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Work-Like Experiences in the United Kingdom: Their role in experiential learning and industry-university collaboration

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Abstract

Work-like experience (WLE) and real-world practice is becoming more important for students as skills gaps are widening. The effects of this gap are becoming more significant also, with negative consequences on productivity and social mobility. Nottingham Business School offers a number of WLE projects, with two options at postgraduate level being the Consultancy Experience Project and In-company Experience Project. This literature review aims to identify the range of similar projects offered across UK higher education, discussing findings around the value and impact on student learning and outcomes to identify potential gaps in knowledge. Among the significant conclusions drawn are the ideas that undergraduate year-long work placements are over-represented in existing research, while WLEs in general, particularly at postgraduate level have received less attention. Significantly, there is little research on the motivations of businesses which take part in these projects. This is even more significant given the growth in scale and the need to encourage more external clients to engage.

Key words: consultancy, work-like experience, experiential learning

Introduction

Increasingly, universities across the UK expect students to partake in a significant amount of work-like experiences (WLE) during their course For instance, data published by the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) show that the percentage enrolling on sandwich courses, typically an four-year

undergraduate course where a student spends the penultimate year on a work placement, rose by 26% between 2014/15 and 2018/19 (HESA, 2020). Beyond, work placements, WLE opportunities take many forms in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses including internships, student projects and company visits. Two types of WLEs delivered on postgraduate courses at Nottingham Business School, which is part of Nottingham Trent University, are the Consultancy Experience Project (CEP) and In-company Experience Project (IEP) (NBS, n.d.). As a credit bearing part of their postgraduate degree, groups of students or individual students, respectively, act as consultants working for several weeks on a challenge set by a real-life external client. Students are able to apply theory they have studied. Successful delivery of CEPs requires meaningful participation of external organisations who provide the real-life projects. Suggested topics include marketing, brand development, business development, financial analysis and competitor and industry analysis (NBS, n.d.). Project providers range from SMEs, not-for-profits and public sector organisations.

Since the primary aim of a WLE like the CEP/IEP is to provide experiential learning opportunities for students, a significant amount of literature exists on their benefits and impact upon student learning and graduate outcomes. Research demonstrates positive impacts on both. For example, Kerrigan, Manktelow and Simmons (2018) explain how placement schemes improve student outcomes while Crebert et al. (2004) illustrate how students assign value to specific skills gained in the workplace like teamwork and managing responsibility. Unfortunately, research suggests that skills gap exists within the UK. Ball (2022) suggests there are insufficient UK graduates with the skills needed to fill contemporary professional jobs. The findings of Luchinskaya and Dickinson (2019) support this, showing a widening skills gap which is producing lower levels of social mobility. WLE opportunities like the CEP/IEP projects offered by NTU and other institutions are offered as a potential remedy.

The literature review below will survey the existing research on CEPs, IEPs and other WLE opportunities. We will analyse the literature on the value and impact on student learning and outcomes to identify potential gaps. Further, as universities expand their provision of WLE opportunities, they must engage meaningfully with more external clients from all sectors. Part of that engagement and of managing that customer relationship journey will require an ability to demonstrate and build upon the benefits of WLE opportunities for providers. Therefore, it is timely to conduct a review of the literature surrounding the value and impact of WLE opportunities in general and on external clients specifically.

The review will be structured as follows. First, WLE projects similarly to the CEPs offered by NTU will be discussed. The next section will examine the literature around industry-university collaborations, before work-like experiences and their impact of student employment skills and outcomes are investigated. Conclusions will then be drawn identifying gaps in the literature and areas for further research.

Work-Like Experience (WLE) Projects offered across UK Higher Education

Surveys of university websites and publicity brochures indicate that a number of institutions offer projects which are similar to the Consultancy projects offered at NTU. For example, postgraduate students at London Business School analyse challenges posed by a range of different businesses, including 'major multinationals, tech start-ups, social enterprises and NGOs' (London Business School, 2022). One example cited includes Zoomo, a producer of delivery vehicles. The students were asked to address issues relating to bike breakage and repair costs, for which the students suggested financial incentives, education and optimisation of management systems and hardware. These solutions addressed clients, employees, operations and product. Zoomo communicated that the solutions added value to their business, improved the quality of their service. In general, reported satisfaction of clients across the projects at London Business School is high - '96% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that the students' recommendations have had a positive impact on their organisation' (London Business School, n.d.). This feedback indicates that such projects can be of great value to client organisations.

Information on other examples of consultancy projects are provided by universities through publicity brochures. Unlike NTU and London Business School, these projects are delivered at undergraduate level. De Montfort offers a consultancy project with a business, aimed at encouraging students to 'harness the knowledge gained during their studies and apply it to a real-life scenario with a local company/employer' (De Montfort University, n.d.). The University of Stirling also has a similar offering, where they suggest that students can 'make a real business impact', suggesting that 'increasing your

employability isn't just about achieving outstanding academic results. You'll want to gain as much real-world experience as possible to help accelerate your career progression.'. Among the benefits cited for students is the possibility of gaining confidence in their abilities, making professional connections, and enhancement of transferable skills (University of Stirling, n.d.). Helyer and Lee (2014) highlight similar projects at Teesside, Bedfordshire and Drexel Universities as good examples of work-like experiences. Lester and Costley (2010) praise the approach of Middlesex University through their 'Learning through Work' programme.

Evidently, work-like experience is offered across UK HE. However, based on our review of university websites and publicity brochures, it is not widespread, with limited credit-bearing opportunities at postgraduate level.

Industry-university collaboration, factors which influence success, and implications

WLE such as consultancy projects is part of broader industry-university collaborations (IUCs). While little research has addressed consultancy projects specifically, there is a literature strand relevant to this review which examines aspects of collaboration. However, the focus of attention has been identifying the factors which contribute to successful collaboration.

Rybnicek and Königsgruber (2018) conduct a systematic literature review to examine what makes this relationship a success. The authors recount how IUCs have increased in importance for management practice and research. This systematic review is used to create a conceptual model to organise and categorise factors that influence the success of IUCs. Rybnicek and Königsgruber (2018) highlight several motivating factors for collaborations: companies gaining from highly trained individuals in students or researchers, access to technology and knowledge, and access to research infrastructure which is expensive. Universities can, in turn, benefit from additional funding through patents, licensing or providing access to equipment. Rybnicek and Königsgruber (2018: 222) highlight an ambition of policymakers and universities for university-industry interaction to become the 'third mission', alongside research and teaching, with a push to "commercialise academic knowledge".

This literature identifies a long list of factors which influence the success of IUCs. Firstly, there needs to be clear roles and responsibilities in any partnership (Barnes et al. 2002). Secondly, there needs to be trust and communication between the two parties (Rajalo and Vadi, 2017). Thirdly, the parties need to be committed, with a culture which facilitates the collaboration (Attia, 2015). Finally, the quality of resources such as finance, time, staff and equipment are important (Rybnicek and Königsgruber, 2018). Furthermore, some external elements are important to success such as a conducive economic environment, government support tax incentives (Bodas Freitas et al. 2013; Flores et al. 2009) and geographical distance (Myoken 2013).

This work considers IUCs at a broad level. Yet, such partnerships can operate at different levels, in different subjects and take varying forms. Rybnicek and Königsgruber (2018) suggest that universities have different levels of connections with their industrial partners; university, faculty, departmental an individual. While, much attention has been on more strategic partnerships, an analysis of the impact of different levels of collaboration would be fruitful. Further, subject disciplines have different conventions and cultures, use different methods and instruments and have different emphases - applied research, practice and teaching. This should produce different results (Niedergassel and Leker, 2011; Cummings and Kiesler, 2007).

Further, the nature of the collaboration can affect success. Some are concerned with leadership and management, some are involved with research and some with work-like experiences. There has been little research of factors which make for successful collaborations through WLEs such as individual or group consultancy projects. Yet, such analysis is important since there is increasing emphasis in providing such experiences for students to address a perceived skills gap.

Work-like Experiences, Students' Skills and Employment Outcomes

IUCs involving work or work-like experiences have become increasing prominent in discussions around curriculum design across UK Higher Education. The reason for this, as Perusso and Wagenaar (2021)

report, is a skills gap between what employers require and what graduates are equipped with. Moore and Morton (2017) found that between 2017 and 2022 around 2.4 million employees would lack the necessary cross-disciplinary skills. With students paying for degrees directly through a loan system in the UK, there is concern among policy-makers that universities are not providing value for money by failing to equip students effectively for work.

A strand of literature researches this gap and suggests work-based learning as the solution. Heyler and Lee (2014) state that universities are associated with more didactic teaching styles and passive learning. In contrast, the authors argue that work-based learning has the ability to alter and improve what happens at a university, because it offers a different way of learning with the potential to share new knowledge. Perusso and Wagenaar (2021: 1423) argue that "Globalisation, technological changes and the industry-to-service economy transition has produced dramatic changes in the labour market, thus affecting higher education". They suggest it is not enough for higher education to only provide disciplinary knowledge, graduates should be flexible, be able to adapt and innovate and that these competencies are better developed through practice. Work-based experiences are beneficial since they provide appreciation for practical knowledge.

With renewed interest in the employability of university graduates following the Wilson Review (2012), much attention in the literature has focused on work-based learning such as year-long placements and internships, particularly at undergraduate level. Such partnerships between industry and university are long established, particularly in vocational subjects. Research on employment outcomes demonstrate that the completion of work placements fosters career-related competencies which produces higher levels of employability (Brooks and Youngson, 2016). Helyer and Lee (2014) report similar findings for internships. Yet, as McCann and Hewitt (2022) highlight, a significant proportion of students do not complete work placements nor internships. Consequently, such students are offered work-like experiences such as consultancy projects or simulations to address the skills gap they face. Unfortunately, there is no established literature investigating these work-like experiences.

Another issue with the literature is the attention on undergraduate level. In relation to postgraduate study, the Wilson report (2012) observed that there is uncertainty about the suitability of postgraduate taught programmes given there is no loan system. Since there is one now, it could be argued that it is even more important to ensure value for money through maximising students' employability. This is emphasised in Wilson (2012) recounting research by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) which highlights that students' main motivation for undertaking postgraduate study is to improve their employment prospects. The author also calls attention to the lack of research around employers' perspectives and postgraduate study, further stating that the research which does exist is contradictory: employers attach minor importance to postgraduate education, while also noting employers' reservations about the skills of postgraduates, particularly in leadership skills and work experience. Thus, there is a need for further research into the employability skills gap of postgraduate students.

The literature supports to the idea that employability and work-like experiences are more important than ever, while also spotlighting the lack of research around these topics, particularly at postgraduate level.

Conclusion

WLE, consultancies and in-company projects are a type of IUC that is becoming increasingly important to universities at undergraduate and postgraduate level, to students seeking to enhance their career profiles, and to businesses which looking to access knowledge and talent. Based on reviewing academic literature and promotional material for WLE by universities across UK Higher Education, we identify a range of different projects with various styles, with example institutions including NTU, London Business School and De Montfort University.

Our survey suggests that the academic literature considering WLE does not consider postgraduate study extensively. This may reflect the lower attention given to the analysis of postgraduate study generally because its scale is much lower compared to undergraduate study. Further, WLE comes in various guises and lengths, but undergraduate, year-long projects are overrepresented in research. There is a dearth of research into alternative WLEs, particularly consultancy-projects.

This review has also identified a seam of literature which analyses industry-university collaborations. However, research tends to focus on strategic level applied research and knowledge exchange. Our review found few studies which consider the perspectives of associated businesses. For instance, ,we found no studies which investigate the motivations of companies which take part. Research into these motivations could demonstrate potential benefits, improving the information provided to potential clients and a greater degree of understanding for universities and partner institutions and those involved in decision-making on WLE. It is timely to investigate this since universities are expecting such work-like experiences to grow in scale and will need to encourage more external clients to engage.

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Change in Education. Taking a Processual View

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Abstract

Educational change is predominantly understood as a planned set of activities which are driven by performance indicators or predetermined choices, often led and managed by senior leaders within educational organisations. However, change itself is rarely, if ever, conceptualised, meaning that the nature of change is not reflected upon as part of the process of developing the most appropriate ways of engendering meaningful and sustainable change. Here, I begin by conceptualising the nature of change through a consideration of process philosophy. Rescher (1996) defines process as being constituted of occurrences, change being the shifts in reality associated with the flow of occurrences; thus, change is inherently processual in nature. In addition, within organisational contexts, there are a multitude of processes present, which, according to Hernes, occur in tangles which together constitute the organisation. The presence of such tangles means that processes, and by extension change, are predominantly complex in nature. Hence, I argue that a complex processual ontology can best explain the nature of change in educational organisations. I finally use these insights to consider how this ontology relates to the practicalities of change projects in educational settings.

Introduction

Over the past 40 years, education in many Anglophone countries has been impacted by the development of New Public Managerialism (Lynch, 2014). This is an approach to governance and leadership which relies heavily on quantification, the result of a focus on performance management and output controls (Mather and Seifert, 2011; Stevenson and Wood, 2013; Wood, 2014). In England, these reforms can be argued to have led to a separation of leaders from the main body of the workforce through the creation and development of senior leadership teams who, under New Labour and the 'deliverology' approach of Michael Barber (Barber, Moffit and Kihn, 2010), increasingly took the role of internal quality controllers and technocratic managers (Perryman, Maguire, Braun and Ball, 2018). This approach to organisation has outlasted its political instigators. As a consequence of this managerial focus, together with the ever-present pressure of external inspection by quangos, such as the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the Office for Students (OfS), leaders have become the dominant drivers of 'change' in educational organisations. However, organisational change is not easy. It is complex, not only in terms of its instigation and development, but also the embedding of change within organisations to create longer term shifts in culture and/or practice (May and Finch, 2009; Allen and May, 2017).

Improvement planning, which predominantly relies on annual cyclical rhythms of activity leading to quantified outcomes, has further entrenched the idea of change as both formal and planned.

Consequently, leaders become central to identifying and sanctioning change projects, often with clear measurable outcomes decided upon before sharing with the majority of the organisation. Such projects predominantly rely on a 'stepped' model which, at its most basic, involves a delimiting of important variables, a clear structured way of gaining a desired impact on those elements, with a temporally defined endpoint to identify and measure the impact of the project through key performance indicators. In addition, planned models of change often rely on 'cascade' approaches where senior leaders set high level change targets which then become atomised and contextualised into each area of the organisation, often through both departmental/faculty and individual performance targets.

Managerially driven improvement models in organisations, as exemplified in the Educational Endowment Foundation's (EEF) guidance for leaders which is now a central aspect of the government's National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) for aspiring leaders in schools (2019), is now deeply embedded, creating an ontology of change as constituted as a form of 'punctuated equilibrium' (Romanelli and Tushman, 1994) where aspects of professional work are deemed to remain unchanged until pulled from their stasis by decisions within the leadership of the organisation. Further, any change which is planned for follows a form of methodological reductionism, stripping down the complexity of change into a small number of explicitly determined elements 'to be dealt with' in the belief that this will have a definable and linear impact in the resultant measured outcomes.

In this model of organisational change management, a clear, linear and reductive model of change is assumed, but never explicitly interrogated. But this leads to the problem that change as a concept is not considered on its own terms. Here, I begin by offering a definition of change based on a process philosophical perspective, and link this to some of the features of complex adaptive systems as the starting point for an alternative view of change and hence how change should be understood and supported in educational contexts.

What is change?

Rescher (1996: 38) outlines the nature of process as:

'a coordinated group of changes in the complexion of reality, an organised family of occurrences that are systematically linked to one another either causally or functionally. It is emphatically not necessarily a change in or of an individual thing, but can simply relate to some aspect of the general condition of things.' (Rescher, 1996: 38);

Here there is the interplay of the concepts of process, occurrence and change. The core of a process is a group of changes which emerge through occurrences[1] flowing through time, and which are constantly moving from possibility to actuality. So process is characterised/identified though its pattern of occurrence which '*inherently exhibits a structure of spatiotemporal coherence*' (Rescher, 1996: 39). Rescher (1996: 39) goes further to stress that processes can preserve their own self-identity as alteration occurs due to their own internal complexity,

'A process does not change as such – but any such process can incorporate change through its unifying amalgamation of stages or phases.'

Changes are therefore shifts in reality brought about by the occurrences which constitute and flow though process. In this way we can see change as being processual in nature. Consequently, if we look at processes in an educational context, we are inherently understanding change.

Change and process in organisations: the idea of processual complexity

Developing an understanding of the nature of processes within organisational contexts, Hernes characterises organisations as tangles of processes,

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[1] Rescher uses the term occurrence which I see as being synonymous with Whitehead's definition of the term event, Whitehead (1922:21) states that 'I give the name "event" to a spatio-temporal happening

'Organization takes place in what may appropriately be described as a tangled world, a world where there are discernible elements, but ones which are twisted together, entwined in ways that add up to an untidy mass' (Hernes, 2008: i)

He goes on to argue that tangles of processes are what constitute organisations and that these masses of processes cannot be undone; they cannot be picked apart into their single strands. Consequently, tangles have an inherent level of complexity, what Whitehead (1929) calls a complex unity (cited in Hernes, 2008), which makes them very hard to untangle and look at individually. Such tangles also co-evolve and emerge, and consequently I argue that they have the characteristics of a complex adaptive system. However, it must be stressed that individual strands within the tangle might have complicated or simple characteristics (explained below), so that whilst the overall organisational tangle is complex in nature, strands within it may not be, though they will tend to be in the minority.

Characteristics of complex adaptive systems are outlined by Cilliers (2000) who identifies a number of essential features which I contextualise below:

- Complex adaptive systems have a large number of elements [strands] that in themselves can be simple.
- Elements interact dynamically by exchanging energy and/or information. Exchanges are non-linear and even local interactions can be propagated across the organisation.
- There are many feedback loops, both positive and negative.
- Complex adaptive systems are open, meaning they exchange energy and information with their environment; their boundaries are permeable.
- Complex adaptive systems have memory, and hence current processes are impacted by their history.
- The behaviour of the system is processually determined, the interactions are the core of the behaviour, rather than components. Since interactions are ubiquitous, non-linear and involve multiple feedback loops, prediction is not possible for anything other the most general. This constant shift and processual complexity give rise to the concept of emergence.
- Complex adaptive systems are characterised as such as they can (re)organise their internal structure without the intervention of external agent.

I, therefore, propose that change can be best understood through a complex-processual ontology. By this, I mean that change is inherently processual in nature, and in *most* organisational settings and contexts, takes the form of entangled complex adaptive systems. In the case of an educational organisation these systems are exemplified by classrooms, relationships, the learning and development of individuals, pedagogic and curricular processes, and the interactions between these strands as they are entangled within the organisational context.

Processual complexity as a basis for understanding change in organisations

What does accepting change as being processually complex mean when applied to educational organisations? As stated above I see change as inherently processual and as the core of organisations themselves. Hence, the work of those in schools and universities occurs in a multitude of flows, as part of the wider complex tangle of processes which are themselves constantly tangling and untangling. Consequently, we need to understand the nature of processes within educational organisations and one way of conceptualising this is the form of change under consideration which leaders need to deal with. Snowden and Boone (2007) identify four main contexts in which leaders need to make decisions and hence manage change (there is a fifth, disorder, which I do not discuss here). In simple and complicated[2] contexts, there are generally clear cause and effect patterns which can be identified and

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[2] Simple contexts are those which have clear cause and effect relationships which are understood by all leading to clear, shared ideas about the best way forward. Complicated contexts allow for a number of solutions, and

understood and which can be clearly modelled and analysed. An example in a school might be to model changes in finances based on falling or rising enrolment numbers. The change required is identifiable and can be relatively clearly modelled. Well considered decisions can be made as to how financial management might need to shift in the different scenario and leaving leaders to drive such change is a reasonable way of organising.

Two further contexts, complex and chaotic, are then outlined. Chaotic contexts are such that no patterns can be discerned a priori and the job of leaders is simply to find a way to quickly ameliorate the situation. Fortunately, such contexts are very rare in education. Conversely, complex contexts are common in educational organisations. Here, contexts are constantly emerging. Therefore, it is not possible to solve issues a priori as the solutions which might work come out of the context and the tangle of processes themselves, characteristics which are reflective of complex adaptive systems.

Snowden and Boone's work suggests that the four types of change can be broadly categorised into two groups, those which are essentially linear in the processes which occur (simple and complicated), and those which are non-linear (complex and chaotic). But because most activity in educational settings is a tangle of processes, the presence of non-linear processes are more prevalent than those which are linear. This means that to effect change we can rarely rely on linear, pre-prepared project plans; as soon as they hit the complex reality of the organisation they will begin to mutate and potentially fail unless they happen to be dealing with issues (simple and complicated) which can be accurately mapped, understood and actioned. However, in some cases as the project unfolds and understanding emerges through the change process there may be some drift from the non-linear to the linear. This might happen as a change project becomes better understood, and/or as it nears its completion.

This distinction between different families of processes through which change occurs can be further understood through a consideration of the work of Iveroth and Hallencreutz (2018) who distinguish between planned and emergent change in organisations. *Planned change* is defined as change which occurs through processes which are intentional and discontinuous. This is the predominant formal approach to change used in educational organisations. Here change is seen as divergent from an equilibrium state and is managed throughout. As such it is a form of change which is 'top-down', resulting in projects predominantly driven by senior leadership teams. The occasions which are planned and which constitute the processes are managed in a linear way with an assumption that they will move forward from one stable state to a new, different stable state identified a priori as a predetermined and preferred endpoint. This is currently the dominant model of change in education as characterised by new public managerialism.

In contrast to planned change, Iveroth and Hallencreutz (2018) outline *emergent change*. Change is constant and cumulative, emerging through a tangle of processes which are ceaseless and the consequence of multitudes of occurrences which are the daily nature of organisations. Because change here is associated with ubiquitous occurrences across the organisation, emergent change tends to occur through a bottom-up tangle of processes. In addition, because emergent change assumes the presence of complex adaptive systems, processes here are operating through feedback loops, interact in tangles and allow for only general levels of predictability. As a consequence, linear planning with a priori decisions on endpoints cannot be used. Complex contexts require a less fixed approach to change which is navigated and altered in a continual way. Doyle (2021) outlines a vector target approach to change where the context is processually complex. Here, we take note of where we are and decide roughly what we believe the right direction for change might be. We can't know the ultimate solution at this point in time as the tangle of processes are too complex and explicit solutions are not clear. We set a general direction of travel, but importantly, to do this we need to involve groups from across the organisation; this might include a permutation from teachers, support staff, administration, and where appropriate students and local communities. Doyle then includes ideas such as stepping-stones, small-scale steps, and 'safe-to-fail' probing which all help to move in the direction of the initial vector, but where necessary, allow this to shift and reorientate as the project develops and the tangle of processes is engaged with and understood to a greater, if always incomplete, way. It also has to be remembered

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whilst the way forward may be quite clear, not all individuals can see this and may require exploration before a final decision is made.

that the nature of the tangles of processes may themselves change as a result of the ongoing shifts which have been instigated.

