national public service broadcasters, as well as an extended partnership between BBC Studios and Discovery (Harrington and MacIntosh, 2019). These sales and partnerships contribute to the commercial profile of the BBC as a global entity, and to the complaints of an unfair public subsidy.




**1** All information BBC iPlayer schedules 4 February 2022



*We also watch differently now, not necessarily in a linear fashion, and access is available without regard to the transmission schedule. The notion of a shared routine has diminished through time-shifting and on-demand access*

**Relevance**

Another area of conflicting concerns for the BBC at the mid-term review is how it can demonstrate its relevance to audiences, as well as its contribution to the cultural economy. Surveys commissioned by the BBC suggest that 99% of households access some BBC services (BBC, 2019). The proviso is that 99% of the self-selecting households are prepared to fill in a survey about the BBC, and the same applies to the claim that 91% of individuals use one or more of the BBC's services in the average week (Barwise and York, 2020). There needs to be a better mechanism for measuring the relevance of content, and there are associated difficulties; the BBC is required by Ofcom to transmit a minimum quota of 25% content from independent production companies. In 2018, 32% of content (BBC, 2019), was from the independent production companies which also produce content for the commercially funded terrestrial channels. This arrangement contributes to the wider production economy of the broadcast sector, but reduces the consistency of programmes, of channel identities and of the domestic brand. Distinctions between BBC and independent content are not always clear, arguably only identified by the absence of ad breaks. It may not be apparent to audience members that they are engaging with BBC content, particularly as trailers and channel idents disrupt the content in the same that adverts do. The availability of free (YouTube) or SVOD (Netflix) services, has further fragmented the audience, and BBC content too often fails to engage young(er) audiences in ways they find interesting or easy to navigate. The economically driven shift to an exclusively online delivery for BBC3 was misguided, particularly as the online channel was used to showcase content that was potentially too risqué for the broadcast channels, but more relevant and appropriate to the older segment of the channel's target audience (16–34). The re-launch of BBC3 as a terrestrial broadcaster (February 1st, 2022) was surely an opportunity to do something a little more invigorating than six back-to-back episodes of *Eating with My Ex* on its first Friday night back on the telly.

There has been a loss of connection between an audience from four nations and a national broadcaster that privileges one. Historically, the nation was brought together in through the regular broadcast of the events, that came to make up the broadcast calendar that it invented (Scannell, 1989). These include the Boat Race, the Grand National, FA Cup Final, the Derby, Trooping of the Colour, Wimbledon, the Proms, Remembrance Day Service, the Christmas message from the monarch. These events are punctuated by the royal occasions, marriages, deaths, investitures, and jubilee celebrations. For some, these elements are still central to their experience, for others they make no sense. For many the narrative imagined for a nation a century ago, arguably no longer has any relevance. We also watch differently now, not necessarily in a linear fashion, and access is available without regard to the transmission schedule. The notion of a shared routine created by the ordinary familiarity of soap operas, to the extraordinary events of the broadcast calendar, has diminished through time-shifting and on-demand access. However, the slowness of the Corporation to respond to the generational and demographic shifts has left many feeling under-represented and under-served (Barwise and York, 2020).

It may be, however, that when the turbulent years of Brexit and the pandemic settle down, some of the moments we will remember are tuning into BBC Parliament to watch live coverage of Brexit votes, or our ability to access data about COVID cases with our postcodes on the BBC website. For others, the educational resources provided during the pandemic helped with the stress of home-schooling, and CBBC provided distraction for younger school-age children, or perhaps in phases of insomnia people discovered the soothing sounds that play throughout the night on CBeebies Radio. The circumstances of the pandemic may do much to demonstrate the public service role of the BBC in a period of great uncertainty and of financial or emotional hardship, but clear plans to support that role of public service and ensure its continued relevance to its future audience remain essential. Growing trust in or appreciation of the BBC may already be demonstrated the most recent parliamentary petition 'to hold a binding referendum on the future of the BBC TV license'. This closed on December 1st, 2021, having attracted only 15,899 of the 100,000 signatures needed to force a debate, despite having been open for more than 6 months (Petitions UK Government and Parliament, 2021a). The previous petition 'Abolish the license fee' closed on 21st May 2021 having gathered 5994 signatures (Petitions UK Government and Parliament, 2021b). And the one prior to that 'Revoke the License fee' 4th September 2020, achieved 110,842 signatures which led to a pointless debate which reiterated that the license fee was enshrined by the Royal Charter until the date of its next review (Petitions UK Government and Parliament, 2020).

*Another important part of the BBC's contribution has been the development of new technologies and techniques, a regulatory requirement, that is often clouded or squeezed out by discussions about content, but should not go unrecognised*



**Technology**

Another important part of the BBC's contribution has been the development of new technologies and techniques, a regulatory requirement, that is often clouded or squeezed out by discussions about content, but should not go unrecognised. Not only is it the world's first national public service broadcaster (1927), the world's first international broadcaster (Empire Service 1932), it also established the first national television service (1936). The coverage of the Coronation of George VI (1936) has been identified as the first global media event (Dayan and Katz, 1992). The Coronation of his daughter, Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 did the same for television (Scannell, 1989). Behind the scenes, the Corporation developed its own video technology VERA—Vision Electronic Recording Apparatus (1947), introduced the first national colour television service (1964) and invented the 'instant replay' for the 1966 World Cup (Nash, 1970). The structure of public service broadcasting has been influenced by the introduction of the 'broadcaster as publisher' model, later adopted by Channel 4, but first used in the BBC2 Community Programmes Unit (CPU), a participatory project initiated by David Attenborough in 1972, when he was Controller of BBC2. It emerged in response to an extended media debate about the role and function of public service broadcasting prior to the Annan Committee report (1977). The CPU gave the Corporation a mechanism for responding to concerns about public service broadcasting. Importantly, it also provided the BBC with ways to develop experimental forms of content, a central part of BBC2 s remit that was difficult to achieve in the, then, 'closed-shop' (fully unionised) environment of the television studio. Broadcasting, like many other industries, in the early 1970s, was a fraught time, as unions sought to protect the rights of their members that were being eroded.

By developing a production context beyond or external to union agreements, the CPU enabled 'ordinary people' or non-media professionals, usually pre-existing groups, to apply to the Unit for access to the means of production and distribution, in order, to express their frequently unrepresented point of view in a variety of formats. Not only did this contribute to a reconfiguration of the broadcasting sector, but it also introduced many of the themes and techniques we are now familiar with. This is most apparent in the output of *Video Diaries* (BBC2 1990–94) and its offspring *Teenage Video Diaries* (BBC2 1994–97), strands that introduced the first-person documentary to television screens (Henderson, 2009). Such experimentation continued with the *Video Nation* (BBC2 1994–2000, BBC Online 2000–11) project that supported a small group of volunteers, selected from 3000 applicants, to document their lives in two-minute vignettes, broadcast on weeknights, immediately after the late evening news. Whilst fleeting and ephemeral as television content, many of the shorts were remarkable glimpses into real lives, that disrupted or 'punctured' the stream of high production value content, or 'flow of television' (Williams, 1992). Shorts were often presented in first-person address to camera in extreme close-up from a lowly lit, intimate domestic environment—techniques that are now familiar from reality tv and online vlogs (video blogs) and performances, but were unusual and memorable televisual techniques at that time. Video Nation relaunched in 2000 as the first archival project on the BBC website (Henderson, 2009). The growth of online services followed to facilitate the digital switchover and offer a trusted provider. The launch of iPlayer and Sounds and the ability to access live, time-shifted and archival content are examples of the role 'a strong, independent, publicly funded BBC might play in a post-broadcasting future, to present opportunities for much more authentically democratic arrangements than were possible when radical media reform was last on the agenda in the 1970s' (Mills, 2016, p.217).

