Considering Playful and Intuitive Pedagogies that Incite Motivation

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TILT Festival of Learning 2019, NTU
Lifelong Learning: pedagogies for the future

This presentation resonates with three conference themes;

1. Lifelong *(and lifewide)* learning: pedagogies for the future

2. Student diversity - Are we providing appropriately flexible modes of delivery and pedagogies that allow all students to learn?

3. Learning through practice

Final Year student's Industry Project: Day 1 and 6 weeks later..

'*College is a potentially transforming experience, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to challenge students to examine their previous ways of knowing, thinking, and behaving.*'

George Kuh, 2003

We intrinsically know that student behaviours, and their levels of engagement, can be hugely influenced by our teaching styles (Kahu, 2013).

We are all in the business of '**education**', but where does **pedagogy** and the **art of reflecting on our teaching practice** fall within the hierarchy of our own action list?

…and when we do find time to reflect on all of this?

…and who do we share our thoughts with about this?

…and what actions do we take?

Inspiring students to learn could be classed as a 'wicked problem'

Describing a problem as **'wicked'** (Rittel and Webber, 1973) alerts us to the fact that it is a complex, multi-layered set of problems which include a wide range of factors that all need investigating more deeply in order to be able to shed light on the larger overarching problem.

Many lecturers intuitively know that students best learn when they;

- talk things through with fellow students or staff
- research things for themselves
- test their understanding by asking questions
- practice what they've learnt until they get it right

We may struggle to design sessions that facilitate deep, active learning as we are governed and constrained by numerous factors which contribute to this **'wicked problem'**;

- increasing student numbers with a diverse range of learning styles and needs
- space for academics to engage with pedagogy
- student attendance
- timetabling and resources
- room layouts
- technology

Professional Doctorate in Education

How well do institutions and educators understand the levels of motivation, autonomy and engagement of the contemporary learner?

'gaps between student survey responses and faculty perceptions'

Coates and McCormick, 2014

Case Study – *Qualitative Research using Grounded Theory methodology*

Part One: **Student Narratives**

25 final year students wrote down their personal stories;

'At some point in your education it is likely that you will have experienced a point when you felt completely engaged and motivated by what you were doing
– can you tell me about it?
Write down the thoughts as they come to you and include as much detail as you can remember.'

Aim: To **uncover the contributing factors** that enabled students to experience high levels of motivation and engagement with their learning.

Part two: **Semi-structured Interviews**

27 individual semi-structured interviews with final year students, lecturers and managers from 3 different institutions on the subjects of student motivation, student engagement and student autonomy in Higher Education.

Aim: To obtain a greater **understand of the similarities and differences of opinions** between the students, lecturers and managers about what motivates and engages students in higher education today.

Grounded Theory is an inductive, analytical technique that allows the researcher to observe themes and patterns that are emerging from the qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Bowen 2006; Mishler, 2009; Yin, 2014).
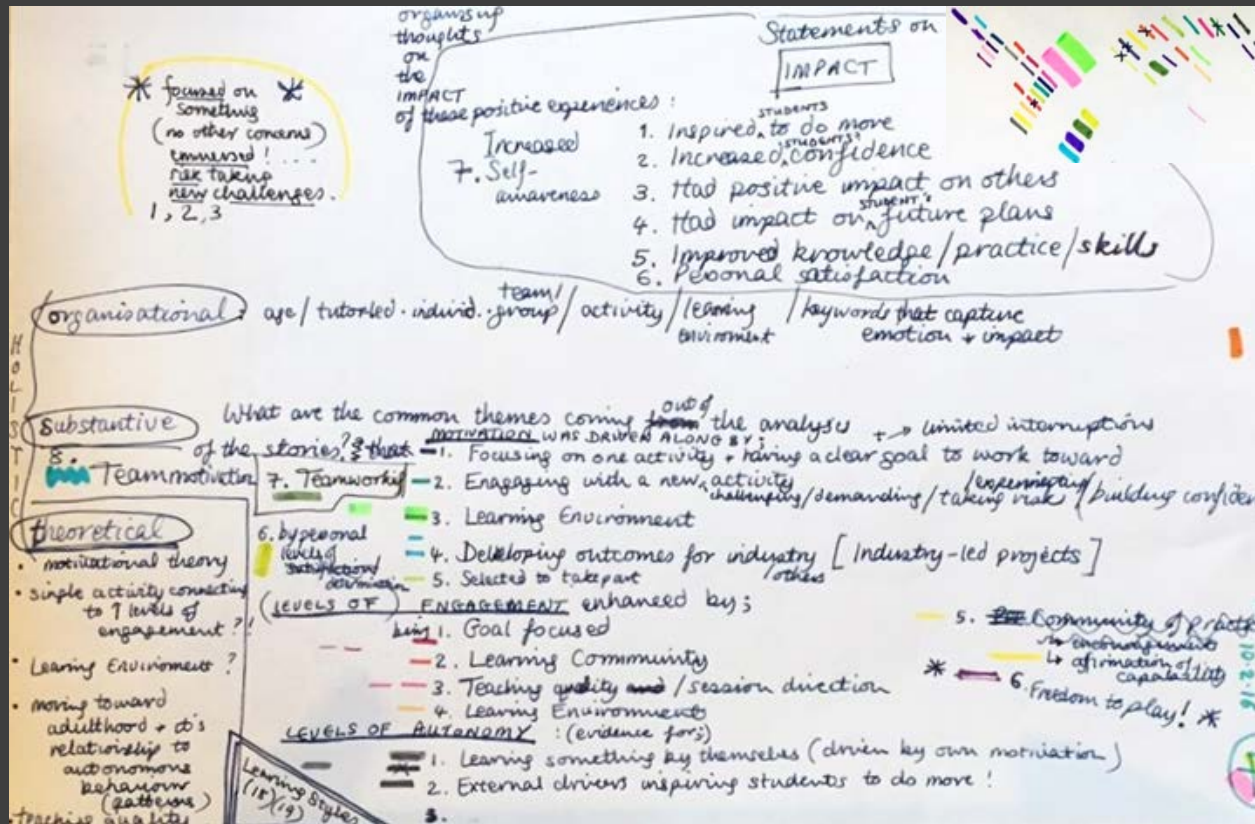
My sensory perceptions of the individual student's experience heightened as I continued to immerse myself in the memories depicted in their personal stories. I did this by inhabiting their world and '*scrutinising the material*' (Griffin and May, 2012).

