

Being creative in the face of adversity

Annual #creativeHE collection 2021



Edited by Nathalie Tasler, Rachelle O'Brien and Alex Spiers



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Editorial

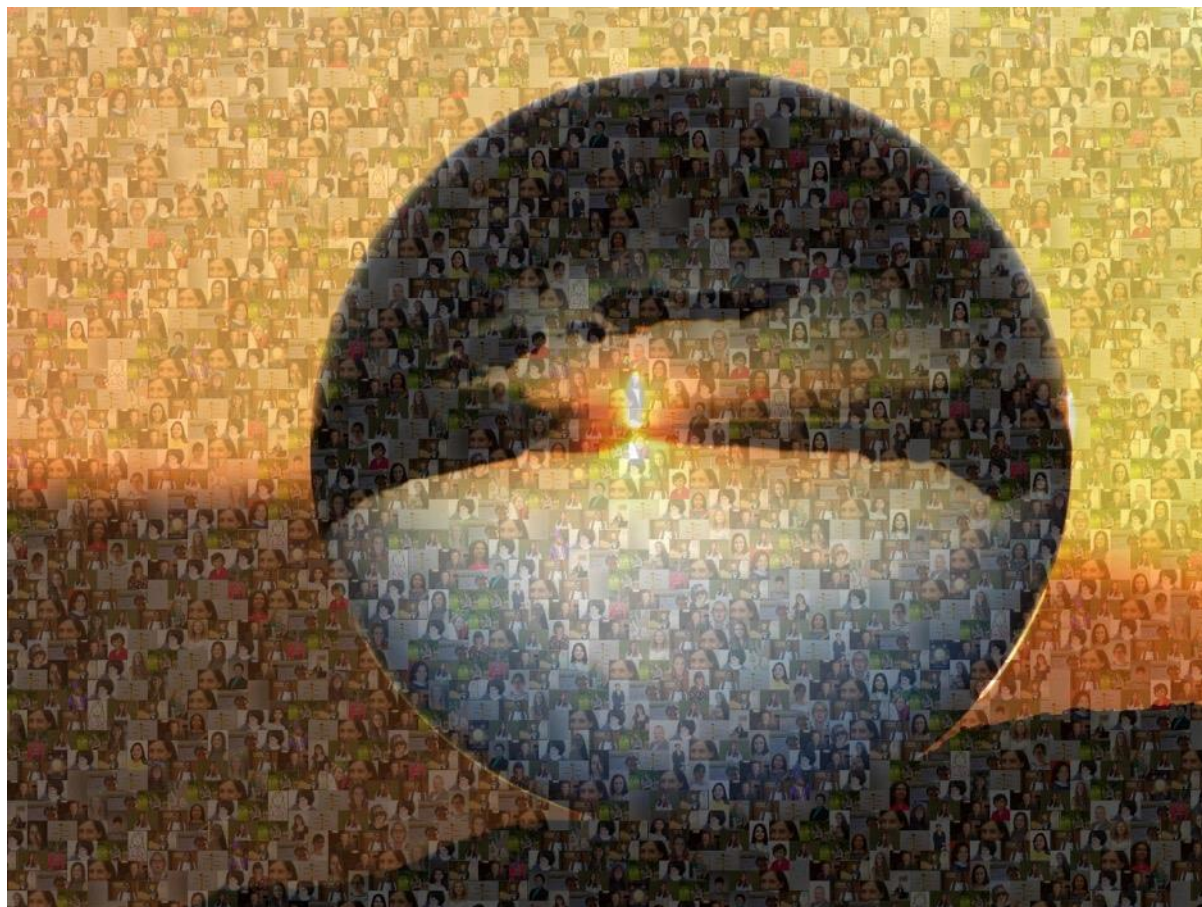


Image 1 Mosaic created with contributors' photos and doodles of themselves by Nathalie Tasler using [Photo Mosaic](#)

As we are seeing the year out, we are delighted and excited to welcome you to the very first open Annual #creativeHE Collection of 30 diverse contributions from 60 authors, educators and students, across our wider community and practitioners from the United Kingdom, Slovenia, Nigeria, Canada, Italy and Germany that capture creative and resourceful practices during this pandemic year that show the inventiveness and commitment to creating stimulating learning and development opportunities and experiences.

It was a hard time to get an edition curated, edited, and published, considering the time constraints and emotional exhaustion our sector experiences. When the call for contribution went out it asked for submission of:

"Teaching and learning activities during the pandemic. This past year has been like no other we have experienced, and most educators have had to draw on their creativity in order to adapt, improvise and create entirely new practices."

This collection is a symphonic variation of adaptations, improvisations, and joyous creative practice has brought to educators and learners throughout this last year. The contributors

take us through poetry and virtual labs, share tech problems and affordances, as well as their reflections on the impact creative practices and the creative community had on their life. We are particularly delighted by the inclusion of learner voices, either as solo contributors or co-authors.

Being creative in the face of adversity

We were inspired by the ideas, projects, resources submitted; the challenging circumstances seemed to have empowered rather than impeded educators and learners to engage in creative practices. While Plato considered necessity as the mother of invention, maybe the following quote is more appropriate to reflect the spirit of this edition, and not only because this was the earliest printed instructional manual about archery in the English language and therefore challenged established notions of education:

*"Necessitie, the inuentour of all goodnesse."
Roger Ascham, Toxophilus, 1545*

And goodness there is a plenty in this very first annual #creativeHE collection. One of the aspects that many of the contributions feature is that of the joy creative practice brings, not only to the educator, but also their learners. Further, creative practice and reflections have been established by some authors as sources of respite, recovery, and relaxation. We hope you find as much joy, interest and learning as we did curating this edition.

About the editors:

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My background is Erziehungswissenschaften (Sciences of Education). My current focus is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). I have a strong background in Creative Learning and Teaching and Culture Education. I have volunteered and worked in the education sector for over 25 years, initially, in museums and culture education and, for the last 15 years, predominantly in Higher Education.

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I've worked in the education sector for over 15 years as an independent consultant, in Higher Education (HE) and the commercial sector. I graduated from the University of Edinburgh with an MSc in Digital Education in 2020 (yet to actually visit Edinburgh and graduate!). I'm a Certified Member of the Association for Learning Technologists, a Senior Fellow of the HEA and 2021/22 co-lead of #creativeHE community activities. My research interests include digital education and cognition. More specifically my focus is on the use of creativity, games and play in HE with a consideration on how these can be used in learning, teaching and assessment. I am passionate about accessibility and inclusion, my priority in anything I do is to create learning that can be accessed and engaged with by everybody.

Alex Spiers

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Senior Learning Technologist

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I am an experienced Senior Learning Technologist who has worked in a variety of institutions within UK Higher Education. I have significant knowledge in blended learning, EMA (electronic management of assessment), VLE administration, use of audio and video for feedback, and the use of social media in Higher Education. I regularly present at national and international conferences and have contributed to writing and research within his field. I am a keen collaborator and active participant in a wide range of technology focussed user groups and online open education courses and communities. I am also obsessed with music. Any kind of music...

About #creativeHE

The open and international cross-institutional Creativity for Learning in Higher Education (HE) community (#creativeHE), was born in 2015. Since then, #creativeHE has become a distributed community of practice, a space for emergent professional development, practice sharing, peer support and experimentation with creative learning and teaching approaches for educators, students and the wider public. Access our [website](#) and join the #creativeHE community on [Twitter](#) or in [Facebook](#). Check out our planned activities for [2021/22](#).

About this collection

Before we took on the role of editors for this edition, we met as a team to agree our priorities. It was clear to all of us that we have a passion for creating content that is both accessible and inclusive to everybody in our community and beyond.

We took on this task as editors during a very busy and exhausting term and the task of pulling all of this fantastic work together seemed daunting. But through clear communication, which we knew the others would meet with good will and support, we were able to find encouragement, resilience and creativity in one another that enabled us to not only power through, but to produce something we are proud of.

We really hope you enjoy this inaugural annual #creativeHE collection which focuses on 'being creative in the face of adversity'. We have loved working together to create this for you and we hope that you find as much joy in reading the wonderful contributions from our community as we have in creating it.

Stay safe and enjoy this very first Annual #creativeHE collection.

Nathalie, Rachelle, and Alex
December 2021

1. Undoing academic writing

By Sandra Abegglen, Tom Burns, Sandra Sinfield, and Veronica Piras

Because writing in Higher Education (HE) occupies contested ground loaded with controversy, in 2017, we, the author team, held a workshop on academic writing at the LondonMet L&T conference. We aimed to ‘undo’ academic writing and disrupt preconceived notions of how writing needs to be taught. The workshop included hand-on activities, and time to discuss and reflect. The responses received by participants inspired us to start our own collaborative writing project: [A Staff Guide on Academic Writing](#) (Abegglen et al., 2021). In this short piece we outline why it is important to challenge ‘narrow’ and remedial views of writing, and we promote student writing across the curriculum. We also highlight the value of collaborative creative writing and joint writing projects.

Disrupting the way academic writing is apprehended

Murray (1972) calls writing a “process of discovery”, a way to evaluate the world as well as a method of communication. “It is the process of exploration of what we know and what we feel about what we know through language” (Murray, 1997, 19). This means, writing is more than the composition of a text. It includes thought processes and exchange. It is ‘mark-making’—literally and also ideologically— as a way to express oneself, and make an impact.

Elbow (1981, 1998), similar to Murray (1972), underscores that writing is a process of investigation. In fact, he argues that when people think too much, too soon about what they want to end up with, that preoccupation with that final product, keeps them from attaining it. Elbow (1998) therefore suggests concentrating on ‘creating’ and ‘criticising’. First, generating words and ideas, and then adopting a critical frame of mind to thoroughly revise those draft words. Inherent in this is the assumption that “virtually everyone has available great skill with words” (Elbow, 1998, 7); similar to the idea that everyone has the crucial skills they need to feed themselves. Thus, writing is something that can be improved with practice (like cooking); utilising the two opposite skills of creativity and critical thinking.

This crystallises how ‘writing to learn’ differs from ‘learning to write’. It is a pathway into and engagement with our epistemic communities rather than a ‘skill’ to master or assess (where you either get it right or wrong). Thus, all those that teach writing, and in particular academic writing, need to embrace processes that enable students to positively discover the pleasure of writing. Students need spaces in which they can experience that writing is a learning process that gives them voice and agency; a practice that places them powerfully within their own learning and learning community.

Staff writing guide

Our Staff Guide *Supporting Student Writing and Other Modes of Learning and Assessment* (Abegglen et al., 2021) emerged from a joint reflection on that L&T workshop on academic

writing. Using the method of collaborative writing as inquiry (Gale & Bowstead, 2013), we wrote together, both synchronously and asynchronously, in a shared Google doc. We harnessed the expertise and experiences each of us brought to the topic, utilising the shared writing as a catalyst for our inquiry; acknowledging that we did not yet know what our writing would become. The ‘marriage’ of inquiry, collaboration and becoming led us to create a guide about academic writing, incorporating what others said about academic writing.

The Guide is in its second iteration, published open access to enhance accessibility, and promotes the idea of writing-to-learn by offering examples and activities that discipline staff can embed within their own practice: creating curriculum spaces for creative, playful writing to learn. There is a section with suggestions and links for further reading, including web links that lead to free online resources. It also explores the role multimodal assessments could play in extending students’ learning by asking them to write more than the traditional essay. The Guide concludes with a set of workshop sessions that academics and learning developers could put together that would constitute a creative programme to develop students’ writing throughout the curriculum, and their development of self-efficacy throughout their study.

We brought our Guide to life by working in direct partnership (Healey et al., 2014) with a design student, Veronica Piras. She not only created the layout for our text but also developed visuals that ‘translated’ the arguments, activities and resources from flat words on a flat page to ideas, dreams, thoughts and motifs that danced through the air and through the imagination. Further, she created ‘empty’ spaces that invite readers to write down their own ideas. So, rather than just being a book to read, the Guide is also a book to write.

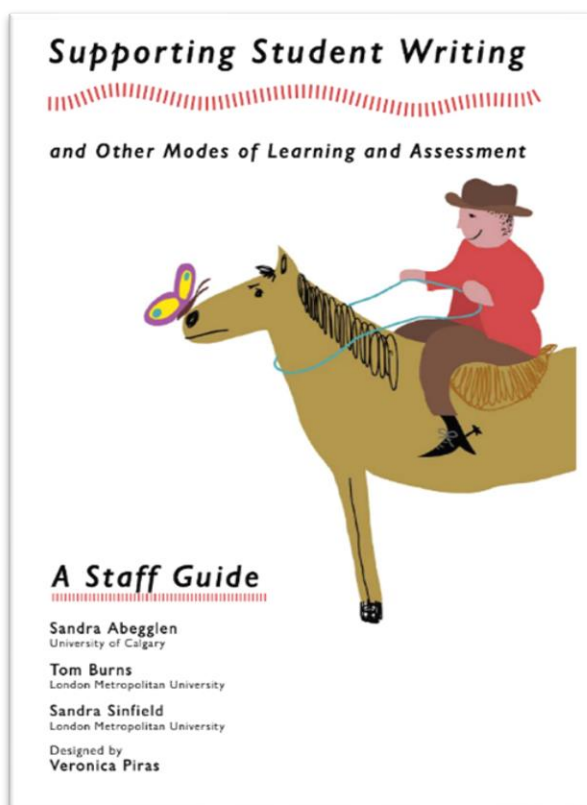


Image 1 [Supporting student writing](#)

Conclusion

If (university) teachers approach and teach writing differently, it can foster students’ learning. Writing is a process. In HE we write to become academic. So, it is important to move beyond the ‘mechanics’ of writing, to make it meaningful, engaging, interactive and joyful—even fun. If writing is appreciated as developmental—and appropriately supported—it automatically spurs students on to write their ‘best’. As Debbie Holley (Abegglen et al., 2021), Professor of Learning, Innovation in the Faculty of Health and Social Science at Bournemouth University states in the Foreword:

“Wherever our students are learning, they are writing, be it formatively, creatively, or summatively, often with pain, pressure and little support, but seldom for pleasure. If we are to actively engage our students with their learning, it has to be where they learn, not ‘over there’ to be fixed by a skills team, however dedicated, but within the framework of true emancipatory practice, where their writing frees them to articulate their authentic voice.”

Our collaboratively written and creatively illustrated Guide *Supporting Student Writing and Other Modes of Learning and Assessment* (Abegglen et al., 2021) provides activities that foster writing habits and build a ‘write to learn culture’. Writing is an initiation into and participation in wider professional and academic discourses. Writing is an act of expression—we write in order to ‘make our mark’.



Image 2 Pen and line

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2. Workshopping creatively online

By Chrissi Nerantzi and Javiera Atenas

Context

The pandemic brought a tsunami of changes to higher education institutions and most of the programmes moved fully online and enabled the continuation of learning and teaching despite very challenging circumstances for humanity worldwide. This rapid transition required resourcefulness and creativity to seek solutions that are simple, flexible and stimulating, for students and educators.

The authors of this case study, team-taught the Workshop module of the MSc in Open Educational Leadership during the Summer Semester 2020/21 remotely. The programme is open to educators and other professionals interested in developing a deeper understanding about open education and actively contribute to local, national, and global developments in this area and take on leadership roles. The programme consists of a series of core modules and optional modules that enable students to pursue personal interests in specific areas. The Workshop module aims to create opportunities for hands-on practical experiential learning through open education projects that are of interest and importance to students. All modules were offered fully online from the beginning of the academic year 2020/21. The University of Nova Gorica had invested in the digital platform MiTeam to support learning and teaching online for all their courses including this one. However, we know that the technology on its own will not make it happen. Sound pedagogical approaches are needed to enable active learning that stimulate curiosity in students, is motivational and engages them in creative, critical and meaningful ways.

What follows are key interventions of the teaching team of the Workshop module to enable creative and critical learning and deep engagement throughout and what we as educators have learnt through this process.

Creative intervention

Within this section we describe the creative approach used to design and offer the Workshop module fully online during the summer semester 2020/21. Despite the reality that creativity can pose challenges to institutions and is often rejected and stopped (Kleiman, 2008; Nelson, 2018), we noted that during the pandemic, creativity and resourcefulness were perceived as more welcome and needed than ever before and many educators engaged in experimentation and innovated in their practice driven by the desire to make a difference to their students' engagement and learning.

Active and experimental: The teaching team had the module descriptor and saw this as an invitation to bring the module to life. Key goal was to make the module participatory, active, and dialogic to bring in diverse experiences, aspirations, and interests of students (Freire, 2007; Warhurst, 2006). The Workshop module should not just be called Workshop but also

be experienced as a workshop and do what it says on the tin. And all this fully online. A challenge we turned into an opportunity to design alternative learning and teaching experiences (Jackson, 1996). However, some of these were beyond our control, such as internet connection and electricity for example as this is not a given in all countries. The pandemic really illuminated the extent of digital inequalities locally and globally and the negative impact this has had on learning and teaching and how exclusive it can be (Killen, 2020). We took these challenges into consideration and aimed to create an inclusive experience as possible for all our students using a range of approaches and strategies.

Our prior experiences as online educators, online students and open educators and researchers, as well as our knowledge and understanding around pedagogies and adventurous attitudes and tactics to teaching enabled us to be brave and dare to try new approaches. As we felt that it would be valuable for students to work closely together, we paid special attention in creating multiple opportunities for them to get to know each other but also the teaching team, work and learn together using a roadmap to follow a route towards designing the projects. The module after all aimed to create applied and experiential learning instances, equip and empower students to design and construct their own open education projects.

Organised and evidence-informed: The Workshop module consisted of the following 5 live workshops which were complemented by an online communal learning space within LinkedIn:

1. Introducing
2. Exploring
3. Designing
4. Testing
5. Evaluating

The live workshops were complemented by self-paced activities and autonomous study. Activities and assessment were aligned to the learning outcomes and a digital portfolio was used to capture the process of learning and specific outputs. A template was provided, media rich artefacts could be used, and the portfolio was developed within the shared Google Doc folder for this module. Guest speakers who had specific expertise linked to the topics of the module were invited to host some of the live workshops and inspire our students. The final exam, a professional discussion with the module tutors, was an opportunity to celebrate learning and engage in a creative reflective task.

Our broader pedagogical approach was evidence-informed and evidence-based. A review into a series of pedagogic empirical and conceptual frameworks and models that support digital learning and collaboration has shown that the following four elements are key in being effective:

1. Tutor support
2. Activities
3. Choice
4. Community (Nerantzi, 2017; Nerantzi, 2020).

These were taken into consideration when designing the Workshop module and underpinned the approach developed and used.

Transparent and collaborative: A transparent and collaborative approach was developed using social media such as a shared Google Doc folder where all learning and teaching resources and activities were hosted, available to the whole group. This transparency also translated into being human as educators and students. We didn't hide our vulnerability and the personal challenges we experienced and used our humanity as a connector (hooks, 1994). We showed understanding, empathy and were respectful of each other. Remaining positive and focusing on the students' experience and their success were key. Furthermore, during the sessions, students were invited to complete the tasks directly via the dynamic Workshop presentation that was used throughout the module and grew by contributions from the teaching team, students, and guests. This helped us keep everything in one place, speed up the process of locating useful resources to specific tasks, work together in pairs, present the work completed and peer review it also. This way of teaching and learning also enabled us to model open and ethical practices and help us all reflect on its benefits and challenges.

We had a small group of students, four in total. This enabled personalised, collaborative and peer-to-peer learning in a range of ways and tutor support that was responsive to the needs of students and manageable. However, we did not want to create dependencies and tutor support was scaffolded towards empowering our students and progressively leading to autonomy while also harnessing the power of peer-to-peer learning. Activities for socialisation and learning and peer support were build-into the live workshop sessions and students were encouraged to continue working together beyond these and progress their projects and learning. Each live workshop had a clear structure with breaks built-in and active learning opportunities to scaffold engagement and make it relevant to students as these could be used by them to pursue their personal interests and open education projects while also collecting evidence towards the assessment for their portfolios.

Lessons learnt

Our own reflections, anecdotal evidence from students and the assessment outcomes suggest that the approaches we used and the risks we took were effective for students' learning and stimulated their interest in open education and also enabled them to engage creatively and develop open education projects that will make a difference to their professional communities.

We are taking away the following from the Workshop module:

Openness: Our transparent approach worked well and helped us create a sense of community but also troubleshoot and resolve issues as they were appearing and experiment and use more creative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. The openness in the live workshops was present throughout. There was however only sporadic engagement in between the live sessions, something that could be explored in future iterations but perhaps this can also be interpreted as a sign of students' autonomy.

Trust: Trust that it would work, trust in ourselves, trust in each other, trust in our students. But also the trust of our students in us and the offer we had put together. Without trust it would not have worked. Often creative interventions are rejected because there is a lack of trust and a closeness of mind. We managed to open students' minds and/or keep them open and embrace something new. We took them on a journey, we all went on a journey together and while this brought discomfort to all of us, in different ways and for different reasons, it also enabled us to explore new territories, learn and develop.

Flexibility: It was good that we had a plan and that it had flexibility build-in. The active and participatory learning approach and our guests brought the module alive. Being alert during the module was key and quickly respond to challenges and make changes as we were experiencing these to secure the smooth running of the module and create a valuable learning experience for our students and maximise learning opportunities and take-aways.

[Access the openly licensed portfolios submitted by one of our students.](#)

Enjoy! Two of our students kindly agreed to reflect on their experience as well, which you will find in this collection. See contributions 3 and 20.

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3. Reflecting on my online learning challenges

By Adéṣínà Ayẹni (Ọmọ Yòòbá)

My online experience

I have participated in a couple of online workshops in the past; however, the Workshop for Open Education Practitioners is a different experience that will linger for a long time in my mind. One reason being that it is one that prepares me towards the attainment of my Master's in Open Education (OE). The other reason is for the fact that the module is conducted by two professionals in OE, making the education process interesting to follow through.

Aside from the perfect content of the module and the knowledge gained during the cause of the workshop, I must commend my institution, the University of Nova Gorica for the paradigm shift to online pedagogy in the current trying times that made it possible for me and other students to go to class during the pandemic. Had the online workshop not ensued, my education will be delayed, I would not have been able to further my studies, perhaps I would have to wait for the pandemic to elapse to proceed and there are no indications that things will change any time soon as the effect of the pandemic is still very much in the air.

There are many students in Africa that are keen about furthering their education on the international network of computers; but certain drawbacks wouldn't allow them to attain their desires. These drawbacks include high tuition fees, expensive textbooks, electricity, and access to the internet respectively. In my case, the tuition fee was not a problem because I am enjoying a free education scholarship that covers all tuition fees and all my course materials are free and open. However, I almost forfeited my classes due to epileptic electricity supply and the only way out is the purchase of petroleum to power the generating set for electricity.

The onus rests on me to provide internet bandwidth to gain access to my classes online, which was a problem, for the reason that internet data is expensive and video conferencing consumes more bandwidth, plus the fact that the download and upload speed is sluggish and unreliable, resulting in audio delay and poor signal. The image below is a crop edit from a computer Print Screen, showing the download and upload of my internet bandwidth.

In addition to the above, for a reason beyond my understanding, I could not attend classes because my country's Internet Protocol (IP) blocked out access to the university's MiTeam platform. All efforts to connect to the platform proved futile and I became downhearted. Virtual Private Network ([VPN](#)) became the only tool available for me to circumvent the blockade and I am grateful that I had taken some MOOCs on internet circumvention, privacy and security, it helped me greatly. I had to rely on a free VPN client, which I downloaded on my laptop and selected the countries whose Ips are used to access the MiTeam website. On a regular day, most VPNs are not outrightly free to use, so I depended on the free 10 gigabytes provided by the VPN for my classes. Talking about the workshop on the OE

module, it showed me new ways to organize and design a full-fledged online education. Through the workshop, I became abreast of effective strategies, tools and resources that can propel my Open Education career. Two important lessons that I learnt are peer-review and teamwork.

In regard to my project on the creation of Open Educational Resources (OER) in the Yorùbá language titled; OER Yorùbá, I faced the challenges of sourcing free images cum videos in Yorùbá language on OE, as well as translating the OER from English to the Yorùbá language. Since it is paramount to have open resources in all languages of the world and for a language like Yorùbá which hitherto has inadequate materials and is a low-resource language on the web, my project is key. To achieve my goal, I relied on the abundance of open resources in the English language available on the internet which was localized to my native language. The major challenge that I faced while translating the open resources was choosing the best diction for Open Education registers. To drive home my point, I had no option than to coin new terminologies that have not been used elsewhere for my project. Having done that, the translated texts were recorded into audio format, the English infographic was adapted for the Yorùbá version, and the synchronization of the audio and images suffice for the audio-visual content.

I drew a diagram, reflection on the workshop module. The diagram combines emojis and clip-arts to showcase my reflection of the module. Above the image is the callout on module quality which combines websites, PDF, video content and synchronous live video classes. On the middle left is the success of my learning process, with a spike in percentage in the year 2021 compared to three years ago, while the callout below indicates the precious takeaways from the workshop viz., teamwork; collaboration; openness. On the right is my accomplishment in the workshop highlighting the knowledge acquired from the different OE evaluation models, design models, learning analytics, etc, and underneath is the obstacles encountered and solutions provided. There is a head in the middle of the diagram with a Yorùbá native cap, that is me! Take a look at the diagram below:

Lessons learnt

All said and done, during the course of my tutelage by the two great educators, I learnt the power of collaboration and teamwork for a common goal. In addition, the workshop broadened my horizon on the recent practices in the world of Open Education and Online Learning in particular.

4. Using Padlet to share dissertation stories and writing tips; can Padlet foster a scholarly community?

By Aspasia Eleni Paltoglou, Rachel Simms-Moore, Michaela Pal, Rossella Sorte

Studying for a course can be a very rewarding and enriching experience, one that allows the student to acquire important skills and expand their horizons. On the other hand, it can also be a stressful and lonely experience, especially when the course is delivered online (Slagter van Tryon & Bishop, 2009). Some scholars suggest that social interaction is crucial for learning to take place, and the lack of face-to-face contact can make social interaction more difficult (Slagter van Tryon & Bishop, 2009; Adams & Wilson, 2020; Bada, 2015).

How can we encourage students to connect and create a supportive student community when there is no face-to-face interaction? Part of the solution is using software that could help create a learning community (Adams & Wilson, 2020); Padlet is one of them. [Padlet](#) is a free online platform where users can post messages and comments anonymously. This capability can facilitate student engagement in activities, both for face-to-face and online teaching, synchronously or asynchronously. Of course, software by itself cannot build a community; it is important that the organizer designs an activity in a way that the students feel compelled to participate.

The activity described here took place in the Dissertation unit for the MSc Psychology Conversion course at ManMet, an MSc course that is delivered online. This is a course in which students that did not study psychology for their undergraduate degree can acquire knowledge in key areas in psychology and gain accreditation from the British Psychological Society.

In the Dissertation unit, the students are asked to take full responsibility of their project and work independently. Keeping motivated and working consistently on the project and dissertation throughout the 9 months can be a challenge, especially for students that are in full-time work and have family responsibilities; even more so during a pandemic.

The dissertation unit is conceivably one of the most creative units of the course, as students are asked to come up with a novel study, collect and analyse their data, and finally write up a report. It is also probably fair to claim that the Dissertation Unit allows students and lecturers to engage in a constructivist approach to learning, more so than in other units. The constructivist approach of learning suggests that individuals construct learning themselves by combining what they already know with new information (Bada, 2015). According to this approach, it is important for students to be active learners and reflect on their learning, and for learning to relate to the real world in an authentic way.

This approach also puts emphasis on the importance of social interaction while learning and suggests that being part of a community where the main goal is to learn (i.e. a 'community of practice') is very important for learning. Social interaction is also thought to help shape the values and identity of the learners according to Adams and Wilson (2020) who suggest

that it is beneficial to include activities that promote and capture students' thinking as it is being formed (rather than just the final product), by encouraging online discussions between students, and thus foster a learning community; online platforms can be very effective in facilitating this. Similarly, Abegglen et al. (2021) note that writing should be seen as a process through which the writers learn, a process that should be fun and interactive. They suggest that students should be given creative spaces where they can 'write to learn', collaborate, explore, discover the pleasure of writing and learning by participating in writing projects other than formal academic writing. This Padlet activity attempted to create such an informal creative space.

The activity and Padlet responses

Project stories

Typically, the students come up with very interesting projects for their dissertations, usually inspired by their employment or a significant life event. In order to capture these stories, and inspired by the 4th co-author and colleague who had already created a Padlet activity for the same course, the first author (and unit leader of the Dissertation unit) created a Padlet which invited the students to do two things: firstly, to write about the story behind the reason they studied psychology and the topic of their dissertation project; and secondly, to share writing/study tips and potentially write and share a study diary to reflect on their study practices. The Padlet was placed on the Moodle website for the dissertation unit, and students were invited to participate in this optional activity through a forum message. The hope was to encourage a dialogue regarding the projects and study practices and foster a sense of community.

Padlet instructions for students:

"Optional activity:
Project Stories and Study Diary

Feel free to share your stories here regarding:
Why did you become interested in psychology?
Why did you pick a particular topic for your dissertation?"

You can share stories about either or both topics. Also, feel free to comment on other students' stories. I thought it would be a good idea to allow you to share these stories with each other and find common ground. You can also use this space to reflect on your work, e.g. writing your introduction, collecting data. Do you first finish one assignment and start the next? Or do you work in parallel? What are you finding difficult/rewarding in writing your dissertation or essay?

I posted a very brief note about a project I was hoping to work on at the time:

My study explores motivations and experiences of cycle touring. I love cycle touring, and there are not many studies on this topic. I was also keen to do my own qualitative study, and I wanted to pick a subject that really interested me. For more information access [this article](#) (supported and edited by editor extraordinaire Dr Susanne Langer).

Two students (2nd and 3rd authors) and one member of staff (4th co-author) responded. A more detailed account of the padlet contribution of the 3rd author can be found in Pal (2021). Here are the contributions of the other two participants:

This is Rossella Sorte's story, who is a member of staff and co-author:

When I arrived in Manchester in 2011, to complete an internship at ManMet, it was all very new to me because I had never left Italy before. I lived in a shared house with other students from different countries. It was fascinating living with somebody who had different living cultural habits and stories to share. I remember that far from home, the smell of baked bread of my French Muslim flatmate in the middle of the night during Ramadan provided the comfort and security that I had in my home country, and which I was missing in the UK. I realised that food was important to me in terms of identity and belonging, and I started asking other students how they felt about it. I soon appreciated that the experience of displacement was more common than expected when people travelled from other countries with such different cultures.

Once back in Italy I decided to make something valuable from this experience and started to research about the sociability and emotional value that food has for place-attachment. I first looked at the local communities in Milan; the Chinese are one of the biggest groups who are now in the second generation and with a longstanding history of food-settling and business in Italy. A few years later I returned to the UK to start a PhD on food, place-making and belonging among South-East Asian women in the UK. I studied how women creolised recipes and food practices to rebuild a sense of home in the UK. My research allowed me to explore the meanings of food beyond its medicalised terms. Food represents the embodied and sensorial experiences of people's journeys and memories of a lifetime, and it has an invaluable meaning into our nomadic lives and the way we make sense of our roots and the domestication of our living spaces.

This is Rachael Simms-Moore's dissertation story, MSc student and co-author:

My study is on the life perspectives of adults after brain tumour treatment. I myself have had brain tumours removed over the last 6 years and have made friends who also have had similar diagnoses as adults. I have found that much of the research focuses on children with tumours or carers perspectives and not on adults with tumours. This may be due to the very low survival rate, but it made it difficult as one of the 11% who survive to find any qualitative research of others' experiences. With 11,200 adults diagnosed in the UK alone

each year (32 every day) I thought this might be a gap I could help fill for others. Some of the data gathering has been emotionally draining but it feels worthwhile and keeping the final project in mind is keeping me focused and moving forward.

Writing diary

Another aim of the Padlet was to create a space for students to share writing and general study experiences and tips. To that end, the first author created a 'writing diary': i.e. a diary noting thoughts and everyday actions in relation to writing. Admittedly this part of the Padlet was an afterthought. The initial motivation for this was discussions with the students on one of their studying strategies. As full-time students, they were required to study for more than one units at a time, which meant that they had to work on two different writing projects at the same time; for example an essay for one unit, and their report for the dissertation unit. The problem with that is that the project and dissertation can take the back seat, as the students often choose to focus on a more pressing deadline of an essay, which might result in not dedicating enough time to the dissertation. I reflected on my writing practices, and I noticed that I tend to work on more than one writing projects at the same time, often alternating between them.

Short-term task switching has been robustly shown to result in reduced task performance (e.g. Elchlepp et al. 2015). However, changing tasks over a longer time frame could at times be beneficial; for example, leaving one project aside for a while could result in tackling it more successfully, as new ideas could be generated on how to proceed with the most challenging parts of the project (Ritter & Dijksterhuis, 2014).

The idea of 'incubation' and its positive effects on creativity are relevant here; incubation is thought to be a stage of creative problem solving where an individual takes a break from consciously and actively working on the problem; when returning to it, they typically have new insights and ideas on how to solve it (Ritter & Dijksterhuis, 2014). The mechanisms of this phenomenon have been widely researched and debated. Some scholars suggest that it is the absence of conscious thought for the project that enhances creativity, partly via cues in the environment that can help the retrieval of important information and the reduction of unhelpful mental fixations (Ritter & Dijksterhuis, 2014). Conceivably, working intermittently on two different but related writing projects, which involves stopping conscious work on one of the projects while working on a relevant project, could provide facilitating cues to retrieve (or even discover new) relevant information that could be helpful for the writing project.

I posted a note pondering on the idea of working on more than one writing projects at one time:

"I quite like working on different papers at the same time, although it depends on the paper, and on the stage that it is really. If, say, I just started working on 2 papers, and they are quite similar, then it usually helps to work on them in parallel. If you get stuck with one paper, then you can work on the other one, and you feel you are making some progress. Also, having a bit of distance from a paper usually helps. But if I have a deadline for corrections on a paper, then I suppose I would focus mainly on

that and not on other papers. It is a matter of trying different ways to see what works for you.”

In some ways, the diary was an attempt to examine my own writing practices, and to see if indeed I was switching between different writing tasks.

Here is an extract from that diary:

“07/05/21

I am working on the 5th draft (or is it the 15th?) for the Times Higher Education article (800 to 850 words) on hierarchy and creativity in academia. The editor has been very helpful, but this is my last shot. It needs to have more sources and be less personal. It is definitely much better than it used to be, but still some way to go. I am re-reading the references to make sure I interpret them correctly, and to see if there are more relevant ideas I hadn't initially noticed. Reading one of the papers, I am adjusting some of the terms, and copy parts of the paper in comment bubbles to re-think later, as there are some very relevant points.

I had also contacted The Psychologist's editor Jon Sutton and he is interested in a media review on a radio programme on the Peter Principle (300 words). I started jotting down some ideas on paper and looking at a couple of relevant papers.

I have written 140 words for the Peter Principle review, very first draft.

Back to the THE article: I read a blog on holacracy.

Peter-principle review: 320 words, included self-determination theory.”

I also wanted to encourage the students to keep their own writing diary, in the same Padlet or elsewhere, so that they can monitor and appreciate their progress, and so that studying does not feel like a lonely, never-ending struggle with no results. There is some evidence that an informal learning journal, where students reflect on their writing with both a cognitive (such as organisation and elaboration) and meta-cognitive strategies (such as monitoring and regulation), can have positive effects on comprehension, retention of information, and motivation for learning (Nückles et al., 2020). Reflecting on my experience, keeping a writing journal (and not just on the Padlet) has helped me keep focused and motivated; self-monitoring of my progress tends to give me reassurance that I have progressed on the paper I am working on, and gives me a sense of continuity and progress, and stops me from abandoning the project. Writing can be a lonely experience, and a high level of intrinsic motivation is needed; a writing diary could help foster intrinsic motivation for writing.