*The need for widespread media reform and regulation has never been greater and it needs to be built around a strong public service broadcast sector across radio, television and online provision*

**Conclusion**

The need for widespread media reform and regulation has never been greater and it needs to be built around a strong public service broadcast sector across radio, television and online provision. Perhaps, rather than celebrating the centenary of the commercial iteration of the BBC in 2022, we should spend the next five years finding ways to ensure that the concept of public service broadcasting will achieve its centenary in 2027 as part of a far more effective public service media to redress the slippage between the nation that is represented and the lives we live. A reimagined BBC should surely retain a central role, whilst relinquishing some of its transmission hours to alternative media producers and not just independent production companies. As identified earlier, in 2018, the BBC transmitted 32% of content from the independent production companies, although they are regulated to transmit 25%. This 7% over-reach on the independent quota, could become a space for campaigning and community groups, members of the public, and students to produce content, revisiting the aims of the CPU, but enhanced by advances in technology and digital literacies, and the relative ease of access to the means of production. Many universities, including UWL, have broadcast-quality production facilities and our media and journalism students produce broadcast-quality work that raises important issues and has a social and public value. Such an arrangement would ensure that the voices and experiences of a far wider range of people are represented on, but not by, the BBC, to increase the relevance of the broadcaster and ensure that it serves its audience in a more equitable manner. Who knows, a re-establishment of trust between the BBC and the people and a more effective and democratic public media sphere could help to counter some of the most corrosive narratives in mainstream and social media outlets.

This paper is the basis of a presentation for 'Creating a People's BBC' (March 25th, 2022), a panel organised by The BBC and Beyond campaign, as part of the 2022 Media Reform Festival:

**https://bbcandbeyond.net/**

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**Keywords**

BBC, license fee, mid-term Charter Review, public service broadcasting, UK



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# TAKING STOCK OF DIVERSITY

*Since the 20th century, migration has mainly been considered as something to do with black and brown people coming into Britain. In the post-war period this was dominated by so-called New Commonwealth immigration; current debates around the usefulness of the term BAME reflect the feeling that identifying and grouping all these diverse people into one broad category has been and continues to be a problem, not least because of variety and change within these populations*

The perception that Britain is experiencing increasing ever greater demographic complexity has become a truism in social policy as well as in public debates. Whatever field of policy this is linked to—health and social care, families or social security, for instance—the variety and changing patterns of social groups and identities present severe challenges to the delivery of public services (Platt and Nandi, 2018), particularly where they aim to meet the needs of diverse groups equitably. These changes are evident across all demographics and characteristics, such as gender and age, but my own interest is in how this is thought about with regard to race, ethnicity and migration.

The convulsions around Brexit shone fresh light on migration in the UK, with its focus on predominantly white European migrants. However, over the centuries, there have been waves of white migrants, often received with some hostility, and a recent book on London, *Migrant City* (Panayi, 2021) sets out this history in an engaging manner. Since the 20th century, migration has mainly been considered as something to do with black and brown people coming into Britain. In the post-war period this was dominated by so-called New Commonwealth immigration; current debates (e.g., see CRED, 2021) around the usefulness of the term BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) reflect the feeling that identifying and grouping all these diverse people into one broad category has been and continues to be a problem, not least because of variety and change within these populations. The change is also terminological, as over the decades, they have been called many things in policy terms, including 'coloured', Black, Asian, ethnic minorities, and BME/BAME. Yet, as these groups have made Britain their home, other terms and ideas – such as mixed race – have also become evident, reflecting social change. This short article presents four major approaches in the social policy literature to thinking about this racial/ethnic complexity. For each of them, I sketch its main claim, what is known about it based on applied research, and some reflections on what it could mean for social policy, in efforts to improve Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

**Superdiversity**

This term emerged from Vertovec's (2007) observation regarding UK migrant communities as smaller, more scattered, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified than was recognised through a concentration on racial minorities and catch-all categories such as BME. Rather than viewing diversity mainly in terms of ethnicity or country of origin, the fact of superdiversity, Vertovec maintains, means that policymakers should recognise the 'multiple identifications and axes of differentiation, only some of which concern ethnicity' (Vertovec, 2007, p.1049). There are relatively few examples of empirical research directly examining the implications of superdiversity for addressing race inequalities in social policy, although it is used frequently in migration studies. Among them are Phillimore's (2014) work on the need for different policy approaches to monitoring and managing complexity in health services due to new migrant groups, as professionals encounter service users with new cultural and linguistic needs. In turn, these groups may have differing expectations of how to access services based on their countries of origin. Overall though, the implications of superdiversity for social policy are still underdeveloped.

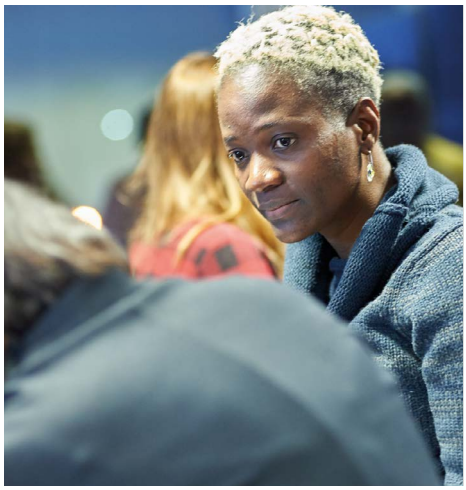
An analysis of what is lacking in service delivery and how 'different' or similar the needs of communities are remains at issue. While Vertovec (2007) called for a substantial shift in the assessment of needs, planning, budgeting and commissioning of services, there has been little progress on what these new forms of administrative data collection might look like in practice. More importantly, what will this new information help to achieve? How should it be used? It is here that more research is required in order to understand what, if anything, superdiversity (understood both as a concept and as a method) can contribute, in practical terms, to our understanding of the utility of ethnic and racial categories in promoting equality in public policy and public service provision. The work to date has not offered practitioners and policy makers a clear direction, other than to describe demographic complexity with a greater degree of sensitivity and granularity, and why it would produce better outcomes.

*There is a need to explore, in more empirical detail, the nature of underlying beliefs and choices that policymakers, social scientists, and mixed people make in using the idea of 'mixed'.*

**Mixedness**

Sociological studies of mixedness offer a theoretical account of the boundaries of identity associated with race and ethnicity, by considering the significance of 'mixed' and 'inter' racial and ethnic backgrounds, as both a global as well as a national issue (King O'Riain *et al*., 2014). The main policy implications arise from demographic analysis: in 2001 (the first time the UK census included categories for people from mixed heritage backgrounds) 677,000 people in Britain identified themselves as 'mixed'. Just less than half were under the age of 16 and the mixed category looks set to become one of the fastest growing ethnic populations, as will become evident when the 2021 Census data is available. The feeling that mixedness requires attention by policy makers has been around for some time, with a common view that the sheer diversity of mixed people's combinations and experiences is insufficiently understood. There is a risk that assumptions are made about what being 'mixed' means, as a simplistic 'between two cultures' understanding of experiences.

