Higher Education Close Up 10

Critical approaches to close-up higher education research

Booklet of Abstracts

Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

4th, 5th, 6th July, 2022

Contents

Welcome to Higher Education Close Up 10

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to HECU10. After two years of delay due to the awful pandemic it is wonderful beyond words to finally come together for this conference on *Critical approaches to close-up higher education research*. HECU has now been running for over twenty years and stands out as a conference of challenging intellectual discussion and engagement in a friendly and collegial atmosphere. Experienced and less experienced HE researchers sit side by side at HECU, equals in their commitments to high quality research that makes a difference – to higher education and to society more broadly. This year we have a particularly large number of doctoral students taking part – and I'd like to extend a special welcome to you. Doctoral researchers tend to underestimate their own value and importance to the HE research community, as those people bringing in new ideas and diverse perspectives. Academic research is, at its heart, about engagement with the minds of others – and we particularly need these new minds and people coming into our field, and the conversations they can then have with more established researchers. This year we have four incredible keynotes offering diverse and challenging insights into close-up higher education research, and its place in our educational institutions and society. HECU10 continues to build on the rich friendships that have been established between Lancaster University colleagues and colleagues in South Africa. To this we add people from many other parts of the world – and your insights are particularly welcomed. On a personal note, I have gone from being a nervous PhD student presenting at HECU5 to having the honour of helping to organising HECU10 this year. In that intervening period the HECU community have been an important part of my growth as a scholar, providing challenges and inspiration, but also the guidance of genuinely collegial, kindly and caring scholarship. I know this is true of many others, and I hope true for many to come.

I would like to extend particular thanks to Alice Jesmont and Sheila Walton for the organisation of this conference. Having been postponed twice due to covid-19 this means that much of the organisational work has had to be done three times over. It has been an amazing effort. Thanks too to Richard Budd and Janja Komljenovic for help with the organisation. And to Felipe Sanchez, who will be racing between rooms ensuring your PPT presentations are ready to go! Also, thanks to the Department of Educational Research here at Lancaster University for their continued support of HECU.

Thanks to Bloomsbury Publishing for their small financial support of this conference, which reflects the ongoing relationship between Bloomsbury and many colleagues in the HECU community.

A great champion of HECU and responsible for building the strong relationships between Lancaster and South Africa was Professor Suellen Shay, who we sadly lost in 2021. In memory of her contribution, scholarship and friendship we will now always launch HECU with the *Suellen Shay HECU Keynote*. Our colleague Professor Paul Trowler explains more below.

Dr Jan McArthur

The Suellen Shay HECU Keynote

Launching a dedicated keynote in Suellen Shay's memory is one small way we have to thank her for her contribution to close up research, to the HECU conference series itself and for the way she touched our lives as people and as researchers. As in everything she did and that she believed in, Suellen was a tireless advocate and a leader by example, in this case of robust research that made a difference. She promoted HECU and helped its influence spread through South Africa and beyond. It was she who developed the 'co-ownership' of HECU with colleagues in South Africa, and promoted the alternating countries model the conference has today.

Suellen was a moral and intellectual leader, both at the University of Cape Town and beyond. She was one of the people at the forefront of the mission to put the Academic into Academic Development, to work rigorously at research-led approaches to university improvement. As a Dean and as an academic developer, she never faltered in her quest to improve what we do by improving understanding and conceptualisation and by values-led change. Her far too-early passing in April 2021 was a profoundly saddening event for all those who knew her. She is very much missed.

Professor Paul Trowler

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Monday 4th July, 2022		
Time/Paper Number	**Room**	**Session Details**
11.15 – 14.00	**Foyer**	Conference Registration
11.45 – 12.45	**Restaurant**	**Buffet Lunch**
12.45 – 14.00	**Training Room 2**	**Welcome: Dr Jan McArthur** **Inaugural Suellen Shay HECU Keynote One, introduced by Professor Paul Trowler, Lancaster University:** **Keynote Speaker One: Amanda Hlengwa, Rhodes University** *Is mentoring higher education's novice academics a safety mechanism against transformation?*
14.00 – 15.30		**Parallel Session 1**
01 **02** **03**	**Bowland 1**	**Roxana Chiappa, Universidad de Tarapacá** *In times of greater demands for justice, what is the role of academic mentors in higher education? A critical analysis from Chile* **Masixole Booi, Kelly Solomon, Rhodes University** *The role of academic mentorship for staff and students in contributing to transformation and decolonisation at a South African University* **Susan Mathieson, Northumbria University** *Reframing academic mentoring using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT): foregrounding sociocultural and structural aspects of induction to teaching*
04 **05** **06**	**Bowland 2**	**Jakub Krzeski, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Krystian Szadkowski, Adam Mickiewicz University** *Political ontology – a foundation of critical higher education research* **Nomanesi Madikizela-Madiya, Velisiwe Gasa, Enid Pitsoane, University of South Africa** *Transforming higher education spaces through ethical research publication: a critique of the publish or perish aphorism* **Sukaina Walji, Laura Czerniewicz, University of Cape Town** *Reframing relationships between private edtech companies and universities for digital education provision*

Time/Paper Number	Room	Session Details
Symposium 1	Training Room 2	**Symposium** **Rachel Sweetman, Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research & Education, Norway, Elisabeth Hovdhaugen, NIFU, Norway, Liz Thomas, University of York** *Re-theorising retention in nursing programmes: the strengths and limitations of Tinto's model for professional degrees*
07 08 09	Training Room 3	**Kevin Ardon, Northumbria University** *Researching student engagement: the application of Inquiry Graphics Analysis to develop a socio-material understanding* **Zach Simpson, University of Johannesburg, Helen Inglis, Celeste Combrinck, University of Pretoria** *Recognizing diverse capitals through reflective learning: An argument for transforming the first year* **Ashish Agrawal, National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research, Chennai, Margaret Blackie, Rhodes University, Jennifer M. Case, Benjamin Goldscheider, Nicole Pitterson, Virginia Tech, Jan McArthur, Lancaster University** *Formation of agency in science students: how a close-up view helps challenge unjust and unhelpful orthodoxies*
15.30 – 16.00	**Foyer**	**Refreshments**
16.00 – 17.30		**Parallel Session 2**
10 11 12	Bowland 1	**Piers von Berg, University of Plymouth** *Citizenship education in a liminal space in higher education* **Katherine Ward, Lancaster University** *A critical reflection of some of the ethical issues concerning qualitative research with student participants* **Margaret Blackie, Rhodes University, Jan McArthur & Kayleigh Rosewell, Lancaster University, Nicole Pitterson, Virginia Tech** *Examining orientation to society in chemistry and chemical engineering*

Time/Paper Number	Room	Session Details
16	Training Room 2	**Evelyn Muthama, Rhodes University** *What does it mean for a university to have an academic project?*
17		**Puleng Motshoane, University of Johannesburg** *Mentoring of emerging supervisors: The university looks good on paper, but it did not work as expected*
18 – W/D		~~**Philippa Kerr, Norwegian University of Science and Technology**~~ ~~*Are some of us in a parallel pipeline? An analysis of how postdoctoral fellowships are described on university websites, in the context of casualisation and concerns about the academic pipeline in South Africa*~~
19	Training Room 3	**Joseph Collins, Susan Flynn, Lindsay Malone, South East Technological University, Ireland** *Perceptions of success for part-time and flexible learners during emergency remote teaching*
20		**Dr Hazel Messenger, London Metropolitan University** *Researching the development of transnational education partnerships: an activity theory approach*
21		**Professor Thierry M. Luescher, University of Free State, South Africa, Dr Angelina Wilson Fadiji, University of Pretoria, Dr Keamogetse G. Morwe, University of Venda, South Africa, Ms Tshireletso S. Letsoalo, University of Pretoria** *Taking Rapid Photovoice online: Critical Reflections on the Project "Student Wellbeing in the Aftermath of Protest Violence" during Covid-19*
19.30	**Dinner – Dalton Suite**	

Tuesday 5th July, 2022		
Time/Paper Number	**Room**	**Session Details**
09.30 – 10.30	**Training Room 2**	**Keynote Speaker Two: Bruce Macfarlane, The Education University of Hong Kong** *'Faking' close-up research?: the risks of strategic deception in a post-truth world*
10.30 – 11.00	**Foyer**	**Refreshments**
11.00 – 12.30		**Parallel Session 3**
22 23 24	**Bowland 1**	**Julie Rattray, Durham University, Isaac Calduch, University of Barcelona** *Critical approach to threshold concepts research: counterhegemonic and creative practices* **Nathi Madondo, Mangosuthu University of Technology, South Africa** *Transformation discourse through a decolonial gaze: co-generating knowledge with students from rural areas in the teaching of science in higher education* **Vicki Trowler, Robert L. Allan, Rukhsana R. Din, University of Huddersfield** *Passing through Faking Authenticity*
25 26 27	**Bowland 2**	**Richard Bailey, University of Bolton** *'It's a Faustian pact we make'. A critical analysis of metaphors used in institutional discourses surrounding educational technology innovation and in the spoken accounts of academic teaching staff* **Ruth Roberts, Birmingham City University** *Electronic attendance and engagement monitoring policies: A critical perspective* **Daniel Clark, University of Kent** *The global pandemic and the legitimisation of pervasive EdTech: Critical perspectives on educational technology use in Higher Education*

Time/Paper Number	Room	Session Details
28	Training Room 2	**Gabrielle Orbaek White, Dr Catherine Groves, Dr Patricia Xavier, Swansea University** *From performativity to authenticity – a critical reflection on the journey of becoming a critical scholar*
29 W/D		**~~Alaa Abdalla, Virginia Tech~~** *~~Perspectives on the purpose of engineering higher education: A close-up view on undergraduate education in the US and England~~*
30		**Ashish Agrawal, National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research, Chennai, Paul Ashwin, Lancaster University, Benjamin Goldschneider, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Renee Smit, University of Cape Town** *Developing a personal project: chemistry and chemical engineering students' formation*
31	Training Room 3	**Jonathan Vincent, York St John University** *In between belonging in higher education*
32 W/D		**~~L Peta Myers, University of Exeter Business School~~** *~~(Not) Heeding the call for change: Reinforcing power structures at the expense of student success~~*
33		**Sioux McKenna, Rhodes University** *Assuring quality in Doctoral Education: what's measured is not all that meaningful; what's meaningful cannot be measured*
12.30 – 13.30	Restaurant	**Buffet Lunch**
13.30 – 14.30	Training Room 2	**Keynote Speaker Three: Janja Komljenovic, Lancaster University** *Higher education industry expansion: commodification versus assetization*
14.30 – 15.00	Foyer	**Refreshments**
15.00 - 15.30	Bowland 1	**Alison Baker, Bloomsbury Press** *Demystifying academic publishing*
15.00 - 15.30	Bowland 2	**Poetry Session -** Selecting poems as part of a call and response Tawona Sitholé and Alison Phipps will read work which has been inspired by struggles to care take and to take care in higher education as cultural worth is eroded and all is war and targets

15.30 – 17.00		Parallel Session 4
Time/Paper Number	**Room**	**Session Details**
Symposium 2	**Bowland 1**	**Symposium** **Paul Ashwin, Lancaster University,** **Andrea Abbas, Paul Gao and Gihan Ismail, University of Bath, Margaret Blackie, Rhodes University, Didi Griffioen, Natalie Park, Emilia Roelofs and Kasja Weenink, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Nicole Pitterson, Virginia Tech, Reneé Smit, University of Cape Town,** *Developing knowledge-rich accounts of 'graduateness'*
34 **35** **36**	**Bowland 2**	**Nafisa Baba-Ahmed, Lancaster University** *Doing, Embedding and Allowing Criticality in English for Academic Purposes* **Rethan Knoetze, University of South Africa** *An English literature curriculum study: intersections between the macro and micro* **Janét West, University of Johanesburg** *A critical approach to accounting education*
37 **38** **39**	**Training Room 2**	**Ronel Steyn, Rhodes University** *The limits of criticality: the need for explanatory theories in higher education* **David Peet, Lancaster University** *Effective change in higher education: exploration through a practice lens at the meso level* **Paul Trowler, Lancaster University** *Can applying the practice sensibility involve a critical and radical approach to change processes?*
19.15	**Bowland Corridor - Drinks Reception – Guitarist Howard Haigh**	
20.00	**Bowland Suite - Conference Dinner with music by Howard Haigh and Fretville**	

Wednesday 6th July, 2022		
09.00 – 11.00	**Parallel Session 5**	
Time/Paper Number	**Room**	**Session Details**
40	**Bowland 1**	**Joyce J. Lelei, Egerton University, Kenya** *Analysis of Doctoral Supervision*
41		**Grant Alexander Cyster, Rhodes University** *The necessity of and value in researching power dynamics in candidate-supervisor relationships in South African doctoral education*
42		**Nompilo Tshuma and Gifty Enyonam Ketemepi, Stellenbosch University** *Critical for whom? Reflecting on supervision experiences of educational technology research*
43		**Richard N. Onwonga, University of Nairob, Joyce J. Lelei, Egerton University, Kenya** *Managing Loneliness among Doctoral Students*
44	**Bowland 2**	**Vel McCune, Jenny Scoles, Sharon Boyd, Andy Cross, University of Edinburgh, Rebekah Tauritz, Wageningen University and Research, The Netherlands** *Academic Identities for 'Wicked' Problems: Braving Transformative Work in the Face of the 'Competition Fetish' in Higher Education*
45 W/D		~~**Jo-Anne Vorster, Rhodes University, Kibbie Naidoo, University of Johannesburg, Xena Cupido, Cape Peninsula University of Technology**~~ ~~*Exploring critical theories and methods to enhance academic development as a profession with status in South African higher education*~~
46		**Omolabake Fakunle, Mariel Deluna, Yifang Xu, Vel McCune, University of Edinburgh** *Staff perspectives on the connection between internationalisation and inclusiveness in a UK university*
47		**Lynn Quinn, Jo-Anne Vorster, Rhodes University** *What close-up research is needed for responsive academic development practices?*

Time/Paper Number	Room	Session Details
48	**Training Room 2**	**Vikki Hill, University of the Arts London** *Listening with Compassion: Evaluating the use of podcasts to foster compassionate pedagogy within an academic enhancement programme*
49		**Felipe Sánchez, Lancaster University** *The learning experience through art-based research: Opportunities for a critical understanding of learning research*
50		**Priscilla Echeverria, Lancaster University** *The capacity of pedagogical agency developed by pedagogy students in their passage through initial teacher formation: A critical approach to foster social justice*
51		**Sherran Clarence, Nottingham Trent University** *Can a critical understanding of emotions enable the creation of more inclusive spaces for belonging and transformation in higher education? Interrogating early career scholars' mentoring into the academy*
11.00 – 11.30	**Foyer**	**Refreshments**
11.30 – 12.30	**Training Room 2**	**Keynote Speaker Four: Alison Phipps, University of Glasgow** *Subversities and Permaculture: When Close Up and Critical are Cut*

Keynote One

Is mentoring higher education's novice academics a safety mechanism against transformation?