I combined an initial coding process with that of a more intuitive '*analytic procedure of constant comparison*' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pope, Zeibland and Mays, 2000)."

Excerpt from one of the student's stories…

In second year we all took part in a live project. **Initially we were put into groups – and I couldn't think of anything worse!** Over the course of the project there were ups and downs, obviously. But **towards the end of the live industry project, the pressure started to build and the pace of everything we were doing quickened.** Originally I thought pressure did not do anything good for me, but this example proved otherwise. **(7) The group really started to bond and our work became more cohesive,** each sample linking to the next. I was working with imagery that wasn't really my style and using fabrics I had never found interesting before – but **in this moment I loved what I was doing. The pressure meant I didn't second guess myself, I just DID. I got over issues quicker, resolved them.** I was producing samples (better samples) in the last week that I loved more than the ones that had taken me an age to produce. **I couldn't wait to get into Uni**

Themes	Factors	Number of stories
Motivation	**New/challenging activity**	7
	Personal determination/passion	7
	Focus on a single activity	7
	Learning environment	6
	Learning by themselves	6
	Industry-related experience	5
	Team-working	4
	Experimenting/taking risks	2
	Selected to participate	1
Enhanced engagement	Learning community	11
	Teaching quality	7
	Freedom to play/experiment	6
	Affirmation (by others) of capability	5
	Goal driven	4
Student-centric	Fun to be in education	4
	Learning styles	3
	Comments relating to stress	2
Impact	(4) Impacted on future plans	6
	(6) Increased personal satisfaction levels	6
	(5) Inspiring new knowledge/skills/practice	6
	(7) Increased self-awareness	5
	(1) Inspired to do more	5
	(2) Increased confidence	4
	(3) Had positive impact on others	3

'demanding', 'fascinating', 'experimenting'

'working digitally was completely new to me and so it was demanding'

'All my energy was pushed to the highest level both physically and mentally'

'to learn new techniques and create something more technically challenging was incredibly satisfying'

'I felt so engaged in this lesson because it was the first time I saw and realised how my designs...could be used for a professional outcome'

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'I felt pressured for the end result to be good for future jobs'

'I remember just loving the opportunity to focus on one big task solidly and getting totally immersed'

'working on the industry project really gave me a focus to work toward something very worthwhile'

'I enjoyed being busy and independently working on something'

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'Glancing around at my friends'

'I spoke to people I didn't usually speak to'

'It was an exciting and inspiring atmosphere'

'We were very happy about being creative and messy'

'The team felt so natural and we worked so well together'

'Towards the end of the live industry project, the pressure started to build and the pace of everything we were doing quickened'

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'I was shocked at how easy and obvious things could be if they are clearly taught and explained to you'

'She [teacher] never made me feel stupid even if I was really struggling, it is important for the teacher to have patience'

'What also motivated me was the fact that my tutors would push me and make me get the most out of my ideas'

'one to one support helped kick me into doing the work'

'taking on board constructive criticism was useful in exploring new ideas'

'[The teacher] had a very open approach to teaching, not forcing her opinion but advising'

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'when you are doing a project by yourself, it can be easy to feel lost, particularly as [I am] someone who is generally very anxious...I often lose the sense of purpose for why I am doing things'

'Being shown how to use something helps as I learn quite visually and kinetically'

'I benefit from one to one support more than being taught in a large class'