It is evident that a substantial proportion of people with mixed parentage choose not to describe themselves as 'mixed' when filling out social surveys. For mixed heritage children in foster care, categorisation is often inadequate and fails to consider internal variation between identities that are formed outside birth families, and the ethnic and racial categories of birth. If mixedness is to be used as a framework to determine the public service needs of the population in the future through a more granular analysis of service outcomes, then understanding the factors that shape decisions to identify oneself as 'mixed' will be an important line of inquiry for policy makers. In particular, there is a need to explore, in more empirical detail, the nature of underlying beliefs and choices that policymakers, social scientists, and mixed people make in using the idea of 'mixed'. How do existing patterns of racialisation and structural inequality shape the process of defining and responding to the public services needs of certain parts of the population? How do these beliefs apply to decisions about administrative categories employed by public authorities in order to monitor difference? Mixedness would also require a more intersectional approach to racial identities (acknowledging the social construction of race in conjunction with other aspects of identity such as gender and class) and while this is apparent in youth and cultural studies, its implications for and in social policy to address race inequality are still much less understood.



*Post-race. This has several meanings that are often confused. The more common manner in which it is employed is a descriptor of ethnic/racial diversity and the need to go beyond race*

**Intersectionality**

This term has only been used in the UK social policy lexicon in recent years, where it has been associated mainly with specialist equality issues and legal matters (Atrey, 2018) where one form of discrimination is 'added' to another. Although this additive approach is weak, the term has also been employed in a more critical vein, as a dynamic alternative to equality approaches based on more static, one-dimensional forms of identity and inequality such as race/ethnicity, age or sexual orientation. Despite providing a nod to complexity and intersectionality, policy makers often continue to treat gender, ethnicity and disability as separate processes and inequalities. Hence, it can be argued that the concept has been denuded of its radical edge. Authors note that the UK has been slow to embrace the application of intersectionality in women's rights movements and that it has revealed differences of approach within feminist movements (Christofferson, 2020).

There appear to be continued conceptual and practical barriers to the application of intersectionality in policy and practice. It currently has only limited application in UK policy and is more often found in international development policy. The term is used descriptively rather than critically, and even then, is seen as requiring a relatively high level of investment of time and resources to work at the required level of granularity—understanding the complex relationships between gender, race and class for instance. Despite widespread recognition of the need to understand the intersectional identities and experiences of those using public services, the practice of public services delivery has not caught up with how to address these multidimensional aspects of inequality.

**Post-race**

This has several meanings that are often confused. The more common manner in which it is employed is a descriptor of ethnic/racial diversity and the need to go beyond race. In common with the above approaches, the view is that racial categories and terms such as BME do not helpfully capture experiences of inequality and discrimination in contemporary society. Alternative post-racial arguments draw on ethical propositions relating to questions of social justice. This 'eliminativist' perspective maintains that, even though racism has not been overcome, removing race from political discourse and scholarly inquiry is needed due to the negative, reifying effects that arise from its use (St Louis, 2015). Thus, the term covers a variety of views – a move beyond race-based/identitarian politics; and also as a critique of 'race blind' viewpoints, that deny race and racism as an issue for political and policy attention It is the former 'beyond race' aspect that is most common and this was evident in the recent government-commissioned Sewell report (CRED, 2021). It has echoes in public discussions too, as in a 2015 Channel 4 documentary *Things we won't say about race that are true*. There the presenter, Trevor Phillips, stated that actions on race equality under the banner of 'multiculturalism' had actually been counter-productive for both racial minorities who had been 'ghettoised', and white communities who had been alienated by 'political correctness' and special treatment for non-whites.

What are the implications of post-race for policy and practice? A reluctance or refusal to count by race makes counting ethnic inequalities a particular challenge in Europe (Simon, 2017). From a UK perspective, the racialisation of groups and associated race inequalities problematise the adoption of race-blind forms of equality policy frameworks. Contemporary arguments about sovereignty vs. security, as in the UK Brexit debates, or about the alleged cultural incompatibility of Islam reveal the intersections of racism, nationalism and populism with migration issues and religious minorities. This supports arguments that race categories and identities are still needed, given the fact that racial inequalities remain so clearly evident across a range of policy fields (Race Disparity Unit, 2020; Byrne *et al.*, 2020). Thus, a key challenge in this area is about identifying a balance between acknowledging that race categories and terms are imperfect and heuristic, while at the same time resisting the element in post-racial views that deny racism or limits it to the past or an extreme fringe.

*There are a range of approaches to thinking about diversity beyond race or using terms and categories such as BME. The four discussed here are useful in telling us something about social and demographic change and complexity*

## Conclusion

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this article. For one, there are a range of approaches to thinking about diversity beyond race or using terms and categories such as BME. The four discussed here are useful in telling us something about social and demographic change and complexity. They are better seen as overlapping, rather than being wholly distinct, but they remain at quite different levels conceptually and empirically, with post-race and superdiversity stressing more than race is no longer a useful category, while mixedness and intersectionality tend to call for a more granular and complex view of how race works alongside other identities. Second, despite a great deal of academic and public talk about social change, due to race and migration as well as other factors, applying alternative or additive models to actual policy studies and outcomes is patchy, and it is not easy to prescribe a list of changes that derives from advocating alterative terms and models. This makes it difficult to compare and assess them. Third, the impact of Black Lives Matter in the past two years has seen the issue of structural racism come to the fore (Murji, 2019). This indicates that the approaches here do not replace race as wished for in claims for some of them, and, whatever the arguments against a category such as BME, it or something like it will still be needed to act as a baseline against which to assess whether policy is delivering more equitable outcomes. Hence, and finally, in a context such as Higher Education, producing better EDI will need to find a way of taking account of race as well as (and is not replaceable by) other models.

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**Keywords**

Diversity, intersectionality, superdiversity, mixedness, post-race



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A. Deirdre Robson | University of West London, UK

# GENDER AND THE MARKET FOR MODERN ART IN THE UNITED STATES

*Looking at gender as a factor in changing attitudes to art market values in New York, and the key role of tastemakers in this process*


***Abstract:***

*Between the inter-war years and 1960s, there was a radical shift in the art market status of modern art in the United States. This was not simply a matter of time. This article argues that there was a re-gendering of the discourse of art patronage in America, with modern art being re-presented—as never before—to the potential collector as being if not masculine then 'not feminine'. It is argued that the Museum of Modern Art, New York, explicitly set out to re-gender collecting discourse as part of its overall aim of enhancing the status of modern art in America.*

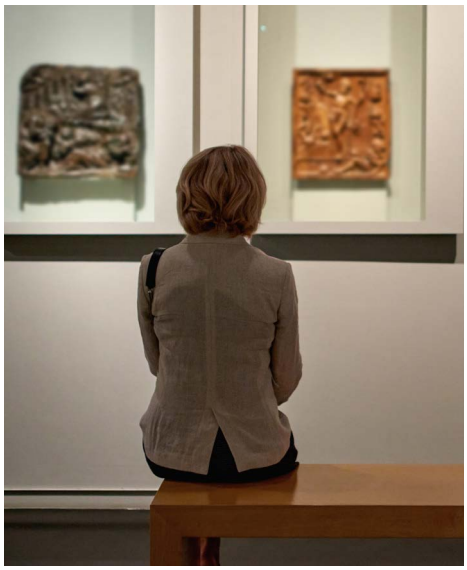
*Conventionally, art collecting has been discussed in terms of 'great collectors', focusing attention for the most part on the wealth and status typically associated with such individuals. It is only quite recently that any attention has been paid to gender as well as class, with respect to analysing collector motivations and behaviours*

It has become something of an art history cliché that the period between the 1940s and 1960s heralded the critical 'triumph' of modern art in the United States. Less frequently discussed has been the concurrent shift in the market for modern art in America. Whereas in the inter-war years or early 1940s, the values of modern art were really quite low (Robson, 1994), by the late 1960s, modern art was *'long recognized as a sound area of investment'* (Grant, 1968, cited in Cras, 2013, p.3). The question then is: what explains this change? This article argues that a key factor was a shift in the discourse of art patronage in the United States. More specifically, the collecting discourse was re-gendered. This did not happen of its own accord, and it will be argued that a key tastemaker in the American art world—the Museum of Modern Art, New York—played a fundamental role by deliberately setting out to re-gender collecting discourse, so as to raise the status of modern art in the United States.