Although very few of the 80 students wrote in the Padlet, it still generated discussions between the contributors. Here are the reflections of the participants:

MSc student and co-author Rachael Simms-Moore:

I initially wrote on the Padlet to share my dissertation idea and the motivations behind why I chose the topic. I was interested in reading what other students were working on and why. I was pleased to see that everyone appeared to have picked a topic personal to them and that I was not the only one doing so. I also was impressed by the variety of subjects that were being covered.

I felt it was a shame that more students did not opt in to share, although this may be to do with concerns around plagiarism and not wanting to risk sharing their ideas. Particularly as a Master's is a competitive degree and especially when considering the final piece is worth the most marks.

Having shared the dissertation piece, I felt I had fulfilled the aim and did not therefore need to also keep a writing diary there. However, I did check in on the Padlet from time to time to see if anyone else had contributed to it as I was interested in reading other student stories and motivations. If the Padlet topic focused on the writing diary as a singular purpose Padlet, this may have resulted in more contributions as then students would not need to disclose their dissertation topic ideas. Also, in focusing on techniques and strategies for writing this could have possibly proved beneficial for sharing helpful tips with other students.

To share one of my study strategies, I used a desk weekly planner where I blocked writing and study time for each module and included rest periods. I found this was more useful than an online planner as I physically looked at my desk planner each day. Not risking the out of sight out of mind trap! Also using static wipe board paper on my walls to outline assignments and make notes on the dissertation from the first month of the degree meant by the end I had a solid wall of notes on my dissertation ideas. Finally, I used music to help delineate study time vs relaxation time. I used the same soft Jazz playlist for when I was studying creating conditioned associations. This is a similar technique to using a particular piece of music to help sleep etc.

What may be helpful for the future Padlet is a weekly automatic email reminder with the link to remind students to update the writing diary on a specific day. This could be an opt in system and would allow students to keep the Padlet in mind. The course is a busy one and doing extra work may be made more accessible via reminders and a note that even a paragraph a week as a writing diary is enough. This may stop students feeling daunted or overwhelmed and encourage greater participation.

MSc student and co-author Michaela Pal:

The reasons I answered and posted to the Padlet were as follows: firstly, I love writing and it's my second nature; secondly, I like to share my experience of learning and creativity with others; finally, I like to inspire people to be creative. It is interesting to ponder on why such a small percentage of students responded to the activity. Perhaps writing does not come naturally for all individuals; not everybody finds it easy to express their thoughts in writing. And then, there is that thought at the back of your mind: 'What if what I write is not good? What will they think?' And the self critic is out there in all his splendour ruining it all.

It is also possible they might have forgotten about it; promoting the activity regularly might have resulted in greater participation. Or they might be too busy and not consider such activity being as significant as writing their assignment.

But this is something one can work on - there is no such thing as too busy as not having enough time! After writing a mighty thesis on exactly this theme, time, I have acquired a clearer vision on how people can strategize and become consciously and actively involved in creating these time management strategies when it is needed. I think that sharing your experiences with others has a double benefit; it helps the ones that read /listen and creates a sense of community. But it also helps the writer too, as sharing with others can help one grow as a person, become more responsible, and more authoritative in their expertise. It is important to create a non-judgemental and student-centred culture that encourages writing and sharing in the community. It is important to assure participants that they will not be judged.

Human beings tend to respond well to things that present a reward or a benefit. It is the culture we live in. If it was emphasized that reflexive writing could potentially enhance creativity, critical thinking, free some mental space for when we later write our assignments or help us be more reflective for our new jobs, it is possible that students might have been more motivated to participate in the activity. Who wouldn't like to be more creative, more analytical and more relaxed when they write their essays, or more successful?

Colleague and co-author Rossella Sorte:

I work on the Conversion course as a diversity tutor and this year I supervised students for the Dissertation Unit. Aspasia and I met for the first time before the start of the Unit to discuss about generative research work/creative research practices and engagement among the students by using Padlet, whilst keeping the focus on self-directed learning. After our meeting, Aspasia shared her reflexive Padlet with me to which I responded by contributing the story of my PhD journey.

Although only a few students populated Padlet, this idea sparked interest in discussing how we can use digital spaces creatively in teaching, as well as how to use digital tools to enable spaces for learning creatively. The way this space was constructed, it enabled a re-conceptualization of teaching and learning as a relational practice (Murphy & Brown, 2012), which connects us through the stories and the practices of our everyday life (Schraube & Hojolt, 2015), humanizes teachers and learners, and finds communal grounds to bond and co-produce knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

I appreciated how Padlet could be used to reflect on our embodied learning (Rosa & Mater, 2001); for example, make learners more aware of their learning practices. The first author shared a flow of thoughts on her academic writing which focused on the way she planned and managed her time at home whilst focusing on writing papers. I found this exciting, and a great opportunity for learning from my colleague. Padlet's stories are dynamic as they create a continuous shift of our knowledge and make us responsible for our actions when we learn, as we set to put in action our thoughts as we write, read, and reflect on them.

Some students and academic staff, and I include myself, show some reluctance to writing, and this is because we are taught from an early age that writing is constrained by rigid rules (Thrift, 2008). Nowadays, with the development of technology we are engaging with the idea of unruly space (De Certeau, 1984) as well as expanding the space of subjectivity (Salmon, 2002), and the horizons of communication which promote research and sense-making based on the practices of everyday life. Writing stories allows us to opt out from a format and a preconceived space where things follow some hegemonic logic and capitalized ideas (Thrift, 2008). The sketching proposed by this Padlet, the nomadic writer (Braidotti, 2011), the one that develops with their "rhizomatic" thoughts (Goodley et al., 2014) without necessarily following an academic logic but the ecologic rhythms of humans, can relieve these anxieties and make the learner feel confident that they have interesting revelations to disclose. Keeping a shared reflexive journal opens the possibility of continuously evolving through these narratives and through the language that we use to talk about ourselves (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The idea of reflecting and learning from these stories can be helpful for students to enable awareness and create a sense of belonging to a community (Chinemanda, 2007).

First author's final reflections

I have learned so much from my co-authors' insightful suggestions and reflections, and this knowledge will help me improve the activity next year. Even though there was limited participation in the activity from the rest of the student cohort, it brought together the authors of this paper, and created a micro-community of nomadic writers (Braidotti, 2011), to use a term Rossella introduced in her eloquent analysis. This micro-community was further strengthened while writing the current article.

Reflecting on the suggestions, the worry with having too many Padlets was that there would be too many links in an already busy Moodle site. But it is a good point that Rachael made about the Padlet having a single focus, as having two different tasks within the same Padlet was potentially distracting. Furthermore, the Padlet was placed on Moodle, but it may not have been easy to find among so many other documents and links. The students were alerted once about it in the Moodle forum, but a reminder could have helped.

The issue of plagiarism that Rachel raised is a very important point. It goes without saying that it is extremely important that the students submit original work, but I wonder if the worry of plagiarism potentially discourages the creation of community between the students to some extent. Fazel & Kowkabi (2014) suggest that we need to make sure we 'design out' plagiarism, and they suggest several tips for doing so: include several checking steps, such as reading drafts by staff and other students, make sure that the assessment has the right level of difficulty, give students the option to work on a subject they are really interested in. As Newman et al. (2014, 3) suggest, it is important for assessment to be authentic, i.e. 'significant, worthwhile and meaningful' for the students. Although most of these suggestions are implemented in the Dissertation Unit, plagiarism can still be a worry.

Michaela made a very important point about individual differences between students regarding writing. It is indeed important to remember that students are a very diverse population. I wish I could tailor my teaching so that each and every student achieves their maximum potential, but that is not always possible. My way of addressing the student

diversity is to include a variety of activities so that students can choose the activities that are most suitable for them, while ignoring the ones they find unhelpful or not relevant. Furthermore, I think it is understandable if most students choose to focus on their compulsory coursework, especially during a very busy and eventful semester. Finally, I have been made aware that sometimes participation in activities and forums can have a negative impact on students' motivation and confidence, as such spaces can result in students comparing themselves to other students, which can have a negative impact on academic confidence (Newman et al. 1995). Therefore, I feel it is important to make participation in such activities entirely optional. But I agree that emphasizing the benefits of writing reflexively and the informal and non-judgemental nature of the activity, as Michaela pointed out, might have also helped increase participation.

Although I was the one organizing the activity, I did not comment on the participants' writing, I just used the 'like' function. I think part of the reason I was not commenting on other participants' posts in the Padlet was that I wanted to make sure I did not discourage them or put them on the spot in some way; the Padlet felt like a very special space that I did not want to disturb, but perhaps I could have encouraged discussions by posting messages commenting on the other participants posts.

Perhaps the two parts of the Padlet would not have been seen as disconnected, if I had been working on my cycling study, which would have been a task much more similar to the projects the students were working on. Although my intention was initially to work on the study, it turned out that during the time I was keeping the diary, I had to work on other writing projects, such as brief reviews. This perhaps made the writing diary less relevant to the students working on dissertations and academic essays. Next year I will work and keep a Padlet diary on my study; it will certainly give me extra motivation to keep working on my study while the students work on their own projects, and it will hopefully make the diary more relevant to the students.

As a closing remark, I must note that being a unit leader of this unit as well as project supervisor is one of the most rewarding parts of my job, and I feel very privileged to be able to support students and staff with managing such interesting projects.

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5. Being part of a community

By Aspasia Eleni Paltoglou



Image 1 Boat that belongs to residents of a village

This photo (Image 1) shows the boat that belonged to one of the residents of a village I stayed at during the summer. When Giannis realised that he did not have long to live, he brought his boat by the sea, he put lots of soil and planted some flowers in it. Then other residents kept watering the plants, sweeping the place. Then two blue seats were placed, one in front, and one to the left of the boat. Somebody else brought two planters with plants in them. These are only some examples of the actions taken by the local residents to maintain and enhance this beautiful beach. Some of the improvements tend to be decided in and organized by official meetings within the local community. Additionally, certain residents spontaneously and regularly go above and beyond to take care of the place. For example, Takis and Parisoula regularly pick garbage from the beach and provide buckets for people to put out their cigarettes. The result is one of the most beautiful beaches I have ever seen, entirely maintained by the local resident community, out of love and care for the place.

I feel there are a lot of commonalities with the #creativeHE community. Residents of this community are offered opportunities to interact and participate, develop their writing, learn and teach each other, become editors, network, without undue pressure or judgment from the editors, such as Chrissi Nerantzi and Norman Jackson.

There are many different types of opportunities given for participation: live zoom meetings, Twitter and Facebook discussions, contributions to creative academic magazine and blog,

contribution to Lifewide Magazine. And of course, there used to be face-to-face meetings before the pandemic. I have described elsewhere how valuable I found the two face-to-face meetings I attended (Paltoglou, 2020a). Once the pandemic struck, the face-to-face meetings became online. But at that point I felt quite overwhelmed and zoom-fatigued by the live online teaching and all the changes in our teaching due to the pandemic, and I felt the need to focus on my teaching and writing and cut down on other online activities. So, I stopped attending most meetings, including the ones organized by the creative academic community. I also find the twitter and Facebook discussions a little overwhelming, partly because I do not feel I have the time to develop my answers substantially, or I feel too self-conscious. I seem to still be going through a phase where I want to be alone with my thoughts and peer reviewed papers and write about my interests at my own pace. I think this is partly because I have felt that participating in too many different activities and groups in the past made it difficult to focus on my own research interests and develop as an academic.

But despite being anti-social and not participating much in the #creativeHE sessions, I was still supported and inspired by the #creativeHE community during the pandemic. For example, Norman Jackson edited and included one of my articles in the Lifewide magazine. It was an article about the relationship between creativity, imagination and resilience I wrote during the first lockdown (Paltoglou, 2020b). This article was written spontaneously and evolved as I was writing it, rather than by any plan, and gave me the opportunity for the first time to combine my two separate selves/identities; the Greek musician and the British academic psychologist. A big part of the article was about the Greek musician and activist Mikis Theodorakis, that died recently (2nd September 2021). I feel it was my own way to say goodbye and honour him while he was still alive. It helped me articulate my thoughts and feelings in an authentic way and at the same time feel part of a community interested in imagination and creativity.

Here is another example: after 3 intense months of pandemic online teaching, I treated myself to reading the book edited by Chrissi Nerantzi 'The power of Play in Higher Education' (James & Nerantzi, 2019), which is very much in the spirit of the #creativeHE community. I wrote a book review on it (Paltoglou, 2021). When I got in touch with Chrissi to say 'thank you' for the book because it kept me company, cheered me up and inspired me during the pandemic, she offered more opportunities for collaboration and writing, including the current article. She simply sent a link to a shared google document. And suddenly I felt part of the community again, and that I was allowed to join on my own terms, i.e. by writing a brief article, and it did not matter that I did not contribute in other ways. And that made me think how important it is for a community to be inclusive, to provide different opportunities for engagement, to consider the diversity and different needs and strengths of each member. One can provide the boat and plants, the other their time to water the plants, somebody else their editorial, writing, and communicating skills. This creates a community where one can develop in their own way and speed, without competing with one another and without being judged against a single rigid measure.

That is certainly something to bring to our teaching. We should be mindful of the diverse student population and provide a variety of activities to help them develop as individuals and scholars. I think providing the opportunity to write for a magazine such as the 'Creative Academic' is a good way to encourage students to develop their writing and communication

skills and feel part of a writing community. Interestingly, #creativeHE is used both as part of Chrissi's formal teaching, and as a stand-alone activity, independent of teaching, which makes it a great bridge between being part of a student community and a wider academic community.

I hope one day I will be able to participate in more activities in the #creativeHE community. After all, I do want to encourage the students to create a community amongst themselves and participate in the activities I set, and how can I do that effectively if I cannot be an active member of an academic community myself? I can see that social media can be valuable tools for the development of academic discourse and for networking. But for now, I am grateful for being able to pick and choose how and when I participate in this wonderful community.

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6. Active creativity

By Tanisha Rout

With a heart filled with excitement and soul filled with happiness, I came to the UK to pursue my post-graduation in February 2021. Amidst COVID-19 restrictions, my lectures had all been online. It was not until April that I had even visited my university campus. I cannot remember the last time I interacted with groups of people. With an opportunity to be a part of the Global Culture Jam, an online international event due to happen in June 2021, I was finally excited to channel my inner creativity and interact with people from different cultures. I worked as a graphic designer for the event and created the branding identity for the program. Our mentors guided us well enough and made sure we brought the most creativity out of us. We had design sessions which were more like boot camps revolving around designs. I, alongside a team of about 30 members, held regular meetings, designed the event curricula, and took care of every detail. The weeklong event had around 1000 participants from various countries. We had designed quick imaginative tasks for the participants. It was a surreal experience to see my design templates being used in presentations, as templates for posters and in the social media channels. I also learnt new software and got my hands on video creation, script writing, voice recording and video editing. The event ended on a rigorous and visionary note but left with me a few connections that I will always cherish.

One of the mentors is Dr Chrissi Nerantzi, who was our programme creative head and mentor. We connected over LinkedIn and recently in October 2021 I got a chance to work with her again. It was about co-hosting a conference for the HE Students' Festival. I spoke about my life as a student in the UK. This time, it was for an audience of 8000 participants. I started with a short introduction and then began to explain my journey from India to UK. I mentioned about how my reasons of choosing UK as the study destination revolved around the idea of work, live and play. It is beautiful here. Work: People strictly maintain a professional 5-day-a-week routine and are very helpful to their employees and colleagues.

Life: The weather is unpredictable yet beautiful. The citizens are responsible and very friendly. Play: There are recreational facilities all around with their fantastic pub culture and nobody misses out on the weekend fun. The study environment is research based. Lecturers would go beyond their limits to help the students and are particularly more focused on the journey the student takes rather than the result. There is constant support from tutors and the university well-being societies. However, it can sometimes be difficult to overcome challenges in a new country, especially if someone is a creative person. I adapted something that I call as the 'stepping-in' approach, where even though I feel shy, I try to step in to take part. All of this started with the creative journey I decided to take with the Global Culture Jam in April and here I am, with more connections, more confident and filled with more creativity.

7. Celebrating pedagogy and scholarship: The National Teaching Repository and how it supports creative and open practice

By Dawne Irving-Bell



The National Teaching Repository: Enabling the creative and open sharing of pedagogical practice.

The National Teaching Repository (NTR) is a safe and secure space where colleagues can disseminate their learning and teaching, proven in practice pedagogical research and resources. Sharing practice benefits the learning and teaching community but as this short article explains it has additional benefits including giving colleagues a global platform to shout about their brilliance!

The National Teaching Repository is an open educational resource (OER). An open access space that facilitates the open sharing of educational resources for everyone. Sharing your practice is easy. There is no need to register or create an account and uploading work, using the submit link, literally takes just a few minutes.

Protection for our authors

The National Teaching Repository is a searchable database, built using a secure platform called Figshare which is housed at Edge Hill University. Work is curated by a team of like-minded colleagues, who support authors to share their practical pedagogical resources and scholarly research. In submitting their work authors can choose their own level of Creative Commons (CC) licencing. At all times work remains the academic and intellectual property of the author(s).

Professionally authors may assign an existing DOI to their work, or request one for each item uploaded. Authors can link their work to their ORCID IDs and also signpost work to existing repositories, personal websites or institutional spaces.

In assigning each piece of work uploaded a DOI the academic and intellectual property of the authors work is protected. The system generates a citation that enables others to recognise the use of colleagues learning and teaching research and resources. Protecting academic and intellectual property.

Securing evidence of the impact of your practice!

We all know how difficult it can be to evidence the impact of our scholarship and learning and teaching practice, so in sharing authors can use the data generated as evidence of the impact of their practice. For performance review, internal and external promotion, fellowship applications and progression pathways for example.

The NTR collects interactions of others' engagement with work. Using Almerit data authors can see views, downloads, the number of engagements on social media and secure data in a number of formats including tables and global maps.

The system enables authors to share their scholarship in multiple formats including audio/visual, media, video, visual including posters and also data. Where work uploaded requires updating the author can share revised work 'overlaying' it over the existing submission to ensure continuity of metrics.

Creative intervention

My rationale for founding the repository was quite simple, to support colleagues.

This is achieved in two ways. Firstly, by offering support in facilitating easy access to amazing resources. Secondly, to support colleagues to secure evidence of the impact of their scholarship on learning and teaching practice not only within, but beyond their institutions, and in doing so secure recognition for their academic and intellectual property and practice. Through the publication of their practice supporting them to build confidence and increase their profile.

The concept was developed from work undertaken to share best practice within and across my own institution. Following an extremely successful conference presentation in 2019, using funding secured from Advance HE I developed the repository.

Lessons learnt

The NTR was established in September 2021 and in just 12 months has received over 55,000 views and downloads. That equates to over 1,000 colleagues worldwide every day accessing the space to seek inspiration to help shape and improve their practice. The data indicates an incredible global reach with 58% of activity being in the USA.

In addition to the space providing a much-needed space for colleagues to search for and access learning and teaching innovations, colleagues who have been sharing their practice have reported many benefits including promotions and successful fellowship applications.

Drawing from the breadth of research and resources shared on the repository, our next steps include more formal publications. To include the production of the Excellent Resource Series of 'Proven in Practice' texts to support colleagues across the sector, with our curators' becoming series and section editors.

Developing links with more colleagues across the globe. Other than that I'm not 100% sure! I'm always open to ideas to make the space better. So, if you would like to become a curator, critical friend or if you have any suggestions please get in touch!

Useful links and resources

- Discover research from the National Teaching Repository:
https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/The_National_Teaching_Repository
- Why not share and secure recognition for your SoTL research and resources? Sharing is simple!
- For more information view this video presentation:
<https://doi.org/10.25416/NTR.15152094.v1>
- Read our welcome presentation: <https://doi.org/10.25416/edgehill.12673016> and meet our curators and critical friends:
<https://doi.org/10.25416/edgehill.12820727.v13>
- FAQs: <https://doi.org/10.25416/edgehill.12674687.v6>
- Follow the NTR on Twitter: @NTRepository
- Click here to share: <https://figshare.edgehill.ac.uk/submit>

8. 'I'm a Learning Technologist. Get Me Out of Here'. A techno-autoethnographic poem.

By Pip McDonald



Image 1 I'm a learning technologist get me out of here

Prologue

"The Stories we tell ourselves, about ourselves, are incredibly powerful" (Dennis, 2021, 216)

In 2019, I co-hosted a learning technology podcast called [ALT Mentions](#). I created a spin-off fiction podcast called [TEL TALE](#) in which a monologue of a Learning Technologist reflecting on their experience can be heard. The solipsistic audio adventure approach was inspired by the immersive fiction of [Within the Wires](#). Reflecting on your own experiences can be a valuable place to start to make sense of and share your ideas with a view to constructing new realities.

At the Royal Agricultural University (RAU), I worked with a Lecturer, [William Leschallas](#), Head of Real Estate and Land Management to explore the idea of techno-autobiography in January 2021. What is techno-autobiography? Employing a techno-autobiographical approach provides a dynamic space and an opportunity to have a conversation about your historical relationship with technology. Can the past help us make sense of the future? Can the future help us make sense of the past? [The blog post about the techno-autobiographical approach can be found here](#). It is possible to think "autobiographical incidents" (Tripp, 1993)

Since January 2021, the idea of techno-autobiography evolved into exploring autoethnographic approaches. The idea that an autoethnographic “identity performance” really appealed (Clark, 2020). In May 2021, I performed a poem at the [Write Out Loud](#) open mic even alongside Dr. Lee Campbell, a Lecturer from University of the Arts London (UAL) ([@leejicampbell](#)) . Lee performed using himself as a green screen to project text and image with sounds repeating to create multimodal layers. His work involved both creative and autoethnographic storytelling. What if we provided both students and lecturers opportunities like this?

The poem is an amalgamation of a series of poetic attempts at exploring the use of technology in the modern world through an autoethnographic lens. Technology has almost become inescapable, particularly during the pandemic. As Learning Technologists, perhaps we are always supposed to be one step ahead of everyone else. Yet, it is good to be just as critical as you are enthusiastic about techno-normative pedagogical realities. “*Creativity comes from a conflict of ideas*” (Donatella Versace). We live with digital conflict, tension and uncertainty. ‘*I’m a Learning Technologist. Get Me Out of Here*’, is both a poetic and speculative stream of conflict and digital consciousness, drawing on ideas including from T.S. Eliot’s ‘*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*’, S. T. Coleridge’s ‘*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*’, ‘*Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*’ by bell hooks (1994), in addition to Dickensian references and drawing on philosophy, popular culture, film and more.

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'I'm a Learning Technologist. Get Me Out of Here' A techno-autoethnographic poem

How does your digital garden grow?
Does your data reap what it sows?
Is it pride or digital prejudice?
What is this digital edifice?
Beauty and the digital beast?
When will this acceleration cease?
Jumping on digital bandwagons
From the dinosaur to the digital dragons
A storm in digital teacup
It's really hard to keep this all up
Another level of Dante's digital hell
Trapped in a technological shell
Shaken but not digitally stirred
All the lines are getting so blurred
Lost in a cloud in the digital haze
The oppression of the technological gaze
Real life with techno twist
What have I really missed?
The techno capitalist comes out to play
Do you come here often? What does your data say?
Born in a digital manger
Because things just got stranger
Now what happens to the Philosopher King
When AI gods are out in full swing?
There is no soul in this code
Bias is sent to try us, in multimode
Hope is resistance, surveillance insistence
Mind your own digital business
As we turn into our own digital witness
The best practice is to hide in plain sight
We disguise consent and fly our own digital kite
High in the sky we plot in the cloud
Dancing with data like a digital clown
Rocking and rolling with all the digital rocks
Ticking and tocking with the digital clocks

Techno corridors and realities collide
I'm truly out of my digital mind
Lost in the digital laundry in Zoom
Trapped in a small black box of doom
With my name and always on mute
Here's to the avoiding the digital salute
Who stole my legacy hand?
From the data wardrobe, do you understand?
What does it all really mean?
It's all a bit grey and a bit in between
Lock stock and two digital barrels
A pint of data then I'll be on my virtual travels
Life seems so digitally arresting
Why does it have to be so testing?
What about poetry in digital motion?
As idle as a digital ship upon a digital ocean
The techno poetics, the digital heretics
Have we been thrown under a digital bus?
What is all of this digital fuss?
Let us go then my data and I
While my heat map is spread out in the sky
The digital echo chamber in the room
Along with the elephant in digital bloom
Oh give me a break
You great big fake
Am I a file, or a USB?
Buzzing around like a digital bee?
I'm down with the loads
In a hive of digital toads
Just click 'save as' and hope for the best
The inevitability of digitally oppressed
Chasing digital waterfalls
Jumping over digital wonderwalls
Deathly digital hallows
As idle as a digital marshmallow
Deep inside the data ghettos
Trapped inside a digital archipelago
A digital atlas, of data sadness
The descent into digital madness
As we descend into the digital plateau
It's not me, it's the technology you know
If technology was a fruit
I'd wear my data like a suit
Five a day
What does the data say?
Data glorious data
Digital harvest or data hater?

Data ashes to data ashes
See my digital life as my computer crashes
Digital dust to digital dust
My, myself and my data distrust
Like a phoenix from the digital flame
All these pictures in a beautiful frame
If you're a 'host'
Then you're a digital ghost
Roar, soar, digital folklore
Story, glory, my data inventory
Digital history, magical mystery
Let's go on a tour, to the digital core
Explore our futures, data shakers and digital movers
Never knowingly, is data undersold
All that glitters that is definitely not gold
If I'm left to my own devices
Then life is full of digital surprises
The semiotics of my technology
The poetics of digital ecology
A kaleidoscopic glitch
A digital switch
Is there light at the end of the digital tunnel?
Is there an end to the data funnel?
The fellowship of the digital ring
The hills are alive so let us sing
Eternal sunshine of the digital mind
Sadly, my data has left me behind
A digital thorn in my side
What will my data really provide?
All face and no book
Get me of the digital hook
Escapology of digital mythology
Eco digital, data miracle
Invincible, yet unforgivable
What is the data forecast? A lot of digital contrast
Cloudy with a chance with digital rain
Please just let me try to explain
Unapologetic, a digital relic
The exquisite appeal of the digital aesthetic
A digital totem, data is broken
Data can be good, bad and ugly
Digital mess doesn't fit too snugly
Technology's empty promise
Is just a quantum of digital solace
A pivot within a pivot around the digital globe
The lion, the witch and the digital wardrobe
Data is invincible, predictable yet irresistible

I feel like a roar coming on
Can data sing its own very song?
Digital languish and anguish
Digital antiquities and ambiguities
Great digital expectations
Digital trials and tribulations
“Please Sir, can I have some more data?”
“No, certainly not, if you are a digital hater”
What would Alexa say if she said what she really thinks?
“Sorry I don’t know that one” my digital heart sinks
“I know what I want to say, but I can’t find the words”
To kill a thousand digital mockingbirds
As I develop my digital craft
Man plans and digital gods laugh
Teaching, learning and technology
Is this the newfangled holy trinity?
All the digital bells and whistles
Disguising the digital hells and thistles
Mirror, mirror on the digital wall
Whose data is the fairest of them all?
Little digital fires everywhere
Is this really a pedagogy of care?
A night at digital museum
A data athenaeum
How it started and how it’s going
With digital origami flowing
Nothing to see here
Both being and digital nothingness are clear
Zoom & the art of motorcycle maintenance
Let me make your digital acquaintance
From wellbeing and mindfulness
To analytics and techfulness
All the hidden digital forces
Are only fools and digital horses
All technology, great and small
Some will work and some will fall
The proof is in the digital pudding
But what are we really cooking?
Have your digital cakes and eat them
And after that, well what then?
A thousand digital plateaus
An enormous data gateaux*
One hundred years of digital solitude
How have we become so digitally shrewd?
All my data is so vivid
The day of the digital triffids
404 Sorry not found

I can hear everything but there is no sound
The robot who cried digital wolf
The endless enigma of the digital gulf
Fantastic technologies and where to find them
It's not a question of 'if' but of 'when'
What digital shadows does data cast?
Perhaps the future is a guide to the past
How can I navigate this inevitable path
Without bringing about my own digital wrath?
Who am I and what can I be?
Hell is other people and their technology
No exit from the digital narrative
If our future is shared, then why isn't it collaborative?
I work in tech, therefore I am
The house that tech built, is like a digital wigwam
How can I make sense of the digital totem
When everything is undeniably broken?
Digital dominoes, all falling down
The data ocean, in which we all drown
Let's make tech great again!
But is your data really your friend?
Technology to transgress
My digital distress
The negative space in the virtual world
What if I am tomorrow's girl?
Digital apocalypse now
What will data allow?
Perhaps we need a *tabula rasa*
The data flows like digital lava
The digital canvas like *la pelle du vide*
Bringing out the digital void in me
How to train your digital dragon
While falling off the digital wagon
The digital wheels are all on fire
What if data couldn't get much higher?
Putting the pivot into pivotal
Why is everything so digital?
From remote working with love
I walk on digital splinters
A thousand digital winters
What if my hand does not fit inside the digital glove?
Wayfinding inside a digital palace
What if data means no malice?
Locked inside a digital fugue
What are we really trying to prove?
The techno-poetics of all this data
This is just too much, so I'll see you later

9. Relentless: A fashion project for the future

By Johanna Payton

Introduction

Many of my BA Journalism students have a keen interest in fashion, and they are aware that the fashion industry is one of the world's worst offenders when it comes to pollution. At the start of the academic year 2020-21, when I met the new third-years, we talked about this issue, and agreed that we wanted to do something, to make a difference. We talked about a sustainable fashion show, a panel debate, inviting students across the university to contribute to a sustainable fashion conference...but we were all too aware of rising COVID-19 cases, and the threat of another lockdown. How could we raise awareness around the fashion industry's pollution problem within our community, if we couldn't be in the same room?



Image 1 Elliott Swan on location at Streatham Common, styled and shot by Johanna Payton

Creative intervention

Wait! We are journalists. And we needed to think like journalists. The physical constraints caused by coronavirus couldn't hold us back creatively. As Jesse Owen Hearn-Branaman (Hearn-Branaman & Bliss 2021, 271) writes, the radio journalist Johnny Bliss, confined to his bedroom by the pandemic, "managed to do some of the best work of his career". We felt instinctively that we could use our journalistic skills to create something unique and positive to motivate change within our community. A project the students could be proud of (and include on their CVs - employability is always a priority for third-years).

Inspired by Erdem's fashion show on the outskirts of Epping Forest (Mower, 2020), we came up with the idea of a sustainable fashion showcase in our own surroundings. The showcase would be shared in the form of a video, supported by a documentary with sustainable designers and influencers, to highlight the climate change challenges the industry faces.

For the showcase, a core group of students volunteered to source sustainable clothes from designers, friends and their own wardrobes, styling their closest contacts, and filming them on location in nearby parks, woodland and commons. Between us, we had the video editing skills (using Adobe Premiere Pro) to weave the shoots together, creating a complete and coherent fashion narrative. I am a firm believer in learning and working alongside my students, so I convinced my son to let me style him, and he modelled for the first shoot on a chilly but sunny day on Streatham Common, minutes from our home.

The students set up social media accounts and a website to promote our work, and devised mood boards—inspired by gender fluidity, which was an important theme for them - for the clothes, make-up and locations. Our film director, Diana Buntajova, provided direction on the day of each shoot via WhatsApp, feeding back live on footage and still photography captured on the 'set'.



Image 2 Paris on location in Liverpool, photographed and styled by Jessica Battison

We faced many challenges--we had no budget, so we relied on the good faith of designers to send samples. One of the students walked to a studio in east London to collect a selection of clothes in person. Some students made their own clothes for the shoot - there is a wonderful crochet tank top on display courtesy of third-year student, Laura Molloy. Due to

social distancing, bubbles and limitations on travel, models were sisters, boyfriends, sons, best friends and flatmates. And every shoot was managed and directed remotely, with our core team spread between London, Liverpool, Cyprus and Italy.

But the technology worked beautifully, and thanks to the wonder of Zoom interviews (and the easing of restrictions in the spring of 2021) making the documentary was a breeze. We had contributions from a range of impressive fashion figures, with every interview set up, conducted and edited by the students.



Image 3 Third-year students Amber Zafar and Akshay Patel on location in London

Lessons Learnt

Relentless launched on July 23 2021. The 15-minute film premiered online and we held a live Q&A afterwards on Zoom, with an in-person event in the evening. A group of 30 students (to comply with COVID-19 regulations!) joined me in central London for an informal photo shoot and a party in the park. Our social media manager was still in Cyprus due to travel restrictions, but she joined us via video call.

The students successfully applied for [City's School of Arts and Social Sciences \(SASS\) Sustainable Development Goals Competition](#) and were awarded first prize in the undergraduate category for their work on Relentless



Image 4 to the left shows: Team Relentless celebrating: (l-r) Johanna Payton, creative director, Akshay Patel, PR director, Diana Buntajova, film director, Yu-wei Lim, fashion director

None of us wanted Relentless to end there. Everyone involved (including my son, who will now only buy from eBay) said their attitudes towards fashion consumption had changed, and we were able to reach out across our university community and beyond to share a message of hope and change. In this academic year, I'm launching a new Relentless project in collaboration with the [Fashion and Textile Children's Trust](#), with this year's third-year students making an editorial video about the charity, and an event and panel debate planned for spring 2022 to discuss the future of the UK high street.

Relentless was a hugely inspiring project that gave the students real-world experience as fashion journalists. I would urge colleagues to invest in extra-curricular projects where students can explore their creativity and potential outside the constraints of assessment. It helped them to bond deeply with me, each other, and their university community more widely, in spite of having no physical interaction.

We used the barriers of the pandemic to our advantage, and I hope you'll agree that the Relentless fashion film and documentary has made a worthy contribution to the debate around fashion and sustainability.

[YouTube video](#)



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10. Matching HEI staff training, and development demands with expertise in creative and flexible ways: the Expert *innenpool “Flying Experts”

By Martina Emke, Andreas Matt, Elisabeth Scherer, Peter Bernardi and Chrissi Nerantzi

Introduction

Faced with multiple challenges in preparing their teaching staff adequately for digitally-enhanced teaching, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are in need of professional development offers that meet their specific training demands in timely and flexible ways. The German project *HD@DH.nrw: Hochschuldidaktik im digitalen Zeitalter* (University Teaching in the Digital Age), which is funded by the Ministry of Culture and Sciences of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia, seeks to address these needs in different ways.

Based on the *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators* (DigCompEdu), the project *HD@DH.nrw: Hochschuldidaktik im digitalen Zeitalter* consists of four parts. While three parts of the project are still being developed, the (a pool of experts in digitally-enhanced university teaching and learning; website currently in German only) has been operational since January 2021. Experts from this pool can be requested by HEI in North-Rhine Westphalia to facilitate online workshops, provide targeted input at training sessions or provide consultancy services. There are over 50 experts in this pool from different academic fields, covering a wide range of topics. Currently, we are working toward expanding the pool to include experts from different parts of the world. The experts' fees are borne by the project.

This reflective practice article aims to consider and critically reflect on the services offered by the pool of experts from the perspective of all actors involved. Based on a specific example, the perspectives of the coordinators, the university which requested the expert and the expert who facilitated the workshop for the university in July 2021 will be described. Finally, the main take-aways from this joint experience and future plans for expanding the pool will be described.

