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Contents

'Fulfilling our potential: Teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice' – SEDA's response to the consultation

SEDA's Co-Chairs coordinated a response from the members of the Executive Committee, which has been edited from the pro-forma response document on the web into this article.

SEDA's comments on the potential equality impacts of the proposals and other plans in this consultation are that we welcome the focus on improving social mobility for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and with protected characteristics. However, there is a lack of discussion in the green paper of the diverse range of students which gives the appearance that much of this is premised on the traditional young undergraduate student taking a three-year full-time programme. Others who need to be considered include mature students and those who also do not follow a traditional programme such as craft apprenticeship schemes and vocational programmes. In addition, account needs to be taken of those existing higher education programmes that are different from this assumed norm − this would include Foundation Degrees, further education in higher education provision and programmes in education, nursing and other health programmes.

If we want Higher Education to change and to serve the needs of a wider society, these more diverse groups also need to be encouraged to be future students. There is also a need to explore different modes of study such as part-time, distance and blended learning, all of which have increased over recent years. Whilst there is reference to students from BME backgrounds, and the needs of those in different economic and cultural contexts, this could be strengthened.

There is already a national qualifications framework and we should be focusing on this and how all students can be given an opportunity to achieve access to education that enables them to succeed and achieve the outcomes of the appropriate level of that national qualifications framework. The focus should also not be just about access but should also be about support once the students have commenced their education.

SEDA's comments on how information from the TEF can be used to better inform student and employer decision-making are that, whilst SEDA agrees with the need

for better, more accurate and valid information for both student and employer decision-making, the proposed measures within the TEF neither measure nor will distinguish 'teaching excellence'. HESA already collects a wide range of data, some important elements of which (such as teaching qualifications of academics) it does not currently share publicly or shares in ways that make interpretation challenging. There would be merit in making this information more accessible and open. However, these data sets will also then be at the mercy of data aggregators and the media to manipulate and utilise as they see fit. This will inform students and employers but whether that information is good or not will be uncontrollable. Student satisfaction scores might well not equate to teaching excellence since context, motivation and a number of other factors are in play here.

It should be noted that universities have been focusing on employability for some time now and have made significant advances in this area, but that the proposed data sets (e.g. DLHE) do not flag up context, *etc.* to users and do not reflect enhancement work, carried out with the express aim of enhancing students' life opportunities.

Transparent, direct and raw student comments/ratings and open text comments from programme leaders in response would allow a public dialogue that may offer some powerful insights as to the learning experience within a programme. This must be useful for prospective students.

SEDA's comments on whether the TEF should be open to all HE providers, all disciplines, all modes of delivery and all levels are that our response to an earlier question provides our rationale for indicating that we think it should be as open as possible. A concern, however, is that if inappropriate data sets are used or data sets that are not fit for purpose, then universities will become more and more risk-averse, concentrating on the 'tried and tested' to try to ensure positive outcomes for the purposes of TEF, not for the furthering of knowledge, *etc.* We don't want universities to become horribly 'safe' places and, if unmitigated, inappropriate data are used in a potentially damaging way, then this is a very probable outcome.

SEDA's comments on Access Agreements and the TEF are that an approved Access Agreement should *always* be a prerequisite for a TEF Award. Acknowledging through an Access Agreement the steps that an HE provider would take to ensure they adhere to the Agreement should be essential for any provider in receipt of student fees or public funding.

SEDA's comments on QA reviews, the position of alternative providers and differentiated TEF levels are that the criteria outlined for a successful review are appropriate. In terms of the alternative providers we feel that there are many obstacles to these providers; however this is not SEDA's area of expertise. We have said 'yes' to differentiated levels but have concerns about the suggestions of four levels, which is felt to be a move towards an OfSTED-style approach and will lead to a hierarchy and ranking system and create competition which may not focus on what is intended. We believe that perhaps a two-level approach could be used where all who have achieved the criteria gain TEF1 and then institutions apply for level 2 based on a specialism such as widening participation or a discipline approach. This is also likely to be easier for future students who are looking at how to make their choice of institution.

SEDA's comments on timing, processes and assessment panels proposed for the TEF: if the sector is to transition from its current peer-reviewed system of quality that has a formulaic, bland and artificial experience and process to it, to a transformational and transparent 'real life', 'live' and collegiate experience of quality assurance and more importantly enhancement, then many changes will be needed. Year 1 TEF metrics do nothing to tap into this more essential aspect of the enhancement of the learning and teaching experience – the aspect of teaching excellence and professionalisation where substantial progress has been made in

recent years. This is a substantial omission in the quest for teaching excellence metrics. The TEF would need to expedite the use of live and transparent data sets instead of rooms filled with paper and files that a panel of experts must deem to be of the appropriate level. The issue in this proposal is that the data sets being proposed have questionable accuracy, are unstable and more importantly, are invalid as measures of teaching excellence. As proposed they would be invalid both in the timings, which need to reflect the length of degrees of between 1-3 years, and in the mode, where external panels' members making judgements is unnecessary and will likely reduce innovation. It is also likely that such expert panels will do as they have done in the past – inhibit teaching quality exercises – and, at considerable expense in time and effort, merely reinforce existing reputational measures.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills may wish to look at the benefits of other models, such as self-review against published criteria and public data, to lead collegiate engagements and inform a risk-based approach across multiple data sets, not just those that bias some institutions over others and lack connection to the desired teaching excellence (or preferably 'learning excellence'). The intention must be to encourage innovation in the support of student learning and to promote diversity in the sector by encouraging institutions and programmes to focus upon, and draw attention to, their particular strengths. This is unlikely to occur within a system of peer review and simple, 'one-size-fits-all' metrics.

SEDA's comments on the administrative burdens are that it is difficult to fully respond with the limited detail of the proposals here. However, we do feel that as staff are already over-burdened, there should always be consideration of removing an activity that creates a burden prior to adding further activities. Requiring staff to undertake further data collection removes them from the business of enhancing student learning. The lack of links between data is currently an issue across the sector and we would support the creation of a national government repository where all data could be accessed at one point. Any processes introduced should be reviewed first to ensure they are streamlined and effective. It would also be useful, given the large amount of data collected currently, to have some research undertaken on the data sets and their usefulness. Certainly data should not be gathered and then not used. For example, we would strongly encourage the publication of current HESA data on the teaching qualifications of HE staff, as only the open publication of such data will encourage institutions to ensure it is accurate.

SEDA's comments on differentiation within the TEF are that there is very little evidence that the sector has sufficient variation to be able to differentiate in the way or extent proposed. Neither would an Ofsted-styled scoring approach be desired from our community, as autonomous institutions should have the ability and be expected to assure the quality of their own standards of teaching and learning experiences without regressing to an 'accepted norm' of teaching excellence, but instead maintaining an 'assured variety'

of teaching specialisms and styles. This will be difficult with panel members as many may not fully appreciate the diversity of teaching excellence in subjects and contexts they may be unfamiliar with. There is a danger that the award of excellence in the tiers of the TEF will be a self-fulfilling prophecy: *i.e.* the historically well-funded HEIs with low staff student ratios and students with high entry scores could be seen to be excellent without any sensitive exploration of what this means in terms of flexibility, diversity, response to different kinds of learners, disciplines and contexts.

Building on the way that the TEF could differentiate, SEDA believe that a core level of award would be essential, but instead of creating a four-level differentiation, the sector may be better served by a two or three aspect differentiation to acknowledge institutional and subject specialisms that allow an additional differentiation. To differentiate on a subject/discipline basis makes complete sense but the suggestion of aggregating these individual scores to provide an institutional score does not.

SEDA's comments on incentives are that we have real concerns about the linking of fees with the TEF and feel strongly that this should not be the case. In terms of the incentives, we believe that there is already complexity around much of the quality activities that all providers undertake, and so whilst using the approach mentioned might support some of the diversity in providers, we would urge consideration of something that is simple for all and already available.

SEDA's comments on the focus on teaching quality, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain are that these are sensible and welcomed foci for this purpose, but BIS will need to alleviate a concern that the student outcomes aren't linked to the rate of taxation they will be paying in the future. SEDA are particularly keen that courses should never become categorised according to how much tax revenue they generate as that would remove one of the strengths of our Higher Education system. A graduate's contribution to society is not measured by the size of their pay packet or tax return. Certainly such a measure is not even a proxy for the quality of their HE learning experience. There needs to be a balanced approach to teaching quality which takes account of inputs and effective processes as well as outputs.

Learning environment should also be strengthened and more inclusively described within the paper as 'appropriate' learning environment. Teaching quality must be better defined.

The changing nature of educational practice and metrics means that current fads may not necessarily be a good indication of quality teaching, For example, the current focus on class contact is not an indicator of teaching quality or a predictor of learning gain; what matters more is the time students spend 'on task' – a measure of engagement rather than contact. The emergent nature of much of the work on metrics means it is too premature to determine the value before this work has been concluded. Practice is far more

nuanced and varied and the system should be prepared for that.

SEDA's comments on the use of common metrics derived from national databases with provider additions are that we are concerned that these metrics could damage student learning as much as improve it. Paragraph 9 page 32 states that 'Excellent teaching has the ability to transform the lives of students' and these metrics do not measure the transformation, only the output. There is no evidence that these metrics have brought about change to date. We acknowledge that there have been changes around assessment and feedback related to the National Student Survey data but beyond this there has been little change from these metrics. Students do not appear to be choosing their institution using these metrics, it is often parents that ask the questions around how many teaching hours, rather than the students. The measures identified in paragraph 12 (page 33) are then noted in paragraph 13 (page 34) as being proxies rather than direct measures, so there are concerns that this data is simply not robust enough. For example, the DLHE prioritises those who leave and are in a high-earning graduate profession within six months of leaving HE. DLHE doesn't take into account those who start up their own businesses, for example, or those who go into a graduate occupation which is not high-earning, or at least not in the short term. The use of some metrics will promote certain institutions for the wrong reasons.

The measures that should be considered should focus on learning gain and engagement. The HEFCE learning gain project will provide evidence in the future about what could be used but we recognise there is some time before the findings from this project will be available. There are, however, other measures that might be used and be more valuable such as the ASSIST Questionnaire and the NSSE. There needs to be a focus on work around Self Efficacy such as that of Mantz Yorke and work undertaken by the Centre for Recording Achievement. In addition accreditation by professional bodies, e.g. BPS and NMC, should be seen as a sign of quality, rather than relying solely on those suggested in the consultation paper.

In terms of institutional data, paragraph 17 bullet point 5 does mention engaging teaching staff and training but this could be stronger in terms of emphasising the numbers of staff with teaching qualifications and professional fellowships, such as those of the Higher Education Academy and the Staff and Educational Development Association, that demonstrate engagement in supporting learning and teaching and educational development. Staff professional development around teaching is key. We recognise that the HESA data around these metrics is not robust but this is in part because there is insufficient importance placed on teaching as opposed to research and so it is not taken as seriously. The data will only become robust when there is a clear signal of the importance of this type of data and activity. Publishing the existing data on this would itself signal its importance and drive greater engagement with it.

SEDA's comments on social mobility and widening participation are that much of this part of the paper is welcomed and strongly supported, although it is socially regressive that some universities are able only to accept A-levels. BIS should reflect on whether the entire sector should be more inclusive by recognising all nationally recognised and UCAS point-awarding qualifications.

We would also want to highlight that it is not just widening access, but recognising the additional resource implications if students from these groups (and others) are to really benefit from their time in HE. It is not just a 'welcoming them in' approach that is needed but a real enhancement of the learning environment in the light of their needs, *etc.,* once they are there.

SEDA's comments on the powers of the Office for Students are that we agree that where institutions reveal an historic inability to progress the widening of access or inclusivity of the learning experience within their institutions, the OfS should be able to set targets (and create financial consequences) that ensure progress towards such axiomatic ambitions is made.

The Government should also adhere to the provisions of the Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disabled Students Allowance.

We feel unable to respond to questions about the additional administrative burden of improving access without more detail. The impact on administration cannot be assessed until more is known about the types of additional data that will be used.

SEDA does not feel that the details involved in opening up the sector to new providers, risk-based approaches to eligibility for degree-awarding powers and arrangements for courses which cannot be completed are areas of its particular expertise.

SEDA's comments on changes to the higher education architecture are that, although there are understandable reasons for creating a super-quango, this would include legislative changes to HEFCE which seem both unrealistic and unachievable in the time-frame.

SEDA's comments on the allocation of Teaching Grants are that our experience is the allocation of grants requires an enormous amount of insight into the sector to be able to do well and so it does not make sense to move this away from those who have the existing experience.

SEDA's comments on the proposal for a single, transparent and light-touch regulatory framework for every higher education provider are that this does not match the metric approach proposed and the focus on risk does not promote excellence. There is no mention in the paper of balancing the duty of the interests of the HEIs as employers and their employees the teaching staff. There could be a risk of reputation and an incorrect perception of risk. There is also an issue about combining the funding and regulatory roles, so that there is no independent body with oversight of these

roles. This would be a risk to the reputation of the Higher Education sector.

SEDA chose not to respond to the questions about student unions, the powers of the Office for Students, how it might be funded, issues of risk management, the complexity of research funding, *etc.,* on the grounds that these were not central to SEDA's areas of expertise. However, SEDA did comment that maintaining an important connection between Research and Learning and Teaching experiences of students should be a benefit to both institutions and the wider sector.