Amanda Hlengwa

Rhodes University

Higher Education is called to respond to multiple, complex, and urgent transformation imperatives such as making higher education institutions spaces that are democratic and inclusive promoting belonging and a social justice agenda (Badat, 2016; CHE, 2016). In the South African context, perhaps one of the starkest reminders of the challenges the sector faces are student activists' movements calling for radical redress and rejection of a 'Eurocentric epistemic' which legitimates global northern knowledges at the expense of global southern ones, as popularised through the hashtags, #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and #NationalShutdown. Concerns raised by these student movements are neither new, nor dissimilar to the profound concerns emanating from commissioned studies and national reports (CHE 2000, NPC 2011) regarding the consequences of the glacial pace of the transformation agenda in the higher education sector. This glacial pace brings challenges to the role and responsibility of higher education research by bringing into question which level of the system close-up interrogation of higher education's structural and processes would be most effective in influencing rapid change.

Internationally, higher education institutions grapple with the challenge of recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of qualified academic staff to cope with the implications of massification and globalisation. There is also a deep concern that the academy no longer serves the student transformation and the public good quite so much as it serves the economic imperative. In the South African context particular attention is paid to addressing the unequal representation of black and female academics. It is curious that studies examining underrepresentation of black and women academics tend to choose historically white institutions as contexts with very few focused on historically black institutions. This is an indication that transforming the academic profile is not a systemic imperative. It is likely that a different picture may emerge if the questions of underrepresentation were nuanced enough to consider the impact of differentiated institutional purposes, structures and cultures.

The South African sector is also faced with urgent and multi-faceted challenges in academic staffing, challenges which include the 'slow pace of transformation, the ageing workforce, and the relatively under qualified academic staff workforce' (DHET, 2015:3). The Ministry of Higher Education and Training has injected substantial resources to building capacity and developing future generations of academics in public institutions. This paper draws on one such initiative, the national New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) which was implemented in 2015 with the first cohort of academics half way through the six-year duration. The nGAP is positioned as a transformation mechanism to accelerate diversification of staffing current demographics[1] by reserving 80%[2] of new posts for black and or women academics. Black and women academic staff are designated groups due to their severe systemic underrepresentation in the higher

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[1] South Africa's race categories of Black, Coloured, Indian and White have a problematic history, however, still used to measure demographical representation. In 2012 white academics account for 54.3% with Africans making up 31.9% and Coloured staff at 5.2% and Indian academics making up the remaining 8.5%.

[2]The first cohort of nGAP posts was introduced in 2015 and including the 2018 intake the programme has created 373 posts in the sector.

education sector. Increasing the visibility of these underrepresented groups on university campuses is a normative endeavour that is seen to be a moral imperative.

This paper draws on the nGAP to ask questions about its role as a transformation mechanism.

Transformation by design is intended to bring about profound and radical changes, often including turbulence (Fourie, 1999), which will result in 'deep and pervasive' changes affecting the all aspects of an institution (Eckel et al, 1998). The structural transformations that the nGAP contributes to university contexts are relatively easy to observe and quantify, one only has to note the change in staffing demographics but cultural transformations are less overt and require close-up examination drawing on socio-cultural frameworks underpinned by realist ontology. Diversifying race and gender representation shifts universities' organisational cultures, requiring the 'old' academic guard to be open to co-developing variations of cultures that the 'new' academics usher in the academy (Fourie, 1999). Adopting any transformation strategy (like the nGAP) is a commitment to rocking the academic boat. It is worth interrogating whether such interventions do indeed rock the boat or whether institutions achieve the targets of recruiting black and women academics by employing what I have termed 'safe bets' (Hlengwa, 2015), these are people who possess the kind of cultural capital (Bourdieu,1986) that is aligned with the established valued in the university and, therefore, likely to reproduce rather than transform dominant institutional cultures.

Typically, ministerial funded interventions are reliant on self-evaluative reports submitted by institutions to effect modifications of the intervention from one year to the next. Rigorous and critical HE research examining systemic interventions is often available once the funding complete (see Boughey and McKenna, 2011a&b; Boughey, 2013, Moyo, 2018) these studies and reports provide valuable insights and recommendations that have bearing on the conceptions and implementation of the next iteration of the intervention. However, as Moyo's (2018) thesis illustrates, the lessons come at a high price of fiscal waste that could possibly be avoided if implementation decisions were informed by timeous research recommendations. In the next section, I briefly describe the core feature of nGAP which is the focus of this paper, followed by a critical examination of the possibilities for deep and pervasive change (Kezar and Eckel, 2002) to emerge and whether institutional cultures constrain transformation that they reduce it to reformist modification.

Mentoring within the nGAP

nGAP is designed for early career academics and spans the first six years of tenure track employment. The programme aligns with McAlpine et al 's (2014) definition of early career of those new to academic employment and pursing postgraduate3 qualifications, as well as those in postdoctoral pursuits. Core features of the programme include flexible workloads for the first four years, professional developmental opportunities and, the focus of this paper, mentorship. Each academic on the programme is assigned a mentor for the first four years of the programme. It is not surprising that mentorship features strongly as it is positioned as an essential component of nurturing the development of early career academics (Quinn & Vorster, 2012). The mentoring literature features diverse ideas regarding classification of mentoring, ideas related, but not limited, to the appropriate selection and pairing of mentor and mentee, and to deciding the duration of a mentorship relationship. Despite these diverse ideas around mentorship, there exists a consensus that the aim of mentoring is the transfer of learning between mentor and mentee, where the experienced mentor engages in deliberate interaction that nurtures the mentee into the

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[3] McAlpine (2014) and colleagues do not include postgraduate qualifications lower than doctoral studies, however in the South African institutions mandated with offering mostly professional qualifications will recruit professionals who may still require to pursue Honours and Masters qualifications.

academic roles and responsibilities in particular disciplinary and university contexts (Blunt & Conolly, 2006; Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Dhunphar et al, 2018).

Regardless of the approach, the traditional 'master-apprenticeship' model or the seven typologies4 outlined in the Hanover (2014) study, challenges emerge with regards to the extent to which mentoring might be viewed as a transformational mechanism with the potential of 'rocking the academic boat'.

Transforming or reforming?

South Africa's colonial and apartheid legacies shape the particular political and socio-economic manifestation of transformation. An effect that is prevalent in historically white institutions is that seasoned senior academics are paired with younger early career academics for mentoring relationships. In these institutions, positions of seasoned senior academics are predominantly occupied by white middle age men and nGAP positions are specifically for designated groups of women and black early career academics.

Mentors and mentees are expected to navigate the complex organisational cultures of the academy through discussions centred on, but not limited to, the nature of academic work, academic identity and career pathways. However, it is expected that mentors and mentees have differing vantage points which test the extent to which radical ideology penetrates the established practices.

Mentors and mentees navigate a rapidly shifting higher education system, which is increasingly affected by systemic massification, globalisation and managerialism. However, their experiences are from different vantage points, with the mentees positioned as transformation agents thus bearing the brunt of the responsibility to advocate, conceptualise and demonstrate new and innovative ways of responding to the changing academic climate. Whilst mentors support the notion of transformation mechanisms (nGAP) the intersectionality of race, gender, class and language dynamic often constrain the mentor's ability to fully appreciate the day to day experiences of their mentees. On the one hand, seasoned academic mentors do not have the same level of exposure because they have recourse to the protection granted by their elevated status, access to funding and established research profiles. nGAP mentees, on the other hand, have the desired demographic representation to legitimate institutional committees dedicated to transformation strategies, however, given their junior status, there is a question of whether their inclusion goes beyond symbolic participation.

One of the limitations of nGAP as an effective transformation mechanism is the low number of posts injected into the higher education system. The effect is the lack of critical mass of early career academics, which then reduces the agential capacity required not only to rock the boat, but also to usher in significant, meaningful and sustained change across the sector. Mentors have vested interests in maintaining what is perceived to be the corner stones of the academy, therefore it would seem that the concept of mentoring has a built in 'safety' device ensuring that the academic ship does not steer too far away from the familiar, comfortable and existing course.

The mentoring process is embedded within institutional cultures of daily experiences that incorporate interpersonal relations shared in the institution (Mapasela & Hay, 2005). In historically white universities, institutional cultures are dominated by 'whiteness' of academic culture, explained as 'the ensemble of cultural and subjective factors that together constitute the

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4 Hanover research outlines the following typologies: (1) One-on-One mentoring between a mentor and a protégé; (2) Group mentoring between a mentor a multiple mentees; (3) Team mentoring including multiple mentors and mentees; (4) Peer mentoring where junior staff members mentor each other; (5) E-mentoring where the relationship is conducted on line or a-synchronistical; (6) Informal mentoring where mentee self-selects a mentor and there is no formal agreement (7) Reverse mentoring where the junior staff member has expertise in particular area/s offered to the mentor

unspoken dominance of higher education of Western, European or Anglo-Saxon values and attitudes reproduced and inflected in South Africa" (CHE, 2007:97). Booi (2015) points out historically white universities cannot easily distance themselves from the history of racisms deeply rooted in every aspect of these institutions. Limited opportunities to examine up-close the impact of 'whiteness' in cross-cultural mentoring relationships, diminish the potential of mentoring as a mechanism of transforming the academy. Close-up research is required to answer the question of whether the mentoring process within an establishment can be used to rock the establishment's boat.

It remains open to question how meaningful and rigorous engagements with the potential to radicalise institutional contexts might be achievable through mentoring approaches that already inadequately acknowledge or else fail to address the intersectionality of race, gender, class and language dynamic of South African higher education. There are studies pertaining to transformation processes and progress in South African higher education as well as studies that focus on the development of early career academics. However, what the sector requires is a close examination of the intersection of a transformation mechanism (nGAP) with mentoring as core feature of developing the next generation of academics.

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Keynote Two

'Faking' close-up research?: the risks of strategic deception in a post-truth world

Bruce Macfarlane

The Education University of Hong Kong

The theme of HECU10 reflects, at least in part, current concerns about the rise of 'fake news' and challenges to the role of expert knowledge. However, the notion of trustworthiness cuts both ways. While the world of academe displays a collective sense of exasperation at declining levels of trust in professional expertise and empirical evidence, how confident can wider society be that academic research is not itself a part of the 'fake news' problem?

Academic fraud tends to be thought of in dramatic, headline-grabbing terms. The acronym 'FFP' – Falsification, Fabrication and Plagiarism – is repeatedly intoned in discussions about research misconduct in the hard sciences. These academic crimes attract a lot of attention because they are clear-cut instances of a lack of academic integrity. In reality there are considerably more subtle, ethically borderline practices that can go almost completely under the radar. Citing sources without reading them, or understanding them properly, is a commonplace enough example. Perhaps fewer of us have time to read anything anymore. Besides, who hasn't cut corners occasionally or relied simply on an abstract?

Close-up, qualitative work, often of an ethnographic nature, makes few (if any) claims to generalizability and, in a low status academic field such as education, rarely gets much public attention. Yet, the nature of this research raises a wide range of ethical issues that are extremely complex to deal with such as insiderism, negotiating the pitfalls of organisational politics, and an often wafer-thin dividing line between researcher and participant (or none at all in self-ethnography). The extent to which we are engaging authentically or merely 'doing rapport', 'faking friendship', 'faking solidarity', or even faking identity online now are relevant for any close-up researcher (see e.g. Duncombe and Jessop, 2002). Close-up research requires personal contact between the researcher and the participant and so giving an appearance of sincerity can be regarded as a work-related, investigatory skill (Alvesson, 2003). These are important ethical issues, but it is not my purpose in this think piece to focus solely on them. Others have done so already in greater depth than I can hope to cover here.

Instead I wish to raise a broader question around 'faking'. This is the increasing tendency, as I see it, for the philosophy and language of close-up qualitative research – criticality, reflexivity, statements of positionality, discussions of insiderism, and so on – to be the subject of a strategic deception. Here I am mainly, although not exclusively, thinking of doctoral students and referring to the way in which some researchers are adopting the lexicon of close-up qualitative research in a compliant, mechanical and ultimately inauthentic way. Do any of these practices look at all familiar to you?

The production of 'ready-to-wear' positionality statements, based on self-stereotyping, relying almost wholly on identity categories that lead to what Cousin(2010:9) has called 'positionality piety' where affinity with participants is consideredto invest the researcher with superior moral authority

Discussions about insiderism based on an over-simplified dichotomy between'insider' and 'outsider'

Considerations about positionality or insiderism, in the methodology section but not later linked to the discussion of findings

Claims to a 'thick description' that are distinctly thin (e.g. based purely on standard interview data)

The habitual use of the word 'participants' to describe those who play no meaningful participatory role beyond being interviewees, for example

Citing close-up authors in a routinized/tokenistic way without demonstrating any understanding of their ideas or (probably) reading them (e.g. Geertz, 1973)

Do any of these examples resonate with you? If they do, perhaps you can add your own examples to my list.

I feel it is too easy to suggest that this type of 'faking' is simply about poor scholarship. Students can feel under the pressure of what I have called 'emotional performativity' (Macfarlane, 2017). Valerie Hobbs' account of the way in which she resorted to a 'strategic deception' in producing a reflective piece of writing to satisfy assessment requirements is a perfect illustration of this phenomenon (Hobbs, 2007:414). Reflection is an act of confession and self-disclosure – whether real or fake. In composing such statements, students are complying with what they perceive to be a performative requirement to link the ontological with the epistemological. Can we really distinguish between a real and a fake one?

Twenty or thirty years ago critical reflexivity was an overdue corrective to the apparent invisibility of the researcher in the research process. It was rare for a researcher's positionality to be explicitly surfaced within methodological work. Today, positionality statements and references to reflexivity have become more of a stock convention. They are de rigueur in dissertations or theses involving qualitative work. Is it even any longer valid to talk about 'traditional' and 'critical' approaches to research, or has the 'critical' perspective become the new 'traditional'? In other words, close-up qualitative research has entered the mainstream of educational research. At one level this is a great success story but at another there appears to be an increasing tendency to treat the practices and lexicon of close-up research as ready-to-wear garments. When ideas and concepts enter the mainstream, their meaning can quickly become over-simplified. The nuances get stripped away. We are all familiar with mantras about 'student-centred learning' and 'student engagement' in the university. They once meant something more nuanced. The word 'reflection' has now sadly become little more than a performance indicator for a range of professionals.

We know that in the world of the news media – and fake news – it is important to find a scapegoat. In attributing blame for the types of inauthenticity I have illustrated the obvious target as the perpetrator: normally, but not always, the research student. Is it possible though that the academic profession is responsible, at least in part, for this state of affairs? Is it in any way our fault? In understanding why fake practices exist we should practice what we preach by being self-critical about the potential role of our own 'pastoral power' (Atkinson, 2012). We need to recognise that strategic deception arises because students get to know our convictions and methodological insistences as supervisors only too well. Someone's whole persona, and professional identity, can be tied to a particular theoretical approach (Trowler, 2012). When this occurs, methodological guidance can lapse into methodolatry and students can feel obliged to swear their allegiance to a particular flag.

The verisimilitude of close-up research is linked to a researcher's genuine commitment to reflexivity and self-disclosure. The presence of positionality and reflective statements in research reporting enhances the apparent trustworthiness of the work of the lone researcher. We need to be aware of the scope for disingenuous manipulation. Feeling fraudulent as an academic – otherwise known as the 'imposter syndrome' – is a common enough condition. When academics reflect on their feelings of inadequacy this tends to focus almost exclusively on their lives as teachers rather than researchers (e.g. Overall, 1997). Are we open enough about how much we 'fake it' – or perhaps cause others to do so – as researchers and supervisors?

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Keynote Three

Higher education industry expansion: commodification versus assetization

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In this short think piece, I will discuss the new processes that we witness in the Higher Education (HE) industry. I will focus in particular on the challenges that digitalisation brings to the study of HE markets. I will limit myself to the UK; however, the processes that I discuss are equally valid in other contexts.