Background

Based on the *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators* (DigCompEdu), the project *HD@DH.NRW: Hochschuldidaktik im digitalen Zeitalter* (higher education teaching and learning in the digital age) consists of four parts. One part of the project is currently developing a training programme which will enable teaching staff at HEI in North Rhine-Westphalia to (better) integrate technology into their teaching in critical and student-centred ways. Another part of the project seeks to establish a Community of Practice among teaching staff across HEI in North Rhine-Westphalia, while yet another part is collecting

feedback from stakeholders to ensure that all project offers continuously meet the varying demands of HE teaching staff.

While these three parts of the project are still being developed, the *Expert*innenpool 'Flying Experts'* (a pool of experts in digitally-enhanced HEI teaching and learning) has been operational since January 2021. Starting with 17 experts, the pool has been substantially extended both in number of experts and in the scope of expertise offered. There are now over 50 experts in the pool covering a wide range of development areas, from project management to hybrid teaching. Most experts are based in Germany; however, the pool coordination now strives to include more experts from different parts of the world, possibly leading to the creation of an international network. In its current form, experts from this pool can be requested by HEI in North-Rhine Westphalia to facilitate online workshops, provide targeted input at training sessions or provide consultancy services. In this way, the project has been able to meet the staff development demands of HEI from an early start, aiming to offer a more comprehensive staff development programme to HEI at the beginning of next year.

As of mid-October 2021, over 30 staff development offerings in collaboration with the pool of experts had taken place. In this section we will describe a collaborative workshop about creativity for learning and teaching in higher education which was facilitated by Chrissi Nerantzi at the Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf in July 2021. The university perspective will be presented first, followed by the experts' reflections. In the final part of this section both perspectives will be brought together against the background of the university's 'online first' attitude as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which certainly contributed to the participants' willingness to experiment with digital tools in new and innovative ways.

University perspective: expectations and aims

We became aware of the services of the pool of experts through a project presentation, and we were quickly convinced that requesting an expert to facilitate an online staff development workshop at the Heinrich Heine University could indeed be very helpful for our work as staff developers. Using the services of the pool would enable us to bring new expertise to our staff development programme, free of charge.

Choosing an expert was fairly simple and straightforward: Using the filter options on the pool's website and exploring the experts' stimulated reflection, provided us with new ideas and led to questioning our existing program: Which subject areas are under-represented or not yet represented at all in our University's staff development program? Which new and innovative (pedagogical) approaches could we introduce to the teaching staff? What would we like to promote further at our university? Which topics or areas of development are interesting for the teaching staff at our university?

Working for the university teaching services centre, we are involved in a national certificate programme which requires university teachers to attend workshops on designated topics, such as course development, student assessment or student counselling. Many workshops are pre-determined in the annual staff development programme, and thus we only have limited capacity and a limited budget to experiment with new topics and formats. The

services of the pool of experts offer the teaching services centre the opportunity to test new workshop ideas with different experts. They also allow us to experiment with new workshop formats and to further develop our workshop portfolio by creating a network for future cooperation.

We initially offered workshops facilitated by experts from the pool to multipliers and teachers who are already more experienced in university teaching and whose feedback after the workshop has provided us with valuable input: If a workshop was well received by the participants, we would look for ways to integrate its topic into our annual programme. And if a workshop turned out to be less useful for the participants, we would know that we will have to sharpen our focus.

Chrissi Nerantzi's profile intrigued us because she has got a vast background in university teaching, and she practices what she preaches. Chrissi has done research on creative approaches in university teaching for a number of years, and she has been continuously implementing her knowledge in her own work. Choosing Chrissi also allowed us to connect with an expert based outside the German educational system, who offered a different perspective on university teaching. With face-to-face workshops requiring participants to spend considerable time on travel, the online workshop greatly helped workshop participants balance their teaching duties with their care work. Figure 1 shows a picture which was created to promote the workshop on Twitter.



Figure 1 Workshop promotion picture shared on Twitter (Peter Bernardi)

The participants' feedback showed high satisfaction with the content presented and with the methods used in the workshop. It was greatly appreciated that Chrissi facilitated the workshop in German and that she created a very engaging environment. During the three-hour workshop participants felt that they had gathered numerous ideas, really connected with other participants and were able to discuss both their own and other participants' creative approaches. This was particularly important because of the participants' interdisciplinary backgrounds, ranging from medicine over natural sciences to humanities.

Expert perspective: workshop facilitation

Thanks to the pool of experts, I had the pleasure of being invited to work with colleagues at the Heinrich Heine University in Germany to facilitate a workshop. Under pre-COVID-19

circumstances it may have been a physical visit to the institution, and I would have loved to see and work with everybody locally. However, the pandemic got in the way! It didn't stop us though, as digital connectivity and networked technologies enabled us to create an alternative experience and, most importantly, there seemed to be an appetite for this type of professional development more than ever before.

Confession: On a personal level, this invitation filled me with excitement and anxiety at the same time. While I was born and brought up in Germany and later studied translation and worked as a German language teacher and translator for many years, I have to admit that I have neglected my German since I moved to the UK over 20 years ago. However, as the topic of the workshop was creativity for learning and teaching in higher education, I felt that it was worth investing time and energy to get up to speed again with my German and to connect with German colleagues. Facilitating this workshop also provided an opportunity to gain insights into local practices at a German university, presenting valuable learning and development opportunities for me.

The workshop: Needing to familiarise myself with the pedagogic terminology in German, the preparation took more time and effort than usual. I put the workshop together with great care as I wanted every participant to take the maximum out of it. Putting a one-off workshop together for a group of people who don't know the facilitator is never easy. However, in this case the task was even more difficult because of the workshop focus (creativity) and because I wanted to model slightly unusual practices which entailed taking risks and trying out things that at least some of the workshop participants may not have experienced before. From past experience I knew that I might face some resistance if participants feel that they are thrown in at the deep end. I wanted to mitigate against this by creating a safe space which would allow participants to open up and be willing to go on a journey and try out new things. Therefore, I decided to become part of the learning community in this workshop by sharing my personal story and by connecting with participants on a human level. I showed my own vulnerability, helping participants to trust me and invited them to try out new approaches and practices collaboratively. Of course, integrating such activities within a three-hour online workshop is very challenging. I also think that in face-to-face interactions socialisation and trust-formation processes perhaps happen more naturally and quicker.

My aim during the workshop was to create a range of opportunities for interaction and practical activities that would trigger curiosity; create interest and provide some ideas for participants of the workshop to take away and to adapt for their own teaching practice. Starting with my own story, we shared practice examples, followed by a discussion around creativity and an overview of learning and teaching theories suitable for higher education. We then moved to participants' experiences and discussed participants' understandings of creativity in university teaching, using the tool Mentimeter. Figure 2 shows that participants in this workshop mainly associated freedom (Freiheit) with creativity.

Was verstehen Sie unter Kreativität in der Hochschullehre?



Figure 2 Word cloud (created with Mentimeter) results exploring the meaning of creativity in university teaching (Chrissi Nerantzi)

Participants were also asked to share in what way(s) they felt the COVID-19 pandemic had enabled or hindered their creativity. Figure 3 illustrates the willingness to use more creative approaches, that students actually welcome such approaches and that colleagues are perhaps less concerned now to receive less favourable evaluations on their teaching because of these.

Kreativitätsmeter in der Pandemie



Figure 3 Creativity meter (created with Mentimeter) (Chrissi Nerantzi)

Learning and developing online does not mean that we need to restrict ourselves to using digital tools that may appear flat. Instead, digital tools allow for creative approaches to mix and mesh items from participants' lives and everyday surroundings within a digital environment to foster learning through making. I was hoping that this approach would bring the workshop alive and move us away from the perception that learning online is two dimensional. Figure 4 illustrates this approach with the paper ball/Papierball activity.

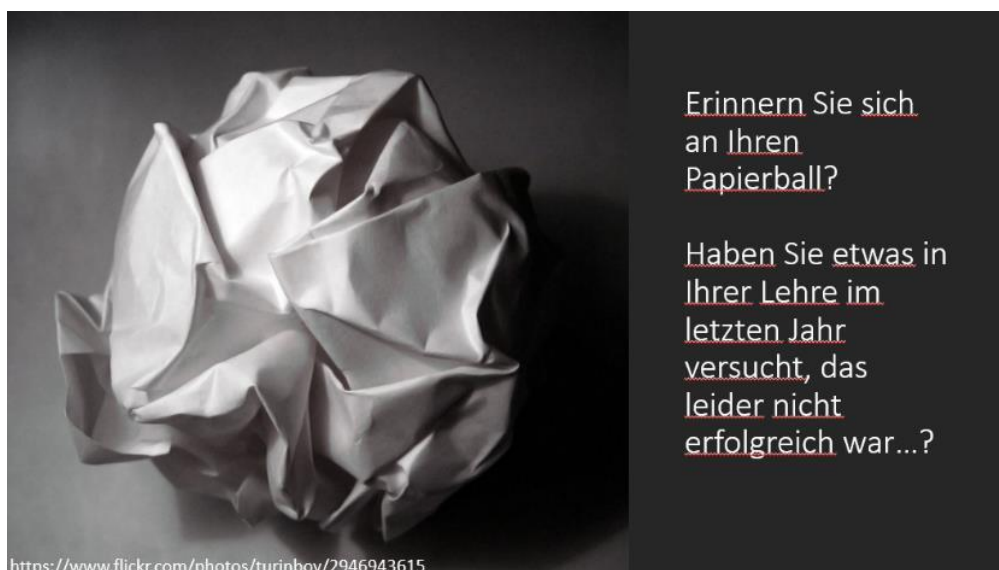


Figure 4 The paper ball / Papierball activity (Chrissi Nerantzi)

I used this activity to encourage participants to think of a specific teaching intervention that did not work, capture this intervention on a piece of paper and turn the paper into a ball. This paper ball is usually thrown away or put in a recycling bin. However, I asked everybody to hold on to their Papierball, as it would be used later in the workshop. Towards the end of the workshop participants were asked to discuss their Papierball intervention with another participant and to identify how their idea could perhaps be developed into a successful teaching activity, using some of the triggers and creative approaches we discussed during the workshop.

I hope this workshop provided food-for-thought and many creative ideas for further action. Vielen Dank Martina, Peter und Elisabeth.

Bringing the perspectives together: take-aways

This section describes the main take-aways from this workshop from the authors' perspectives.

Overall, this workshop confirmed that the filter options and the experts' profiles on the website of the pool make it easy for HEI to develop first ideas for a staff development offer and to choose as suitable expert. From a coordination perspective, liaising closely with both the HEI which requested the services of an expert and the designated expert during the organisation of a professional development offer is of key importance for ensuring a satisfactory experience for all parties concerned, as Chrissi confirms: "The conversations I had with Martina (pool coordinator) and Peter (Heinrich Heine University) were extremely helpful and acted as a thermometer if you like and helped me get a feel of the group before meeting them."

For Chrissi, facilitating the workshop was helpful for overcoming her reservations of working in German and inspired an interest to continue on this journey and identify further collaborative pedagogic activities with German-speaking colleagues: "Accepting to do this workshop has made me a little bit braver."

For the service centre, collaborating with the pool of experts has three distinct advantages: “Firstly, the workshop facilitated by Chrissi helped us address pre-existing staff development needs with regard to creative approaches in university teaching. Secondly, using the services of the pool enables us to offer a broader range of workshop topics and allows better on-demand programme planning. Thirdly, digitally-enhanced workshop formats can facilitate cooperation between national and international participants and institutions.”

Another take-away from this workshop was the impression that teaching staff at HEI may be more open to experimentation now than they had been before the COVID-19 pandemic. It could be that this change in attitude may be related to the rapid shift to teaching online due to the pandemic, something that could not be avoided, and triggered changes in thinking and practice more than ever before.

Conclusions and outlook

All five authors involved in the organisation and implementation of the workshop agree that the services of the pool of experts enable HEI to offer their staff opportunities for professional training and development they could not have offered otherwise.

For 2022, the Heinrich Heine University is planning two workshops with Chrissi Nerantzi and possibly another workshop with an expert from the pool. In one of these workshops we will focus intensively on creativity, its practices and techniques in a larger setting. Another workshop will feature Serious Play as a method for teaching, again using the services of the pool of experts to explore a topic which has been underrepresented in our staff development programme so far.

Finally, the staff development example described in this article clearly shows the pool’s potential for collaboration beyond federal and national borders. The concept of bringing together HEI demand for innovative and creative staff development offers and the knowledge and experience from experts around the world in flexible ways could be expanded to create a larger network. Martina (pool coordinator) would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in developing this idea further. To facilitate communication and information, the pool’s website will be translated into English in the next year. In the meantime, [a webinar in cooperation with the Association for Learning Technology](#) on 29th November 2021 will provide an opportunity to learn more about the pool and its services. The webinar will be recorded and made available on YouTube.

11. The power of creativity and reflexivity in writing your dissertation during the pandemic

By Mia Michaela Pal

Little did I know in my late teenage years that my poetry reading indiscretions would later serve as the foundation for a master thesis. Reading was my top favourite thing as I was growing up, not only because of my curious nature but also because every time I was reading a story I loved, I would afterwards imagine it and reconstruct it and then trying to rewrite it in my own style. It wasn't until I started to read the Latin poet's famous *Metamorphoses* around the age of 17 when my sense of invincibility in recreating the world, I was diving in collapsed. Although he lived some 2000 of years ago, our stories seemed similar. He also had a taste for recreating and retelling the myths about ancient characters, but in a much funnier and more interesting way than his counterparts at that time. Also, his parents gave him the best education so he would become a lawyer later, but Ovid had other plans. He wanted to be a poet. My parents also prepared me to step into the family's tradition and train as a psychiatrist yet in my heart I could not envision myself seeing people as brains with 'electrical signals going wrong across brains' (as my father sometimes joked) instead of whole human beings.

These were the thoughts that were entertaining my mind as I was reading Ovid's life and enjoying his verses, when all of a sudden, I come across one of the lines that was saying: '*Tempus edax rerum—Time, the devourer of all things*' and then I stopped. At first, I wasn't sure that what I was reading was correct but there was no mistake, it was all there in plain light: *Time, the devourer of all things*. I was simply struck by the impact that line had on me- I thought to myself, if time devours all things out there, then there is no escape for life, or for any of us! Beyond being terrified by such greedy force that nobody ever told me about until then, my inquisitive nature established quickly that I was going to find more about what time was and how exactly was this devouring taking place, but also how come despite this sweeping power everything was still there, the world seemed to be pretty much in the same place every day. Over the years I have tested and experimented myself in Time and my perception of time in every possible situation that I found myself in.

Like Ovid, one day after going through the traditional training to become a psychiatrist, I found my voice and I knew that I wanted to approach the human being in all its wholeness, with compassion, and if anything in that wholeness was ever broken, I wanted to help in reconstructing it, but from a different perspective. A perspective that integrated and celebrated the person's right to participate in their own story and recreate it and be empowered by this creative force that links us back to our roots only to re-emerge a thousand-fold stronger, fresher, bearing the seeds of the new human being.

Looking back reflectively, I can say, that I have waited all my life for this opportunity of studying time from a psychological perspective. Why psychology? After studying literature and other sciences, philosophy, theology and physics, I realised that there isn't a more

inquisitive science out there than psychology. It became quickly obvious that I could apply psychological research not only to study my time thirst but also to anything else specific our human experiences, behaviours, minds in their entire complexities. There is a sharpness, a detachment from passion and sentiments, a rigorous approach in the psychological endeavour that transpires through regardless of the research methods applied. Does psychology claim it is invincible in its endeavour? Not at all! Its replications, meta-analyses and continuous testing and disseminating of its findings are all a sign that psychology has not stopped evolving and recreating its face and retelling its story. Retelling our story, a story that needs retelling all the time because, as a species, we are continuously changing and evolving and the more sensitive and aware of these changes we are, the better we can understand how to positively impact the world we live in to prepare it for the next generations.

I remember as vivid as now the joy I felt when I put together my proposal for the dissertation and submitted it. It was an air of relief, a feeling of coming home after many years of wandering, similar maybe to what the Prodigal Son must have felt when he returned home. I called my thesis: *'How do mature students returning to university via online learning experience the use of time?'*

I wrote my dissertation during the pandemic, and alongside time, the destroyer of all things, COVID-19, was bringing in a new variable of destruction, more tangible, more terrifying that time could ever be. Once again, I took *time* to go in and reflect and I found myself going back into my sacred space where stories were always retold, recreated, and given a new life and meaning. I then knew that I had two significant forces, one ancient one very current Time and COVID-19 that were challenging, especially for the population I was interested to study: the mature students returning to university.

Although I wanted to tell a story, the story of time, I also wanted to be able, just like Ovid, to tell it from a new perspective, that was not told before, and be creative about it in a way that would later inspire other directions and other outcomes. I wanted to write a story that mature students, students in general and educators would find useful, creative, and reflective. The research design that won ended up being Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the last 30 years of research into time phenomena were mainly quantitative in nature. I had my lived experience of time, yet I was embarking as a co-creator that from a double hermeneutics perspective was leaving behind their own ontological preconceptions just to understand and make sense of the new meanings assigned to the participants own experiences of time.

Reflecting upon my experience now, after having done the research, two words stand out: creativity and reflexivity. These proved to be not only my playground friends but also my guides and fair critics later in life. To them I owe not only my successful MSc dissertation but also the richness of our roots that reminded me that we always have unlimited access to tap into these creative resources. By keeping that pure curiosity alive and give a terrifying story a new meaning we are bringing in a new dimension that inevitably forces the terrifying factor to also transform and change so it does reflect the new meanings, the new creative force we believe in.

And finally, am I wiser about time now than back then when I was reading the *Metamorphoses*? I still remember the feeling I had when I first read Ovid's line: '*Tempus edax rerum—Time, the devourer of all things.*' I am less terrified for sure (thanks God for that!!:) as I learnt that resisting such force is futile. And yet, it still eludes me and surprises me. Plus, I have discovered that it is not always *present*. There are moments when it disappears completely, when everything is still and forever unmovable, and such moments are rare, when I write, or when I listen to some piece of Brahms or Wagner, and then I think Ovid might have been wrong all along, and that time does not devour everything. That all the memories we create, all our works, relationships, accomplishments and dreams are never lost or '*devoured by time*'. They remain and they are being transformed and retold by the ones around us and by the ones who come after us, they are being continued and from such perspective life and the human creativity outlives and out wins time.

12. Internationalisation and education, is it becoming more of a dream than reality?

By Gabriella Rodolico, Mark Breslin, Anna Maria Mariani

*“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”
– St Augustine*

This famous phrase is reported in a blog posted by Craig Thompson in 2016 where he mentions John Feltham publication of English Enchiridion in 1700. The quote continues

*“They that never stir from their home read only one page of this book”.
– St Augustine*

However, in a world where planes, trains and automobiles stopped moving and the world came to a sudden halt during the global pandemic of COVID-19, it was clear that many students would not have the opportunity to have any form of internationalisation experience intended as mobility.

At the School of Education, University of Glasgow, Mark Breslin (Lecturer in Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow) and I asked ourselves “Is this the university experience we would like our students to have, where they are isolated within their bedrooms or university dorms with little, or in some cases, no interaction with other students?” The answer was clearly O!

Although the impact of internationalisation through students’ mobility has several benefits at multiple levels and is very complex, it was clear to us, that for many, the chance of exploring and experiencing different cultures, foods, religions, and the social interaction with students from other countries risked becoming a distant memory or even an impossible dream. Yet in the age of technology where distance and digital learning managed to support Education through a global pandemic, it was important to build on the good practice to create alternatives to mobility opportunities such as the Erasmus Mundus project.

In addition, as we emerge from the pandemic the future is unclear as to what internationalisation will look like, if at all. Furthermore, with the UK leaving the European Union, movement between countries is very unclear and there are many barriers that will need to be cleared before free movement of students where they can enjoy similar experiences such as the Erasmus Mundus programme.

As human beings we have the curiosity and the soul of explorers. Take Charles Darwin for example, he was known for his contributions to science as a geologist and scientist as he

travelled far and beyond to evolve biology as he collected species from various countries around the world. More recent human travel adventures include NASA and the Mars 2020 preservative Rover Mission which seek out any signs or forms of life and collect samples of rock and soil to return to [earth for analysis](#).

These are all big exploration missions! You will think ... however, for a student studying within Higher Education the exploration wishes as well as the spirit of adventure and excitement remains the same. Internationalisation provides the opportunity for students to explore beyond their own habitat and for many this will be a life changing experience and memories to cherish forever.

Conversations around internationalisation have changed significantly with the challenges which COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and possibly Brexit have presented for student mobility. There has been a shift which has highlighted the impact of internationalization on improving the quality of education, research, and other social goals. Supported by this evidence, and by the wish to improve our students' experience Mark and I investigated how technology could support active participation of students in international activities by organising cross countries seminars based on multilingual and multicultural approach with a focus on mutual enrichment across international Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers.

Participants were year 3 undergraduate students studying at the University of Glasgow, School of Education, on the Master of Education (MEDuc) ITE programme and Italian student teachers on the course "Scienze della formazione" at the Niccolò Cusano University, Rome supported by the participant tutors included Mark, myself and Annamaria Mariani (Lecturer in Education University Niccolò Cusano).

Several sessions were organised and remotely delivered to both cohort of students with a careful blending of tutors' expertise, focused on their cultural and language diversity; a carefully planned topic of high interest for both countries: Parental Engagement in pupil's Education; and finally, a very well taught integration of the sessions' content and task requirements into both Universities' assessment agenda. Results showed a mutual enrichment and active participation which went beyond any expectations with elements of e-networking and overcoming of language, communication, and even possible stereotype barriers.

This experience opened the hopes that meaningful international experience can be organised by relying on digital technology and the passion of Universities' tutors as well as the wish to exchange knowledge and good practice that characterise students around the world!

Please watch the [full presentation](#) or [read the blog](#).

13. Drawing for learning during a pandemic

By Curie Scott

Curie shared ways drawing augments learning within HE during the monthly #creativeHE network meeting (18th October 2021). Participants were invited to create a drawing that captured the sense of where they were now in respects to teaching before sharing in breakout rooms.

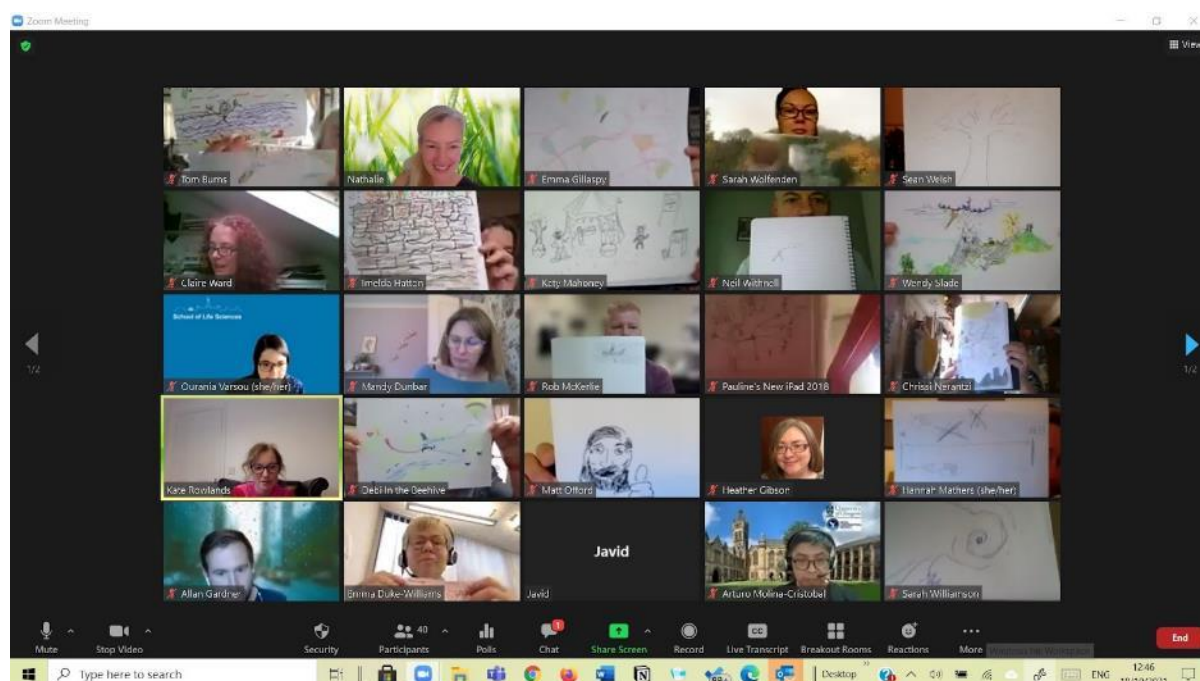


Image 1 Participants sharing creations during session on Zoom

Drawing opens up a rich interactive space with students both face-to-face or online (e.g. sketching through [Miro](#)). Drawing has a long history with learning though drawing for learning remains marginalised within Higher Education (HE). This blog expands on my drawing focused PhD (Scott, 2018) and my educational practice.

Drawing enables all the levels of learning denoted by Blooms taxonomy. That is, drawing has been shown to help students remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, and create. These forms of thinking are necessary for our students' lives as the future workforce post-COVID-19. Here are the top [ten life-skills](#) cited by The World Economic Forum (2020) necessary:

- Analytical thinking and innovation
- Active learning and learning strategies
- Complex problem-solving
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Creativity, originality and initiative
- Self-management skills (= resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility)

- Skills of reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

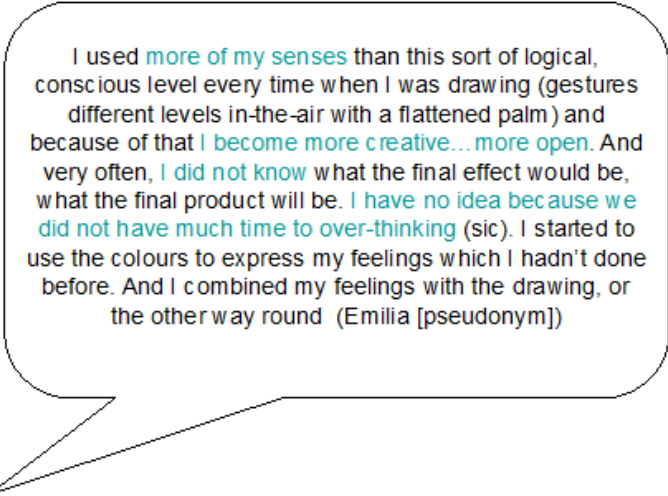
[My PhD research](#) titled 'Elucidating perceptions of ageing through participatory drawing: a phenomenographic approach' utilised freeform, intuitive drawing or 'mark-making'. I named this drawing process 'generative drawing', which I defined as:

"The process of mark-making for enactive, emergent non-propositional thinking to be presenced on the page in order to be seen. It accepts indeterminate drawn marks as holders of potential meaning, appreciates drawing as both process and product, and connects drawing with thinking and reflecting" (Scott, 2018, p.xii)

I was especially interested in whether drawing helped adults to explore their worlds. Children explore their world through mark-making. In fact, drawing development is a crucial part of a child's cognitive development. My PhD research confirmed that drawing was useful for adults too and can be "reaffirmed as intelligent practice, which is as much about thinking, seeing and interrogating as inventing and which communicates as intensely with others as it refers to the affective self." (Petherbridge, 2010, 432)

I developed a novel methodological contribution to research, moving the use of drawing as a research elicitation method or tool to being a research methodology. Further depth can be found on the [Drawing Programme methodology](#) in an interview with Janet Salmons, from Method Space. The Drawing Programme comprised four connected drawing workshops to enable people to explore their perceptions of getting older. Each workshop lasted three hours and ran over four consecutive weeks. There were two groups, each with health professional students and people over-60. Every week, participants practiced different drawing techniques with different drawing tools. They individually created five drawings related to their future older self. Each person presented their understanding of their drawing at that point in time to the others before group discussion. Participants displayed drawings at home and sent me private reflections on their evolving insights about drawing and ageing. The core questions were "what happened in you when you did the drawing" and "what are your insights now?" as they reflected on their drawings over a three-month period.

I analysed the drawings, text from the conversations and the emails, as well as the actions from the video during the five key drawing activities. One outcome was that drawing enabled embodied cognition. Here, Emilia (a pseudonym) demonstrates this embodied



I used more of my senses than this sort of logical, conscious level every time when I was drawing (gestures different levels in-the-air with a flattened palm) and because of that I become more creative... more open. And very often, I did not know what the final effect would be, what the final product will be. I have no idea because we did not have much time to over-thinking (sic). I started to use the colours to express my feelings which I hadn't done before. And I combined my feelings with the drawing, or the other way round (Emilia [pseudonym])

cognition by 'drawing-in-the-air' through gestures as well describing the interplay of her sensations, an unconscious (or perhaps, subconscious) drawing/thinking, becoming more open and creative and the use of colours to express feelings or vice versa:

Participants described a dialogue working in many directions. One was that the drawing spoke or communicated to them. This concurred with what occurs during art-making where

... the work itself secures its own voice and helps set the direction ...The maker is guided and, in fact, at times surrenders to the demands of the emerging forms [...] The act of representation is not merely a monologue made manifest through the obedient responses of a material; the material itself speaks and creates new possibilities ... (Eisner, 2002, 7 and 239)

There are many types of drawing that benefit learning. Some are representational and some more freeform. Sometimes the drawing itself is the purpose and less commonly the drawing process is emphasised.

During our global experience COVID-19, we have had to rapidly adjust to teaching through a screen. Additionally, the public have been shown many different drawings to communicate different perspectives of COVID-19. Drawings include diagrams of handwashing, schematics of the virus, infographics on social distancing, a cumulative graph of cases over a timespan, and colour-coded world maps to show density of confirmed cases.

I shared some images from my own and others' work on how drawing can be utilised. This demonstrated the broad scope of drawing and included:

- Doodling to improve memory
- Objectively representation of observations
- Recording data
- Documenting a process
- Explaining abstract concepts

- Organising complex narratives
- Uncovering & voicing the unconscious/ hidden
- Representing subjective experiences
- Processing uncertainty
- Analysing concepts
- Collaborative or group drawing
- Drawing to designing novel solutions
- Storytelling e.g., through graphic novels
- Campaigning and educating
- Embracing the Unknown
- Drawing to stimulate the imagination
- Drawing as a methodological tool for research

I hope this whetted your appetite and you will experiment with drawing for teaching. There are many different drawing techniques in my book as well as suggestions of how to overcome common obstacles such as 'I can't draw'! To find out more ways that drawing benefits us, please contact me via [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#)).

To end, here are some other drawing resources:

- Excellent 'Drawing to Learn' booklets and other resources from [Brighton University](#)
- [Thinking through drawing](#)
- [The Big Draw Campaign](#)
- [Drawing Research Network](#)
- Rich Pictures - open access, [animated tutorials](#)
- Felice Frankel's: [an in-depth resource for drawing in science](#)

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[Curie's 2021 book Arts for Health](#)

14. Hybrid co-teaching using technology: Could this be a model for peer-mentoring?

By Natalie L Courtney, Michelle Welsh, Ourania Varsou

Co-teaching is where more than one teacher is involved in the planning and delivery of lessons (Maihi, 2021). This is not a new concept, and a common example of co-teaching is during teacher training. Whilst this helps the trainee teacher to learn, research has also shown that pupils performed better when they were co-taught by both student and qualified teachers compared to when there was no student teacher present (Bacharach et al., 2010). In this situation, co-teaching is also a method of peer mentoring whereby the mentor with more experience can offer the mentee help and advice (Maihi, 2021). Developmental peer mentoring is utilised at the University of Glasgow, where newly joined members of academic staff are mentees and are paired with more experienced peers who adopt the role of mentor. This serves to support and encourage the mentee to increase their confidence, but it also aims to give the mentor the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience as well as reflect on their current teaching practices (University of Glasgow, n.d.).

In this case study, we have explored this joint concept of co-teaching and peer mentoring in a hybrid setting. Two members of academic staff, with different levels of experience, co-taught neuroanatomy to undergraduate anatomy students. There was a focus on histology and embryo development, which are all subject areas that students often find challenging. The addition of the skills required for microscopy, added a further challenge to these classes for students (Hall et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2019; Tait et al. 2020). All students were on campus with the mentee, while the more experienced mentor was online.

We trialled three different approaches for our hybrid co-teaching lessons. Microsoft Teams was used for its chat function, between mentor and mentee, and Zoom for its video call capabilities and screen sharing functionality. Our teaching laboratory was equipped with TV screens and a projector for screen sharing, a speaker system, and a wide-eye camera to view the room. This hardware coupled with the functionalities of Zoom allowed for two-directional livestreaming between the online mentor and the class/mentee.

The first case involved the mentor on Zoom, assuming a support role, and the mentee leading the class on campus. The mentor could see and hear the class but did not communicate with them. Instead, the Microsoft Teams chat function was used to communicate with the mentee. This allowed for private conversations between the mentor and mentee and enabled the mentee to feel in control of the class, gaining the respect of the students without feeling like the more experience teacher was leading. In this setup, we found that the mentor was not only able to support the mentee by answering any queries privately, but they were also able to provide assistance in observing the laboratory in terms of monitoring student conduct and class timings. In addition, instant feedback was provided to the mentee on their teaching performance.

In the second case, the mentor was only available on the Microsoft Teams chat but was not viewing or actively teaching the students in Zoom. This provided support to the mentee, but felt less like co-teaching, especially for the mentor, as they were unaware of what was happening in the laboratory. This approach also provided no additional support to the students directly and did not allow for the mentor to provide teaching feedback to the mentee.

In the third case, the mentor was on Zoom and was visible to the students on the screens around the laboratory and on the main projector. The mentor took the lead and delivered the knowledge content of the lesson. Meanwhile the mentee was assisting students with the practical aspect of the laboratory, ensuring they were able to use the equipment and find the structures of interest described by the mentor. The setup of this approach can be seen in Image 1. It is important to highlight that during all live Zoom calls, the meeting was locked for security purposes preventing anyone entering the two-directional livestream.

The first and third approaches we have described worked well as both members of teaching staff were able to provide support to each other and to the students. In the first, the less experienced mentee was able to take the lead within the laboratory while the more experienced mentor could provide support and feedback. In case three the roles were reversed, allowing the mentee to focus on building their experience and confidence within the class and observing how an experienced teacher delivers the topic and communicates with students. Although the second approach may be helpful for a mentee in terms of knowing there is support for them, on reflection we think this is less suitable as a method of co-teaching and peer mentoring as there is no opportunity for feedback and therefore is only providing a method of troubleshooting.

However, where approach two would be useful is in situations where human cadaveric material is being used within the laboratory. Due to the laws surrounding the viewing of this material, we would not be able to adopt two-directional livestreaming and, therefore, the Microsoft Teams chat could provide support to the mentee. In addition, for approaches involving Zoom to work well, the teaching settings must have audio-visual facilities and the two-way internet connection must remain stable for the duration of the class.

Overall, we feel based on the above experiences that hybrid co-teaching with technology is a great way to promote academic peer mentoring.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Mr Stuart McNally for setting up the two-directional livestreaming technology that allowed for this approach to be piloted and evaluated. Without Stuart's help and support, we wouldn't have been able to test this new hybrid co-teaching approach.