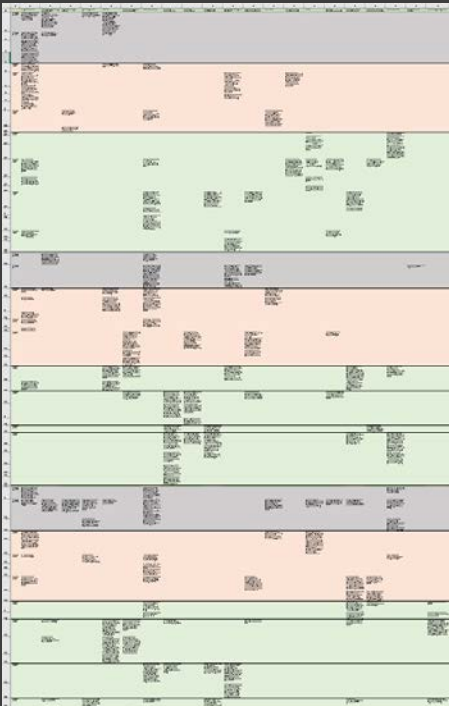# CASE STUDY - Part two: **Semi-structured interviews**

Comparing past to present	Stress / mental health / pressure	State of HE today / increased bureaucracy / increased student numbers
"Oh, I think about my own education and how things have changed (923)		"With greater numbers, larger group sizes and less contact time, it's become far easier, I think it's survival in many ways for staff to think, "I'll put a PowerPoint together and I'll talk to all of them" (745).
		"it's the model that the university wishes us to deliver because it's highly cost effective, but it's to the detriment of our autonomous learners that's my huge concern and regret for how design education is going (746)
	"if they haven't got that motivation to seek out that gallery, or find that music gig that they are passionate about, that impacts on how confident they will be, , in seeking what they want to do in terms of their degree (761).	"it's about getting the students through those hoops, rather than actually letting them find out for themselves and have a much more open-ended experience (760)
	"It's your degree, now this is where your life is going to start". My life, okay, no pressure then! But you hear that from everybody, parents and everyone around you really (805).	
"some students, they just weren't interested. They all moved and left home to have a good time and get paid to enjoy it basically.(934)	"the thing is, at the end of the year, you don't realise how stressful it is, until it gets to you (899).	
	"A lot of us said, when we first started, it's a big step, you've just moved away from home, you are living on your own. You're there for a reason you just don't want to throw it away, the people that are stressed here are probably over-thinking things (901).	

Engagement levels (across different years)	Engagement levels in 1st year
Very! 263	
'fairly engaged' 219	
'Pretty good engagement overall. But I think that sometimes it's incremental' 306	'Hungry to learn' 307
'Probably about 70% to 80%' 395	
'very engaged I think, throughout the whole course' 451 'In 2nd and 3rd year, you really sort of get to know how you design and develop' 452	'1st year was a bit of a funny year because you're getting used to the course and, like, finding your style' 451
'I have always been quite engaged, I think definitely more within the 2nd and 3rd year. Definitely 3rd year, kind of really like immersed myself in it and that is kind of everything. You're just in it and that's it!' 477	'In the 1st year, I think you're still finding your feet a bit kind of like putting the feelers out and exploring, but definitely as we were getting taught new things you just completely like get in to it' 478
'It's your life, especially 3rd year, it's your life, just completely! You work there, you eat there, and you do everything there.' 479	

student: 'I probably wasn't doing badly, I didn't get a bad grade, and I still did a lot of work. But it wasn't my usual kind of level, and I don't think they [lecturers] really spotted that'

lecturer: 'If you start out with positivity and a good open attitude and lots of enthusiasm, eye contact, engagement, highlighting the teaching space, how we're going to use that, with an expectation of interactivity, I found that that works with the students the best'

Key:
Managers' comments
Lecturers' comments
Students' comments

Factors that affect students' motivation, engagement and autonomous learning habits...

Opportunity for course teams to consider whether their curriculum provides;

- **Regular challenges / develop problem solving skills**

- **Learning experiences that develop resilience / determination / criticality**

- **Time to focus on a single activity**

- **Team-working**

- **Peer learning opportunities**

- **Ways of broadening their passion for the subject**

- **Freedom to play/experiment/take risks**

- **Encourage students to determine their own reading**

- **Industry-related experience**

Opportunity for course teams to consider enhancing the following;

- **Learning environments**

- **Learning community**

- **Sense of belonging**

- **Mentoring systems to support personal development**

The Case Study also highlights that student success is often attributed to students being goal-focused and highly motivated.

Norman (2004) refers to this when individuals are in '*flow*'; in an addictive state, immersed in their learning / activity.

Deci and Ryan's 'Self-determination theory' (2000) identifies that individuals need to develop their confidence, self-belief and autonomy which often leads to an increase in motivation levels and improved psychological well-being.

John Dewey (1910) highlighted the problem by stating that *'the training of mind remains an incidental and secondary consideration'* to the acquisition and confirmation of knowledge.

So, what can higher education do about this?

By talking to and working with students as partners when we design learning and by identifying ways to deliver sessions that maximise their motivation and engagement levels, we will;

- gain a greater understanding of the different ways in which different students prefer to learn,

- facilitate greater levels of autonomous behaviour,

- prepare graduates who can problem solve, think creatively and are resilient and pragmatic in the face of change.

Investigating 3D form through trial and error / problem solving

'Individual learners are ultimately the agents in discussions of engagement, and primary focus is placed upon understanding their activities and situations'.

Hamish Coates, 2005

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Thank you

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