Collecting more generally has been defined as a form of socially sanctioned acquisitive activity, whereby the symbolic value of such singularized objects is linked to enhanced monetary value (Brimo, 1938/2016). A collection—and this includes art—is seen variously as: a concrete expression of a collector's taste; as having a psychological dimension; representing an intense connection between collector and objects; and as indicative of a collector's identity traits, imaginative capabilities and even world view. Personal motives for collecting can be difficult to define, but typically involve personal taste, fashion, the desire to possess, and an ambition to impress both one's inner circle and society at large. Art collecting, historically, has been regarded as transforming the meaning of objects from the profane—i.e., mundane, ordinary, commonplace, the realm of commodity—to the sacred—i.e., capable of generating reverence, a vehicle of transcendent experience (Potvin and Myzelev, 2009). Further, elite or 'grand style' art collecting has typically not merely demonstrated a collector's wealth, but conferred a singular status upon the collector concerned, evidenced their ostensibly highly developed aesthetic discrimination, and provided a means of being memorialised (Johnson, 1986). For such reasons, as Saarinen (1959, p.346) noted, art collecting in America was attractive because *'art is conveniently endowed with exactly the right characteristics to make its pursuit not only pleasurable but also wise and virtuous.'*

Conventionally, art collecting has been discussed in terms of 'great collectors', focusing attention for the most part on the wealth and status typically associated with such individuals. It is only quite recently that any attention has been paid to gender as well as class, with respect to analysing collector motivations and behaviours. This is an important omission for, as Belk and Wallendorf note, in a consumption society *'collecting makes visible the gender distinctions governing social life'* (1994, p.251). With respect to wider socio-gender norms, in Western societies, the attributes associated with masculinity are more closely aligned to highly prized cultural values than the norms of femininity. In the United States, a prime 'individualistic' culture, masculinity i.e., being 'self-oriented' (self-assertive, autonomous) is typically prioritised over femininity i.e., being 'other-oriented' (nurturing, deferent) (Baily Wolf *et al*., 2015). Indeed, despite ostensible advances for women in America in both political and economic terms post World War I, and the increasing currency of the idea of the *'new woman'* in the 1920s, the inter-war era was also impacted by conservative gender norms. In particular, a new prominence was given to Sigmund Freud's notions of female sexuality as 'naturally' passive and acquiescent, with the *'innate'* natures of men and women being fundamentally different (Chafe, 1973, p.100). Even in the 1930s, despite substantial changes in women's actual lives, gender norms of men's superiority over women continued to hold sway, and indeed Freudian notions of 'innate' gender difference had a further renaissance in post-World War II America (Meyerowitz, 1994).

In cultures typified by inherent gender difference—ergo Western nations—'elite' collecting (that of high value art exclusively) has historically been characterised as calling for personal attributes such as aggression and overt ambition, characteristics conventionally seen as untypical of women (Belk and Wallendorf, 1994). Significantly, the 'elite' collecting ethos strongly reflects what has been



identified as the early twentieth century ideal of American manliness: individualistic competitive success (Rotundo, 1993). In the Gilded Age (last quarter of the nineteenth century) American self-made men had been, for the first time, encouraged to see art as an opportunity for profitable investments (Vottero, 2013). By the early 1900s, when art collecting in the United States was becoming better established, 'grand' collections—and more particularly the European 'Old Masters' collections of industrialist-plutocrats such as J. Pierpont Morgan—were being lauded as exemplifying novel American cultural tropes. These tropes were: the *'businessman with taste'* as American hero; New World attainment of cultural complexity via accumulation of the treasures of the Old World; and the successful combination of tradition—the function of the ruling class—and timely modernity—the business attitude and public commitment of the private collector (Santori, 2003, p.71). Conversely, where woman as collectors was concerned, contemporary male anxieties about a supposed turn-of-the century feminization of American culture meant that women as an entity were criticised (if mentioned at all) as signifying only the perils of poor collecting practice (McCarthy, 1991).

In gender terms, art collecting has enabled men to participate in the so-called 'feminine' world of consumption, while at the same time not subverting their more conventional identification with the 'masculine' world of production (Belk and Wallendorf, 1994). More importantly, within collecting discourse, men have conventionally been identified with the 'ideal' collector: someone with the ability to make disinterested aesthetic judgements; those with a vision for their collections; and who viewed their holdings as *'an ensemble with a philosophy behind it'* (Saisselin, 1984, p.68). Male collectors, in the early twentieth century, were alone seen as having the capability to *'exhibit objects in both public and private venues for the spectatorial pleasure of others'*, i.e., did not build collections for exclusively personal reasons (Tierstein, 1996, p.31). Conversely, women were characterised as bound by their synecdochic nature—i.e, preoccupied with *the cares of the particular* and regularly reminded of their *'fleshly limitations'* (Alcoff, 1996, p.15). Inherently lacking the supra-personal mind-set of the 'true' collector, women were regarded as unable to make disinterested choices as to aesthetic quality, and as capable only of acquiring art for purely personal or merely decorative reasons.

Typically, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the expectation of social decorum meant that American women's collecting was typically restricted to favouring those fields—such as decorative arts or folk art—as yet disdained by wealthy male connoisseurs or the art establishment, or perhaps they adopted a more *'pioneering'* role in favouring the work of *'new'* or as-yet under-valued artists (McCarthy, 1991, p.155). For American women, art collecting was *'a sort of private investment'* (Time, 1936, p.28) in artists rather than in pictures per se, with collections based primarily upon personal relationships (Watson, 1931). In the terms of collecting discourse, this inevitably meant these collections lacked the same status as the more 'disinterested' collections of males. These gender preconceptions found expression in early American collections of modern art such as that of Museum of Modern Art founders, Elizabeth (Lillie) Bliss or Abby Rockefeller. These factors might seem unimportant to art market status, and the consequent sales values

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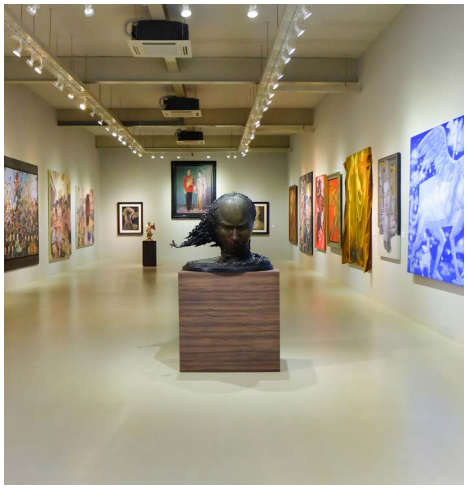