SEDA's final comments were that SEDA's core objective is the advancement of education for the benefit of the public and key to this is the improvement of educational and professional development in Higher Education. This is in order to enhance the quality of student educational experiences. We are therefore supportive and encouraged by the intention of the TEF to raise the status of teaching. The potential of the TEF will be a positive move in challenging practice and the potential to help prospective students reach decisions. The focus on widening participation is clearly very positive as are the statements that context will be taken into account and that comparisons around discipline will be included. It is clear that there is an understanding that there are some practices in Higher Education that do need challenging and addressing to ensure that students' experiences are enhanced. However, there also needs to be recognition that there are already many areas of teaching excellence and this balance does not come across. We welcome the recognition of the wider aspects of teaching excellence with the inclusion of the environment and learning gain.

We believe that anything intended to enhance the student experience is to be supported in principle, however we do have several significant concerns about the proposals as they stand:

- The use of the three core metrics which do not focus on the transformation of the student and their learning gain is of great concern
- The focus on teaching excellence without a definition of that term raises issues around what is being measured across the sector
- The four tiers of TEF suggest a move towards an inappropriate Ofsted-style approach
- It is not clear whether this is about institutional, discipline, programme or individual teaching excellence
- We cannot have confidence in a framework around teaching excellence that has no metrics for the professionalisation of teaching. Such a framework will not be able to raise the status of teaching to equal that of research where there are known metrics around three-star and four-star research
- It takes time to build a reputation and there is no real acknowledgement of this in the timescales proposed.

We believe that if there is a panel of experts this should be formed of those in the position of being able to judge teaching. This should include both experts who prepare teaching staff but also those at the 'coal face' who deliver excellent teaching. There is already a strong network of National Teaching Fellows and Principal Fellows of the Higher Education Academy and these two networks would be an important source of panel members. We are supportive of a move to raise the status of teaching and student learning but the definition of metrics needs far more development and we are in a position as a community to work with others on that development. This is the beginning of an important journey and it is important that it sets off from the correct starting point utilising as much sector knowledge as possible. SEDA would be happy to provide further advice to BIS on these matters and be involved in any work around metrics.

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The evaluation of an institutional UKPSF recognition scheme

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Context and introduction
In common with other UK universities, Kingston University offers an academic development programme to support the professional development of staff who teach and/or support student learning. At the heart of this provision is Kingston's Academic Practice Standards framework (KAPS), an HEA-accredited scheme based on the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), which provides an opportunity for staff to gain recognition as a Fellow of the HEA.

The emergence of the UKPSF can be seen through influential policy documents, specifically the *Dearing Report* (NCIHE, 1997) and *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) (cf. Brand, 2007; Lea and Purcell, 2015; Turner *et al.,* 2013).

The *Dearing Report* stimulated the professionalisation of learning and teaching in HE through accredited programmes, such as the Postgraduate Certificates in HE (PgCert) for new members of academic staff and through the establishment of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in HE. *The Future of Higher Education* recommended the development of standards that would apply to all

members of staff involved in HE, whether new or experienced, leading to the first iteration of the UKPSF in 2006. We might argue that the importance of the revised standards in 2011 gained traction after the Browne review of HE (Browne, 2010) and the subsequent White Paper *Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS, 2011) which led to proposals to increase competition amongst Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). The White Paper developed this notion further by proposing key changes in the way that HE in the UK is funded and arguing that the marketisation of HE would drive up teaching quality as students would chose to study at institutions with the best reputations for teaching, research and graduate employability.

There are now over 100 UK universities which offer HEA-accredited schemes such as KAPS, to support staff in gaining fellowship recognition (HEA, 2015). An increasing number of HEIs are highlighting the importance of possession of an HEA fellowship through key performance indicators (KPI) and are, as the HEA argues, aiming 'towards 100% of their staff gaining HEA fellowship in recognition of their teaching standards' (UKPSF, 2015). Although this is not the case for all institutions, talking to colleagues at regular networking opportunities via SEDA and elsewhere, it is apparent that many institutions are following this path and the number of staff with a teaching qualification have become part of the annual return to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). As this information enters the public domain it may become a factor taken into account by students when considering at which institution they would like to study. This, in turn, may lead to a surge in demand for institutions to increase the number of staff with HEA recognition for their experience and expertise in teaching so that they can be counted as 'qualified', therefore allowing institutions to demonstrate a strong rating against this metric.

Kingston University's Education Strategy has set a target for all academic staff to hold a professional qualification in learning and teaching

by 2018, although some Faculties within the institution have set a deadline even earlier than this. Achieving an HEA Fellowship is discussed with staff during annual appraisals and holding an appropriate HEA Fellowship is also an essential component of academic promotion and progression. Institutional support for this is important as it indicates a powerful commitment to and support for this activity; however this can be seen as a double-edged sword (Peat and Burden, 2014). As academic developers we have become concerned with the motivation of some of our colleagues as they engage with professional development around learning and teaching and we have to manage the institutional/managerial pressure exerted on us to ensure these targets are met. This was key to our interest in conducting an evaluation of the KAPS scheme 18 months after it was launched at Kingston.

As a model for professional development, a professional recognition framework like KAPS is not comparable with previous PgCert programmes. PgCert programmes traditionally consist of a front-end model of professional development enabling staff to develop their understanding and practice through exposure to theoretical and practical training, whereas schemes such as KAPS promote a more retrospective, reflective model based on colleagues demonstrating how they incorporate the dimensions of the UKPSF in their practice. Or as Lea and Purcell (2015) argue, the UKPSF is designed to facilitate the kind of reflective practice inspired by the work of Donald Schön who made a clear case for the importance of reflection for professionals when developing their practice.

The KAPS scheme is closely aligned with the requirements of the HEA direct route to obtaining a Fellowship and the main artefact participants produce is their reflective account of practice (RAP). In the RAP participants present their evidence in a reflective, personal, individual and scholarly account to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of a particular category of Fellowship, and that they

have internalised and understood the UKPSF Dimensions of Practice. Although staff are also required to evidence their engagement with CPD over time, they are not explicitly exposed to new forms of knowledge, theory, or competencies about learning and teaching as part of the KAPS scheme. In this respect, we argue that it might be more appropriate to speak about KAPS as an HEA-accredited recognition scheme that leads to an HEA Fellowship rather than an HEA-accredited programme in the traditions of the PgCert. Furthermore, we are beginning to experience the difficulty or tensions of reflection in relation to ongoing academic development. For instance, participation on the KAPS scheme is often of limited duration where formal engagement ceases once colleagues have obtained their SFHEA, limiting the opportunities for ongoing reflection, although in common with other institutions, we are looking at how colleagues will demonstrate that they 'remain in good standing'. Perhaps more importantly, staff evidence their practice and their reflection on this in an account that is assessed by their peers – this is also a factor which impacts on their reflective accounts as they frequently shy away from reflecting on the more challenging, perhaps less successful aspects of their role despite these reflections often providing more powerful indicators of their development as professional academics. The 'retrospective benchmarking' approach may well provide adequate evidence of mastering the UKPSF Dimensions of Practice (mechanistic approach) but at the expense of the development of ongoing practice which may be messy and/or open-ended yet could lead to significant change that genuinely improves and impacts on the student experience.

As we developed the KAPS scheme, we became particularly interested in the relationship between the professional development we offer through the recognition scheme and the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment practices. This led us to design our evaluation to capture staff perceptions and opinions of the KAPS scheme, to help us begin

to understand the impact KAPS is having on the quality enhancement of learning and teaching and for the professional development of those participating in the scheme.

Why was it important to evaluate the scheme?

There is much in the literature about the importance of evaluation, be it for accountability, achievement of goals or to present evidence of effectiveness. For academic developers, evaluation helps to enhance our provision, inform future developments and to enable us to share our findings with colleagues both within our own institutions and externally. For this evaluation we chose to address (a) evaluation for development, to help strengthen the scheme, placing an emphasis on stakeholder accounts, and (b) evaluation for knowledge, to produce a deeper understanding of the scheme, integrating research and evaluation and providing an opportunity to continue to further develop the research (Scheerens *et al.,* 2003; Chelimsky and Shadish, 1997).

We were influenced by the impact report of Turner *et al.* (2013) which was a large-scale, sector-wide evaluation, using institutional case studies to demonstrate varying stages of engagement with the UKPSF. This provided a rich resource for us to draw on when developing our local, more formative evaluation. National and large-scale investigations are important to evaluate and inform the development of national CPD initiatives, such as UKPSF recognition schemes. For academic developers, it is equally important to undertake evaluations in the local context, as the mission and aims of each institution and the content and structure of their provision will differ. Dissemination of these findings among colleagues is important as the richness of these contextual evaluations will not get sufficient attention in national investigations. National and local evaluations are not exclusive categories; the results of both are important to understand and contextualise the local setting, as well as inform the developments at a national level (*cf.* Bamber,

2011; Guskey, 2000). By providing a rich and detailed insight into our scheme we aim to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of recognition schemes, and to ongoing debates on the professionalisation of learning and teaching in HE.

How did we evaluate?

We treated the KAPS recognition scheme as a case study, which in the literature is seen as an appropriate approach to undertake research within the educational context (*cf.* Cohen *et al.,* 2007; Simons, 2009). A case study approach allows an intensive analysis of a single unit of investigation, resulting in a rich and detailed picture, with the objective to inform the local context and contribute to the development of professional knowledge and understanding. Equally important, the findings from a case study supports the decision-making process for further development and enhancement of our provision (Simons, 2009).

To capture the experiences of the participants on the KAPS scheme fully and make use of the rich sources available to us, we decided to use a mixed method approach. There are many research designs possible under the header mixed methods, each with their own objectives and strengths (*cf.* Creswell, 2011). We decided to develop and disseminate a questionnaire to the active participants on our recognition scheme and probe their motivation and the perceived impact on their professional development and learning and teaching practices. The questionnaire allowed us to include questions specifically related to the KAPS scheme, such as levels of satisfaction with the support and resources available. The questionnaire was sent out electronically to 180 academics who actively participated in the KAPS scheme between March 2014 and January 2015. The questionnaire did yield a 52% response rate after two reminders, which is seen as reasonably satisfactory for a questionnaire (Gillham, 2007).

To capture and interpret the experienced value of going

through a recognition scheme, we complemented our analysis with semi-structured interviews of a specific group of participants. Here we took guidance from Smith and Osborn's (2003) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach which allowed us to probe a fairly homogeneous group of senior academics who had obtained a Senior Fellowship of the HEA through the KAPS scheme six or more months ago. We selected this group specifically, as although KAPS is open to all members of staff at Kingston University, it is primarily aimed at academics with considerable experience in HE. Academics who are new to teaching and learning, or staff in supportive roles are advised to develop their skills and understanding through the Introduction to Learning and Teaching in HE (ILT), which resembles the structure and objectives of a PgCert and leads to Associate or Fellow of the HEA. By interviewing a group of six experienced academics in senior roles, with considerable but differing degrees of management responsibilities, we were able to obtain an in-depth picture of the participants' motivations and perceived value of the recognition scheme for their professional practices, taking into account their unique circumstances and individual situations. These accounts complemented the findings of the questionnaire, providing interpretation and nuance to the generalised statements derived from the Likert-scale questions.

What did we learn?

The findings of the questionnaire and interviews need to be understood within the context of Kingston University. Kingston University is a post-1992 university and a member of the University Alliance, a group of universities in the UK with a strong commitment to learning and teaching and engagement in the local community and/or region. The units of analysis were obtained from KAPS participants who participated between March 2014 and June 2015. Considering that the scheme has grown substantially since this period, the participants in the questionnaire and survey could be categorised as

'early adopters', who were familiar with the UKPSF and understood the value of professionalisation and gaining recognition from the outset of the KAPS scheme. The demographics of the respondents in the questionnaire confirm the KAPS target audience of senior and more experienced members of staff. A substantial number of respondents, a third, indicated that they were already a Fellow of the HEA, obtained earlier in their careers through, for instance, an HEA-accredited PgCert, and the majority aimed to obtain a Senior Fellowship of the HEA through KAPS. Mindful that we are in the process of writing up our findings for an academic outlet, we would like to share some of our findings here.

A set of questions in the questionnaire aimed to probe the respondents motivation to participate on a 7-point Likert-scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The motivation questions were grouped in internal and external motivations. As outlined above, participation on the recognition scheme is stimulated through institutional KPIs, and mechanisms such as appraisal and promotion and progression policies. The set probed respondents' motivation with questions related to learning and teaching, appraisal and/or promotion and progression, and future employment opportunities. Notwithstanding the relatively strong institutional pressure to participate in the scheme at Kingston, the majority of academics did agree that they applied to the scheme in order to learn more about learning and teaching in HE and sought professional development to enhance their teaching practices. At the same time, the majority agreed that they joined KAPS because it was part of their appraisal objectives and/or mandatory requirements of their promotion and progression. Furthermore a considerable number of staff saw the value of acquiring a form of teaching recognition that is transferable to other institutions.

This apparent ambiguity in responses, which might be described as an attempt by participants to combine institutional pressures with individual benefits and making the best out

of the situation, was confirmed in the semi-structured interviews. The interviewees, who were all in senior roles, indicated they were familiar with the UKPSF before the establishment of KAPS. They were driven by internal and external motivations, such as gaining reputation for their institutional contributions to learning and teaching, recognising the general importance of the UKPSF for the HE sector, as well as setting an exemplar for others or their team to support the institutional objectives.