The criticality of research in this piece is highlighted first by unpacking the concepts of HE industry, markets and marketisation. Too often these are still taken for granted as if it is clear what they include and especially dismissive of the micro-processes of marketisation and everyday experience of HE actors. Second, the critical approach is also understood by searching for new theoretical and conceptual approaches that can explain contemporary dynamics and challenges that we are witnessing. Sticking to theories, approaches and concepts that do not provide enough explanatory power is, I argue, not critical research and does not contribute to developing HE research. Finally, the critical approach benefits from a fruitful interaction of relevant and much needed close-up research with more broad and macro analysis of the HE sector.

Context: digital technology becoming a part of the higher education industry

HE is an important export sector for the UK for many years. The new International Education Strategy (HM Government, 2019) reiterates the value that HE brings to the British economy and plans to strengthen its contribution even further. Also, it foregrounds Education Technology (EdTech) as part of the education industry in which it wishes to become a global champion. Moreover, in a strategy specifically on technology and education entitled 'Realising the potential of technology in education: A strategy for education providers and the technology industry' (Department for Education, 2019), the Department of Education positions a dynamic EdTech business sector as one of its key aims.

EdTech innovation and digital solutions are thus high on the national agenda, as they are in other counties including main English speaking competitors to the UK (USA, Australia and Canada), its global competitors (China), as well as its European counterparts (Germany and France). Competition is high, and innovation and investment in EdTech are unprecedented (Brighteye Ventures, 2019). It is safe to expect the substantial and fast expansion of EdTech in future.

This dynamic and fast innovation in EdTech speaks to the fundamental digital transformation that universities are undergoing. Course delivery via digital platforms, personalised learning with the support of artificial intelligence, real-time metrics such as learning analytics for students or business analytics for managers, and smart university campuses are only a few examples of contemporary digital initiatives in HE (Williamson, 2018). It is not exaggerating to say that universities are undergoing fundamental transformation with digitalising all of their operations. Universities, however, do not and cannot deliver this digital transformation on their own. They partner with various private companies to collect and process data, build digital infrastructure, and create digital solutions. This is where EdTech meets universities operations and their IT systems to innovate and deliver new solutions.

When marketisation marries digitalisation

The global HE industry consists of many different and variegated markets that work in different ways and under different rules (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2017). It includes universities, who increasingly act as sellers of not only teaching and learning but also other services. They also increasingly act as buyers of things and services; as well as working in partnerships with private

companies (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2016), for example, offering online degrees together with Online Programme Management Companies (Perrotta, 2018).

Importantly, the industry consists of new actors who have entered the HE sector and span from for-profit companies, non-governmental organisations, philanthropists, policymakers, and so on. Each of these actors operates across scales (institutional, national, regional and global) along their strategies and power position; as well as they engage in education policy networks (for example, Ball, 2012).

HE scholars have studied marketisation of the sector for years. Some authors argue that the overall approach was too static and reliant on the simplistic conceptualisation of markets derived from neoclassical economics (Komljenovic & Robertson, 2016; Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Such an approach does not seem to be able to explain the contemporary market-making dynamics in the sector. Notably missing is the analysis of the micro-processes and micro-foundations of market making as I argue with Robertson elsewhere (Robertson & Komljenovic, 2016). Close-up research with detailed in-depth qualitative analysis on case to case basis is essential to understand how different markets get imagined, constructed, and maintained in the HE sector. On the bright side, there appears to be a shift in the literature more recently from discussing whether HE is or could ever be a 'real' market towards addressing various types of governing it as a market (for example, Jungblut & Vukasovic, 2017; Marginson, 2018). This is only the beginning of studying HE markets in this more detailed, varied and processual way and there is much to learn by applying more detailed close-up research.

The digitalisation of universities brings yet new challenges to the study of marketisation in HE; as the intersection of marketisation and digitalisation produces new forms of privatisation and new types of university unbundling (Czerniewicz & Walji, 2019; Swartz, Ivancheva, Czerniewicz, & Morris, 2018). There are at least two forces of privatisation and market making in the sector related to digitalization. First, the marketization of HE as such supported by government policy and led by many actors including universities. And second, the marketization of HE via digitalisation led by proprietary digital solutions.

Digital solutions and their nature

There are many different types and forms of digital solutions used by universities and their actors (students, staff, and leadership). These solutions span from traditional software such as Microsoft Office to new applications such as Amazon Alexa. Most of these digital solutions are proprietary and targeted to universities who pay for them and allow free use to students and staff. They may also be targeted directly to students or staff who pay for their use. In this case, providers circumvent universities. There is much to say about this, but I will highlight only two specifics of such digital solutions.

First, what the user (either the university as an institutional user or an individual) pays is not a price for a transfer of ownership rights over the product, like there is the case with commodities. When consumers buy either a tangible or an intangible commodity, they pay the price and get rights over that commodity. However, here the user pays monthly or annual fees for access to the digital service. The user cannot change or interfere with the service, does not get ownership rights over that service; and often also no rights over the digital data that it or its constituents leave behind, which leads me to the next point.

Second, students and staff leave enormous amounts of data when using such digital applications and software. We do not know all of the uses or potential uses of this data. One of them is to further develop the service. In this case, the service provider is able to offer even better and improved solutions due to network effects (Srnicek, 2017). However, the business model charges fees (not prices!) and more or less always develops a vendor lock-in for users. The latter means that is is not possible to leave the service or that the costs would be too high.

Universities, therefore, collaborate with companies in various ways in that they integrate external digital solutions into their infrastructures to a more significant or lesser extent. Universities may also develop their own 'internal' digital applications. This creates a varied ecosystem of internal, external and mixed digital solutions. Not all of the collected data in this ecosystem is (yet) processed and applied, but there are motivation and lubrication of innovation around what will

happen with the data. The key questions are what kind of privatisation and monetisation are we witnessing; how is this happening; and what are the consequences?

I argue that these digital innovations are not commodities, but assets; and that what is charged are not prices, but rents. Consequently, commodification and marketisation as theoretical frameworks (especially in how they have developed in the HE literature) do not allow enough explanatory power to analyse and explain what is happening in the intersection of marketisation and digitalisation of universities. I propose to incorporate theories of capitalization and assetization (Birch, 2019; Muniesa et al., 2017) into our analysis of the HE sector. There is a severe empirical lack of how assets get constructed in general (Birch, 2019), let alone in the HE sector. However, we know that assetization is varied, variegated, and path-dependent. Assets are thus constructed in very different ways in complex economic, social and political processes which include power relations and struggles between interested actors. We have to study these processes in-depth and on a case to case bases. Such close-up research of cases will further develop HE research; as well as has a potential to contribute to the emerging scholarship on assetization. This way the learnings deriving from the micro-level do not only illuminate particular cases but also how they are constitutive of global interrelated HE industry.

Conclusion

This think piece gives food for thought on many and various processes. First, it invites a discussion on HE industry and markets. Second, it puts a focus on digitalising the HE sector. And finally, it gives an opportunity to engage in a debate on close-up research and critical approaches more generally. What does it mean to do critical research? How can we place close-up research within the macro phenomena? What is the interaction of close-up research and criticality? These are only a few examples of the broader questions I have introduced and invite HECU participants to potentially find others.

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Keynote Four

Subversities and Permaculture: When Close Up and Critical are Cut

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Abundance

What a day it was – International Women's Day 2021. We all gathered – hundreds of us – including the cultural ministers for the countries in which our work was beginning and where the projects were launching. Young people sang and danced and told stories, older folk dreamed dreams. Translators made worlds so distant come alive that we had goosebumps at what lay ahead. A future. A set of carefully laid out possibilities for the transformation of persistent and enduring conflict into episodes of peace and the healing of festering wounds of trauma and neglect. Cultural justice no less beginning to take her steps after such a long struggle. The website went live, the grant application forms were pains takingly checked and double-checked, support workshops for capacitating safe-guarding, ethics, financial due diligence and fiduciary risk were finalised and our wonderful VIP guest – Debra Kayembe Rector of Edinburgh University – no stranger to conflict and persecution herself – declared the project launched.

It was a real time of celebration. The hard work had paid off, the careful years of pains taking research which meant that contexts for cultural work and peace work were understood and trauts had been won for co-design, participatory work to be eminently fundable in contexts of protracted conflicted, forced migration and violence. A dream come true for researchers in our partnerships and also for myself. To be able to make grant awards to partners in Low to Middle Income Countries, and work with partners as far as possible as equals not aid recipients on research in country which they would lead and understand far better than our own meagre research has ever been able to do. A dream come true. Abundance.

Broken Promises

Imagine. Just imagine that those tiny clauses in research contracts, the ones where you laugh out loud and say – well that will never happen – just imagine that it happens. You have a portfolio of funding which has been through seven levels of peer review, contracting and due diligence and you have grant making powers yourself, as a result of this latest award, to distribute, according to research which you have been engaged in for over 25 years, to the most deprived and vulnerable members of society in the world. Just imagine that not only this but the areas you are focusing on for this particular group are in the areas which have been most systematically neglected by research over the years.

Then, one day you are launching a multi-million pound U.K. Government proclaimed flagship project, at the height of your academic career with a world-wide reputation for excellence in your field. And twenty Four hours later the funders place a notice on their website saying that all grants in progress are no paused until further notice; that 70-80% of funds will be cut and we must now petition our Vice Chancellors for funds to keep going, or cut the project with immediate effect.

Imagine that some of those institutions employing them drop them like hot bricks from a great height. My own has been exceptionally kind, but many have had no such luck. Hung out to dry. Through no fault of their own. Your research dreams and hopes and those of your partners now shattered into thousands of pieces.

Cuts

On March 11th 2021 UKRI, 2 days after our launch – the Government funder of research in the UK, UKRI, post a notice on its website announcing 70% cuts to its flag ship Global Challenge Research Fund.

Scarcity. Cuts. Fear. Disbelief.

How to respond? Those of us affected began to gather in furtive phone calls and angry social media groups, some of us mobilising a campaign, others too numb to even think, to take in something that is unprecedented in higher education. "We've only just appointed all our staff" says one "we've researchers actually in the middle of one of the largest ever surveys in the history of the field, world-wide, and they are enumerating on the ground, right now."; "we are in the middle of human clinical trials – there are no ethics on the planet that allow us to stop at this point."; "We've just finished the dress rehearsal for the production"; "we've just managed to get the UN to take our initial research findings into their committee structures for action".

On and on and on it runs, the list of the immediate and then the global ramifications. Every night for months now my head has spun taking it in. I've responded correctly, physiological manifesting the trauma, grief and stress – no sleep, loss of appetite, deep anxiety, angry tears, insatiable action, often trying to chair meetings of those I will be cutting in situations of such precarity it means I can barely breathe, let alone live with myself if I don't try and fight cuts with every means possible. Most people treat me like the body in transition I am – giving me a wide berth, not knowing what to say.

Now imagine breaking the news to those really affected in life sand ceath ways by the cuts; the calls and messages from partners on your grant in the areas where the work was building something positive, putting hope in place for the first time in a long, long time. Imagine you are, for instance, a young girl in a one of the world's poorest countries, where serial abuse and impregnation are common place under the pandemic conditions. Imagine the research has established this and begun to create safe houses and forms of advocacy and networks of support and overnight this is not only destroyed, but you are now punished for having had and lost an income, and those who are your elders and mentors are threatened with imprisonment because 'they were the one's to take money from the British." The words are spat out, and even though this is over zoom, I wipe my face, British that I am, receiving this as proxy, and knowing it to be a proportionate response to the violence just meted out.

 "This is violent news" says our colleague.

Critical Action

Imagine this is how research funding is weaponised against the world's most deprived communities in 2021, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Now imagine a successful campaign to reverse these cuts. Oh the hope! One led by a few academics who did not previously know one another. One which joined up with lawyers, journalists, NGOs and MPs of all parties. Imagine that the number of elected representatives opposing the cut to the 0.7% Overseas Development Assistance is enough to reverse the decision and restore what has been lost. Imagine you know, under democracy that you have won a campaign against a mighty adversary. Imagine hearing your work and your letters read out on the floor of The Commons as evidence of good work, well done. Imagine that the Speaker announces a debate with a binding vote but the Prime Minister refuses this. And as a result all is lost. All is lost. At the time of writing our research reports are being put through a secret 'worthwhileness indicator' divised in Government an applied to our final scores, describing the 30% left of our projects as 'underinvested'. UKRI now gaslighting research leaders those it underinvests for being recipients of underinvestment. The language alone…..

Close up research just got a lot closer up. Critical research just met its nemesis in the form of the bureaucrats pen, powerful, and painfully creative.

In all of the campaigning since March 2021 my work has deployed critical frameworks. I have worked with the close up, participatory, relational approaches which brought abundance after many years developing intercultural education for conflict transformation, and creative work with

refugee communities worldwide. We've submitted research on critical metaphor analysis determining how higher education researchers have responded in public to the cuts. Just as we had been moving to a place of engaged practice-led research with actions and reflection cycles we were thrown back on to the frameworks Santos (2018) writes of whereby we invest wholeheartedly in the task of critique but interpellated by the aggressor into a position of either subdued subjugation or incisive, careful, close up critique.

Abundance

As the dust settles on the brave new world of 'worthwhileness indicators demonstrating underinvestment' – a discourse to be the subject of critical discourse analysis in good measure, no doubt – I have started to return to my idiom of paradox and possibility and away from the the critical insistence on the reversal of the cuts, and of cuts as zero sum game for myself and those affected in far greater measure by them.

Close up, critical research is giving way to distanciation; to humour – gallows humour but still with some genial comedy; to a different critical lens which has retreated as to what will be possible now that a sub-versity of creative critical scholars, artists and peacemakers have made common cause on the level of their common project and then in the face of the attacks. The possible, liveable future for close up, critical research will not be UKRI grants or poartfolios of funding to enable the work, but underground passages, hiding places, and researchers following the maxim 'be like water' to pool and rush, and pour and respond when drought gives way to rain. There is a conviviality in this new sub-versity, of the kind Nymanjoh (2019) speaks of, a lot of rowdy laughter and a strange joy in the counterproof (Andrade 1970) that we have survived this unthinkable catastrophe and we still know how to make peace, and survive. There is an ontological closeness created with our colleagues who have know this all their lives and are no strangers to the begging we've had to of late.

Brueggemann (1999) writes of the myth of scarcity. The belief there is not enough to go round. Principles of permaculture – Earth Care; People Care; Fair Share – might offer our nascent subversity a way of going on that offers enough – Dayenu as Brueggemann calls it – and a way of framing other kinds of abundance which are present beyond a frame of cuts and scarcity only. It's early days for think-piecing this but Arts and Humanities scholars in the academy have long enjoyed an abundance of life and words to think with and maybe, just maybe, the days of great investment in the grant infrastructure of competition in universities will give way to different kinds of close up, maybe like the ones of lichens or mosses, pioneer survivors on rocks and trees.

In my work in Aotearoa New Zealand my māori friends have repeatedly reminded me "that no matter what the fungus will fix everything." As I watch the rot set in in so many places including in the plans and dreams that are dying away, this is where the thinking falls… the fungus will fix everything, including universities made of cuts or awards.

No matter how poisoned the land

No matter how poisoned the land
the fungus will fix everything.

Everything.
The promise of yeast
in unleavened bread
is only for days
when all is to be
destroyed.
Or when all has been lost.