Final thoughts

I have argued here that the dominant character of change in educational contexts can best be explained by a complex processual perspective as change is predominantly emergent and is, by definition, (as outlined above) processual in nature. However, New Public Managerialism and recent reductionist approaches to learning and curriculum have relied on extreme complexity reduction (in other words, they have attempted to ignore the complex processual nature of change by instead assuming a linear, and overly simplistic, approach to change). If leaders do not understand the complex processual nature of organisational change, and instead oversimplify the educative process they will potentially damage the contexts and processes within which they exist. As such, simplistic approaches to change need to be resisted and instead the complex-processual nature of these tangles of processes need to be accepted and a different approach to bringing change needs to be developed. This is not to argue that planned/linear change is always wrong, but needs to be used in those instances where processes can be identified to be simple or complicated. Being able to identify the context of the desired activity is paramount. However, emergent change occurs regardless of planning as it is a ubiquitous change which emerges through the ongoing occurrences which make up the processes constituting the organisation. There needs to be a greater engagement with the nature and meaning of change and the processes through which it emerges. It is through this that we will be able to gain both a more critical understanding of the nature of change and how we might successfully enable it in sustainable and meaningful ways.

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The Developmental Logic: Childhood, development, and the reform of Gender Recognition Act (GRA) in Scotland and the UK

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Abstract

This paper is part of a doctoral research project in education which uses Child as Method and Discourse Analysis to analyse ideas of childhood, nation, and development within Legal Gender Recognition (LGR) and more specifically the reforms of Gender Recognition Act – GRA (2004) in the UK. Challenges appear in reforms either proposed or opposed by the UK and Scotland, while also resonating arguments previously present in other countries (such as Portugal). Despite excluding children, current legislation guaranteeing trans adults' right to change their gender is still informed by ideas of childhood and development. As I call this, there is a developmental logic in place within Legal Gender Recognition, justifying the UK government's intervention in the Scottish reform passed in December 2022. The developmental logic prevents children from accessing LGR and reinforces conservative positions. Using Child as Method, I propose reversing this logic: childhood could become the ideal model for more inclusive policies of gender recognition. By reducing the hold of reactionary positions, we can promote social justice for trans and non-binary people.

Key words: gender, trans, childhood studies, discourse analysis, development

This paper presents initial interpretations about the ways childhood is being framed as a problem for more inclusive reforms of Legal Gender Recognition (LGR) in the UK. I seek to show how, despite excluding children, legislation recognising trans adults' right to change their gender is still informed by ideas of childhood and development. This is made clearer by an ongoing dispute between the UK government and the Scottish devolved parliament. In addition, this challenge also resonates with a previous backlash in Portugal in 2018 (Cassal, 2019), indicating a discursive structure using childhood as a trope (Burman, 2019) to regulate gender and sexuality (Burman & Stacey, 2010) and more specifically gender and recognition.

In the UK law, Legal Gender Recognition means a person's right to recognise that they have changed their gender (Sandland, 2005). Moreover, as I see it drawing on Butler (1997a) and Fraser (1997), it implies both redistribution (material recognition) and socio-cultural identification. Therefore, LGR creates a sense of value for trans people who are recognised by the state (Hines, 2013). This is particularly relevant considering the violence and discrimination suffered by trans and non-binary people in the UK (Government Equalities Office, 2018; Swenson, Alldred & Nicholls, 2022). As my study shows, LGR is directly connected not only to gender (as is expected) but also to the ideas of childhood and development.

The preliminary analyses presented here are part of a doctoral research project which explores government proposals, reports, publications, and public speeches, to understand the connections between childhood and trans rights. This work draws on a review of interdisciplinary scholarly sources, crossing work from Education, Psychology, Childhood Studies, and Queer Theory.

Child as Method

As discussed by Burman (2019), by analysing imagery and practices around childhood, we can understand social relations, expectations, and anxieties about politics, citizenship, imagination, and the future. The approach, called Child as Method (hereafter CaM), analyses efforts and strategies for producing and reproducing childhood as a fixed and universal category, in addition to broader governing of lives and deaths. In other words, I work on expectations about children organised and combined in a discursive frame, or childhood as figurations (Castañeda, 2002). While CaM is my analytical lens to analyse my research materials, I used Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in relevant policies to understand regularities and irregularities, orders, citations, and material effects (Foucault, 1981). This approach works with what is apparent and manifest, but also what is actively absent – in other words, with the silences and denials (Parker, 2005; Burman, 1991) and what is left outside the frame (Butler, 2002; 2010).

Combining Foucauldian Discourse Analysis with the CaM approach, I look for the absence and exclusion of children and childhood in discourses, and how they are specifically framed and posed in discussions as 'others'. However, it is exactly as the 'other' that childhood becomes a reference about what adults, and more specifically trans adults, allegedly should be. As I will show, childhood appears at once present and absent in discourses, and such ambiguity can be explained by the psychoanalytical concept of ambivalence (Freud, 1912-13/1938; Breslow, 2021). As I understand CaM, ideas and ideals of childhood are useful to understand current political struggles and propose alternative policies and practices.

Reforming the Gender Recognition Act (2004)

The Gender Recognition Act (GRA) was passed by the UK government in 2004 and represented "an enormous step forward for transgender law reform" (Sharpe, 2007, p. 41). It regulates trans people's right to receive a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC), allowing them to replace their original birth certificate to follow what is called their 'acquired gender', as opposed to the sex assigned to them at birth. At the time of this paper, it was the only piece of legislation enforced in the UK for that matter. The GRA passed after several legal challenges, alongside strong activism and lobbying by trans and more broadly human rights movements, and finally a favourable ruling from the European Court of Human Rights in 2002. Although considered very advanced at the time (for not using requirements such as sterilisation or compulsory surgeries), the law established clear barriers for gender recognition, from which I highlight a requirement for gender dysphoria diagnosis by two professionals and proof of lived experience as another gender to be assessed by an external panel. More recently, considering reviews and public consultations, and more contemporary laws in other countries in Europe and beyond, both the UK and the Scottish governments have proposed reforming the GRA (Sandland, 2005, Sharpe, 2007; 2009; Stryker, 2006; Whittle & Turner, 2007; Whittle, 2006; McQueen, 2016; Grabham, 2010; Hines, 2020)[3].

Those reforms followed different paths. The reform in Westminster has been stuck since 2019 because of wider political crises and changes of Prime Minister and has actually suffered constant backlashes from each leadership (more reactionary than the previous one). The Scottish government's action was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects. Nevertheless, the Scottish government finally passed the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill (hereafter GRR-S) in December 2022, bringing substantial modifications[4]. Some of those changes will be presented later.

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[3] For this paper, I do not address the differences between those authors regarding GRA. However, those accounts will be discussed in my thesis.

[4] https://www.gov.scot/news/gender-recognition-reform-bill-passed/

The Scottish reform was far from being a consensus. Demonstrations and actions by groups including the so-called "Gender Critical Feminists" (although frequently allied to nationalist and conservative movements) and labelled "TERF" by trans-inclusive movements have been working in the UK for years (Pearce, Erikainen & Vincent, 2020). Additionally, the UK government strongly reacted to the GRR-S by, for the very first time, using its prerogative to block a law passed by the Scottish parliament[5]. Rather than analysing the legal merit of such action, I stress that both Prime Minister Rishi Sunak[6] and the opposition leader Keir Starmer[7] have expressed concerns about the minimum age. This conflict of nations is based not only on trans rights but specifically on the right of children to be heard[8].

I have heard that one before – The Portuguese Gender Self-Determination Law (2018)[9]

In 2018, Portugal updated its law for Legal Gender Recognition. As I investigated in a previous project, the Portuguese Assembly passed Law 38/2018, led by a coalition of left-wing, centre-left, and ecologist political parties (Cassal, 2019). Queer and trans academics and movements considered this new law an improvement from the previous Transgender Law (2011) for some reasons. The 2018 Law reduced gatekeeping and bureaucracy by guaranteeing self-determination, besides reduced the minimum age (from 18 to 16 years old) (Moleiro & Pinto, 2020; Hines & Santos, 2017; Cassal, 2019). However, those changes also attracted strong criticism and backlash and were vetoed by the Portuguese President regarding the age reduction.

The law passed after a second round of parliamentary discussions and negotiations included a condition for adolescents: presenting a declaration of capacity for autonomous decision signed by a medical doctor or a clinical psychologist. Although this solution contemplates the needs of trans young people, it nevertheless reinforces developmental ideas about the capacity of decision for an administrative procedure and the remit to psychologists. Besides, this law excludes non-Portuguese people from applying, therefore making nation (as nationality) a condition for rights. If the law includes more people, it nevertheless reinforces two excluding processes – age and nation (Cassal, 2019). The common aspects in both cases help to understand an ambivalent process connecting gender recognition and childhood, as I show below.

The developmental logic

Both cases (Scotland and Portugal) have in common claims against gender recognition rights in childhood. Nation, development, and gender are entangled because of so-called colonial ideas of childhood (Canella & Viruru, 2004; Burman, 2019). Not by chance, accommodations that were made to include 16-17 years old can also fuel anti-trans discourses and action.. As I choose to call it, there is a developmental logic in place within Legal Gender Recognition in the UK. The table 1 compares some requirements[10] for applicants in the GRA and the Scottish reform to make this point clear.

Requirement and conditions	GRA (2004) – UK	GRR-S (2022) – Scotland
(1) Minimum age	18 years old	16 years old*
(2) Proof of lived experience	At least 2 years until the date of application	At least 3 months until the date of application*

[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill

[6] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/16/rishi-sunak-blocks-scotlands-gender-recognition-legislation

[7] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-64281548

[8] Those topics I mentioned briefly here receive detailed analysis in my thesis.

[9] A detailed discourse analysis of this law will be published in another paper.

[10] Since I am working with Child as Method, I have focused particularly on those requirements involving aspects of childhood and development, like age, time, vigilance, and stability. Also, I present here the main route for applicants, although there are other specific requirements for overseas applicants, applicants who have or had had gender dysphoria and, in the GRR-S, applicants close to the end of the life.

(3) Permanence	The applicant declares their intention "to continue to live in the acquired gender until death"	The applicant declares their intention "to continue to live in the acquired gender permanently"
(4) Special conditions for adolescents	None (no access)	* Applicants aged 16 or 17 must have at least 6 months of lived experience and confirm that they had discussed the matter with an adult with the role of support, guidance, or advice, or who knows them personally
(5) Medical assessment	The applicant has or has had gender dysphoria (with a few exceptions)	None (self-determination)
(6) Gatekeeping	Very high: Medical assessment and proof of lived experience are assessed by a panel	Very low (Self-determination): The register that documents follow the requirements and are not fraudulent, and that applicant can consent
(7) Gender	GRA only recognises changes from female to male or vice-versa	GR reform only recognises changes from female to male or vice-versa (same as before)

Table 1 – Comparison between GRA (2004)[11] and GR Reform (Scotland) Bill (2022)[12]. Source: the author.

The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) presents clear advances towards more inclusive and accessible Legal Gender Recognition. The Scottish reform removes the pathologisation of trans experiences (item 5, aligned to best international practices) and gatekeeping (item 6); includes self-determination (items 5 and 6); and reduces chronological requirements (items 1 and 2, minimum age and proof of lived experience). On the other hand, it has kept the permanence (item 3, although using different language about life rather than death) and gender binarism (item 7). Besides, the special conditions for those aged 16 and 17 (item 4) enforce the idea (or trope) of childhood as a special period of development. I would like to show now how those requirements are articulated.

Items 1-4 in both pieces of legislation follow a logic of individual linear development, working as a device, in the Foucauldian sense. The device is a set of power relations, discourses, architectures, rules, procedures, and desires articulated on a specific topic or situation with regulatory effects (Deleuze, 1988; Foucault, 1990). First, an applicant must reach a minimum age (1) – which can imply struggling with misrecognition (or acts of injury – Butler, 1997b) until then. Second, they should have undertaken continuous changes (2) – despite possible hostility for not having legal recognition in the first place. Third, they should be stable for an (allegedly) irreversible change (3) – although some civil statuses like marriage can be reversed. Finally, although adolescents were included in the Scottish reform (4), they nevertheless need extra conditions proofing their awareness and knowledge. Childhood is the frame to organise those requirements.

By reading those requirements backwards, childhood appears as a frame. (4) marks children as an object of specific protection, because accessing LGR would allegedly be harmful to them. The harm would be in making an irreversible change (3), which is still present in Scottish reform. (2) would actually be the proof of that change; in other words, (2) is a demonstration of what (3) is expected to be. A minimum age (1), therefore, prevents children from making an irreversible decision because, in a developmental logic (Canella & Viruru, 2004; Burman, 2019), children would be unstable and lack the knowledge for autonomous decisions. This is what I call in my research a developmental device: under this logic, children would be excluded from LGR by default. Not by chance, (1), (2), and (3) have been kept in the Scottish Reform, although with some changes – they attend to the same logic, in name of what (4) makes clear: protecting (developmental) children.

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[11] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/7/contents

[12] https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/s6-bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill/stage-3/bill-as-passed.pdf

Children were put at the centre of national debates and conflicts for gender recognition, repeating a process which justified Section 28 (1988) and consequent silence about LGBTIQ+ rights in public services in the UK (Cassal, 2021). Despite children's absence in both the debate and as possible applicants in the UK law, such (rhetorical) investment in them indicates the ambivalence of what Castañeda (2002) calls figuration. In psychoanalytical terms, ambivalence can be roughly described as the capacity of an object to engage contradictory emotions like love and aversion and more exactly fear of destruction and hate for destruction at once (Freud, 1912-13/1938). Breslow (2021) adds to this interpretation the contradictory ideas of gender as pre-existent and development as natural, making children who challenge gendered and sexual norms objects of discomfort and fear. However, he reminds us that embodied experiences are by principle ambivalent since we experience gaps between perception, body, psychic energies, and social recognition. Or, in other words, there is a gap where we emerge as subjects of language (Butler, 2005), making a full account of oneself an endless and frustrating task. Nonetheless, for accessing Legal Gender Recognition, trans applicants are called upon to prove a linear story about themselves – which, by being unstable and incomplete, is also ambivalent. Still, such ambivalence can also open new pedagogies (Burman, 2019) recognising failure, limitations, and discomfort. Rather than dropping the concepts of children and childhood, I propose looking differently at them to undo – or, at least, avoid – this challenge.

Provisory and unstable conclusions

The developmental logic prevents children from accessing LGR and reinforces reactionary positions. If children are seen as immature subjects, they cannot make a permanent decision – therefore, those reforms allegedly should not include them. While we have a requirement like (3) in place, it is unlikely that children would be included in the GRA. However, one may ask why it is important to keep this requirement in the first place.

Far from reinforcing the power of the State to regulate lives (including gender recognition), I nevertheless acknowledge that LGR can currently make trans lives liveable (Butler, 2010), and for that reason, it should be expanded, under the risk to keep from losing trans lives – especially those most marginalised by race and nationality (Silva, 2021). Therefore, I believe we should propose legal improvements that can support people to keep fight not for recognition but for also social justice and liberation. Using Child as Method, I propose to reverse this logic, revealing the idea of childhood in the centre of the device to disrupt it.

Because LGR is a urgent and timely topic, I consider important to suggest some recommendations, although acknowledging this is a working paper. Perhaps a more inclusive solution for LGR regulation would be exactly having childhood as an ideal model, in at least two aspects. First, the law could consider reversibility and change as processes in everyone's lives (not only children), and therefore dropping out the requirement (3) while proposing procedures for reversion (as we do in other aspects of civil life such as marriage). Without (3), (2) has no reason to be kept as well. Taking development out of the picture can open space for reducing or abolishing (1) as a requirement.

Second, new reforms and laws could offer more than a binary option (female/male), including possibilities for other genders (such as non-binary and agender), and dropping out of the requirement (7). In other words, using an idea of gender that is open to the future (of new identifications) rather than marked by the past (of two official genders), moving beyond a dichotomic logic of gender (Nirta, 2021). Breaking with the developmental logic underlying the requirements for Legal Gender Recognition, we can produce conditions more favourable for guaranteeing children's rights to identification in the present and the future. That aligns with the growing diversity and expansion of gender identifications by young people, despite schools' resistance (Bower-Brown, Zadeh & Jadva, 2023). Therefore, this same identificatory principle could apply to schools and educational settings.

Challenging and criticising the developmental device which seems to explain children can create conditions for making more lives liveable (Butler, 2010). The Child as Method approach shows us that it is not children who should fit, but the orthodoxal idea of childhood that should be challenged. Therefore, this paper contributes to educational, childhood and queer studies fields, besides addressing solutions for trans-inclusive educational policies and practices.

Acknowledgments

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Distance Learning and Safety of the Educational Environment: Teachers' Point of View

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Abstract

Digitalization is a powerful trend in education, which has become especially noticeable since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as digital technologies have made it possible to organize distance learning and not stop the educational process for a long time. However, distance learning has its own specifics, and its implementation raises certain concerns for the participants in the educational process and draws attention to a number of practical issues to provide a more comfortable and safe educational space. This paper relies on 12 semi-structured interviews with secondary school teachers and a thematic analysis of these data. Based on this analysis, the paper identifies the main challenges that Ukrainian secondary school teachers face when organising distance learning. It was found that most of these problems were related to the need to take a new approach to the organization of the educational process in general, to change the methods of communication with other participants in the educational process, and to look for new ways of presenting educational material and checking students' work. The paper also outlines further areas of research aimed at identifying the needs and motivations for the development of teachers' digital competencies and makes relevant practical recommendations for creating a more comfortable and safe educational space.

Key words: distance learning, educational environment, safe educational environment, teachers' digital competencies

One of the main trends of the 21st century is the digitalization of most areas of social life, despite evident disparities in the speed of this process in different parts of the world (Yamin 2019; Verhoef et. al., 2021; Amankwah-Amoah et. al., 2021). The availability of information and the speed of its dissemination through the modern digital technologies and media are changing education systems as well (Hans and Crasta, 2019; Pettersson, 2021). The digitalization of education is a powerful trend in the context of reforming and modernizing the educational space, which has become especially noticeable since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of new opportunities provided by digital technologies has made it possible to organize distance learning and not to stop the educational process for a long time.

The digitalization of the educational process has various forms, from communication in a virtual environment (Kerimbayev et. al., 2019) to the use of virtual reality (VR) in the study of specific topics (Elmqaddem, 2019). This form of organizing the educational process has its own specifics, which include its own peculiarities of managing and evaluating learning effectiveness, new teacher functions and increased parental involvement in the educational process, mastering the skills of working with

information sources and online platforms by all participants, etc. However, like the implementation of any other innovations, the use of digital tools and technologies in the educational process also raises certain concerns for its participants (technical access problems, privacy and security issues, distraction and overload, etc.). For example, some authors study parents' attitude to distance learning (Haller and Novita, 2021; Lau and Lee, 2020). Some others draw attention to a number of practical issues regarding the usability of digital tools and ensuring the safety of the educational environment (König, Jäger-Biela & Glutsch, 2020). The practices and experiences of distance education in different countries have also been of the key foci in recent research (Kirsch et al., 2021; Lavonen, Salmela-Aro, 2022).

Most research on distance learning can be divided into pre- and post-pandemic studies. Prior to the pandemic, distance learning research focused on theoretical issues of distance education, its evolution (Kurzman, 2013), the possibilities of organizing it using special technologies and software, ensuring the safety of the educational process in a remote mode (Kavun, Daradkeh & Zyma, 2012), etc. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many researchers to take another perspective on this topic and expanded the field of practical issues that need to be resolved (Firmansyah et al., 2021). Since distance learning has spread throughout the education system, researchers have begun to actively consider how the system can adapt to the new conditions (Hodges et al., 2020). They also tried to revisit the terminology related to distance learning, for example, the concept of "Emergency Remote Teaching" was used to separate the concepts of distance learning in normal conditions from those under strict quarantine (Zimmerman, 2020). Distance learning during the quarantine period has, indeed, become a kind of experiment, and it is important to understand what problems this experiment has revealed and which of them need to be studied in more detail.

The focus of my research project is on school education, since it has proven to be less prepared for the transition to distance learning than the higher education system. In addition, this project focuses on the study of the Ukrainian secondary education system. The education systems of European countries have experience in organizing distance learning during quarantine restrictions, but they differ in their funding, logistics, and have different approaches to regulating the educational process, including distance learning (Katić, 2021; Blaskó et. al., 2022). In addition, most European countries are now returning to the normal educational process, while Ukraine, due to the martial law imposed in the country after February 24, 2022, continues to use distance learning and faces new challenges in its organization. Therefore, studying how the Ukrainian education system responds to the challenges of distance learning and ensures the safety of the educational space will be relevant and useful from a practical point of view.

The multifaceted character of the problem also implies a comprehensive approach to its study and the application of the relevant methodology. method This study combines qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies. The use of such research design, which involves the use of qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) methods of collecting information for data triangulation, allows reliable data to be gathered, reaching evidence-based conclusions and producing recommendations.

At the initial stage of the study, a qualitative approach has been used in order to see the problem "from the inside", formulate research hypotheses more clearly and develop relevant questionnaire for the survey.

At the first "reconnaissance" stage of the study (seen as a pilot to inform a larger piece of subsequent work), 12 in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers to identify the main problems they faced in organizing online learning and approaches to solving them. This stage was focused on detailing and clarifying the informants' position on the benefits and challenges of online learning based on their subjective vision of the situation and individual experience. To build a theoretical sampling model, the following selection criteria were determined: 1) high or low level of teachers' digital skills (based on self-diagnosis in the preliminary screening); 2) positive or negative attitude towards distance learning. Thus, four clusters were obtained, with three interviews in each cluster. A detailed description of the problem by the informants will help not only to create a questionnaire for an expert survey of teachers for the second stage, but also to analyse the teachers' current experience of distance learning. In addition, it will help to determine the presence or absence of additional needs for mastering media literacy skills and digital tools to create a more comfortable and safe educational space.

In general, the development of digital skills in the modern world is relevant and important for all citizens. The EU has recognized the importance of digital competence by including it as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning. In this context, digital competence is defined as the confident, critical

and responsible use and interaction with digital technologies for learning, working and participating in society (Mattar et. al., 2022). This definition of digital competence has been further developed in the European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) (Vuorikari et. al., 2022). However, in the spring of 2020, a significant number of schools in Ukraine were not ready to implement distance learning (Hrynevych, 2020). Of course, educational organizations with trained teaching staff, digital materials, knowledge and skills to use distance-learning technologies were generally in a better situation. As teachers and students became more involved in online learning and communication during the pandemic, this provoked a number of problems for all participants in the educational process.