*The first significant introduction of modern art to the American public was the 1913 Armory Show, with commercial galleries beginning to present such art from the 1910s onwards*

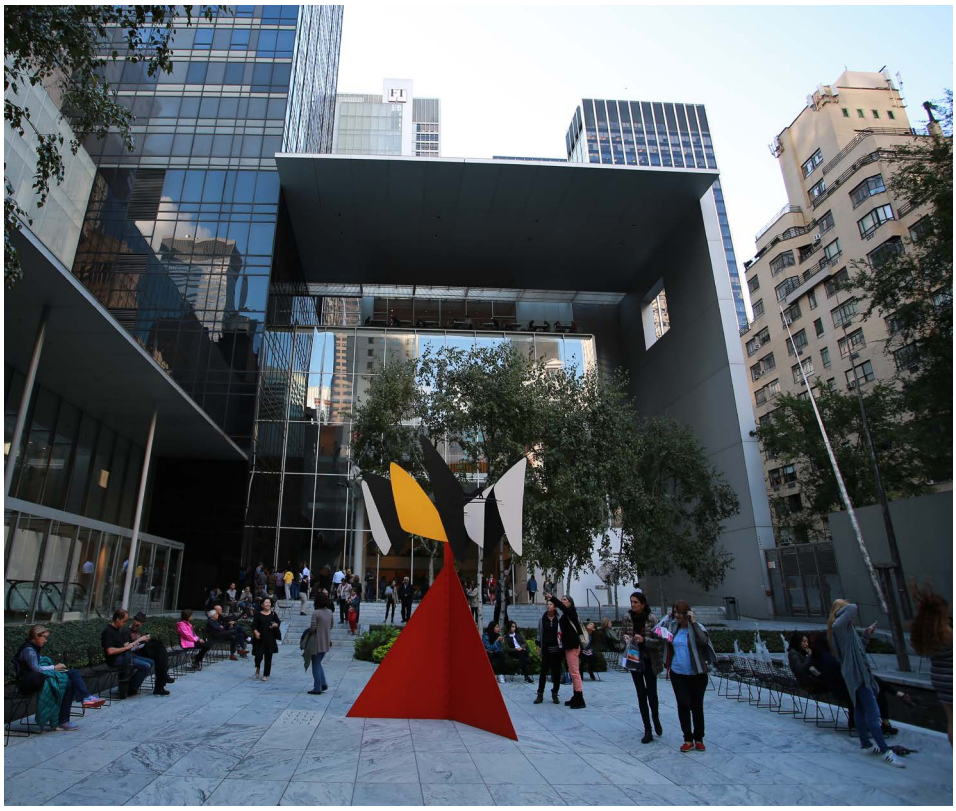
of modern art, in the United States. However, the lens of such collecting discourse in America could be seen to impact upon the status of women's collections, and, more importantly, the art which they collected might be devalued by association. For any institution such as MoMA, concerned with raising the status of modern art, this had obvious implications.

Almost by definition, the art with the highest cultural standing and comprising the 'grand' collections in the United States in the early twentieth century, was European 'Old Masters'. For modern art to enter 'elite' collections, it had to achieve an enhanced status, i.e., have museum standing, if it were to ensure the interests of the most important collectors. In the United States, a key reason for this was Federal taxation policy, which encouraged private philanthropy in the form of tax-exempt charitable donations to public institutions. This meant that modern art needed to have clear support from public not-for-profit institutions, in order to attract high-status collectors who might want to memorialise their art patronage via the public realm (Robson, 2019). This process took some time and effort to achieve. The first significant introduction of modern art to the American public was the 1913 Armory Show, with commercial galleries beginning to present such art from the 1910s onwards. However, modern art remained controversial in American institutional eyes for some time. The nation's most prestigious art museum, the Metropolitan Museum in New York, acquired its first 'modern' art, a late nineteenth century Cezanne, in 1913, but ignored modern painting later than Impressionism during the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1920s, moreover, there were no other publicly chartered not-for-profit institutions in New York where the public could see modern art (McCarthy, 1991). By the late 1920s, supporters of modern art in the United States recognized that this situation had to be addressed if the status of modern art was to be enhanced. This led to the establishment of the first American chartered museum dedicated to modern art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in October 1929.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York (subsequently referred to as MoMA) had two main aims. The first was to help people enjoy, understand, and use the visual arts of our time. Its success as a critical tastemaker has been explored extensively. The second—to 'encourage patronage of modern art by the public' (Soby, 1944, cited in Messer, 1979, p.152)—is, however, what concerns this article. The founding of MoMA in 1929 was hailed as marking the final acceptance of modern art by *'respectable'* society (Goodrich, 1929, p.664), and by the 1940s, New York art dealers considered MoMA as seminal in encouraging both public and collector interest in modern art. The initial expectation was that as MoMA's founders were the very pinnacle of 'respectable' New York society—the figurehead of the new museum was Abby Rockefeller, wife of the-then richest man in the United States—social status would be sufficient to encourage other well-to-do Americans to support modern art. However, it was soon realized that another factor was impacting upon the art market potential of modern art: gender. As a museum commissioned 'A Report on the Development of the Museum of Modern Art' (1935-36) argued:

> *one of the greatest barriers to the healthy development of [modern] art interest in America is unquestionably the fact that it has been so largely cultivated hitherto as an interest peculiar to women. (Chamberlain, n.d., p.152)*

This claim, by external consultant Artemis Packard, might be seen as unexpected, as MoMA had only recently been founded by three women collectors: Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Elizabeth Bliss and Mary Quinn Sullivan. However, the claim was perhaps not surprising, as it was representative both of contemporary societal gender norms and collecting discourse.





*Unusually for a United States art museum, when chartered in 1929 as a public institution, MoMA had no core collection or initial endowment. In consequence, the Modern was uniquely dependent for its survival, let alone growth, upon attracting support in the form of donations of works of modern art, as well as financial contributions or bequests, from wealthy American private art collectors*

In light of contemporary socio-gender preconceptions and collecting discourse, and despite the fact that women collectors were so essential to founding the Museum of Modern Art, it is perhaps not surprising that Alfred Barr Jr., Director of Collections at MoMA, concurred with the proposal put forward in the 1936 Packard Report, that modern art had to cease being seen primarily 'as an interest peculiar to women.' That it was MoMA, rather than any other American art museum of the time, which explored strategies to this end, is rooted in the circumstances of the museum's foundation in 1929, and its financial situation over its first decade or so. Unusually for a United States art museum, when chartered in 1929 as a public institution, MoMA had no core collection or initial endowment. In consequence, the Modern was uniquely dependent for its survival, let alone growth, upon attracting support in the form of donations of works of modern art, as well as financial contributions or bequests, from wealthy American private art collectors (Robson, 2019).