Everything,
We need the taste of fungus
on our tongues.

Open your mouth and let

the yeast rise upon it.

Present the words
that bubble and breathe
with a possibility of more.

And excess.
A doubling in size.

Rot this casino,
this shopping mall world
rotten to its core.

Let the fungus moulder all.

Decay comes
from the poet's words
Finding a way,
clean as a surgeon's knife
to cut to the quick
and expose all
to the air.

The air, the air,
the germs on the air
the fixers of all.
Of everything.

Where there is decay
is where the new life
draws forth.

Energy, sucks at the old host
and strengthens its hold.

Be bright toadstool,
small microbe,
Be dun coloured mushroom
or just be the fermentation
that gives us our
sourdough,
our wine.

Keynote 2021

Competition and Critique: Implications for Higher Education in the Post-Truth Era

Rajani Naidoo

University of Bath

This think piece is included as Rajani was unable to attend this re-scheduled conference but some authors had already engaged with her thoughtful think piece.

The legacy of the Kantian conception of the university as a site for the progressive use of reason and criticality continues to exist in many universities across diverse world regions, and is often linked to the role of the university as a critic and conscience of society with responsibility for calling truth to power. These functions of the university are even more important in the 'post-truth' era in which digitalisation has led to greater difficulty in distinguishing facts from opinion and rational arguments from emotions; a situation which is exacerbated by powerful pressures to evaluate the media by the number of 'clicks' so that news going viral appears to be more important than the quality and integrity of the reporting. Together with the erosion of trust in public institutions and growing suspicion of scientific and professional expertise, 'fake news' has escalated with the potential to wield an inordinate influence on political opinion and action. These scenarios pose serious threats to higher education but at the same time offer opportunities for universities to counter such trends. An important role for universities in this context is to defend and reinvigorate the importance of critique and criticality.

There are, however, barriers to universities playing this important role. I would like to focus on one such barrier which is the extent to which accelerating and intensifying competition erodes the capacity of higher education to engage in genuine critique. As I have argued elsewhere (Naidoo, 2018), contemporary education reform is locked in a competition fetish. Competition in higher education is related to but sits in parallel with global economic competition. It also comes with its own set of rules, established by those institutions and systems already judged to be 'the best' on an international scale.

There are many varieties of competition in higher education which reinforce or displace one another or combine into new hybrid forms. The first competition relates to what Pierre Bourdieu has termed the struggle for scientific capital (Bourdieu 1998). Scholars have long engaged in various forms of competition including the symbolic destruction of rival scholarship. This competition is still dominant but it is mediated by other forms of competition. The second competition is the contribution of higher education to geo-political rivalry including new forms of imperialism (Henderson 2008). Higher education stands at the centre of such struggles. First, it is transformed into a global commodity for economic advantage. Second, higher education is deployed in a race for influence. The third type of competition is government sponsored competition. These are generally termed 'excellence policies'. The core political aim is to identify 'world class' universities to compete on the world stage (Deem et al 2008). Funding is diverted to these universities to provide positional advantage for global competition. The fourth type of competition is status competition particularly ranking. Although rankings do not measure holistic performance and undermine institutional diversity, a significant number of universities across the world strive for membership, even when there is little capacity to feature in such rankings (Marginson 2017).

The Erosion of Criticality

In order to understand how various forms of competition impact on criticality, it is important to link macro analyses with close-up research to identify how structures, actors, and cognitive and affective factors interact to constitute and reproduce competition. In many countries, government is a key shamanic actor. In general, governments create the conditions for quasi-markets in higher education while market mechanisms are deployed to achieve political goals (Naidoo 2008). International organizations also play a shamanic role. The World Bank for example embeds neoliberal competition through structural adjustment programmes, conditions attached to loans and prescriptions for what they term 'good governance' while the OECD urges policy makers to reform education in a certain direction through coercive social construction (Pettersson et al, 2017). Global corporations have become potent

political actors with a clear agenda: to push as deeply as they can to open up public sector education to for-profit provision.

Shamanic actors also sit inside the university. Some university leaders and managers have become 'audit market' intermediaries (Enders and Naidoo, 2014), channelling competition into the heart of the university; while others protect the academic heartland from the worst excesses of competition. And finally faculty and students too play their part. Competition is so powerful because it borrows legitimacy from elite scientific capital (Enders 2015).

In order to understand why competition is so powerful, we need to incorporate the power of beliefs, desires and emotions. The anthropological concept of the ritual, and Pierre Smith's (1982) evocation of the concept of 'mind snares' which he describes as part of a ritual that encourages the mind to slip and fall into a trap that is set for it, is illuminating. The first mind snare is that competition is natural. Thus a simplistic conception of Darwinian natural selection is fused with what Bourdieu has called doxa, which is an unquestionable orthodoxy that operates as if it were the objective truth. The second mind snare is the idea that competition is legitimate and just. The third mind snare is that competition is efficient and leads to innovation and quality. The fourth mind snare works through emotions. Competition works because it ignites in us the thrill of fame and the fear of shame (Brogger, 2016)

What are the potential impacts of the competition fetish on the university's role in critique and in fostering criticality? In relation to research, the competition fetish has the potential to colonise epistemic and professional frameworks. Mark Olssen (2016) has indicated how research excellence frameworks militate against 'blue skies' research, encourage dubious research tactics for maximizing citations and over-encourage conformity to external expectations. The intellectual content of the work becomes invisible as research is translated into a simple numeric score that can be ranked by those who manage the research competition. The looming Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is likely to increase pressures to realise the profit potential of research and to link research more closely to corporate interests. The danger is that research that is not profitable will be side-lined. In addition, there is a serious threat that corporations will push governments to develop stronger legislation to control access to research in order to extract private economic rents. The danger here is that the conventions and institutions that support the relative independence of research conceptualised by Polanyi as the "The Republic of Science' will be undermined. In this context, research that critiques power including corporate power will become more marginal and always under threat.

In relation to teaching, students are rightly so demanding more democratic and agile education that is more responsive to their needs. A key challenge is how to engage constructively with students in fostering critical thinking together with social justice (Ashwin and Mcvitty 2015, McArthur 2018). A great deal of research has shown how the reconceptualization of students as consumers has the potential to lead to a loss of responsibility, a sense of entitlement and instrumental learning (Molesworth et al 2009). The Teaching Excellence Framework clearly exacerbates this and of course academics too play a major role by internalising a consumer mentality in relation to their teaching. In a competitive context where trust has been undermined, there are pressures to opt for safe, risk free, spoon-feeding teaching particularly when teaching is measured through market verification, managerial indicators and student satisfaction.

In a future higher education system, teaching is likely to be configured into standardised units which can be priced and sold, knowledge is likely to be codified, tasks standardised and outputs quantified. While an academic elite may be able to maintain some autonomy, a growing number of academics will face work intensification and insecurity and they will be perceived to be exchangeable and disposable. These are all conditions which create real barriers to fostering criticality in both teaching and research.

Reinvigorating Criticality

This think piece has sought to delineate the powerful macro, meso and micro levels at which the competition fetish is produced and reproduced, thus highlighting the importance of linking macro approaches with research that is 'close-up'. I have also shown how the competition fetish has the potential to undermine the role of the university as a site for critique and criticality and as a conscience for society.

I will conclude by outlining core questions for research which may lead to how we can re-imagine critique emerging from higher education systems that are becoming more and trapped in the competition fetish.

First, how do we protect higher education as a space for critical analysis and dialogue. How do we resist the pressure to see higher education purely as a space for consumption, a victim in the status wars orchestrated by governments and applauded by university leaders, or as a simple lever for economic development where ideas are validated purely in instrumental terms?

In terms of teaching, philosophers writing on education from John Dewey to Martha Nussbaum have all pointed to the dangers of producing docile, technically trained individuals rather than citizens with critical reasoning. I agree with these views but my concern is that they appear to have (at least implicitly) an elitist view of a golden age of education. The majority of students live in financially precarious situations and work in full time employment. They are often physically exhausted and time-poor. The challenge for us is how to take the principles of education that arose out of the very different conditions of a period of time spent in full time education with few financial worries and implement them under changing conditions of national and global inequality.

In relation to research, the boundary between the university and society conceptualised in different ways by Kant (1992) and Bourdieu (1998), together with the principle of academic freedom, has historically enabled scholars to call truth to power in many countries with limited repercussions. However, this space is being constrained as the boundary between universities and political and market forces becomes more porous and as autocratic managers emerge in some universities to propel higher education in a more corporate direction. It thus remains very important in contemporary times to search for, build, protect and replicate the relatively autonomous spaces within which we can engage in research in order to offer powerful critiques of current conditions. It is important that such research is peer-assessed in scholarly terms. At the same time, our critiques need to become more engaged with wider society. This requires us to rebuild relations of trust from the wreckage of the partially manufactured conditions of dis-trust. A key question is how to communicate our research accessibly without simplifying or playing to negative populist tendencies?

Finally, we need to interrogate the Kantian concept of progressive reason, which has historically been tied to western enlightenment in relation to contemporary forms of critique. Since critique cannot be abstracted from its institutional location and socio-political, ideological and economic context, and in the light of challenges from anti-capitalist and post-colonial challenges, we need to explore how different rationalities relate to various classifications of acceptable and unacceptable critique in the academy. Most importantly we need to explore how a critical stance can avoid the trap of cynicism and despair so that we can reinvigorate criticality for the common good.

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Abstracts: Parallel Session 1

In times of greater demands for justice, what is the role of academic mentors in higher education? A critical analysis from Chile

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Within the last four years, the world not only experienced a pandemic, but it has also witnessed the rise of international social movements asking for greater justice to women (#metoo in 2018) and black populations (#blacklivesmatters in 2020); groups that have been historically excluded from positions of power in academia and other sectors. Chile (19 million) was not indifferent to these social movements. In 2018, women university students denounced the sexual and gender violence experienced on campus in one of the greatest feminist student movements ever seen. A year later, Chile had violent social protests, literally known as a social outburst. These protests stopped the country for around six weeks and revealed the blindness of elite groups, who did not foresee the discontent of low and middle-income groups that denounced the precarity of their living conditions in a country with high income inequality.

In Chile and elsewhere, academia tends to respond to these societal movements mainly through the organization of academic events and publication of articles that cognitively analyze the implications of these social crises in different arenas. But then, the question that follows is *to what extent* the demands of social movements get to permeate the "roles" of academics in their main functions, as teachers, supervisors, and academic mentors.

In this research, I explore this question by examining the perceptions of 16 senior academics in economics, who have a reputed research career and have served as academic mentors in their supervisors' roles. Drawing form the scholarship of Professor Amanda Hlengwa on mentorship of black and women academics in South Africa and her keynote piece of the HECU´s conference, I argue that academics in their role as mentors may intentionally trigger changes in higher education that disrupt some of the gender, racial and class inequalities.

Preliminary findings show that the feminist movement heavily influenced the discourses in economics departments. Participants in this study (N=16, women=2) indicate that the field has acquired a greater awareness of the discrimination that women face in economics. As one of the academics explains, "economics is a historically male dominated field, and the protests of 2018 installed a new sense of urgency in the field". Yet, when participants are asked about their practices as academic mentors, several participants report to have practices of students' recruitment that favor homophily relationships with little awareness of the impact of these practices in the reproduction of gender inequality in the field.

Key words
Academic mentors, economics, inequality, social movements

The role of academic mentorship for staff and students in contributing to transformation and decolonisation at a South African University

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Abstract

In response to Dr Hlengwa's paper, this work in progress paper is drawn to her discussion on the kind of mentorship that is offered for new academic staff, more specifically the kind of mentorship that happens epistemically. We, too, question to what extent young black academic staff have the space to contribute to substantial transformation. Drawing from each of our research areas, which focus on black students' experiences and academic staff experiences in the Humanities respectively. In this paper we discuss the level of, what has been conceptualised as, epistemic mentorship that occurs during the process of moving through the undergraduate degree to becoming an academic staff member completing a PhD. Our work in progress paper explores our different but related PhD study trajectories. Masixole's research focuses on decoloniality in South African higher education and the history of knowledge making, and Kelly's research is about how students understand the purpose of a humanities degree. Bringing these two together, we ask the question: do disciplinary mentors (both lecturers and new staff mentors) legitimate global north knowledges at the expense of global south ones in their mentoring approach?

This paper grapples with the question of how colonial Western dominant centric ways of knowing and producing knowledge are reproduced. We explore whether academic mentorship contributes to reproducing the colonial Western dominant centric ways of knowing and research in institutions of higher learning. This creates what we conceptualise as epistemic mentorship, where students and young and emerging academics are encouraged to adopt the already existing theoretical and ideological lens in their scholarly work within a specific discipline which contributes to the reproduction of dominant Western colonial centric ways of knowing. This paper will also reflect on the agency of students and academics as emerging scholars and the institutionalized power relationship in academic mentorship. We question if mentorship encourages staff and students to be critical of the knowledge that is selected for curricula or if it reproduces the status quo of only sticking to the canons?

We will look at how new academic staff position themselves in an academic department and how they approach their roles. Through this paper, we aim to show how disciplinary knowledge mentorship plays a key role in contributing to decolonising and transforming universities, both epistemologically and ontologically.

Keywords

Reframing academic mentoring using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT): foregrounding sociocultural and structural aspects of induction to teaching

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Abstract

Amanda Hlengwa's Thinkpiece raises important questions about the limits of academic mentoring in transforming South African Higher Education (HE). She argues that while nGAP is positioned as a transformation mechanism supporting black and women academics through mentoring, its impact is limited, because mentoring is largely by white male academics, and does not challenge existing conceptions of HE.

This paper argues that Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engestrom 2001) can illuminate both the sociocultural and structural elements shaping mentoring, by locating mentoring in the broader 'activity systems' for induction to teaching. At the same time, CHAT surfaces contradictions in 'activity systems', that can generate proposals for change.

This paper draws on research in a UK university that identified the 'third space' (Bhabha 1992) tensions between teaching and research (Mathieson 2019) experienced by new academics', and how these influenced their induction to teaching, in a performative HE culture. Here we focus in particular on the light CHAT sheds on academic experiences of mentoring and community support for teaching. Through examining contradictions that surfaced through a CHAT analysis, we identified ways to enhance mentoring and communities supporting teaching.

Because of its capacity to analyse individual, collective and structural issues and contradictions in 'activity systems' as they develop historically over time, CHAT could be a valuable theoretical tool in expanding understandings of mentoring for new academics in the contested space of South African HE. It could broaden the focus from individual mentoring relationships, to incorporate the wider 'activity systems' in which mentoring happens. It could also shed light on race, gender and cultural bias in the academic practices that new staff are inducted into, while recognising the agency of academics, both individually and collectively, in challenging these cultural biases (Hlengwa 2020). We found Bhabha's concept of 'third space' useful in understanding the painful, but creative spaces new academics struggled with in negotiating their identities between research and teaching: this concept could shed further light on tensions and contradictions of race, gender and culture.