After analysing all the interviews, we can identify the main problems that teachers had to solve. First, it is the preparation of new or adaptation of existing teaching materials and presentations for online work. Teachers noted that although the textbooks were digitized, they were not adapted for distance learning (interviewees 4, 6, 7, 8, 11). They had a low level of visualization, did not contain presentation materials, audio and/or video support, etc. All respondents indicated that at the beginning of distance learning they did not have enough of such materials and had to use those that were in open access on the Internet. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine issued recommendations and clarifications on the organisation of distance learning and prepared relevant materials. However, the teachers who were classified as having developed digital skills said that they quickly "got to grips" with the situation and began to create relevant materials on by themselves (interviewees 2, 4, 5, 12), unlike teachers in the other group who said they continued to use ready-made materials from the Internet (interviewees 6, 7, 8, 11). This also raises the question of the quality of such "ready-made" materials, how well they correspond to the program and learning objectives, and whether they contain distorted information, etc. The availability of additional materials was not a mandatory requirement of school administrations, but in interviews, teachers indicated that school administrators asked them to use such materials as often as possible in their work (interviewees 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12). Some of the teachers interviewed also pointed out that students have also begun to use online sources and media materials more often in their homework (interviewees 2, 10). Another important issue is the ethics of using "borrowed" materials and respect for copyright. Most respondents, when asked if they had thought about these aspects, said that since the materials were in the open access, they did not think about the possibility of such problems.

During online learning, teachers and students had to interact more actively with open information space, networking platforms, and digital tools that helped make learning resources available. However, technology is only a tool for implementing new approaches and curricula. Moreover, their development and content is the responsibility of teachers, who have to prepare materials for students in a timely and high-quality manner. In general, distance learning requires restructuring the content of the discipline, "filling" it with information, and accompanying key sections with media files, which is an extra task for teachers.

In addition, the issue of information security is raised when using media materials and other sources of information in the preparation of teaching materials. The information security of every person in modern society depends on the development of media literacy and critical thinking. A huge information proposal excess causes that it is difficult for a person to distinguish important information from "information noise", the consumption of which can negatively affect the psychological and physical condition of a person. To this added the threat of believing false, fake information, becoming a victim of manipulative influences, etc. Therefore, an important aspect of the training of a modern teacher is not only the availability of access to modern digital technologies and the ability to use digital and media resources for more effective implementation of the educational process, but also the skills of media literacy and working with information verification tools. The majority of teachers surveyed indicated that they advised students to use various digital platforms and resources for homework and their projects (mainly in cluster of respondents with high level of digital skills and positive attitude towards distance learning). One teacher noted that he had organized an informative hour with students to talk about media literacy and threats in social media (interviewee 4).

Another problem that was mentioned in all interviews was the problem of excessive workload. During the pandemic, a safe school environment has become an important issue in schools, including through the integration of technology into learning activities. Indeed, the digital environment has helped to make school learning safer from an epidemiological point of view. However, the safety of the educational environment has not only a physical but also a psychological dimension, and ensuring a safe online educational space has also become a challenge for teachers. All teachers indicated that they experienced increased both physical and psychological stress during online learning. In terms of greater

physical stress, the informants noted an increase in the time spent at the computer, which led to less physical activity and more strain on their eyesight. The respondents also reported that they did not have enough working time to prepare materials and check students' assignments, so they had to do it after work (interviewees 3, 6, 10).

As for the psychological pressure, the informants pointed to the difficulty of working with an online classroom, as they constantly had to maintain students' attention and discipline. One respondent said that sometimes she felt that the situation was "out of control" (interviewee 11). Teachers also noted that there was a significant intensification of communication with students' parents in messengers (Viber, Telegram), where special groups were created to discuss the current situation and homework. Such communication also took a lot of time and effort. Sometimes conflicts arose, so a lot of attention had to be paid to resolving them (interviewee 9).

Almost all respondents, regardless of the level of digital skills development declared in the screening survey, indicated that they had to attend additional informal training, mostly workshops or online lectures that did not provide for confirmation of learning outcomes. Only two of the respondents indicated that they had taken a special online course on the digital platform "Prometheus" and received certificates after completing it (interviewees 2, 5).

During online learning and communication on social media and different digital platforms, teachers also faced various unusual situations and challenges to the security of the educational environment. For example, they mentioned the problem of unauthorized access to an online lesson by unknown persons, which led to interruption of the lesson, unauthorized connection or disconnection of participants without the permission of the teacher, cheating and dishonesty in online work, etc. The respondents noted that because they had no previous experience, they did not know how to act in such situations and felt confused. One of the informants said that during the lesson she noticed that there were people she did not know in the online classroom and was disoriented to some extent because she did not know how to act in this situation: "...So I just had to interrupt the lesson and ask the students to connect again, because I didn't know what else to do..." (interviewee 7).

Technical problems encountered by teachers are worth mentioning as well. All respondents indicated that at the beginning of distance learning they used their own technical equipment, which could not always be enough to satisfy their needs. One of the informants mentioned that he had to pay extra for the servicing of his laptop and had to connect to a high-speed internet connection to be able to conduct online classes while the school was closed for attending (interviewee 6). However, with the quarantine restrictions lifted, teachers were able to use school equipment. It is necessary to note that the costs of purchasing or modernizing their own devices, as well as the increased costs of Internet and mobile communication, were not reimbursed to teachers.

During the interviews, most of the teachers who indicated in the screening survey that they were positive about online learning said that they felt supported by school administrators and colleagues who gave advice on how to deal with certain situations with students and their parents, recommended special professional development programs, apps or resources to diversify learning tasks, etc.

Based on the data obtained, several hypotheses can be proposed to be tested in the next stage of the study:

- teachers with good digital skills have a more positive attitude towards the process and results of distance learning and feel more prepared to create relevant materials on their own;

- teachers with good digital skills are more likely to be critical of information and check media sources when preparing teaching materials, more often have practical experience in sharing these skills with students and encouraging them to consume information more responsibly; they are more aware of security threats in the information space, so they can identify such threats and will resist them and/or seek help from specialists or administration to resolve them;

- the development of teachers' digital skills and their attitudes towards online learning are influenced by the support/non-support from the administration and colleagues. It can be suggested that teachers who have such support (organization of professional development programs, trainings and workshops, access to sources and literature, recommendations from their own experience, etc.) have more positive attitudes toward the process and results of distance learning and are better motivated to develop their own digital skills.

Further research and development of these hypotheses will help to determine which digital skills can help teachers adapt to the new conditions of the educational process. What needs and motivation they have in developing their own digital competences, and what school administrations play a role in this, as well as develop appropriate practical recommendations for creating a more comfortable and safe educational space.

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Digital technologies in higher education: from the pan-European vision to local university governance

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Abstract

Through the *Bologna Process* (1999), European countries initiated a development program devoted to building the European Higher Education Area to face digital challenges (ECER 2016) through the adoption of a shared Quality Assurance (QA) model (ENQA 2009), capable of running the enhancement of lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities through information and communication technologies. Over the years, many subsequent interventions have been promoted to confirm this vision and contribute to building a unique higher education (HE) space, through the adoption of certain standardsand tools in European policies. For these reasons, the project *Empower Competences for "Onlife" Learning in HE* (ECOLHE) has examined national policies for e-learning in HE specifically in the countries of the European Union through multiple case study approaches to study the transformation of key concepts, from the *supranational level* to the *national level,* while implementing inclusive LLL processes, based on digital technologies. This working paper presents an extract from this overarching project. The working paper aims to examine how universities, as the main unit of analysis, develop their strategic approaches to digitisation.

Key words: Higher education, translation theory, digital challenge, higher education policies, cultural studies

Introduction

The pandemic has brought to the forefront, and given urgency to, the issue of digital development, which has been an aim of the European community for more than twenty years. By 2030, the number of university students in the world is predicted to reach 414 million (UNESCO, 2015). For this reason, for example, in the UK, the *Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends* report (2021) indicates an accelerated need for LLL owing to graduates currently lacking many skills required for today's work environment, and who face an ever-changing and increasingly complex society which necessitates continuous learning for their entire lives. These changes require that all educational institutions review teaching paradigms, organisation, management, evaluation processes, relations systems and competences frameworks. In addition, online delivery presents challenges for HE provisions and policy making (Jonson et al. 2016; COM/2013/0654 final).

This working paper presents an extract from a bigger project entitled ECOLHE[13], aimed at answering the question: *How do Universities promote innovation and digitalisation in their learning and teaching activities and wider management processes?* The main goal of the ECOLHE project was to understand how national policies in the countries in the European Union (EU) have interpreted EU policies, and how universities have interpreted regulatory constraints in practice, with the intent of extracting valuable suggestions for policymakers, decision-makers and academic bodies in order to build a European E-learning Higher Education Area (EEHEA). For these reasons, ECOLHE examined national policies for e-learning in HE specifically in EU countries to explore the transformation of critical concepts from the *supranational level* to the *national and organizational level* while implementing inclusive LLL processes, based on digital technologies. The project aimed to examine how universities develop their strategic approaches to digitisation. Specifically, we examined the respective micro-policies of each university case study and how, following their national framework, they "translated" the digital challenge into practice. Inspired by sociologists (Raub & Voss, 2016), economists (Dopfer, Foster & Potts, 2004; Sheng, D; Geng, 2012), and engineering scientists (Li, Bocong; 2012), we tried to develop a *Meta-Macro-Meso-Micro* framework of analysis to understand the translation process from the *international level*, prompted by the European Union, to the *micro level,* activated by each university in its organisational complexity, after passing through the *national level*. The research hypothesis is three-fold:

a) the availability of the technological infrastructure is not per se enough to guarantee the correct use of learning and knowledge technologies among colleagues, learners and researchers Capogna, 2020);

b) European policies orient towards a digital university model;

c) the pandemic emergency has triggered a process of hybridisation of organisational and didactic models.

Theoretical Framework

In this paper, we focus on the "translation into practice" process (Callon, 1986; Dolowitz, Marsh, 2000; Latour, 2007; Bresman, 2013; Carlile, 2004; Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000; Sturdy, 2009; Thorpe, Eden, Bessant and Ellwood, 2011; Yanow, 2004) of supranational indications, regarding the digital challenge for the construction of an EHEA.

The analysis turned out to be particularly rich in theoretical suggestions. The first perspective concerns the field of *public policies* with specific attention to the digital HE policy. Within the framework of supranational policies, the European Union, while outlining specific development objectives made feasible through precise financing channels, leaves ample room for manoeuvre for the member states on how to pursue these objectives. However, even at the national level, every reform, from one level to another, initiates challenging courses of action and adaptation, and triggers a whole series of non-linear processes of change, providing valuable interpretations for the decision-makers charged with guiding their progress. In a world increasingly interconnected and interdependent, the process of public policy analysis becomes more and more complex, especially given the multiplicity and heterogeneity of interests, actors, and policy ideas moving between different contexts.

The debate between *rationalistic* and *constructivist* approaches to policy, specifically between *policy transfer* and *policy translation*, can be located in the search for policy analysis approaches that consider this complexity and heterogeneity in the movement of policy ideas. As Kennett (2008, 2010) states, shaping public policy is complex. In this process, there are interactions at different scales (transnational, national, and subnational), which generate tensions in the traditional functions of the state because different actors with a diversity of interests, ideas, and levels of political influence are interacting. Stone outlines that (2012) links and networks play a relevant role in spreading ideas, standards and policy

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[13] The research used mixed methods for data collection through multiple case studies, six in total, two from Italy and one from each of the following countries: Spain, Ireland, Greece and Finland. Project official website: http://ecolhe.eu

practices in a globalised world. The policy interpretation approach helps us understand the policy process, by paying attention to policy actors and focusing on how they engage in morphing and transforming ideas coming from elsewhere; trying to understand how they choose to act at a particular geographical scale; as well as the extent to which contingencies of politics and context interact with the intentions of policy actors (Mukhtarov, 2014).

The *theory of translation (or interpretation)*, going beyond the analysis of the output, allows us to interpret the richness and complexity of the local relationships and processes activated at the local level during the interpretation of a standard. In this way, it allows us to reconstruct the constraints and problems that affect the system, bring out actors, practices, conceptions, and shifts with which to reset the path and identify the cultural differences that influence the interpretation of the rules and their implementation. We can distinguish three perspectives on translation within organisation research; studies rooted in *actor-network theory*, *knowledge-based theory*, and *Scandinavian institutionalism*. All these perspectives can be connected via the following premise: *translations have a geometric, semiotic, and political meaning*.

The analyses carried out so far show a snapshot of the transformation underway, both very rich and complex, which allows us to look at the process of translating supranational instances into practice, in their dynamism, through the involvement of the different levels (meta-macro-meso-micro) and actors in the area of *interressement*, recruitment and alliances that are created within the framework of complex social systems, such as those observed in this research.

Since the end of the 1990s, in line with the European directives aimed at building a common area of HE, universities have been experiencing a process of continuous renewal and a state of permanent tension. This tension is expressed within a space where many opposing forces converge, which we have brought into the dialogue through the reconstruction of the public debate and actions that move around and within digital policies for HE. This space is constantly tossed about by the winds of change that blow from the European community through the continuous process of building the cultural framework, and is limited by the national constraints that have to be observed, delineating the area of digital and HEA (meta-level). The *micropolitical choices* (Ball, 2005) implemented by the academic bodies (micro level) sits within this turbulent arena. This transformation inevitably pushes the national level to adapt, review, and innovate the regulatory-institutional system (macro level) which directs the meaningful action of all the different individual and collective, public and private actors (meso level), who for various reasons, are involved within this transformative flow. At this level, universities also need to react and adapt to the whirlwind digital transition that is propelled by the market, and which today poses essential questions to the current and future role of universities as educational institutions of innovation and change. Universities have a duty to play not only a reactive role, but also assume a proactive and guiding presence for the present and future existence of the human family.

Methodology

Based on these premises, the investigation sought to reconstruct the common thread of this transformation and adaptation process, which crosses different dimensions. ECOLHE examined national public policies for e-learning in HE to understand the adaptation of critical concepts from the transnational level to the national level (for example, dominant rhetoric, orientations, legacies, obligations, risks and opportunities, expectations, educational paradigms) during the implementation of inclusive LLL processes, based on digital technologies. The research adopted a mixed method to achieve an exploratory and comparative analysis based on a collection of case studies aimed at understanding the similarities and differences between the cases (Zach, 2006), and explore the object of the study with a replication strategy. For each case study, a literature analysis aimed to briefly outline the main cornerstones that define the national legislative/regulatory framework for HEs.

In this first research step, qualitative analysis was adopted, focusing on national laws and strategies, national e-learning policies, digital strategies for Lifelong Learning, the promotion of ICT for social equity and inclusive learning, supporting services (educational and career guidance, career counselling), priorities for learning and appropriate incentives, national funding plans and strategies, plans for removing legal obstacles, measures adopted for ensuring LLL, initiatives and actions to promote the

use of ICT in HE, policies and strategies related to teachers' professionalisation, and internationalisation and quality assurance initiatives.

Increasing digitalisation in HE

This research work, aimed at reconstructing the attempt to affirm and translate the digital challenge into practice in HE in the passage from one level to another, allows us to closely observe the four stages that act in each step-in translation process for "creating convergences and homologies, by relating things that were previously different" (Callon, 1980: 211). Firstly, *problematisation* is when actors offer problem statements and seek to convince others that they have the correct solutions. All efforts conducted by the European Union since the launch of the Bologna Process (1999) have insinuated themselves into this dimension to create a common cultural and interpretative baggage around which to create the *interessement*. This second stage corresponds to strengthening the links between various actors' interests. In this stage, we observe the awareness-raising work carried out at the national level to identify interested actors and those willing to commit themselves to carrying forward the proposed innovation and change. For example, the experts were called upon to bring the experience of the Bologna Process to a national level. The third step is the *enrolment*, which refers to the participation of actors, *human* or *non-human* (the actants in the Actor-Network Theory language) activated in prioritising a particular *problematisation.* Lastly, Callon indicates the *mobilisation*, which concerns the maintenance of the network by ensuring that spokespersons act according to its interests. We will briefly explain the evolution of these four phases in the digitization process in HE.

Problematisation

The reconstruction of the *European Framework* (Capogna et al., 2022) helps us to identify the keywords and efforts activated by the European Union to run the digital challenge at different stages over the years. In fact, despite the National Authorities in each Member State remaining responsible for the way HE is organised and delivered in their countries, at the European level, European institutions bring an additional international dimension to studying, teaching, researching, or policy making in HE all over Europe. In particular, the European Commission, jointly with the main European and national (as well as regional and local) stakeholders, is working with policymakers and decision-makers to support the development of the EHEA, with all its policies and strategies. This is a meta-level policy space through which the European Union tries to *problematise* the issue of quality and inclusive education, training and LLL, which are considered fundamental elements for redefining the Union's growth strategy, based on sustainability, and green and digital transitions.

Interessement

With the *Declaration of the European Ministers of Education* convened in Bologna on 19 June 1999, adopted by ministers of education from 29 European countries, we can identify the *interessement* stage by which the establishment of the EHEA was fixed: to facilitate student and staff mobility, to make HE more inclusive and accessible, and more attractive and competitive in the worldwide. In this stage, the keywords for building the EHEA were: a three-cycle HE system consisting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies; mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad completed at other universities; an implementation of a system of quality assurance to strengthen the quality and relevance of learning and teaching. In this way, the EU thus comes to fully assume the role of agent, committed to *problematising* the renewal of the HEIs by directing its developments, imprinting its *agency*, that is, the "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahern, 2001, 110). After ten years, in the *European Union strategy 2019-2024* (2019:4), the issue of digitalisation is considered a technological change in phase with networking ambitions; this is an aspect that should therefore be developed at the EUI. In this document, the words "digital/digitalisation" is compared three times. Digitalisation is considered an enabling infrastructure and tool capable of building networks and connections between different systems to favour integration. This phase focuses on the *disruptive innovation determined* by ICT and its impacts on the labour market, especially regarding perspectives and mismatch skills. The *European Skills Agenda* (2020) focuses on the issue of the labour market. Digitalisation is transversal to all pillars, calling into question the theme of skills, upskills, re-skills, VET skills and life skills.

Enrolment

On 30 September 2020, it can be said to represent the temporal watershed when the EU unveiled its vision of HEIs addressed to the digital society through three long-awaited strategic proposals: The *Digital Education Action Plan* (2021-2027); the *European Research Area*; and the *European Education Area* (to be achieved by 2025), starting from the assumption that HEIs play an important role in Europe's social, digital and sustainable future. In this document, the word digital appears 269 times, showing the urgency to define a radical change in addressing the future development of all European countries to face the digital challenge. With the pandemic, the *European Union* discovered its cultural and infrastructural digital unpreparedness, and moved quickly to overcome the traditional view of 'digital' as being technology, to prepare for the vision of an *ecosystem* which calls for a paradigm shift to reconsider its ecological and socio-technical implications. Education is becoming digitalised, and *The Action Plan* identifies specific areas and actions "to ensure that education in Europe enables the green and digital transitions and seizes the benefits of digital transformation while mitigating its risks" (EU, 2020: 4). The *Digital Education Plan,* through its ten concrete actions, establishes itself as a *non-human actor* capable of giving its agency to the courses of action that guide the digital renewal of the entire education system. Moreover, creating a *European Digital Education Hub* represents a key tool for giving life to the *enrolment* process, through which to build alliances and synergies.

Mobilisation

The *Digital Europe* and *Connecting Europe Facility* programmes act as *mobilisation* tools capable of attracting individual and collective, or institutional actors. At the same time, the national agencies represent the "operating arm" that extends from the supranational to the national level, defining the rules and opportunities for engagement, models and operating tools, best practices and virtuous behaviours, through which change becomes action. Following the evolution of the digitalisation concept in the European public discourse, it is possible to build the *actor-network* progressively involved in the definition of a policy framework across borders that allows for seamless transnational cooperation, enabling alliances of HEIs to leverage their strengths, pooling together their online and physical resources, courses, expertise, data and infrastructure across disciplines (EE.CC., 2020).

Conclusion

Based on multiple case studies, we can observe that over the past twenty years, all the countries participating in the analysis have produced laws to regulate HE. However, the need for legislative support and effective planning to increase cooperation between HEIs from the perspective of digitalisation, development of education and LLL, as stated by the *Europe 2020 Programme report*, is pursued in all countries, albeit with different tools and levels of development. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has challenged national HE systems, testing digital development and highlighting criticalities, and hesitating in rethinking the strategies followed. The reconstruction of the public debate through the lens of the Actor-network theory about the construction of the EHEA allows for identifying the critical steps in the evolution of the digital society vision, as summarised in the timeline (Fig.1).

Fig. 1 The translation timeline process of the EHEA
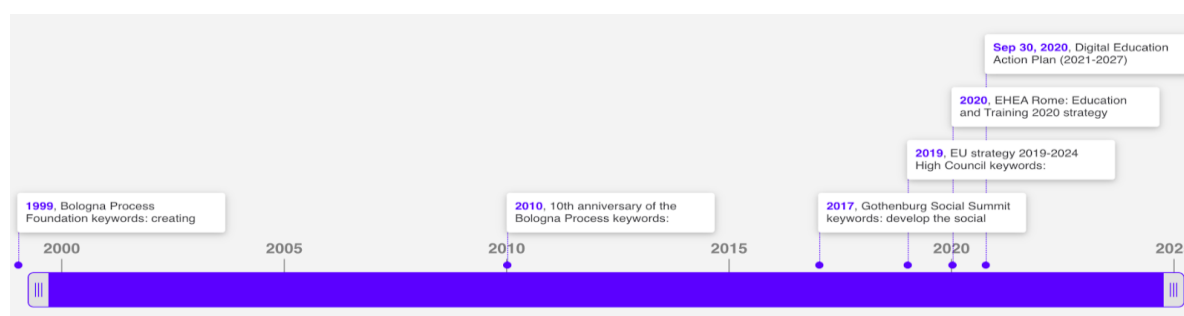
Source: Author

Rovik (2016) analyses this evolution through the *knowledge translation rules*, pointing out that one can observe an incremental process of *addition* and *alteration* related to the creation of an EHEA. With the geographical and temporal extension of the actor-network progressively involved in this process, we have witnessed a process of profound *modification* of the original objectives and values. These have undergone a radical change of vision due to the pandemic, which characterises a change agent capable of exercising its agency, by suddenly altering the evolutionary path in question. Even looking at the timeline that summarises the most important moments of this journey, three steps emerge, followed by a change of course. In the first phase, which extends from its foundation (1999) to 2010, the keywords accompanying the transformation effort are comparable, compatible and coherent HE programs to favour mobility within the European Union; while the *Gothenburg Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth* held in 2017, attended by 31 countries, sets out 20 fundamental principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets, structured around three chapters: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion. The first turning point, in 2019, shifted the attention to the issue of technological change, which in 2020 transformed the digital revolution in all its forms: digital society, digital economy, digital education, digital transition, digital Europe, digitalisation, digital skills, digital challenge, digital maturity and the digital divide. Universities were asked to become a compass, capable of guiding this change, a change that took place outside the *ivory tower* (Capogna, 2012), developing their *digital maturity* (Đurek et al., 2019) and seeing them in intense competition with the *web giants* and digital providers and platforms that are pushing to create their market spaces for the training of tailor-made digital skills and new market trends, which deeply modify the university role and mission.