Barr set out to re-gender attitudes toward collecting modern art via a range of museum activities, some overt, some covert. In a public-facing context, which is beyond the scope of this paper, was the institution of a mode of gallery presentation, such as the to-be standard 'white cube' gallery, aiming to suggest modernism as separate from feminine allure, charm or comfort, and as, if not masculine, then 'not feminine' (Hankins, 1999, p.106), echoing the views of key early twentieth century modernist architect-theorists such as Adolf Loos or Le Corbusier (Wigley, 2001). Within the remit of this paper, however, are strategies aiming to link modern art with the cultural trope of the American 'businessman with taste' noted above as lionised in critical commentary prior to World War I. Barr termed this sector as his 'Action Group': 'wealthy business people [ergo men] who might be attracted by the modernity of the Museum's image … [and] … though they had not yet accepted the idea that good art is good for business, were not opposed to the idea' (Chamberlain, n.d., p.150). As Barr was to argue:

> *the question of the value of modern pictures is very important, especially if you, as salesmen, are going to talk over the desks of businessmen who may not be interested in modern pictures but who certainly are interested in an increase in value of 200,000 per cent. (MacDonald, 1953, p.169)*

Subsequently ongoing attempts were to be made to enhance the critical value of modern art via exhibition and publication, as might be expected of a publicly chartered art museum, but also, more unusually, by activities aiming to promote modern art as having monetary value.

In terms of overt—public facing—strategies aiming to enhance patronage of modern art, MoMA strategized exhibitions as a tool for re-gendering collecting discourse. Starting in the 1930s, there was an occasional series of special exhibitions publicizing collectors involved with either MoMA or modern art *per se*. That these shows should be seen as a tool for re-gendering is suggested by the fact that—in comparison to fourteen shows of works from MoMA's own permanent collections—there were thirteen shows highlighting private collectors. The re-gendering potential of these shows is further suggested by the fact that the ratio of male to female collectors presented was more than three-to-one, with an emphasis given to businessmen

collectors as much as those of the social elite (which might have been the more conventional tactic). Alongside museum exhibitions was a sequence of members' visits to private collections in their domestic settings, which again seems to have prioritized male collectors. In a public context, press releases were to be used to attract the attention of both the specialist art and mainstream media to the monetary value of modern art in in terms sympathetic to attracting the 'Action Group'. Among covert, i.e., private efforts by MoMA to promote the economic potential of modern art was the practice of museum curatorial staff to advise individual collectors on the economic aspects of patronising modern art: i.e., current art market trends, or the tax benefits of collecting modern art (the latter of which gained in importance as Federal tax regulations were amended over the years) (Robson, 2019).

Against a quarter century of continuing conservative gender, discourse MoMA's founding strategies to re-gender American collecting discourse had borne fruit by around its 25th anniversary in 1954, when MoMA was being cited by the press as the key tastemaker in the New York art market. In 1954, Vogue, in an article reminiscent of Barr's early strategy intentions, celebrated the monetary values of thirty-three artists and works in MOMA's permanent collections as *'a record of rewarding speculation, backed by some brilliant hunches and rare streaks of luck'* (Vogue, 1954, p.169). Success in re-gendering collecting discourse might also be deduced from the increasing coverage given to modern art in the American business press. For instance, *Fortune Magazine's* 1950 article 'The Businessman and Picasso', or its 1955 'The Great International Art Market' featured not just Old Masters, but also the twentieth century 'modern masters' strongly promoted by MoMA, as significant investment opportunities for the successful businessman. The latter article's language of 'blue-chip stocks' or 'speculative growth issues' surely also echoed Barr's earlier re-gendering strategy (Hodgins and Parker, 1955). The Modern was, to quote MoMA curator Andrew Ritchie: *'the bourse. Everything we did the dealers knew about before we did it, and prices were affected accordingly'* (Lynes, 1973, p.250). Success at re-gendering the patronage of modern art might also be seen in the emergence in the late 1950s of major corporate art collections—for instance, Chase Manhattan Bank—as a newly respectable signifier of contemporary American corporate vigour.

By 1958, American attitudes to modern art collecting seem to have been definitively re-gendered. Now there was, as Time noted in that year: *'a new force … loose in the art markets … the buccaneer investor who does not know what he likes but knows a good investment when he sees one'* (Time, 1958, p.66). This surely echoes the early century trope linking the 'businessman with taste' with American national hero, though now it was modern art rather than Old Masters which provided the nexus between American cultural values, gender and collecting discourse. Modern art, and its patronage, was no longer to be devalued as an 'interest peculiar to women.' Instead, the discourse of art collecting in America had been successfully re-gendered, albeit in a manner which in effect reinforced rather than challenged conservative gender norms.

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## Keywords

Gender, discourse, Museum of Modern Art, art patronage, art collecting



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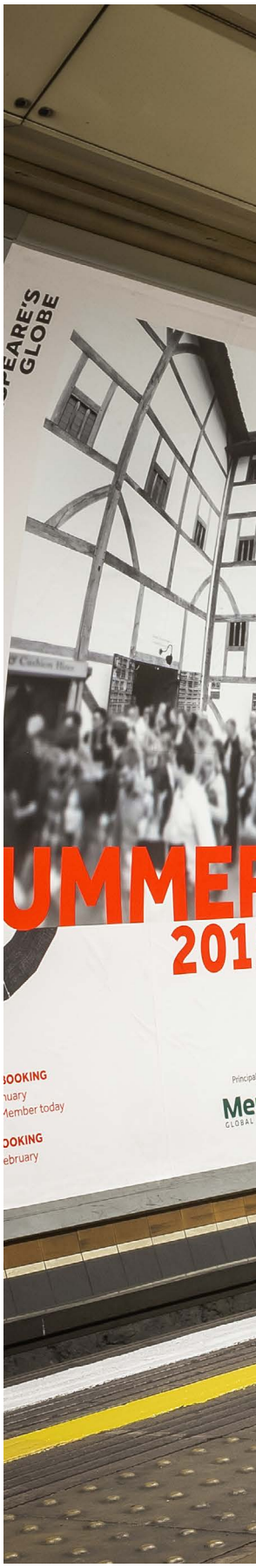
# THE PROMOTIONAL WINDOW INTO SOCIETY

*Advertising as indicator and influencer of socio-cultural trends*




***Abstract:***

*In this position paper, I argue for a structurationist understanding of advertising, exploring the current standing of advertising within western cultures, establishing advertising's nature as a 'distorting mirror' of socio-cultural trends that can provide insight into the mental images and expectations of its target audience. Outlining aspects of the reciprocal relationship between society and advertising, by showcasing how advertising can impact its audiences, the paper provides relevant takeaways of this view of advertising for both academics and brand managers*

In the academic study of advertising, there is an ongoing debate as to whether: (i) advertising changes society, persuading consumers to value appearances and reputation over price and product quality; or (ii) advertising simply reflects what is already happening in society, namely transmitting information to consumers in order to help them make better choices. However, this paper takes the view that these positions are not mutually exclusive and argues for a *sociology of structuration* in terms of advertising; in other words, a reciprocal relationship between society and promotional communication output. On this basis, this paper encourages the use of advertising both as an indicator of ongoing and emerging socio-cultural trends, as well as a contributor to social change.

**Advertising in society**

Every aspect of our lives is permeated by the presence of material goods. The discourse on and through products, and therefore advertising, as well as the debate surrounding advertising itself, occupy important places in our lives and modern western cultures. Culture, in this context, refers to 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others' (Hofstede, 2011, p.20). It can be understood as a 'control mechanism, (...) a sort of blueprint for action, guiding social behaviors' (Tanner, 1997, p.31).