Various sets of questions in the questionnaire aimed to quantify the impact of a recognition scheme on participants' CPD. The main objective of the recognition scheme as discussed above, aims to support staff in obtaining a Fellowship of the HEA. KAPS, in line with the UKPSF, emphasises the importance of CPD and the scholarship of teaching and learning in HE, but does not offer education in a traditional form, which might raise questions about the type and the impact of academic development that is stimulated through recognition schemes. The majority of the respondents agreed that their Fellowship application stimulated their professional development in a variety of ways, including scholarly activities such as reading about learning and teaching and HE in general, collaborating with peers and sharing best practice. Furthermore the majority of the participants agreed that the scheme had stimulated them to undertake CPD offered within the institution. The interviewees supported these findings. They felt the value of the KAPS application in relation to CPD was strong in a variety of ways, for instance it had refreshed their understanding with respect to pedagogic practice, raised awareness of the importance of CPD and increased awareness of the wider HE landscape.

Both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews have yielded many more insights, which we aim to disseminate soon, and we acknowledge that the results presented here require more discussion to contextualise them fully. Nevertheless, the results described here suggest

various interesting perspectives for further discussion. The KAPS recognition scheme, considering the institutional context, might not be representative for the sector as a whole. However, the growing institutional interest at a national level in HEA Fellowships may raise concerns about staff engagement, motivation and impact on professionalisation of teaching in HE. Our findings indicate that respondents make the best of the situation for their own practice, despite structural pressures to participate, which is encouraging looking forward. Nevertheless the tension between the need to meet institutional objectives, and participants' conformity/compliance will require further exploration and discussion (*cf.* Di Napoli, 2014; Peseta, 2014). Although not explored here, the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews have probed the impact of the recognition scheme on participants' teaching and related professional practices. The findings presented here suggest that participation in a recognition scheme stimulates scholarly activities related to learning and teaching. Nonetheless, as argued above, the recognition scheme's retrospective and reflective model of professional development will require further investigation to fully understand its contribution to learning and teaching in HE, and we anticipate contributing to these discussions soon.

Looking ahead
We have been engaged in disseminating the findings of our study and have presented at two conferences during 2015: EAIR 37th Annual Forum, Krems, Austria (August 2015) and SEDA's 20th Annual Conference, Cardiff (November 2015). We are also presenting our findings at Kingston University's Festival of Learning in January 2016 and we have a paper in preparation. In addition, we are exploring ways in which we can combine our findings with colleagues engaged in similar activity in other universities to try and explore impact on a larger scale and we will continue to gather data from those participating on the scheme to enhance the scheme and further develop our knowledge. Importantly, the findings from this study will inform the next iteration of the KAPS scheme as we work towards

re-accreditation later in 2016, and the importance of having this evidence base for this activity is crucial to the task.

At the time of writing this article the Green Paper *Fulfilling our Potential* (BIS, 2015) is with the sector for consultation and we are considering the likely impact of the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework alongside the outcome of our evaluation.

We would like to thank the academic staff at Kingston University who participated in the survey, and acknowledge especially the kindness of the interviewees who helped us to gather the information and insights during this project.

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Enhancing scholarship in college higher education: Introducing the Scholarship Project

John Lea, Scholarship Project Research Director, Association of Colleges UK

Background to the project

In March 2015, the UK-based Association of Colleges, working alongside the UK-based Higher Education Academy, the Quality Assurance Agency, and the National Union of Students, was successful in bidding for catalyst funds from the Higher Education Funding Council for England for a project aimed at strengthening the profile of the professional and technical higher education provided by English further education colleges (FECs).

This is a three-year project running from June 2015 and formally involves a sample of around 50 colleges, although all colleges can get involved. The sample colleges were chosen to represent the range of higher education currently provided

by FECs in England. This includes colleges which are: geographically spread throughout the country; colleges with small and large HE numbers; colleges with established and beginner HE status; and colleges with general and specialised HE courses (for example, those with exclusively Land, or Arts based courses).

The project is conceptually underpinned by Ernest Boyer's (1990) model of the four scholarships – the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching and learning – and it seeks to utilise these broad notions as springboards for exploring how they might each enable student learning to be enhanced. For example, the project will provide an opportunity for project participants to explore ways in which curricula and pedagogies might explicitly and effectively integrate life and work experience with academic studies (the scholarship of integration); encourage staff, students and local employers to develop productive knowledge exchange networks (the scholarship of application); and provide opportunities for students and staff to work collaboratively on enhancing learning and teaching (the scholarship of teaching).

Integral to the project is the testing and trialling of the ways in which these wider notions of scholarship might become embedded features of college higher education (CHE), and thereby help raise its profile within the wider landscape of higher education. The project will be seeking ways to evaluate the quality of these wider forms of scholarship, and measuring their effects on enhanced and more engaged forms of student learning – this will be key to the project's success.

This article focuses on some of the early findings, highlights some of the key conceptual ideas, and discusses some of the issues raised so far. These are grouped under the headings: the nature of CHE provision; scholarship as a troublesome word; and the nature of higher vocational knowledge. It finishes by indicating some of the ways in which anyone working in CHE, in any national context, can get involved in the project.

The nature of CHE provision

FECs in the UK have been consistently providing some form of higher education (or advanced education as it was sometimes called) throughout the post-war period. Although it might be said to be insignificant in terms of overall higher education numbers (hovering around 10% for the last fifty years), it is worth noting that there are now more students studying on higher education courses in FECs than the total number of higher education students present throughout the system at the time of the Robbins Report in 1963. And the provision is not insignificant for those involved in it, particularly in terms of its contribution to widening participation, focusing as it often does on supporting first generation entrants to higher education, often located in so-called higher education `cold spots'. In some cases, particularly where there is `no university nearby, the FEC effectively acts as the local university. Indeed, this localism has many dimensions, including the option for students

who wish to remain living in their existing homes (and often in their full-time local employment) to access local higher education courses. And for the colleges themselves, it has enabled many of them to provide courses which have close links with local employers, in order to educate and train a highly skilled professional and technical local workforce.

These dimensions differentiate CHE from some of the more traditional university-based student experiences (significantly the *rite de passage* associated with campus-based living) but they are not unproblematic. In one recent large-scale study it was questioned whether CHE students could be said to be making well-informed decisions based on the limitations imposed by these forms of localism (Parry *et al.*, 2012), and the potential for social mobility offered by CHE has also been questioned (Orr, 2014); that is, CHE students may well be experiencing enhanced access to highly useful educational qualifications but they are not necessarily then going on to work in jobs that these qualifications should merit. These points are double-edged because it could equally be argued that many CHE students are actually making very realistic assessments of their situations, at the same time as experiencing an enriching learning and teaching regime. And, in wider societal terms, it surely isn't realistic to expect CHE to be able to make (on its own) serious inroads into the well-established social and cultural capital networks provided by some universities. These networks contribute significantly both to their positional advantage in university rankings, and to the opportunities they afford their students, but they are not necessarily closely coupled with any distinct learning and teaching regime (Gibbs, 2011).

CHE has also become significant in the UK higher education landscape because of the government's recent decision (from September 2015) to remove the cap on HE student numbers (*i.e.* the number of students that an institution can recruit on an annual basis), alongside the encouragement to colleges and other private providers to seek degree-awarding powers. These reforms are significant because, in the past, many colleges were part of university-based consortia, where the university validated the degree (or sub-degree) award and received the funding, but signed a partnership agreement with a local college, enabling it to deliver some or all of the teaching. Colleges now, however, are in a position to effectively go it alone – having, in some cases, all their HE students directly funded and having students studying on exclusively college-validated degree awards (sometimes up to master's level).

It is too early to predict what some of the long-term outcomes of these reforms will be. Indeed, the evidence so far is that colleges are not clambering to achieve full teaching degree-awarding powers, and those that are have quickly become aware that the process is thorough and may well take many years to achieve. As of the end of 2015 only Newcastle, Hull, Warwickshire, Durham and Grimsby colleges had achieved foundation degree awarding powers, and a small handful of colleges have pending decisions on full teaching degree awarding powers to be announced in 2016. In terms of the Scholarship Project this raises an interesting swings-and-roundabout question about whether

the need for CHE teachers to become more involved in research and scholarship (in order that their institution be granted those degree-awarding powers) is best developed by separating themselves from their previous university partner(s), or by working more closely with them. And this brings me to the question of the nature of scholarship itself.

Scholarship as a troublesome word

The project does not seek to impose a fixed definition of the term on CHE. On the contrary, it seeks to explore the full range of its multiple meanings. In part this is because academic and policy-related literature since the turn of the century has highlighted its somewhat problematic nature. From journal articles entitled 'Scholarship is the word that dare not speak its name' (Young, 2002) and 'Oh to be a scholar' (Feather, 2012), to several policy-related references, which speak to the need for colleges to embed more of an HE ethos, there is clearly an important issue at stake here. That said, and although QAA guidance to colleges seeking degree-awarding powers makes it clear that 'scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education', the guidance also goes on to say that 'the precise nature of these scholarly activities is determined by subject differences as well as by differences in focus, level, scope and *provider context* (emphasis added)'; further indicating that this '…does not necessarily mean doing original research but it does mean doing more than simply professional development' (QAA, 2013, pp. 4-5).

This raises the question of what exactly is the difference between research and scholarship or can the two words just be used interchangeably? Does scholarship perhaps sit somewhere between research and teaching? In a slightly derogatory way perhaps the word scholarship is aimed at people who clearly do more than teach, but don't actually conduct research, indicating that perhaps we just need a blanket label for this rag-tag collection of activities? This is problematic for the project because there is a danger in that, by encouraging more scholarship in colleges, they might then become associated with something less than research, and given a second-class status accordingly. Alternatively, in encouraging colleges to engage in university-style research we might then be asking them to compete in a game that they cannot possibly be expected to win, and in the process fall into Ernest Boyer's American university trap, where only original research becomes of any significant value. Indeed, it is now routine to find UK-based academics bemoaning the way that the Research Excellence Framework (and its forerunner) has unhelpfully skewed their activities toward a very narrow range of research outputs.

Interestingly, however, Ernest Boyer and the UK-based Research Excellence Framework (REF) might be considered strange bedfellows. For, whereas Boyer wanted to subsume original research (or the scholarship of discovery as he called it) under a wider umbrella of four equally weighted scholarships, the REF approaches this issue from the other end and subsumes scholarship under a wider umbrella of research activity, defining the former as: 'the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as

dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases' (REF, 2012, Annex C, p. 48). And, so long as these activities are not restricted to the submitting institution, it views these as forms of research and thereby eligible for a REF submission; the key characteristic being that any 'investigation must lead to new insights, effectively shared' (REF, 2012, Annex C, p. 48).

This analysis puts the Scholarship Project in an interesting space, both conceptually and politically. Conceptually, it invites a critical exploration, in the English college context, of ways to effectively embed and start measuring the quality of outputs in all four of Boyer's scholarships; including the notion of the all-round scholar, and the all-encompassing 'scholarship of engagement' (Boyer, 1996). And, importantly, exploring more fully how all these outputs can be linked explicitly to enhancing student learning. But more politically, and while not precluding college teachers from entering their activities into future REF panels, this might also help to encourage the adoption of — and better recognition for — a much wider range of scholarly activities, throughout higher education provision, not just in colleges.

Three other considerations are also significant here. First, there is the question of whether CHE should, on the basis of this, start competing for research recognition within the existing HE landscape (and almost inevitably lose out to the well-established big players), or, as some of the community colleges in Canada seem to have done, argue a case for having access to a specifically defined pool of 'applied research' funds, only available to eligible institutions. Second, there is (the paraphrased) question neatly put by Jacoby (1987) in asking scholars to start resisting the pull of the college canteen and start drinking coffee again in the public cafe, in order to reinvigorate their role as public intellectuals, as opposed to cloistered, and journal-focused, academics. This issue was also recently explored by considering the potential for many FECs today to re-discover some of the original civic responsibility we saw when the red brick universities were established in the northern cities of England in the Victorian period (Eaton, 2015).

Third, and to return to one of the key aims of the project, there is significant scope presented here to look explicitly at how each of Boyer's four scholarships might be able to, avowedly, enhance student learning. To some extent this takes us backwards to some of those thorny issues relating to the research-teaching nexus in asking how exactly does a research-rich environment actually enhance student learning. But it also takes us forwards in providing the project with an opportunity to develop some tools for measuring the learning enhancement, and to showcase examples of where, for example, teachers, employers and students have worked collaboratively in scholarly ways on projects of local significance.

Higher vocational knowledge

Finally, the project will also be exploring one of the most distinctive characteristics of CHE courses — their (very often) avowedly vocational nature, in preparing students to work in a range of roles in professional and technical occupations.

Politically, this too has proven problematic, because of the danger that this will place these courses on the wrong side of the deeply ingrained academic-vocational divide in the English education system. Although that divide might speak more to a cultural, or even social class, dynamic, rather than a strictly educational one, there is plenty of evidence that when a course or an entire institution in the UK is granted an opportunity to label itself academic in some way, that opportunity is always grasped. In this context, it is worth remembering the speed with which the former polytechnics in the UK embraced forms of academic drift in the 1990s, and how highly vocational courses in traditional universities rarely seem to use this term when referring to these courses.