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Supporting children's speech, language and communication: challenges for practitioners and leaders in the early years

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Type of working paper: research (and practice-inspired) working paper

Abstract

Communication and Language (C&L) is a prime area of learning and development within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in England. Recent research has shown that it is an area of growing concern in education as children entering school have significantly lower levels in C&L of development than in the past. The impacts of particularly Covid have been identified as being a possible factor although these concerns have been noted over a number of years. As well as being significant to pedagogy and practice within the setting, children's C&L is a key area which involves practitioners working closely with the family and other professionals in order to support children's development. Many early intervention approaches to support children's C&L have been implemented in Early Years settings in England, and this paper considers ways of working to support children's Speech, Language and Communication, including evidence from a research project in Nottinghamshire County which looked at the way in which Early Years (EY) professionals worked with the County Speech and Language Therapy team to provide support for children and families. The research particularly identified some key challenges for leaders in the Foundation Stage in considering aspects of pedagogical leadership and staff development in this key area of learning and development.

Key words: communication and language, disadvantage, enabling environment, leadership, collaboration

Introduction

As a prime area of learning and development, Communication and Language (C&L) is central to planning and provision in the Early Years (EY). Each of the 3 prime areas within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is "particularly important for building a foundation for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, forming relationships and thriving" (DfE 2021 p8). However, even among these prime areas, C&L is accorded particular significance as the area which "underpins all seven areas of learning and development" (DfE 2021 p8).

Recent research and data have shown that children's development in this area is a cause for concern in education. The latest YouGov (2023) survey on teacher's perceptions of school readiness finds that teachers report that "almost half the children in their Reception classes (46%) were not developmentally 'school ready' on entry to Reception" (p3). This survey identified the belief of teachers that the issue of school readiness is becoming increasingly problematic. In relation to Speech, Language and Communication (SLC), the judgements about whether a child is 'school ready' included children having

basic verbal skills, communicating in short, full and clear sentences, being able to verbalise needs and being able to follow simple instructions. 72% of teachers surveyed stated that their school has to divert more resources to supporting children's early language skills.

There is a suggestion that this gap in children's C&L skills is related to some extent to the impacts of the Covid pandemic. In a piece of research with practitioners, the Education Endowment Fund (2021) found that the pandemic has had an impact on children's language, alongside their socio-emotional development, with Early Years Educators (EYEs) and teachers noticing increased delays in children's C&L as they returned to settings and entered Reception classes after lockdown. This study indicated that, as an area in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), 96% of schools were either very concerned or quite concerned about children's C&L when schools reopened in September 2020.

These concerns are not only present in teachers and EY practitioners. In their latest research, the Sutton Trust (2020) found a significant concern amongst parents of pre-schoolers about their children's communication development and associated wellbeing during the pandemic, with parents noting negative impacts on their children's language development as a result of missing prolonged periods of their early education during lockdown.

Communication and language in health and education systems

However, even prior to the pandemic, children's early C&L was a focus of concern for EYEs and the measures used in the EYFSP over a number of years have shown that approximately 15-20% of 4–5-year-olds are not meeting expected levels in C&L on school entry (Law et al 2017). The report by Law et al (2017) for the Education Endowment fund, focuses on the impact of the language environment and highlights aspects relating to social disadvantage or deprivation, citing the higher prevalence of language difficulties in children from socially disadvantaged communities. Results from this research recognise that early communication difficulties in children can result in lifelong disadvantage into adulthood. In a wider multi-professional context over the last 20 years, children's Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) are increasingly being recognised, not just as an educational issue, but also as a public health concern. In fact, persistent, ongoing and pervasive SLCN have been identified as a significant public health issue (Law et al 2017). In addition to supporting children to communicate, Law et al (2017) suggest that early communication experiences are fundamental to children's wellbeing. A key Ofsted Early Years report (2016) highlighted that children with early C&L needs, are those "destined for disadvantage" throughout their lives. This report notes that "a gap in children's speech and language equivalent to 19 months has already emerged for some children in the lowest income families before they have even started statutory school" (p14) and advocates for a "joined-up service" between health and education for these children.

John Bercow had reviewed the provision of Speech and Language Therapy services to children and mechanisms of collaborative support between education and SLT teams in his 2008 review (Bercow 2008). He discovered a wide variability of services across the country, a lack of equity and a need for early identification and intervention for children with C&L needs, including collaboration between health and education. In his follow-up review in 2018 he advocated that an "understanding of speech, language and communication should be embedded in initial qualifications and continuing professional development for all relevant practitioners" (Bercow 2018 p3).

The enabling environment

A language-rich communication environment in EY settings can be a significant support in helping all children to reach expectations around being 'school ready' for C&L. Public Health England (PHE) (2016) link children's early communication and language opportunities and environments with school readiness at age 5 years. Their guidance for local authorities and health professionals focuses on the importance of planning effective early intervention for C&L in the earliest years. This included guidance around commissioning of local Speech and Language Therapy services to work in collaboration with educational provision.

Most children in England attend private and voluntary EY settings, where practitioners have varying amounts of opportunity, training and experience to work inter-professionally (Payler and Georgeson, 2013). However, although there is a recognition of the crucial necessity for skilled carers and educators, facilitated by high-quality training (McLeod, 2011) research suggests that the knowledge and skills of EY practitioners varies, as does the level of support from local SLT teams (Jago and Radford 2017). Law and Pagnamenta (2017) identify the training of a communication "champion" in a setting as a key universal intervention in the area of C&L; this can be achieved by collaboration between SLT services and EY settings to provide training to staff teams. The role of a communication champion is central in developing and "championing" strategies and practice in settings which will enhance communication environment for all children as well as having knowledge and skills in the provision of targeted strategies for children with communication needs.

Collaborative C&L training for staff in the early years.

McKean et al (2017) state that effective co-practice is essential in delivering services to children with C&L needs and Reeves et al (2018) discuss how specific language intervention programmes designed by SLTs and delivered by EY practitioners can be effective in advancing the language skills of socially disadvantaged children and improve their school readiness. In their 2019 research into SLC interventions in EY settings with EY practitioners, Hayes and Rooney conclude that continuing professional development with EYEs should place more emphasis on their role in developing oral language, literacy and social skills through interactions. Their evaluation of the use of a language intervention programme mediated by the local SLT team, considered the way that EY practitioners were supported to develop practical strategies to support children's early C&L development and they relate the quality of the EY environment to the development of children's C&L. One such intervention devised and delivered by Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) in Nottinghamshire is the Language Lead Approach (LLA), where SLTs deliver a formalised but flexible package of support and training to EY practitioners who go on to become Language Leads (LLs) or language champions for their setting. Research findings from the project (Kent and McDonald 2021) provide some insight into key elements of good practice in leadership and learning in communication practice and collaborative working.

The value of the Language Lead interdisciplinary working and training model.

When interviewed, all Language Lead champions noted an increase in children's communication needs in recent years and, hence an increased need for their own professional development in the area. As a result of their participation in the project, EY practitioners expressed increased confidence in supporting children's C&L in the setting as well as in working with parents to provide information and support about providing an enabling communication environment. In coherence with this, The SLTs reflected on strong and sustained improvement in the enabling communication environment in settings following Language Lead staff training. They also commented on a reduction in non-essential referrals to their service from settings where staff were managing C&L in a shared style, without the need for escalation to targeted services suggesting that there was increased confidence and ability to manage children's C&L needs within the setting.

Challenges to setting leaders

From the perspectives of both the practitioners and the SLTs, the relationship with the setting manager seen as pivotal to the success of the collaborative working. All the SLTs interviewed identified the role of the setting manager as being highly influential to the successful implementation of the approach. Managers were characterised by SLTs as gatekeepers and the degree to which the manager enabled the SLT to work with the setting was felt by SLTs to influence the implementation, along with how much the manager prioritised the approach. They also suggested that the manager's selection of Language Lead champion was seen as central. Practitioners expressed that they could only make the approach

work if they were given time, space and autonomy to develop the approach and to have ring-fenced time to be released to attend training. One EY practitioner summed this up:

"I suppose if the person in charge doesn't value it then it's not going to get to anybody in the school and taken seriously is it" (LL03).

SLTs and LL practitioners identified an organisational culture with leadership which was invested in the approach and had a strong focus on developing early support for C&L as being central to the success of the approach. EY practitioners spoke of how managerial support and leadership which allowed them to develop their role as language lead champion was one the most valuable elements of this collaborative practice and was most fundamental to developing the enabling communication environment in the setting.

Conclusions

Leadership is at the crux of working in a "joined-up" way, as previously championed by Ofsted (2016). Male and Palaiolgou (2015) note the importance of the value that setting leaders place on staff learning and development in order for effective practice strategies to be embedded. By enabling practitioners to have time to develop their practice and reflection on practice, the enabling communication environment in EY settings across Nottinghamshire is being changed to meet the communication needs of all children in the context of growing concern in relation to school readiness. The project findings support the view expressed in the Bercow review (2018) which highlights the role of local leaders in embedding support systems between health and education for children's C&L. It is clear that investment by leaders and managers in the EY sector in staff development in the area of C&L will pay dividends and will benefit staff, children and families. In addition to local initiatives to develop practitioner knowledge and skills and improve consistency in Early years practice, the EY sector in England has worked to embed a series of Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner competencies into the Early Childhood degrees on offer (ECSDN 2019). These skills are specifically designed to strengthen the development of a graduate-led EY workforce with leaders who can improve outcomes for children. The competencies, which include collaborating with others, should ensure that graduate EY practitioners are well-placed to work and lead in this space between health and education in supporting children's C&L. For the future, there is the issue of wider dissemination of good practice beyond the Foundation Stage where C&L is considered holistically and linked closely to children's personal, social and emotional development within an enabling environment. As children progress to Key Stage 1, it is essential that school leaders note the value of good communication practice in the Foundation Stage and build on the strong foundations and enabling environments for supporting holistic communication being developed in the Early Years.

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Applying Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action in an Educational Context

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Type of working paper: review

Abstract

Habermas' theory of communicative action (1984; 1987) offers a pragmatic meaning of language that prioritises what language does over what it says. The act of communication thus becomes an exchange in which individuals within a lifeworld intend to reach agreements about how they interpret their shared world. They are equal participants in these exchanges, entering into them with an intersubjective relationship in which the speaker makes themselves understood through their relationship to the listener rather than to the external world. The lifeworld comprises three elements: culture, society and person. Culture supplies the knowledge from which members develop their understanding of the world within and beyond a lifeworld. Society becomes the smaller self-selected or designated groups within the lifeworld that a participant associates with over time. With these influences in mind, an individual person within the lifeworld has the capacity to speak and act, and is positioned to engage in processes which allow them to reach understandings that ultimately lead to the development of ego-identity. As educators seek to engage students in a process of developing self-awareness which ultimately leads to learner self-determination and self-realisation, this question of ego-identity formation through communicative acts is highly relevant within a school lifeword.

Key words: Habermas, communicative action, lifeworld, ego-identity

Habermas' theory of communicative action (1984; 1987) offers a social theory that articulates how an individual comes to understand their world, and themselves, through linguistic communication. The act of communication is viewed as an exchange in which individuals use language to reach consensus about their shared interpretations of the world. Both speaker and listener are equal participants, with the speaker making themselves understood through their relationship to the listener rather than to the external world (Habermas 1984; 1987).

Building on the work of Mead (1962) and Durkheim (1933; 1957), Habermas establishes the significance of communication in the formation of ego-identity. Through communicative acts, an individual embarks upon a process of self-awareness, ultimately developing into a person who both understands who they want to be and views themselves as a reliable source of self-understanding (Habermas 1987). In this theory, ego-identity comprises the pathic and practical self, both of which are necessary for the self-criticism that takes place "under conditions of autonomous action" (Habermas 1987, p. 100).

Habermas (1984; 1987) frames the process of communicative action and the development of ego-identity as taking place within the lifeworld, a space comprising the elements of culture, society and person. In the lifeworld, speaker and listener come together to reach their mutual understandings, forming "a context that, itself boundless, draws boundaries" around the objective, social and subjective

worlds of these individuals (Habermas 1987, p. 132). Regmi (2017) suggests that the concept of the lifeworld is fundamentally important to the theory of communicative action because it establishes the parameters within which communication and action take place. The lifeworld also serves as a scaffold for new members, providing them with the resources and skills necessary to become active participants within their lifeworld (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2006).

The Lifeworld Elements of Culture, Society and Person

Each of the three components of the lifeworld—culture, society and person—are essential within the act of communication (Habermas 1984; 1987). Culture supplies the knowledge community members use to develop their understanding of the world within and beyond that lifeworld. The smaller groups within that lifeworld are the societies a member associates with over time, either by self-selected memberships or through designated assignment. Each individual person within a lifeworld has the capacity to both speak and act, thus positioning them to engage in processes and reach understandings that lead to the development of ego-identity. This pattern of engagement with culture, society and person is reproduced within each lifeworld and can be transferred to other lifeworlds of which an individual is a member.

Culture is inclusive of the norms, traditions and values of a community and the beliefs inherent in its commonly used language (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007; MacNeil, Prater and Busch 2009). A school has a distinct culture that "is generally thought of as the normative glue that holds a particular school together…[it] serves as a compass setting, steering people in a common direction. It provides norms that govern the way people interact with each other" (Sergiovanni 2000, p. 14). School culture shapes the patterns of interaction between individuals, nurturing teacher leadership and fuelling school improvement (Ohlson et al, 2016; Cansoy and Parlar 2017; Lee and Louis 2019). A school's wider community, national system, international setting and/or accrediting bodies can also contribute to the culture inherent within the institution. von Ahlefeld Nisser (2017) and Schipper et al (2020) suggest that a school's culture also impacts its students' academic achievement.

Society builds relationships and provides shared experiences for members of social groups. With culture enabling a lifeworld participant to make meaning within the objective world, society does so through interpersonal relationships, offering a sense of kinship to the individual within their lifeworld (Habermas 1987). Yelland et al (2021, p. 1) suggest that "[a] dynamic education system forms part of this ecosystem, both producing and attracting participations and creating aspirational opportunities for citizens that are flexible and globally focussed". Society thus becomes a key factor in the nurturing and development of individual identity for lifeworld participants.

In contrast to the lifeworld, the system is presented as an alternative space in which power, rather than language, is the driving influence on identity formation (Habermas 1987). In politically and economically stratified societies, this can result in the loss of meaning, alienation and psychopathologies for the individual (Regmi 2020). Habermas (1987) refers to this as the colonisation of the lifeworld, when the competition between social and system integration reaches a point at which the systemic acts begin to wield more influence than the linguistic one. Being aware of the threat of power imbalances inherent in schools is an important reminder of how detrimental these hierarchies can be for the students educators intend to serve, as they erode the opportunities students have to independently develop within the learning lifeworld.

Ultimately, the solidification of the ego-identity sits with the person as the key actor within the lifeworld as well as the main beneficiary of communicative action. Over time, an individual shifts from knowledge being formed through engagement with culture, to the increasing influence of society, to finally forming meaning through ego-identity (Habermas 1987). Sarid (2017, p. 466) posits that "Habermas's notion of *self-critical appropriation*, which involves the more personal-existential endeavour of self-clarification, provides the grounds for bringing the above two (seemingly) contradictory perspectives [distinct subject areas and learning experiences connected to everyday life] into a single curricular framework." For individuals to grow into independent individuals within their lifeworld, culture and society need to emphasise the importance of self-directedness.

The Theory of Communicative Action in Educational Research

Ewert's 1991 literature review of Habermas' influence in educational research between 1972 and 1987 presents technical, practical and emancipatory interests in his work as well as the focus on research related to the sociology of education through the application of communicative action. Habermasian theory can be used to establish the idea that a learner can become increasingly self-reflective through communicative acts and used to "justify philosophically and explain the practical effects of an approach to learning that is aimed at the full range of developmental measures in the interests of holistic education and wellbeing" (Lovat 2013, p. 78). Sarid (2017) identifies how Habermasian theory can be used to restructure educational curricula to develop communicative competencies that promote self-realisation for learners.

In considering the influence of Habermas on the field of education, Fleming and Murphy (2010, p. 203) assert that "[e]ducation has the task of ensuring that democratic skills and processes are handed on from one generation to the next…In this kind of education, reflective practice becomes more akin to the critique of ideology and an exercise in communicative action." The lifeworld of school directly influences and shapes who students are and who they become as they form their identities as learners and as humans. Developing communicative competence empowers students to engage with their learning and transfer cultural knowledge to social contexts then ultimately to personal experiences (Sarid 2017).

Habermas' theory of communicative action is also leveraged to advocate for values and citizenship education (Deakin Crick and Joldersma 2007; Lovat 2013; Sergiovanni 2000). Through this application, it becomes a moral imperative of schools to strike a balance between lifeworld development and traditional curriculum requirements. By integrating pedagogical approaches such as negotiated assessment (Gosling 2000) and feedback (Dann 2016), schools can transform traditionally transactional experiences into communicative acts, empowering a student to assert a more equal standing in their interactions with a teacher.

The application of Habermas' theory of communication within educational research provides a lens through which one can explore the learning lifeworld from the perspective of students. Gosling (2000, p. 296) asserts that "[a]ccording to Habermas, and those he has influenced, education is a key element in the achievement of autonomy and responsibility, but, to be successful, educational practices must permit and encourage forms of communication which are not distorted by imbalances of power or other blocks to open and rational discussion." By focusing on the role of communicative action in ego-identity development, Habermas (1987) places explicit value on self-determination and self-realisation, elevating the lived experiences of the individual who is simultaneously also a part of a larger lifeworld. Individuals with developed ego-identities recognise the developmental influence of their lifeworlds and understand the need to be able to function within increasingly diverse lifeworlds moving forward (Murphy 2013). This underscores the opportunity of students' understanding the influence that the lifeworld of school has on the development of their ego-identities.

The theory of communicative action suggests that learning is a social act, as meaning is made through linguistic interchanges at the levels of culture, society and person within the lifeworld. This interconnectivity of the lifeworld structures form the foundation for learning as a social experience and "becomes a necessary condition for learning because it is the most valid way for producing knowledge, examining the validity of existing knowledge, and providing opportunities for acquiring contextually useful knowledge for each citizen" (Regmi 2020, p. 225). This integration also underscores the role of fostering authentic, real-world connections within an academic context. In addition to promoting communication within the lifeworld of school, educators who actively engage students in learning experiences that integrate knowledge from external lifeworlds secure the learner's position within the school lifeworld as well as their capacity to transfer their ego-identity to other lifeworlds (Skibsted 2020).

Habermas' theory of communicative action "requires us to shift the focus to recognising that pupils have a role in controlling and regulating their learning. Agreeing actions through communicative processes...should be considered to help align intentions and consequences, through negotiated meanings" (Dann 2016, p. 402). Ordinary communication can have an exceptional impact on an individual, "such as the establishing and reproducing of patterns of belief, of consent and legitimacy, of status and identity, and of perception" (Parkin 1996, p. 423). Integrating increased opportunities for student voice and self-directed growth into the curriculum could further elevate the impact of communicative action on self-actualisation (Sarid 2017). In order for educators to increase dialogue through which consensus is reached between student and teacher, they must recognise and value the uniqueness of each student's lifeworld experiences (Harris 2019). This demands that the classroom

environment be one in which all voices are elevated and celebrated by both teachers and peers. It is not enough that educators provide space for students to explore ideas through communication, they must be comfortable inviting ambiguity into the learning process. In a time of high stakes testing, examination-driven appraisal and government intervention, this is not an easy task. And yet, Habermas' theory reinforces the critical role that communication can play in supporting students to develop their ego-identities within the school lifeworld. Teachers who leverage communication as a means for learning to understand oneself, rather than simply to share what has been learned with a designated audience, can transform the learning journeys of their students.

Conclusion

Habermas did not posit the theory of communication action with education in mind, however it has relevance and traction when applied within an educational landscape (Lovat 2013). Students are directly influenced by the lifeworld of school, which helps to shape the formation of their ego-identities throughout their formative years of development. In the school lifeworld, influences take many forms: cultural norms, socio-economic conditions of a community, teachers and peers might each shape an individual student's experience. Through the gradual process of individuation, individuals gain increased autonomy and an improved ability to problem solve, which over time shifts the locus of influence from external to internal (Habermas 1991). This process requires learners to adapt to these forces of influence and, when a strong ego-identity has been curated, monitor their adaptivity and apply these skills in various contexts. In responding to any one influential lifeworld element, the conditions of that lifeworld will be altered and the learner will ultimately change (Habermas 1987; 1991).

To support the transition from maintaining an identity based on socialisation to one based on individuation, students should be taught how to apply learned skills and processes within the school lifeworld. Instruction that integrates culture knowledge, social integration and personal identity has the potential to create individuals who are grounded in their own perspectives and also have the moral capacity to positively contribute to society at large (Habermas 1987; Habermas 1991; Habermas, Lennox and Lennox 1964). Within a school, the theory of communicative action suggests that each community member exists within a shared as well as a unique lifeworld. As a result, the personal learning journey that every individual undertakes is both related to, and distinctly different from, other members of the same community. In order to actively shape ego-identity development within the lifeworld of the classroom, students can be provided with self-directed opportunities to solve complex problems and engage in thinking routines as both are essential aspects of human cognitive and ego-identity development. Protocols that invite students to offer and consider open-ended interpretations in response to a stimulus, assume perspectives other than their own and evaluate possible solutions against a variety of outcomes encourage exploration of thought, reinforcing the relationship between critical and creative thinking and personal growth.

The theory of communicative action reinforces the boundaries that are placed on members of a lifeword, with Habermas (1987, p. 126) explaining that "communicative actors are always moving *within* the horizon of their lifeworld; they cannot step outside of it." The realisation of how much influence the school lifeworld holds, and how tightly its boundaries define the learning context for students, can serve as a call to action to decision makers within a school who shape the learning lifeworlds of the students each day. Applying Habermasian theory to teaching practice and curriculum design can provide an opportunity for empowerment of the learner within the lifeworld of school and shift the balance of power towards a more equitable and democratic distribution between teacher and student (Lovat 2013). Lovat suggests, for example, that in situations that call for self-reflection, teachers can invert the traditional classroom power dynamic by "in a sense, sitting at the feet of the structural learner in the role of veritable learner, 'or listener'" (2013, p. 74). If educators can curate classroom dialogue that is exploratory in nature, modelling how their own thinking is evolving through conversation with students, they can help their students see the mutual benefit inherent in these types of exchanges. As it is based on mutually beneficial linguistic exchanges in which participants are seeking to understand one another as equals, Habermas' theory of communicative action can serve to emancipate students within their learning lifeworlds and equalise the power dynamic within teacher/student relationships.