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Key words

Induction, mentoring, CHAT, third space, communities of practice

Political ontology – a foundation of critical higher education research

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Abstract

Following the ontological turn in higher education research, this paper argues that the critique is inevitably entangled with the ontological dimension. How we conceive the being and what we deem ontologically primary regulate how we dissect and deconstruct the present state of things, as well as determine the kind of the alternative to building up which our critical efforts are invested. In this context, political ontology is presented as a type of reflection that uncovers hidden and ideological presuppositions about university while establishing ground on which critique can operate. When narrowed down to the analysis of higher education, political ontology can be deployed to investigate the two hegemonic modes of articulation of being within the sector. On the one hand, it interrogates ontological assumptions about the primacy of the individual, underpinning the ongoing market expansion. On the other, it examines assumptions regarding totality that encompasses individual parts, which underpins the coordinating role of the state vis-a-vis university sector. Those two modes of articulation of being have to be put into the context of the current historical conjuncture. One, in which productive dialectics between the market and the state exhaust its powers due to the acceleration of capitalist socialization of higher education. By exposing this deadlock political ontology is able to introduce an alternative mode of articulation that transcends the private and the public. Such an articulation is founded on the common. The common rejects the hegemony of those two ontological models, not only at the theoretical level but also in their material basis, within the many past and contemporary practices of teaching/learning and knowledge production, that due to their relational and collective nature, refuse to be completely subsumed under the private/public dichotomy.

As such the developed argument relates to think pieces by Dr Janja Komljenovic and Professor Alison Phipps and, to a certain extent, connects ideas contained in them. Under the current predicament, the common, for which political ontology makes its case, can be observed primarily through its corrupted forms. Instead of increasing the collective and productive power of those involved in higher education, it all too often is instrumentally used to propel competition, focus on performance and acceleration. However, recognizing the common as an ontological ground allows us, in turn, to better grasp what fuels higher education industry and markets in the first place, as well as offers a tangible meaning to abundance, covered by the myth of scarcity.

Keywords

political ontology, critique, crisis, the common

Transforming higher education spaces through ethical research publication: a critique of the publish or perish aphorism

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Abstract

The publish or perish aphorism declares publishing a condition for survival in academe. It resonates with the imperatives of neoliberalism that privilege individual success, entrepreneurship, prestige, promotion and monetary gain. In this paper we use the concept 'aphorism' to refer to the phrase 'publish or perish' in order to draw attention to how it has been universalised as 'a general truth about the world' (Samadova 2020) of research and publication in higher education while it is actually subject to debate. It 'signifies a doctrine according to which the destiny of an academic depends exclusively on success in publishing scholarly work […]' (Moosa 2018). In other words, it is fast becoming a litmus test for academic identity, rather than one element of it. According to this saying, academics lose academic respect, acknowledgement or creditworthiness (Brown 2015) if they fail to publish as much research as possible (in a short space of time). While some researchers have identified debates about the legitimacy of 'publish or perish' as it pertains to researchers' desire to write and the ethical obligation to disseminate knowledge (Heron, Gravett & Yakovchuk 2020), there are still oversights in such debates. In this theoretical paper, we engage multidisciplinary literature to reflect on some such oversights. We analyse how it contributes to various kinds of exclusions and how it can jeopardise the relation between research and social justice. Our analysis also relates to Bruce Macfarlane's Think Piece for HECU2022 as we address the issue of trustworthiness of research published in the rush to avoid perishing. We attend to the ethics related to what Macfarlane calls 'faking' in research to expose its violence, not only to the researchers' credibility, but also to the communities and individuals from whom research is conducted. The ultimate goal of the paper is to propose a more transformed and democratic approach to research and publishing, for the sake of ethics, justice and fairness.

Keywords

Research publication, neoliberalism, human capital, research ethics, research faking

Reframing relationships between private edtech companies and universities for digital education provision

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has prompted universities worldwide to accelerate their moves towards increasing use of digital technologies to deliver teaching in remote and online forms. For some universities this meant increasing their internal capacity to support staff and students to teach and learn online, while for many more this has meant forming relationships with educational technology companies to provide necessary support, infrastructure, technologies. It is likely that universities have used a combination of strategies in emergency modes. However, even prior to the pandemic, universities had been engaged with experiments in higher education "market-making" whereby due to imperatives such as austerity and massification some universities have considered online and digital education as opportunities for income generation through the ability of online education to reach new markets of students. The relationships between universities and online programme management companies, known as OPMs, is one area of fruitful empirical research which sheds light on the particular forms of market-making with a wide range of possible forms including unbundling as well as other types of business arrangements including seeing rentiership as a way of extracting value from educational data and activities. Focussing on the role of private companies specialising in creating and selling educational technologies as shaping higher education, we explore how critical approaches to understanding the entanglement of technologies and social systems such as higher education can provide counter narratives to instrumentalist and essentialist approaches that seek to impose particular types of imaginaries for universities.

Close-up research theorised to take account of the socio-materiality of digital technologies and the types of assemblages that form can offer a more nuanced way of understanding the role of how the digital is being enacted in particular contexts. In the light of the Covid-19 pandemic it is more important than ever to understand the impacts of digital technologies as socio-material assemblages with forms of distributed agency including different actors, tools and technologies. While the dominant imaginary is often decontextualized and instrumentalist, critical theories can go some way to impact on the way digital technologies are spoken about and enacted at institutional levels. This could both contribute to and be the outcome of different sorts of research agendas and research questions. This in turn may inform policy and practice within institutions and better inform staff who are and will be increasingly required to engage with the market making overtures of private companies.

Keywords

Edtech, marketisation, socio-materialism, university futures, unbundling.

Re-theorising retention in nursing programmes: the strengths and limitations of Tinto's model for professional degrees

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Abstract

Concerns about student completion of higher education (HE) programmes are common across Europe (Vossensteyn et al 2015) with the OECD setting this issue as a key indicator for international comparison (e.g. OECD 2013). On these measures, Norway has a higher than average HE withdrawal rate, while the UK's is significantly lower. However, in nursing degrees the rates of non-completion are similar, at around 25% in both countries: non-completion rates in nursing are relatively high in England and low in Norway (compared to other subjects). This forms part of a complex picture about the supply of nurses that is in focus in many countries. We start from these macro patterns in comparative data, and the acknowledgement of nursing retention as a socially important concern, and interrogate them through qualitative analyses of the experiences of nursing students in Norway and England. In England, about 50 nursing students were interviewed in 2016, while in Norway around 40 students were interviewed in 2019-2020, all using a common interview guide. This set of three papers aims to convey how nursing students perceive and meet the challenges of their degree, how they think retention could be improved and how institutional and national approaches vary. Across the papers, Tinto's model of institutional departure provides a lens to compare experiences between countries and compare wider patterns and assumptions in the retention and completion literature to the somewhat 'other' case of nursing students.

Link to conference theme

Tinto's (1993) interactional model for student departure has arguably become a 'default' conceptual framework for student retention work. This model states that students come to an institution with a certain level of commitment and a goal, and their eventual success is dependent on successful social and academic integration. The concepts of social and academic integration have near "paradigmatic stature in the study of college student departure" (Braxton 2000:2) and so shape assumptions about retention dynamics. Such an influential model runs a risk of what Macfarlane refers to as 'strategic deception': it is easy to assume this model conveys the central features of student persistence, irrespective of national context, HE institution, course type or student group. Taking a more critical approach, we focus on Tinto's central concepts of integration and commitment in our analyses of the nursing student experience in the first two papers (Sweetman et al & Thomas et al.) We question and re-frame how these concepts are understood and how this shapes their dynamics within the wider degree experience and as influences on completion. These first two papers also resonate with Phipps' call to seek out niches and opportunities for change, even in inhospitable environments. Nursing degrees are hard to adapt and tightly regulated, with set practice placements, compulsory academic modules, and typically large cohorts of students to coordinate. The cultural environment around nursing is also laden with tensions between the value of traditional caring and 'women's' work, and the crucial professional role promoted via degrees. While acknowledging the challenges to change, we suggest there is room for institutions to address several key common student concerns found across countries and sites. In the third paper, Hovdhaugen et al pushes back against another 'strategic deception' risk in this field, of falling into a polarised debate which seeks to either support or discredit Tinto's model.

Parallel Session 1   Symposium 1   Training Room 2   Monday: 14.00 – 15.30

Hovdhaugen argues that Tinto is useful *despite* limitations in the case of nursing, as it can 'bridge' the terrain of professional degrees into the large literature on non-continuation and persistence, without ignoring the difference identified in nursing degrees. With some elaboration it can offer an accessible, familiar model to communicate students' experiences and opportunities to improve retention.

The three papers

Rachel Sweetman *et al*: ***The (dis)integration of nursing students. Multiple transitions, fragmented integration and implications for retention***

Early social and academic integration of students is generally important to promote persistence and prevent early departure. This paper considers how integration plays out in degrees with extensive practice placements in clinical settings and degree programmes with large cohorts, thus effectively investigating the challenges of mass HE on persistence. The paper argues that the shifts between practice and academic sites, combined with institutional practices which encourage frequent changes of peer group, physical location and academic network, tends to interrupt integration processes and leave students in a prolonged liminal state with challenges for motivation and greater risk of leaving.

Liz Thomas *et al*: ***Professional or student identity and commitment? Comparing the experiences of nursing and healthcare students with literature on student success***

The development of a student identity, and a commitment to a course, are key components of retention and success within literature on completion. This implies a linear process where identity formation takes place during the first year, and commitment develops over the duration of the course, eventually leading graduates to develop a professional identity. In the case of nurses, it seems a strong desire to become a healthcare professional is often the starting point for enrolling in HE, rather than the culmination of the course, and thus students have a strong initial commitment. However, many have a weak student identity. It is the professional identity, not student identity, which seems vital to retention and completion in this programme, but this is not actively nurtured by most nursing programmes.

Elisabeth Hovdhaugen *et al*: ***Institutional scope to shape persistence and departure among nursing students: re-framing Tinto for professional degrees***

Tinto's (1993) interactional model of student departure was initially developed for students in traditional academic degrees, at residential colleges in the US. This paper takes up Tinto as a fruitful starting point for a critical review of the aspects of the model which are more and less suitable for professional degrees: integration and commitment. It suggests that a Tinto-type model can be adjusted to offer a clear and valuable tool to inform institutional work on retention and completion in nursing and potentially in other short professional degrees. While we identified limitations in how integration functions in a nursing programme, the existing model is fairly easy to adapt to account for specific modes of professional commitment, which in turn may counteract the fragmented integration.

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Vossensteyn, H. et al (2015), *Dropout and Completion in Higher Education in Europe*. Brussels: European Commission.

Researching student engagement: the application of Inquiry Graphics Analysis to develop a socio-material understanding.

Kevin Ardron

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Abstract

This paper aligns with the ideas presented in the think piece by Janja Komljenovic in the sense that notions of student engagement are contextualised by how the Higher Education market is experienced at the micro-level.

The discourse associated with student engagement is extensive, it has been widely conceptualised, generally adopted as a force for good and is central to university policy in the United Kingdom. As a concept of strategic concern, it is framed by the social (and financial) contract that exists between universities and students and is moulded by marketised business models that demand 'engagement' is positioned as a measure of success. In the context of this, and the digital transformation of Higher Education, engagement data becomes an asset that may sustain mainstream views, compromise agency, and diminish the proximity of students. Although data driven insights provide compelling arguments for policy action, they may not provide the explanatory power to fully appreciate the complexity of the student experience.

This research offers an opportunity to reflect on, and therefore minimise, the distance created by data through a detailed, in-depth qualitative analysis of student experience informed by socio-material perspectives and the principles of Inquiry Graphics.

Ten participants, from across three faculties at one University were invited to reflect upon concepts linked to their engagement with learning and collate these ideas as images in multi-modal diaries. Critical approaches to materiality recognise that complex, day to day realities are mediated by the spaces, objects and relationships that constitute the human and therefore the student experience. In this respect, the images represent a bridge between abstract engagement concepts and the complex reality of individual experience. Inquiry Graphics Analysis retains the value of the visual artefact and supports a detailed interpretative dialogue offering an insight into the relationship between individual circumstances and the way students engage with learning.

The paper describes the application of this method, the process of participatory analysis and the technologies that supported this approach. It presents early findings indicating that students conceptualise engagement with learning as a highly situated and negotiated state influenced by diverse physical, socio-cultural and technological environments. It offers a qualitative and critical approach to materiality that may enhance data driven insights and support a more holistic understanding of the student experience.

Keywords

Recognizing diverse capitals through reflective learning: An argument for transforming the first year

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Abstract

Successful learning, particularly at the first-year level, is strongly influenced by students' incentives and ability to conform to inflexible academic norms. This is problematic as students enter higher education with diverse backgrounds, resources, and motivations. We argue that the ways in which we teach and assess at undergraduate level foster what Macfarlane, in his conference think piece, calls 'strategic deception' on the part of higher education students, leading to a 'fake it until you make it' approach to meaning making and causing students to frame 'success' in limited ways. Our paper engages with the challenge of acknowledging and incorporating more diverse student experiences. This requires student reflection, not just on what is taught, but on what it means within their own and others' frames of reference and imagined futures.

Hlengwa, in her think piece, emphasises that any attempts to 'transform' the academy will be hampered because graduates entering into academia are those who have managed to master the discoursal 'rules' of higher education. We argue that this begins with first-year teaching and learning, which tends to embrace students who fit a narrow 'normative' profile. Those who do not match this normative profile (too often, black, rural and other marginalised groups) are at risk of being alienated at this crucial juncture in their academic careers. The university fails to acknowledge and employ the array of resources and capitals that students bring into higher education, resulting in students not feeling that they 'belong' at the university and forcing them to engage in 'emotional performativity' (to use Macfarlane's phrase).

In this paper, we use a social justice lens as well as elements of an academic literacies perspective to frame our argument for transforming the first year. Throughout, we draw on data collected as part of various projects. Our analysis merges the empirical, the theoretical and our positionalities as higher education teachers and researchers. We discuss how first-year curricula could be redesigned to better embrace, recognise, and employ the diverse skills, histories, and perspectives that our first year students bring to higher education, and highlight the critical role of student reflection in this regard.

Keywords

First-year experience, teaching and learning, higher education, social justice, academic literacies.

Formation of agency in science students: how a close-up view helps challenge unjust and unhelpful orthodoxies

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Abstract

The think pieces of Phipps and Macfarlane throw down two different challenges for close-up researchers. Phipps asks how we can continue our research in meaningful and ethical ways within hostile climates and Macfarlane asks whether we are sure our research is meaningful and ethical. This paper is an open account of the difficult reflections and adjustments we have made as a research team, grappling with unexpected insights from our data and working to ensure that we free our students' voices from the domination of stereotypes.

Our research project explores the longitudinal study experiences of university science students. Spanning six higher education institutions across the United States, England, and South Africa, we investigated student development over the course of their undergraduate study, focusing on the formation of agency in these students as they traversed these demanding programmes. An initial engagement with Archer's theory on agency and its interplay with structure sent us looking for instances where students were crafting their own paths. These degrees tend to have highly structured curricula, especially in the early years, so it is perhaps unsurprising that we found few examples of agency expressed in this way. Rather we were faced with overwhelming evidence of what seemed like a rather non-agentic response, what we termed "coping". However, further empirical engagement pushed us to rethink the normative assumptions we had derived from this theory, and to reconsider these experiences on their own terms, developing an idea of 'situated agency'. Through this concept we no longer took an isolated concept of agency and tried to find it in our students' lives and experiences. Instead, we closely analysed each student's narrative to see how their words might frame their sense of agency, particularly when understood through their wider experiences.

This type of large-scale qualitative research of higher education pedagogy is not common, and we should heed Phipps' warning that we are heading into an environment that may make such work less likely, at least less likely in the ways that proved so valuable in our work. So we present this research to celebrate and affirm the need for close-up research to also sometimes be relatively large scale. Equally we present our work in light of Macfarlane's warnings: To ensure the ethics, credibility and genuine usefulness of this research rather than playing into yet another performative agenda.