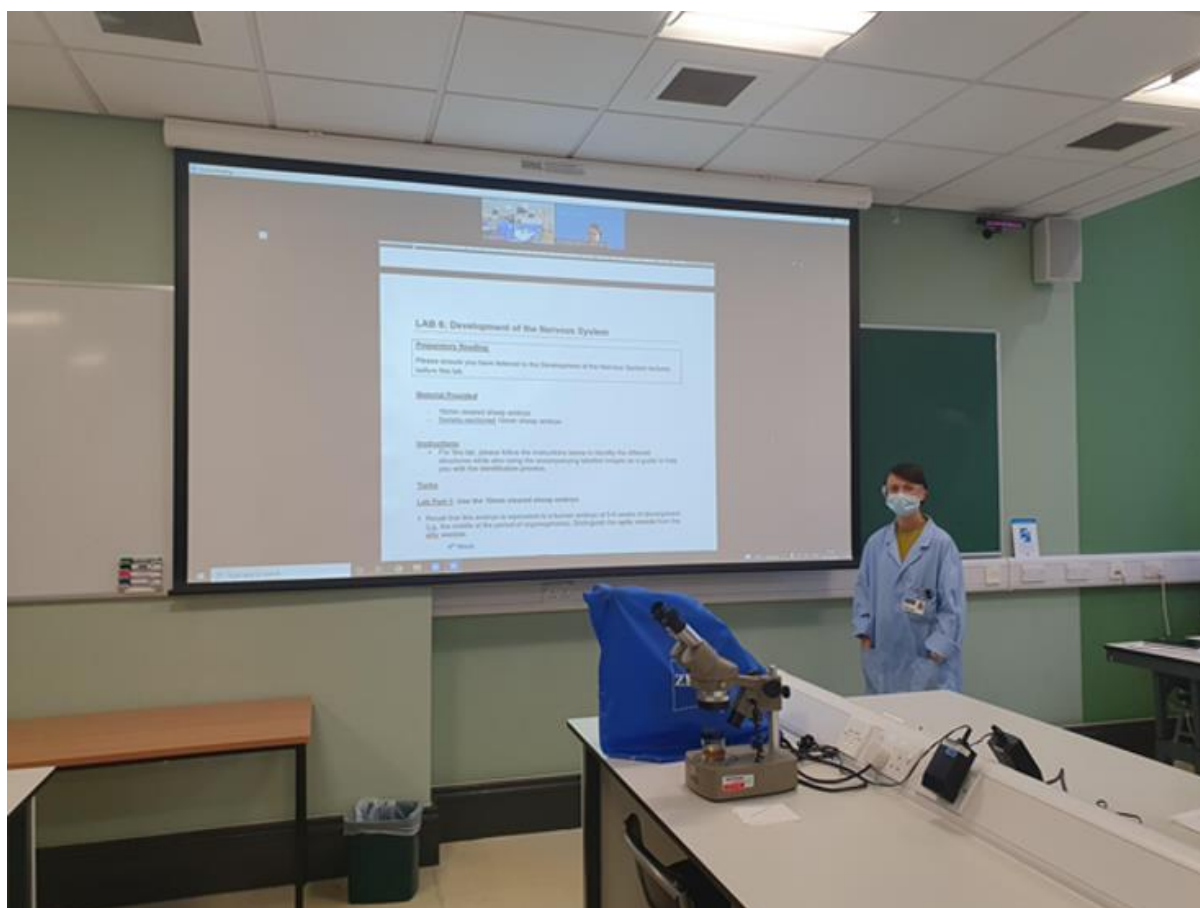


Image 1 The mentor online, sharing their screen to describe the teaching material, and the mentee on campus in the laboratory where the students attended for their teaching.

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15. Improving student engagement in the virtual world of disease diagnostics

By Nicola Veitch and Claire Donald

In January 2020, all Higher Education teaching went online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This had a huge effect on how laboratory teaching in the Life Sciences could be delivered, with online labs replacing hands-on practical experiences (Abriata, 2021; Delgado et al., 2020). A key laboratory for undergraduates in the School of Life Sciences (SofLS) at the University of Glasgow (UofG) is a 5 day long Molecular Methods (MM) course, that allows students to gain practical skills in molecular biology that are essential for future employability (Scott et al., 2018). Under hugely challenging conditions, staff and students collaborated to develop an online platform using the local Virtual Learning Environment, Moodle, to deliver an online equivalent of the MM course (Image 1). Staff and Graduate Teaching Assistants undertook extensive training in online course development in a time-sensitive manner to allow the resources to be made.

As part of the online delivery of the MM course, a new bespoke Virtual Reality (VR) app was utilised. VR has shown promise as an educational tool and in skills development across many disciplines with research on the value of it only recently emerging (Radianti et al., 2021; Jensen and Konradsen, 2018). The VR app was embedded into a 'Disease Diagnostics' lesson within the MM course, with the user experiencing the processes involved in diagnosing a viral disease in an immersive research lab environment (Image 2). This VR app had been recently designed by a team of scientists and the VR-design company, Edify, and was re-purposed to have the novel capacity to broadcast the VR environment by-proxy via Zoom. A staff member who coordinates and teaches on the MM course donned a VR headset and from home, delivered 20 hours of lessons via Zoom to ~600 undergraduate Biology students covering multiple degree disciplines split into small teaching groups throughout the teaching year. A staff member with extensive knowledge and research experience facilitated the session, answering student questions about various topics relating to the lesson in real time.

Students experienced entering a VR disease diagnostics research laboratory that was modelled on a lab in the UofG, initially putting on a lab coat and washing their hands. Moving into the lab by teleportation, the user arrived at a sterile microbiological safety cabinet, in order to set up an experiment using automated pipettes. Various instructions popped up along the way, allowing flow from one set of tasks to the next. The staff member enabling the VR walkthrough talked students through each step, adding value to the VR lesson by including theory and practical experiences of common mistakes. The students visualised how to set up an experiment that was used to quantify the concentration of viral cDNA within human blood samples. The students were then teleported to a machine that processes the samples and generates data which was visualised within the VR environment. The data that was visualised was then available for students to analyse as part of a Moodle quiz, that walked them through instructions on how to learn to process the data using R-studio.

Following on from the VR lesson, students were encouraged to ask questions live on Zoom to both staff members present. Lively discussions followed, with questions on all aspects of what they had experienced. Discussions focussed on the use of lab equipment, working in a sterile environment in a microbiological safety cabinet, differences in diagnosing various viral infections, including COVID-19, and how to avoid common mistakes. Discussions often moved on to cover careers in research and what it is like to work in a research lab compared to what the students had previously experienced in a teaching lab.



Image 1 Virtual lab

Preliminary feedback from students indicated that students felt more confident in their understanding of the key concepts and that they had confidence they would be able to carry out these experiments in the future in a real-world setting. Many students however did comment that as individuals they would like to experience the VR lesson themselves using their own VR headset. Staff involved in delivering the teaching noted that it was an innovative way to show students experiments they would normally be doing themselves in a teaching lab during a pre- COVID-19 year. Not only did the experience allow the students to consolidate their learning from the online course material, but it also gave them a shared opportunity to get as close as possible to being within a real-world laboratory environment whilst working remotely. In addition, this is an environment they would not normally be able to access unless completing postgraduate studies or if working in a research environment, so having the ability to use these facilities was unique.

In the dramatic move to online teaching in March 2020, various positive outcomes have occurred. Staff and students have been trained in how to develop and deliver effective online teaching and various innovative strategies have been tried and tested. Using VR as a tool to deliver teaching online has proven to be an effective short-term replacement for lab-based teaching. Moving forward, students will have access to VR headsets on campus and will have the ability to experience this virtual disease diagnostics world for themselves.

Scholarship studies are underway to investigate the effectiveness of this approach with a future aim to enhance the student experience.

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16. Overcoming obstacles when teaching STEM during the COVID-19 pandemic a collaborative approach

By Gabriella Rodolico and Deborah Simpson

STEM Education is considered an integral element of our future economic and social development (Scottish Government, 2017). It is then plausible to think that as part of our commitment to the STEM agenda, specialists in Teacher Education Institutions should focus on preparing pre-service teachers and on supporting in-service teachers by equipping them with deep content knowledge in STEM and strong pedagogical skills (Ejiwale, 2013).

This case study is about a remotely delivered STEM challenge on renewable energy as an example of a collaborative project-based learning on sustainability conducted in partnership between University of Glasgow, School of Education tutor and two probationer teachers (PGDE Primary Science former student teachers class 2019-20), several In-Service teachers in mainstream and Additional Support for Needs (ASN) schools as well as experts from the 3rd sector. The project aimed to highlight the relationships between STEM, Engineering design process, Sustainability and Social Sciences to aid young people to identify and find solutions to current problems. The STEM challenge called “Build your own sustainable house” has been piloted in Scotland and showcased at the Festival of Social Sciences, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in November 2020 and published on [the GTCS news magazine pp 50-51](#). Feedback from schools, parents, pupils and other participants have defined it as a very engaging and well-planned activity.

Creative intervention

In January- February 2020 Gabriella started an interesting professional conversation around the topic of “build a floating turbine” STEM challenge with a team made of academic and non-academics mainly specialised in engineering and mathematics. The aim was to make the challenge very relevant to the Scottish context where floating turbines are emerging as possible future wind farms in Scotland.

During the first lock down, Gabriella run a remotely delivered “science is fun” club where the initial STEM challenge prototype called “Build a floating turbine”, was tested with the PGDE Primary class 2019-20 at the School of Education University of Glasgow with the aim to:

- a) Apply the concept of renewable energy with focus on the most abundant in Scotland: Wind power (**Science**),
- b) Apply the formulas to calculate forces of gravity and buoyancy, Wind power, sizes and shapes of blades (**Mathematics**),
- c) Apply the designing” Review and Revise” process (**Engineering**) to design the prototype of floating turbine
- d) Apply the principle of modelling (**Technology**)

PGDE student teachers enjoyed it so much not only as student teachers but as parents as well:

“...being able to involve my children has been fantastic as it had given our projects a genuine purpose.”

This made Gabriella think a little bigger and in June-August 2020, she planned a STEM challenge that not only could engage student teachers but also pupils, reaching out for schools, teachers, parents all supported by academic and non-academic professionals to achieve a common goal: Learning for Sustainability through STEM. To achieve such big goals, she needed specialised collaborators and who better than the PGDE teacher students who took part at the “Science is fun “club?

The project

The project aimed to raise awareness of sustainability and STEM in an unconventional manner by promoting Social Sciences studies in primary and secondary schools through STEM. A significant hurdle had to be overcome initially to even allow the project to occur, due to COVID-19, that being how the project was going to be taught, as such circumstances were new to all involved. The team worked together to produce a hands-on remotely delivered STEM Challenge: “Build your own sustainable house”, with the aim to develop pupils’ curiosity and collaborative thinking around the issues of sustainability. The exploration of power generated by the sun and how it can be converted into wind energy.

Pupils from 4 schools, with each giving lesson time to both the theoretical aspects and the practical model building, which were managed by both probationary and In-service teachers alike. Over a course of several sessions, the children designed their own sustainable house – involving teaching of the engineering design process along with explaining human behaviour as the main key component for a sustainable society – then presented their feedback on the decisions they made during their build.

These sessions were further enhanced by twilight sessions the pupils engaged in at home while sharing this learning with their parents/guardians engaged in at home, whereby they received further tuition and guidance from academic leaders and an in-role engineer for Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) company Catapult. Participants heard how a real model turbine works from Project Engineer at Catapult, Lorna Bennet, who works on projects in wind and tidal power to address industry challenges through technology innovation and research. While academic leaders explained the huge effort Scotland is putting into promoting wind energy as a valid renewable energy alternative in the context of the Scottish socio-economic environment.

Additionally, further recorded sessions from Dr Daniela Castro-Camilo, Lecturer in Statistics at University of Glasgow and Structural Engineer Iain MacLeod of the Institute of Engineers in Scotland (IES) provided explanations on how statistics can be applied to make predictions relating to wind power and the efficiency of wind turbines. Further to this the pupils’ mind were also challenged on complex issues in connection to wind energy. The aim behind this was to get the pupils to think about big questions, such as why wind power is not yet our

main source of energy and why we do not all have wind turbines in our gardens powering our homes.

From these inputs the pupils were then able to complete the next part of the challenge of building a wind generator to produce electricity to light an LED bulb in their model house. They also gained an understanding of the socio-economic benefits such renewable energy can have while combating the issues related to sustainability of the planet.

Lessons learnt

The running of the project relied on the use of technology to adhere to the strict guidelines for education establishments and to ensure a safe approach during the pandemic where contact and communication in person with others was very limited. However, this itself had its own complications, in particular, regarding the platform to be used in relation to child usage and safety matters.

To circumvent this matter Microsoft TEAMS was utilised as the children were familiar with it due to having used it during a period of lockdown previously. It was equally familiar to all other parties due to their experiences of online teaching, learning, and conducting meetings by such means over the last 6 to 12 months. It also provided the security required to safeguard children of primary age (East Ayrshire Local Authority, 2020). The most important lesson learned was having alternative means to live online learning to deliver the same workshop, where technical issues could arise such as internet accessibility, loss of connectivity by some and cameras not working for others.

There was a point, after the twilight sessions when probationer and in-service teachers took the lead and decided to decrease the likelihood of lack of internet accessibility and connectivity issues by carrying out the project in class and by completing the workshop during school hours. This showed an incredible resilience and confidence that were developed as a response to the critical circumstances. If doing this project again, having a pre-recorded version of the whole workshop would be good as a fall-back plan. This would also make the project more inclusive since all of the children in the class would have access without worrying about internet connection at home or having access to a device with internet capability to join and take part in the workshop.



Image 1 Materials and making task

In addition, the project demonstrated that success in STEM can be achieved when the exchange of knowledge and ideas is an active collaborative process between teachers, academics, industry experts and pupils who took on the sustainability challenge with the motivation to succeed (Rodolico, 2021).

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17. Micro-art breaks for creative mindfulness

By Nathalie Tasler

While I have written about my creative practice during the pandemic before and just as we are in the final throes for editing the magazine I created another digital game. This digital game focusses on helping colleagues and my MEd students to develop their [research questions](#). I wanted to focus on creative practice that has helped me cope with the increased workload and permanent low level stress the pandemic has brought with it.

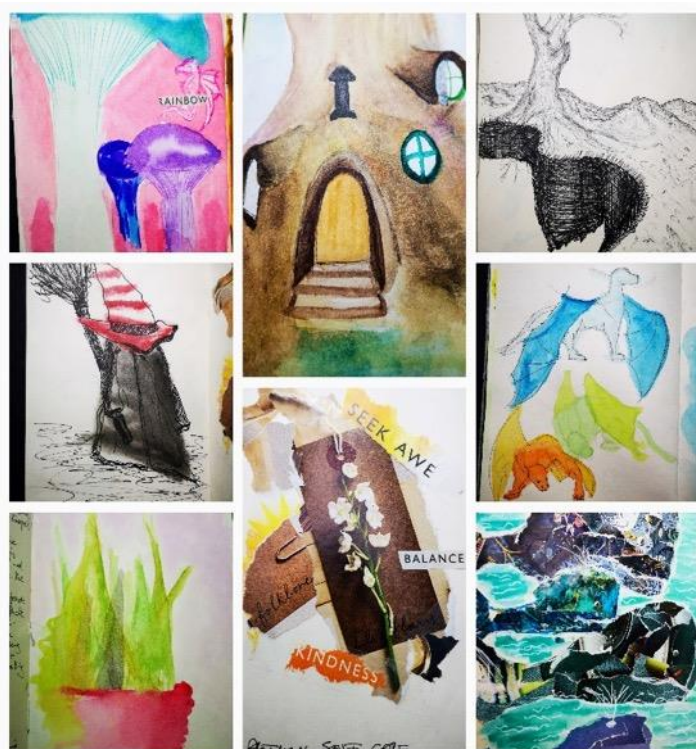


Image 1 A collection of micro art pieces

After some stretches, I usually work on a layer of watercolour, or prepare the next painting, by sketching it out. Or I continue working on a part of a drawing. However, I have found watercolour is the perfect creative practice for these micro breaks, as it usually necessitates times for various layers to dry before continuing with the next. In the image above the two collages (the bottom right corner with the whales and the bottom middle one with the wording 'seek awe') have taken me all of five minutes and just under ten minutes to make.

If you struggle engaging in something like this, where the outcome has no definite purpose, using these [creative practices](#) in a [bullet journal](#) might work for you. The elaborate monthly pages take many micro art breaks to make, and you create something to look forward to when the next month begins (Image 2 below). But also, just preparing a page by creating structure and doodling a little is a very short task and does not need to be complicated.

There are many inspirations on Pinterest, even whole series of: *How to draw ...* which provides colour coded step by step instructions of drawing anything from plants to animals,

My ADHD brain does not like the kind of mindfulness exercises which require to be still, in fact these tend to induce even more anxiety leaving me in a worse state than when I set out.

However, I have discovered that deliberate mindful engagement with some forms of my creative practice, have helped me significantly with coping during this academic year. I am calling these my micro-art breaks. I usually engage if there is a small space of time in-between meetings: usually between 5 and 10 minutes. Too little time to undertake any other work, too much time to sit idle. The process works as follows:

to objects, buildings etc. If you feel even doodling is beyond you, there are other techniques that are easier. Creating collages or using washi stickers and making a page frame from there (Image 3 below) or getting some stencils or bullet journal templates you can trace.

Finally, there is tape transfer: you use any transparent tape you have available and use a discarded magazine (mind you it does not work well with high-gloss magazines for these you need modge podge glue+lack (Image 5)). Firstly, choose a part of an image (or words) from the magazine and rub the tape vigorously over the image or words to remove even tiny air bubbles. Finally, pull the tape and the top layer of the image will come off and you can glue it into your journal (Image 4).



Image 2 Cover pages for September and October, inspirations found on Pinterest

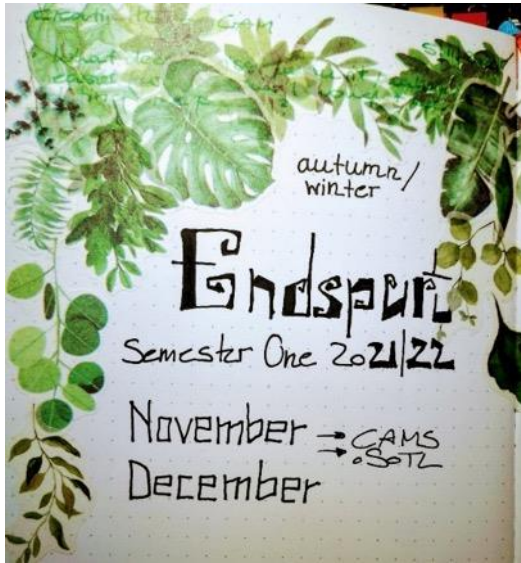


Image 3 (left) This page experienced a miss-start so I covered this with washi tape stickers and made is a section heading page.

Image 4 (right) This is an example of a quick tape transfer I made just to demonstrate the technique.



Image 5 Is an example of a modge-podge image transfer onto a page of my latest journal.

18. Anonymous asynchronous peer reviews to facilitate student interaction and reflection

By Cristina Mio

In education, social constructivism is widely used as a theory of learning to guide the design of classroom instructions and activities (Adams, 2006). Central to social constructivism is the belief that knowledge is constructed through conversation and interaction.

As a lecturer in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), I believe it is important for student teachers to experience, as students, the pedagogical approaches that they are encouraged to use with their own pupils. Therefore, before the 2020 pandemic, I designed my PGDE (Post-Graduate Diploma in Education) face-to-face seminars to maximise student-student interaction. With the move to online teaching in March 2020, these in-person discussions had to be held online using video-conferencing platforms. However, I felt that the virtual environment was limiting the quantity and quality of those conversations, as some students seemed reluctant to participate actively to online discussions.

PGDE students come to university with a wide range of experiences. Most of them have already worked for a few years before starting the PGDE programme and have accumulated a wealth of knowledge and developed interesting views. I felt it was a shame that these funds of knowledge did not have a channel to be exchanged within the seminar group, so I planned and implemented a series of activities to facilitate asynchronous online interactions between students.

The overarching goal of these activities is to enhance student teachers' ability to critically reflect on their practice, as teachers need to be able to analyse lesson plans and reflect on their lesson delivery to develop as reflective practitioners (Dewey, 1910). The students are asked to analyse a lesson plan and upload their analysis as a text file using the [Moodle Workshop tool](#). Then, their submission is peer-reviewed by two other students in the class. The process is fully anonymous for both reviewee and reviewers, but not for the lecturer, who is able to monitor the process and read students' feedback before it is released back to the reviewee.

The benefits of peer assessment are widely recognised (Topping, 1998). Peer reviewing gives students the opportunity to read other students' work and to provide and receive constructive feedback. However, its implementation requires careful planning and attention to set up, organise and monitor the process (Langan & Wheeler, 2003). As I was aware that it is crucial to provide clear guidelines and scaffolding for carrying out the reviews (Topping, 2009), I provided students with enough time and support to familiarise themselves with the framework used to analyse the lessons, the Teaching for Robust Understanding framework (TRU) (Schoenfeld, 2014). Before the first round of peer reviews started, students learnt about TRU by reading research papers, discussing them during the seminars and analysing a given lesson plan together with other students. Only after this preparatory phase, the students were asked to analyse a lesson on their own and to upload it for peer review.

At the moment of writing, the first round of peer reviews has just been completed. Even though this is a formative task that does not influence the summative grade students receive in the course, all students in the class completed the required tasks (submitting their lesson analysis and reviewing other students' work). This is in itself a success, as sometimes students are very strategic with their workload and do not fully engage with formative tasks. However, the high level of commitment I observed in this class is not unexpected, as post-graduate students usually have strong intrinsic motivation. In addition, the sense of community that has been established within this small group of students might have also played a part in encouraging the students to complete these activities.

I plan to have a second round of peer review activities, after the student teachers complete their first school placement. Students will be asked to submit the analysis and reflections on one of the lessons they have taught in school, and then to peer review two other students' submissions. I expect that students will be very interested in reading how their peers have approached teaching; learning about other students' teaching strategies will prompt them to reflect on their own practice.

As a final activity, when students are back from their second school placement, they will be asked to (self) assess the lesson and analysis they submitted previously, in the second round of activities. This will be an opportunity for students to self-reflect on their journey as a teacher. They will also be asked to reflect on the peer review process as a whole and if and how it has helped them towards becoming reflective practitioners.

I am aware that reality could interfere with my plan. With summative assessment deadlines approaching, students might not participate in the second and final rounds of activities as fully as they did in the first round, as they might prioritise the summative over the formative tasks. Nevertheless, it will be interesting for me to read the students' reflections on the peer review activities, and to compare my expectations to their experience. These reflections will inform my future teaching, as part of the never-ending cycle of evaluation and adaptation that I expect my own students to enact in their own practice.

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19. A creative case study: Enhancing student engagement with professionalism through graphic Medicine

By Lottie Corr, Lynsay Crawford, Lindsey Pope, Amy McCoy and Janelle Goh

Introduction

Medical students are expected to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes outlined by the GMC (General Medical Council, 2016). While knowledge and skills are easily shaped by traditional medical school curricula, facilitating development of the necessary attitudes and an appreciation of the nuances of modern clinical practice can be more challenging.

In their 2020 report, the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) outlined the fundamental role of the arts and humanities in medical education (Howley et al., 2020). Reflecting this, we have developed and introduced Graphic Medicine into the first 2 years of the undergraduate medical curriculum, via the Vocational Studies programme, to enhance students' understanding of the lived experience and support development of their required professionalism competencies. Vocational Studies leads on teaching medical students' communication skills, professionalism, ethics, and inclusion health (EDI).

Graphic Medicine is defined as the intersection between comics, and health care (Czerwiec et al., 2015). It examines diverse perspectives and addresses medical, social, and cultural issues. As a learning tool it can help teach empathy, professional identity development, equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as cultivating self-reflection through creative and innovative means (Czerwiec et al., 2015; Green & Myers (2010). Graphic novels are written by patients, carers and healthcare professionals and can detail personal experiences beyond those readily accessed in clinical settings.

Creative intervention

This work was inspired by the Graphic Medicine Student Selected Component (SSC) at the University of Glasgow, in which students read and discuss autobiographical comics about diverse healthcare themes and develop skills to draw their own comics about their experiences of becoming doctors (Corr, 2020). These graphic narratives are utilised as a platform to engage in discussions about professionalism, professional identity and the wider medical culture, empathy, patient experience and the impact of unconscious biases on marginalized patients.



Image 1 “Tired” by Janelle Goh, third year medical student at the University of Glasgow. This comic explores Janelle’s experiences of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This process within the SSC is helpful for students to develop their reflective skills, and comics allow for a creative and innovative methodology beyond written prose which can enable a greater depth and richer understanding. Additionally, engaging in creativity, a skill in which most medical students are relative novices, is an excellent learning tool to highlight barriers to learning such as perfectionism, build confidence in learning new skills, encourage openness and honesty through a greater depth of reflection, and challenge fears of failure; crucial skills for students’ studies as well as their future training (Green, 2015).

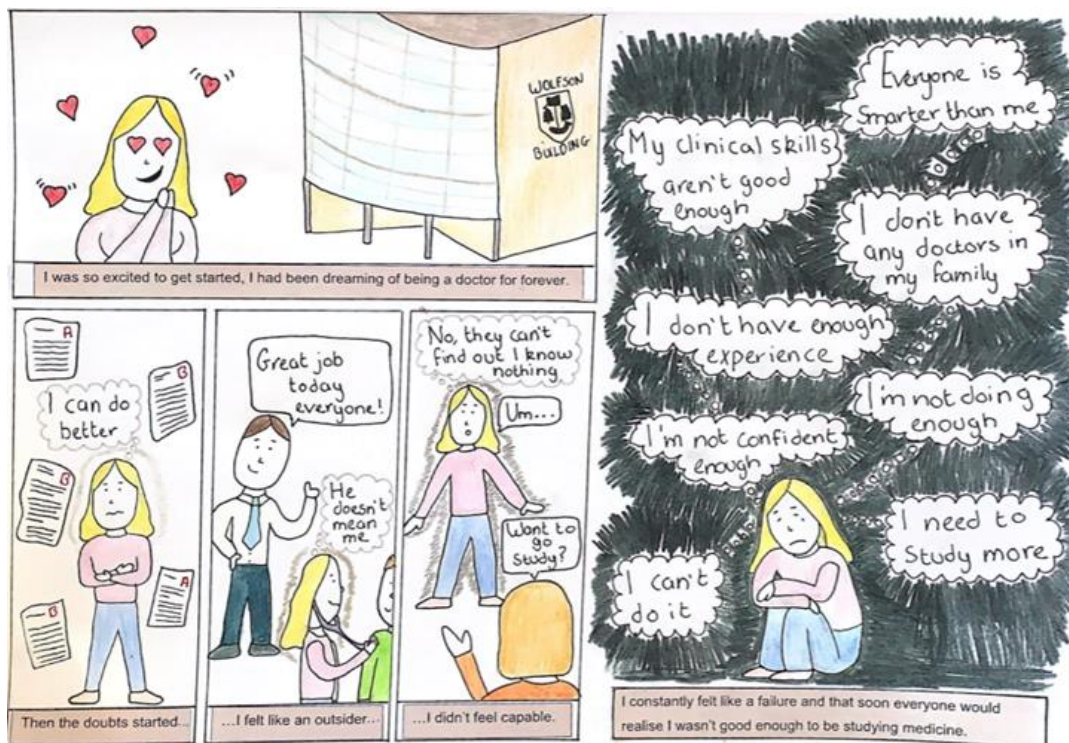


Image 2 “Accepted” by Amy McCoy, third year medical student at University of Glasgow

Aiming to integrate these successes into the wider medical school program, we examined the current Vocational Studies curriculum for first- and second-year medical students and, working with a Graphic Medicine consultant, identified key comics that would complement or expand on important themes. A combination of book and web-based comics were selected, and discussion-based exercises were designed around these to enable students to explore and reflect on these texts. These comics were selected to provide a personal narrative or single story of autobiographical experience to enable students to better understand and relate to patients’ experiences, and we strove to integrate experiences of marginalised groups that are not always represented in traditional medical education. In addition, creative drawing exercises were also incorporated to deepen students’ reflection and encourage further learning through developing new skills.

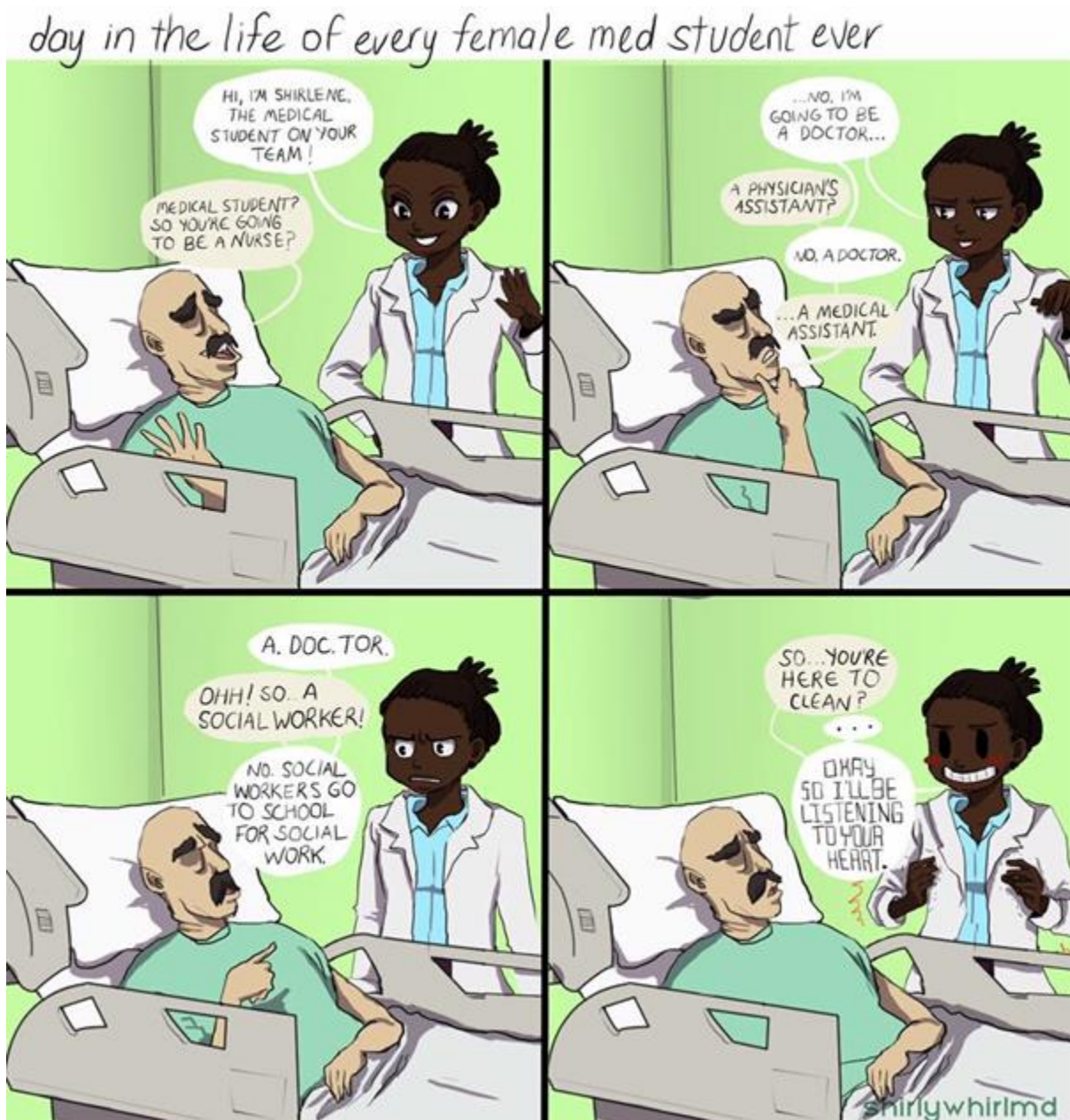


Image 3 Day in a life of every female med student ever by ShirlyWhirlMD

We also created a workshop for Vocational Studies tutors to support their teaching using comics and promote confidence in discussing creative resources. As tutors were also novices in creating comics, an important focus of this workshop was to advocate for tutor participation in drawing exercises in order to flatten the medical hierarchy and help tutors to seem more approachable, encourage students to feel more confident in showing their work, and remind tutors of how vulnerable inexperienced students can feel when performing unfamiliar skills; thereby fostering group cohesion.

Lessons learnt

Graphic Medicine has been introduced into the Vocational Studies curriculum for this academic year (2021-2022) and will be formally evaluated by tutors and students to assess its impact, and the desired objectives of increasing student engagement with

professionalism. The professionalism sessions had previously been challenging to teach and were perceived as 'dry' content. Introducing creative drawing will enhance interaction within the sessions, and prompt reflection by tutors and student, on concepts which can be more nuanced and less amenable to didactic teaching styles.

Informal feedback following the tutor workshop was overwhelmingly positive. The tutors felt it was important that they had teaching about Graphic Medicine and experience of how it worked 'in action', to allow them to confidently use it within their small group sessions. The formal evaluation of this innovative approach to professionalism teaching will be complemented by scholarship to add to the growing body of evidence on Graphic Medicine.

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20. Workshop for open education practitioners: key takeaways for the H2020 NEWCOMERS project

By Mojca Drevenšek

The *Workshop for Open Education Practitioners*, facilitated by Dr Chrissi Nerantzi and Dr Javiera Atenas in May and June 2021 as part of the Master program *Leadership in Open Education* at the University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia, was one of the most engaging educational events I have ever experienced. The student engagement was implemented in a way, comprising the cognitive, affective-motivational, and behavioural aspects of learning. My challenge for this workshop was to explore, design, test and evaluate how Open Education can add value to the existing energy-related non-formal educational practices.

Throughout the 5-week workshop, I have focused on the project I'm professionally involved in, which is the European H2020 (Horizon 2020) research project called NEWCOMERS, exploring the New Clean Energy Communities in Europe. In the NEWCOMERS project, I am in charge of communication, dissemination and exploitation activities, and one of the key exploitable results of the NEWCOMERS project is the Our Energy online platform for education and awareness-raising about clean energy communities. In this creative case study, I will share my personal learning experience from the workshop.



Image 1 Our Energy is an online educational platform, created by the H2020 NEWCOMERS project.

The three aspects of learning were closely aligned with the planned key learning outcomes of the workshop (see Table 1 below).

Table 1 Workshop for Open Education Practitioners: how I perceived the connection between the a.) learning outcomes, b.) aspects of learning, and c.) key resources for my own project, related to the H2020 NEWCOMERS project (Newcomers, 2019; Our energy, 2020), and the benefits I have gained from the workshop

Workshop's learning outcomes (as defined and presented by the instructors at the beginning of the workshop)	What aspect of learning I experienced regarding the achievements of this learning outcome	Resources from the workshop that addressed the achievement of this outcome from my learning perspective and my project needs, and my benefits, gained from the workshop
Consolidated and applied knowledge about the basic concepts, methodologies and tools in Open Education (OE)	Cognitive aspect	<p>Exploration activities throughout the workshop, not only in week 2 (which was dedicated to the exploration phase itself). Applicable examples and resources, detected through the 5 weeks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 2: OER/OEP/OEC examples, presented by the instructors + additional resources (esp. García-Holgado et al., 2020) • Week 3: examples of design models/techniques + additional resources suggested by R. Macintyre, esp. on critical and speculative design (Johannessen, L., 2017) • Week 4: guidelines for planning a test (Dam and Siang, 2020) • Week 5: examples of evaluation strategies (ICDE, 2015) <p>The critical discussion of specific examples (models, frameworks, tools) and their broader context led to my narrowing-down of the ideas/tools/approaches that are most appropriate for my own project.</p> <p><u>My personal cognitive benefit, gained from the workshop:</u> Ability to define the WHAT of my project: what tools, frameworks, methodologies etc. <i>could</i> be used (if confirmed by target groups in the next steps).</p>
A critical attitude towards the application of methodologies and tools in Open Education	Affective / motivational aspect	<p>The structure of the workshop simulated the development of my project: from exploring the different options via designing the project plan and testing it towards the evaluation of the chosen solutions. Discussions with instructors and peers throughout the workshop helped build a critical attitude towards what works for our</p>

		<p>projects (and what doesn't). This increased my motivation to decisively progress in developing my own project plan.</p> <p><u>My personal affective/motivational benefit, gained from the workshop:</u> Ability to define the HOW of my project, i.e. how to approach the process, where to start, how to connect the steps etc.</p>
<p>Familiarity with an open and creative approach in conceptualizing, planning as well as evaluating an OE process</p>	<p>Behavioural aspect</p>	<p>The continuous workshop discussions and several other types of interaction, e.g. sharing ideas and resources via chat, having expert guest speakers, working in pairs, self-studying, presenting to peers and challenging their ideas etc., have strengthened my confidence to approach my future project in a much more open and creative way. In other words: I can reuse and share what I have experienced in this workshop with my project's key target groups.</p> <p><u>My personal behavioural benefit, gained from the workshop:</u> After this workshop, I am able to engage my project stakeholders openly and interactively so that the project activities are planned and implemented in a truly collaborative manner.</p>

My ideas, assignments, as well as the weekly and final reports for the Workshop for Open Education Practitioners can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/view/open-edu-workshop-mojca/home>

The evolution of my project idea throughout the 5 workshop weeks

It was interesting for me to observe how my project idea evolved through the workshop weeks and gained more and more focus as a consequence of the influence of the workshop on all three levels: the cognitive (WHAT), affective-motivational and behavioural (HOW, WHY and WHO).