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Perceptions and Outcomes of International Academic Mobility: A Case of Ukrainian Academic Staff Members

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Abstract

The experiences and attitudes of the study's non-representative sample group members suggest that the issue of Erasmus+ staff mobility from Ukraine for teaching and training needs to be addressed more closely to determine their efficiency. The majority of the study's participants demonstrated overall positive attitudes and experiences, which contributed to both their personal and professional development. The major benefits for personal and professional development of the Erasmus+ mobility participants include increased awareness of novel teaching methods, additional research opportunities, new managerial approaches, and enhanced intercultural competence. Challenges and negative experiences mostly arise from complicated bureaucratic procedures of the sending institutions and unbalanced conditions for implementing mobility programmes. Those may lead to participants' superficial and not always pleasant experience of international collaboration or minor incremental changes at home institutions.

Key words: academic mobility, Erasmus+, university staff.

Introduction

The phenomenon of international academic mobility of university staff members has received limited attention in research compared to a wealth of literature devoted to students' study abroad and learning

mobility actions (Czaika and Toma, 2017; Mendoza, Staniscia and Ortiz, 2019; Pherali, 2011). In this regard, our study attempts to fill a gap in the scientific literature by exploring the academic mobility patterns of university staff from Ukraine who participated in Erasmus+ between 2013 and 2022. Furthermore, it examines the attitudes and agency of academics and educational managers in transnational academic mobility and the perceived outcomes of such professional experiences.

Despite a variety of views on agency in different broader contexts, we use this term in our study in line with Inouye and McAlpine's (2017) and Hewson's (2010) interpretations, which refer to it as the active ability to work towards achieving intended professional goals by overcoming challenges through control and transformation of social relations in particular circumstances. Tran and Vu (2018) introduced the notion of 'agency in mobility,' which is suitable enough for us to focus on identity construction in intercultural professional settings. They identify at least four components of agency in mobility: agency for becoming, agency as struggle and resistance, agency for responding to needs, and collective agency for contestation.

Positive outcomes of academic mobility can be observed at different levels. At the educational system level, international academic mobility helps in 'the diffusion of knowledge while at the same time allocating human resources in research labour markets' (European Commission, Directorate…, 2022). Therefore, at the institutional level, staff's improved knowledge and skills contribute to specific professional outputs (e.g., quality and quantity of published research) necessary to deepen existing research and address emerging challenges. At the national level, such results can lead to economic and welfare growth (European Commission, Directorate..., 2022). In addition, the outcomes of academic mobility are influenced by participants' subjective perceptions of the expected benefits for their professional development and career progression (Bojica, Olmos-Peñuela, and Alegre, 2022). Positive attitudes towards known mobility patterns lead academics to choose the same patterns later on, as different mobility patterns may have different career consequences. The latter fact, together with shared views on the extent to which international academic mobility can be personally and professionally beneficial, influences how academics predict mobility outcomes and plan their mobility activities (Bojica, Olmos-Peñuela and Alegre, 2022; Netz, Hampel and Aman, 2020).

Research shows that international mobility expectations and patterns vary in different national contexts (Czaika and Toma, 2017; European Commission, Directorate..., 2022; European Commission, Joint ..., 2017). There is a clear tendency for mobility (both short and long-term) towards countries considered to be the leading international knowledge systems and leaders in high-quality scientific research activities. These are primarily Western European and North American countries (European Commission, Directorate..., 2022). It is mainly due to the peculiarities and limitations of domestic educational systems in other regions, like limited funding or reduced employment opportunities. Some other drivers may be discipline-specific research practices, personal reasons for career advancement, and the perception that international exposure adds quality to the researcher's academic training and professional development. All these factors influence attitudes toward patterns of international academic mobility, for example, in terms of the expected duration, frequency, and content of mobility activities (Laudel and Bielick, 2019).

Given the wide variety of positive and negative factors related to academic staff mobility in different higher education systems, there is a need to have a closer look at this in the particular context of higher education in Ukraine. Thus, the research question of the study is 'What is the impact of academic mobility on the staff's personal and professional development in Ukrainian higher education institutions?'

Method

The study used semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore university teachers' and administrators' attitudes and practical experiences regarding their participation in academic mobility. The interviews consisted of 10 questions. Most of them followed the methodology proposed by Xu (2021) to research agencies in international academic mobility and were supplemented by the authors' questions on the general perception of mobility and its outcomes. Thus, all the questions can be divided into three distinct blocks: 1) questions on the reasons for participating in academic mobility programmes (Why did you decide to participate in international academic mobility? What were your expectations?); 2) questions on challenges and participants' agency (How did you prepare for a mobility exchange programme?; Were there any positive experiences during a mobility programme?; Were there any challenges and

difficulties during the mobility programme? How did you cope with them?; How do you perceive your identity as a university teacher/administrator?); 3) questions on tangible personal and professional outcomes of academic mobility (What does the international academic mobility experience mean to you?; What has mobility meant to you personally?; Have you introduced any changes in your working practices due to academic mobility?)

The interviews were conducted in December 2022, either face-to-face (6 out of 9) or online via video conferencing tools (3 out of 9), depending on participants' preference and/or availability. The average length of the interviews was 50 minutes. The participants were nine professors/associate professors and academic managers of 5 classical universities from different regions of Ukraine (Table 1). All of them were involved in international academic mobility within projects and specific actions of the Erasmus+ programme. The participants were generally representative of the target population in terms of age (35 to 61 years, median age 46 years) and experience (from 12 to 37 years, average 23.1 years). Informed consent was obtained from all participants. They were informed of their rights, and their anonymity was guaranteed.

Table 1. Demographic of study participants.

Name code	Staff position	Academic discipline	Gender	Age range	Quantity of mobility visits
P1	managerial	Education	female	55-65	3
P2	managerial	Education	female	35-45	4
P3	managerial	International Affairs	male	35-45	2
P4	managerial	Science	female	45-55	3
P5	managerial	Arts	male	35-45	4
P6	teaching	Education	female	45-55	3
P7	teaching	Education	female	35-45	2
P8	teaching	Arts	male	45-55	5
P9	teaching	Arts	female	55-65	2

The study was limited by a small sample size of respondents. Therefore, the participating universities were selected at random. The search for participants was carried out through personal acquaintances of the authors and was based on the relevance of the participants to the aim of the research. The study was also partially limited to the regional representation of universities, as it did not include universities located in the territory of Ukraine which is currently not controlled by the Ukrainian government. The data from the interviews were analysed for key perceptions and attitudes in relation to the research question using inductive analysis by reading the interview transcripts and noting emerging themes and examples representative of these themes.

Results and Discussion

The authors asked the interviewees to formulate their motivation to participate in academic mobility programmes. The majority of participants mentioned their professional development as the main reason: "this is good for my career development" (P8), "I had the opportunity to learn something new about my research" (P4), "to establish professional relations with colleagues from the same scientific and academic field" (P5), "this was the opportunity to work in a digital library and successfully complete my research" (P2). On the other hand, several participants emphasised their personal development first: "to see the world" (P6), "to meet new people from a different culture" (P8), "to improve language skills" (P9), "to travel and "meet" a new culture" (P3), "to increase my job satisfaction" (P1). To sum up, the participants were enthusiastic about taking part in the international mobility programme. They try to combine professional and personal reasons as driving forces for their agreement (Laudel and Bielick, 2019).

According to the responses, participation in a mobility programme requires some preparation. This can be understood from a psychological and academic point of view. "It was difficult to leave my child and my husband and move to another country for half a year" (P7), "my situation was quite complicated as I had a problem finding a person to leave my child with even for a week" (P2), "it was a stressful situation before the mobility because of the uncertainty about the courses I should carry out" (P4), "I spent time

to study the list of participants, a mobility programme, the structure of a website of a host university before the mobility" (P3), "I was intrigued and had several expectations" (P9). The family culture in Ukraine can explain the above-mentioned responses. It is characterised by family ties and personality traits. At the same time, as suggested by Laudel and Bielick (2019), family concerns are one of the essential considerations when planning mobility actions.

It is worth paying attention to the issues of positive and negative experiences before and during mobility. "I have a small number of competitors when I apply for mobility" (P6), which suggests a certain targeting of mobility at universities. "I took a holiday at my own expense to participate in mobility" (P5) and "I see that my university is not ready to use mobility opportunities effectively" (P4). These statements show a certain over-regulation at institutional level. The conditions for implementing mobility programmes are not harmonised and therefore do not promote incentives and motivation for staff to participate in international mobility programmes. "Heterogeneous group with different backgrounds. It can't work effectively during a programme" (P9). This quote shows the lack of team building and communication within the work group during mobility. This can lead to unsuccessful mobility implementation and achievement of objectives. The analysis of the range of participants' responses to their positive experiences allows the authors to define the influence of mobility on the personal, cultural and professional background of employees. "I met new colleagues with whom I continue to do research" (P9), "I made friends with new people" (P1), "I learned a lot about a new culture" (P7), "I learned about new ways of organising training" (P4).

In the third block of questions, the authors asked the respondents to indicate the mobility outcomes at the personal and professional levels. The following responses represent the personal level: "break the existing understanding of things" (P3), "I had certain stereotypes about the country and when I got there they were broken" (P5), "I changed my overview of the world perception" (P9), "I fundamentally changed my attitude towards people from another country" (P4), "I changed my beliefs about communicating with foreigners" (P6). Overall, these results indicate the existence of some stereotypes about other cultures and prejudices in communicating with foreigners. However, participation in a mobility programme had a positive impact on the respondents' results. In attendance with Bojica et al.'s (2022) and Netz et al.'s (2020) findings, our results demonstrate that mobility has had a significant impact on the professional level of staff. "My first training under the mobility programme was on the use of digital tools, so I used them when I came back to my home university" (P9), "I tried to motivate my students to perform better" (P1), "I saw new approaches to the same professional problem and tried to apply them" (P8), "I developed my intercultural competence" (P3), "I started to be more open to the international component in my profession" (P2), "I changed my attitude to working with documents after seeing this work in the Dean's office at the host university" (P4).

The authors can assume that participants in mobility programmes face difficulties in implementing the outcomes of mobility at home universities. "You can't reorganise your university activities all at once, but you can implement small things in teaching" (P6), "I felt the synergy between staff at the host university, but it is quite difficult to achieve it at the home university" (P4), "You participate in the mobility programme, but you don't know what for and how to deal with all these new things at the home university" (P5), "It is difficult to implement new ideas due to institutional regulations" (P2). The situation when there is neither positive nor negative tangible impact on research and academic careers of mobility participants after the participation in the Erasmus+ mobility actions is quite common. This finding resonates with the conclusions also made by European Commission (2017) and Netz, Hampel and Aman (2020). At the same time, we point to the willingness of participants to implement new ideas in teaching and management.

Conclusion

In the light of the research findings presented in this paper, academic mobility under the Erasmus+ programme had a significant positive impact on participants' personal and professional development. However, the participants' negative experiences were related to the pre-mobility arrangements at their home university, which can be improved by developing effective institutional regulations.

The participants of the research expressed their attitude towards the implementation of the mobility outcomes at home universities. They try to implement the gained experience in their teaching practice

using different tools, i.e. digital tools, motivating students to perform better and using innovative approaches to problem solving.

The results obtained allow us to broaden the field of scientific research. In particular, the low possibility of implementation of mobility outcomes in academia requires a separate in-depth study. Because of the limited sample in the current study, its results cannot be generalized to all staff mobility situations and thus further research needs to be performed to help devise detailed recommendations to increase Erasmus+ staff mobility efficiency to internationalise Ukraine's higher education institutions.

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Teaching the EU common values in the context of war in Ukraine

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Type of submission: practice-inspired working paper

Abstract

This paper deals with the peculiarities of teaching the EU common values in the context of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine. The authors describe the EU common values, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights in detail and present the analysis of scholars' opinions on this issue. It is also mentioned that under the conditions of war in Ukraine all these values are being violated. As well as all the spheres of life of Ukrainian people the sphere of education suffers greatly from the Russian aggression. The authors acquaint the readers with the statistics from official sources as for the number of educational institutions which were totally or partly damaged or temporarily displaced to the territory, controlled by Ukraine. The publication highlights the necessity of promoting the EU common values among young generations and presents a training course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers" (J. Monet module), designed by a group of teachers of Bogdan Khmelnystky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine). Aims, outcomes, objectives, structure of the course are described in the publication.

Key words: EU common values, war in Ukraine, foreign languages, teacher training, multilingualism in the education

Changes in the system of education have become especially relevant with the beginning of a large-scale war, unleashed by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. Under these circumstances the Ukrainian higher education was facing numerous tasks that required immediate solution. As stated by S. Shkarlet et al. (2022), the most urgent of them are the following: restoration of functioning of educational institutions; organization of the educational process in blended and distance learning forms; creating safe conditions for all participants of the educational process; providing psychological support for teachers and students, implementing programs for their psychological rehabilitation and adaptation; digitalization of education; reinvention of displaced universities; innovative activity development; modernization of the educational content and bringing the educational system in line with international standards; strengthening European integration processes in the field of education; restoration and development of the infrastructure of educational institutions that were destroyed and damaged in the

result of the Russian Federation armed aggression. It should be noted that by the 1st of August 2022 nearly 2,200 educational institutions of Ukraine were ruined, including 225 completely destroyed, 1,975 partially damaged. Among them 7 Universities were completely destroyed (Shkarlet et al. 2022).

The situation in the occupied territories (Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk regions), where education institutions were on the verge of survival, turned out to be especially critical. Thus, Bogdan Khmelnystky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Melitopol, Ukraine) was temporarily transferred to a new place in the city of Zaporizhzhia on the basis of Khortytsia National Academy in accordance with the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 431 (May 12, 2022). This step preserved the life and health of students, teachers and employees of our university, as well as contributed to the full functioning of the institution of higher education in conditions of war. The University had to make huge efforts to ensure quality of educational and scientific activity, to keep educational staff and students. Moreover, our University had to continue fulfilling obligations regarding the implementation of international projects, one of which was conducted within Erasmus+ Programme (Jean Monnet Actions in the field of Higher Education: Modules) aimed at the dissemination and promotion of common European values in the education and training of future foreign language teachers. Thus, **the aim of this paper** is to prove the essential necessity of promoting the EU common values among Bachelor students. These are the future foreign language teachers who can lay the foundation for the EU common values in primary school students as the youngest representatives of Ukrainian and European society.

The literature review argues that the image of the European Union is inseparably connected with a set of conventional values, and all its member states should accept, respect, and protect the fundamental rights of people living on the area (Borca, Rus and Sava 2020). In this regard the EU is seen as a community of values described below.

Human dignity acknowledges the uniqueness of every human being and proves the fact that every individual has his own intrinsic worth regardless of his or her belonging to specific societal groups or having any other personal characteristics or choices. Other individuals and public authorities are expected to respect and protect this worth. This way human dignity is understood as a fundamental right and the cornerstone of all other rights guaranteed by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000).

Freedom is a complex value including freedom of movement and a number of individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information. In a broad sense freedom is strongly connected with individual's autonomy or free personal development which requires requires equal recognition for all individuals.

Democracy, as one of the EU common values, presupposes a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. The value guarantees holding regular, fair and free elections providing all the EU adult citizens with corresponding political rights and allowing them to make a truly free choice during the elections.

Equality is considered to be a complex and dynamic value existing in different spheres of life among diverse societal groups. This means non-discrimination, equality of results or equality of opportunities regardless gender, race, nationality, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property or birth. This includes respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, equality between men and women, protection of the rights of children, the elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Rule of law means that that everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by EU member states. In this sense the rule of law is strongly connected with democracy and respect for human rights.

Human rights as one of the founding values of the EU presuppose that every EU citizen has to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Crego, Mańko and Ballegooij 2020).

In spite of the fact that the above mentioned foundational values are interdependent and commonly known, they need to be cultivated, taught and fostered amongst people, in particular amongst newcomers in society such as youngsters and immigrants. For that purpose, the EU member states

should join their efforts to stimulate attention, facilitate the exchange of best practices, collect information by research, and provide mutual advice and support (Veugelers, de Groot and Stolk 2017).

The objective to cultivate the EU common values is generally supported by the Ukrainian government policy aimed at Ukraine-EU cooperation in all spheres of life – economy, trade, social policy, medicine and education. According to survey results (Buhbe 2017), the Ukrainians believe that European values serve as a foundation for a successful society, and thus perceive them as worthy guiding principles. Both supporters and opponents of European integration in our country as a whole share such key European values as human dignity, individual freedoms (respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information), democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights, peace, solidarity, tolerance, and the value of human life. None of the survey participants (2,000 respondents aged 18–65) rejected the enumerated values. On the contrary, the support of these values and our country integration into the EU have become topical especially now in the context of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine. According to the latest results of a survey of more than 19,000 people conducted by L. Walter and others in November 2022, overall attitudes of the Ukrainians towards the EU are generally positive (72 %). Thus, 83% of respondents would support Ukraine's accession to the European Union (if we compare this figure with survey results in November 2021, before the war escalated, it can be noted that significantly fewer Ukrainians (58 %) were in favour of joining the EU) (Walter et al. 2022).

Milestones of Ukraine-EU cooperation such as entering into force of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (September 2017), submitting an application to join the EU (February 2022) and gaining the EU candidate status (June 2022) gave a new rise to the promotion of the UE common values in Ukraine. Yet, in spite of the fact that the majority of Ukrainians believe that Ukraine should integrate into the EU and share its values, Buhbe (2017) proved that the process used by Ukrainians to gain knowledge about European values was not systemic and needed further improvement. Buhbe (2017) did not find any information sources in the Ukrainian media space that would systematically highlight a 'European' way of life and shared values. This suggested that Ukrainians might have been forming their notions about Europeindirectly – through watching and listening to Russian media. Thereby, Buhbe (2017) revealed wide opportunities for the manipulation of individuals with unstable and controversial ideas about European values. In this regard it became vital to save, accept and promote the EU key values destroyed by the aggressor country on all levels including the system of education. Taking into account all the mentioned above we come to the conclusion that a certain amount of work should be done to promote the European way of life and common values through teacher training, as teachers are considered the main pillars of education and the critical actors in promoting European values. On one hand, they have the power to enhance and bring essential changes to the educational process of the whole country (Komar et al. 2021). On the other hand, the analysis of our University curricula proved the fact that there is a definite lack of educational courses on the EU shared values.

In order to overcome this discrepancy, a group of teachers of Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine) designed a training course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers" within the framework of the grant project under the Erasmus+ international program (J. Monet module). Before developing the Module, the teachers of the Department of Methodology of Teaching Germanic Languages and the Department of Primary Education carried out a needs analysis, which was based on a survey. More than 200 students and future teachers of foreign languages took part in this survey. According to the analysis of the responses, the following was found out. On the one hand, students are not aware enough of what common European values are. On the other hand they believe that these values as well as European language standards should be introduced into Ukrainian educational space (Goncharova and Maslova 2022). The results obtained from the survey proved the necessity of designing the Module on strengthening the European common values. The Module is aimed at training of Bachelor students in their 4th year of studies, who specialize in teaching foreign languages to preschoolers and junior high school students. The main objective of the Module is to strengthen the EU common values through the European policy of multilingualism during the training of future primary school teachers. As a result of learning on this Module, students (future teachers) should have demonstrated: 1) knowledge and experience in the EU common values and policy of multilingualism as well as the EU's educational matters (language policy, reforms, curricula, learning strategies, creativity

development in language learning and teaching sphere, etc.); 2) ability to strengthen EU common values through teaching a foreign language to Ukrainian primary schoolchildren taking into account all European education requirements; 3) ability to introduce European common values and language standards into Ukrainian educational space while teaching foreign languages to children from an early age; 4) ability to contribute to the linguistic diversity and language learning in Ukraine, based on the main vectors of EU's policy of multilingualism, thus strengthening the EU common values.

The introduction of European Union issues is covered by Module's two-part structure. The theoretical part (60 hours) will deal with acquaintance with EU common values, issues of preschool and primary school foreign language learning and teaching in the European Union (policy, reforms in teaching foreign languages, learning strategies, creativity development, educational alternatives etc.). This part of the Module will cover issues which deal with the European Commission's mission to enhance cooperation in the field of multilingualism and improve the effectiveness of language teaching in schools, thus promoting the value of freedom of movement; will outline main aspects of the EU common values through policy of multilingualism.

The practical part (60 hours) included Future Foreign Language Teacher's Portfolio with a compulsory section "How I promote EU common values through my teaching" in two different dimensions. Firstly, by taking part in one-week intensive course on strengthening the EU common values through teaching foreign languages to the children of preschool and primary school age under the title "Europe-oriented Ukrainian Foreign Language Teacher". This one-week course will rely on the Common European Framework of References, recommendations of the Council of Europe and its European Center for Modern Languages as well as on learning the EU common values through high quality language standards. Secondly, students will conduct their teaching practice in preschool and primary educational institutions. Thus, they will use and disseminate the EU common values, strategies and major course issues in their home cities while conducting their teaching practice in preschool and primary educational institutions.

The expected tangible results of the Module are:

- Curriculum of the course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers**",**

- E-course book on EU common values for Bachelor students of preschool and primary school specialities,

- Future Foreign Language Teacher's Portfolio with a compulsory section "How I promote EU common values through my teaching",

- Photo and video recordings of course participants' teaching practice,

- Information leaflets about the Module.

The suggested Module develops critical thinking skills, promotes language competence of students and contributes to the global spread of the EU common values. The Module is in line with the mission of the EU's policy in terms of multilingualism. We believe that this initiative will improve the educational and pedagogical process in Ukraine, as well as bringing it closer to common European values dissemination and new language standards establishment. Moreover, we hope that the developed course will create a basis for learning and teaching foreign languages from an early age and will contribute to the promotion of common values of the EU.

In summary, as Kyiv Mayor V. Klitschko and the Minister of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine – O. Chernyshov – told the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe members: "We are defending not only Ukraine, but also European democratic values" (the 43rd Congress Session, 25-27 October 2022, Strasbourg, France). In the same way the Ukrainian system of higher education is fighting right now for its right for the existence in the context of Russia's military actions against Ukraine. That's why we believe that a training course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers", designed by a group of teachers of Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University

(Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine), will become a powerful tool of promoting the EU common values among students (future foreign language teachers) who can lay the foundation for the EU common values in primary school students as the youngest representatives of Ukrainian and European society.