Beyond pure economic efficiency, advertising has socially relevant side-effects. Due to its omnipresence in the world in which we live, advertising has turned into a mass cultural phenomenon, communicating cultural and social developments widely, thus becoming itself an integral part of modern-day culture. Traditional opinion leaders, such as church and family elders, have largely lost their influence in industrialised societies, whereas the influence and impact of material goods and those who promote them, has risen. It is increasingly artefacts that determine the relationship between members of society, and they have taken over the role and means of interpersonal communication. Messages about one's own attitude and identity are transmitted to others by consumer goods, their use and consumption (Stöckl, 2012). In line with the concept of *symbolic consumption*, Karmasin (2020) sees one of the primary objectives of consumption as allowing people to express their own social standing, staging themselves and communicating this information to others. Regarded individually and superficially, advertisements only promote goods and services, but '[l]ooked at in depth and as a whole, the ways in which messages are presented in advertising reach deeply into our most serious concerns' (Leiss *et al.*, 2005, p.14).


*Due to its omnipresence in the world in which we live, advertising has turned into a mass cultural phenomenon, communicating cultural and social developments widely, thus becoming itself an integral part of modern-day culture*

One of the roles of advertising in modern societies is therefore to formulate and reflect the possible meaning of things and facilitate the exchange of meaning in social communication. This is achieved, amongst other ways, by drawing on established cultural techniques. For example, the reading of images, and to some extent also their appreciation, is dependent on learned knowledge. Since images and their deciphering and understanding are part of a transnational cultural heritage, one can assume that advertising does function, but does not always have to (for example, in the case of radio), as communication through and with pictures. On the basis of this anthropological perspective on the purposes of goods and advertising in human cultures, advertising should be understood as a major cultural institution (Cluley, 2017; Leiss *et al*., 2005).

This cultural foothold is also due to an undeniable, ever-advancing integration of art and commerce into production, distribution and reception. The lines between art and commerce have become increasingly blurred, with veterans from both disciplines introducing and interweaving their origin-specific aesthetics and points of view in other forms of media. A good example is the Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini, who decided, during the final decade of his life, also to pursue advertising—for example, in 1984, the commercials *Alta Societa* for Barilla, and *Oh, che bel paesaggio!* for Campari; in 1991, *Che Brutte Notti* for the Bank of Rome. Fellini was thereafter repeatedly praised for his ability to fit the telling of big stories and to capture the atmosphere of cinema in the restricted format of advertising. Further examples include successful advertising photographers and directors Ridley Scott and David Fincher, who switched between the big screen and advertising for decades, becoming sought-after directors for both forms of media, and bringing their 'advert-esque' style of over-designed aesthetic and concise storytelling to the silver screen. Due to the high quality of presentation and the budgets spent, many advertising campaigns are now considered by creatives, as well as by scholars, as a legitimate form of art, blurring the distinction between economy and culture. Advertising is an important cultural institution, given that the world of goods and its corresponding marketing comprise a principal channel of social communication. Accordingly, the market is a cultural system, in which people enter into a discourse with one another. Therefore, it seems legitimate to regard advertising as a creation of societal culture, and thus as a means to investigate culture-specific ideas and societal trends.

But does this mean that advertising can be understood as a mirror of society?

**The distorting mirror**

Interpretations of advertising often deal with the question of the relationship between advertising and society. Does advertising accurately depict ideas and cultural aspects from society, or does it impose certain ideas on society? And, if the latter, which ideologies are these ideas based on?

Considering the circumstances in which advertising acts, the relationship probably includes aspects of both. This assumption falls into a more recent school of thought, a 'theory of structuration'. According to this theory, society can shape advertising, and advertising can shape society. Advertising, just like other forms of mass media, reflects selected ideas and characteristics of society, including a variety of aspects of everyday life, but also purposefully omitting others. It makes use of images from the storage in our minds—the desires, stereotypes or clichés that we have already internalised—and by choosing only some of these and by reintegrating them into the meaning system of the advertisement, it acts in turn on the audience and thus creates new meanings. Hence, it becomes part of our ideas, or modifies existing ones:

> *When confronted with the task of anchoring something in the intellectual world of potential audiences, one should assume that those thoughts have already been occupied, and that it makes the most sense to utilise certain, already existing thoughts and ideas. In this sense, advertising can provide information about the ideas of certain social groups at certain times. (Ingenkamp, 1996, p.152; original quotation in German, translation by DO).*

*Advertising is an important cultural institution, given that the world of goods and its corresponding marketing comprise a principal channel of social communication. Accordingly, the market is a cultural system, in which people enter into a discourse with one another*



Assuming that advertising taps into such an existing mental world, for example, by using defined target groups and their respective codes, a review of advertising materials could indicate tendencies and trends within a society.

Some researchers, however, argue that it would not be appropriate to consider advertising as a general societal or cultural indicator, for example, as evidence of the transformation of societal structures, or changes of values in society. This view is predicated on the notion that stories communicated by advertising have little reference to reality, but rather mirror the imagination of its audiences. Consumers face worlds of ideas, desires and fears in advertising messages, which largely correspond to their own, as the arguments and values in adverts are, in most cases, developed in accordance with findings from opinion research and demographic analysis. Nonetheless, this places advertising in the role of 'mirror' to and reflecting society, albeit in a different way.

Whilst not contradicting these limitations per se, I would argue that although it seems unlikely that advertising acts as a factually accurate mirror of society and its culture, due to its obligation to persuade and sell, it can still be regarded as a moderately reliable indicator of socio-cultural trends and developments, and current ideas prevailing within a society. Advertising captures the 'zeitgeist' (Basbug, 2013, p.102), hence, allowing inferences on 'collective ideals', 'social perceptions' and 'cultural patterns' (Kühne, 2007, p.78). Just like other forms of mass media, advertising does not provide a faithful copy of the world, but constructs reality with the help of selected truths—a reality that tends to overemphasise positive representations (Schmidt and Spiess, 1994) and exaggerate whatever it touches upon (Willems and Kautt, 2003). Nonetheless, advertising does generally not create new topics or trends, but simply picks them up and follows them, ideally in an early stage, thus making them known to a wide audience. The ideas, desires and even fears that advertising undoubtedly plays upon are a major part of a society's culture, or at least of the sub-culture formed by the target audience. The contents of adverts are an expression of what advertisers have found in search of the addressee. Advertising is a continuum, comprising evaluations in terms of what is currently perceived as important, desirable or undesirable by members of society. It amplifies and affirms contemporary patterns of behaviour and reveals cultural standards (Goffman, 1979). Considering the effort and money devoted to exploring potential consumers, it seems very likely that advertising reflects the dominant values, norms, role expectations, prejudices, fears, dreams and needs of their target group with considerable accuracy. Therefore, whilst advertising might not fully reflect all aspects of a society, it can be assumed that it largely picks up and conveys contemporary ideas and developments, at least those relevant to the target group(s). It therefore provides insight into the mental image and expectations of its intended audience.

This line of argument seems reasonable, and does not contradict the sense of a distorting aspect to advertising as a means to proposition potential consumers. However, with this in mind, it becomes clear how crucial it is to acknowledge the target (and real) audience when interpreting advertising. Investigations into advertising work like a puzzle, where research into a variety of advertising messages for complementary target groups provides a growing number of puzzle pieces, slowly forming insights into society as a whole. Due to advertising's need for the contemporary, analyses ought to appreciate the dynamic nature of this type of media content, which may limit findings to a specific point of time. Any investigation into advertising must consider these aspects in order to position its findings adequately within the right context. All too often, it appears that arguments or decisions regarding current socio-cultural developments are erroneously based on inadequate and/or outdated advertising data.