Keywords

Student learning, agency, longitudinal study, comparative study, STEM degrees

Abstracts: Parallel Session 2

Citizenship education in a liminal space in higher education

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Abstract

This paper explores the conceptual issues arising from an action research project using critical and transformative exercises in citizenship education at a UK university. It develops the idea that liminal spaces for learning enable academics and students to establish critical distance and reflexivity as citizens in higher education.

The space was liminal in several senses: within the institution it existed between classes and extracurricular activities; within the classroom participatory theatre was used that allowed participants to step back from everyday reality; and, in the university's community students spent time in the margins of the city in safe spaces for homeless persons and refugees. All of these spaces are liminal in that they enabled participants to identify and address barriers to participation, nurture political subjectivation and create new identities. A crucial component was a focus on citizenship of the learner as opposed to citizenship in the abstract sense.

The advantages of the liminal space were strongly indicated in the data. Several themes that emerged showed how both teacher and student participants questioned and cultivated their senses of belonging and agency as citizens. This appeared firmly linked to the nature of the experiences and their immediate context as well as the personal emphasis. Participants' experiences are understood as incipient changes or 'becomings' in civic identity and agency that engendered solidarity and shared sense of purpose. These forms of knowledge can be conceptualised as transformational and as foundations for transformative education.

This study contributes to debates over the transformational nature of higher education and the contribution of higher education to transformative social change. It suggests that by using liminal settings one can conceptualise a form citizenship education at university on a personal level. This form of citizenship education provides fora for teachers and students to find shared values and devise interests in action within the various contexts of the institution and its community. It is suggested that this is distinct to concepts of service learning and civic engagement because it utilises different forms of liminality to insulate participants to some degree from the demands of study and interests of the institution.

A range of further questions are posed by the study. Of particular interest for conceptualising this form of activity, is the role of the teacher/researcher as a civic agent conducting pedagogical research.

Parallel Session 2   **Paper 10**   **Bowland 1**   **Monday: 16.00 – 17.30**

A critical reflection of some of the ethical issues concerning qualitative research with student participants

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Abstract

This presentation reports on some of the ethical issues arising from the presenter's doctoral research. The purpose of the study is to explore and analyse the problems associated with the implementation of formative assessment practices within a BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy programme.

A number of ethical issues are considered in relation to the study, particularly in relation to the use of qualitative data collection methods comprising focus group and semi-structured interviews with student participants. In qualitative research, the nuanced nature of ethical matters means that decisions on how to deal with them often come down to 'gut feelings' concerning what is right or wrong.

The use of the presenter's own students as participants will be discussed, taking into account the hierarchical relationship between a lecturer and their students. The concept of informed consent and the voluntary nature of participation for students will be explored. The sufficiency of standardised participant information sheets and written consent forms in achieving the ethical principle of informed consent will be evaluated. This will be followed by a discussion of how the purpose of research is articulated. Whilst research is likely to lead to the development of knowledge and advance the interests of specific groups, it usually includes factors associated with personal gain for the researcher, in this case the pursuit of an academic award. The presentation will also consider how codes of conduct are often written in a way that establishes only a basic minimum in ethical practice. The requirement of researchers to follow these in making ethical decisions about their research can have the detrimental effect of encouraging them to concentrate on protecting their own interests, thereby directing attention away from the interests of participants.

The ethical issues explored in the presentation resonate with some of the examples of 'faking' as described in Macfarlane's think piece, as well as demonstrating complicity in exhibiting his notion of 'emotional perfomativity'. In taking up Macfarlane's challenge for researchers to add their own examples, the following admissions are offered:

- A naïve supposition that students will not feel coerced into participating in their lecturer's research because a formal, approved participant information sheet informs them of this;

- A belief that receipt of institutional ethical approval and related standard documentation is sufficient evidence that ethical responsibility has been met.

Keywords

Examining orientation to society in chemistry and chemical engineering

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Abstract

This paper emerges from the society theme of the Understanding Knowledge and Student Agency. Here we take a close-up view of particular students who have caught our attention as we have gone about investigating the society theme. The UKSA project is a large multisite longitudinal project. We tracked students through four years of study in chemistry and chemical/process engineering. The study covered six institutions evenly distributed between South Africa, England and the United States.

We began with a simple conception of a nested model of orientation to society – self/limited other/general other. The 'other' here is conceived in two ways. The 'limited other' are those with whom the student has a direct link. The 'general other' can be understood more generally as 'society'. The nested model is derived from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. In particular the notion that one's capacity to fully actualise individual wellbeing is only possible in and through engagement with society. Hence, our interest in determining the extent to which an orientation to the other was visible in the student narrative. There have been four particular areas of interest that we have explored - assessment, diversity, reason for attending university, and finances. In all cases, we have included both chemistry and chemical engineering students.

In the process of these analyses we have identified some key narratives which exemplified the possible trajectories. For example, Scarlet, a chemistry student from Sodium University, who began her studies with great ideas of she could make a difference in South Africa. After three years of study she was simply focused on getting a job, any job. Scarlet's move was in the reverse direction to the one we had been hoping to observe. She began a clear orientation to the general other which seemed to erode to a focus on self. We decided it would be useful to focus on students who showed a distinct shift in orientation to society over the course of their degrees.

It is important that the close-up read is done against the backdrop of the broader analysis that has already been carried out. In examining in detail the responses of these students, we will develop questions which can then be taken back to the broader data set. This therefore affords a fractal analysis of the society theme where patterns visible in the small subset may be repeated on the larger data set.

Keywords

Critical theory; narrative; society; self and other.

The curation of a rhythmanalyst: An Autoethnographic Account of the quest for critical methodology.

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Abstract

This paper will use auto-ethnography to explore how some of the most mundane tasks of a PhD, such as searching for a methodology, can become an embodied quest for the authenticity of Self. I narrate the internal struggles I faced as a doctoral student theorising from the margins, outside dominant narratives, trying to find an ontological home for my project. This paper uses autoethnography to discuss my journey as a PhD student trying to find a critical methodology for my study. In my experience, the search for methodology is intricately connected to onto-epistemological belonging. It can be a space of contestation where one is constantly negotiating dressage, assimilation, and appropriation. This paper seeks to capture an account of myself, a PhD student speaking from the margins negotiating competing and sometimes contesting ideologies. This paper mainly reflects on how I negotiated disciplinary dressage- disciplinary entrainment into traditions and normative assumptions that offer no possibility of onto-epistemic alternatives. Secondly, I use the concept of dressage to discuss how I escaped strict dichotomies- where one can only be allegiant to one school of thought. I found this refusal of rigid dichotomies very isolating as you constantly find yourself in an in-between space between worlds/ideologies. To capture these negotiations and space of in-betweenness, I used Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of *Nepantla*. Anzaldúa theorises nepantla as a liminal space between past contradictions, present conflicting realities and an uncertain future. In this liminal, transitional space, suspended between shifts, you're two people, split between before and after. Nepantla, where the outer boundaries of the mind's inner life meet the external world of reality, is a zone of possibility (Anzaldúa 2002, 544).

Nepantla conceptualises thresholds as a rite of passage undefined, non-linear and overlapping. Anzaldúa views threshold crossing in *conocimiento* as a process towards transformation; however, she does not prescribe what junctures and thresholds one needs to cross and how this crossing will be experienced. The nepantla process is thus situated and non-monolithic. *Nepantla*, as a conceptual tool, gave me the language to engage in a critical analysis of my everyday life, enabling me to discover the changeability of the ideologies that have formed some of my onto-epistemological grounding. It acted as and conceptual tool for ideological analysis and, primarily, a tool for incessant self-analysis (1991, 27).

Keywords

Rhythmanalysis, autoethnography, critical methodology, *nepantla,* doctoral education

Think piece link: http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/hecu10/files/2021/09/Think-Piece-HECU10PHIPPS.pdf

Interviewees, "focus groups" and interpreters: the complexity of participants' roles in research into knowledge and the professions in China.

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Abstract

Bruce Macfarlane's paper questions the authenticity of the participation that is usually claimed to have taken place in qualitative research. This paper illustrates an effort to ensure that participants were fully engaged with the research, particularly for the interpretation and analysis of data. It involved a continuous dialogue between myself as a researcher and the forty-three participants over a period of approximately eighteen months, wherein I tried to engage them with one anthers' opinion and with the problem of answering my research questions. This method was necessary and effective as the participants were the experts for understanding and interpreting professional related phenomena and experiences.

My research aims to explore the process and feelings graduates went through during the acquisition, understanding and application of professional knowledge, namely professional knowledge in law and IT in the Chinese context. Apart from 22 UK university Chinese graduates, data were collected from 21 Chinese university graduates for comparative purposes. Like Yoshida's research on unwed mothers using life history interviews (Yoshida, 2020), my research requires retrospective data; however, my focus was on educational history and experience. An individually tailored design of the life grid interview helped me ensure that education is the main narrative in storytelling (Abbas et al., 2013). As first stage interviews took place from the start of the pandemic, even though in-person interviews were not viable, the life grid allowed me to understand and get to know each interviewee more comprehensively and establish close personal connections. Since this research involves professional knowledge in law and IT, significant proportions of jargon, industry phenomenon and events were mentioned in the life grid. In my second stage of data collection, I used a series of short informal interviews like the ones adopted by Brumann and Ho et al. (Ho, Jackson and Lam, 2018; Ho, Jackson and Kong, 2018; Brumann, 2012). These interviews generated indirect discussions between interviewees by presenting anonymised quotes that contained jargon, phenomenon and events to and from interviewees through a series of short interviews. This paper will further illustrate how more comprehensive arguments were made with interviewees' in-depth participation and how the relationships between interviewees and me changed throughout 18 months of data collection and analysis.

Keywords

Research quality in collaborative knowledge generation: a Chinese-UK Collaboration

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Abstract

Our research aimed to gain insights into how teachers in a convenience sample of primary schools in Chengdu, understood and engaged with the diversity of students in their classes. Responding critically to research we participated in as part of a large EU funded project on inclusive Education which had western or European framing underpinning the survey of teachers across four areas of South West China, this small focused project produced 146 observation sheets that were filled in by training teachers based at Sichuan Normal University on their school placements and 25 short interviews they conducted with teachers they observed. In attempting to stimulate preliminary thought about how to generate collaborative knowledge from a less 'Eurocentric Epistemic' in this particular socio-political, economic and cultural context, we relate to Amanda Helengwa's Think Piece. We are developing and trialling methodological and analytical approaches that challenge the current western dominance in the generation of knowledge for inclusive education. However, our work and data are fraught with issues of quality and authenticity, raising questions about the degree to which it escapes Eurocentricity and transcends the boundaries necessary for collaborative knowledge generation.

Hence, we engage substantially with many of the issues discussed by Bruce MacFarlane in his Think Piece regarding research quality, especially if we think and judge our research using conventional Eurocentric-methodological terms. For example, despite Chinese and UK colleagues' efforts to work collaboratively and supportively, the data generated by the observation sheets feels short and perceived absences are hard to interpret. Short conversations (instead of 30–40-minute interviews as envisaged) are shaped by power relations that we cannot directly experience. The student-teachers could only engage in our project for data generation. This raises many questions about how we generate truthfulness from these small snippets of data and ensure valid interpretations of it.

However, we argue that these qualitative insights and the cross-national-linguistic conversations represent, the important efforts we have made to centre the specific Chinese context as suggested by Chen (2008) in Asia as Method. We believe that systematically recording the relevant knowledge's that we found through research encounters, can help us build layers of understanding about inclusive education is important to our endeavours. We have adapted Danermark's (2019) critical realist-based framework for interdisciplinary research with the way of generating systemic ways of recording the presence, absences, inclusion and discarding of potentially valuable knowledges and research practices.

Keywords

Research Methods, Collaborative International Knowledge Generation, Critical Realism, Research Quality.

What does it mean for a university to have an academic project?

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Abstract

Despite being located within very different contexts, the flattening effects of global processes, such as ranking, reduce institutional differentiation as the discursive conception of universities is increasingly that of markets in competition with each other for consumers (Komljenovic think piece). This paper which is a case study of a university in South Africa critically reflects on institutional identities and the nature of the academic project. The concept of 'academic project' is ambiguous and rarely discussed in higher education research. There are multiple conceptions of what constitutes an academic project for any university and not one 'truth', and this is probably as it should be given that universities are meant to be places of contestation with multiple aims. This paper critically reflects on what it means for a university to have an academic project. I argue that without the development of some form of shared (and yet not settled) consensus, it is difficult for an institution to work toward particular goals with a sense of collaboration and commitment. Of even greater concern is that without any shared sense of what academic project guides an institution, it becomes possible for a number of other drivers to dominate. In an era of managerialism, it is especially important for universities to act as stewards of the academic project – and this requires conversations about what it is. Using qualitative data from a survey, and observations, focus groups and interviews, the paper provides an analysis of the discursive construction of the academic project of Rhodes University. By drawing on a social realist approach I argue that views expressed by participants are *real* in the sense of being the true opinions of those who express them and in the sense that such views have effects in the world. At the ontological level such views are seen to emerge from whole range of mechanisms which are worth identifying to answer the question: 'What must the university be like and its context for such views to exist?' Recognising the existence of these varied opinions and the implications thereof allows for collective imagination of those views and ideas that can move the institution forward and those that can hold it back.

Keywords:

Academic project, institutional differentiation, knowledge economy, critical role and criticality

Mentoring of emerging supervisors: The university looks good on paper, but it did not work as expected

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Abstract

In South Africa, as anywhere else, there is pressure to increase the number of doctoral graduates to compete in the so-called 'knowledge economy. With the rapid rise in doctoral numbers comes increasing pressure on supervisors. In this paper, I present how mentoring through co-supervision and informal relationships enabled emerging supervisors to develop their confidence. Emerging supervisors in this study refer to academics who have been supervising for less than five years.

The study was primarily qualitative and exploratory. The data was drawn from 20 higher education institutions and 186 supervisors who responded to a survey, and 54 who agreed to be interviewed. It offers a critical and social realist account of how South African institutions develop emerging supervisors. One of the study's key findings was about the use of mentoring as a means of the development of emerging supervisors. The need for transformation was much evident in the findings of my study.

The South African higher education system is differentiated, and institutional history and type issues were considered when analysing the study data. Furthermore, multiple subculture institutions, including the culture of postgraduate supervision and the agency of the supervisors and their ability for self-reflection, all came into play in the mentoring arrangements and relationships reported. Close-up research with detailed, in-depth qualitative analysis from different institutions was essential to understand what conditioned the mentoring relationships.

Throughout the study came concern about the lack of support for emerging supervisors. The data reflected various supervision development workshops and courses and the use of mentoring as a form of supervision development. It is this last aspect that I focus on in this paper. Mentoring emerged in the data in various forms. For some, mentoring entailed a formal, institutionally arranged relationship between an emerging supervisor and senior staff member. There was also evidence of informal mentoring arrangements developed through the agency of the novice, who sought out an experienced academic for guidance. The study data suggest that formal and informal mentoring relationships often included guidance and support on issues beyond supervision.

In all cases of positive reflection on mentorship experiences, these were not institutionally arranged or required. Instead, the mentorship relationship, sometimes with a co-supervision aspect, emerged through the interplay of the agency of individuals seeking or offering mentorship and the culture of collaboration and support in the department, faculty or university.