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The Role and Impact of Academic Managers in Entrepreneurship Education - The case of East Africa

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Types of working paper: research paper

Abstract

There is now consensus that entrepreneurial skills can be learnt and that entrepreneurship can be taught. While entrepreneurship programmes across all levels of education have rapidly expanded internationally, previous research argues that a skills gap among entrepreneurship educators impedes the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education. This paper explores the challenges educators face in teaching entrepreneurship in Higher Education. Results suggest that academic managers' lack of understanding of entrepreneurship education, and their subsequent lack of active support for its implementation, is a critical factor that hinders the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education in the classroom. The paper's findings extend our understanding of academic managers as a contextual factor within the Higher Education context and their currently under-researched role in the implementation of entrepreneurship education.

Key words: entrepreneurship education, educational management, Higher Education

Introduction

There is now consensus that entrepreneurial skills can be learnt (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman, 2011) and hence that entrepreneurship can be taught (Gorman *et al.,* 1997; Henderson and Robertson, 2000). Ever since Myles Mace taught the first entrepreneurship course at Harvard University in 1947, entrepreneurship education in schools and universities has grown substantially (Solomon *et al.,* 1994, 2002; Katz, 2003; Kuratko, 2005), the research field of entrepreneurship education has received increased scholarly attention (Pittaway and Cope, 2007; Nabi *et al.,* 2017; Wu and Wu, 2018), especially about the content students should be learning, teaching methods about, through and for entrepreneurship, and programme learning outcomes (Gorman *et al.,* 1997; Nabi *et al.,* 2017; Neck and Corbett, 2018). Within entrepreneurship education the "foundational claim in the general schooling literature [is] that teachers matter" (Johnston *et al.,* 2016, pp.2) appears to hold especially true, where in the absence of clear educational guidelines defining the content, pedagogy, curricular and goals of entrepreneurship education programmes, entrepreneurship educators have significant autonomy to implement the subject based on their personal resources (Ruskovaara and Pikhala 2013; Lepistö and Ronkko, 2013; Bell and Liu, 2019). Therefore, microlevel factors, that is entrepreneurship educators' personal resources (pedagogical toolbox, motivation) and variables (subject knowledge) (Blömeke & Delaney, 2012), are instrumental in the effective implementation of entrepreneurship. Research, however, indicates that many entrepreneurship educators lack a holistic understanding of how the subject links to their discipline, the curriculum, or national policies (Seikkula-Leino *et al.,* 2010; Järvi, 2012, Mars, 2016) and how it can be taught in practice (Seikkula-Leino *et al.,* 2010; Osakwe, 2015). Consequently, entrepreneurship educators apply a limited range of teaching methods characteristic or relevant to entrepreneurship education (Seikkula-Leino, 2007) and often lack confidence (Dean *et al.,* 2007; Sorgman and Parkison, 2008). Therefore, the lack of personal variables and resources by entrepreneurship educators is perceived as one of the

main challenges limiting the implementation of entrepreneurship education across schools and universities.

These views, however, perceive an educator's role in the implementation of entrepreneurship education as overly individualistic and independent of social structures (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). More recent research has shown that macrocontextual factors and institutional context constitute critical factors influencing agentic behaviour (Dahl and Sorenson, 2009; Welter, 2011; McKeever et al., 2015; Shirokova et al., 2018; Oftedal et al., 2018). To implement the innovative entrepreneurial pedagogies expected of them, entrepreneurship educators must have opportunities for professional development opportunities, appropriate infrastructure (Myrah and Currie, 2006; Ramussen and Sørheim; 2006), and an institutional context that reinforces and supports their personal and professional commitments, practices, and identity (Reynolds, 1996; Husu, 2005; OECD, 2009). Thus, universities influence what and how entrepreneurship educators teach by making creating inducive rules, norms, and culture (Gibb 2011). Hence, entrepreneurship education is a highly contextual result of educators' personal resources and variables exercised within a specific institutional environment. In this context, academic managers play a significant role by providing sufficient infrastructure, setting the norms and culture, and planning and implementing educational change (Adam, 2003; Cox, 2005; Hockings, 2005). However, the impact of contextual factors on entrepreneurship educators' lived experience remains underexplored in the literature so far (Bae et al., 2014; Blenker et al., 2014; Schlägel and Königs, 2014)

Therefore, the objective of this study is to understand the challenges entrepreneurship educators face by applying a social constructionist approach that pays attention to both the educators' personal variables and resources and the role of macro- and institutional contextual factors that impact their experience.

Methodology

As a contextually situated phenomenon, this study is limited to the geographic context of East Africa. The context was selected because the promotion of entrepreneurship programmes across Sub-Saharan has gained increased attention to address the growing youth under- and unemployment challenge by providing young people with the motivation, skills, and knowledge to start and grow their own enterprises (Fölster, 2000; Davidsson, 2005; Hisrich, 2008). Notably, previous research has identified that entrepreneurship educators received insufficient training on bringing the concept of entrepreneurship into the classroom (Kaijage *et al.,* 2013; Osakwe, 2015).

Participants for this qualitative inquiry were identified through criterion sampling, which constitutes that "all participants experience the phenomenon being studied" (Creswell, 1998, pp.118). Consequently, at the time of the research, participants must have been teaching entrepreneurship within Higher Education in either Kenya, Uganda, or Tanzania. An initial sample of entrepreneurship educators was identified from the researcher's professional network, as 'using contacts in industry, academia and friendship can be helpful, first, in establishing what the population is of organizations you might draw the case study from, and then how to choose the case(s)' (Hartley, 1994, pp.216). The sample was expanded through snowball sampling (Patton, 1990; Neuman, 2014). In all, thirteen entrepreneurship educators (Table 1) were interviewed between December 2017 - February 2018 using face-to-face (2) and virtual semi-structured interviews via skype (11). In qualitative studies, this sample constitutes a reasonable size (Creswell, 1998).

No.	Gender	Education Level	Faculty/School	Professional Level	University type	Country
1	Female	Master	Business Faculty	Senior Lecturer	Public	Ugada
2	Female	PhD	School of Education	Senior Lecturer	Public	Kenya
3	Male	PhD	Business Faculty	Senior Lecturer	Public	Kenya
4	Female	PhD	School of Education	Lecturer	Public	Tanzania
5	Female	Master	Business Faculty	Lecturer	Public	Kenya
6	Male	PhD	Business Faculty	Associate Dean	Private	Kenya
7	Male	PhD	Business Faculty	Associate Professor	Public	Uganda
8	Male	PhD	Business Faculty	Lecturer	Public	Tanzania
9	Female	Master	Business Faculty	Lecturer	Private	Kenya
10	Female	PhD	Business Faculty	Lecturer	Public	Uganda
11	Female	Master	Business Faculty	Assistant Lecturer	Public	Tanzania
12	Female	PhD.	Business Faculty	Dean	Public	Kenya
13	Male	PhD.	Business Faculty	Dean	Public	Kenya

Table 1: Anonymised profile of the participants

The researcher captured the discussion points through notetaking, and all interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Data were analysed using an inductive thematic approach using Nvivo (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Kuckartz, 2014), moving from the particulars of individuals to a more interpretative identification of higher-order concepts shared across participants (Smith *et al.,* 2009).

Findings

While participants in this study acknowledged that they would like to further enhance their knowledge and skills related to the subject, they reject previous findings that the implementation of entrepreneurship education is held back because they lack the skills and knowledge to implement the subject effectively. Instead, they emphasized the role academic managers played in restricting their personal resources and variables (motivation, pedagogical toolbox) and, ultimately, the delivery of the subject. Instead, they confirm that their academic managers' lack of understanding of the subject and their subsequent lack of active support severely obstruct their personal resources (motivation, pedagogical toolbox) and, ultimately, the delivery of the subject (Adam, 2003; Cox, 2005; Hockings, 2005).

Most entrepreneurship educators painted senior managers as bureaucratic, old, detached from the needs and demands of students, and lacking a conceptual understanding of entrepreneurship education:

> *"The people who are really in the decision-making and the resource distribution do not understand the real needs of the people who need this. I think that is the problem." (12)*

Instead of entrepreneurship education being driven by managers, participants emphasized that they were the drivers of entrepreneurship education, implementing the subject based on their conceptual understanding of the subject and resources on hand. As participant 13 noted:

> *"I may not talk much about that, but it is us the entrepreneurship lecturers who are emphasising that there is more than just teaching. Entrepreneurship is not just, like, financial accounting like English, it's much more, because this one, it will have an impact in the future of the students that we have [….]."*

Hence, results appear to confirm that academic mid-level managers are mainly concerned with maintaining existing organisational arrangements and maintaining the status quo, rather than the introduction and furthering of educational innovations (Cuban, 1988). The change was implemented from the bottom up through the academic's own initiative. However, their "capacity to make a difference" (Frost, 2006) related to applying more innovative teaching pedagogies beyond traditional lectures was severely restricted because academic managers did not provide active support to entrepreneurship education. Lecturers struggle with large class sizes, a lack of basic IT infrastructure and teaching materials (cases, books), inflexible class scheduling, and a lack of funding to either invite guest speakers or take students out to visit companies. Furthermore, despite taking the initiative to promote entrepreneurship education beyond the classroom by advocating for business plan competitions, incubators, and other student support services, participants feel confined to the role of a 'restricted professional' (Hoyle, 1972) focused on their own classroom practices. Participant 1 explained the restrictions faced:

> *"And whenever you come up with an initiative, you are always asked, "Are you sure you are still following the curriculum?" You go, "Yes, I am", and "Okay, make sure you don't…" It's more restrictive than progressive, it's always, "Make sure you're not doing this, that and the other."*

Furthermore, managers did also not provide sufficient opportunities for entrepreneurship educators' continuous professional development. Although previous studies have highlighted that a lack of skills severely impedes the implementation of entrepreneurship education (Ismail and Ahmad, 2013; Kaijage *et al.,* 2013; Osakwe, 2015; Mars, 2016), participants of this inquiry asserted their confidence in their abilities because they are all entrepreneurs themselves and felt confident to teach 'what they practice'. Nevertheless, they desire the opportunity to participate in continuous professional development, a responsibility within the realm of academic managers (Cox, 2005; Uys, 2007; Bell and Bell, 2005; Smith,

2012). However, interviews unveiled that manager did not fulfil their instrumental role of facilitating educators' professional development (Pittaway and Cope 2007; Blenker *et al.,* 2008; Vanevenhoven, 2013; Kerry *et al.,* 2015) especially related to pedagogies relevant to entrepreneurship education (Akola and Heinonen, 2006; Haase and Lautenschläger, 2011; Taatila, 2010).

Faced with restrictions, many educators took proactive steps to advocate management to authorize and resource new programmes and initiatives, including incubators or business plan competitions, to meet student needs and demand. However, many experienced continuous rejections of their ideas. A notable comment from participant 3, representative of the experience of many other participants, was:

> *"I have personally presented the issue of, can we take the students to, can we embed entrepreneurship formally with some industrial attachments? Then somebody immediately puts me off that."*

Hence, by withholding *active* support, managers act as gatekeepers and have a significant negative impact on the implementation of entrepreneurship education. As a result of the institutional setbacks and constraints, some participants resourced and pursued what they deemed to be necessary outside of their institutional context, starting the incubator or start-up programme independently from the constraints and authority of the university – at least initially. As a result, some participants initiated their own consulting businesses, incubators, or business plan competitions and continued to manage them independently from the university. Others have initiated the projects initially outside of their formal employment with the university but then used the temporal nature of management positions in Higher Education to integrate their projects into the university under new management.

While many entrepreneurship educators perceive structural barriers imposed by academic managers, those structural barriers are not perceived as permanent. Instead, structural change can open up an opportunity for entrepreneurship educators to expand their sphere of influence (Hoyle, 1972). Those structural change can occur in different ways. Firstly, when projects initiated outside of the formal institutional context were successful in student engagement, fundraising, and creating media coverage, managers' risk of supporting the already proven innovation within the university context was reduced. Both, participants 8 and 10, were able to pilot projects initially outside of the university context and then successfully gained the support of the university to continue the projects within the university. This was reflected in the following comment made by participant 8:

> *"Once it [entrepreneurship camp] took off, the entire university applauded and said, "This is something that should be continued every year, and we are willing to sponsor it." In fact, this year the university is sponsoring it, and in every detail, they are working on it, because they saw that this is working."*

However, many other participants tried but failed to pursue managers to support their initiatives. The change for some of them did not materialise because they gained active support from their academic manager over time but because of personal change in management due to the temporal nature of the middle-rank academic management roles. As academic managers were replaced over time, some educators found themselves with new managers who were more understanding and supportive of entrepreneurship education. As those new managers entered the university, entrepreneurship educators changed their view of managers as a barrier to managers as supporters of change. Participant 10 explained:

> *"If you have an immediate boss who understands and appreciates then yes, if not then forget about it, they will push it under the table; they will not even discuss it in a meeting. That is what we have been struggling with in the past years." [..] But "now with a change of new management they actually appreciate and have been able to support us move to different stakeholders, yes."*

Conclusion
As a contextual phenomenon, entrepreneurship education is componential and requires the buy-in and active support of different stakeholders, including students, educators, and academic managers. While the implementation of entrepreneurship education depends on one hand on what entrepreneurship educators do (pedagogical practice) and think (motivation, subject knowledge), this paper highlighted how their capacity to 'do' in the classroom is influenced by their managers' understanding of

entrepreneurship education (i.e., what they *think*) and their subsequent provision of *active* support (i.e., what they *do*).

Participants' perception of academic managers' lack of conceptual understanding and subsequent active support for entrepreneurship education will come as no surprise to those working in the field of entrepreneurship education. Although some capacity-building programmes have recently emerged for entrepreneurship educators, capacity-building support for academic managers, such as the National Council for Entrepreneurship Education 'Entrepreneurial Leadership' programme in the United Kingdom, remains absent in most other jurisdictions despite evidence that participation in this training has a strong positive effect on entrepreneurship education (Hämäläinen *et al.,* 2018). In the absence of those programmes, academic managers lack the opportunity to enhance their understanding of the subject, even if they wanted to. The study expands previous findings in the context of secondary education, which highlighted the critical role of head teachers in the implementation process of entrepreneurship education (Deakins *et al.,* 2005; McLarty *et al.,* 2010) to Higher Education. It also expands the overly individualistic view of the role of entrepreneurship education in the implementation of entrepreneurship education to a more contextually situated view in which academic managers play a crucial role by providing a wide range of active support to entrepreneurship educators.

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Facilitating emotionally resilient learning in times of crisis

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Type of working paper: practice-inspired working paper

Abstract

We live in a period of extraordinary instability. International crises include climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical vulnerability in Africa, and the war in Ukraine. In the UK, we are experiencing high levels of poverty and inflation, the cost-of-living emergency, and the impact of Brexit. It is vital for educators to try and make sense of these events, to consider their cause and impact and how they influence and often harm lives.

This paper sets out a pedagogical model which allows students from a wide range of courses to explore the ways in which these momentous societal events affect them on a personal level and equips them to be resilient, skilled, and emotionally intelligent graduates. The model has three complementary elements:

➢ Pedagogy underpinned by professional experience and expertise
➢ Pedagogy informed by research and scholarly activity
➢ Pedagogy inspired by the lived experience

The paper presents an example of how the model can be applied in practice drawing on a submission made to Nottingham Trent University's Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching (VCAET). The model has a broad, cross-discipline relevance and applicability. It recognises that to understand and to respond to local, national, and international crisis educators and students need to establish a career identity, engage with research, and reflect on lived experience.

Key words: lifelong learning, research-informed teaching, emotional resilience, crisis, employability, lived experience

Introduction

UNESCO (2020) describes higher education as an asset which 'enables personal development and promotes economic, technological and social change'. Research has found that for many students higher education has three distinct purposes: to contribute to society, to achieve personal growth, and to secure meaningful employment (Brooks et al, 2021). Naturally these functions of higher education are impacted by the period of uncertainty and crisis in which we are living.

Rosenthal et al (1989) describe a crisis as when the political establishment identify a threat to the core values of society. More recently the 'creeping crisis' has been identified as turmoil which arrives in full view and yet takes decision-makers and the public by surprise (Boin, 2020, p.116). Key examples are the over-prescription of antibiotics, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, breakdown of traditional media and rise of

social media, the European migration crisis, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The severity of contemporary crises has led to the construction of the 'super wicked problem' characterised as being exigent and relying on the response of authorities who have caused the problem thus producing poor policy responses (Peters and Tarpey, 2019, p.219).

The personal development and social change which UNESCO emphasise as key functions of higher education are shaped and complicated by the period of instability in which we are living. Educators must attempt to make sense of (and reflect in their teaching) the 'wicked problems' society faces, to consider their cause and impact, and how they influence and often harm lives. Crucially, educators need to be sensitive to the fact that students themselves are impacted by crisis; a pedagogical path must be navigated which analyses the enormity of contemporary challenges, and at the same time acknowledges the more personal day-to-day impact.

The model described in this paper draws on a submission made to Nottingham Trent University's Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching (hereafter VCAET) from the BA (Hons) Health and Social Care degree in the School of Social Sciences. It recognises that to understand and to respond to local, national, and international crisis, educators and students need to establish a career identity, engage with research, and reflect on lived experience. The model is influenced by crisis analysis and policy literature, but rather than trying to add to this body of work, it seeks to provide a working template for how momentous societal events can be explored with students with the aim of creating resilient, skilled, and emotionally intelligent graduates. The model has a broad, cross-discipline relevance and applicability.

The model has three complementary elements: pedagogy underpinned by professional experience and expertise; pedagogy informed by research and scholarly activity, and pedagogy inspired by the lived experience. The model and its application in practice relies on the inter-connectedness of these three elements:
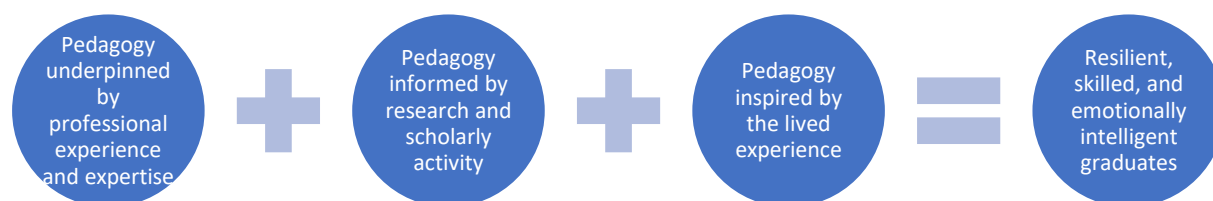

Diagram 1: Creating resilient, skilled and emotionally intelligent graduates pedagogical model.

The remaining sections of the paper look at each of the elements of the model and provide an example of how this has been applied in a teaching session which focused on the causes and consequences of food poverty and was observed for NTU's VCAET. The paper concludes with a consideration of the versatility of the model and possible future development.

Pedagogy underpinned by professional experience and expertise

The first element of the pedagogical model described in this paper centres on the importance of the professional experience of the teacher and their expertise and how these aspects enhance learning and the student experience. It recognises that to equip students with the skills needed in contemporary society, educators must convey a sense of authority coupled with integrity; this is linked to professional values and ethical behaviour (Wright, 2015). This requires reflecting on the professional journey, the experiences and people that have shaped you, the ethical dilemmas that you have faced, the achievements which you are proud of, the situations where you have fallen short, and the areas where there is a need for further development and improvement.

The educator-student dynamic is galvanised when teaching is underpinned with these critical professional reflections. It can allow students to see a more human, sometimes fallible, side to a lecturer. It demonstrates that developing a career identity is an ongoing process and fosters stimulating discussion points. Professional knowledge and pedagogy are inextricably linked, Loughran (2019, p532) effectively summarises this process for teachers, but it applies equally in Higher Education: 'It is the pedagogical reasoning underpinning their practice that shows the richness of what they know, how they have come to know it, and why it works in practice in *their* context.' Similarly, Banks et al (2005) emphasise the importance of subject knowledge within the curriculum, rating this as highly as the processes of teaching; Lunenberg and Korthagen (2009) argue that curriculum development should embrace experience, theory, and practical wisdom.

Pedagogy which draws on professional practice is a crucial element in helping students to critically consider the instability created by contemporary crisis, relate this to their own experiences and to develop the skills needed in the workplace. When preparing a teaching session, a useful starting point can be to think about how one's own professional experience can be incorporated into the teaching, and the ways in which this will interest and challenge students. Reflecting on my own professional experience (working in the voluntary sector and local government) has opened up a wide range of important conversations with students. Issues which are commonly discussed include managing conflict, coping under pressure, conflicts of interest, policy and campaigning work, line management, confidentiality, partnership work, communication skills, and equality and diversity. Some of the key teaching methods employed to explore these issues are role plays, problem-based learning case studies, structured debate, Q and As, expert panels, and mock interviews. The use of guest lecturers 'from the field' can enhance this type of learning and complement modules which prepare or support student for work-based placements. The use of social media, podcasts and expert blogs can help to make links between theoretical concepts and professional competences. A wide range of assessments can be employed to assess learning of this nature including presentation, group work, and portfolios.

I used my professional expertise in relation to food poverty for the submission to the VCAET. Food poverty emerged as an increasing problem during my final years working in local government. When discussing the causes and consequences of food poverty, it helped to be able to share my experience of working directly with service users as well as responding on a policy and operational basis. Important themes around stigma, and language were discussed, alongside my experiences of groups in society who are susceptible to food poverty. I could share my experience of the complications and dilemmas in establishing referral mechanisms for food banks, and ethical concerns around their long-term use and sustainability. Anonymised case-studies were a particular useful way of sharing the lived experience of food insecurity and linking more theoretical concepts to practical realities. It was a useful way of discussing the importance of accurate case-recording and statistical monitoring. Interesting debate was initiated through sharing my experience of meetings with local councillors and evidence which I have submitted to parliamentary enquires. For many students this gave a first insight into campaigning work, the political dynamics which underpin this, and the need to make clear and compelling arguments.

Pedagogy informed by research and scholarly activity

My research and scholarly activity seeks to make sense of the uncertain world in which we live and how policy can alleviate and/or exacerbate crisis. There is a risk that students are overwhelmed by this or view it as an abstract and alienated notion. The second part of the model presented here, pedagogy informed by research and scholarly activity, has two main aims. First, to join the dots between complex ideas and the real-world, and second to create enquiring and critical minds. As both students and future professionals it is vital to understand not all knowledge is already known; the workplace demands that you engage in evaluation, both of your own practice and the environment which you work in.

Brew (2006, p31) urges academics to see themselves as 'knowledge builders' and recognise that the distinction between teaching and research is false and limiting. Healey (2005, p.183) suggests that there can be challenges around the conceptualisation of 'research' in a teaching environment. He argues that research is most meaningful when students are actively involved, describing this as 'inquiry-

based learning'. This is the approach that my colleagues and I employ on the NTU Health and Social Care degree and it reflects the research-informed principles set out by Advance HE (2017):

- Research-led: students are taught discipline specific research findings
- Research-oriented: students are taught research methodologies
- Research-tutored: student learn through discussion and debate
- Research-based learning: students learn through active research

Naturally, teaching and learning about research will often use a mixed methods approach, combining elements of the above principles in a series of activities. Examples from the Health and Social Care team include the recruitment of undergraduate students as teaching interns who research and deliver teaching on agreed topics, and the co-production of research with students exploring transitions between levels of undergraduate study.