The Scholarship Project affords an opportunity to re-examine the nature of this academic-vocational divide. An increasingly popular term, which is being marshalled to undertake this work, is `re-contextualisation' (Guile, 2006). The concept does not have a fixed or narrow meaning but, in general, it speaks to the idea that knowledge always needs re-contextualising (only in cases of very general principle would it ever stay de-contextualised). In most cases, particularly on technical and professional courses, knowledge is quickly re-contextualised or 'put to work' (Evans *et al.,* 2010). It should be also noted that this re-contextualisation is always a two-way process (from work context back to underpinning principle), and will normally require a re-contextualisation into a curriculum or classroom context (or adoption of a 'pedagogic device', as Bernstein (2000) refers to it). Here, the project is providing participants with opportunities to explore ways in which a higher education curriculum might best integrate traditional discipline knowledge with work-based contextualised knowledge, and is inviting students and staff to evaluate the evidence base for the most effective pedagogic interventions in this context.

The wider context for this discussion of re-contextualisation is that thorny question of the place of theory in the classroom, and this too has been heavily tainted by being brought into debates about the higher status of propositional knowledge at all levels of English schooling, and related to that, how theory has been traditionally introduced (or re-contextualised) into vocational course settings. This issue is now being addressed by reconceptualising the theory question and seeing it more as `the space of reasons' (Guile, 2014), that is, seeing the classroom (and the workplace) as a space in which students consider the validity of the reasons that might be given to explain behaviours and activities (Simmons, 2014). Beyond the classroom context other authors have also been re-examining Aristotle's original use of the term *phronesis* (or practical wisdom) to demonstrate how most occupations share a common foundation in being neither purely academic nor narrowly vocational. In this context, architects and builders have, in reality, much that unites them rather than divides them (Sennett, 2008). And, conceptually, we are speaking a language here much more of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or', with all the implications that this contains for helping to break many of the dichotomies that exist throughout educational thinking (Simmons, 2014); some of which have been alluded to throughout this article, for example: theory-practice; academic-vocational; propositional knowledge-practical knowledge; research-teaching…*etc.*

Getting involved in the project

To date, project participants have been collecting 'baseline' data on the nature and scope of scholarly activity at the pilot colleges involved in the project. This has included: a desk-based critical analysis of current scholarship policies and practices in colleges which run HE courses; administering an electronic (mainly quantitative) survey centred on engagement with scholarly activity (aimed at students, teachers, higher education managers, and employers); conducting sixteen one-to-one unstructured interviews; producing a critical review of academic and policy literature; and putting out a call for case studies centred on innovation in learning and teaching in local settings. And, currently, workshops are also taking place exploring the various dimensions to the meaning of the word scholarship, and, indeed, whether the term is a useful one

If you are not a member of staff or a student in one of the 50 colleges, you can still get involved in the project in a number of ways. Each academic year will conclude with a research and scholarship conference (in June), which anyone can attend by responding to the call for papers and/or registration information (which will also be available on the project website). Alternatively, if you have a strong view on any aspect of college higher education, you might consider submitting a 1000-word think piece (guidance notes available on the website). We will be publishing think pieces every month for the lifetime of the project. Finally, if you are involved in an innovative form of curriculum practice in a college higher education context, you might also wish to showcase this by submitting a 1000-word case study (guidance notes available on the website). Case studies will be published on the project's website as and when they come in, with full acknowledgment of the author and college context.

Project website

https://www.aoc.co.uk/enhancing-scholarship-in-college-higher-education-the-scholarship-project

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Using Marx to discuss what we are doing when we do educational development — A more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar?

Julie Hall, University of Roehampton, and **Chris Rowell,** Regent's University, London

The November 2015 SEDA conference focused on the scholarship of educational development and the evidence base for our work. SEDA values also highlight the importance of scholarship because it encourages learners and developers to adopt an informed, critical and analytic approach across their practice. By drawing on alternative perspectives, theories, models, policies and research, scholarship involves us in questioning and challenging our practice.

As a relatively young area of inquiry, alternative theoretical perspectives on educational development practice are rarely debated at SEDA conferences. As a newer area of study, it is hard to point to the Feminist or Marxist or even post-modern educational development research. Having taught Sociology and Economics, we have both experienced conferences where political and ideological perspectives foreground scholarship and the presentation of 'evidence'. Much of the work of educational development research has been dedicated to giving an account of teaching and learning and change in universities and finding ways of reconciling 'what could be' with 'what is'. So, in the light of developments in capitalism, UK politics and the global crisis, we proposed a session at the conference to use a traditional Marxist analysis as a lens to explore educational development in the UK. Our aims were to question whether the scholarship of educational development was rationalising the higher educational enterprise 'in itself' with the latest manifestation of capitalism and inequality, and to explore how we might conceptualise our work if we were to take a Marxist approach to educational development.

We decided to plan the session around three conversations which we would hold in front of conference delegates, opening up to debate between each one. The rest of this article outlines the conversations and the debates which we planned.

Conversation 1: How might we approach the scholarship of educational development from a Marxist perspective?

Julie Hall (JH): For me, a Marxist would pay more attention to the historical context of the educational development project, the role of social class and the aims of that project. A piece of work around improving lectures, for example, would begin by looking at the role of universities and the role of lectures in terms of power structures and the skills and attributes such lectures develop. Attention would be paid to the élite nature of earlier higher education and the role of the lecture in preserving and developing that élite. A Marxist educational developer might also have sympathy for those who struggle with the traditional lecture approach and argue for pedagogic practices that ensure parity of participation. I agree with Nancy Fraser's view that individuals should be full partners in social interaction. What do you think, Chris?

Chris Rowell (CR): Yes, I agree that a Marxist starting point would be based on the historical context of universities. The whole landscape of higher education has changed dramatically since I started teaching in the 1980s. We have moved very quickly from a situation in the UK where only a minority of 18-year-olds went on directly to university, to the present context where most teenagers expect to progress to higher education. Increased student numbers, cuts to funding and the marketisation of UK HE mean that changes to the experience of teaching and learning has put enormous constraints and pressures on the system, especially for the lecturers. The role of educational developers in universities means that we have to cope and come up with strategies to deal with these tensions. How do we equip lecturers to cope with increased class sizes and the increased diversity of the student population, but at the same time think about what we are trying to achieve? How can we make learning more inclusive, interactive, collaborative and enjoyable when more often than not there are fewer resources?

Conversation 2: To what extent, from a Marxist perspective, is educational development a tool of capitalism?

JH: Ray Land has reminded us that educational development can be conceived as 'domesticating' academic staff (or workers). Part of our role can be to get people to work in ways that meet the needs of mass higher education or even business or what Marxists might call 'capital'. As private companies get more involved in higher education too, some of our roles involve ensuring people use profit-making tools effectively. Chris, how do you feel about this in relation to the use of technology?

CR: By the end of the 1990s most communication by lecturers had moved to a digital format and students were increasingly expected to word process their assignments and most engaged with some form of virtual learning. The universities' move towards learning technology wasn't

simply driven by the need to reduce costs and get more students 'through the system'. Lecturers, like myself, were willing to try out new types of technology for pedagogical reasons. They wanted to experiment with new ways of teaching and the intranet opened up new possibilities both inside and outside of the classroom. Alongside this desire to innovate with new teaching methods grew up the 'Open education' movement. The concept of 'open-ness' has received a great deal of publicity recently with the discussions surrounding the advent of Massive Open Online Courses.

HE institutions have looked towards learning technology and private companies to find quick solutions to the issues that increased numbers of students have brought. In this respect the investment with biggest impact has been the establishment of the Virtual Learning Environments (VLE). A variety of them emerged over the 90s at a departmental, faculty and institution-wide basis. Some were built 'in house', others used open source software (such as Moodle) and others used proprietary systems hosted outside the institution (such as Blackboard). VLEs, often with integrated plagiarism detection and e-submission tools, have become mainstream in most universities now. Most students submit their work online and lecturers are expected to retrieve and increasingly grade and give feedback to their students in a digital format. The expenditure on (private) companies supplying learning technology has really escalated in the last 30 years and university managers want lecturers to use them (whether they want to or not).

JH: Educational development in this context can be uncomfortable. On the other hand educational development work can be experienced as activism. SEDA offers a collective responsibility for student learning and a commitment to professional inquiry to achieve that purpose. It offers a de-privatisation of individual practice, and, importantly for me, opportunities to influence activities and policies. I love the SEDA 1992 statement in *Educational Developments* when student numbers hit the million mark and I imagine that

there was a sense of activism at the time:

> 'If the quality of provision is not to suffer, different approaches must be developed and introduced with forethought, sensitivity and imagination. The aim is a more informed and effective citizenry. Indeed, if institutions reconsider their goals at the same time that they make changes to their courses and teaching, the quality of their provision and the quality of the student achievement can actually improve.'

Conversation 3: What might educational development look like if it aimed at socialist transformation?

CR: For me, educational development is about understanding and analysing the educational landscape and helping others to cope with the process of transformation. As I mentioned before, the marketisation of HE has put many pressures on lecturers and we need to understand the impact these changes are having if we are to do anything about them. Educational development initiatives can't be seen in isolation from this. So for example, all the current talk on the Teaching Excellence Framework can only be fully understood if we see it as an attempt to grade and rank HE institutions and ultimately this will be linked to funding and resources. However it's not enough to just interpret the current situation – we do need an alternative vision of what a more inclusive type of education could be like. Despite all the work of organisations such as SEDA, very little has changed in HE teaching methods – lectures followed by seminars are still the dominant mode of delivery. We need to look at more 'emancipatory' modes of learning and this is ultimately linked to the type of citizens and society we want.

JH: Marxism for me can be a theoretical underpinning – a belief in the potential people have to create a better world by their own efforts. Classical Marxists also recognise of course that history is a history of class struggle over the means of production

and ensuing exploitation. Educational development in this context could be more critical of universities' roles in exploitation and emancipation and be more critical of initiatives which aim to domesticate. A Marxist approach would be alert to how people's ideas change on a mass scale, especially when the level of political struggle is high. Active learning in universities would be linked to building confidence in the ability to change the world. As an example, the last word should go to a Metro worker in Paris involved in strikes in 1995 against the public sector who explained how his ideas changed like this, 'Strikes completely change a man. People live in their own little corner. During the strikes individualism was completely broken up. Completely! The chains were broken. Spontaneously because we were discussing things the whole time, we learned to get to know each other. Here we learned to live together' (Wolfreys, 1999, p. 36).

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Promoting active learning through peer instruction and self-assessment: A toolkit to design, support and evaluate teaching

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Introduction

Active learning is advocated in the current pedagogical debate as one of the most powerful pathways to student engagement. However, whilst it is relatively easy to promote the adoption of active learning pedagogies in small-class environments, the challenge arises when dealing with large cohorts of students.

To tackle this issue, having students teaching other students might be the solution: everybody is engaged on the learning task, everybody has the opportunity to add to her own knowledge, and to develop core skills. In this article, I will describe how I successfully implemented the peer instruction pedagogy (Mazur, 1997) in my teaching practice, and how my experience can be useful to other teachers and educational developers across the sector. In addition, and in line with the revived debate on the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching, I will argue that not only is it important to promote the adoption of active learning pedagogies, but also to devise opportune strategies to assess their effectiveness.

In the first part of the article I will describe the learning environment that I have developed, drawing from my personal experience. I will then focus on the implementation of the peer instruction pedagogy, which I have modified to include a self-assessment component. A few words will also be spent on how learning technologies can support the implementation of active learning in large cohorts of students. In the second part of the article I will describe

how the data collected from teaching sessions, including the student's voice, can be analysed to construct indicators of learning and teaching learning effectiveness. In the final part of the article I will reflect on ethical considerations related to the use of student data, on how my experience could be extended to different learning environments, and on the pitfalls to be kept in check.

The learning environment

I teach a large first-year compulsory module in Introductory Macroeconomics, for the School of Economics at the University of East Anglia. The number of students varies between 150 and 250, and my task is to endow a heterogeneous population of students with a core set of skills that they will use in more advanced modules later on. At the beginning of the module, students' skills can be very different, as roughly half of the class comes from an international background. Some students might have studied Economics prior to coming to university, while for others it is a genuine fresh start. The module articulates in: (i) lectures, where I present the learning material and discuss it with the class; (ii) seminars, where students work on pre-assigned problem-sets, and come to class to discuss it with their peers and seminar leaders; and (iii) workshops, where students walk in to a problem-set never seen before and work in teams to solve it. While seminars are organised as small-class activities and facilitated by my team of associate tutors, workshops are large-class events led by me, as the class is divided into only two large groups (for which I repeat the

same session twice, with intervals of two weeks). Seminars and workshops are always based on material taught in lectures beforehand and it is assumed that students have had the chance to read it and, at least partially, process it prior to practising on it in class. As I mentioned, promoting discussion and active learning in seminars is relatively easy, given the size of the classes. The real challenge is promoting active learning in workshops but, with the aid of peer instruction, and the support of learning technologies, I have managed to meet this challenge very effectively.