*Stereotypes can do more than simply shape perceptions. They can assign a specific place within society to the stereotyped individuals and, moreover, actually create conditions that lead to their own confirmation—like a self-fulfilling prophecy*

**The reciprocity of it all**

However, as indicated above, the influence of society on advertising is a two-way mirror. Nowadays, secondary experiences are mainly conveyed by the media, including advertising. On every occasion in which people are unable to experience something first hand—due to distance, time, effort (or pandemic!), etc.—mass media fill the gap. Prominent German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (2000) even claims that all we know about society and the world we live in, we know through the media. Modern means of communication can make the strange seem vivid and concrete, thereby reducing the mental distance. *Cultivation theory* addresses this idea, and posits that the more time individuals spend consuming media, the closer their views align to the 'reality' created by the media. In other words, a frequent and high exposure to media content impacts audience perceptions of social reality in the direction of that constructed by the media (Gerbner et al., 2002). This closely aligns with *social learning theory*, according to which behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1971). Advertising often comprises well-crafted short stories, featuring condensed characters within easy-to-follow storylines, inviting audiences to relate and identify with what is shown. Characters and storylines function as 'role models' facilitating learning in a (para-)social context. Individuals, therefore, learn about the world in terms, for example, of stereotypes and cultural paradigms derived from the media; a phenomenon that is particularly pronounced in children; but is evident throughout a person's lifetime.

Advertising is known for its frequent use of stereotypes. This particular form of media simply does not have the luxury of time, nor does it attract the level of attention, for detailed and multi-faceted representations of situations and characters that develop over time, as is possible in film or literature. People's memories are guided by stereotypes (Welzer, 2002), which makes their use even more precious for advertisers, who are eager to achieve the highest recall results possible. Additionally, research into the effect of stereotypes on societies has shown that stereotypes have the power to shape people's perception of others—in the long as well as the short run. They influence in many ways how people perceive and evaluate members of out-groups. But stereotypes can do more than simply shape perceptions. They can assign a specific place within society to the stereotyped individuals and, moreover, actually create conditions that lead to their own confirmation—like a *self-fulfilling prophecy*. Furthermore, they can cause members of stereotyped groups to demonstrate stereotype-compliant behaviour, by the mere fact that the group members concerned are aware of the existing stereotype; this is termed *stereotype threat*. In modern industrialised societies, where advertising is omnipresent, a high contact rate between individuals and promotional media content is almost inevitable. Due to the frequent and cumulative occurrence of exposure, the opportunities to influence audiences are great. Advertising is particularly crucial, because it mediates between collective and individual experience by offering typical interpretations of supposedly typical problems. What Hall and colleagues (2013) state for mass media more generally also applies to advertising: they have a defining power and the resources to make their version of the world and events generally available to the public and to 'offer powerful interpretations of how to understand these events and the people or groups involved in them' (p.60).


## Concluding remarks

Considering the argument presented in this paper, it seems likely that advertising indeed follows a sociology of structuration, offering a 'distorting mirror' of socio-cultural trends that, in turn, influences audiences through what it shows, or does not. In addition to contributing to the academic debate, knowing about the nature of advertising beyond its economic function, should also be important to brands. Brands should be aware that what they put out into society as part of their promotional efforts might contribute to major socio-cultural developments. In the past, we have seen this, amongst other things, in the debates around sexism and body image triggered by campaigns such as Protein World's controversial 2015 advert *Are you beach body ready?*

Another branding takeaway is the role advertising can play in investigating socio-cultural trends. Whilst social media analysis has received plenty of attention from brands as a way of 'keeping an ear to the ground', structured monitoring and analysis of the advertising landscape is less common. Whilst social media might provide immediate voices and trends, advertising can provide larger market and target-audience-level insights that are more soundly based on market research and representative data sets.

*Whilst social media might provide immediate voices and trends, advertising can provide larger market and target-audience-level insights that are more soundly based on market research and representative data sets*

Finally, for both academics and brand managers, it is important to keep in mind the time sensitivity when dealing with insight derived from advertising research. Advertising, as a means to access socio-cultural trends, more often than not has an expiration date. Very few brands can and will run unchanged advertising campaigns over a long period of time. Most brands need to regularly overhaul their promotional efforts to ensure that they keep tapping into current trends that are relevant to their target audience. As researchers analysing advertising, it can be difficult to determine from the outside, the prevailing point of a brand's cycle. Thus, one might want to regularly seek new data sets on which to base any decisions and/or infer trends—whether this be for academic purposes or for business decisions in the branding context.

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**Keywords**

Advertising, sociology of structuration, symbolic consumption, cultivation theory

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# STUDENT PROFILE

## Francisca Chiamaka Umeh

**Course**
*PhD in Computing and Information Systems*

**Year completed**
*2021*

**Title of thesis**
*Digital Business Readiness Assessment Framework: A Study of Fashion Retail SMEs in Lagos, Nigeria*

Small-medium enterprises (SMEs) are key players in the global economy. Nonetheless, the level of SMEs incorporating digital business strategies is limited, affecting the extent to which SMEs are in a position to drive a digital economy. Moreover, many SMEs in emerging economies are unprepared to participate fully in digital business, due to poor behavioural intention to use technology, poor decision-making strategies, low customer readiness and lack of long-term digital initiatives.

To address these challenges, assessing the digital business readiness level is crucial, especially as techno-anxiety, techno-complexity, and parsimony (reluctance to spend money) are emerging causatives of poor digital business and technology alignment at the digital business readiness level. 'Techno-anxiety' is an extreme unwillingness to use technology due to digital security apprehension. 'Technocomplexity' is extreme unwillingness to use technology due to digital intricacy. Parsimony is extreme unwillingness to spend money. And these negative factors have led to an increase in consumer over-dependency on foreign and imported goods. For example, there is a high dependency on foreign and imported goods from fashion retailers in Lagos, Nigeria - a significant economic hub in West Africa and globally. Francisca's PhD developed a digital business readiness assessment framework (DBRAF) for fashion retail SMEs. DBRAF is a digital business readiness assessment tool, which examines fashion retail SMEs in order to identify the specific areas that need to be addressed to reach the desired level of digital business readiness and avoid business failure. DBRAF scores between LDBRL, the MDBRL and the HDBRL. Low DBRL (LDBRL) means that the SMEs are very predictable, and technology is inactive. Medium DBRL (MDBRL) means that fashion SMEs are responsive businesses. High DBRL (HDBRL) means that the fashion retail SMEs are technologically optimised and have been able to maintain a position in the competitive market. Ultimately, to be digitally ready, organisations must demonstrate the ability to adopt essential and fundamental ICT, in the manner of enterprise social networks and other social computing for such business purposes.

Essentially, DBRAF achieves two critical things. First, it shows whether the SMEs are reluctant to adopt innovative strategies in Lagos, Nigeria. And secondly, the aim is to convert businesses from techno-disadvantaged to digitally transformed enterprises. The digital business readiness assessment tool could be developed into a software solution to automate the entire process in DBRAF. Automating DBRAF can extensively facilitate its application level by distributing the assessment tool to more SMEs. Moreover, the software can also be built as an offline software – one that does not require an internet network connection, so as to improve privacy, functionality, and compliance in a less developed context.

DBRAF has been presented at several conferences, including the UK Academy for Information Systems (UKAIS) and UWL Doctoral conferences. Francisca is a member of the Association of Information Systems, and lectures Digital Enterprise at the University of West London, where she continues to offer more insights into the role of digital enterprise in the 21st Century.

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