In this model being 'research active' has a specific meaning which clearly links to the professional expertise and experience described in the previous section. It can be described as research which is grounded in professional experience with the aim of informing practice. This type of research is often co-produced with practitioners giving it professional accountability and validation. It relies on the analytical skills of academics aligned with the frontline-knowledge of practitioners to produce recommendations to influence policy. Examples of research I have generated in this way include the development of a toolkit for professionals who advocate for mental health service users, policy recommendations to improve the administration of Personal Indepdence Payment, and policy briefs on Brexit, Universal Credit, and the Homes for Ukraine scheme. A range of research outputs are produced including publication in professional/trade publications and presentation at practitioner events, as well as the more traditional academic conferences and journal publications. Academic rigour and standards are upheld, but research outputs must be accessible and of value to professionals in the field.

The observed session for the VCAET drew on research informed teaching as set out here. Undergraduate students were asked to reflect on how knowledge around food poverty is generated, who the authors of key research are, and what alternative views might be considered. An exercise was completed reflecting on images of food poverty in the media and the language commonly used. This was used to consider how our understanding of an issue is developed and the ways in which language affects how we work with service users (linked to pedagogy influenced by professional experience) and how this can be internalised (linked to pedagogy influenced by the lived experience).

Research that I conducted with a member of parliament was used as a case-study to explore differing political interpretations of food poverty (Machin, 2016). The session aimed to demystify key elements of the research process. An exercise was completed where students generated their own research data in relation to food consumption and cost. The group was asked to produce a meme which could be used to raise awareness of food poverty, thus asking students to reflect on how knowledge and images can be used to persuade others. The principles of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) were important in the development of this session as part of the overall module. For the summative assessment students could choose to write a research-informed essay on food poverty considering different viewpoints which had been debated in class and developed through independent study.

Pedagogy inspired by the lived experience

The third element of this model emphasises the importance of the lived experience. Pedagogy inspired by the lived experience is important on a number of levels. We can only understand the impact of the turbulent times that we are living in when we recognise the experience of those who are socially excluded. Social science is concerned with individuals and relationships in society, and yet there is a risk that both teaching and research can overlook, or certainly not focus sharply enough, on human experience. For students on campus the lived experience often provides the link between theory and practice; issues such as discrimination, safeguarding, or mental health only have true meaning if they are explored with reference to real lives. This takes on an extra level of importance as students bring their own lived experience to the learning environment; it adds a richness to the pedagogy but also

demands sensitivity and careful planning. Nottingham Trent University recognises interpersonal learning and reflective practice as two important components in developing graduate skills; this can only be achieved by respecting the lived experience. Finally, the lived experience is critical in developing resilient and compassionate professionals. Valuing the lived experience in a professional context enhances each interaction with a service user, influences the culture within organisations, and can positively influence the way in which services are developed and delivered.

The lived experience element of this model has been influenced by the values of social work and social policy that emerged in the latter stages of the twentieth century. The International Federation of Social Workers state that the overarching principles of the profession are 'respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, doing no harm, respect for diversity and upholding human rights and social justice.' The service user movement has called on the social policy community to reject an adherence to scientific objectivity and a focus on individual deficit. Instead, we should see service users as 'as the best experts in their own lives, identities and experience' (Beresford, 2016, p 216).

This element of the model sees students as local and global citizens and values their lived experience as an integral part of understanding change and crisis in the world. It necessitates an understanding of our position in society and students must be given the space to reflect on their values. This can be a powerful process and allow students to understand how they, and others, are affected by emerging events. Case-studies and role play are particularly effective methods to explore these issues. For example, skills, knowledge, and resilience are developed by considering how we can effectively work with a Ukrainian refugee, or an older person with dementia, or someone who is homeless.

The submission for the VCAET relied on a clear appreciation of the lived experience. The testimonies of local constituents were central to the food poverty research that I conducted with an MP; this research was explored in detail with students and formed the basis of a structured debate. The session aimed to be a catalyst for change for students encouraging reflection on food poverty campaigning, and volunteering. An exercise exploring how much students spend on food and the impact of the cost-of-living emergency personalised the broader themes which were being discussed.

Applicability and next steps

This paper has set out a pedagogical model which draws on professional experience and expertise, research-informed teaching, and the lived experience as a way of working with students during times of crisis with the aim of equipping them to be resilient, critical, and emotionally intelligent graduates.

Although the model has been conceptualised with three distinct elements, in practice there is considerable crossover between the individual components, which are intended to be complementary. The model rests on teaching being informed by practice and research and empowers students to become skilled and compassionate practitioners. The aspiration is that the model creates 'a ripple in the pond'. It starts with educators utilising their professional expertise and networks to act as a catalyst for change. This creates a safe but challenging environment for students to reflect on their own position in society and the lived experience of service users. The endpoint is that students graduate into the workplace and insert a positive influence on professional practice; their interactions with citizens are enhanced and even in times of austerity and crisis they can affect a culture change in organisations where professionals are sensitive, inquisitive, and solution focused.

Although this model has been developed through professional and academic experience in social welfare and social work it can be applied in a wide variety of learning environments. The overarching aim of the model is to try and make sense of contemporary events and to equip our students to face the challenges that they present. These are challenges faced by educators in all disciplines and I look forward to refining the ideas presented here through feedback from colleagues and students.

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The practicum in the initial teacher education: a cornerstone in the improvement of today's education

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Type of working paper: practice-inspired working paper

Abstract

This practice-inspired working paper aims to present the preservice teachers' practicum conducted during their Initial Teacher Education programs of Early Childhood and Primary Education as a tool to address educational equity. The fourth goal of the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (2017) highlights the educators' role in working with social justice and diverse populations to create more fair and sustainable education systems. Thus, the authors relate this purpose with the practicum as an appropriate setting to determine what equity is for the first time. In this regard, we present the most up to date and relevant educational research with our professional experiences in the field. National and European projects are described as examples of working on these issues. Different studies are also included to analyse and strengthen the learning process to teach in intervention-needed areas. Our paper also points out the main barriers that preservice teachers find when working in social justice during field experiences. It is stressed that the practicum can be improved through reflecting together, (i.e., preservice teachers and mentors) since well-built relationships between the agents involved in the experience helps to develop a professional consciousness. Finally, conclusions and possible pathways are presented to guide 21st-century stakeholders in this endeavour.

Keywords: practicum; initial teacher education; sustainable development goals; social justice; preservice teachers.

This practice-inspired working paper focuses on preservice teachers' practicum as a tool to address some relevant issues in the educational field, thus, in society. The authors of this text are a preservice teacher and a field instructor and university supervisor. We take our experiences of shared practicums in the last five years as a reflection contrasted with up-to-date research on a considerable challenge: working with diversity and social justice. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2018, 2019), the European Commission (2020), and the UNESCO organization (2017)

support the Sustainable Development Goals towards 2030, where education occupies a relevant position involving life-long learning from an equitable and inclusive perspective. It is not considered a "new" challenge (Cochran-Smith 2010; Lee 2011; Mills 2009), but more renewed visions could guide how educators act. Society demands diverse answers to multiple educational challenges that schools need to address. Hence, how teachers help children and young people to be competent to respond to those challenges in their daily lives is a concern (Cochran-Smith 2021; Martínez-Valdivia, Pegalajar-Palomino and Burgos-García 2020). Their "equipment" starts from the practicum during the Initial Teacher Education (ITE), where preservice teachers (PSTs) have the opportunity to connect their previous training and ideas with the reality that schools live.

The Sustainable Development Goals prioritise more profound work with social justice. This international call serves as a precedent for ITE since teachers are involved in working with vulnerable human groups (Cochran-Smith and Keefe, 2022; Frederick, Cave and Perencevich 2010; Robinson, 2016). The practicum, also known as teaching practice, internship, or student teaching, seems to give meaning to a professional consciousness required to work with diverse population (i.e..different cultures, special education needs, various family structures, diverse language speakers, etc.). (Alzouebi 2020; Colás-Bravo, Magnoler and Conde-Jiménez 2015; Garcia-Lázaro, Conde-Jiménez and Colás-Bravo 2020). When we talk about professional consciousness, different features describe being conscious in the teaching profession; specifically, a combination of factors? is highlighted: deep reflection, an intention to recognise the context's needs, and a solid motivation to develop the identity as educators (Carson and Fisher 2006; Keppens et al. 2019; Leeferink et al. 2018). In this line, more conscious training of PSTs will result in their identification of and work with equity during their first school experiences. Transforming ITE in a conscious training period is translated into taking care of future education systems since a meaningful and solid teacher training means more sustainable schools in the long term.

In the school contexts of the PSTs' practicum, diversity exists in religious, nationality, language and cultural senses. Teaching and supporting these children present unknown tasks for a white teacher candidate who comes from a completely different educational setting. The point when working with social justice during the practicum is to consider traditionally non-present students and meet all children' needs. As Calabrese-Barton and Tan (2020) state, working in equity is only feasible when educators show their intention to develop the teaching process following a rightful presence framework, which means to be careful, respectful and open to diversity into the classroom. Research regarding teaching practice is positioned in favour of a reflective perspective, insisting on the importance of understanding and strengthening the relationship between the agents involved, such as PSTs, cooperating teachers or mentors, and university supervisors or field instructors (Russell 2018; Browning and Korthagen 2021; Korthagen and Vasalos 2005). If we talk about possible ways to help PSTs reflect with their field instructors or university supervisors about their practicum's context, many tools and resources have been demonstrated to be helpful (Hennissen et al. 2011; Thiel et al. 2020; Soslau and Alexander 2021). The use and creation of a diary or reflective journal seem to bring opportunities to reflect from an analytical perspective. The teacher candidate author recognises the difficulty in writing deeply in the daily rush of teaching in early childhood or primary education. Writing about ethical and considerate practices in diverse contexts can be challenging (Francis 1995; Hojeij, Meda and Kaviani 2021). Similarly, the creation and explanation of metaphors related to PSTs' identity, social relationships at the school, future role as educators, etc., helps them to think abstractly (García-Lázaro and Roa-Trejo 2021). Additionally, using social mind maps also helps student teachers identify who and what affects their professional consciousness during the practicum experience (Fox, Wilson and Deaney 2011). Dialogues and conversations about teaching are also highly valued by preservice teachers and field instructors to keep the monitoring process from a combined training perspective (Land 2018; Knezic et al. 2019). In any case, feeling and keeping connected to the practicum will always be accurate in developing a professional consciousness.

The authors have been involved in practicum together. The field instructor presented a more significant trajectory during her pre-doctoral training, and now she continues working with teacher candidates as an assistant professor. This role allows her to prepare and evaluate preservice teachers at the university, for instance, in methods courses or initial seminars and visiting the schools. This visit aims to support PSTs' teaching, encourage them to observe and reflect, and know their cooperating teachers in the classroom. The combination of both roles, supervisor and instructor, covers teaching didactics to teach to all students through a considerate vision. It also involves preparing teacher candidates before arriving at the schools, for instance, to manage the classroom and plan the lessons. But, above all, from the role of field instructor, we highlight the importance of helping PSTs to become critical observers and

decision-makers during this training period. The purpose of reflecting on the education system where the PSTs are involved is to make them more autonomous in this educational overview, for instance, when they need to decide where to work, the kind of school vision they feel more comfortable with, and the type of values they teach to the children. Reflecting on their practice is beneficial for both parties: PSTs put their thoughts into words and make sense of their ideas related to social justice, and field instructors learn both how to guide PSTs through their discourse and how distant their advice is from PSTs' experiences with diverse students. However, focusing the reflection only on competencies and skills keeps the PSTs on the surface of the reflection's potentialities. In this way, Kortaghen and Nuijten (2022) insist on going beyond the action during the reflection process, trying to reach the approximation to the personal values and educational mission of future educators.

From the preservice teacher author's perspective, this supervision and support involve analysing the classroom performance, questioning the self as part of a complex system, and unraveling previously rooted ideas about educational equity in the teaching-learning process. In addition, considering social justice through the teaching in the practicum involves reflecting while working and interacting with other external factors. For example, she states that the availability of resources in the schools condition the quality of the teaching. She also perceives that a high workload of cooperating teachers can damage the after-teaching reflection process because they tend to be more focused on paperwork and set their conversations apart. Some contributions (Bell, Soslau and Wilson 2022; García-Lázaro, Conde-Jiménez and Colás-Bravo 2022a) investigated the influence of certain elementss on the reflection during the teaching practice: technologies in classroom settings, the communication between educators and caregivers, or the existence of stereotypes associated to educational issues. UNESCO (2018) also points out to consider social justice as a political issue; thus, an external and essential influential factor. Hence the impact of policy guidelines on teaching-learning needs to be considered (Comstock, Edgerton and Desimone 2022; Mayer 2021).

A relevant research contribution that seeks to consider early field experiences as a key to developing a professional consciousness is the research project "Preservice teachers' training trajectories: considerations from the practicum setting". This longitudinal multiple-case study has been developed since 2019 with two cohorts of PSTs involved in practicum experiences at the Universidad Loyola Andalucía. Both authors of this paper participate actively while the placements in the schools occur. The field instructor follows a qualitative and critical research paradigm to observe the PSTs and share reflections and learning opportunities through the analysis of writings and recordings of their teaching. She also accompanies them in their frustrations and achievements in several dialogues and keeps constant communication with cooperating teachers. This formative process makes them understand how fair practices in the classroom are being implemented in the practicum field. To this end, PSTs must become aware of the implications when working with diverse learners or diverse contexts, which involve ongoing relationships between pedagogical theories and the educational context (Mills and Ballantyne 2016). Several tensions appear when the formative background collides with unfamiliar situations and feelings, and the teacher candidates feel they do not have enough resources to overcome them. Thus, working with teacher candidates brings us to think about the importance of recognizing the field instructor's supervision, understanding, reflection, and guidance as tools for developing a professional consciousness in these terms (Kitchen 2020).
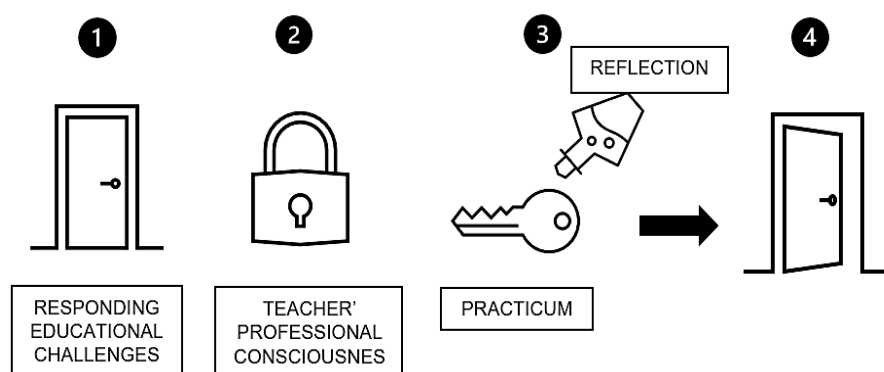

Figure 1. The visual process of the theoretical and practical proposal. Source: authors' creation. Please, note that the figure follows UDL recommendations to support any written information visually: Rogers-shaw, Carr-Chellman and Choi 2018.

Authors such as Zeichner (2016) and Clarke (1995) encourage educators to accompany PSTs from the reflective perspective to change the educational approach to develop a reflection *in* action (Schön, 1983). Investigating teaching practices in schools where diversity is presented in multiple ways offers many pedagogical possibilities to make PSTs reflect on equity in education (Dewey, 1933). A Spanish project related to the Universal Design for Learning ("Universal Design for Learning: contributions to curricular practices and e inclusive and digital cultures of schools", reference: PID2020-112530RB-I00) studies the quality of teaching practices when working with diversity for all and from all individuals. It explores needs and interests related to inclusive approaches in the teaching routine of novice and beginning teachers. From our perspective as participants in this initiative, the project provides tools and guidance in considering a professional consciousness by working with educational equity.

Regarding this proposal and other research programs (e.g., unicef.org), we value live practicum experiences at the front line as relevant and necessary to work with difficulties and misconceptions associated with children's learning in challenging and low socio-economic areas. The PST author had this opportunity for a year. The experience showed her how complex and meaningful working in this type of setting was. Likewise, one of the most decisive events to value the practicum was the arrival of COVID-19. It forced universities to suspend the internship, making access and contact with the schools impossible. From this situation, new paths were opened regarding the professional consciousness of PSTs through socially diverse contexts: online and virtual scenarios proposed a new way to live the teaching practices (Kim 2020; Sasaki et al. 2020). These tools are valuable resources to practice teaching and allow PSTs to manage the class in hypothetical situations (Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison 2020; Fischetti et al. 2021).

This process makes PSTs reflect profoundly and consciously in an exchange of ideas and fears, putting their didactical proposals into practice, and meeting the children's needs and how to respond to them. It is usually observed during the supervision of PSTs that they assume their planning will be successful because it is creative, dynamic, and personalised. They are also usually wrong: diverse events and normal setbacks happen to redirect the teaching process. The teacher candidate author recognises that the inability to cope with the daily routine is due to a lack of time. In addition, she feels she lacks abilities related to classroom management and catching children's attention, which creates a lack of confidence. But, above all, she feels they are not prepared to meet and handle the specific needs of all students. Different studies (Darling-Hammond and Hyler 2020) point out feeling fear or emotional lockdowns as beneficial opportunities to develop a professional consciousness as future teachers in service. These practical situations push teacher candidates to reflect on their abilities and resources to grow as educator for the future uncertainty and unknown problems.

Reflecting and making deeper connections in teaching is a task that needs guidance. Thus, the role of mentors (i.e., cooperating teachers, university supervisors, peers) throughout this process is essential to reflect on equity and educational fair practices. Becoming conscious educators depends on the dedication to think, act, and revise the teaching-learning process with other expert agents. From our point of view, this expertise lies in the teaching experience, and difficulties or challenges found "on the road". The experiences shared with cooperating teachers and university supervisors during the practicum could modulate the teacher candidates' strategies and performance in the subsequent years and the professional well-being experienced in a school (García-Lázaro, Conde-Jiménez and Colás-Bravo 2022b). A group of European universities and educational organizations participate in a funded European project ("Teaching to Be: Supporting Teachers' Professional Growth and Well-being in the Field of Social and Emotional Learning", reference: 626155- EPP-1-2020-2-LTEPPKA3-PIPOLICY). It is considered a significant example in the study of teachers' well-being, an issue addressed for years. As members of this project, we investigate the importance of connecting the quality of the ITE with the future professional careers of educators.

Contributing to healthy initial experiences at the school includes considering the role of cooperating teachers and field instructors (Dreer 2020; Evelein, Korthagen and Brekelmans 2018). Soslau and Alexander (2020) claim the generation of a triad between teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and university instructors to develop that professional consciousness to become quality educators. This triad is going to be the close point of this paper to highlight some considerations in the process of creating a three-parties collaboration. This relationship enables the investigation of the construction of PSTs' professional identity towards working with vulnerable population, which will guide their actions and thoughts in the future as teachers in service (Deng et al. 2018; Izadinia 2015; Pérez-Gracia et al. 2021). If this professional identity is aligned with social justice and inclusion principles, the practicum

experience will be more successful in reflecting and understanding the learning process (Clark et al. 2015).

However, creating that triad between PSTs, cooperating teachers and university supervisor is a tough purpose. The intention seems to be more evident and vivid from the University (Mena, Hennissen and Loughran., 2017; Mok and Staub, 2021), and difficult to settle in the long term for cooperating teachers in the schools (Clark, Trigss and Nielsen, 2014; Hoffman et al., 2015; Lynn and Nguyen, 2020). In the context of this reflection-paper, cooperating teachers are in service teachers who do not receive any special reward for mentoring PSTs. Together with their workload, they also find the task of advising and modelling for PSTs. From the undergraduate author's perspective, it means for the cooperating teacher a huge challenge because it consists of working together in the daily rush covering the function of teaching how to teach. Being a professional reference and working "on equal footing" (forgetting the power relationships, especially in the last student teaching experience) is already something positive for the ITE.

The undergraduate PSTs author has perceived during the last five years that cooperating teachers assume that teacher candidates always help, no matter the way they do it because handle so many children in the classroom is a mind-consuming process every day. Grateful for receiving two more hands, they show gratitude and attention to PSTs; however, both authors agree that it is not enough when PSTs look for growing and reflecting as professionals. There is also a perception related to cooperating teachers' satisfaction when they see that PSTs manage well the class and teach the content well. Thus, as different studies point out (Patrick, 2013), talking about reflection, professional identity to develop a professional consciousness during the practicum seems to be a risky and hard undertaking. Specifically, if ideals, values and educational perspectives about equity vary between cooperating teachers and PSTs, the task becomes even more difficult (Yoon and Larkin, 2018).

A proposal that the authors' affiliation is considering is to think about any motivational incentive to offer some official recognition for professional development opportunities to cooperating teachers. This idea opens the door to also think about a professional consciousness in cooperating teachers to reflect together and understand the educational change as a common responsibility. The authors think that supporting and making cooperating teachers aware of their role in the ITE will stimulate schools to be more connected to what we state in this paper. At the same time, it will be required to analyse and assume the starting point of cooperating teachers' training to frame their perspectives ad support in case they need it. To do so, another step forwards from authors' affiliation is to keep the same cooperating teachers in the schools for 5 years, if possible, to create teams of cooperating teachers in the school who can train future relays.

We would like to finish this proposal by noting the importance of investigating and continuing to analyse our professional consciousness to potentiate the PST's relationship with equity. As literature and international organizations claim, it is a priority work line to move forward in education. Hence, the only way to explore critically and feasibly this educational issue involves working together: PSTs, mentors, and policymakers, to create a tight network as a model for the educational community.

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The Russian war in Ukraine:
the role of the education sector

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Type of working paper: review

Abstract

This piece is a summary and analysis of the discussion that took place during the recent event hosted by the British Education Research Association dedicated to Ukraine 'The Voice of Ukrainian Educational Research Association across Borders or is there Educational Solidarity during the Russian-Ukrainian war?'. The atrocities that have been inflicted on Ukraine prompt us to turn to education as an important area through which positive change can be instigated. The following three messages were the focal points of the discussion at the event: (1) education and the state of social justice globally are interconnected; (2) it is unavoidable for the education sector not to react to wider societal injustices such as the war against Ukraine; (3) the role of academic research in generating knowledge about the war and related injustices.

Key words: education, war, Ukraine.