Peer instruction with self-assessment

At the beginning of each workshop session, students receive a sheet with a set of multiple-choice questions. Students are provided with Student Response Systems (SRS), or clickers, which they can use to respond to the questions. The questions are displayed on the classroom's screen through a PowerPoint presentation, enriched with an add-on which enables me to collect students' responses. Thus, for each multiple choice question, I follow a very precise algorithm:

a) Students are asked a question and respond to it using their SRS devices, individually and autonomously. The distribution of answers is not revealed to them
b) Students are asked to rate their confidence at mastering the skills needed to respond to the question correctly. In this case the distribution of answers is revealed, so that students (and I) can gauge the temperature in the class, and get a feeling of how challenging the question was
c) The same question as in point (a) is asked again. Students are then invited to discuss their opinions on the available options, comparing with each other. This is peer instruction. Some students will try to convince others that they are right. Others will listen or share doubts during the discussion. By the end of this stage, all students are invited to provide a second individual response to the question asked
d) The distribution of answers is revealed, the correct answer is highlighted, as I proceed to discuss the solution and take any further questions about the task just completed. The distribution of answers comparing the first and the second round are also revealed to the students so that they can visually see the change in the distribution of responses. Generally this polarises onto the right answer.

The algorithm is repeated for all the questions that compose the problem set, which may vary between 6 and 10. The whole process takes little more than an hour. I apply as much flexibility as I can to regulate the time invested in tackling each question. The software I use informs me about the number of responses arriving in real time; I also observe the student dynamics in the class, which allows me to decide when is the right time to close each poll. My own addition to the original algorithm devised by Mazur (1997) consists of the self-assessment question that precedes peer instruction. In my opinion, it is extremely important that students have the chance to reflect on what they are doing, and critically evaluate their skills in relation to the tasks they are assigned. To this extent, active learning is not just based on the interaction generated by peer instruction, but the active engagement that each student, even individually, exercises with respect to her own learning.

The role of Student Response Systems

Intelligent use of learning technologies is of course a catalyst to the promotion of active learning in the classroom. My teaching methodology would work very well even without the aid provided by SRS, but the opportunity to display student responses on the screen acts as a further incentive to engage on the task, and provides useful information to the teacher on where to focus attention to maximise learning. The opportunity to see the positive effect that peer instruction generates in the class is also a further motivator for students. Each student in my School is assigned with a clicker device, which s/he retains until the end of her/his third year. Each clicker is associated to a unique ID code, which appears on my computer when I download the reports from each teaching session. Thus, by matching clicker ID codes with student records, I can track the clicking activity of each student throughout their first year of studies in my module, and I can correlate this activity to student demographics and background information.

I use Turning Technologies SRS devices, in conjunction with a USB radio receiver that collects responses once plugged into any computer. The software that manages this process is TurningPoint, a Turning Technologies freeware package that integrates with PowerPoint to create interactive slides able to display the distribution of answers. TurningPoint can also be used as a stand-alone piece of software, able to manage student polling independently from PowerPoint. The software also allows me to save the data generated from each clicking session, which can be converted in Excel format, or used to produce reports to be shared with the students. From the beginning, I found it intuitive and easy to use. Turning Technologies also provides support, case-studies, and organises an annual user's conference to share and disseminate good practice. In an alternative to clickers, Turning Technologies also produces an application downloadable on portable devices, so that students can even interact with their lecturers using their own mobile phones. In this case, individual application licences should be purchased, and renewed every year.

Assessing the effectiveness of peer instruction and self-assessment

Student Response Systems provide far more than the opportunity to visualise and share information during each teaching session. The reports produced at the end of each workshop are a precious source of information to analyse and reflect on the effectiveness of the teaching. At the end of each session I download the data generated in the classroom, and I process it to make it available to students. I also use these data to conduct evidence-based research on the pedagogies that I introduced in my module. For each workshop session, responses to assessment questions are coded as 'correct' and 'incorrect', while responses to self-assessment questions are coded as 'confident' and 'not-confident'. Cross-tabulating the results, I can demonstrate that students who answer questions correctly (incorrectly) are generally confident (not confident) with their skills. Thus, students generally display (and develop along the year) reasonably good self-assessment skills.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the peer instruction pedagogy, I compute the difference between the proportion of correct responses obtained between the first and the second time each assessment question has been asked, which I call 'Class Learning Gain'. The Learning Gain is the measure of effectiveness of peer instruction: the higher the proportion of students who learned how to reach the right answer by discussing with their peers, the higher the Learning Gain. Thus, using regression analysis, I demonstrate that: (i) learning gains are not dependent on student confidence; and (ii) learning gains are higher when the initial proportion of correct responses is low. Both these results support the view that peer instruction is indeed a powerful pedagogy, which enables both confident and non-confident students to learn, and allows the equalising of learning across all students in the classroom. Thus, aside from the 'buzz' raised by the advocates of peer instruction in recent times, my approach shows that its success can be validated by evidence.

But what do students think about this? Personally, I do not believe that asking students whether they enjoy being taught in a particular way constitutes a very useful mechanism to evaluate pedagogical effectiveness. Students are likely to enjoy being taught in an interactive way, but this does not necessarily imply that they are learning. Therefore, I decided to proceed through a different approach. In my first lecture I explained to the students that they would be taught through peer instruction and I asked them to share their views on the statement that: 'students teaching to students can be even more effective than lecturers teaching to students'. At the end of each workshop, I would then ask students to rate the statement that 'they learnt more Economics by discussing material with each other'. Contrasting the two sets of evidence led to a clear result: while students' initial opinion of peer instruction was not very high, the great majority of students found it beneficial when assessing their learning experience at the end of each workshop session. This result was also re-enforced by an informal end-of-module survey, where I asked students to identify the component of the module (within lectures, seminars, workshops, office hours, and VLE learning) which had the strongest impact on their learning. I particularly like this approach, because it is not based on leading questions, and it is completely de-contextualised from the discussion about peer instruction. Questionnaire results show that more than 50% of the students thought that workshops (where peer instruction took place) were the most important component of the module, with other preferences distributed almost uniformly across seminars, lectures, and other components. Asking students about what makes them learn is certainly more useful than asking them whether they enjoyed what they did, and I would argue that taking a step aside from the big debate on student satisfaction displays the potential to uncover much more useful insights about our learning and teaching practice.

Ethical considerations

Since I described a teaching evaluation method that makes intense use of student data, I think it is opportune to spend some time discussing the ethical implications for research. The advent of learning analytics has raised serious concerns about the use of student information, ways to obtain consent, and data-sharing procedures. All my research has undergone a rigorous ethical scrutiny prior to being conducted. Filing an application for ethical approval might look like a daunting task, but I have some suggestions to those who want to embark on producing evidence-based research on learning and teaching data.

First of all, I would claim that if the research that you are conducting is related to teaching activities that would take place irrespectively from your research agenda, ethical concerns should be already less worrying. This is not research whereby you would alter anybody's learning and teaching experience with the purpose of writing a paper; it is research based on regular teaching practice, which would occur anyway. For the same reason, it should be easier to obtain approval for opt-out procedures (whereby students take action if they want to leave the study) rather than opt-in, which requires lengthy filling in of forms: an impractical solution when dealing with large student cohorts.

Additionally, the data collected allows for easy and quick anonymisation of responses, which can also be performed by a third party once records have been matched longitudinally. If you are both the lecturer and the researcher in a project similar to mine, there are both advantages and disadvantages. In order to avoid dependant-relationship issues, any communication about the project, and students' intentions to opt-out, will need to be handled by a third party who will manage the full dataset. However, as teacher-researcher, you probably already have access to data that can be used to inform your teaching. Ethical implications will arise if you want to use it for research to be disseminated in the public domain, but the step is shorter. As a final remark, I would always recommend that your ethical application should highlight the benefits, aside from the costs, that your research projects will bring to the student experience. They are equally important in stating the validity of a research proposal.

Reflections and conclusions

Peer instruction appears to be an effective way to promote active learning in large-class environments, which is validated by empirical evidence in my own experience. The addition of a self-assessment component to the peer instruction algorithm facilitates the development of self-assessment skills and helps students to focus on their learning tasks. While my teaching methodology was developed within a first-year Economics module, I would envisage that this approach can be seamlessly scaled to other Social Sciences and Natural and Mathematical Sciences. Colleagues teaching and supporting teaching in the Humanities can also benefit from adopting this pedagogy, as responses to assessment questions do not necessarily need to be 'right' or 'wrong'. Examples could be applications to ethical or legal dilemmas (such as those considered in Medical Sciences, or Philosophy, or Law), where information is gradually released to the students in order to lead discussion about controversial judgement-valued statements.

Whichever the context, the fundamental challenge is not the actual implementation of the pedagogy, but the design

of questions that can support students in problematising learning. In other words, I would argue that − aside from testing notions − multiple-choice quizzes combined with peer instruction can generate deep learning, if the questions are carefully crafted. Independently from any research agenda, it is also important: (i) to use the data generated in each session to reflect on our teaching and improve following sessions; as well as (ii) to share reports with the students, so that they can also reflect on their performance, and develop independence and self-regulatory behaviours.

The use of technology can, of course, make our job much easier. But, again, we ought to remember that good pedagogical design is much more important than adopting the most recent technological innovation for its own sake. Training on the use of the technology should always be combined with training on how to devise good pedagogical design. I should welcome further enquiries on the features of this pedagogical approach, and I am always eager to help and support colleagues interested in conducting evidence-based research on its effectiveness.

References

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Searching for new methods in curriculum development

Gunter Saunders, University of Westminster, **Peter Hartley,** Edge Hill University and **Peter Chatterton,** Daedalus e-World

This article uses different applications of the Viewpoints approach to highlight important issues in curriculum design for higher education and should interest anyone who is looking for ways to inspire innovation in the curriculum design process. Our main examples are the adapted Viewpoints materials used in work on flexible curricula and recognition of prior learning, and the online support for Viewpoints developed within the Learning Futures Programme at the University of Westminster. To set the context, we include brief introductions to the Viewpoints approach and the Learning Futures initiative. These examples and developments raise practical and conceptual issues which are relevant to everyone involved in curriculum design/redesign.

Our conclusion is that Viewpoints can offer a very valuable starting point for innovation in curriculum design but it must be introduced or adapted with sufficient attention to the specific institutional context.

Why worry about curriculum development?

In an ideal world, the opportunity to develop new modules and courses would be one of the highlights of academic life. What better way of exploring potential for innovation in curriculum delivery and assessment? What better way of confirming our commitment to learning and teaching? However, judging by the comments we regularly elicit or overhear from academics discussing their course-planning processes, our world is typically less than ideal. These conversations tend to focus on the perceived barriers and limitations of current planning processes and a common theme is 'the dead hand of bureaucracy squeezing life from the spirit of innovation' (a quote from one of our colleagues in another institution, which had best remain anonymous).

Our interest in Viewpoints was stimulated by the claims that it offered a more creative/innovative approach to curriculum development.

The Viewpoints approach

Viewpoints started as a Jisc-funded curriculum design project at the University of Ulster, one of the projects from the Curriculum Design Programme which 'explored how technology can give universities the cutting edge in curriculum design practices and processes', running from 2008 to 2012 (http://www.jisc.ac.uk/curriculumdesign).

A useful guide to the use of technology within curriculum design based on the programme outcomes is still available, including links to participating projects Smith *et al.,* 2013).

Viewpoints produced a toolkit to help programme teams reflect on, discuss, and plan effective curriculum designs, based around four themes:

(1) assessment and feedback
(2) information skills
(3) learner engagement
(4) creativity in the curriculum.

The essential features of the original Viewpoints approach are summarised in Figure 1 on page 19. It was designed to be adapted and modified to suit local needs, using structured workshops to encourage open discussion and move into action planning.

There is a certain irony in the fact that this project, part of an ambitious programme with a major focus on technology, finally adopted a workshop design based on the use of pre-printed paper cards. The cards used a consistent design on both front and back and provided focus questions and suggestions for workshop participants. You can download them from the Viewpoints Wiki if you want to explore this method in your own context and

you can find full details of the original project on the Jisc Design Studio.

David Nicol's evaluation of the Viewpoints project highlighted the workshop design as a key contributor to the project's impact: 'Workshops succeeded, impressively, in creating change locally but, importantly, in seeding change beyond the immediate participation experience' (Nicol, 2012).

Viewpoints then achieved further funding support from Jisc – the Panorama project (part of the Jisc e-Learning Programme) supported a range of pilot projects using Viewpoints in different institutions. The evaluation of this project suggested that Viewpoints did have significant impact in a number of institutions. Users suggested that the approach delivered benefits in the following areas:

- quality of curriculum planning and delivery
- management and course team attitudes and approach
- identity and cohesion in the course team
- quality of decision-making in the course team.

As this was a relatively small project, this evaluation was not able to explore in detail or unravel the causal connections creating this impact. So we have some outstanding and unresolved questions about the Viewpoints process. For example, which elements of the Viewpoints process are most helpful? How important is the overall structure of the workshops? How critical are the card prompts and questions? How significant is the focus on the timeline and action plan?

One particularly interesting question is – how important is the 'physical process' used in Viewpoints? Viewpoints workshops are usually very active discussions and the use of physical cards does encourage sharing of information and suggestions in a way which does not necessarily happen if everyone is operating in a 'traditional meeting' or focused on a projected display. This 'physicality' was highlighted by some users in the Panorama pilots as a key change from previous practice, one that enabled more open discussion and better outcomes.