It was during Week 3 that I developed the template structure for my weekly reflections that is now used in all 5 weekly reflections. The template is structured in a way for me to make the most out of the rich knowledge the workshop offered to my project, e.g. by listing the key takeaways in the form of (self)advice or by collecting the reading lists per week.

This is especially important from the viewpoint of the key takeaways that I have formulated each week as a kind of self-advice, based on the gained new knowledge and experience from the workshop that is of relevance for my project but that can also be reused or remixed by other learners or project leaders. When put together from the Week 1 to Week 5 reflections, the info-graphically supported key takeaways can serve as an independent collection of summarized advice on how to approach open education project development. In this way, my learning throughout the workshop was highly self-directed and reflective towards my own project, and therefore also context-related and continuously improvable.

The value of the workshop for my project

The knowledge and experience, gained in this workshop, will be applied to my project (Newcomers, 2019; Our energy, 2020) on all three levels: the cognitive, affective-motivational and behavioural level. My project development from the start until the end of the workshop can be summarized in the following way:



Image 2 Project development throughout the five weeks.

»Ground zero« (Week 1): The H2020 NEWCOMERS project's initial situation

The H2020 NEWCOMERS project is a research and innovation project, exploring new clean energy communities. It's a 3-year project, which is running already for 2 years and is so far a successful research project, well supported by communication and dissemination activities, with the central focus on the Our Energy online platform for education and awareness-raising

There are high interests and expectations of project partners to effectively disseminate and exploit the key NEWCOMERS project results, and in internal discussions, the idea arose to check whether and how the project might benefit from the Open Science & Open Education approach.

A possible reallocation of part of the project's budget made it possible for me to pitch for additional dissemination and exploitation activities, related to Open Science & Open Education.

»Starting to connect« (Weeks 2 and 3): Observing & defining the NEWCOMERS project challenges

- How to add a meaningful layer of Open Science & Open Education activities to the existing NEWCOMERS project research, communication, and dissemination activities?
- How to show that Open adds value?
- Which open activities, approaches, and tools to use to make the most effective for the project?
- How to effectively, openly and creatively engage the NEWCOMERS project partners and other key stakeholders into planning, implementing and evaluating the additional Open activities?

»Project growing« (Weeks 4 and 5): Rethinking how the workshop addresses the NEWCOMERS project challenges

As can be seen from the Table 2 below, the insights gained in the workshop were highly useful for my project development through different stages, from choosing a strategic framework and selecting possible concrete examples of tools and activities to critically reflecting on the project design and testing the plans.

Table 2 Project challenges and workshop resources

Project's challenge	The insight/solution from the workshop	Workshop Week #.
How can Open (Science & Education) add value to the H2020 NEWCOMERS project?	The strategic framework, discussing the relations and intersections between Open Science & Open Education (chapter title: <i>Connecting various forms of openness: Seeking a stronger value proposition</i>), leading to concrete examples (tools, activities) to be applied in my project (Research Gate, 2015).	Week 2: Exploring
What tools/approaches/activities could* be used?	Collection of successful open teaching practices from different arenas of Open, e.g. releasing or using OER, supporting learners to learn,	Week 2: Exploring

*if they pass the critical design and testing phase	collaborating on content development etc. (García-Holgado et al., 2020)	
How to meaningfully define the intent, goal(s) and purpose(s) of selected additional Open Science & Open Education activities of the NEWCOMERS project in a critical, reflective way?	Roadmap for a critical design that shifts from WHAT and HOW we design open activities towards WHY we design them and how will increase the societal impact of the NEWCOMERS research project (Johannessen, 2017)	Week 3: Designing
How to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the NEWCOMERS Open approach?	Ideas about applicable testing strategies (Dam and Siang, 2020). Ideas about applicable evaluation strategies (ICDE, 2015).	Week 4: Testing Week 5: Evaluating

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21. Enhancing interactive learning in an online setting: Breakout rooms and questions to ponder

By Lovleen Kushwah, Geethanjali Selvaretnam

Introduction

The academic year 2020/21 posed many challenges of moving much of the teaching activities which are usually held in-person to an online environment. The priority was to do justice to our students and deliver our usual high quality student experience. A major concern was that students will miss out on the positive spill-overs of interacting with each other, which is an enriching experience. There is evidence that group discussions among peers in higher education is beneficial (Drouin, 2010; Cambre et al., 2014; Nicol, 2010; Roehling, 2010).

The discussion and findings in this article are from the experience in a Postgraduate course in Development Economics. Because the programme ran during many lockdown restrictions, the students were unable to interact with each other in a physical space. There were 84 students enrolled in the course, who came from all over the world. Each unit had recommended readings, lecture slides, videos by the lecturers to complement the slides, discussion questions for online forum, tutorials and weekly online live sessions. The focus of our analysis in this article is about the *design and delivery of interactive opportunities*.

In past years, the students had two hours of in-person lectures per week and tutorials. In 2020/21, COVID-19 restrictions resulted in all learning outcomes being delivered online. On average, 100 minutes of video content per week was uploaded to accompany the lecture slides for that week. These were planned so that each video was about 20 minutes long and could stand alone.

Design

An important aspect of the interactive design was 'questions to ponder'. When preparing the lecture slides, at intermittent points there were appropriate questions to ponder, usually appearing at the end of each short video. First the students were supposed to think about these questions individually. The questions were also made available for online forum discussion as an additional opportunity for reflection before the synchronous session.

The questions were set in such a way to ensure students had a good understanding of the relevant economic models and their applications. Questions should be thought and framed carefully so that learning outcomes are effectively achieved. Another aspect of the questions was to encourage students to think and enable discussions about the applications of what they had learnt through the lectures and videos in the real world. Such questions did not have one perfect answer. Students can get familiar with real world applications through other students' experiences, examples and points of view. Some examples of questions are given below:

- In your country, think about customs and practices which are barriers to development. Think of how such 'culture' has evolved and what mechanisms might have pushed for these changes.
- Explain demography trends in your country or a country of your choice, highlighting demographic transitions and why these transitions may have happened.
- In your country or country(s) of your choice, think about how education is provided. How does the system affect people across different income groups? Think about the economics behind the system and people's behaviour in response.
- In your country or country of choice, explain about the institutions which need to be improved or established and think about how this can be achieved.
- When reflecting upon this use the recommended reading.
- Find at least one journal article about the impact of Health/ Education on development and give the main findings.

In one session, students were asked to search for at least two journal articles related to that week's topic and be prepared to share the summary of the papers, along with one's own thoughts about the research methodology and outcome. This was an opportunity for students to experience searching, reading and drawing out the main ideas of a paper, articulating this succinctly and critiquing.

Next, we move to the main part of the design where interaction happens through synchronous sessions. These sessions are online live Zoom meetings where some 'questions to ponder' were chosen for discussion. These weekly sessions ran for nearly two hours and saw more than 75% attendance on average. The session always started in the main room so that the lecturer could lead students into the breakout room discussion, following which, we had some time to debrief in the main room. Three breakout rooms, about 15 to 20 minutes, were planned for each synchronous session and were sandwiched between the main room discussions. Figure 1 shows the order of play of contemplating the questions.

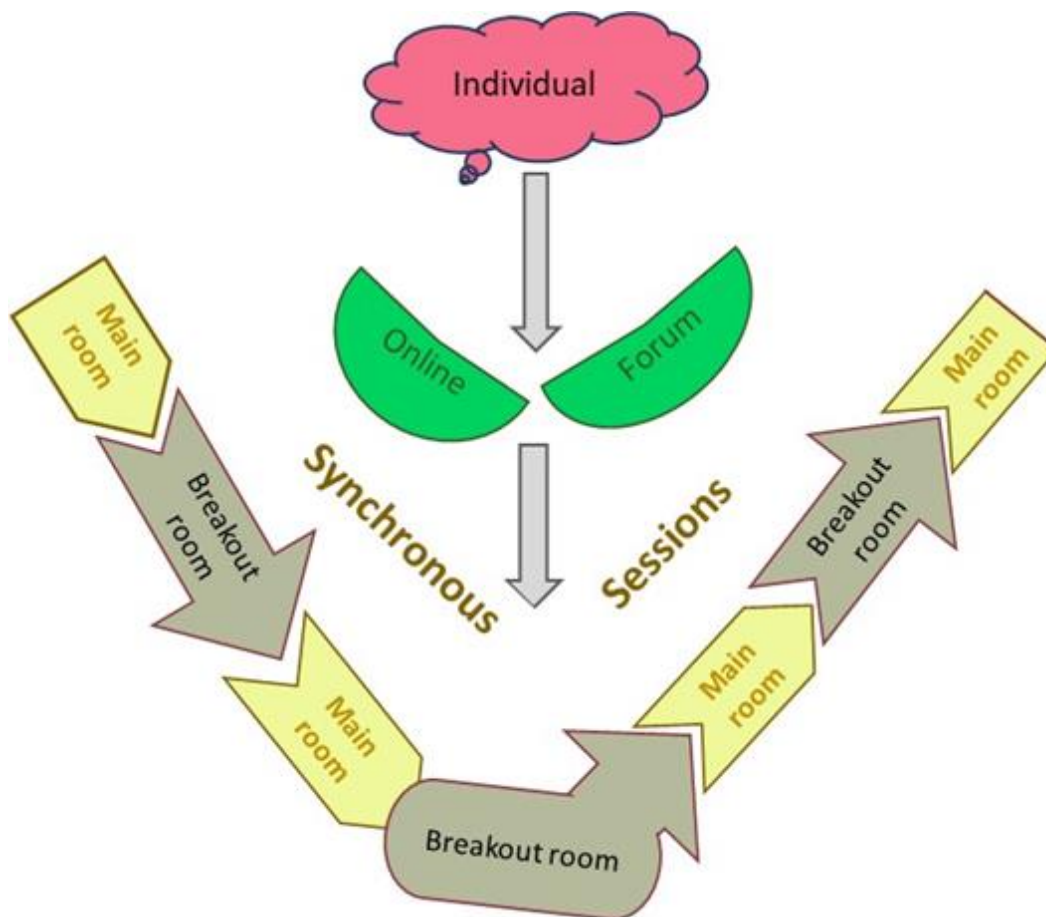


Figure 1 Timeline of discussing ‘questions to ponder’.

Another important aspect of this design was allocation of students in groups that ensured learning through discussion and interaction. A poll was taken to inform us that students preferred five members in a group so that they can get additional insights while keeping it sufficiently small. According to students' wishes each breakout session was recreated for more opportunities to meet peers.

Learning through interaction

This analysis investigates not only the effectiveness of breakout rooms to enable interaction but also how we can design and link activities to facilitate learning. There are studies which explain how students can enhance their learning and generate feedback when provided with a comparator such as group discussion. (Nicol, 2021, Nicol and Selvaretnam, 2021; Kushwah and Nicol, 2021; Gilley and Clarkston, 2014).

To investigate the learning that happens through discussions in these breakout rooms, an online survey was carried out at the end of the last synchronous session. The findings will shed light on how online forums and small group discussions (either online or in-person) can be designed to deepen the learning of the course material.

As usual students were given questions to think about and write down their thoughts in advance. The students then discussed the answers to the questions in the breakout rooms. Students on their experience in the survey questionnaire on their learning during group discussions and benefit/challenges of breakout rooms in this course.

Findings

Twelve students consented to their survey responses being used for research and a summary of their responses is given below in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of Survey responses

Category	Details	%	Comments
Knowledge sharing	About other countries, Ideas, examples, experiences, thoughts	75%	<p>"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to discuss our thinking with our classmates, it is very beneficial."</p> <p>"Discussions in the breakout rooms always bring up more aspects of what is being discussed which I probably wouldn't have thought of beforehand and vice versa."</p> <p>"It was great to learn about other country since we tend to take certain things for granted."</p>
Enhance social interaction	Getting to know peers	42%	<p>"I find them really beneficial because it gives me a chance to speak to my peers in an informal way and get to know them more."</p> <p>"I like the breakout sessions to a point, it is nice to have some form of social interaction despite the online learning this year."</p>

Being reflective	About own answer/new aspects not considered before/oneself/comparison with others	50%	<p>"After discussions with my other classmates, It made me think of the institutions that are inclusive, and I realised that it was possible to have a mixture of the two types."</p> <p>"not assuming people have prior knowledge on my country"</p> <p>"I therefore find it easier not to properly write down an answer beforehand but rather discuss it together."</p> <p>"During the first breakout session on institutions, I had answered that the institutions in my country were highly extractive... After discussions with my other classmates, It made me think of the institutions that are inclusive, and I realised that it was possible to have a mixture of the two types... gave me ideas on how to contribute positively to mine."</p>
Develop graduate skills	Confidence, communication skills	17%	<p>"As a non-native speaker, through conversations in breakout room I have opportunity to practice my speaking"</p> <p>"It is easier for the people who are not very confident talking in the main room to talk in the small rooms."</p>
Student engagement in breakout rooms	Challenges with Muted/ Camera off/ Lack of interest and knowledge	50%	<p>"The problem, and I'm not sure anything can be done about it, is that about 3/4 of the class students stay muted and without cameras."</p> <p>"we can interact with other people in the class. Unfortunately, usually not all students participate in the discussion."</p>

When students were asked whether reflective writing about their learning through survey questions was a useful exercise that they might use in the future, 10 students answered 'yes' while the remaining 2 said 'maybe'. This reiterates the value of students being given the opportunity to reflect upon their learning and skill development through learning activities.

Recommendations and conclusion

We find there are several benefits that can be derived from designing student interactive opportunities this way. Upon reflection and analysis of this design, we can recommend the following:

- Ideal group size would be 4 or 5, depending on the class size, time availability and space.
- Have appropriate 'question to ponder' in each breakout room session which should be part of the learning outcomes for the week.
- Questions should facilitate interaction. They should enable students to bring different ideas, facts and points of view to the discussion.
- Allow enough time for discussion and interaction. Our design of three breakout sessions of 15 minutes each worked well.
- Listen to student voice and make it enjoyable and comfortable rather than a chore to be anxious about.
- Encourage students to speak and participate in breakout rooms.

There are a couple of challenges for this design in an online environment that are worth mentioning. In an online setting, the teacher cannot observe how well the students are engaging in group discussions without intruding into their group. In similar activities during in-person lectures, we can observe how students are engaging in discussions, how quieter students become more confident over time and students being able to better put their points across, listen to other points of view, etc. Another challenge was that only a handful of students engaged well on the online discussion forum. Coleman (2014) says just a message board for discussion is of not much use. Since this was just another tool to encourage students to think about the questions before coming for the discussion, there is a benefit of continuing this practice.

Despite these challenges, the online setting has an added benefit of students being able to think about the questions beforehand. This facilitated good discussion as well as reinforced the pedagogical benefit of deeper learning by comparing their own input with what other students and the teacher were saying. Student evaluations at the end of the course indicated that they were satisfied with the opportunities for interaction.

This design worked very well and can be continued not only in this course but also in other courses and disciplines. This created fantastic learning opportunities for students to think about how applications of their academic learning can happen in different settings around the world. Given that all learning objectives were delivered online and government regulations limiting social interaction, it is amazing that we were able to deliver this experience for our students. These pedagogical benefits should be considered and incorporated into the teaching design when we revert to in-person teaching. When we look

back, it has been an excellent year of developing online teaching skills, turning obstacles into opportunities!

Note: The ethics approval for this research has been obtained by the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow where this study took place.

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22. From lockdown film club to 'Crim Gogglebox': Can watching 'cool crime shows' foster learning and a sense of student community?

By Becky Clarke

Locked-down at home in the Autumn term of 2020 I was scheduled to meet weekly with my personal tutees, a group of level 5 undergraduate criminology students, via Microsoft Teams. As we logged on at 10am each Tuesday morning there established quite quickly a group of regular attenders. Many I had taught in person in the previous year, and we built on some of these existing interpersonal dynamics to create a relaxed and supportive space. The Autumn term flew by, lots of pastoral check ins and chats, both in the group and also one to one. Topics ranged from practical questions reflecting students trying to navigate the new online world of study, as well as the tensions of working from both busy or isolated 'home' spaces. We also spoke a lot about TV. Like most people we were all spending more time watching TV programmes and films, this led to us sharing suggestions and our reviews. In and amongst the mix of reality tv, dramas series and films were ones set in or around the criminal justice system, or echoing wider questions of social (in)justice.

As we all found ourselves back in lockdown in the new year of 2021 it once again felt like this regular shared online space might be quite important for some of us. One Tuesday in late January we quite organically decided to collectively watch something, creating a kind of 'film club'. There was much discussion about what we could watch, we steered towards films or short series (largely due to my lack of commitment to telly!) but then determining who had Netflix, Sky or other streaming services started to complicate matters. I shared the link to the film 'The Accused' (taken from 'Box of Broadcasts' from the uni library databases) off the back of a discussion we'd had about sexual violence on another programme. We agreed that we would watch independently over the coming week / weekend and then meet up again on the Tuesday to discuss.

For that first session, and thereafter, I came prepared to 'facilitate' the discussion. A few notes and open-ended questions to 'kickstart' the conversation. What happened over the next hour or so was a fascinating discussion about justice, power, stigma, trust and society's response to victims of sexual violence. We chose the next film together – 'Shawshank Redemption' and then the next one 'Pride' I suggested. The sessions were stretching longer as everyone had contributions to make - how the fictional characters made them feel and how they made sense of the stories. My prompts and notes were sometimes used and at other times redundant as students came with their own priorities and themes. A student suggested the next film - 'Boy A' with Andrew Garfield, about a young man leaving prison after serving 14 years for murder. Unknown to me, yet probably the best fictional depiction of the challenges of rehabilitation post prison I have seen to date. The conversation about the film was one of the most nuanced discussions I have had with students about the contradictions within aims of punishment and rehabilitation. We watched and discussed a couple more TV programmes, including Steve McQueens 'Small Axe', the numbers were

dwindling as term came to a close (and the world was opening back up). Those of us left shared how much we'd enjoyed the space.

So what?

In reflecting on this experience, I can identify that at least three things were happening in those online discussions. We were, to a greater or lesser extent, all doing the following:

- By discussing the characters and stories we were challenging assumptions about the criminal justice system. The contradictions in normative claims about 'controlling crime', 'fair treatment', 'delivering justice' were revealed and we were trying to make sense of this.
- In creating emotional connections to the characters in the stories, stepping into their shoes, we are engaging with these issues and questions about punishment with feeling. The stories pushed us to connect emotionally or viscerally, so we feel the tensions rather than talk about them in an abstract way.
- In the discussion, as differing opinions and viewpoints are shared, we start to identify our 'position' in relation to that of others. In gently pushing on these viewpoints students are thinking about how they might build an argument, in some cases referring to other evidence from their studies. This gets to the difficult task of creating an argument that is not conjecture but includes your position on a particular issue or matter.

These are all features of my wider teaching practice and philosophy. Something that I have developed with the support of colleagues in the team-teaching experiences over the last seven years in higher education. They are also importantly informed by twenty years as an applied researcher in the criminal justice system, continually being pushed to 'make sense' of the tensions inherent in policing, courts, prisons, and probation policy and practice.

What next?

Fast forward to the start of term September 2021. We are 'reconnecting' with campus and I attended a criminology subject team meeting to plan for the new academic year. A discussion arose about the challenges of providing campus based contact for our ever-growing first year criminology cohort. We acknowledged that these young people were arriving at uni after only one term in sixth-form college, and potentially in a new city – what might mean for them in terms of 'settling' into their sense of being uni students, making friends and finding their voice?

In the session it struck me that what we'd had online with the PT film club could be reworked and offered as an optional 'extra' alongside the core criminology and sociology programme. A bit of a rebrand ensued, so students could have a better sense of what the session I renamed it 'Crim Gogglebox'. Then set about planning a 'series' of four sessions that could run in weeks 2 to 5 of the first term. Lots of the features of the online 'film club' remained but with a couple of tweaks.

Tweak 1= A weekly provocation

Each week of Crim Gogglebox had a hook. This was a provocative question that all the TV / film content and prompts for discussion could hang off.

Week 1 *'Are miscarriages of justice an inevitable part of the criminal justice system?'*

Main event: 'A Killing in Tiger Bay' A 2021 BBC 3-part documentary series about the police investigation, criminal trial and acquittal of defendants in 1984 murder case.

Week 2 *'Can the criminal justice system deliver justice for victims of sexual violence?'*

Main event: 'The Accused' A 1988 film depicting two criminal prosecutions – behind scenes and public trial - in response to a gang rape of a young woman.

Week 3 *'Can prisons be non-violent spaces?'*

Main event: 'TIME' The 2020 BBC 3-part fictional series written by Jimmy McGovern that explores how prisoners, prison officers and their families navigate the violence of prison)

Week 4 *'Is rehabilitation possible?'*

Main Event 'Boy A' A 2007 film which presents a fictional account of a young man leaving prison following a 14 year sentence for a murder he was convicted of aged 10)

Tweak 2 = Additional and Shared Content

As well as the 'main event' film or programme (listed above) I provided links to additional suggested TV. Only a handful had watched this ahead of the session, others indicated they were going to watch following the discussion. Whether they did or not I'm not sure. What was perhaps more significant was the decision to watch some content together in the session. In week one this was just one ten minute video 'Justice on Trial', interviews of three acquitted prisoners who had served long prison sentences following wrongful convictions. This worked well and prompted further discussion about to who, or in what context, a miscarriage of justice might happen.

Something else was clear that required a response – of the 40 students who came to the first session almost half hadn't watched the programme and yet wanted to be in the discussion. For week two, as well as the additional clip (a segment of Newsnight exposing the CPS use of targets for rape prosecutions) I had also prepared a couple of clips from the main event film 'The Accused' to watch together in session. This worked really well, both for those students who might not have watched but also to watch and directly reflect on the significance of a particular scene (in this instance the backroom negotiation between the legal teams in the fictional case).

We did this again in week 3, watching three short (few minute) scenes from Time. Watching on a huge screen in the lecture theatre with the sound loud was visceral – the fear and intimidation was overwhelming. I certainly experienced them differently in that space. In week 4 I purposely chose quiet scenes, where we are with the character, almost in his head. Sharing in his feeling of isolation. Again watching these together in this space brought a different quality to the debate. The speed with which students were making nuanced

contributions around the aims and harms of punishment, or the significance of both interpersonal and institutional power and control, was astounding.

Future tweaks = fostering community

Reflecting now across both these shared spaces I wonder if and how such spaces that inform learning and development of ideas but are not formal teaching spaces can foster a sense of community. The online film club, in large part because of the unprecedented wider context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the inevitable feelings of social isolation, meant that we reached this sense of community quicker. Would this work the same in a different context? For which students and at what point in their studies would such a space be valued? Trying the Crim Gogglebox on campus at the very start of our new Level 4 student's university journey worked well for some, I watched a few lone students gravitate together. Looking back perhaps we could have created some exercises that supported these connections between individual students in order to actively support the building of social networks and community. There were also a few students who joined in the third or fourth week and indicated they would have come earlier but were too nervous to come along, perhaps we could have done more to reassure students. These are all things to consider in future.

Future tweaks = student-led content

The online PT group afforded space and opportunity to engage students in making suggestions about TV and film content, this not only surfaced some great suggestions but also created what felt like a shared rather than facilitated space. Each week in Crim Gogglebox time was given over to ask students about potential TV / film content related to the themes of the discussion. Often students referred to popular series that reaffirm normative claims about criminals and the criminal justice system, rather than the more challenging and hidden TV and films that would facilitate critical analysis of policing and punishment.

As individuals shared a little more about themselves, what started to come out towards the end of the series of Crim Gogglebox sessions was the very varied hometowns and countries of the students and also how culture and religion inform views of justice and punishment. This is something that students were seeking to discuss with me and in smaller groups at the end of sessions, indicating a case or an issue that had occurred in their community or country. This suggests there could be a much broader range of content for Crim Gogglebox, reflecting the themes and issues we are collectively examining from wider global and cultural perspectives.

So what for the students?

At the end of the last session – of this series anyway (the students coaxed me into confirming we would be back for more) – I asked that the students write down anonymously on a post it 'why I come to these sessions...'. They had after all been optional. I was interested to hear what they felt they got from this space in the university, that wasn't a

formal teaching space but that we were creating together. Here I shall finish with some of their reflections:

‘I come for the engaging conversations and being able to hear and debate thoughts and ideologies that I’ve never before been in a situation to debate. And learning about cool crime shows I hadn’t heard of before’

‘I come here because I like the idea of watching a film as part of my course, for educational purposes. I like the wider discussions about crime.’

‘What made me come = debating skills and opening up my mind to more opinions. I’ve actually learnt more here than on my course. That feels like lots of independent learning, Gogglebox has informed with a lot of new info and ideas.’

‘I come because I find other people’s opinions on the matters discussed very interesting. I wouldn’t have thought about it in that perspective. I’m learning a lot here about the topics too.’

‘By coming here it is a way to feel engaged with the course and gain more knowledge in a less demanding way.’

‘I like having something to watch, usually it will be on my to watch list but I procrastinate around it. With this it’s nice to ‘have to’ watch it and then be able to talk about it which I love 😊’

‘The discussions are interesting, and I have no social life.’

23. Homestretch: A Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences co-produced approach to supporting PhD students through COVID-19 Lockdown

By Beth Cross, Patricia Castellano Verdecia, Diane Gill, Geoffrey Baines and Jingyang Ai

*I gave myself permission to feel and experience all of my emotions.
In order to do that, I had to stop being afraid to feel.
In order to do that, I taught myself to believe
that no matter what I felt or what happened when I felt it,
I would be okay.
Iyanla Vanzant*

How Homestretch was born

I remember meeting my yoga teacher on the street after the first hard lockdown. Being out on the street, meeting someone I knew came as a subtle shock, particularly as I was just coming out of a month-long battle with COVID-19 myself. We talked about how strange the time had been, about missing the shared space of the yoga studio and the small social acts the surround a class. I've thought again and again about one of the things she said, that when we come through COVID-19 we will be a long time realising what its effects are and recovering what we can from the many kinds of loss. We are still in that process both of distancing and trying to reconnect. What follows is the account of the development of a series of support sessions held every Wednesday through the second hard lock down through winter of 2020. We called the series Homestretch, hoping that it would indeed get isolated students through the homestretch of this difficult time, as well as invite them to both stretch and be at home in shared space for a few minutes on a Wednesday over lunch time. The voice is primarily Beth's but the knowledge was gained alongside Patricia, Jingyang, Diane and Geoffrey. What follows traces the back story to the project, it's development as COVID-19 gained its grip on the country and a sketch of what we've experienced and learned as we've "built the plane whilst flying it"—something, in so many ways, all of us have had to do this past year.

Back story

*The purpose of a storyteller is not to tell you how to think,
but to give you questions to think upon.- Brandon Sanderson*

This work was a long time in gestation. It's tap root grew from work that sunk deep into the myriad ways forum theatre can help us reconnect to what our bodies know. Much of our knowing is embodied. I had witnessed how powerful the embodied knowledge of service users can be when given a gateway to decision makers. Evaluation of the impact of policy making on people's lives becomes much more meaningful. This knowledge had been nudging away inside, pushing me to apply ways to explore and translate embodied knowing

to more of my work and teaching. Curious to know more I've participated in the Collective Leadership for Scotland programme that has helped professionals across public sectors engage with U-Theory and its development of Social Presencing Theatre. From family networks I had also become engaged in a set of practices with different origins but that explore and tap into similar sensibilities: Interplay. I've written more about this braiding of learning from forum theatre, u-theory and interplay [here](#). Learning from these separate but resonant practices for me, felt like an opportunity to participate in a larger rhizomatic process of shift in zeitgeist. In 2018 I shared this learning with a small group of Algerian PhD students in a phenomenological study of their experience of university space as international students (Abdessalam et al., 2019). We enlarged our journaling practices to include various forms of visual engagement both dwelling with works of art at the nearby Paisley Art Gallery and making our own visual images through collage, photography and drawing. This culminated in moving into embodied activities that spoke powerfully of the mix of restrictions, decisions and pressures they experienced. In the early months of 2020, I was working to develop a week-long intensive methods workshop on [Widening the Impact of Codesign Research for the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences](#), as news began to indicate the severity of what we were in for.

Working with a pro-active team we persevered with workshop plans as we scaled back and reconfigured what had been a very experiential design to something still participatory held in on-line space. In Sept 2020, after three months of strict lockdown, three months of social distancing restrictions and another lockdown looming in the near future, we ran our session.

Our week included sequenced small group work. Over the series of sessions we worked with participants as they worked through a co-designed research brief, encountering challenges and opportunities. In getting to know the group I worked with, I quickly gained a sense of the toll lockdown had taken, emotionally as well as academically. Some recuperative space was needed to get participants to a place where their creativity and collaboration could flow. I knew how to do this working with groups in person, but across screens at that point I did not know if activities could precipitate the shift in energy and trust. I took a deep breath and guided participants through activities I'd facilitated in coproduced research to help everyone get on the same level, feel what they brought was welcome and create the confidence to be creative. As we worked through them, I could see the same sense of leaning in as when I facilitated these in shared physical space. I could see the tensions ease from faces, shoulders lift, and the bubble of contributions flow; I could see the transformation of our gathered wellbeing. It was enough to convince me more was possible on zoom than how it was conventionally used and that I could bring my skills as an embodied facilitator to on-line space. Geoffrey, chaplain at University of Edinburgh was on a similar path of discovering how to adapt his facilitation to Zoom. Diane Gill at Scottish School of Graduate Social Sciences brought us together and Homestretch found its feet.

Homestretch sessions creative workshops for social, recuperative space during lockdown

There's nothing like drawing a thing to make you really see it.
Margaret Atwood

A good way to bring you into what the sessions were like, is the same way PhD students were invited. Here is the invite we sent out across SGSSS social site for PhD students:

This winter with increased lockdown measures research and studies can begin to feel like a marathon. The natural breaks we could often take that re-energised the focussed work we do occur less frequently in our current circumstances and this can take a toll. These sessions are designed to help get you through the homestretch. They are an opportunity for some creative playful time off task that can bring us back better in mind and body and even inspired. The sessions are not meant to have direct bearing on your research but are designed to encourage the conditions that may lead to “eureka” moments by giving you an opportunity to talk about your work in a non-judgemental space, explore ways to take different perspectives on what may seem over-familiar, and take stock of your work in your wider life interests and aspirations. That said, we will be using a range of creative methods that are increasingly being incorporated into research, so you may find it a space to explore and develop the creative side of your developing research portfolio.

We played with the visuality of zoom space, embodied inquiry activities, visual journaling, and time for small group discussion. We started by disrupting normal zoom conventions, de-privileging the face and inviting thumbs, fingers and elbows to take centre stage to play pac man, follow the leader and a game that literally involved zooming in and out from webcams. We followed this moment of fun that dispelled inhibitions with an invitation to have some stillness, with slow stretches that gave participants a moment to connect to their bodies, their strength, their breadth and where they were holding tension. Each session we focussed kind attention to a part of the body that may be overworked in these times with gentle circular motions paying attention to wrists, fingers, foreheads, and jaw lines ([here's an example](#)).

We then explored ways to flesh out and unfurl what we were experiencing using the principle of incrementality of Interplay. Simply, this means asking people to take only small leaps of faith. Rather than ask for a complete story we broke into pairs to just share a minute about a favourite pair of shoes, or a tree one remembered with fondness. In sharing these small moments details, surprising connections that are the stuff of life surfaced and made it easier to share more. We created structures that helped widen the gaze and distil meaning. We experimented with using mobile phones to go on local walks whilst still connected via phone to a person from the session, using the phone to share photos that spoke to the theme of the conversation.

Geoffrey Baines who helped give the sessions visual journaling activities. At one session we were invited to draw an object that sat on our desk, not needing to get it perfect, but through drawing to pay attention to a particular thing that made up our everyday life, exploring its qualities and connotations.

In another session we made little credit card sized sketch books and quickly sketched on each page a contour portrait, that is, without ever looking down in one continuous line drawing that face we could see in our web cams. That image has become too familiar over lockdown, a constant companion doppelganger, even. Leaning into giving it attention was an opportunity to expel the critical, surveillance of ourselves. The activity gave us a chance

to laugh, confide if we cheated and looked and ponder: How is what we see, connected to what we write, how are they both us? Sessions closed with Patricia, one of the PhD students who helped us design and facilitate sessions, sharing a quote that had particularly meaning for her, providing encouragement through these times. We include a selection of them as introduction to each section of this paper.

One of the things that had surfaced in discussion with students during the Co-Production Methodology workshops was that in lockdown it's been incredibly meaningful to get something tangible delivered to one's door. It can powerfully overcome the sense of isolation. With this in mind, we created a session companion pack with a journal to write in, collage materials, a loom to take on a walk as [Tim Ingold](#) suggests, and a few quotes, folded up like the sayings in Chinese fortune cookies. We also posted an [online guide](#) for its use. When students might most need a lift or just something to give them a change of pace could not be predicted and was unlikely to always occur when we were offering sessions, and so the companions offered a way to meet needs as they arose.

We also offered sessions during SGSSS and SGSAH summer schools. These were longer sessions and we built into them breaks where participants could do an activity off screen and then share them on jamboard along with comments. One such activity invited participants to gather items from their surroundings in a still life arrangement that could be a portrait of their "Stilled Life". This gave an opportunity for a different kind of creativity, sharing and connecting. In our thinking through sessions afterwards this observation surfaced: I think the still life exercise was a good offering, just going off screen to do something, time to do it as they wanted and it meant new voices came in. What people said about each thing was so heartwarming. It did provide a different way to show up.