The below reflection offers a summary and analysis of the discussions that took place in the framework of the recent event of the British Education Research Association (BERA) entitled 'The Voice of Ukrainian Education Research Association across Borders or is there Educational Solidarity during the Russian war in Ukraine?' (BERA, 2022a). The event was organised for BERA members as well as the members of the Ukrainian Education Research Association (UERA). It took place online on the 11th of November 2022 and included a couple of dozen academics.

In the effort to provide a brief introduction for the readers to BERA and UERA, it is worth mentioning that these are sister organisations of a national level in the UK and Ukraine, respectively. They are both full members of the European Education Research Organisation, and both organisations have become hubs for promoting quality in academia in the area of education nationally and internationally (BERA, 2022b; UERA, 2022).

The atrocities that have been inflicted on Ukraine prompt us to turn to education as an important area through which positive change can be instigated. The following three messages were the focal points of discussion during the event mentioned above. These messages were 'distilled' by the authors of this working paper based on the presentations and discussion that took place during the event mentioned above, particularly summarised in the concluding remarks made by the discussants at the end of the event.

Message 1: education and the state of social justice globally are interconnected

This message was discussed and developed in the context of the injustices that have been inflicted on Ukraine in Russia's war in Ukraine. On the 24th of February 2022, Russian government and military, in cooperation with their partners in Belarus, launched a full-scale military assault on Ukraine's infrastructure, sovereignty, as well as civilians' lives, freedoms and identity. This message is a reminder of Freire's (1970) powerful theorisation of the two scenarios of the development of any society and the role education plays in this. In the first scenario, education is used to sustain an oppressive societal structure in which citizens are raised as passive and docile recipients of the information that is unquestionably imposed on them. The overall aim of education in such an unjust society is to sustain the power of the oppressors through acceptance and reproduction of inequalities in education and other aspects of life. On the contrary, in the second scenario, education serves as a liberating tool for the critical thinkers that are raised for seeking and implementing ways to transform the society for the better and to promote social justice. In both scenarios, there is a mutual shaping relationship between the education system and what happens in the wider society.

While Freire (1970) focuses predominantly on formal education, any type of education, including non-formal and informal (Bates and Lewis, 2009), is relevant in this discussion. What we learn defines how we position ourselves in relation to others and to what extent we understand and task ourselves and others with promoting equality.

Russia's war in Ukraine has been a turning point in perpetuating injustices on all levels: from the international geopolitics to the devastating impact on the lives of particular individuals who lost their homes, close ones or their own lives. Evidently, social justice in Ukraine has been compromised. Education remains a key tool at our disposal to promote any change through dissemination of the knowledge about what has been happening, and thus, equipping the generation of global citizens with the knowledge and skills to transform the world for the better, rather than display a silent indifference to what may not directly concern them.

Message 2: it is unavoidable for the education sector not to react to wider societal injustices such as the war against Ukraine

While we do not endeavour to detail here the complexity of the notion of the 'education sector' in relation to the international context, it is unavoidable to mention that formal education systems and other learning structures (e.g., the media) in each country or a wider geo-political region such (e.g., the EU) have already probably responded to the war. Examples of active responses include suspending the memberships of Russia and Belarus in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA, 2022), excluding Russian and Belarussian higher education institutions form international university rankings (Quacquarelli Symonds, 2022). Responses, however, may not always be as forward in condemning the invasion. In fact, there even are responses that celebrate it, such as in the statement made by the Russian Rectors' Union in early March 2022 (Russian Rectors' Union, 2022).

While propaganda, and perhaps acting under duress, may explain the reasoning behind the response from the Russian Rectors' Union, the question we raised in the BERA event that inspired this piece, was whether it is possible for the education sector to refrain from reacting to the invasion all together. As much as some would want to impose a boundary between politics and education, education was theorised as a political field a long time ago (Marshall and Scribner, 1991). It can never be politically neutral. Any neutrality that the education sector may want to adopt in relation to wider political events is a particular political position in itself.

The comfort of many who are not being affected by the invasion, and a pursuit of particular achievements that could be reinforced by a 'neutral' position to this war, would be a sad outcome of the decades of fighting for social justice in different areas of life against unequal power-relations between the oppressors and the oppressed. We, as a global community, have made a leap in tackling some forms of injustice in some parts of the world, such as racism, sexism and xenophobia. However, despite decades of fighting for justice, these are only the first steps of many more that have to be taken, with another form of injustice to overcome added to the list – the Russian war against the Ukrainian identity. If the representatives of the education sector around the world do not use education as a tool to promote social justice, the only other thing they will do is reinforce existing oppression, in Freire's (1970) terms.

Message 3: the role of academic research in generating knowledge about the war and related injustices

There seem to be two types of knowledge: truth generated by high-quality ethical research and propaganda made up from twisted facts, either purposefully or due to ignorance or both (e.g., Boyd-Barrett, 2019; Moravčíková, 2020). The Russian war in Ukraine is not only a military offence, it is also a clash of very different knowledge production systems which are produced and sustained by very different means.

The Russian war in Ukraine has showcased one more time to many around the world that the knowledge people form, based on the information sources that they prioritise, shapes minds, lives and history. The line between truth and propaganda, sadly, becomes blurred for those who do not have the knowledge and skills of distinguishing between credible and non-credible information sources. Rising populism, disinformation and propaganda in our 'post-truth' world (Ylä-Anttila, 2018: 356) becomes a fertile ground for invasions, killings, and different types of persecution and discrimination, such as in the Russian aggression and crimes against Ukraine. The 'post-truth' demagoguery is, arguably, a culprit of our technological advancement, as copious sources of information bombard us with what we are left to interpret for ourselves as believable or not. High-quality ethical research in the area of social sciences and its dissemination is the only tool that is left at the disposal of researchers to help us navigate our way and help others in this dynamic world. The qualities and expertise, that the current generation of researchers predominantly in academia is going to develop, are going to determine the state of the art of research in the future and what kind of next generations of researchers they are raising.

We, academic researchers, have a duty to the current and next generations to come, to ensure that high-quality and ethical research about the war has a chance to survive in our global society, to counter propaganda and remain our saviour in this 'post-truth world'. Research defines the knowledge the humanity holds, and hence, its decision-making. It defines the future.

It is essential to continue reflecting on these three messages, carrying on with learning events such as the one that served a platform for this valuable discussion, as well as other opportunities.

Potential next steps for engaging with UERA and BERA:

1. We would like to establish partnerships to support a body of funded work that can be used to leverage the voices of Ukrainian academics with other international partners and work to fortify academic integrity in research that can withstand and challenge political propaganda.

2. We would also like to develop and host more collaborative learning events (e.g., seminars, workshops) with joint participation of Ukrainian and other academics and other relevant stakeholders.
3. We also see a great value in developing collaborative online learning opportunities for students in Ukraine and other countries which would also help raise awareness of the situation in which Ukrainian students work and all the international support wholeheartedly and generously developed for the members of the Ukrainian higher education community in the context of war abroad.

Acknowledgement

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Children Missing from Education in Nottingham

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Type of working paper: research paper

Abstract

A 2020 report from the Local Government Association found that there was a scarcity of reliable and comprehensive data regarding the numbers of children missing from formal full-time education. There is also a growing concern that the number of children missing education (CME) in Nottingham is increasing – a phenomenon exacerbated by the pandemic. However, without a clear understanding of the CME numbers in England, it is very difficult to be precise about the scale or nature of intervention that might be needed either locally or nationally to address the issue. This paper addresses that information deficit for the city of Nottingham and investigates the experience of the CME Team in the City Council using the databases available for the period 2016-2021. The study first looks at the geographical and demographical pattern of CME cases in Nottingham. It also analyses the characteristics of CME cases and identifies the main patterns and 'triggers' that have resulted in referrals of CME. The determinants of whether a CME case is resolved, and how long it takes if it has been resolved are also examined. Finally, some recommendations are provided to enhance the service and suggestions for future research.

Key words: Children Missing Education (CME), local authorities (LAs), geographical pattern, demographical pattern, regression

Introduction

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the local authority (LA) to identify children of compulsory school age in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education other than at a school. Previous (Pre-COVID) studies (May-Chahal and Broadhurst 2006; Botham 2011; LGA 2020) have shown that children missing education (CME) are difficult to

identify since they are not from homogenous backgrounds and are often vulnerable with complex social, behavioural, educational, medical, or mental health needs. Ofsted (2013) previously reported that many LAs had little understanding of how much education vulnerable children with complex needs actually received. Moreover, many failed to arrange suitable education, monitor the effectiveness of their education, collect relevant information, and analyse this to gain knowledge and understanding of this group of children in pursuance of the direct, institutional and statutory duty of care. Consequently, there are potentially serious implications for the safeguarding of these children and a danger of them becoming 'invisible' or slipping under the LAs' radar (Children's Commissioner 2019).

The lack of information on CME was recently highlighted in a report on the national picture by the Local Government Association (LGA) which found that "there is a distinct paucity of any comprehensive, reliable data outlining the numbers of children who are missing extended periods of formal, full-time education" (LGA 2019, p. 1). Without a clear sense of how many children in England might be missing out on their entitlement to a formal full-time education, it is very difficult to be precise about the scale or nature of intervention that might be needed either locally or nationally to address the issue.

There is also a growing concern that the number of children missing education in Nottingham is increasing and has been exacerbated by the pandemic. This reflects similar concerns from the LGA findings (2020) which reported an increasing number of children missing formal, full-time education nationally. This situation is highly problematic for LAs. Although, Nottingham City Council (NCC) has the responsibility to ensure school age children receive suitable education, the capacity to carry out its duty at a detailed and lengthy individual case level is extremely challenging.

In collaboration with the CME Team at NCC, this paper examines the situation regarding "children missing education" in the city between 2016 and 2021. It starts by addressing the information deficit for the CME team and the city. In doing so, it also highlights several areas where future research or inquiry might assist the CME team in further understanding the situation in the city.

This study investigates the local experience of the CME Team in the City Council. It examines the current and past record of CME in the city for the purposes of:

•   Understanding the changing characteristics and demographics of the CME group.

•   Identifying the main patterns and 'triggers' that have resulted in referrals of CME from schools and elsewhere to the service.

•   Identifying the determinants of whether a CME case is resolved, and how long it took if it was resolved.

Research design and methods

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Nottingham Trent University research ethics committee in accordance with the Public Administration code of ethics. Building on a short literature review of the guidance, policies, and practice relating to CME, and adopting a quantitative research approach which utilizes existing data extracted from the databases compiled and used by the CME team in NCC, this study examines and analyses:

•   The demographics of the CME group including its distribution across the city, level of deprivation, gender, national curriculum year group, and ethnicity.

•   Trends and changes within the demographic over a 6-year period.

•   Trends within the CME workload (number of cases, days taken to resolve cases, patterns, and trigger points to referral from schools' overtime).

•   The relationships between whether a CME case is unsolved and how long it took if it was solved against factors such as gender, type of education, ethnicity, location and deprivation.

Additional data relating to the populations in different age groups, the index of multiple deprivation data for the city and pupils' ethnicity data from the school census at LA level were also applied to facilitate

meaningful comparisons. This data was supplemented by qualitive information from five meetings with the CME team and examination of notes from previous team meetings.

Regarding statistical methods, the data were analysed with the use of MS Excel, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and Stata. We used a combination of descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression to analyse the data.

With the assistance of the Geographical Information System at the Council, we were able to identify the locations of the CME within the NCC boundary and mapped these against the level of deprivation and the authority estates letting areas.

Results

We begin by looking at the geographical and demographical pattern of CME cases in Nottingham. We found a remarkably stable in-year pattern of cases notified to the team, particularly a sharp increase each year in the month of September (during the 'transition' period) which represents approximately 20% on average of the cases within the year but a smoother in-year pattern for their resolution. The CME team works to resolve the cases continuously throughout the year, regardless of whether there has been an influx of cases or a dip in referrals in a particular month.

Geographically, there are three 'tiers' of CME cases with two areas (NG7 and NG8) each accounting for more than 20% of cases, four postcodes (NG2, NG3, NG5, and NG6) each accounting for more than 10%, and the remaining postcodes all having less than 3%. We briefly explored whether this might be related to housing tenure as NG7 and NG8 contain a high percentage of rentable properties as indicated by the councils' 'Estates Lettings Areas' records, and recent changing patterns of migration or historical and more stable patterns of multiple deprivation in the city.

Figure 1: CME Cases by IMD National Decile
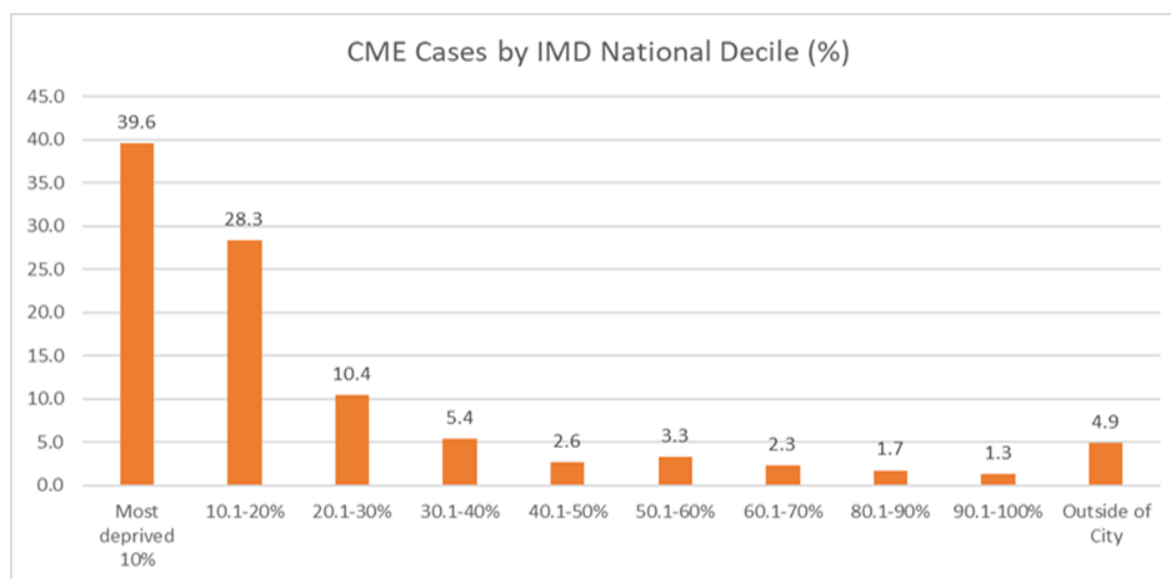
While a high percentage of the CME cases living in the most deprived areas (Figure 1) was not a surprising finding, it reinforces the fact that children living in the most deprived households are the ones who most need to be in education but are also the most likely to have children missing from education.

We also analysed the characteristics of CME Cases in Nottingham city. We found a stable pattern over time, with little difference in their distribution by gender. By relating cases to the national curriculum year, we found that the distribution of CME cases follows a bell curve, with the majority of cases occurring in the years from Year 5 to Year 8 (10.8% - 10.6%), and relatively few cases in the reception year (0.7%) and Year 12 (6%) as the former relates to the transition period from primary to secondary school in the city at this age.

When examining the distribution of the CME cases among different ethnicity groups, our study, found that 40% of the CME cases fell into the category of *Information not yet obtained* and when compared to the results of the School Census in 2021, the gap was substantial. To understand the reasons for this gap, more research and information are needed on children's ethnicities from the families of CME. However, this was outside the scope of the current study.

The study also looked briefly at the origin of referrals and the results reveal a wide range of referrals from all types of schools, particularly academies (as the predominant providers in the city), internal council teams, wider NCC partners and agencies as well as the external partners most notably other LAs providing similar services. This shows the CME team has established an extensive network of contacts with internal and external partners. This level and quality of collaborative working is essential to providing an efficient and effective services to both the council and to the clients of the service.

We also examined case outcomes both in terms of the process and in terms of the success in resolving cases. There are 5,615 cases in our sample, with 71% having been resolved by the CME team and 29% open ongoing cases. Between 2016 and 2018, there was a steady increase in the percentage of cases with the outcome *returned to education* and then a dip in 2020 and an upturn in 2021 to 59%. The trend for *case closed* remained steady from 2016 to 2018 but declined in 2019 and then sharply increased to 39.2% in 2020 and back down to 25.7% in 2021.

There is a great deal of variability in the time that takes for the CME to solve a case. Some cases could be resolved on the same day as when the CME team started the investigation. In stark contrast, it took 2,307 days (more than 6 years) to solve one extreme case. The percentages for resolved case gradually decreased and the percentages for open case gradually increased over time. In 2021, more than half of the cases were resolved, and this included 44% that were the accumulations of previous unsolved cases. Nearly a quarter of the cases were resolved within 7 days. We further investigated what outcomes were achieved by acting promptly and examined the outcomes of the cases in the most deprived areas. We found almost no difference in these outcomes.

The findings relating to the CME workforce reveal that there were approximately 1000 CME cases for 2.5 full-time equivalent CME officers to investigate on average yearly. The size and constitution of the workforce and the number of cases have clear implications for the amount of time officers are able to spend on each case.

Table1: Determinants of unsolved cases and case length

	Case unsolved		Days taken (if solved)	
	Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error
Female (Compared to male)	0.020	(0.012)	-3.901	(11.265)
Secondary school (Compared to primary)	-0.025**	(0.012)	26.708**	(11.312)
White	-0.113***	(0.017)	-84.924***	(14.902)
Asian	-0.075***	(0.019)	-77.125***	(18.073)
Mixed	-0.129***	(0.025)	-65.004***	(21.483)
Black	-0.048*	(0.027)	-86.110***	(24.102)
Gypsy, Roma and Traveller	-0.036	(0.029)	-41.734	(28.031)
Other (Compared to no information)	0.092***	(0.029)	11.049	(30.916)
NG2	-0.035	(0.043)	-106.963**	(42.022)
NG3	-0.104**	(0.042)	-150.513***	(41.442)
NG5	-0.095**	(0.042)	-124.636***	(41.427)
NG6	-0.092**	(0.043)	-141.656***	(41.726)
NG7	0.078**	(0.040)	-66.872*	(39.740)

NG8	-0.080**	(0.040)	-97.249**	(39.679)
NG9	-0.267**	(0.106)	-163.065*	(89.165)
NG10-14	-0.155***	(0.051)	-78.008	(47.449)
(Compared to NG1)				
IMD	0.029***	(0.003)	3.166	(3.343)
Constant	0.309***	(0.041)	342.296***	(40.695)
Observations	5295		3727	
R^2	0.069		0.027	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

We used regression analysis to examine the predictors of unsolved cases and case length. Whether the student is male or female had no effect on whether the case is unsolved, or how long it takes to solve the case. Interestingly, secondary school cases were less likely to be unsolved compared to primary school cases, but they did take 27 days longer on average to solve when compared to primary school cases. Unfortunately, in 40% of the cases, no information was recorded regarding ethnic background and this group served as our ethnicity reference group. Where data is available, cases where the students are White, Black, Asian, or from Mixed heritage were more likely to be solved, and took fewer days to solve, when compared to group to this reference group. In terms of locality, every postcode had cases that were either less like to be unsolved, or quicker to solve, when compared to NG1 (which served as our reference group for the locality variable), with most postcodes being superior to NG1 on both metrics. Finally, deprivation appears to be a predicator of whether the case is unsolved, but not of how long it takes to solve.

Conclusions

The geographical and demographical analysis suggests very clear and relatively stable geographic patterns and trends within the CME cases referred to the team across the city. We found a bell shape distribution reaching its highest between national curriculum Years 5 and 8, which reflects the years either side of the transition years from primary to secondary school in the city are peak years for referrals. According to the CME team, this result reflects the likelihood of the family's relocation at the end of their children's primary education and the possibility of children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnic groups missing secondary education once they have finished primary education. There is an equally marked pattern of cases across the city where we identify three 'tiers' of case prevalence. Whilst these patterns and numbers are likely to change in the future (not least because of changing migration into and out of the city), they do provide useful evidence for service enhancement, service deployment (or redeployment), resource allocation, and workforce planning.

The analysis of the characteristics of cases in the city indicates there are no significant differences between genders nor the pattern of ethnicity, and although the number of cases of *information not obtained* relating to ethnicity have constantly reduced, there is some way to go on this issue. When looked at referrals by types of school, although initial gross numbers indicate that the number of referrals were increasing from academies and reducing from schools maintained by the LA, this reflects the rising number of academies and the decreasing numbers in LA maintained schools within the city. We would suggest this could most usefully be further investigated at the level of the individual school.

When we looked at the status of cases in the caseload and focused on the outcomes of cases, we found 71% of the cases had been resolved by the CME team, with 29% open ongoing cases. This finding indicates there is a huge variation in the length of time that it takes to resolve individual cases. While this is well known to the team, the study also reveals and highlights two factors which are probably less appreciated by those not directly involved in CME teams. They are the importance of the quality and access to internal and external databases and the importance of developing, maintaining and improving networking and collaboration within the city council and across the 'community of interest' that provides the service in LAs. As almost a quarter of the cases were resolved by the CME team

within 7 days, we investigated what kinds of outcomes were achieved to see if they differed from the general caseload. We also looked at the outcomes and duration of resolved cases in the most deprived areas of the city. In both instances we found they reflected the trends for general population of all cases.

The CME is a relatively small team, as it will be in most LAs, and works on a very clearly defined on-going task. The nature of its work highlights the importance of local knowledge and experience in this work and the importance of the often 'hidden' skills of trust, reciprocity, perseverance, diligence, and empathy with clients that are essential for the efficient and effective delivery of the service.

Finally, we looked at the relationships between cases unsolved, along with the length of time to resolve cases, and the impact of gender, type of education, ethnicity, location and deprivation. The implication is that the factors of the type of education (primary school or secondary school), ethnicity information, location, and deprivation are possibly associated with the probability of whether the case being solved or unsolved as well as the length of time for the case being solved. In particular, we found that not only is the likelihood of an unsolved case with ethnicity information (White, Asian, Mixed, or Black background) lower than a case without the ethnicity information, but it also takes fewer days for the CME team to resolve the case when the ethnicity information is provided. It is important to note that obtaining ethnicity information in and of itself is unlikely to affect the ability to solve cases. However, understanding the mechanism behind why this information is either withheld, or unable to be obtained is important, as this factor is likely to be correlated with the ability to solve cases. An example would be families withholding ethnicity information for fear of discrimination, and this fear of discrimination also leading to a looser attachment to the education system. This finding also emphasises the importance of collecting this information in the correct way in order to help the CME team provide the right support to specific groups and help them back into education.

The needs for collecting more reliable ethnicity information and comprehensive data for benchmarking at local and national level regarding CME to facilitate further research have been mentioned in the paper. However, in order to significantly advance the strategic knowledge and understanding of the service in the city and facilitate mutual support and the sharing of good practice among other LAs, we suggest that a comparative study of the work of the CME teams in other authorities should be commissioned and undertaken.

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