Keywords

Mentoring; Doctoral Supervision; Higher Education; Structure; Culture; Agency

Are some of us in a parallel pipeline? An analysis of how postdoctoral fellowships are described on university websites, in the context of casualisation and concerns about the academic pipeline in South Africa.

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Abstract

This paper responds to Amanda Hlengwa's thinkpiece by bringing the casualisation and de-professionalisation of academic work into the conversation about racial transformation and the academic pipeline. On one hand, policy discourse in SA higher education expresses worries about the small proportion of permanent academics with PhDs. On the other, it is concerned with the underrepresentation of black and women academics, which is the motivation behind the NGAP program, in which young black and women academics without PhDs are recruited into permanent jobs, with reduced teaching load in the first three years. NGAP thus recognises how important job security is to encouraging young people to pursue a career in academia. This presentation intervenes through a focus on postdoctoral fellows and fellowships. Universities already host thousands of postdoctoral fellows, who have PhDs and are required to publish, but are *not employees* for tax and equity purposes, and are not part of any career development structure that leads to secure employment. I analyse how postdoctoral fellowships are described on SA university websites. Typically these sites claim that postdoctoral fellowships serve two purposes: (a) they help the university achieve its research productivity/excellence goals, and (b) they benefit early career academics by giving them further research training under a mentor/host, in preparation for a future academic career. By promising to prepare postdocs for a *future* academic career in this way, the descriptions thus treat postdocs as perpetual learners, and ignore how many postdocs have already established themselves as accomplished academics *in the absence of secure employment*. The descriptions are also disingenuous insofar as the real reason for constructing postdocs as trainees and learners is more likely a *post-hoc legal justification for the fact they are already not employees*, than because there is any plan being made for the incorporation of postdocs into the permanent academic workforce in future. And the reasons why postdocs are not employees are because (a) this makes their research outputs very cheap and (b) they do not dilute the 'per capita' research output scores of universities that calculate this based on the number of permanent academics they host. Thus, the expressed policy concern with both greater PhD capacity and better racial representation among the permanent staff overlooks how the higher education system is itself incentivising the casualisation and de-professionalisation of academic work. The paper raises questions about the meaning of 'transformation' in a context where academic research has been thoroughly instrumentalised.

Keywords

Perceptions of success for part-time and flexible learners during emergency remote teaching

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Abstract

This topic engages with questions around the ways in which close up higher education research reflects, integrates and advances higher education as a critical endeavour. The pivot online in March 2020 has the potential to transform delivery of part time and flexible learning in higher education for the future. Put simply, we will never go back to pre-Covid times for part time and flexible delivery. Thus, this study provides the impetus for part time and flexible learning units/departments/schools to engage in a reimagining of its provision, as the benefits for remote and hybrid models become apparent. A wide range of literature has already emerged which assesses the sudden closure of Higher Education Institutions during the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, when many academic institutions turned to ERT (emergency remote teaching) in order to maintain teaching and learning. The Faculty of Lifelong Learning at SETU, Carlow Campus (South East Technological University Ireland), one of the largest providers of part-time learning in the Irish sector, undertook a study of its learners in January 2021, to ascertain their experiences of the online pivot. This research takes a qualitative approach to the findings of this study and it highlights the importance of acknowledging the lived experiences of our learners. We acknowledge that it is necessary to engage with our learners' opinions on the challenges and affordances of online and remote learning, and that the experiences of our learners are key to the future of our faculty and to part-time learning in Ireland. We focus on the normative expectations of learners, and their experiences of learning in the remote context, using a self-selected sample where N = 401 learners.

Our findings mirror large bodies of emergent research, which suggest that 'online teaching and learning may proffer certain added benefits that could even lead to better course outcomes, notwithstanding technological and socio-economic issues faced by disenfranchised and marginalised social groups that limit equitable access to education' (Lemay et al., 2021). This research puts a focus on critical research on the student experience of the pivot and gives an opportunity to engage in a debate on close-up research and critical approaches more generally.

Keywords
Lifelong Learning, part-time learning, emergency remote teaching

Researching the development of transnational education partnerships: an activity theory approach.

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Abstract

The development of transnational education (TNE) partnerships in higher education are significant contributors to the expansion of higher education internationally. However, there is little evidence available which reveals, beyond the business set-up, how they are developed, how challenges are overcome, the significance of organizational cultural contexts on progress, the development of relationships and so on. For growth to occur, is is important to get in touch with 'the vibe' of a particular context, which can only be achieved through close-up knowledge and engagement.

In universities close-up knowledge is most likely to be achieved by those appointed for the oversight and management of individual partnerships. Often termed academic liaison or link tutors, these university academics are an excellent example of the 'third space profession who undertake the complex boundary spanning activities that make partnerships work. Existing research identifies that TNE link tutors need to have experience of working in complex environments, in-depth understanding of organizational procedures, the ability to manage power differentials, sophisticated communication and interpersonal skills, the ability to create and lead a cultural context for learning and development, change management and the ability to resolve difficulties.

This paper relates to research carried out by a third space professional, a TNE link tutor responsible for a TNE partnership which demonstrates successful growth over the past seven years, with notable development in the quality and range of provision. The research adopts an ethnographic approach with multiple forms of existing and newly collected data being used to explore significant factors influencing the development of the partnership through reviewing three different undertakings; a staff development programme, the annual performance review and student records administration. Undertaking this type of research presents the researcher with significant challenges with regard to transparency and reflexivity if the result is to be regarded as trustworthy and useful to the higher education community. Having an authentic approach to reflexivity associated with the subject and the process of the research is important to note, especially in these complex contexts. This has been enabled by taking a socio-cultural perspective of partnership development and of research, and in particular, the diagramming facility of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT).

Keywords

Taking Rapid Photovoice online: Critical Reflections on the Project "Student Wellbeing in the Aftermath of Protest Violence" during Covid-19

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Abstract

In this paper we reflect on taking Photovoice online as a strategy to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our project "Student Wellbeing in the Aftermath of Protest Violence". Photovoice is a close-up emancipatory action research methodology with multiple, intersecting social justice goals. We start by considering Photovoice in general and its use in research into the student experience. We then present our pragmatic redesign and application of the methodology as Rapid Photovoice (RPV). Unlike reports in methodology literature that recommend multiple engagements with participants over several weeks or months (e.g. Kessi & Cornell 2015; Strack, Magill & McDonagh 2004; Wang & Burris, 1997), our redesign of the method as RPV compressed the core of engagements into three one-day workshops of training, production and reflection held in the course of a single week. This was successfully employed in four university cases as documented in Luescher et al (2021).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown in 2020, we could not visit the fifth and last of our case universities in person; thus, we decided re-design RPV to try and take it online and conduct the series of Photovoice workshops with student activists using Zoom as interactive online platform. As in the other cases, the workshops were preceded and followed by further engagements; however just like the core face-to-face training, data collection and collective discussion work, this now also had to be done online. We thus piloted 'online RPV' as a technology-embedded research method which, along with the research collaborations in the project was conducted into the virtual space in ways (Kibona et al, *forthcoming*).

With the benefit of hindsight, we critically reflect in this paper the key problems involved in the 'emergency redesign' and implementation of online RPV. These reflections are based primarily on reflective notes kept by the participants in the case study, i.e. researchers and student activists. In the process of presenting these reflections, we respond to Macfarlane's think piece. We are particularly interested in exploring whether online RPV can sustain any claims to being a 'close-up, emancipatory methodology'. What different ways offer themselves to involve our RPV participants in an online environment? Is there potential to attain the Freirean social justice goals in which this research method was originally grounded (Liebenberg 2018)? And finally: How can we go beyond researcher reflexivity and self-disclosure to include in our critical methodological reflections those of participants?

Keywords

Higher education, Photovoice, Rapid photovoice, online research methods, Student experience, Student activism, Student affairs, Violence, Wellbeing, Covid-19.

Abstracts: Parallel Session 3

Critical approach to threshold concepts research: counterhegemonic and creative practices

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Abstract

In their think pieces, Phipps and Macfarlane challenge us to consider what we do as researchers, who we include in our work and whit what voice they are included. Also, Macfarlane cautions that it is important to avoid the oversimplification of ideas as they enter the mainstream. This pushes us to ask questions about the current state of thresholds knowledge and where it might need to go in the future.

Through threshold concepts, the learner enters the liminal space in which the transformation process, potentially, takes place (Meyer and Land, 2003, 2005). However, threshold concepts are always epistemologically informed (Cousin, 2008). They are socio-constructed entities or artifacts that represent a situated disciplinary worldview, accepted and legitimized by a specific community of practice (Rattray and Calduch, forthcoming), defining which knowledge is central and which is peripheral to the discipline (Barradell and Fortune, 2020).

To avoid exerting epistemic violence in our curriculum, it is essential to reflect on which thresholds are identified, legitimated and promoted. To achieve this aim, some difficult questions must be addressed: Who should be involved in the identification of thresholds (Barradell and Peseta, 2017)? How can we prevent threshold concepts from leading to epistimicide (De Sousa, 2018)? Do threshold concepts act pervasively as guardians of disciplines, as self-perpetuating of the hegemony within a discipline (Davies, 2016)? What forms of knowledge are we considering as thresholds and which ones are we marginalising (Rattray, 2021)? Should we accept certain unexpected transformations to allow for the creation and evolution of knowledge (Calduch and Rattray, 2021)?

Our aim with this paper is not to offer definitive answers, but to pose these questions to the research community, and to reflect on their implications. We highlight two directions we think that threshold concepts scholars need to move forward to achieve a more critical research approach.

Firstly, related to their identification, we want to encourage alternative methods that can help the counterhegemonic agenda: to promote the inclusion of non-privileged stakeholders, to focus on the transformative potential and not only on the dominant position of ideas, or to pay attention to variation between stakeholders and not only to consensus. Secondly, related to research on liminal space, we want to encourage methods that manage to capture the dynamics of this fluid and recursive space to overcome, potentially, reductionist and linear understandings: ethnography and micro-ethnography, visual art-based research, or narrative inquiry, among others.

Keywords

Transformation discourse through a decolonial gaze: co-generating knowledge with students from rural areas in the teaching of science in higher education

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Abstract

This paper argues for the learning that students from rural areas in South Africa bring with them to higher education, particularly in the field of science. The focus on rural students is informed by the realization that these students are, at most, cut off from mainstream discourses as these areas are characterized by underdevelopment. When these students join higher education, they are likely to experience a sense of alienation, yet they bring with them literacies and practices that could be relevant for learning in higher education. These literacies are, however, not likely to be recognized or rewarded in higher education. The close-up research question thus becomes: how can universities adapt to widening and diversifying the student body, especially in science classrooms? More specifically, what transformation discourse would enable a living and an inclusive curriculum that values all students, including those from rural areas, a social justice issue? In line with the idea of inclusivity in higher education, in her think piece, Mandy Hlengwa cautions us about the construct of 'whitenes' in terms of how it plays out as a constraint for genuine transformative discourse, a discourse that will allow all those involved in interactions for genuine, not just symbolic participation. The construct of 'whitenes' and symbolic participation are likely to be true in the field of science in the case under investigation in this paper. I argue that a transformation discourse that has a potential to enable a living and an inclusive curriculum should be informed by a decolonial gaze, in conjunction with the construct of Discourse with a capital letter D to engage with the epistemological and ontological orientations of the discipline of science. Decoloniality could be understood as a mechanism that is geared towards valuing the epistemologies and ontologies of the global South. I draw on in-depth focus group discussions conducted with 2nd year science students at a historically white and privileged university in South Africa, to develop my argument. Data shows that students' learning from rural contexts is sometimes subjected to critical thinking practices, explanations, descriptions as well as arguments, literacies and practices which are valued in science. However, academic teachers, wittingly or unwittingly, seldom, if ever, draw on what these students already know about the texts they are expected to produce when they teach these aspects of science. I conclude the paper by discussing the implications for inclusive and living curriculum in the field of science.

Keywords

Higher education, transformation discourse, decoloniality, global South, inclusive curriculum

Passing through Faking Authenticity

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Abstract

Trust, according to Rempel et al., is "one of the most desired qualities in any close relationship" – which must surely include our "close up" research, as well as our teaching and other practices in a HE context. And yet, as Macfarlane highlights in his thinkpiece, our own practices may be "fak[ing] it – or perhaps caus[ing] others to do so". This paper grapples with that question by reflecting critically on the values and norms we embody in our practices and in turn demand from our students. Our previous work revealed that some students appeared to be producing reflective writing of the desired depth and focus, without deriving the expected benefits, which we concluded was a mimetic and inauthentic enactment of "penitent performance". We made sense of this through drawing on the work of Stenhouse, and his distinction between initiation and induction. Applying this insight to the context of student engagement, we concluded that for students to be engaging both congruently and authentically, rather than mimetically, along the socio-cultural facet, they would need to have undergone induction rather than merely initiation, in Stenhouse's terms.

As their teachers, we assume students construct their imagined communities to look rather like… us. We project onto them the aspiration to achieve membership of our discipline, our profession, our institution – and yet the imagined communities they construct may look nothing like us at all, especially where the students don't see themselves reflected in our various subjectivities. Ashwin has argued that the goal of HE is to be transformative, which we've noted elsewhere accords with Stenhouse's "induction". Yet transformative HE assumes that students want to be transformed – which is not always the case, as many students' HE ambitions are entirely instrumental. Macfarlane calls on us to interrogate critically our own authenticity in our practices, to consider both how we "fake it" and how in turn we cause our students to do so. As close-up HE researchers, we turn our gaze with alacrity onto the values and cultures our students bring with them to HE. It is perhaps time to examine as critically the values and cultures we ourselves bring, and the ethnocentrism to which that gives rise.

Keywords

Authenticity, student reflection, student engagement, imagined communities.

'It's a Faustian pact we make'. A critical analysis of metaphors used in institutional discourses surrounding educational technology innovation and in the spoken accounts of academic teaching staff

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Abstract

Technological innovations, under the aegis of 'technology-enhanced learning' (TEL), are high on policy agenda in higher education. Komljenovic makes it clear in her Think Piece, that we should expect 'substantial and fast expansion of EdTech innovations' as the sector vies to increase its competitive advantage in the global market. Universities are in the process of developing their digital policies in particular ways that comprise the integration of external digital solutions with possible internal ones. For those who teach in the sector, it is a time of change and upheaval. As Komljenovic's piece implies, the socio-cultural dimension - the impact of technological change on working communities and their practices and beliefs on the ground – appears under-researched, in close-up, empirical work.

This presentation reports on a close up, case study project that attempted to address that gap. The study adopted a qualitative, ethnographic style approach. Its aims were three-fold: to understand better the way that users of digital devices and applications deploy them to support pedagogy; to explore teachers' lived experiences and beliefs about technology and pedagogy; and finally, how they feel roles and identities as teachers are changing in the 'digital age'. Staff were interviewed from across the institution's main faculties and, for triangulation, linguistic analyses of relevant documentary sources, where available, were made.

The interview data formed a spoken corpus of naturally occurring language. A prevalent feature was the range of metaphors that respondents engaged in using: some of these explicit and familiar metaphors but others less consciously used. The presentation will, firstly, focus on a critical take on dominant metaphors that permeate and shape thinking and ideologies around educational technology innovation in education policy. Secondly, as it was anticipated that documentary sources would promote the TEL ideology, a critical language lens which draws on both critical discourse analysis (CDA) and critical metaphor analysis (CMA) was applied and an example will be presented. Thirdly, there will be an examination of metaphors that frequently appeared in the spoken data and instantiations will be presented as illustrative examples. While respondents were often given to use metaphors that demonstrated new influences on their thinking about learning and teaching and their professional roles and identities, an interesting feature was the extent to which these were mixed with more familiar metaphors.