What we found along the way

It is ironic that you must go to the edge to find the centre.
Richard Rohr

The sessions were experienced as qualitatively different than normal zoom meetings and provided a welcomed place to share and process experiences. Participants indicated the activities within and the sessions themselves should be mainstreamed. The regularity of the sessions helped inculcate habits that supported wellbeing both for facilitators and participants. The activities often did successfully create a space where incidental musings on life could be shared. It was not just the background inadvertently disclosing our home lives, in Homestretch there was the opportunity to choose to share more than our academic business, and thus connect our social worlds. People shared what they'd had time to retrieve that they had long set aside, they shared that in doing so they became reacquainted with past selves --knowing them differently, valuing them differently. People spoke of repurposing, repairing, getting around to what they'd always meant to have time for. Even finding in washing the windows a new kind of off-screen pleasure. Sharing these kinds of details led to deeper conversations about self-compassion, its importance, the difficulty in developing and maintaining it, the importance of celebrating small goals. Also, the odd kinds of grief and guilt experienced at a distance found a place to be heard. Being able to name these, hearing others name what one did not yet have words for, this kind of sharing

emerged. There was a real sense that hearing others' difficulties was reassuring and provided a way to regain perspective-taking that our stilled lives were missing. Even people that seemed to be quite shy and quiet, really opened up during the breakout rooms. I also saw gratitude. People were grateful to have a space to share all these things without shame and getting understanding and kindness in return.

Thinking through what we learned

*Never forget that writing is as close as we get to keeping a hold
on the thousand and one things —
childhood, certainties, cities, doubts, dreams, instants, phrases, parents, loves —
that go on slipping, like sand, through our fingers.
Salman Rushdie*

As survey respondents commented:

“Opening the session with physical movement and some 'unexpected' ways to interact with the other cameras on screen was a great way to 'flesh out' those interactions. I really appreciated the invitation to be in my own body and I would appreciate if other types of online meetings/workshops began with this.”

“I was surprised by how engaged I was throughout the entire session. They really felt like a break to me instead of another thing on my calendar.”

In developing this project we had a set of goals that focussed our immediate design and facilitation work but also anchor a longer inquiry:

- to discern together the features and aspects of the activities, and the degree to which they facilitated enabling conditions of mental health for participants
- to examine the digital constraints and enablers in the context of other physical and affective conditions with sensitivity to more than human agency to share findings with the wider academic community
- to contribute to the emerging lessons of COVID-19 particularly as may inform continued forms of hybrid working and learning.

Restrictions that COVID-19 pandemic has placed on postgraduate researchers have meant this community faces particular challenges to their work, their mental health and social connectedness (Ghogari et al. 2020; Hamza et al. 2021). Whilst data is still emerging about the mental health impacts of social distancing, evidence makes clear that issues are likely to be heightened and that preventative work is needed (Galea et al., 2020; Hughes, 2020). Digital spaces lacks many of the para-linguistical affordances which we normally rely upon. Over-reliance on screen is correlated with increased fatigue, a sense of heightened self-scrutiny and isolation. We wanted to find out if innovative ways of working with these spaces that disrupt the two-dimensional grid can mitigate some of the impact. In doing so, we've taken a co-inquiry approach (Brookes et al., 2013; Voorberg et al., 2015) that draws upon post-humanist sensibilities (Taylor, 2016) to explore the benefits, dynamics and challenges of a preventative on-line support project, simply put, because Posthumanist

sense-making opens up a reconsideration of embodied and embedded knowledge of lived experience.

The co-inquiry process was guided by the principles of UWS Code of Ethics. Taking inspiration from the collective biography work of Davies and Gannon, we worked to make visible and therefore revisable the discourses through which we make meaning and selves in order to deconstruct the idea of the individuals as independent of collectives, discourses, histories and places (Davis & Gannon, 2013). Monaghan's (2020) call for concurrent sociological inquiry as we grapple with COVID-19 and their question: 'what sort of society are we heading towards and what sort of world do we want to share?' oriented our inquiry process. Our analysis searched workshop, survey and facilitation notes and compared our coding of themes, revisiting the data and testing alternative meanings and interpretations (Davis & Gannon, 2013).

The sessions were fleeting and though feedback in the moment was positive, the evaluations we've sent out have not had many respondents. Those that did were very appreciative and we did not garner much constructive criticism. There could be many reasons for this. The sessions were offered through SGSSS which for the most part offers training events with clear learning outcomes and structured learning activities. What we offered was less amenable to being evaluated than these sessions. Also, if participants felt the sessions added to their quality of life, returning to standard form filling afterwards may have been experienced as subtracting from it, and therefore counterproductive and disjunctive. What we do know is that some of the standard lessons others are learning about online facilitation apply to our sessions. It's important to allow time to rehearse technical aspects and to have more than one person keeping an eye on the different channels and functions. Particular to our sessions, we also learned that although supportive space was developed within the sessions, the departure from that space was still experienced as abrupt. Zoom just doesn't allow folks to linger or drift over and join informal clusters of people departing. We always announced we would hang around after the session finished and this did result in a few good conversations, but this still didn't have that quality of off-mike, off-record informality.

We also discussed in discernment sessions the very real possibility that the people that most need this kind of support aren't here. It is challenging and some folks don't have the bandwidth or confidence to jump into an on-line space. Nevertheless, we concluded that it is important to do what we can. Even if it is not perfect, it's an instance of what can be supportive, a tendril in the larger rhizome, that makes other instances more possible. Also, we can enlist those who do come to work with us to better understand and evolve more approachable sessions. Inviting participants at the close to 'pay it forward' by asking "What has meant something for you today and how could you take that knowledge and help someone else?" will be part of our next evolution of sessions, as it may serve to better gauge what we are doing than surveys and ratings.

Continued mental health stigma means further culture change work is needed. Mainstreaming activities within Homestretch, as participants recommended, can contribute to this. Lessons can feed into continuing mental health support in the recovery from COVID-19 and within the increased hybrid learning conditions likely at universities going forward.

The role of the sessions in preventative support requires further theorisation and research as does culture change to support mental health. This work has brought us to a fuller engagement with our senses and the means to share the reassurance that we were not in “it” alone.

My yoga teacher’s words resonate more strongly the farther I navigate through this time as teacher, parent and partner in embodied research. I would like to leave one last image with you who have read and perhaps followed links and listened in to what we’ve shared. As we signed off one session, we returned to the finger play we had started the session with. This time, each of us in our own unique way curled pointer fingers and thumbs into heart shapes and again we let these shapes Zoom in and out so that the screen became a kaleidoscope of hearts. And then, what one person started doing quickly caught on and was repeated by us all: we started releasing the hearts out beyond the zoom frame, starting with a small, closed heart shape, then, letting our fingers open out, expanding like ripples moving in diffractive waves across all of our windows into the world. I loved that moment of hearts welling up and out into the world. I experienced them coming to me as well, as a gift I didn’t expect! That is the signature of creativity: repurposing and inventing variations on themes that make life and connection more than the sum of their parts.

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24. Effectiveness of blended learning and creative doable learning strategies using reusable's at home for children with special educational needs.

By Neelakshi Naolekar

In this reflective article I am sharing my experiences during the pandemic period of bringing out play based learning using everyday materials at home for children with ADHD, ASD and those with learning difficulties.

It was mid March, the period when schools in India finish with their yearly assessments of kindergarten. Handing over observation reports, file folder of activities done by the children as they move on to higher classes, new enrolment of students, interaction with parents. Overall a busy period for me and my colleagues at our Child development and inclusive learning centre.

Although we were aware of the deadly virus which was spreading super-fast all over the world, still we had not expected that in coming days we were going to experience something which was beyond our thinking. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the onset of Pandemic and lockdown.

With lockdown being extended and closure of schools announced teachers, parents started worrying about children being at home. As the overall situation began to worsen due to pandemic it was the specially abled children whose parents started facing lot of difficulty. Not only the whole family schedule was disturbed, these children were missing out on their important therapies Like speech, Occupational Therapy (OT).

Being struck up in the house, no access to open space, was becoming taxing. I started receiving frantic calls from parents who needed guidance about how to manage, handle this situation.

In our Child development centre, we had inclusive set up having children who were facing issues of ADHD, Down syndrome, learning difficulty, Autism. These children had special educational and remedial learning requirements also.

A switch to the online mode was gradually becoming the new normal. But the important question was can it be possible for us to work with these children through this mode. Second concern was the access to technology.

Seeing no other way out of it we decided on trying out some way to resolve the concerns of parents. After a lot of thought and brainstorming we planned out one to one WhatsApp video calls with the parents, as this was the most convenient way to connect with most parents having smart phones and WhatsApp for messaging and chat.

Making the children especially autistic and ones with ADHD was going to be tricky, plus apprehension of parents as how children can see and learn from screen, will they sit for online, understand and main concern of screen time usage were there.

I decided to fall back on my experience of nearly more than 15 years and brainstormed how this interaction can be made more interactive and engaging.

How we decided to go about it

Starting with only a group of 3-4 students a timetable was chalked out, allotting individual time slots to each child of 20 mins. The age group of the children was as young as 4 years to 10 years (one child of 18 years also a part of the programme.)

Parents were instructed that it is important to let the child adapt to interacting with the educator via the screen, it is ok even if they don't sit at a stretch. Seeing teacher on screen, listening to her will also make a lot of difference.

Using a puppet or soft toy to greet the children everyday was the 1st step to catch their attention. Gradually some children started sitting or standing for longer time span, a step forward was when they wanted to bring and show something similar which they had at home like even a small thing like pebble, doll, car.

It was difficult to expect the children to sit and in one place, so we experimented with another strategy to bring them back towards the screen by playing the classic game of Peek-a-boo. Whenever the children would get up, run here and there or as with the autistic children they would not make eye-contact we would call out Peek-a-boo
Here I am, where are you?

Gradually this started to interest them and they started coming near and looking at the screen.

To make the sessions engaging, interactive we worked on a blended kind of approach. Hands on activity with easily available everyday things, materials at home in combination with some fun 4-5 min activities via screen.

The thinking behind this was that parents must have easy access to things, materials as strict lockdown was there in most places. Secondly most of these kids were missing out on their therapies of OT, Speech so we worked upon using materials, resources which children see around them, which are part of their everyday life as children will be comfortable with them. Many basic life skills can also be taught to children in this manner. Children were cooped up in homes so they needed physical movement and some change. Also movement is vital for learning to happen.

Household items like pillows, basic utensils like glasses, spoons, plates, hand towels, soft toys, blocks, coins, pebbles, leaves, newspapers are some examples from the many materials which were used to plan out creative, interactive learning activities/ experiences. It was not that children were only going to play with these things but so much was going to

happen through these activities, like motor coordination, language development, STEAM concepts, life skills. Wherein possible we correlated some of these learning activities with lessons in their textbooks.

It will not be possible to share all the activities in detail but some examples are Midline crossing Exercises with newspapers, pillows were taken for children to provide support for their OT. Making indoor mazes with pillows, boxes, chairs . Sometimes concept of alphabet, number was also taken through this like crossing the mazes by jumping on rhyming words.

Utensils like glasses, spoons were used to create some music plus used for eye hand coordination, balancing activities, concept-based maths activities like sorting, pouring. Simple food items from kitchen were used to for hands on activities and science experiments which helped children with sensory concerns.

Sorting clothes from laundry basket, folding their socks, small clothing items made the child become involved and served to develop life skills.

Newspapers, old magazines proved useful to carry out literacy-based activities, and conversation based on pictures. To incorporate movement and fun, simple techniques like throwing a bangle or ring on a spread out newspaper and telling child to circle particular alphabet, finding words or numbers in newspaper were done.

Play date with soft toy/doll was a strategy we tried out to build the social interaction and conversation part amongst children. This we started by making child bring one toy to show, talk and share in the one –one session. After the children became comfortable then the playdate was organized virtually for a group of 3-4 children. We could see that this way children had less apprehensions being with other children and social interaction skills could be worked upon which were affected due to isolation.

Mindfulness breathing (Hug a pillow and breath) Hold a sibling's hand and do deep breathing, regulation activities were also worked upon during this play date and using special storytelling sessions and puppets.

As children's responses and sitting improved we started with Learning based activities in form of worksheets, simple puzzles, find parts of picture on the screen and then gradually moved to taking their academic related work. To share an example a Maths grade 2 chapter of Lines and Lines was taken in the following creative manner. Matchsticks/ ice cream sticks, skewers, drinking straws whatever was easily available was used to form simple shapes, drawings using different lines. Sand /Rice whatever was available children drew same in it.. They observed different patterns in and around them in the environment and talked about the different types of lines. To make it more enriching for the children we correlated this with an Indian festival in that month and made children do some drawings of Indian traditional patterns and Art (Rangoli and Warli Art).

Reflections about these blended sessions

In the beginning the idea of taking sessions for these children seemed daunting but slowly we were happy with the responsiveness of these children. Yes some days were a challenge with child refusing to sit and participate. Also internet issues, in the beginning manoeuvring the screen and so but with sustained efforts, handholding with parents we have been conducting these blended sessions since last year.

We were gradually able to increase time and started using Google meet or zoom which gave us a platform to make it more engaging. Whiteboard option, sharing small videos made the learning experience more rich for the children.

Parents were happy to share that even these 20-30 minutes time is making a lot of difference, children were not only looking forward to it but they had kind of settled into the routine for these sessions and if any day miss out they become disturbed.

Achievement for me and my team was when some of these children started joining and participating in with other children that is in group classes, moving out from their comfort zone.

To provide support and guide the parents we started having small group parent online meetings to discuss concerns, sending out news letters about doable activities at home which proved useful, as was shared by parents to us. Having parents, siblings and working with them was helping strengthen not only the bond but was having positive impact on the childrens' learning and behaviour.

Play based strategies intertwined with social and emotional learning helped children feel comfortable and adapt to this digital change and helped address concern as to can technology be used to creatively teach.

Definitely any kind of change is scary, difficult to adapt to but with positive outlook and looking at it through a different lens can help. With the right blend of play and technology we tried to approach this difficult situation of lockdown and reaching out to parents and children so that they did not miss out on important therapies and learning.

Most of the materials we used were reusable, like spoons could be used in a variety of activities -to make music, sort, carry simple balancing - like spoon and ball, spoon and lemon, transferring with spoon, making shapes by placing spoon and so many more. Every time we came up with some innovative and creative ideas to reuse same materials which sustained interest of the children and was not cumbersome for the parents to arrange.

Theory of Multiple intelligence (by Howard Gardner), SEL strategies, Easy play based activities and idea of using recyclables and reusable materials were the guiding force in these creative learning experiences.

So definitely as is rightly said Play is the Engine that drives learning.

The pandemic made us look at education through a different lens and has made educators think up new creative ways to adapt technology which has become the new normal. It has

also brought forth how play, creative ways of using different resources can strengthen not only learning but help in academic related work also.

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25. Using comic strips as an educational tool for learning about the stages of 'respiration' and promote team-work

By Shelini Surendran, Sam Hopkins, Daria Danielewicz, Emil Nikadon

Cellular respiration is one of the toughest topics for foundation Biology students to comprehend. For our students to fully understand aerobic respiration, they must be able to fully grasp complex concepts such as co-enzymes, redox reactions, enzyme functions and concentration gradients. Foundation year learners usually have a wide range of misconceptions about cellular respiration, which must be rectified before they achieve higher order thinking (Songer & Mintzes, 1994).

It is evident from the literature and from our experience that students often focus on the process of memorizing the steps of respiration, as opposed to focusing on the overall purpose and process of cellular respiration (Baines et al., 2004). An added difficulty that Foundation year lecturers face is that classes serve students who previously studied Biology at college vs students who have not studied Biology before. Our students therefore have different drives and expectations for being in class, thus making it hard to gauge the level of delivery for the lecturers. From previous experience, efforts to teach cellular respiration using lecture style formats have been relatively ineffective on student exam performance.

Thus, we delivered an interactive session to teach cellular respiration with the hope of increasing students understanding of the key components of cellular respiration. The activity involved a classroom project where students researched and drew self-generated scientifically accurate comic strips about cellular respiration. Surprisingly, the use sequential illustrations to tell a story, has been present since the prehistoric times when humans painted series of pictures on caves to effectively transmit culture and teach acceptable norms to their children (Hatzigeorgiou & Stefanich, 2000). In education, storytelling is an useful approach for learning as it allows learners to remember the emotional connections associated with the story, and makes learning context-based (Hatzigeorgiou & Stefanich, 2000). Comics are a method of storytelling, which convey immediate visceral meanings, that textbooks cannot.

Traditionally, comic strips have been used in the humanities and have been largely ignored in science education. For a long time, comic strips have been deemed as only suitable for children, as they do not contain lengthy prose. However, comic strips have the power to convey important scientific messages in a more interesting and comprehensible way for adults, compared to using a textbook or newspaper article (Koutníková, 2017). Comic strips are memorable learning aids, as they are usually organised in panels containing a single message (González-Espada, 2003).

Comic strip reading is an active process as the reader needs to fill the gaps between the juxtaposed panels, which contain a complex interplay of words and images (Rota & Izquierdo, 2003). Moreover, comic strips encompass elements of humour and fun, making it a useful pedagogic tool to engage students and motivate them to read scientific content in a fun way. Therefore, the main aim of this study was for students to create comic books that

would provide imagery and context that would enhance their learning and attitudes about cell respiration.

Activities

All students were first taught about the different stages of cellular respiration: glycolysis, links reaction, Krebs cycle and oxidative phosphorylation in a three-hour online lecture. The week after the lecture, the students attended an active learning class over zoom (2 hours in length) where they were expected to produce a comic strip explaining cellular respiration in teams under the guidance. We then asked our students to create a comic using illustrated scenes and dialogue, within comic bubbles, that matched their storyline. Students were recommended to use comic strip generators such as 'Canva' or 'pixton' and were told that proper spelling and grammar should be used within the speech bubbles and that the following vocabulary words should be embedded within the storyline e.g. ATP, cellular respiration, Krebs cycle, electron transport chain, NADH, & FADH₂. Finally, students were told to write their comic strips in a creative way, for example the students could portray mitochondrion as a superhero ATP molecule or any other fun character. The role as the teacher was to facilitate the identification and elicitation of the relevant information.

After finishing the task, we graded their comic strips based on the following criteria: content, illustrated scenes, dialogue and vocabulary, spelling and grammar, clarity and neatness and creativity. An example of a comic strip students produced is shown in Appendix 1.

Outcome

The Comic strip generators used within our classroom activity, clearly indicated that no previous artistic skills are required from our students. The process of creating comics are important for the enhancement of creative thinking, personal expression, literacy development and communicative skills of our students (Lazarinis et al. 2015). The story telling strategy is important, as it requires students to determine what the most important points are from the lectures we delivered. Our students were also expected to re-phrase their reading/ lecture notes concisely and to organise them in a logical manner. In our opinion, creating comic books is very fruitful as it combines science, language, arts and technology, holistically.

From our observations, it was evident that our students were willing to work outside classroom hours. As many students stated that they were working during the weekends to finish the project. It is thus clear that comic strips are engaging, as students were driven by its fun nature, as well as a sense of teamwork. Secondly, we noticed that the use of technology played an essential role in the student's learning experience. Many of the students were appreciative of the opportunities of using new technological tools, such as 'Canva' to present work in an aesthetically pleasing way. Interestingly, we saw that students who were unfamiliar with using 'Canva', were able to learn how to use it by watching YouTube videos themselves without structuration, and thus managed to execute the story

board successfully. It is evident to us that adding digital solutions within the classroom is attractive to students, as it enhances their creative problem-solving capabilities.

The ability to create comics allowed our students to express their feelings and emotions; which is often difficult with other conventional techniques. The comic strip task allowed students to create connections between physical concepts (characteristics of respiration) and social ideas of human interactions (the characteristics of the cartoon characters they created). The ability for students to express their ideas of what respiration is through characters, is a good way for students to demonstrate their understanding of cellular respiration through their personal experience and perspective. Many of our students, created characters with interesting personalities. For example, one student created a character who was flirtatious with a villain to describe the relationship between the chemical 'citrate' and co-enzyme 'FAD'.

One of the main benefits of using comics in the classroom, is it allows students to present the most essential information, as they are limited by the number of panels available in the comic strip. Furthermore, it is usually much easier to remember visual and entertaining graphics, as opposed to reams of text. The ability to couple visual information and text, leads to greater problem-solving skills, creativity and innovativeness that may improve student performance (Hosler & Boomer, 2011). The use of comic strips in education is also very important as they integrate cognitive processes associated with the psychomotor domain, due to the incorporation of auditory, kinaesthetic and visual learning methods (Wright & Sherman, 1999).

The creation of comic books fulfils students desire for excitement, humour and entertainment. The storyboarding allows students to organize the different topics of cellular respiration by sequencing the story chronologically. Students were also able to develop composition techniques through visual-verbal connections. We also believe that using comic-strips harnesses inclusivity, as it allows students who are poor readers to understand complicated topics, as it uses a language common to most members of society. Furthermore, as instructors we believe that getting students to create comics, breaks the monotonous nature of lectures and keeps students motivated. We consider that students were made aware that science can in fact be informal and fun, instead of being connected to elite sombre intellectuals.

On the other hand, some educators have argued that comic strips may not have the desired outcome, as it results in character stereotyping (gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality) (Glacock & Preston-Schreck, 2004). However, within the comics our students produced, there was an equal distribution of genders, and one student used an Islamic woman wearing a Hijab as her main character, indicating that the students were diversifying their characters. Additionally, some authors have also argued that comic strips may bring room for inferior and idiomatic writing, which often encompasses a weak plot structure (Hadzigeorgiou & Stefanich, 2000). After marking the comics, we did come to realise that a minority of teams created comic strips that focused a lot on the action and adventure elements and misrepresented the actual science. In the future, we will stress to the students, the importance of conveying the process of cellular respiration more.

Impact

One of the main findings, we observed from this activity, was that using educational comics makes learning a fun and engaging activity. Throughout their course, students complete a reflective ePortfolio and many entries focused on the usefulness of this task and some students even spoke about using the technique for other topics. Similar findings have been established in the literature, for example, scientific comics have been shown to enhance student interest and satisfaction in comparison to text-only books (Lin et al., 2015). The feedback provided to the activity by our students was overwhelmingly positive, and one student stated that comic strips make science less terrifying: 'Many of the students in the class really struggled with respiration at A levels and found the whole process dull and complex. By presenting respiration as a story, it made cellular respiration less intimidating'.

One of the most notable positive side effects we gathered from this activity was the increase in 'reading enjoyment'. One student stated that 'I use to hate reading text-books saturated with text and barely any pictures. This comic book activity, made me realise that I am more eager to read when presented with images and an interesting story line and me really understand cellular respiration properly'. This finding goes in line with (Özdemir & Eryilmaz, 2019) who stated that teenagers are five times more likely participate with reading comic books, as opposed to essay type materials. Another benefit to this study was from a teacher perspective, we realised that classroom management was minimal during this activity. Students were so motivated to create and read their peers comics, that there were no instances of students getting distracted or deviating from the task. One team of students stated that 'As a team, we were assigned the task of creating a comic strip to illustrate how cellular respiration takes place. It was a fun and exciting task, that got us to work together as a team. We enjoyed thinking about the process in a more creative way and thought that it was more interactive than a lecture. As we had creative freedom we could have a lot more fun with the concepts involved and found that it made us remember the topic a lot more. We also found that the experience felt a lot more relaxed than the usually assigned university work. On the whole, we really enjoyed the process, we had a few time limitations and felt that we could have made it even better, however at the end we've produced a piece of work that we're both really proud of, with a lot of creativity that we didn't necessarily think we had.'

In contrast to the positive opinions provided by the students, one student stated that they found it hard to 'be creative and to describe respiration in another format, other than a flow chart'. In an article by (Spiegel et al. 2013), the use of comics also seemed to pose negative challenges in a few students. Some students believed that comic style activities cause disruption in classroom discipline and were time waste-wasting.

One other important finding of the study was that students were eager, to incorporate comic books as core texts for their course. It was also evident in many of the student responses that lessons should be adopted to be more humorous and enjoyable. One student remarked that 'Comic strips are so fun and add a twist of humour to the class. It's always the funniest moments and fun activities in life I remember, as opposed to the dull moments'.

In conclusion, the creation of comics in the classroom are a useful teaching aid in biological education, as it improves classroom management and makes learning more entertaining. It also promotes inductive thinking and offers teachers a way to assess student work in an authentic way. Based on the positive feedback, we received from our students, we are

convinced that this strategy is useful for students to remember difficult topics, as it promotes the use of an artistic mind.

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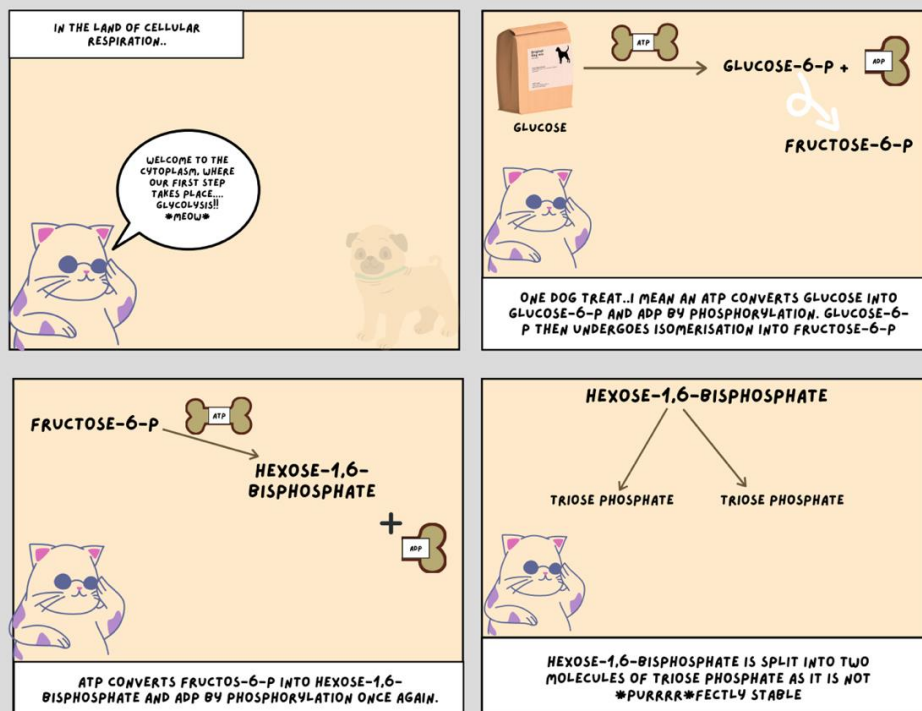
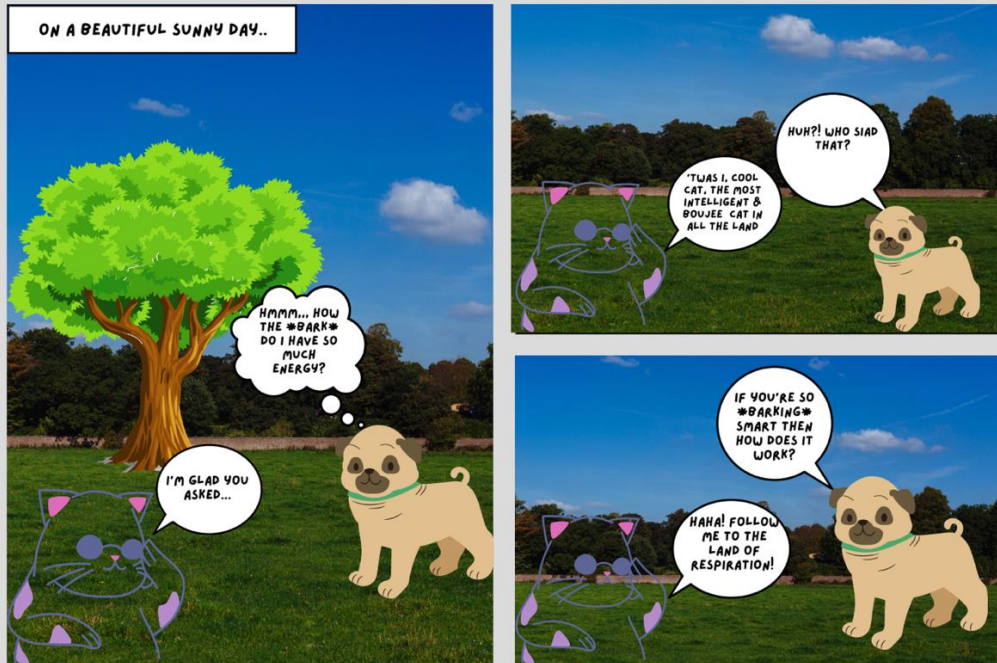
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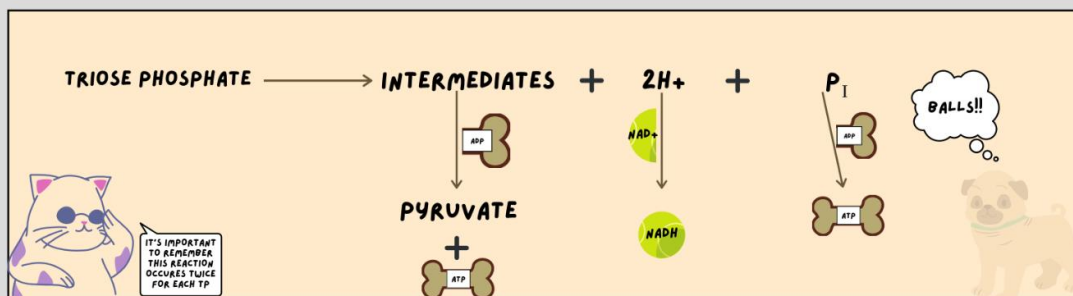
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Appendix 1

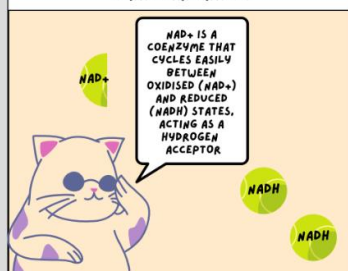
CELLULAR RESPIRATION



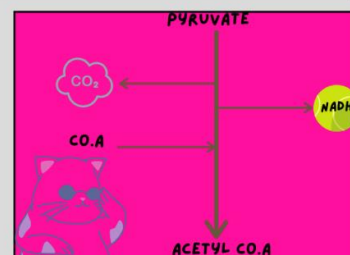
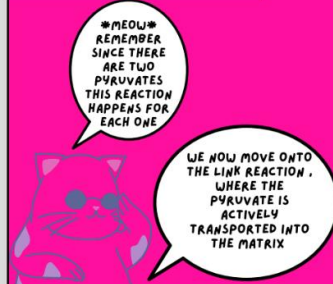


EACH TRIOSE PHOSPHATE IS THEN CONVERTED INTO AN INTERMEDIATE, TWO HYDROGEN ATOMS AND AN INORGANIC PHOSPHATE BY DEHYDROGENASE ENZYMES. ALL OF THESE PRODUCTS THEN GO ON TO REACT FURTHER..THE INTERMEDIATE IS CONVERTED TO PYRUVATE BY ENZYME ACTION, A PHOSPHATE GOUP IS REMOVED DURING THIS REACTION WHICH COMBINES WITH ADP TO FORM ATP. ONE HYDROGEN ATOM COMIRBINES WITH NAD^+ TO FORM $NADH$, TENNIS BALLS REPRESENT THIS TO HOLD ONTO YOUR ATTENTION DOGGO...AS FOR THE INORGANIC PHOSPHATE IT ALSO REACTS WITH FREE FLOATING ADP TO MAKE ATP.

THAT'S THE END OF GLYCOLYSIS. BUT YOU MIGHT BE THINKING WHAT THE *MEOW* IS NAD^+ AND $NADH$?



IN THE MITOCHNDRION MATRIX...



ONCE INSIDE THE MATRIX PYRUVATE REACTS WITH ENZYME $CO.A$ TO FORM ACETYL $CO.A$. CO_2 IS RELEASED AS PYRUVATE IS DECARBOXYLATED. HYDROGEN JOINS WITH NAD^+ AND FORMS $NADH$.

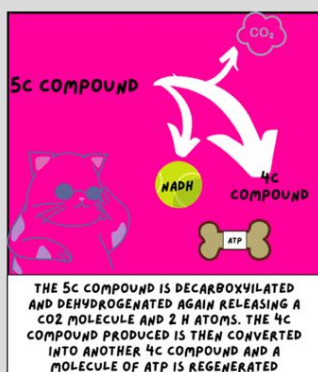
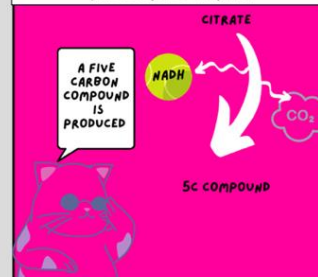
WE STAY IN THE MITOCHONDRIAL MATRIX FOR THIS ONE...



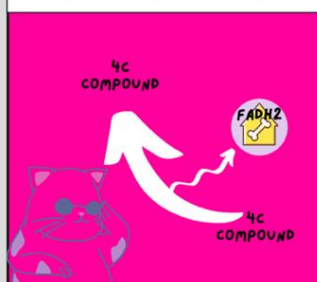
THE ACETYL $CO.A$ FROM THE LINK REACTION HAS THE ACETATE REMOVED WHERE IS IS COMBINED WITH OXALOACETATE TO FORM A 6-CARBON SUGAR CALLED CITRATE



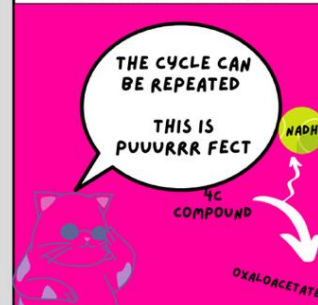
THE CITRATE IS DECARBOXYLATED REALISING A CO_2 MOLECULE IT IS THEN DEHYDROGENATED WHERE 2 HYDROGEN ATOMS ARE RELEASED AND ARE USED TO REDUCE NAD^+ TO $NADH$



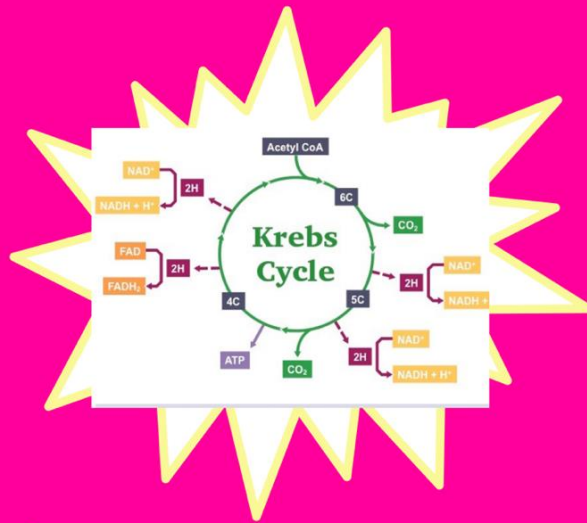
THE 4C COMPOUND IS DEHYDROGENATED WHERE THE TWO H ATOMS RELEASED GO ON TO REDUCE FAD^+ . THIS PRODUCES $FADH_2$ AND A DIFFERENT 4C COMPOUND



THE 4C INTERMEDIATE IS CONVERTED TO OXALOACETATE BY DEHYDROGENATION THIS PRODUCES A MOLECULE OF $NADH$



THE WHOLE OF THE KREBS CYCLE...



NADH FADH2 ATP

NOW FOR THE PURR-DUCTS OF THE KREBS CYCLE WE HAVE...

- >4X CO2 FROM DECARBOXYLATION
- >6X NADH FROM REDOX REACTIONS
- >2X FADH FROM REDOX REACTIONS
- >2X ATP FROM SUBSTRATE-LEVEL PHOSPHORYLATION

NADH AND FADH2 CONTAIN POTENTIAL ENERGY THAT WAS PREVIOUSLY LOCKED IN GLUCOSE.