Further applications and adaptations of Viewpoints

The Viewpoints framework can be used in different ways by different user groups as summarised in Figure 2, on page 20.
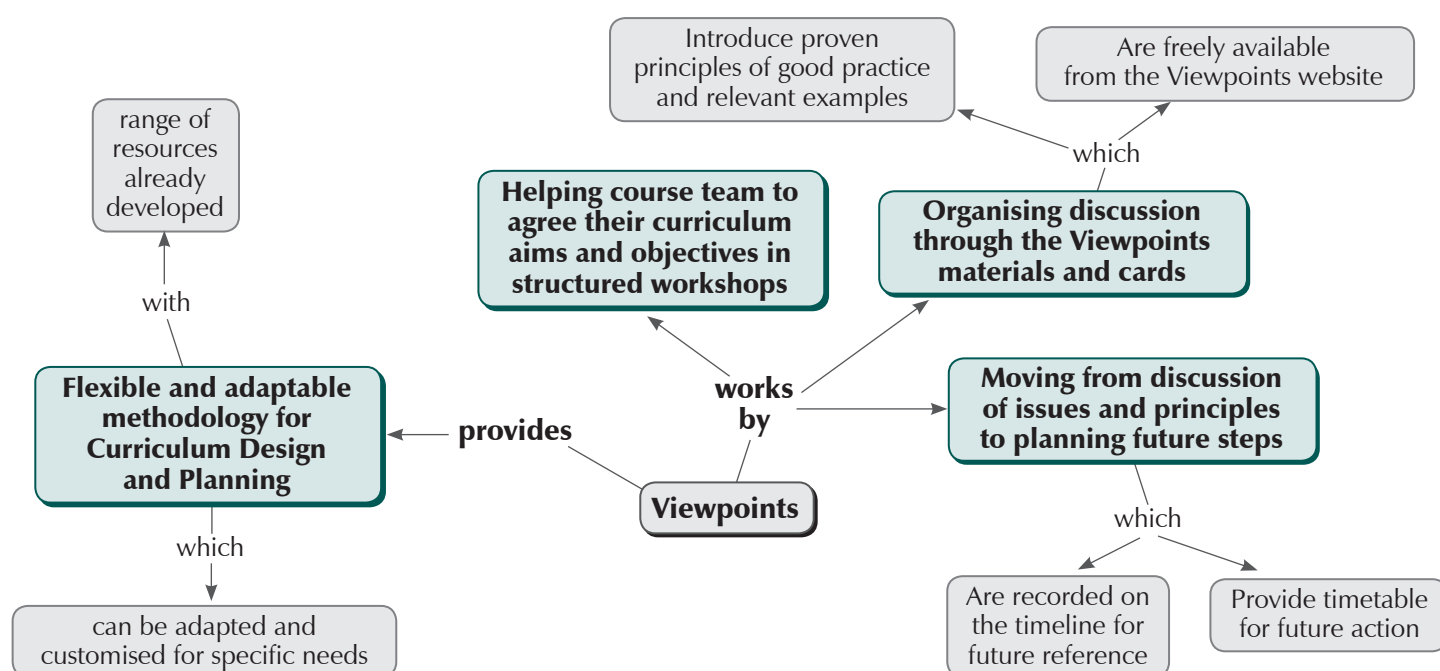

A Viewpoints workshop group

Figure 1 Essential components of the original Viewpoints approach

Viewpoints has been adopted and adapted by a number of other universities in the UK and beyond for curriculum planning. For example, Glasgow Caledonian University uses Viewpoints as one of its learning design methodologies (Creanor, 2015). Sydney Institute of Business and Technology (SIBT) used Viewpoints in a workshop as one of their initial steps in a major change management exercise to revise the college vision. Margot McNeill (Project Manager, SIBT Curriculum Review) reports that 'the Viewpoints cards were instrumental in prompting the stakeholders from various parts of the business as well as external contributors to focus their priorities for the new curriculum' (personal correspondence, 16 April 2015): Viewpoints has also been adapted to other more specific contexts, e.g.:

- Viewpoints for Digital Literacies: the University of Greenwich worked on this as an output from their Digital Literacies in Transition project (part of the Jisc-funded Developing Digital Literacies programme)
- Viewpoints for Student Partnerships: the Change Agent Network (CAN) has developed a Viewpoints toolkit to aid institutions in setting up partnerships with students, involving students in change agent initiatives. It encompasses four dimensions: (1) Partnership set-up; (2) Partnership implementation; (3) Capabilities, development and accreditation; and (4) Evaluation, impact and sustainability

- Viewpoints for work-based learning: a Viewpoints for Work-based Learning toolkit has been developed as part of a Jisc-funded project within its Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development programme. It encompasses four key themes: (1) Establishing an employer-provider partnership; (2) Designing and delivering work-based programmes; (3) Reviewing and quality-assuring work-based learning programmes; and (4) Guiding and supporting work-based learners.

Specific evolutions of Viewpoints

Viewpoints for Flexible Curricula
QAA in Scotland supported Peter Chatterton to develop the Viewpoints for Flexible Curricula toolkit, building on the concept of the Flexible Continuum (Casey and Wilson, 2005). This work aimed to enhance the original Viewpoints toolkit design with the following new features:

- A two-stage process: the first stage requires teams to reflect on the changing drivers and needs for flexible curricula (using a dedicated set of cards that focus on e.g. student needs and expectations, key Government drivers, institutional drivers, goals and priorities and globalisation and internationalisation) and the second stage that aids teams in enhancing practice
- Four dimensions: seeing that flexible curricula is a broad topic, a set of Viewpoints cards were created

for each of the following four dimensions of enhancing practice with flexible curricula:
  – external engagement and partnerships
  – anytime, anywhere learning
  – entry, transition, progression and exit
  – learning model, personalisation and learner engagement
- Contextual support: each card includes 'positioning questions' on the front, to help teams to contextualise why each card is relevant to flexible curricula
- Links to further resources: URL and QR codes connect the card to a unique web page for each card – this web-page contains a range of information and resources relevant to the card, e.g. case studies. Figure 3, on page 21, is an example of a card (front and back).

Viewpoints for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Building on the design of the Flexible Curricula Viewpoints toolkit, QAA commissioned Peter Chatterton to design a RPL toolkit focused on a specific aspect of flexible curricula – recognition of prior learning (known as APEL, south of the border). This toolkit is based on Scotland's national framework for Recognition of Prior Learning and defines the process in three stages as follows:

- developing understanding about and engagement with RPL
- departmental preparation and planning for RPL
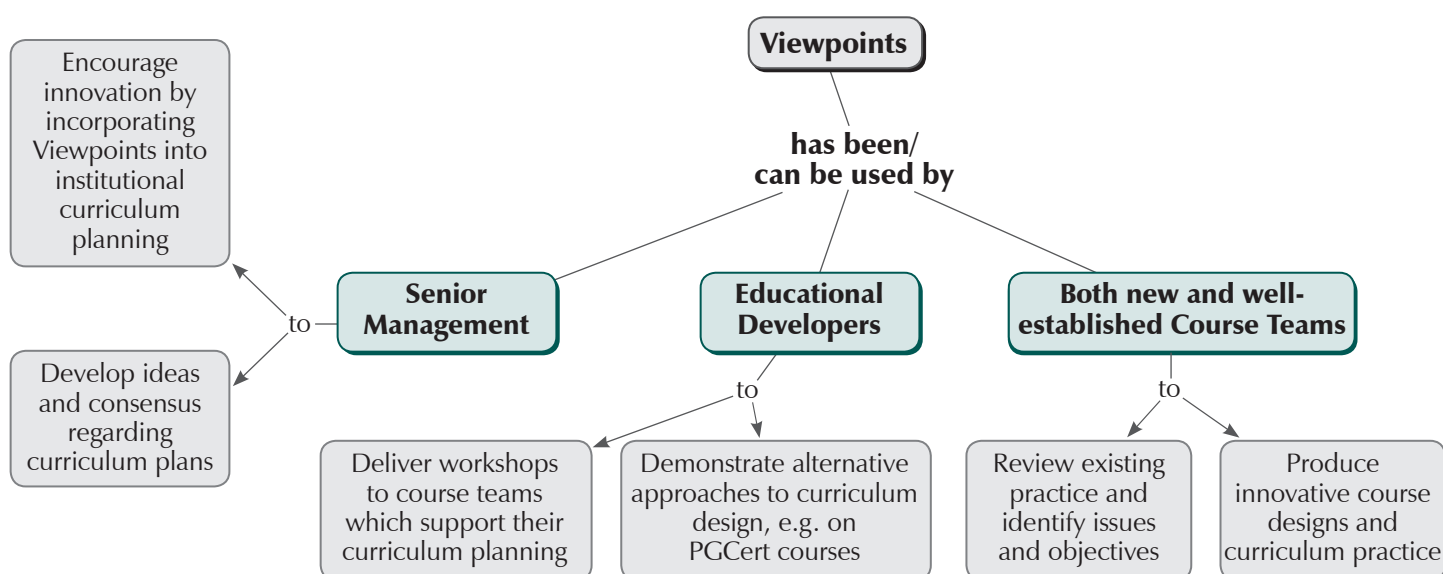- implementing RPL in programmes.

Figure 2 Different uses for Viewpoints

2-8

Good practice in
anytime, anywhere learning
should:

Provide specific learner guidance and support for flexible learning

❑ To what extent do learners understand the importance of being an effective and efficient flexible learner?

❑ To what extent are flexible learning capabilities incorporated into academic, personal and professional development planning and reflective practice?

❑ Do learners have access to tools and resources to diagnose and develop their flexible learning capabilities?

QAA Enhancement Theme: Flexible Curricula
http://tiny.cc/qaafc021

Provide specific learner guidance and support for flexible learning

❑ Development of learner flexible learning capabilities is incorporated into academic/personal/professional development planning and reflective practice.

❑ Guidance on effective practice in using digital media for collaborative, constructivist, peer & informal learning e.g. social media, mobile devices is provided.

❑ Guidance on effective practice in flexible learning, including academic/personal/professional development planning, reflective practice and evidence capturing using technologies such as e portfolios, blogs and learning journals is provided.

❑ Guidance on effective practice in use of synchronous communications such as web-conferencing is provided.

❑ Guidance on effective practice in research-led learning is provided.

❑ Guidance on studying/learning in different locations such as the work-place, at home and on the move is provided.

❑ Guidance on how best to manage study time, be an efficient learner and using ICT for efficiency in learning is provided.

❑ Tools to help learners diagnose/self-review their flexible learning capabilities are provided.

❑ ....

QAA Enhancement Theme: Flexible Curricula
Based on the Viewpoints model: http://www.viewpoints.ulster.ac.uk

Figure 3 Example of Viewpoints card used in the Flexible Curricula toolkit

The Viewpoints process for flexible curricula is represented in Figure 4.

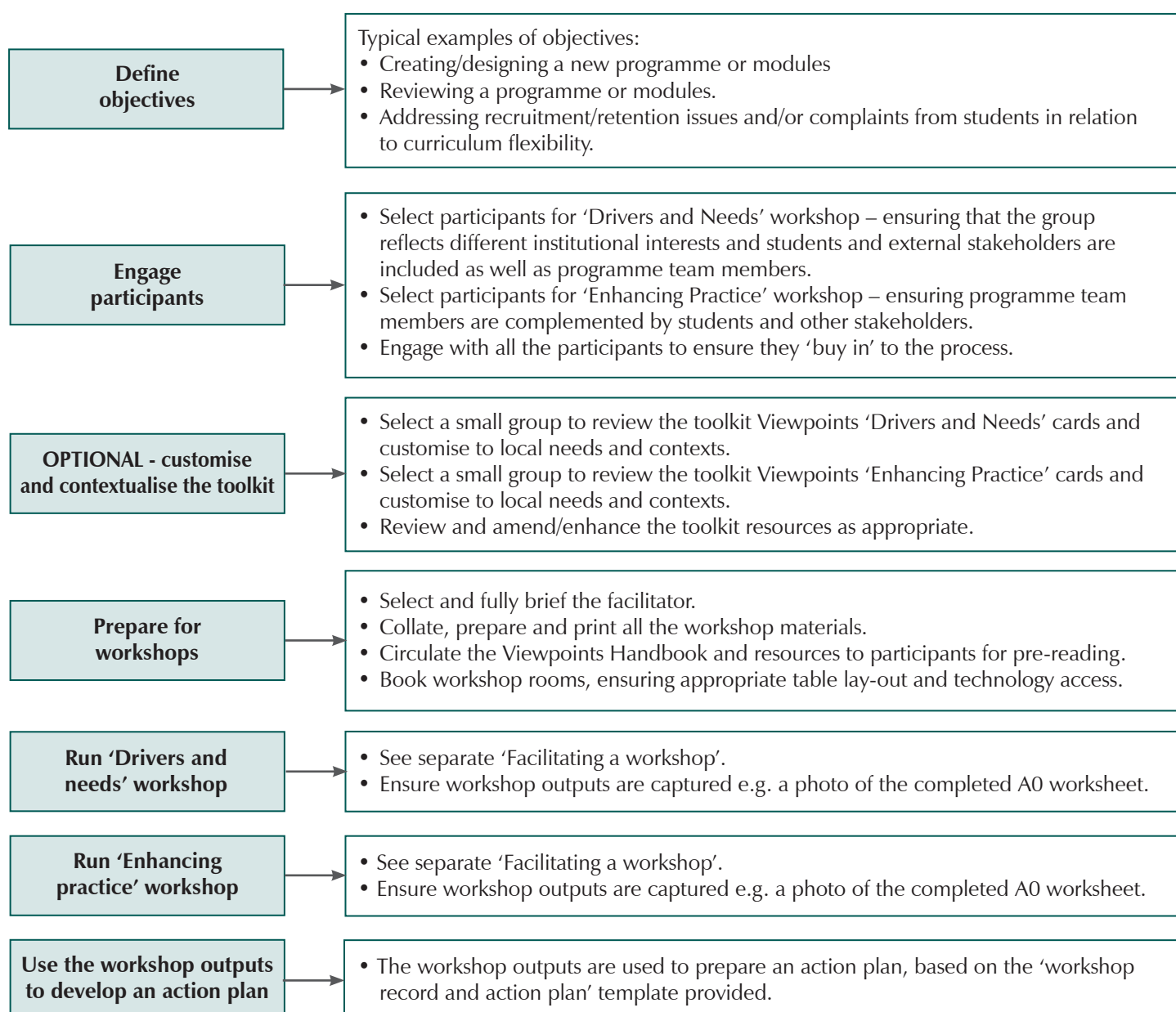|	
Define objectives	Typical examples of objectives: • Creating/designing a new programme or modules • Reviewing a programme or modules. • Addressing recruitment/retention issues and/or complaints from students in relation to curriculum flexibility.
Engage participants	• Select participants for 'Drivers and Needs' workshop – ensuring that the group reflects different institutional interests and students and external stakeholders are included as well as programme team members. • Select participants for 'Enhancing Practice' workshop – ensuring programme team members are complemented by students and other stakeholders. • Engage with all the participants to ensure they 'buy in' to the process.
OPTIONAL - customise and contextualise the toolkit	• Select a small group to review the toolkit Viewpoints 'Drivers and Needs' cards and customise to local needs and contexts. • Select a small group to review the toolkit Viewpoints 'Enhancing Practice' cards and customise to local needs and contexts. • Review and amend/enhance the toolkit resources as appropriate.
Prepare for workshops	• Select and fully brief the facilitator. • Collate, prepare and print all the workshop materials. • Circulate the Viewpoints Handbook and resources to participants for pre-reading. • Book workshop rooms, ensuring appropriate table lay-out and technology access.
Run 'Drivers and needs' workshop	• See separate 'Facilitating a workshop'. • Ensure workshop outputs are captured e.g. a photo of the completed A0 worksheet.
Run 'Enhancing practice' workshop	• See separate 'Facilitating a workshop'. • Ensure workshop outputs are captured e.g. a photo of the completed A0 worksheet.
Use the workshop outputs to develop an action plan	• The workshop outputs are used to prepare an action plan, based on the 'workshop record and action plan' template provided.