ENERGY IS TRANSFERRED TO ATP BY OXIDATIVE PHOSPHORYLATION IN THE ETC

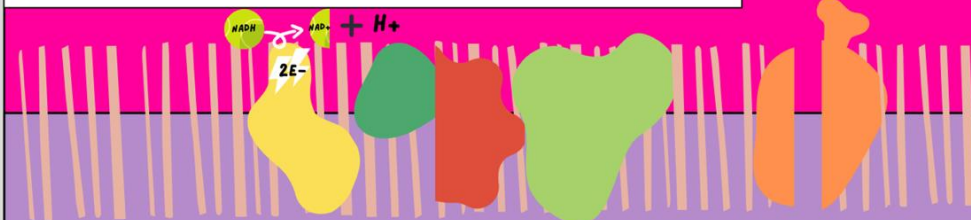


THE ELECTRON TRANSPORT CHAIN OCCURS WITHIN THE PROTEINS LOCATED ON THE INNER MITOCHONDRIAL MEMBRANE...WE'RE GOING TO IMAGINE THIS AS SOME ABSTRACT ART...

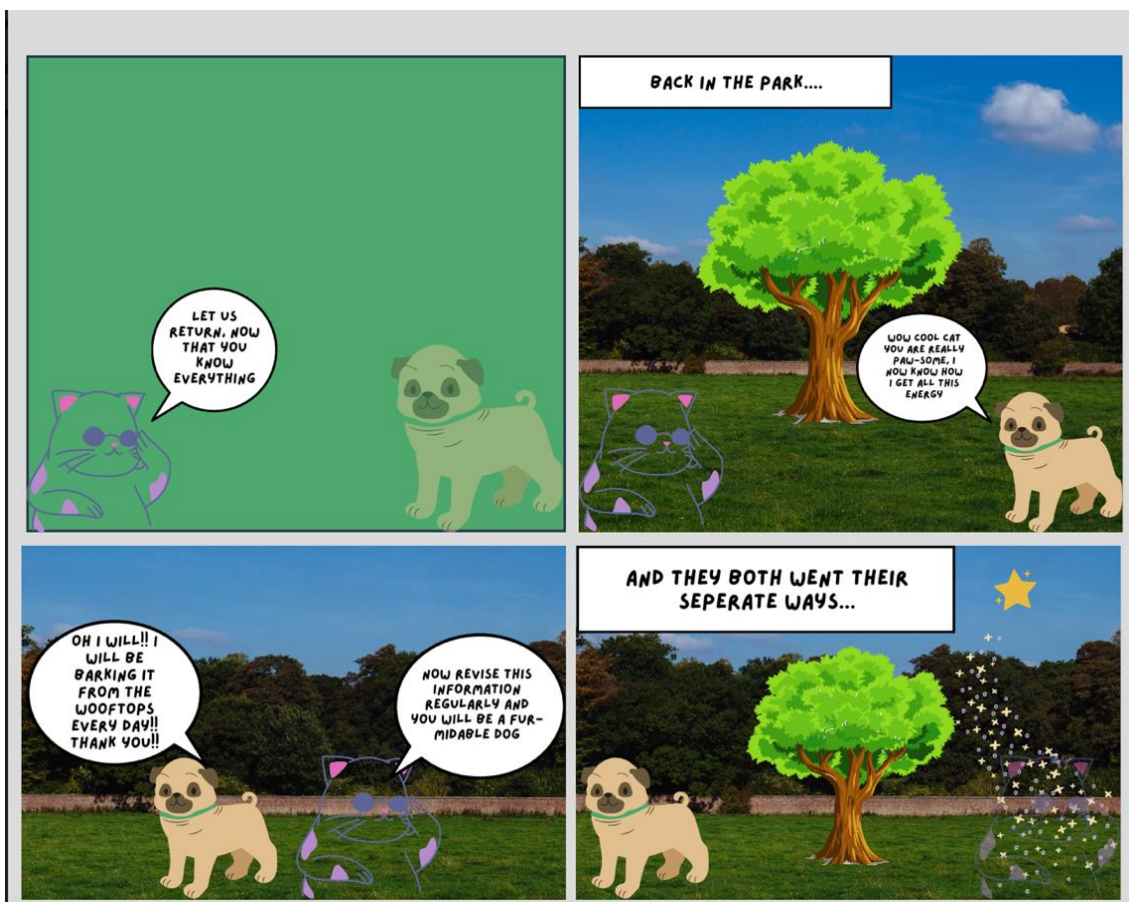
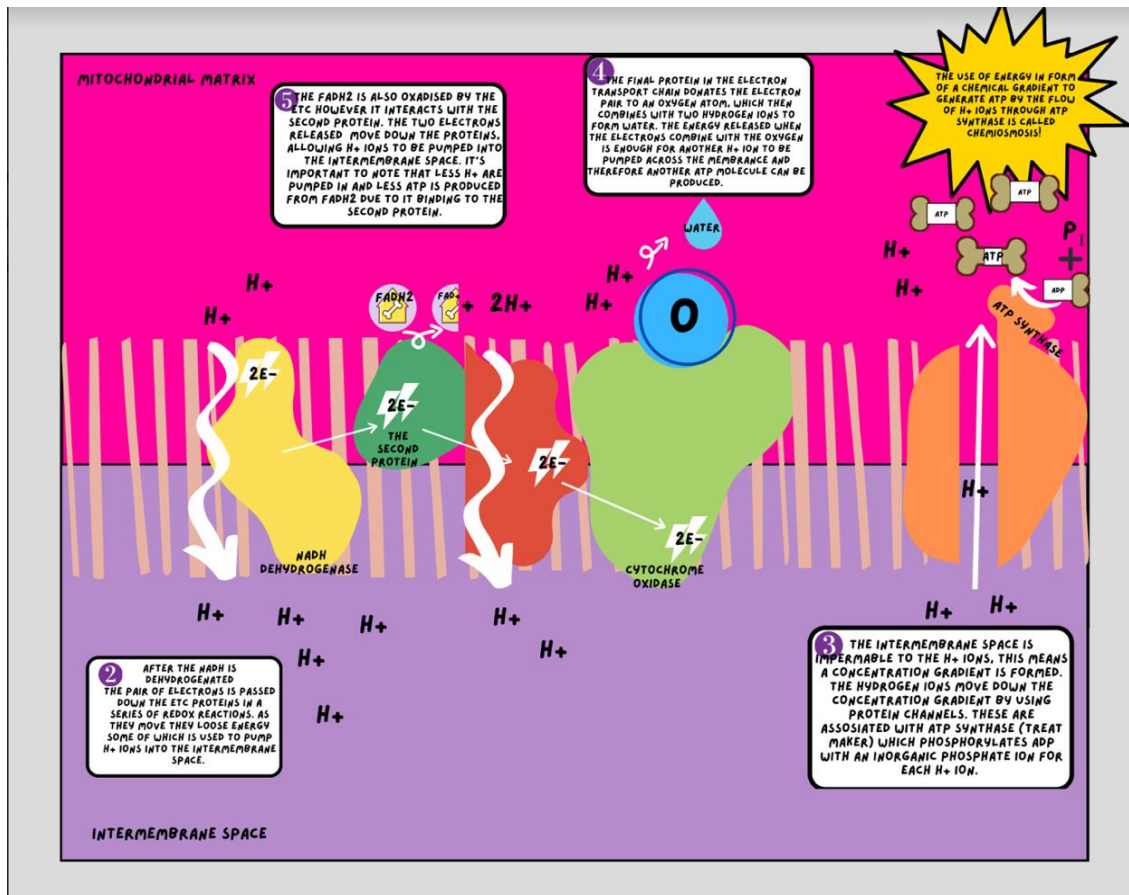


THIS LOCATION IS PURR-FECT DUE TO THE LARGE SURFACE AREA OF THE CRISTEA AND THIS ALLOWS FOR LARGE AMOUNTS OF ATP TO BE PRODUCED

1 FIRSTLY, THE NADH FROM THE KREBS CYCLE IS OXIDISED BY THE FIRST PROTEIN IN THE ELECTRON TRANSPORT CHAIN. THIS PROTEIN IS CALLED NADH DEHYDROGENASE. THIS PRODUCES A PROTON ALONG WITH NAD+ AND TWO ELECTRONS THAT BIND TO THE PROTEIN...



LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT THIS IN A LITTLE MORE DETAIL...



26. (Un)locking the power of poetry in a global pandemic

By Hannah Seat and Laura Blundell

(Un)locking the power of Poetry in a Global Pandemic



Image 1 Promotional poster for the #creativeHE session on storytelling and poetry.

In April 2021, Hannah Seat from University Campus Oldham and Laura Blundell from University of Liverpool hosted a #creativeHE 'Storytelling and Poetry' event.

This article is the story of the event in the form of a reflective narrative told by the two event organisers who refer to guest contributions and how they engaged participants.

The event took place online during the COVID-19 pandemic. As (Eringfeld, 2020, 146) points out, "the past academic year of 2019 and 2020 has seen large-scale disruptions. Universities around the world had to rapidly close their buildings, send students home and shift to online education". During the online event we were joined by guest speakers from across Higher Education who shared their experiences of storytelling and poetry throughout the pandemic, this included powerful and emotive poetry performances.

Through various activities, the #creativeHE community became immersed in storytelling and poetry within the context of their own homes during the national COVID-19 restrictions, which gave a very different narrative to the face-to-face events we had been used to attending pre-pandemic.

Throughout this article you will encounter examples of the poetry, some of which was created by the #creativeHE community during the event. We hope that as you read you will, enjoy the ride, and know the difference between poetry and prose is that poetry is broken into lines— that is all. (Carroll, 2005, 161)

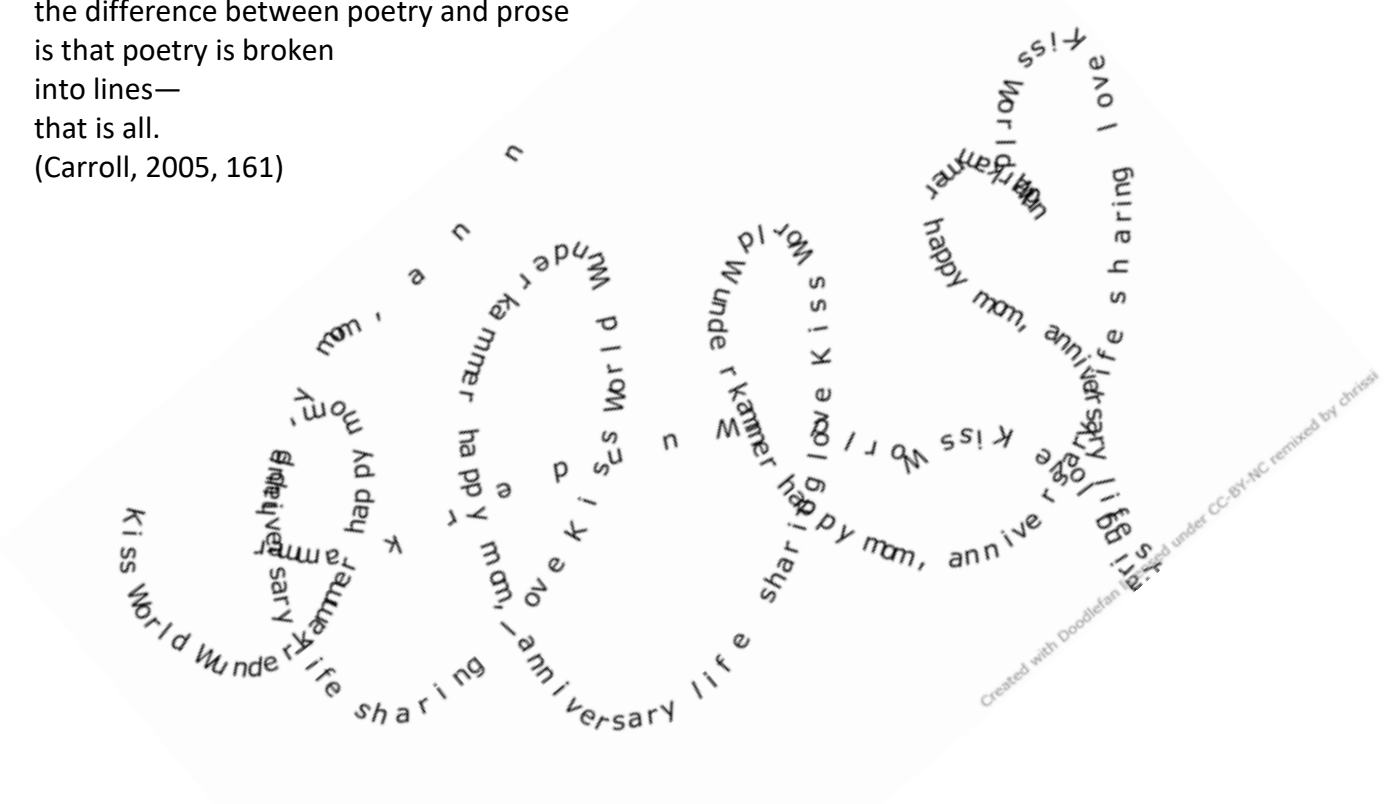


Image 2 Line drawing with words

Unmaking activity, facilitated by Sara Merkaj and Linda Matthews – Manchester Metropolitan University



About this un-making session: Sara and Linda facilitated an un-making activity which they wanted to trial in preparation for later use during the Global Culture Jam, a programme put together by educators and students at Manchester Met.

The facilitators defined un-making as a deconstruction of meanings, materials and the function of objects to help us imagine new possibilities. The session presented a new approach to how we understand and view everyday objects. The task they facilitated was to take 2 minutes to find a meaningful object or poem that they felt represented them and was readily available. Participants were asked not to think too much about this, just find the first thing that comes to mind or that is easy to reach.

Once in breakout rooms participants were invited to take it in turns to tell the story of their object or poem in 2 minutes. They were asked to think about why is it significant to them and how the item reflects their life, culture and place in the world.



Image 3 Storytelling objects: a pot, stapler, crochet square

*#creativeHE here is my
storytelling item 'Warpaint'*

*Fascinating discussion that showed the
emotion we imbue objects with. #creativeHE*

Showcasing poetry using research findings, facilitated by Simone Eringfeld – University of Cambridge

Simone Eringfeld is an educationist, artist-researcher, writer and edu-coach and we invited her to share her work around using poetry and music to communicate research findings to a wider audience. Simone's research and creative work are youth and (educational) aspiration, imagined futures, embodiment, temporality, opportunity and agency (Eringfeld, 2021a; Eringfeld, 2021b). Simone graduated from the University of Cambridge with a Master's Degree in Education and International Development in 2020. Her dissertation on the future of the post-colonial University won the BERA Master's Dissertation Award.

During the event Simone shared with us her reworked research data (interviews with students and academics) from her award-winning MPhil dissertation, which she has turned into spoken word performances and produced the album Please Hold. The 'data poems' were composed with expressions used by students and academics to describe their

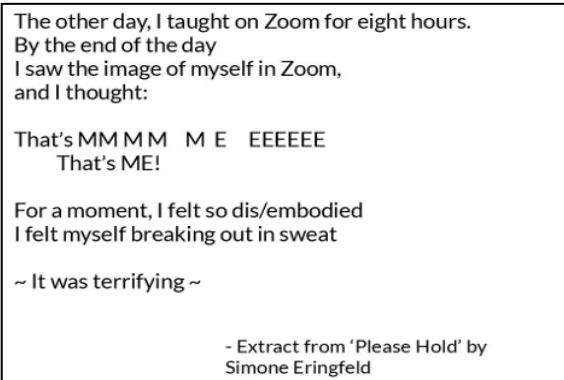
experiences of the pandemic and their hopes and fears for the future of Higher Education after COVID-19.



Image 4 Simone Eringfeld Please hold cover



Powerful comments from the #creativeHE community about Simone's poetry are depicted in the tweets. Click on the images to be transported to the original responses on Twitter.



Introduction to Storymakers, facilitated by Lisa Stephenson – Leeds Beckett University

Story Makers Company

We were delighted to also be joined by Lisa Stephenson from Leeds Beckett University who is the founder of the Story Makers Company.

Lisa, a former primary school teacher founded Story Makers as a way of combatting the marginalisation of the creative arts in education. Story Makers is a social enterprise with a clear ethical standpoint that unites its collaborators; the stories we create and share should celebrate diversity, promote global citizenship and critical thinking (Story Makers, 2021). Storytelling is used as a vehicle to amplify the voices of marginalised groups.

Lisa told us that within the Story Makers Company, artists and educators share a space to practice research and work with young people to empower them to create their stories through drama and creative writing. Lisa went on to tell us about the Story Makers press that is a publisher focussed on encouraging children's voices and creativity. Drama and storytelling is used with children as a way of exploring different narratives which are later transformed into engaging none fiction books.

What was striking after listening to Lisa was not only how powerful storytelling can be, but the positive social impact stories can have. The Story Makers is a living breathing example of how the creative arts can have such a positive influence on education. We all need to make a little more room for storytelling.

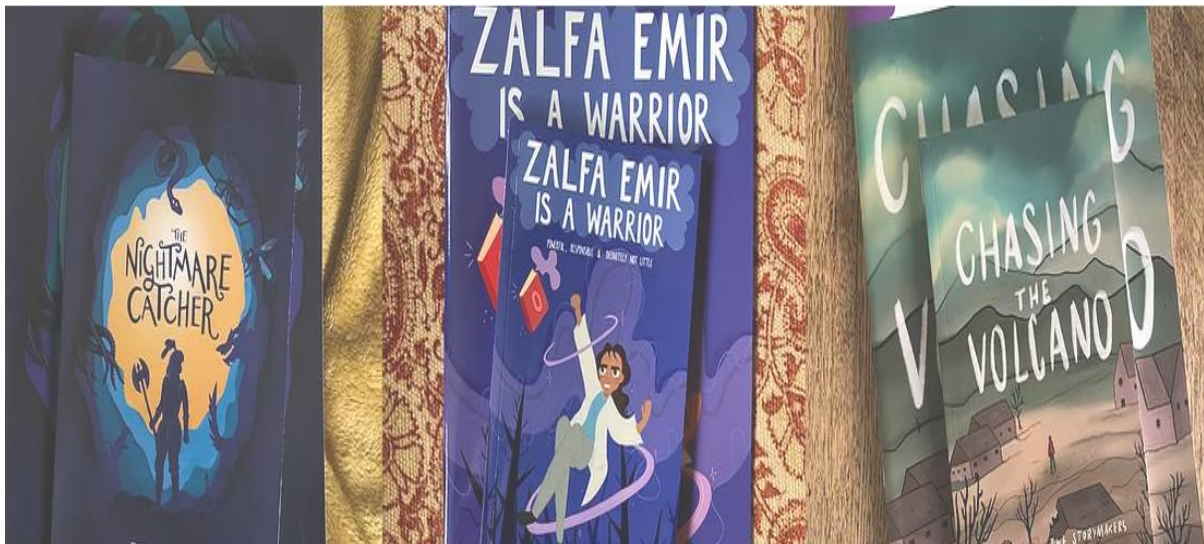


Image 5 Book covers of The nightmare catcher, Zalfa Emir is a warrior, Chasing the volcano

Using storytelling and poetry, facilitated by Gail Frampton – University Campus Oldham

Another guest was Gail Frampton, a Senior Lecturer who has a wealth of teaching experience. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Faculty Lead and former Course Leader on the BA (Hons) Education and Early Years at University Campus Oldham.

During the event Gail shared with us some examples of storying and poetry work from her current teaching on the Year 1 Working in Teams module on the BA (Hons) Education and Early Years. This module aims to examine the theory, principles and practice of working with individuals and with groups and considers a range of models appropriate for use by Early Years. Students analyse group interaction and apply appropriate theory to a project where the group has worked together. Students also reflect on their experience and consider their own role, their skills and qualities in the group context. Gail shared with us how after exploring the theoretical concepts of team working, the students had created a 'we poem' based on their shared ethos and values as a team. The students were then invited to create a recipe for a happy team and this could be using any method such as arts and crafts, baking, making a poster or flow chart or modern dance. Gail shared how one group of students decided to make a pizza, with each ingredient representing an element of their team, as you can see in the image below.

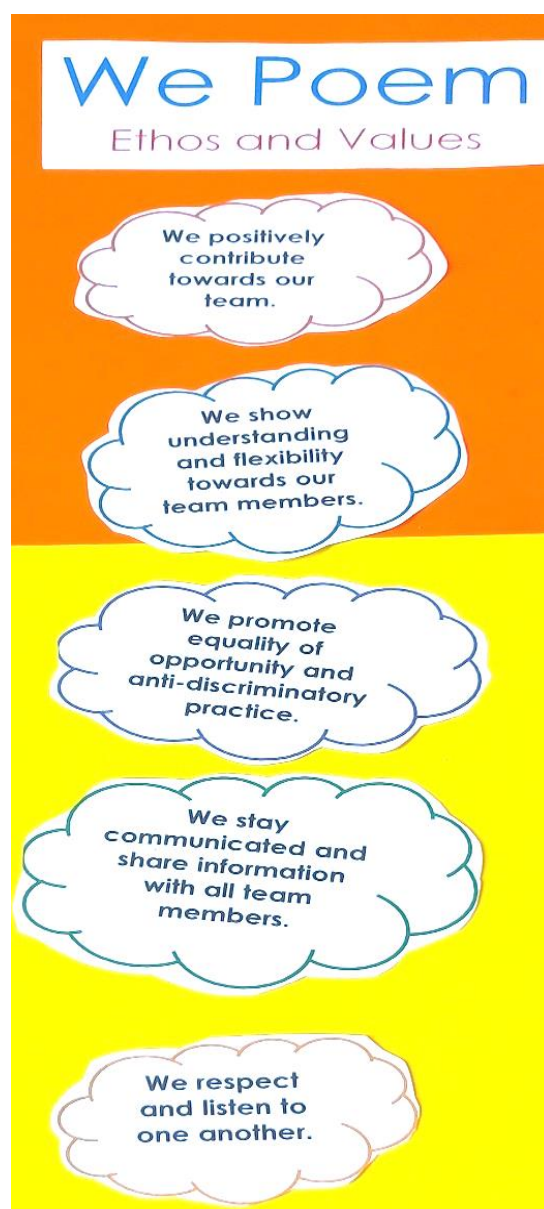


Image 6 We poem, ethos and values

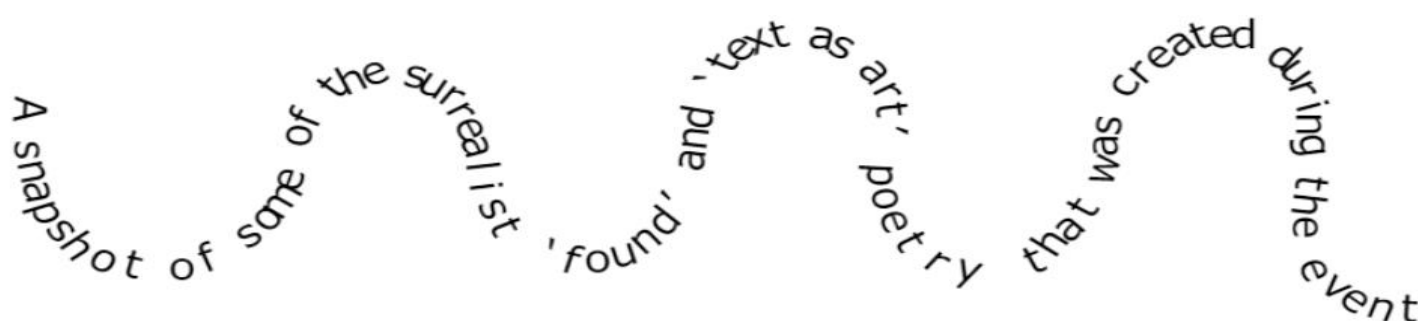


Image 7 Doodle of 'found' and 'text as art' poetry that was created during the event.

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27. Use of digital video communication platform (zoom) by British Indian nurses to upskill Indian nurses for managing COVID-19 patients

By Roslyn Mattukoyya, Leena Koshy Vinod, Manju Pallam and Emmima Angelina Manoharan

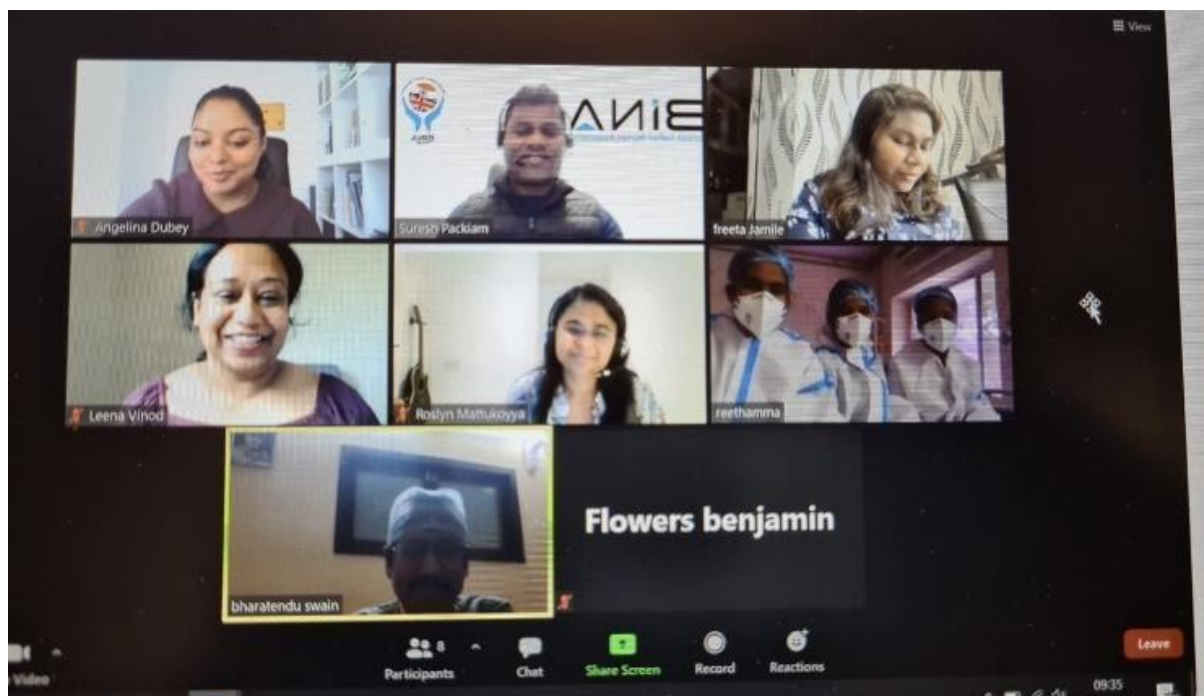


Image 1 British Indian Nurses upskilling Indian nurses using digital Platform (Zoom)

COVID-19 outbreak, a severe respiratory infection, was an international public health emergency. Like many other countries, the crisis shattered most states of India, and Indian healthcare professionals lacked skills, knowledge, and resources for managing the scale and severity of the pandemic. The British Indian Nurses Association (BINA) took the initiative of offering support to Indian Nurses to address this massive skills and knowledge gap issue and asked for volunteers. Around 65 British Indian Nurses (clinical nurses, educators and researchers working across the UK) showed interest. These Indian origin UK nurses felt the moral and social obligation to volunteer to share their expert knowledge to provide cross-cultural digital educational support to the Indian nursing workforce (Ford, 2021). The authors volunteered to become the programme development team and co-ordination team and led to the successful completion of the project.

Creative intervention

The main aim of the project was to swiftly upskill Indian nurses by sharing the best practices learnt during the UK COVID-19 waves to meet the demand of the hour. The creative intervention was implementation of a cross-border collaborative virtual training programme (Elsevier, 2020). It involved the use of video communication platform (Zoom) to offer timely and high-quality educational training programme to upskill around 400 nurses working in small to large multi-speciality hospitals in 3 states of India to address the massive skills and knowledge gap issue around managing COVID-19 patients (NHS England, 2020).

Despite having no prior connections, the authors worked cohesively and collaborated with ICU Nurse Educators/Leads across the UK to create a training package of 16 topics in a week's time. This was a massive achievement as the project was a voluntary activity and each member had their busy day job. In addition, the authors acted as the key liaison between the Nurse Leads from the Indian Hospitals and the BINA volunteering trainers.

The innovative education programme was carried out by using zoom to provide tailored support to 3 hospitals located in 3 different states (Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra) and recordings were made available on you tube following due consent. Three 1-hour sessions were delivered weekly for 4 weeks and the training reached out to hundreds of nurses as most sessions were projected in auditoriums with mass attendance of nurse leaders, educators, nurses, and student nurses. This was a complex activity as the hospitals varied in size and capacity. The staff who attended the educational programme differed in their knowledge, experience, skillset and had diverse linguistic background. English was the main medium of delivery but local language was utilised as per the situational requirement. The training contained a range of evidence based COVID-19 management skillsets, patient safety guidelines, and infection control resources (Almomani et al., 2020). Emphasis was given to practical information and post session; relevant posters and guidance were sent for reinforcement of safe care provision.

Lessons learnt

The sessions evaluated extremely well, and the Indian nurse leaders really valued the outstanding contribution. It enabled them to upskill their nursing workforce to deliver care safely and bridge the knowledge-skills gap. One nurse lead's comment capture this, 'Well co-ordinated, excellent and friendly faculty, apt topics and for those who attended, it is a life-time learning.' The project team's vision was to ensure that the training was relevant and of high quality. Challenges included time pressures, mixed level of audience proficiencies and finding guidance relevant to Indian practice setting (Ford, 2021; Elsevier, 2020; NHS England, 2020; Almomani et al., 2020).

On reflection, one of the key factors that enhanced the teaching and learning process was the social and cultural connections that the trainers and co-ordinators made with the attendees. This was evident in the pre and post informal conversations with the Nurse Managers, as well the formal evaluations (Baran & AlZoubi, 2020). The previous experiences of the co-ordinators and trainers in India enabled them to deliver the sessions at a level that was most suitable for the learners (Baran & AlZoubi, 2020). In addition, expertise in nursing practice, education, and research in combination with working flexibly, a strong passion and a partnership approach led to the success of the project. The authors consider this whole

process of developing a detailed educational programme and implementing it effectively to meet the challenges of the crisis as novel (Shivangi, 2020). Some of the unintended positive outcomes includes further collaboration and networking amongst the co-ordination team and Indian Nurse Leaders for sharing good practices and to influence future practice.

The cross-border collaborative virtual training programme was a creative output to combat the pandemic in a developing country. The positive outcomes have inadvertently met United Nation's various Sustainable Development Goals; including 3 (health and wellbeing), 4 (quality education), 10 (reduce inequalities) and 17 (partnership goals). Organisations in affluent countries can implement the same robust model to set up virtual training programs to promote best clinical practices, policies, procedures, guidelines, and curriculum globally to reach the SDG set goals by 2030 (The Commonwealth Education Hub, 2021).

Conclusion

The authors came together at the peak of COVID-19 pandemic in India in May 2021. The approach taken in this project to use digital video communication platform (zoom) by British Indian Nurses to upskill Indian Nurses for managing COVID-19 patients has enhanced networking across borders, allowed to share best practice across borders and impacted all involved for the better in the field of nursing practice and education. This type of collaboration is globally replicable, with its potential to offer flexibility in meeting the education and training needs in any acute crisis posed during situations such as COVID-19. The project coordination team will be more than willing to share and support anyone interested.

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Links to some of the training sessions delivered

[Session 1](#) and [Session 2](#)

28. The magical effect of memes and gifs for feedback

By Linnea Soler and Smita Odedra

We are chemistry academics who collaborate with our final year project students with the dual aims of creating T&L (Teaching and Learning) resources and to undertake SoTL (Scholarship of T&L). Fostering creativity and fun is core to all our endeavours, supervisions, and collaborations. Our project students have responded incredibly well to the freedom of this approach, channelling their creativity and sense of humour to create truly impactful resources.

Chemistry labs have a range of learning objectives (theory, practical skills, equipment training and safety awareness, amongst many others), the adaptation to online learning demanded creative and pedagogically-sound approaches to meet as many of the learning outcomes as possible. In traditional physical laboratories, there are ample opportunities for fun, between the chatter and the demonstrations and the group work. We wanted to bring that fun into the on-line learning experience because we are convinced that having fun promotes learning and reduces stress. We harnessed the talents of our final-year chemistry project student to design, develop, and evaluate two new online chemistry lab resources to substitute two traditional chemistry experiments. This pivot to e-labs was unblazed territory for us, requiring creative problem solving at every developmental stage. In this article we focus on our Quizlets and Feedback design elements and their impact.

To avoid video fatigue we wanted to use a platform that would allow us to take a multimedia approach (Mayer, 2017) (with written content, embedded videos, and images) as well as allow for an interactive approach to promote active learning. (Prince, 2004; Brame, n.d.; Worrell, 1992)) To enhance accessibility from students in different time-zones, we wanted asynchronously available content. Furthermore, we wanted interactive quizzes seamlessly integrated within the structure. Therefore, we opted to use [Genial.ly](https://genial.ly) for our platform. Not only is it easy to learn; it supports creativity, it is fun, and it is affordable, thereby ticking all of our core design requirements.

One important design aspect of these new resources was the use of “Quizlets”. These were designed to focus attention on common misconceptions of both theory and experimental procedures. The quizlets are formative, because we wanted to remove the fear of “failure” and promote curiosity and engagement (So et al., 2019; Zalnuddin et al., 2020). Furthermore, we wanted to imbed feedback into the responses, both for the incorrect response as well as the correct ones, to highlight the process of learning from mistakes.

Quizlets:

multiple choice questions scattered throughout the lab resource intended to help students pause and reflect on what they have just learned and to test their understanding and promote deeper learning. (Brame & Biel, 2015; Szpunar et al. 2013)

These lab resources were designed, created and evaluated by our wonderful final year (2020-2021) chemistry project student, Valerio Ruzza. We allowed Valerio creative freedom and the results of his labours delighted us, in quality, originality and in effectiveness. He used a combination of subject knowledge and reflective practice to guide his content creation and stamped it with his own unique personality and humour.

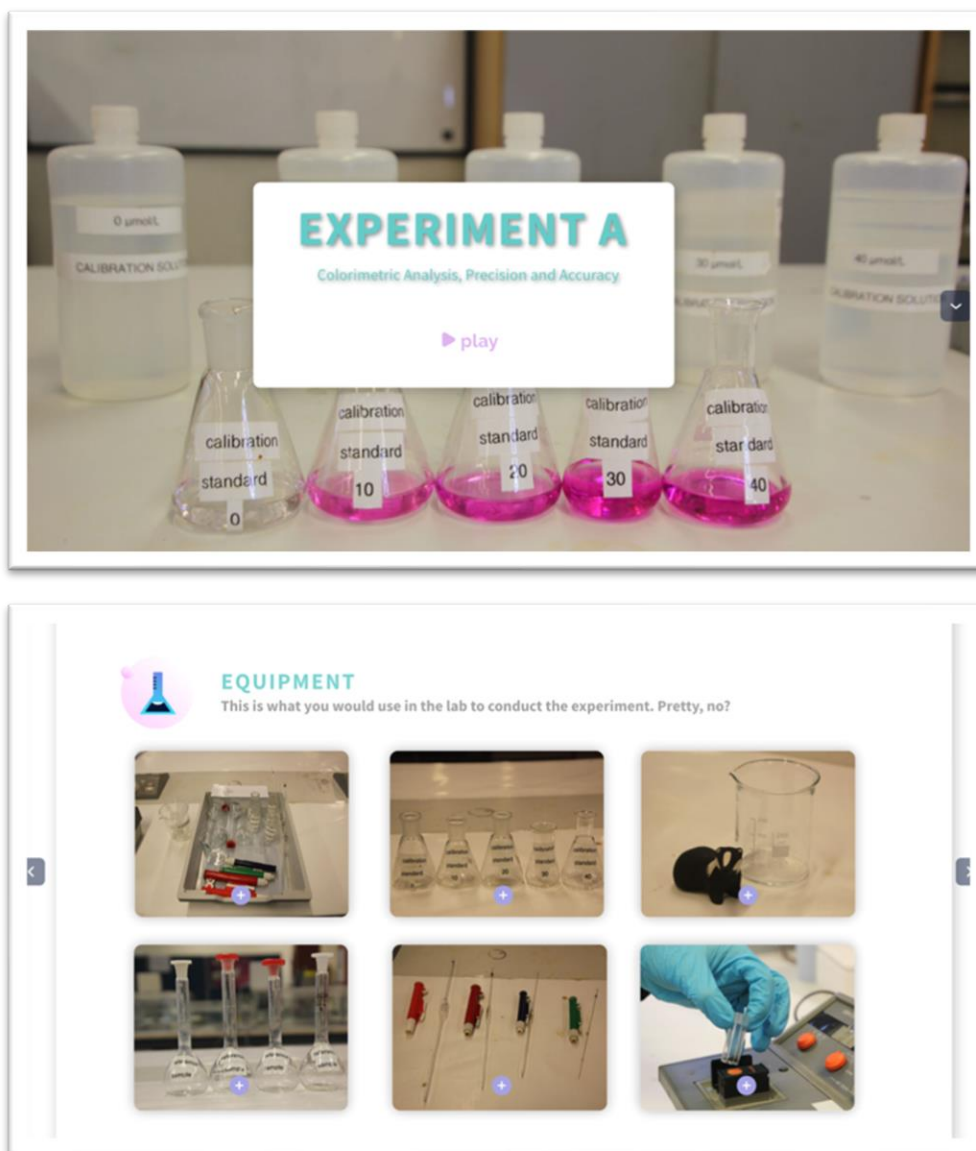


Image 1 Experiment A and equipment

Furthermore, Valerio harvested popular culture trends and incorporated the magic of memes and gifs into these resources.

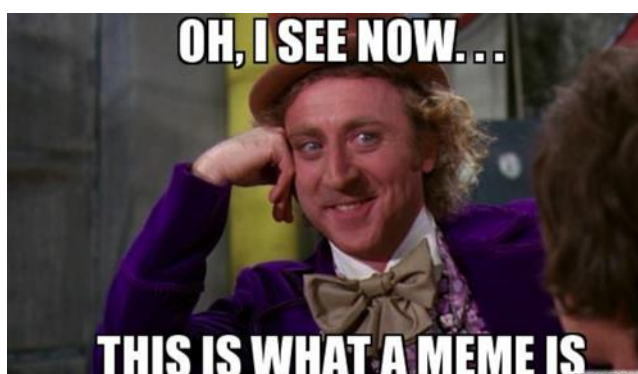


Image 2 Memes “What the heck is a meme” “This is what a meme is” & “Is it possible to learn this power”

Meme:

A meme is generally an image that makes a popular culture or topical statement or reference.

gif (Graphics Interchange Format):

is generally a moving image often taken from pop culture and there can be memes that are gifs as well.

Explore this is one of the biggest [gif sharing and creating sides](#).

By using humorous memes and gifs, quirky statements, and audio feedback, Valerio created a light-hearted and playful approach to lab learning while ensuring all the traditional material was delivered. He managed to create a positive reward cycle by embedding whimsy into the quizlet feedback. Have a try and see if you can get a round of applause! [What do you do when you spill something?](#)

What our students thought

The interactive lab teaching resources were used in our first-year chemistry (Quantitative) Lab (2020-2021), comprising ~600 students. The response from the student body (N=200) was overwhelmingly positive. We discovered that the students especially enjoyed and

appreciated the quizlets and the humorous feedback approach using memes and gifs. We share some of the voices:

"I found the quizzes most useful, and I really liked the encouraging words or supportive gifs upon answering the quiz questions."

"I really enjoyed the quizzes in-between, it made sure i didn't stop paying attention and I thought the gifs and feedback were funny and made the overall experience enjoyable."

"Also being hyped up with gifs every time you get an answer right is fun, and the continuous mini quizzes were good for making sure you understood what we'd just gone over."

A surprising finding was that students deliberately explored all quiz response options, even knowingly wrong answers, because they enjoyed the whimsical feedback provided by Valerio. This also means they engaged with the questions and answers multiple times, we still need to establish the effect this had on their learning and understanding. We have learned that the students appreciated opportunities to think, play, and get things wrong in a safe environment without their grades being impacted. This shedding of fear of failure was a delightful outcome.

"The GIFs also made me feel better if I got the answer wrong 😊"

Having the opportunity to be creative to develop an interactive digital teaching resource, and one that is very successful in delivering learning objectives, has opened up a new route not just for chemistry lab learning, but for e-learning in general for us. The use of funny memes and gifs triggered a staggeringly positive response from the student body, and we fully intend to continue to find and fuse the fun into our teaching and learning.

"Absolutely loved this interactive lab! I'm not a big chemistry fan but this made it much more enjoyable and reminded me people can actually have fun doing chemistry (it doesn't have to be all scary and daunting!)"

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29. Multimodality and creativity in new forms of distance learning assessments; exploring university students' perspectives during the pandemic

By Charalampia Sidiropoulou, Panayiota Christodoulidou and George Topalidis

Framing

The topical quest for alternative, (more) creative practices of assessment in Higher Education (HE) is currently attracting the ever-growing interest of academics and researchers working across disciplinary fields and domains of study. Our common professional interests, as teachers in HE classrooms coupled with our 'shared imaginations' (Dewulf & Baillie, 1999) to take an active part in this venture have primarily prompted our reflective thinking about (our) multimodal pedagogic designs of e-evaluating student learning (Kress, 2010; Sidiropoulou, 2020) and in the process sparked off the design of a small-scale research study.

The site of research

We have embarked on this study during the coronavirus pandemic with the aim to explore the experiences and perspectives of HE students attending an undergraduate programme at a London University. The site of our research comprised an 'interdisciplinary research methods' module designed for first-year undergraduate students. This is a core module on an undergraduate honours degree that incorporates both arts and sciences subjects. The module seeks to familiarise students with a range of qualitative methodologies and tools for data collection and analysis. Although we were not involved in the curricular design of the module, one of us had previously contributed to its teaching as a seminar tutor. Due to the implications brought about by the Covid-19 outbreak, all the teaching and the coursework was completed online via distance learning methodologies. The aim of this module was to support students in understanding the key principles entailed in designing interdisciplinary research projects, which investigate topical issues in our contemporary communities. Each cohort of students in each seminar group was divided into two/three groups of 5-6 peers who were encouraged to select a topic of their own interest.

The module instruction followed the lecture/seminar style and the assessment strategy comprised a number of individual and group assignments, all of which contributing towards the final student mark albeit with varied weighting. Specifically, the coursework components comprised a group video diary, an individual research report and a group research proposal.

Initially, students were expected to contact three University academics from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (e.g., engineering; psychology; biology; political sciences), whose research was pertinent to their group's chosen topic. Examples of topics suggested by

students comprise 'the effects of vaccinations on young people'; 'trends of sustainable fashion'; 'sustainable urbanism', 'artificial intelligence', 'recycling' and others. Each group prepared and conducted online individual semi-structured interviews of approximately thirty minutes, audio-recorded via Zoom, and then transcribed and analysed their data using a thematic approach.

Throughout the process of undertaking the interviews, students were expected to create a reflective video diary that would be focusing on the strategies they had devised for preparing and undertaking the semi-structured interviews (finding participants to be interviewed,) and would encapsulate the challenges they might have encountered in recruiting participants, as well as their experiences of conducting online interviews. The video diaries contributed towards 10% of the total student marks. Students were encouraged to present their methods of undertaking a thematic analysis of the interview material and to identify the possible strengths and weaknesses of exploring a topic from an interdisciplinary lens.

Secondly, the assessment design comprised a peer assessment component. Students were asked to give anonymous feedback to their group members regarding the level and quality of their engagement in the production of the video diary. Equally important was that the feedback to team members was constructive, especially given that all students would have to work with/in the same team until the end of the module. Importantly, peer e-valuations contributed towards the students' individual marks on the video diary assessment.

Thirdly, students had to compose a short, individual, written report (1,500 words) outlining their small-scale research and discussing the key themes that emerged from the group analysis of their interview data. The weighting of the individual coursework was 40% of the student final mark. In line with the guidance provided, the individual reports should outline the research aims/ objectives; methods and findings while focusing on two-three clearly defined themes arising from the interviews.

For the fourth and final assessment students had to collaborate with their group peers in order to design an interdisciplinary research proposal (20,000 words) with the purpose to persuade the reviewers (module tutors) that it should be funded. To this end, students were asked to work both individually and collaboratively in order to develop an understanding of the diverse stages involved in designing an ethically appropriate, interdisciplinary research study; and to (co)author the different parts of the proposal (i.e., research focus/questions; literature review; methodology, ethics; time-frame; cost plan; impact and dissemination). Group proposals contributed towards 40% of the individual students' marks.

The module assessment strategy comprised opportunities for formative feedback in the context of online presentations to the seminar tutors and peers, of (parts of) the developing research proposal. It is worth noting that a fifth assessment was initially integrated in the module design, stipulating that upon completion of the written proposal, each group of students would undertake a pilot study of the research proposal, during the summer term. The findings of the pilot would then be disseminated via an oral group presentation, that which would also further contribute towards the final marks (10%). However, the module

team decided that the group presentations would be postponed due to the pandemic conditions and the additional pressures that were created on students' learning journeys.

Research focus and theoretical lens in tracing learning, creativity and assessment

Notwithstanding our brief (given the space limitations) description of the module design and assessments, we hope that its inherent potentiality for stimulating a plethora of opportunities for creative, meaningful, multimodal learning experiences from the part of the students is readily apparent (Jackson, 2005). Indeed, the multifaceted character of the module design coupled with our common interest in visual and multimodal assignments prompted our curiosity to take a closer, systematic look.

To this end, we collaborated in carving out a research study that would enable us to explore these questions in more depth. Our prime goal was to explore students' experiences in engaging with less conventional academic practices and forms of assessment. We were further interested in tracing the kinds of texts students created; what resources they used; how they deployed them to fulfil their situated purposes; and what these might tell us about the complexities of tracing student learning; the possibilities of new forms of assessment of academic knowledge and its multimodal shapes of re-presentation.

Against this backdrop, we decided to initiate our field work over the summer term after the students completed their coursework and handed in all their assignments. We contacted students across the seminar groups so as to inform them about our study and ethical issues and invited them to voluntarily participate to semi-structured online interviews with the aim to explore their experiences, views and reflections of engaging with the module assessments and addressing the criteria of evaluation. Given the governmental restrictions of social distancing and lockdown measures, the research team chose to conduct the interviews online. The benefits of online videoconferencing include convenient time scheduling and location for participants, such as talking while being in their home environment where they feel more comfortable and safe (Jackson, 2005; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). The fifteen students who took part came from across five groups and further shared with us samples of their assignments. While the data analysis is still ongoing, we 'd wish to share here some preliminary thoughts with a particular focus on students' experiences regarding the video diaries.

The design of our small in scale (albeit promising and even more rewarding!) project has been framed by the theoretical lens of multimodal social semiotics (Kress, 2010) and draws on a number of cognate semiotic concepts including the notions of design, mode, semiotic resource and multimodal ensembles. The term multi-modal refers to the multiplicity of means (modes) through which meaning is made and social semiotics concerns the significance of the socially-situated, communicative actions of sign-makers and their resultant signs.

Multimodality sees representation and communication as being realised through the selection and orchestration of diverse semiotic resources, the so-called modes. In pedagogic contexts both teachers and learners make and express their meanings by selecting and coordinating a multiplicity of modes (image, writing, colour, speech, gesture, gaze, movement etc.) to fulfil their social purposes. Each mode has its own materiality and potentiality for making meanings, which is configured by both its physical properties as well as by the communicative functions it has evolved to serve through its previous usage in diverse communities and the ways in which it has been culturally shaped to 'mean' by previous users. Given the complex relation of 'modal affordance', the rhetor's interest and intention and the variabilities and complexities of social environments, the category of design moves into the foreground of attention in the making of complex signs-as-texts. And so design becomes the *creative* practice where the crucial issue is the configuration of modes, media and frames in relation to rhetorical / political purposes, the designer's interests and the characteristics of the audience (Kress & Sidiropoulou, 2008).

Learning environments include all the objects and phenomena which, directly or less directly, function legitimately in the environment of schooling and have recognised effects. The *interest* of the producer of learning environments – the teacher - is a pedagogic and didactic one: 'how can I best realise potentials for engagement with subject-content (a specific epistemology) together with a particular pedagogy (a social relation with the imagined audience)?' Similar questions apply to the kinds of textual entities that the learners are expected to produce and the social relations projected to them. The notion of genre, as the (multimodal) entexting of distinct social and epistemological positions of the participants involved in the text-as-interaction (Kress, 2003), is especially pertinent as it is enabling us to think about the meaning of contemporary literacy and the kinds of texts students are expected to produce for the purposes of assessment.

Research findings – some preliminary thoughts

Students' general experience of the module was positive and a number of them said that they found the module assignments interesting, especially as they were different from conventional coursework that they were familiar with and recognised that this helped them develop new skills. Particularly, in relation to the video diaries, which was the first assignment that they had to complete and hand in for marking, the students were encouraged to engage with a range of creative processes which encompassed decision-making, problem solving, team work and role assignment along with the exploitation of online resources and media for the purposes of communicating and co-authoring their assignment. Importantly, we were impressed by their ongoing enthusiasm and commitment, despite the unprecedented challenges that the pandemic has brought to their lives and studies.

In the context of the video diaries, the roles students assigned in their groups comprised the following:

- Editor – oversees any writing
- Video Editor – oversees any editing of the video diary

- Communications Director – takes the lead on liaison with seminar leaders and teaching staff
- Main interviewer – there were 3 of these per group
- Technical director – someone to take responsibility for recording equipment
- Secretary – arranging meetings, taking any minutes for group meetings and other
- Researcher(s) – take the lead on finding people to interview
- Transcriber – shared role, so no one should be expected to transcribe an entire interview

Notably, as the groups engaged further with their coursework, students came up with new roles in light of and in response to the intricate issues that emerged (e.g., assigning a second video editor and a coordinator of the group work). During the pandemic period, all the conventional courses at Universities transferred to online learning. This process of transitioning from face-to-face to distance education and communication drove lectures and students to elaborate creatively with their existing teaching, learning and evaluation practices (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Sahu, 2020). Due to the new conditions of distance learning and their implications (e.g., the challenges in working on the same course across different time zones) some of the participant students came up with creative solutions of using cyber tools and blended strategies to tackle the new problems (Kress & Selander, 2012). Among other, these comprised filming their synchronous online meetings, which they conducted via Microsoft Zoom or Teams; sharing transcripts and co-editing assignments in real-time via Google documents; and using WhatsApp as a group communication tool bridging informal and formal learning.

Video diaries as multimodal designs of learning

The ‘turn to the visual’ in late modern society means that young people experience the world differently. As Jewitt (2008, 55-56) maintains,

‘...The broad range of resources that are available in the contemporary landscape are leading to the emergence of new multimodal configurations and genres (in both digital and print media) that are significant for creativity and learning (Kress, 2003; Jewitt, 2008; Marsh, 2006). They are significant because of the ways that knowledge is re-distributed across image and other non-linguistic modes, as complex multimodal ensembles. Writing is one mode, image is increasingly dominant, and all modes play a key role in contributing to the meaning of the text’.

Visual representations and the production of dynamic video diaries seem to be closer to students’ multimodal worlds and contemporary experiences / knowledges of literacy than the traditional, ‘monomodal’, static and atomistic forms of assignments (Elkington, 2020). It is useful to include here some illustrative quotes from the student interviews, which are both enlightening and revealing of the creative ways in which they have experienced the process of collaborating and co-creating their video diaries. Students’ responses are further

indicative of the ways in which the different groups have reflected upon the semiotic work that they have jointly invested in their making:

Group A: 'Artificial Intelligence'

We didn't script the video diary; we put music in the background and sounds of the frog to make it more fun

We wanted to submit something different from the other videos
we use audio effects in order to have a balance between what we said and of having fun
We aimed to make it enjoyable, while at the same time we recognised that this assignments counts only the 10% of our total marks and thus we also preferred to save time for the following assignments.

Group B: 'Sustainable Fashion'

We have been creative we experience new things because we work as a group, and we encourage each other if I was doing alone I wouldn't be so creative-like using the frog sound
we have the same interest, so make our work more enjoyable
have audio effects make it more enjoyable and more accessible to people, we added subtitles to make it accessible to people
due to the length of the video, we speed up our voices

Group C: 'Visual Arts'

We didn't have an idea of video making, we put a lot of effort to make it coherent, we paid attention to what to include
we added sounds, we spend much time making it aesthetic
In the last part of the video, we recorded what we have learned

Group D: 'Youth Wellbeing'

...doing the video diary -it made us to think outside the box than the written academic essays
You can see the faces of people and how they feel if they are enthusiastic, you can listen to their tone of voice
The struggles were more technical, we didn't add sounds, we try not to make it too long

Group E: 'Recycling'

There are many benefits of working online... we recorded directly our meetings on Teams
we had a lot of clips to include, but we focus on presenting snapshots of our meetings, snapshots from our documents, interview plans than our faces

during our meetings, not everyone wanted to show up on camera
if it was a written assignment you can go back and change what you had written but while
recording our meetings you can do it again/we show originally our steps/ the process
we needed to have more than one editor, occasionally she shared with us the clips we said
what to include more...

Closing remarks

In this paper, we have wished to begin sharing some thoughts and preliminary findings of a small-scale, qualitative study that explores University students' experiences of non-traditional forms of assessment, focusing in particular on video diaries as multimodal designs of learning. We anticipate that the reflective sharing of innovative practice and topical research might help shed more light on the discourses surrounding the notion of creative teaching, learning and assessment (Banaji et al., 2010; Sidiropoulou, 2008), especially as we are entering an era of the 'new normal'. Inspiring work has already been undertaken by immensely creative colleagues - see for instance, the special issue of the Creative Academic Magazine on creative practices of assessment (Sinfield et al., 2018) freely available at the #creativeHE platform. Our take further seeks to highlight the importance of recognising the potentials and constraints afforded by the new virtual, multimodal learning environments. As Kress and Selander (2012) propose, a broader, design-oriented understanding is needed to inform our selections of technologies, practices, genres and assessments that are apt to facilitate students' meaningful, agentic, creative and enjoyable learning journeys.

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30. To infinity and beyond! A creative exploration of failure

By Rachelle Emily O'Brien

For as long as I can remember I've wanted to be a teacher. My undergraduate degree in Dance, Performance and Teaching had two teaching placements as a part of it and I went into both brimming with excitement. I soon realised that primary and secondary teaching is absolutely not for me. Feeling disheartened I graduated and pursued a career in student support. My career has seen me travel through some winding roads, with twists and turns along the way, but I find myself today, a Senior Digital Learning Designer working for Durham Centre of Academic Development. My role now involves working with academic staff and students... and this I have come to realise, is where my heart has always been. I still don't have a teaching job as such BUT I am fortunate enough to have become Module Lead for a PGCAP module in Enhancing Academic Practice this year. This module involves curating a schedule of workshops for participants to access which enables them to develop and reflect on their own practice as educators. Getting this role has been the highlight of my year! I currently guide two tutor groups through our PGCAP and every time I meet with them, I find myself just feeling more and more at home and it is affirming that this, is exactly where I'm meant to be. Now on to the topic of this piece. Failure.

Failure is defined as 'the lack of success' and is often referred to as the opposite of success. I don't understand this viewpoint, because every experience of failure I personally have had, has led me to learn an important lesson. Success is a personal and subjective thing for me, and success to me is treating failure as a learning experience. That doesn't make failure easy to accept! I've written about [encountering my failure monster in this blog post](#). Failure is also suggested as part of the underpinnings of the concept of playful learning (Whitton, 2018) something I will discuss later.

I've been fortunate in my life. My mum signed me up for dance lessons from the age of 2 which put me into a competitive environment. As an introvert, who is awkward, with short arms and legs and a long body, it was the perfect environment to experience failure in a positive way. It was also the perfect opportunity to start honing my creative thinking skills, I found myself in some very sticky situations that tested this creative thinking... There was the time I went on stage to perform a competition solo, entered from the wrong side of the stage, and ended up performing the entire solo the opposite way to how it had been set – amazingly I actually placed third, even though the majority of the dance had been done facing the back of the stage rather than the audience. But I wasn't perturbed, I just, got on with it and re-created the dance the wrong way round!

During a recent PGCAP tutorial my wonderful tutees reflected on the lack of educators talking openly about failure and how to overcome it. They feel that failure is important to be discussed, reflected on and learned from and I completely agree. Because of this, I've decided to write this piece and dedicate it to my PGCAP tutees.

Here you will find a few examples from across my life of where I've failed, what I did, how I realised this failure was a win in disguise and how these experiences are helping me to become a Creative Academic

The one with Sigmund Freud where I was definitely the wrong type of critical

We're starting this journey through my fails back when I sat my A Levels. I was a precocious teenager, fiercely independent and with a strong sense of social justice. One of the subjects I chose to study was Psychology, because I was utterly fascinated by the human mind. I quickly discovered that our syllabus of work didn't really cover the human mind so much but more focussed on human behaviour. Fast forward to my exam, there I was ready to write my heart out but then as I opened my exam paper I came across a question that said something along the lines of 'Sigmund Freud's work in psychoanalysis was revolutionary for his time, discuss how the discoveries of great men have led to us better understanding human beings'. Well, I saw red! I really didn't agree with Freud's work and I DEFINITELY didn't agree with writing an essay which celebrated men only, what about the achievements of women? So, I used this opportunity to write a 'critical' essay about equality and not about Sigmund Freud. You can guess what happens next can't you? I failed my A Level. Yep, that's right, me and my lack of common sense, or ability to follow guidance and write a critical argument, rather than criticise, meant that I failed my A Level. I was fortunate that I did well enough in my other A Levels that I still got a place in university but that one silly decision by my 17-year-old self very nearly cost me a university place.

What is there to learn from this experience? Yes, it is important to have opinions and to formulate critical arguments, but they shouldn't criticise *people*, they should offer different perspectives. Also, there's a time and a place to have your say and your psychology A Level is probably neither the time or place for this. Have you ever had an experience like this yourself? How did you overcome it?

Failing an exam, although it was embarrassing, really wasn't the end of the world. As much as I was disappointed in myself and in hindsight it was stupid, I don't regret failing that A Level because I learned some very important lessons. Firstly, there is a time and a place to share your opinions. Secondly, forming a critical argument is different to criticising. Thirdly, failing an exam doesn't ruin your life (but it can cause complications or make things unnecessarily difficult, so maybe don't follow my example)? Me having 2 A Levels instead of 3... well, that has led to a lot of self-reflection, learning about sharing opinions and some creative conversations in job interviews especially working through why this type of failure isn't always a negative thing.

This experience led me to explore assessment and its purpose which subsequently directed me to explore [Jesse Stommel's work on ungrading](#) and [critical digital pedagogy](#) which at this time really opened my eyes to my own view of assessment and has gone on to heavily influence the way in which I work as a practitioner.

The one where I got so nervous, I didn't speak

The majority of the jobs I've had since working in Higher Education have required a level of interaction with people. Which for an introvert, can be difficult. When I was younger, I seemed to just be able to go into a room and present, no problem. I just got on with it. As time has gone on though, this has become more difficult. There was a point in my career I started experiencing what is best described as 'imposter syndrome' and as time has progressed, this has become more challenging. Imposter syndrome is a phenomenon referred to as the notion that individuals feel that they ended up in an esteemed position or role, not because of their competencies, but because of luck or an oversight (Feenstra et al., 2020).

The way that I have handled this previously is to either avoid situations altogether, or try not to overthink them and overprepare so that I don't become robotic in reciting notes (this has happened too). So, there I was, ready to deliver a workshop, a group of peers sat in front of me. I know the topic, it's my main research area. I looked around the room and look up to the PowerPoint presentation I'm expected to deliver and all of a sudden fear washes over me and I'm stood there staring at the people in the room and they are staring back at me, and I can't speak. Time slowed in this moment, and I had absolutely no idea what to do. What do you do when you're supposed to be leading a workshop and you just can't speak? What would you have done here?

So this is where the creative thinking thankfully kicked in! I had a realisation that although I couldn't speak, I had an activity planned which wouldn't require me to speak. Although this was deviating from the plan and I knew I'd get in trouble later for doing this, I decided to hand this activity out to participants and indicate that they should read the paper. This gave me just enough time to get a drink and calm myself down enough that I could speak again.

Once the participants had finished the activity, I made a start on the PowerPoint. Realising this wasn't going so well, I did something completely outside of what I was supposed to do. I turned the PowerPoint off and instead opened the floor for a led discussion. I explained to my peers what had happened at the beginning of the session and apologised for not following the session plan, or giving them the best experience. Instead, I facilitated a discussion based on peer-support, peer-learning, and failure. Which absolutely wasn't what I should have been doing!

Afterwards, I had to explain to a very annoyed boss that I'd deviated from the PowerPoint. However, the feedback came in from those who had attended the workshop and it was positive. This was the point that I had a realisation. Sticking rigidly to a format, or a PowerPoint just doesn't work for me. I find it so constraining that I panic. This experience, although not great at the time, empowered me to change the way I work. I have shifted the focus of my workshops away from me as a 'sage on the stage' and back to the people in the room, instead prioritising their wants and needs. This stressful situation enabled me to really assess what had gone wrong and make positive change for myself as a result. I may have failed to deliver a PowerPoint in a precisely timed manner, but what I did do, was give my peers a fantastic learning experience and in the process, I revealed what is important to

me as a facilitator. I discovered the importance of planning, of flexible delivery, reading a room and thinking on my feet which are skills that benefit me every day.

The one where I locked myself in an Escape Room

I've had an interest in puzzle solving and using Escape Rooms as teaching tools for a long time. I like how much these activities link to active learning and provide problem-based learning opportunities. I also enjoy the agency you are able to give to those participating and opportunities for reflection in a way that may be slightly different from the norm.

Since before the pandemic, I've been creating Escape Rooms. These have covered a variety of subjects and been used as learning activities for many purposes. This has ranged from formative and summative assessments to induction activities to build belonging right the way through to memory aids and just enjoyable team building activities. [I have written about some of the work I've done with Escape Rooms in this article](#) and [this article provides guidance on how to create your own Escape Room.](#)

Escape Rooms can be built using low-cost or free tools, such as Microsoft OneNote, Forms or Google Forms/ Jamboard and can be face to face, blended or virtual. They're a form of game-informed learning (Begg et al., 2005; O'Brien, 2018) whereby characteristics of video games are incorporated into educational context to create learning activities. These characteristics might include:

- Problem-solving activities
- Back stories or narrative
- Tasks which have feedback and give learners a sense of agency
- Use of roles and role play in tasks to reduce pressure to 'get it right'
- Decision frameworks that can be impacted and controlled by the learner
- Most importantly opportunities to take risks and encounter failure in a safe environment

The pandemic has meant an increase in interest from across the sector in educators using puzzles and Escape Rooms as learning activities for their teaching. As this is an area of my research and something I've gained a reputation for sharing, I've been invited to many different institutions to share my practice and demonstrate Escape Rooms to staff and students. At this point, you can be forgiven for thinking that as somebody who is invited to share their practice, I have some level of 'expertise' in this area. Don't worry I can quickly dispel that thought! I am the expert who creates Escape Rooms and manages to trap myself in them! I've come to the point where I think I must just love solving puzzles so much that I need to be around them.

I do this in two ways generally (although I'm sure I'll find more ways to trap myself!). Firstly, by forgetting the password to a room and locking myself out of activities. The second is my favourite recent fail to share. When delivering an Escape Room session, I demonstrate by asking participants to split into groups and try out an Escape Room against the clock. During this time, I hop in and out of breakout rooms and help if needed. This is great for me

because I get to see the huge variety of ways in which people react to the activity and how they engage with it. In July I was keynoting for a conference, carrying out this activity when my internet connection decided to die. My disconnection caused me to get stuck in the Escape Room with all the conference attendees stuck in their own breakout rooms. I had no ability to contact them, to pull them back to the main room, or to move myself anywhere other than where I was. Completely by chance, the participant who had been given my 'host' privileges found me and was able to re-assign the privileges and free me! While trying to figure out how to handle the situation, I'd made a plan to finish the session on a different platform (Twitter) assuming I'd not be able to get back to the attendees. This was the best decision I could have made because it resulted in frantic conversation and conference attendees getting the opportunity to not only network with one another but to make new connections.

Reflecting on what happens when technology fails me, I realise that I am able to stay calm and figure out a new plan and hope this works. I am only in a position to do this though because I am comfortable with both technology, and failure. I handle failure by being honest with participants about what has happened and using it as an opportunity for a conversation and reflection. I find giving people the chance to feedback on my failure and ask them to advise me how I could do things differently tends to lead to personal reflection about similar situations. Needing to think on my feet, led me to change an activity which opened me up to new possibilities. Without taking a risk, I'd have never known how carrying out a plenary on a different platform would go.

Failing or winning?

There are so many examples of failure I could use here. Ranging from falling over at the front of a lecture theatre (I am notorious for tripping over fresh air) and failure to see my worth and put myself forward for opportunities. Failure is something that everybody experiences to some degree, both personally and professionally. In her writing about playful learning, Whitton (2018) proposes 'positive construction of failure' as one of the three characteristics of the 'magic circle' that highlights the pedagogic rationale for using playful approaches in learning in higher education. The positive construction of failure advocates for the creation of learning environments where students feel able to fail and are encouraged to do so but in a safe way. In describing the rationale for this, Whitton (2018, 3) states:

"Failure is an inevitable consequence of trying to achieve things, being ambitious and taking risks; dealing with disappointment and building the resilience to learn from mistakes and persevere is a crucial life skill"

The thing about the magic circle concept that really resonates with me is the idea of creating a space which gives participants freedom to fail without serious consequences and where failure is embraced as not only positive but a necessary constituent of the playful learning process (Whitton, 2018).

Failure for me is an opportunity to think creatively and learn something new. So based on this I have a challenge for you. Either try and work your way creatively out of a challenging

situation. If this feels like too much of a leap, why not work failure into a task or activities? Set a challenge with the objective to fail and see what happens. In my experience failure provides a rich opportunity for reflecting, for connecting with others, for learning and opening yourself up to approaching a solution with a creative mind.

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Dr Geethanjali Selvaretnam is a Senior Lecturer at the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow. Her current research interest is in development economics, inner feedback and multicultural interactions. She holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Essex, M.Ed in Academic Practice and Senior Fellowship of HEA.

Charalampia Sidiropoulou has extensive experience of teaching and course leading on a range of Higher Education programmes (under/postgraduate and distance learning). She has worked as a Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at the London Metropolitan University and as Researcher at the University College London (UCL, Institute of Education). Moreover, Hara is an experienced early years Teacher and has Qualified Teacher Status. Hara's research interests focus on multimodal social semiotic theory and methodology, pedagogy and literacy in culturally diverse academic contexts. She further works as an Associate Lecturer at the Open University and at the London Metropolitan University, teaching on a number of modules and supervising doctoral research students. Hara is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK).

Rachael Simms-Moore is a student at Manchester Metropolitan University Student. Having a bachelors in business management she worked for several years in project management for the NHS and abroad, including for Lord Ara Darzi in Qatar where they opened a state of the art women's and children's hospital. However, after recovering from two brain tumours she had a new life perspective and found herself searching for a more fulfilling career. This led her to completing diplomas in counseling, CBT and mindfulness before then studying an MSc in psychology where she discovered a passion for neuropsychology. She plans to continue this journey of discovery with a neuropsychology/health psychology PhD. Ultimately aiming to make it standard practice to offer some form of psychological support to all those recovering from brain tumours. This will hopefully lessen the trauma of survivorship and improve patient well-being.

Deborah Simpson is a Primary Teacher with East Ayrshire Local Authority. In 2002 she completed her BSc (hons) Psychology at University of Stirling, and then embarked on a

career in Policing. In 2019 she undertook her PGDE (Primary) at the University of Glasgow with placements in primary schools in East Ayrshire.

Sandra Sinfield is a Senior Lecturer and Learning Developer at London Metropolitan University. She teaches on the PGcert and MALTHe courses for academic staff with a special focus on praxes that harness creativity, and foster playful teaching and learning. She is a co-author of *Teaching, Learning and Study Skills: A Guide for Tutors* and *Essential Study Skills: The Complete Guide to Success at University* (4th Edition), and a co-founder of the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDHE).

Dr Linnea Soler is a Senior Lecturer in Organic Chemistry (Learning, Teaching & Scholarship) School of Chemistry and the University of Glasgow. She is a firm believer in harnessing the power of fun, technology, and creativity to make learning more engaging, interactive, and powerful. Her interests include the creation of novel multimedia chemistry education resources, in partnership with her final year chemistry undergraduate project students and my wonderful colleague, Dr Smita Odedra, for use in HE and in secondary schools, to enhance learning, assessment and feedback.

Dr Rosella Sorte is a Psychology Tutor at Manchester Metropolitan University. Rossella has worked as a diversity tutor at ManMet since 2019. She is an active member of the EDI committee and co-chairs the disability group in the department. She is committed to raising awareness and developing neurodiverse-friendly educational environments for the students. Previously, she worked as a psychologist in school settings with neurodivergent children.

Dr Shelini Surendran is currently a teaching fellow at the University of Surrey in Biosciences. She is very interested in playful and flipped learning. Shelini has experience teaching in primary schools, colleges, and University in the UK and China. She completed a PhD in Nutrigenetics and have a PGCE in higher education

Dr Nathalie Tasler's background is Erziehungswissenschaften (Sciences of Education). Nathalie is a Lecturer in Academic Development at the University of Glasgow. Her current focus is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). She has a strong background in Creative Learning and Teaching and Culture Education. Nathalie has volunteered and worked in the education sector for over 25 years, initially, in museums and culture education and, for the last 15 years, predominantly in Higher Education.

George Topalidis, is a Lab Teaching Staff in the Department of Products and Systems Design Engineering, at the Faculty of Engineering, University of Western Macedonia, Greece. His research interests revolve around political science and international relations, design and marketing research and communication studies in the context of applied social sciences

Dr Ourania Varsou is a lecturer at the University of Glasgow where she teaches human anatomy to science, medical, and dental students. Ourania's research includes imaging with a strong focus on ultrasound, clinically applied anatomy, and scholarship of teaching and learning. Ourania is passionate about medical humanities and sustainability.

Patricia Castellano Verdecia is a second-year PhD student at the University of the West of Scotland researching the retention of disabled students in higher education. Her research interests include student wellbeing, inclusive education across all levels, and creative pedagogies. She thrives on supporting others and enjoy travelling and baking.

Dr Nicola Veitch is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Life Sciences at the University of Glasgow, with a focus in Infection Biology. A Senior Fellow of Advance HE, Nicola has a keen interest in blended learning and digital technologies.

Leena Koshy Vinod is a Senior Lecturer in Adult Nursing and Primary Care at at Edgehill University. Leena is an experienced senior nurse lecturer. Currently, Leena leads modules on MSci Nurse Paramedics programme, exclusively provided at Edgehill University. Leena is keen to promote creative ways of enhancing learning in Higher Education and played a pivotal role in the upskilling of the nurses in India during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Michelle Welsh is a Senior Lecturer in Anatomy at the University of Glasgow where she teaches science and medical students with a focus on reproduction, embryology and histology. Michelle's research currently centres on scholarship of teaching and learning and she is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Happy New Year