Figure 4 Viewpoints process for flexible curricula

This updated process recognises that RPL is an area which can benefit from greater understanding and clarity and encourages teams to develop a greater appreciation of the academic value of RPL and its benefits before embarking on enhancing practices.

Both the Flexible Curricula and the RPL initiatives have suggested major benefits of the Viewpoints process, summarised in Figure 5.

Viewpoints in Learning Futures at Westminster – The Learning Futures initiative

In 2014, the University initiated its Learning Futures Programme, comprising four closely related projects covering the curriculum framework, curriculum delivery, the development of the individual, and student support.

The major aim of Learning Futures is to equip the University to be competitive in the changing HE environment by 2020. Initial objectives focused on reducing the number of modules on offer, reducing the assessment burden, and being explicit about what a Westminster Graduate 'is' (development of the individual). The development of the individual student has now been encapsulated with a concept of Westminster Distinctiveness, underpinned by a vision of employable graduates who are global citizens, with sustainability uppermost in all that they do.

Academic Council approved the final curriculum structure proposal and the schedule for the proposed changes in July 2014. The timescale was very tight – course teams essentially had six months to submit their redesigned courses for approval.

Why bother with Viewpoints at Westminster?

Consultations on the best way to support course teams revealed the generally held view, across subject areas, that Learning Futures was generating so much information so quickly, often in the form of lengthy committee-type papers, that course teams would spend too much time 'getting up to speed with the rules of the new curriculum framework' as well as the aspirations of the University in relation to Westminster Distinctiveness and curriculum delivery. Course team leaders said they were struggling to get engagement of course team members with the core concepts and ideas behind:

- The rationale for new curriculum structure
- The meaning of 'distinctiveness' and implications for the curriculum.

Course teams also needed ideas, or so we thought, to think about implementation of a changed curriculum delivery approach, to cater for employability needs, the global and sustainability agenda (as enshrined within the new Westminster Graduate Attributes) and to incorporate technology enhanced learning. However, they had little time to engage and also

Curriculum development	• The workshop helps programme teams to reflect on changing drivers and needs and design curricula to respond appropriately. • The workshop provides a simple approach for programme teams to consider a broad range of aspects to deliver flexible curricula including use of technology-enhanced learning. • The workshop supports collaborative decision-making and prioritising within a highly complex design process. • Outputs from the Viewpoints workshop can be used for evidence for validation/revalidation panels.
Value for programme teams	• The workshop allows for creative discussion and sharing of ideas around programme design for flexible provision. • The process is built around reflection and effective team dialogue. • Programme teams can focus on shared priorities. • The process enhances effective teamwork and strengthens team building.
Value for students (the learner perspective)	• The workshop and toolkit have a primary focus on learners, their needs and their experience from entry, transition, progression and exit. • The initial stage of reflecting on changing drivers and needs has a strong focus on identifying needs and circumstances of students throughout their learning journey.
Value for the institution	• The Viewpoints approach can be incorporated into strategic policies and plans in relation to quality enhancement including enhancing the student experience and learning, teaching and assessment. • Institutional professional support services (eg technology-enhanced learning, IT, MIS, careers, employability) can use the toolkit to review and enhance support for programme teams.
Easy-to-use quality resources	• The toolkit is built around sector good practice in designing and delivering flexible curricula and provides links to sector information, guidance, reports and case studies. • Resources are simple to use. • All resources are free, reusable and e-versions are provided to allow customisation to local needs and contexts.

Figure 5 Potential benefits of Viewpoints

needed flexibility in relation to that engagement.

To address these concerns, Viewpoints offered an opportunity to 're-present' the Learning Futures outputs to course teams and facilitate discussion around the Learning Futures objectives for course curriculum development.

Supporting Viewpoints online

Course leaders also generally felt that it was going to be very hard to have sufficient well-attended meetings in the period allowed for course review. It was decided early on therefore that, whilst Viewpoints would provide the ideas and stimulate dialogue, it was essential that key underpinning information could be fully accessed online to inform staff before face-to-face events. This was then taken further – some staff expressed preferences to offer ideas and input views online, thus leading to a 'blended' approach to debate.

With accessible online information as a priority, we first put the outputs from Learning Futures (e.g. the Distinctiveness Framework, graduate attributes, details of the new curriculum structure) into e-learning packages. These interactive multimedia learning objects seemed to be attractive vehicles through which to summarise the key decisions made by Learning Futures. Once core information was available in this form, we set our minds to adapting and developing Viewpoints materials that could either be used for face-to-face workshops or used online with appropriate collaborative systems offered through Google or Office 365. Both of these cloud-based services allowed for collaborative commenting against benchmark statements and development of suggestions/ideas for change.

As well as adapting existing sets of Viewpoints cards, we developed our own sets as an alternative means of online dissemination to the e-learning packages and to generate discussion amongst course teams. These very Westminster-specific cards did not attempt to use national benchmarks but rather re-present very context-specific statements for staff to comment on and discuss.

Our model for blended use of Viewpoints cards was very simple: Blackboard was the front door because that's what the academic used on a daily basis. Course teams could access the resources (e-learning packages and Viewpoints cards) via a dedicated Blackboard site per Faculty. Viewpoints cards were online either in Office 365 or Google depending on Faculty preference.

Outcomes at Westminster

Though it has not been possible to conduct a full systematic evaluation, significant anecdotal evidence makes it clear that a blended approach has helped some course teams in both of the ways envisaged, *i.e.* enabling better dissemination and gaining wider input across course teams into the redesign process.

However, there was surprising confusion with the online options offered. The front door of Blackboard was fine and suited almost everyone. But it was surprising to learn how many staff were simply not used to online collaboration. In addition there were problems that arose from the fact that within a course team some members were used to using Google whilst others preferred Office 365. Some wanted to use other online collaboration systems that were not part of the University offering (e.g. Tumblr, PBWorks) and in the end the most successful in exploiting the blended approach chose their own online platform/approach (we offered a range). The degree to which our offered solution was accepted (or not) was often driven by specific individuals, influenced by their own preferences.

And finally – general themes and issues

The examples given in this article (and others we do not have space to mention) demonstrate that the Viewpoints approach can have some very positive impact on curriculum planning. In terms of general lessons which educational developers and course leaders can take from this, we would highlight the following main points.

Deciding what 'works'

We have to admit that Viewpoints does not always 'work'. Some course teams do not engage and there is not enough evidence to predict how/when this will happen. Our own diagnosis is that some course teams may be wrestling with interpersonal and/or academic issues which make them resistant to any 'new-fangled idea', especially if this comes from educational developers. Although Viewpoints can assist in some situations where there is significant time pressure, it may also be seen as too time-consuming if the time pressure is very intense. The general principle here is that educational developers need to have a finely tuned sense of the institutional and 'political' context in which course teams are operating to decide which new method can be safely proposed and implemented.

Flexibility

The flexibility offered by Viewpoints is one of its main advantages. The materials can be customised and it is also possible to use the method in different stages (as in the RPL work cited above). You can customise the approach to suit your institution's priorities and context. And this illustrates a more general principle – that curriculum design should not be treated as a standard process without any consideration of context.

Workshop formats

The workshop approach is an essential feature of Viewpoints and this does seem to be very important in terms of impact. Workshop formats do encourage participation and may eliminate or alleviate some of the hierarchy issues we see in conventional meetings. Of course, other workshop formats are available for curriculum planning such as Carpe Diem (and it would be interesting to compare outcomes from different planning processes if we could find a practicable method and context).

The very specific workshop format used by Viewpoints (printed cards, timeline for action planning *etc.*) is seen as particularly important by some users. We do not have much evidence on the impact of different physical approaches and this could be an important agenda for educational developers over the next few years, especially as the integration of face-to-face and virtual interactions becomes both more common and easier to organise.

Integrating face-to-face and virtual

If we do try to integrate face-to-face and virtual interaction within the curriculum planning process (as at Westminster) then we need to be aware (and plan for) the extra levels of complexity that this might bring as different users have different technical preferences and needs.

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Sources

For direct links to the following sources, please go to the webpages of the Jisc Curriculum Design Programme, the Jisc Design Studio, the Jisc e-learning programme, the Panorama project, the QAA Flexible Curricula Enhancement Theme programme and Viewpoints Wiki/Toolkit.

Professor Gunter Saunders is Director of Technology Enhanced Learning at the University of Westminster, **Peter Hartley** is a Higher Education Consultant and Visiting Professor at Edge Hill University, and **Peter Chatterton** owns and runs Daedalus e-World.

Book Review

The Triumph of Emptiness: Consumption, higher education and work organization

Mats Alvesson

Oxford University Press, 2013 (reprint edition, 2014)
ISBN: 0198708807
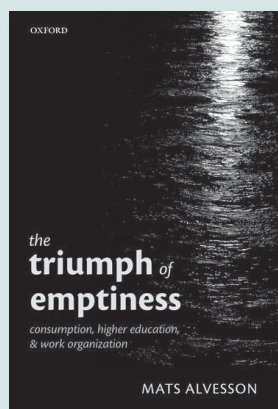
This book is ordered in four sections. Firstly, the introduction and the subsequent two chapters which outline the key concepts. Secondly, chapters four and five which consider the concepts in relation to Higher Education. Thirdly, chapters six to eight which relate the concepts to business and, fourthly, the remaining two chapters ('the triumph of imagology' and 'the costs of grandiosity') which draw all the material together.

The three concepts or, as characterised here, contemporary conditions, are deceptively simple to describe and are elaborated on in depth and detail. Alvesson starts by discussing the nature of positional and non-positional goods in scarcity/pre-affluent and post-scarcity/affluent society. Simply put, within post-scarcity society people feel the need for more consumption because of its positional value and socially contingent satisfaction.

The contemporary conditions: Zero-sum games occur when 'one person's or institution's gain is another's disadvantage without there being a positive effect for others or for society' (p. 117). In an HE context, this can be seen in university ranking lists. If your institution improves its ranking it must be at the expense of others.

Grandiosity, Alvesson notes, is a 'positive (if somewhat superficial) well-polished and status enhancing image' (p. 8). One does not have to look too closely at university tag/strap lines to find fine examples of grandiosity. As an aside, in *Moo* by Jane Smiley, there is a great snippet about a fictional American Midwest university:

> 'Foremost in the provost's internal data bank just now were the results of his morning meeting with the President of the university and His inner circle of administrative advisors. They were not positive results, did not redound to the university's professed goal of excellence in every area, or even the provost's own secret goal of adequacy in most areas.'

Illusion tricks are the 'creation of arbitrary links between objects and values/meanings that are totally independent of the produce in question' (p. 70). This in turn leads to desires for products/services that are not necessarily resolved by purchase, arguably leading to the 'need' to purchase and consume even more. Think most modern advertising! In HE, one example offered is the award-winning building where the award for the architecture does not have anything to do with the quality of education provided.

The two HE-specific chapters make for grim reading, but are curiously satisfying in their contextual resonance with academic development. Try playing spot the grandiose claims of your own institution! These two chapters would make excellent reading on any programme that tackles the purpose of contemporary HE.

Four claims are made about these contemporary conditions in the final chapter: increased quantity leads to decreased quality, there is an erosion of trust (between producer and consumer), unhealthy narcissism increases, and functional stupidity (a lack of reflexivity and reasoning) develops. Cheerful stuff!

To polarise this: do you work in a '[T]emple of knowledge or a factory for the production of credentials'? (p. 112).

Typically, Bob Dylan (1973) has said: 'I'm crestfallen, the world of illusion is at my door, I ain't a-haulin' any of my lambs to the marketplace anymore, the prison walls are crumblin', there is no end in sight, I've gained some recognition but I lost my appetite.'

Peter Gossman is a Principal Lecturer in Academic CPD at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The eye of the storm: A view from the eye

Ian Murray, Robert Gordon University

The use of social media within the world of academia, whether by students or academics, is becoming an increasingly important part of life and work. When you unexpectedly find yourself in the middle of a Twitterstorm you can feel incredibly alone and vulnerable. Some people who use Twitter do so to raise issues and concerns that they feel passionate about and therefore can brace themselves for robust reactions. Some will crave the reactions — along the lines of an adrenaline rush. They will anticipate reactions, prepare responses and engage in a 'tennis match' of ideas and options, often giving as good as they get. Twitter is populated with many highly savvy social media veterans who have sharpened their skills over the last ten years. Many of us are unfortunately social media novices, often by choice — perhaps much more of an innocent bystander than an active participant in a debate or argument? Some of which forms a vitally import part of academic discourse, but of course, just as in real face-to-face life, there is a need to demonstrate respect and tolerance of opposite views.

It may be helpful to explore the language used here. Take the term 'Twitterstorm'. Technopedia describes it thus:

> *'A Twitterstorm is a sudden spike in activity surrounding a certain topic on the Twitter social media site…often started by a single person who sends his or her followers a message often related to breaking news or a controversial debate. Using a certain and often original hashtag, the tweet quickly spreads as people are notified of the message and then reuse the hashtag with subsequent retweets and tweets.'*

This comes over as a relatively tame description: a group of like-minded people sharing ideas in a cordial manner — but the networks and connections that exist in the world of social media are mind blowing and to think that everyone in that virtual world will agree with a particular viewpoint is naive. One can see how such an activity, utilising the instantaneous capability of the Internet can engage hundreds and thousands of people in lively and powerful debate. The key aspect of this process is that it is instantaneous with comments often made that are more emotionally driven than cognitively considered. Anger is often expressed through conventions such as using capital letters, large font and emoticons to signify shouting, insults and gesticulations, and these often flow uncontrollably into the mainstream of social media.

The world of social media could be compared to the experience of driving; we all at some time have shouted or gesticulated towards another driver safe in the knowledge we are cocooned in a secure and mobile shell where no one can harm you. Of course road rage cases show that this feeling of security doesn't always protect one from harm. Maybe this analogy works in the world of social media; perceived safety results in behaviour where the perpetrators feel that they cannot be harmed so they can 'fire off' their vitriolic 'missiles' in the perceived comfort that no one can get back at them. Jon Ronson (2015) describes a number of examples in his book, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed,* of the way in which social media frenzies have totally destroyed unsuspecting victims (in some cases the victims were not necessarily victims in the traditional sense, and some less unsuspecting than others).

Let's consider for a minute the players in this game. There are many very able and articulate people promoting their ideas, political stance and ethical viewpoints to others equally competent in the world of social media and the ensuing debate can be lively and robust if not at times quite intimidating. Let's also consider for a minute that you are one of the less savvy participants in one of these virtual debates. Perhaps you engaged quite innocently in a debate only to find that you are a lone voice, or made to feel like you are the only voice that disagrees with a particular viewpoint. This can become a very isolating and lonely experience.

Again maybe it's worthwhile thinking of the language that is used: storm — 'eye of the storm'. This is defined as the area of calm which the storm (wind, rain, hail, *etc.*) is revolving around. For the novice social media user the eye of the storm may initially feel like a calm safe place but how do you break away from the calm if you feel the storm is raging around you, closing in on you? You feel compelled to engage but are you equipped to do so? Do you have the necessary 'warm and waterproof clothing' to weather the storm? Do you have someone to help you weather the storm? Often the answer to this is no. No, because you didn't expect to find yourself in a storm; maybe the storm came at a time when you were least expecting it — in the night, at the weekend. This analogy works very well in the world of academia and social media; many of us engage with social media in our down time, evenings and weekends, when we don't have the security of colleagues around, and not in our workplaces, which brings that natural security from being able to chat with colleagues when encountered with challenging scenarios.

Of course our students may be very technically able and use social media in a way that is much more intuitive, partly due to growing up in a world with social media, unlike many academics. But do our students and academic colleagues fully understand how to behave in the world of social media? How to cope with comments that, at times, can be very personal? The 140 character limit on Twitter often means that explanations are difficult to express. If an academic or student is forced to defend a position by someone who is being instantly

dismissive within the 140 character limit, how do you 'get back' to them with your explanatory response when it requires more space than you are allowed?

Returning to the storm concept: the individual components (participants) of the 'storm' may not appreciate that their comments to the person in the eye of the storm are being followed by another comment, and another comment, and so on until the recipient feels like they are receiving a barrage of responses…sometimes arriving every few seconds. Some participants, of course, understand this and use it to brutal effect deliberately. Therefore the individual comments may be easy to respond to but multiply those up and factor in that everyone starts receiving comments out of synch, we end up with a scenario where the victim in the eye of the storm cannot cope, cannot respond quickly enough to the many 'attackers' from within the storm. It's not the individual raindrops that cause the harm it's the torrential downpour. Some academics will be vulnerable to the heightened exposure that social media engagement can bring (McDonald, 2015).

The use of personal accounts versus organisational accounts is worthy of consideration; it is clear that you cannot separate your personal presentation from your organisation, particularly if you are a senior member of staff within a particular organisation. Woodley and Silvestri (2014) assert that 'most professions acknowledge that any benefits of social media must be balanced against its potential to negatively affect workers' professional lives and the public trust'. Comments made will be attributed to you in your role, regardless of disclaimers *etc.* that indicate comments made are your own opinion and not those of your employer. This is vitally important because less scrupulous contributors can readily misuse comments made to further their own arguments whether that be in a positive or negative manner. Academic freedom brings responsibilities as well as privileges.

Do we prepare academic staff and students to understand this environment? Do we advise both on how to respond and how not to respond? Where are the 'shelters' from the storm? Do we build shelters when we know the storm is coming? Do we always know when a storm is likely to happen? I suspect the answer to many of these questions is no.

What can we do to protect ourselves during the storm? McDonald (2015) asserts that 'more support should be offered to manage individual reputations in the public sphere'. Staff and students need to be cognisant of the dangers and realise, particularly in the evening or at weekends, that escalation of activity on social media could leave them exposed and lacking in support; having a glass or two of wine whilst surfing social media sites may not be the wisest of pastimes.

Staff should resist being overly defensive or supporting a particular stance overtly in a post; you can use private communication methods to get a message over, particularly when dealing with colleagues or students. To draw further on the storm analogy, it is better to be prepared. Staff and students should be offered advice on how to contribute safely when using social media — a set of dos and don'ts that set some parameters on what would be considered safe practice. Given the perceived pressure to engage with social media, those staff who have developed strong profiles could buddy up with novices as they develop their own profiles. The realisation that you are presenting to the world and not just a few friends should be enough to sharpen your perspective on using social media.

Universities should ensure that such guidance is provided particularly when we see an expansion in the official use of social media and often the expectation that staff should engage in some way.

Academia should explore the need for more research in the field of social media usage by staff and students, exploring the negative effects as much as the positive ones. The use of guidelines for staff and students along with other methods of support should be considered if we are to seriously maximise the benefits of using social media.

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Professor Ian Murray is the Head of School for Nursing and Midwifery at Robert Gordon University. He and colleagues lived through a twitterstorm over the use of masks within a simulated learning environment designed to enhance nurse education.

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TEF and student engagement: Transformation through free text comments?

Ellie Russell, National Union of Students

I haven't yet assigned the TEF a ranking in the 'reasons to be cheerful about student engagement' barometer. With plenty of questions still unanswered, I'm torn between whether the green paper presents some genuinely interesting opportunities to improve student engagement in order to enhance teaching and learning or whether I'm clutching at straws in order to wedge the issue I care about into the future landscape; and based on my relatively short period of time working in HE policy, I don't think the two are necessarily mutually exclusive.

I didn't balk at themes outlined as dimensions of teaching excellence in the green paper, but rather the distance between what is meant by excellence and how it is going to be measured; and thus the potential for the TEF to fail to deliver on targeting and driving enhancements at a local level or eliciting an accurate picture of teaching excellence. As is so often the case with the NSS, for example, the insight and context is contained in the free-text comments and it may be the same for the TEF.

The institutional evidence aspect of the TEF architecture doesn't receive much of an airing in the green paper, but it does suggest that institutions will have the opportunity to contextualise their metrics with information about how they are seeking to enhance teaching and learning. Until new metrics can be developed, particularly effective measures for learning, the institutional evidence seems to be the bridge between the metrics and the aspiration and it's here where the opportunities could lie for student engagement.

There's another issue that might trip up progress on student engagement, though, which is that the criteria for teaching quality outlined in the green paper casts students in a fairly passive role beyond engagement in their own learning, which is out of step with approaches adopted by the majority of institutions and encouraged in Chapter B5 of the UK Quality Code. Students' role as partners in their learning and the institution could also be emphasised in the criteria for learning environment. Students should be considered to be central to identifying, developing (and in some cases delivering) and evaluating new interventions designed to enhance teaching and learning. If institutions are only reaching for student satisfaction through the NSS as a proxy for teaching excellence and the student voice is consigned to survey participation, then the understanding of students' role in higher education, which has evolved in recent years through the concept of students as partners, will have been significantly narrowed and our sector, our institutions and education itself will be the poorer for it.

The NSS has its place in a range of approaches, metrics and proxies, but it should not be the catch-all for student engagement. In short, surveys use student voices without necessarily engaging student voices – you can be satisfied after eating a McDonalds, but it doesn't mean that it's good for you. I would hope that institutions will continue to improve and expand their student engagement activity because they know it can deliver meaningful enhancements to teaching and learning, but a key driver and incentive for senior leaders will be missing if it's not clearly embedded in the TEF.

Yet, if we can arrive at a situation where student engagement is reflective of an existing and broader understanding and if it is expected that the institutional evidence isn't merely providing context to the metrics, but an opportunity to collect qualitative evidence that could meaningfully inform a judgement based on the dimensions of teaching excellence identified in the green paper, then there may indeed be some reasons to be cheerful. In this scenario, student engagement activity can be encouraged and the institutional evidence can be used to gain a picture of enhancement activity across the sector in order to both highlight examples of good practice, as well as identify areas where further support and thought-leadership is needed.

I expect we'd see existing student engagement activity espoused, such as students-as-researcher schemes that consider pedagogical developments or seek to better understand and resolve course or institution-wide issues. Approaches to designing surveys, analysing results and co-designing new interventions in partnership with students are also well embedded in many institutions and should be highlighted as contributing to the pursuit of teaching excellence. There's also the potential for emerging activity to be accelerated or more readily explored, such as the way that data from student-led teaching awards can inform enhancements to teaching and learning and the role of students in staff CPD.

However, much will depend on the 'weighting' the institutional evidence receives in the balance of TEF judgements. In the context of quality assessment moving to become less burdensome, more risk based, outcomes focused and relevant to an increasingly diverse sector, the reliance on metrics may prevail and hence my reluctance to award a judgement just yet.

Ellie Russell is the Student Engagement and Partnership Manager for The Student Engagement Partnership (www.tsep.org.uk).

SEDA News

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The next few years are likely to see dramatic change across HE and FE given recent developments in the national context such as the announcements about a possible Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), removing the caps on student numbers, and increasing use and experimentation with new technologies. Are our assessment and feedback processes sufficiently fit for purpose in this changing context and what can we learn from recent innovation and initiatives in this area?

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Innovations in Education and Teaching International (IETI)

IETI is one of SEDA's two journals (the other is IJAD). It is published six times each year, and each issue is bursting with innovations and thought-provoking articles from UK and international authors. We would like to see far more SEDA members contributing to the journal both as authors and reviewers. The journal's focus is on innovation in university-level teaching and learning, as the name suggests, and we also publish some articles on educational development. Please submit articles of up to 5000 words for peer review.

If you are interested in reviewing, contact either Celia Popovic (cpopovic@yorku.ca) or Gina Wisker (g.wisker@brighton.ac.uk) as reviewing is both a way of finding out about and contributing to the field, and for some a first step to writing for the journal. We pride ourselves on our developmental and supportive approach – so while we can't guarantee your article will be published we can assure you that you will receive support and guidance in the form of peer review comments and suggestions.

Educational Developments Committee

Karen Strickland has stepped down from the *Educational Developments* committee through pressure of work at Robert Gordon University. She was at Edinburgh Napier when she joined the committee in the spring of 2014 and we would like to thank her for all her work for *Educational Developments*.

We would also like to welcome **Carole Davies** onto the committee. Carole has been at Middlesex University for ten years, but is moving soon to Queen Mary University of London to be Head of Educational Development within their Centre for Academic and Professional Development.