Keywords

Educational technology; higher education teaching and learning; metaphor; case study; lived experience

Electronic attendance and engagement monitoring policies: A critical perspective.

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Abstract

In this paper, I offer reflections on a critical discourse analysis of documents relating to the introduction of electronic attendance and engagement monitoring at a UK university. My aim is to consider the implications of using electronic attendance and engagement monitoring (also known as pre-emptive learning analytics) for the university – student relationship. The paper relates to Dr Komljenovic's thinkpiece on the challenges of digitalisation in Higher Education and considers the role of commercial providers of digital monitoring systems in enabling institutions to demonstrate responsiveness to regulatory and market requirements.

Semiotic and interdiscursive analysis was carried out on texts from three different sources: the institution, the commercial analytics software provider, and one academic subject area. Authority discourses in institutional texts indicate an ambivalent attitude to students exemplified by oscillating discourses of 'Here to help' and 'Over to you'. At the micro level, the 'Concerned tutor' discourse indicates a diminished authority position for academics who are nevertheless charged with managing student engagement on the ground.

The critical discourse analysis provides a view of the institution as managing multiple competing interests resulting in an ambivalent and confused authority dynamic with students. I suggest a shift in the discursive positioning of students from 'consumers' to 'assets' as I contend that learning analytics policies are primarily performative in nature. They generate auditable evidence of institutional efforts to improve student engagement while failing to address contextual factors that lead to non-engagement and attrition. The analysis identified discursive strategies of pathologisation and responsibilisation which result in the attribution of educational 'failure' to individual deficiencies rather than structural inequalities. This leads me to question the willingness of institutions to fully acknowledge the complex needs of some non-traditional students who, despite admission to full-time study, are effectively excluded from attendance and engagement on traditional terms.

Finally, I hope to consider the ethical sensitivity of carrying out close-up research of this kind and the 'messiness' of coming to an accurate reconstruction of the data from a critical interpretative approach. In presenting my ideas, I hope to uncover resonances with others and stimulate dialogue for further reflection for my ongoing research on the HEREE programme here at Lancaster.

Keywords

The global pandemic and the legitimisation of pervasive EdTech: Critical perspectives on educational technology use in Higher Education

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Abstract

Whilst technology may have been the 'saviour' of Higher Education (HE) from some of the immediate logistical and enforced geographical challenges caused by the global pandemic, there are important questions to be asked of the longer-term implications of educational technology in relation to its mounting legitimacy within HE. The opportunistic dialogue that emerged in response to the pandemic has imbued HE debate with notions of the pandemic as a catalyst for change and as an opportunity for transformation. This dialogue has brought about a revisioning of HE - its function, its reach, its purpose – with technology as the determinant of this change. As this paper will describe, the pandemic has acted to justify and legitimise the technological pervasion of an already technology-centric HE landscape, culminating in unprecedented levels of investment into a new paradigm of data-driven technology to serve the needs of its imagined future. As this paper highlights, empowered by the apparent success of technology's deliverance in the face of the pandemic, this new technological paradigm is entrenched in notions of transformatory potential, libertarianism, and market opportunity. Consonant with the conference themes and aligned with the think piece *Higher Education industry expansion: commodification versus assetization* (Komljenovic, 2021), the aim of this paper is to reposition and critically frame discussions of educational technology. Whereas existing research has sought to problematise the impact and effects of educational technology, this paper introduces a new angle of critique, one that critically explores the role of dialogue, rhetoric, and discourse in the act of defining and legitimising the future role that educational technology plays in HE. By applying a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to key sector-orientated literature published in response to the pandemic, this paper describes how the emergent dialogue of the pandemic has acted to catalyse and legitimise a new paradigm of technocentricism that grants countenance to, and is mediatory of, neoliberal, libertarian, and consumerist ideologies. This paper therefore introduces a new angle of critique in that it explores the discursive characterisation of educational technology. By positioning educational technology in a critical and uniquely political light, this paper offers a much-needed critical lens through which to view this new era of technological pervasion.

Keywords

EdTech, Critical Theory, Discourse Analysis, Legitimacy, Datafication

T

From performativity to authenticity – a critical reflection on the journey of becoming a critical scholar

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Abstract

When I first read Bruce MacFarlane's Think Piece, *'Faking' close-up research?: the risks of strategic deception in a post-truth world*, I felt defensive. As a doctoral researcher, attempting critical scholarly work, I struggled with the suggestion that my work might be "deceptive" or "fake." I felt this way until I realized I may have done exactly the thing that MacFarlane writes about in his Think Piece; namely, the "production of 'ready-to-wear' positionality statements," applied in an instrumental, surface-level way. This realization served as a critical incident for me, one that I use as a point of departure for a critical auto-ethnographic account that forms the basis of my talk and forthcoming paper.

The context of this account sits within engineering education research (EER), an area of higher education research that seeks to advance practice and research in engineering higher education. Over the last 15-20 years, the priorities of EER have evolved, from descriptive research, primarily used to share classroom-based practices, toward the interrogation of more fundamental questions, such as "what is engineering for?" and applying that learning to the engineering curriculum. Despite that evolution, the field still grapples with disagreements in priorities, research questions and a wide variety of methodological approaches, and with them, varying epistemological approaches and demands.

This has been a challenging starting point for an early career researcher, especially as the first doctoral student in the engineering department at my university to focus on educational research. Through this reflective account, I aim to shed light on some of the structural barriers to doing critical research in a positivist world, alongside agentic stories of transcendence. In doing so, I hope to challenge what MacFarlane calls "strategic deception," and instead consider the existence of a steep learning curve in doing critical scholarship.

In acknowledging the difficulty of this type of work, I then offer a challenge: is it not the role of this community of scholars and academic advisors to extend the proverbial olive branch? Few aspects of academic life within modern neoliberal capitalism generate the conditions for robust and thoughtful critical scholarship. During this session, I hope to provoke discussion on how, as an academic community, we can use the tools of scholarship and praxis to fight against the chains of our condition. Instead of calling out strategic deception, I wonder, how can we better support our collective, radical endeavour?

Keywords

Perspectives on the purpose of engineering higher education: A close-up view on undergraduate education in the US and England

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Abstract

The think piece by Hlengwa (2022) prompts us to think of the pace and the nature of transformation happening at higher education institutions. Particularly concerned about the academy no longer serving the students' transformation and the public good. This latter idea speaks to Komljenovic's call for a discussion on the higher education industry and the markets (2022). Bridging these two think pieces together leads us to think about the kind of humans we are educating in these marketized higher education systems. A useful way to explore the formerly introduced idea is to adopt the Human Capabilities Approach, mainly put forward by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, to question what higher education is for, or what is a student able to do and be during and after being a part of the higher education system. Why do they even choose to enroll in a university system? How, if at all, do students change during their time of undergraduate education, and what values do they attain and leave behind in the process?

This paper, which is built on work from my ongoing doctoral dissertation, is written from a point of interdisciplinarity of engineering education and higher education research. The purpose is to build a qualitative multi-case study to explore the purpose of an engineering higher education degree from the students' perspective, in the hopes of answering the following research question:

RQ 1: What are the held perspectives of undergraduate engineering students towards the purpose of higher education?

This work is part of a larger overarching project, an international four-year longitudinal collaboration spanning the Unites States, England, and South Africa, with two institutions from each country for a total of six institutions. For data analysis, the focus has been on chemical engineering students in England and the US where the entirety of the students' interviews across the four years is read as one narrative to capture their whole story. Although the study establishes extended engagement with the interviewed students and includes longitudinal and contextual elements to add to the thickness of the study, there are still challenges of conducting qualitative research as presented in Macfarlane's think piece (2022). Current challenges are concerning the dividing line between myself, as a doctoral student, and the participants, the extent to which the students are actually participating in the formation of this research, and not merely being interviewees, and the ongoing reflection on my positionality.

Keywords

Human capabilities, engineering higher education, international comparative education

Developing a personal project: chemistry and chemical engineering students' formation

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Abstract

Bruce Macfarlane "afflicts the comfortable" in his think piece (to repurpose Mr Dooley's phrase): are we, as qualitative researchers, perhaps a little too quick off the mark to claim the moral high ground of criticality in our research methodologies?

Some of the central questions in our field are around what higher education is for, and how students think about their academic and social journeys during a crucial stage in their lives.

The development of potential (professional) selves as an aspect of a personal project is not well understood, but researchers have shown that while growing familiarity with disciplinary knowledge plays a role, there are other factors at work in the process. Ibarra (1999) argues that engaging in professional activities and developing social networks linked to the potential profession play a role. Sense-making activities (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) and narratives that reconcile external messages about the professional role with internal ones around the individual's needs and ambitions are important.

Students enter higher education with rudimentary ideas around what they value about what scientists and engineers do, and how they present themselves in the world. The period spent at university is often a meaning-laden transition as students grow in their understanding of their disciplines, themselves, and the world they live in. In some instances, significant formational events influence the trajectory of a student's personal project. In this paper we explore what a group of STEM students from three countries at six institutions over four years value in terms of their personal priorities, shifts in direction for some, cementing of identities for others and, for some, letting go of previously held certainties. We consider the following questions:

- How do students make sense of shifts in what they view as valuable in their personal projects?
- What is the role of formational or seminal experiences in the trajectory of personal projects?

Our paper in this work-in-progress account explores the varied ways in which STEM students speak about what matters to them about the way they position themselves in relation to their discipline. The longitudinal nature of the study and extended engagement with student projects contribute to rich findings. However, we remain challenged by Macfarlane's (2022) think piece to examine our (ready-to-wear) 'garment' as qualitative researchers and the claims we make for authenticity and criticality in close-up research.

Keywords

Personal projects, sense-making, professional selves

In between belonging in higher education

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify, disrupt, and, to some extent, rearticulate the nature and practices of belonging in modern higher education. In doing so, it seeks to show how belonging is a metaxic concept and, thus, necessarily focused on and located within in-between spaces – epistemologically, subjectively, relationally, temporally, and spatially. The paper seeks to map different ways of belonging with a view to both generating richer understandings regarding the nature of the concept and opening up spaces wherein practices in higher education might be critiqued and proposed. To this end, it speaks to the ways in which both Amanda Hlengwa and Alison Phipps offer more reflexive imaginings of higher education, informed by diverse, and often less-heard, voices.

Before embarking on the theoretical examination of belonging, it will be useful to consider the methodological approach that sits at the foundation of this paper. Belonging indicates, at a basic level, the notion that some objects or people have a particular worth inside a particular frame of reference, for example higher education. This inside-outside dichotomy with respect to belonging is important, not least because such bounded categories are dominated and policed by certain forms of knowledge. At a theoretical level, this paper will make use of Foucauldian analyses, drawing particularly on the inextricable relationship he identifies between knowledge and power but also his epistemic method of eventalization, which seeks to pluralise and problematise understandings of events, their relations, and points of reference.

The paper will begin by outlining belonging-between-meanings and in so doing seek to identify spaces where subjugated knowledges might inform richer meaning and more equalised power relations. From here it will progress to consider belonging-between-subjects, denoting the metaxic nature of this phenomenon and recognising the affective dimensions which derive from the subjectification of individual potentialities as well as the relational dimensions of belonging together. It will then move on to analyse belonging-between-places, identifying the importance of spatial and environmental affordances. And finally, consider belonging-between-potentialities with a view to proposing how belonging in higher education may be reified in new and productive ways.

Keywords

Higher education, belonging, Foucault, eventalization, knowledge

(Not) Heeding the call for change: Reinforcing power structures at the expense of student success

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Abstract

This study investigated the challenges faced by a group of students while completing a professional higher education qualification at a small Higher Education Institution in South Africa. Research data was obtained from seventy hours of interviews conducted with 43 students in semi-structured interviews and fifteen academics in three focus groups.

Interviews and focus group discussions took place in three separate phases; firstly fourth-year student participants were interviewed, and feedback was provided to academics in the fourth-year focus group; this was repeated for the third-year student participants and teaching cohort and lastly for the first- and second-year group. It was data emerging from the fourth-year student interviews and fourth-year academics focus groups that forms the basis of this paper.

While students being accepted onto this four-year combined undergraduate and postgraduate programme would all have had to achieve the same minimum marks on entry and on progression to the next level, the pass rates amongst black students were significantly lower than that of their white peers. For most students learning in a second language was a problem; but it was their interactions with the fourth-year academics that became a bigger challenge.

When these issues were raised in the focus group, academics fell back, unquestioningly, on the deficit model of believing that the problems lay within the student cohort, their motivation, their ability, their preparedness, and were unable to see their own contribution to these students' struggles. At the time of the research, academics appeared to have little understanding of the impact of their teaching practices on students. Equally, there was little awareness of a need to examine and potentially revise how they engaged with students within the cycles of Teaching, Learning and Assessing, given the change in the demographic composition of the student body.

Subsequent to this research taking place, many staff who were research participants have left and the department currently comprises a significantly different teaching cohort. The experiences of these students and the responses from the academic body, are still relevant when examining calls for change, in a context of unequal power dynamics.

Assuring quality in Doctoral Education: what's measured is not all that meaningful; what's meaningful cannot be measured

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Abstract

The doctoral standard (CHE 2020) sets threshold levels for doctoral education in South Africa. In a 2021 review of the doctorate, institutions had to account for their processes of doctoral student selection, supervisor appointment, proposal approval, ethical clearance, progress management, examination, and so on. They also had to demonstrate how it is that institutions ensure that doctoral candidates develop the prescribed set of attributes.

In this reflection on the national review, I present concerns about whether meaningful aspects of quality in doctoral education can be measured across disciplines and institutional contexts, given the very specialized nature of doctoral education. I argue that the quality assurance process failed to offer a space for engagement with the normative values of doctoral education. Instead, the focus of the review was on generic processes and attributes, which positions doctoral education in performative rather than critical ways.

MacFarlane (*Thinkpiece*) argues that knowledge creation in the academy can readily be concerned with performativity and suggests that research in general and doctoral education in particular can potentially be an exercise in 'faking it'. The immediate response should not, in MacFarlane's view, be to blame the student for playing a game which has been set out for them by the academic profession. He suggests that we look at how issues of inauthenticity in research emerges, at least in part, as a response to the persona presented to the doctoral student by the supervisor. I would agree, and go so far as to suggest that rather than attending to this problem, much of quality assurance is an assurance of such performativity. I would also suggest that any 'false performativity' that may be evidenced in students' work emerges because of macro forces at play, every bit as much as in response to supervisory rhetoric. Komljenovic (Thinkpiece) points out that higher education functions in many ways like an industry serving multiple markets. She argues that many macro analyses of how the so-called 'knowledge economy' shapes higher education miss out on analyses of micro-processes. I use the national review of doctoral education in South Africa as a basis from which to take a close-up look at how such micro activities are shaped by macro forces, and vice versa.

Keywords

Abstracts: Parallel Session 4

Developing knowledge-rich accounts of 'graduateness'

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Margaret Blackie,

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Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Nicole Pitterson,

Virginia Tech

Reneé Smit,

University of Cape Town

Introduction

This symposium examines how different elements of students' 'graduateness' are formed through their studies, and how these elements change their relations to knowledge and society. The central focus of the symposium is on how we can develop knowledge-rich conceptions of graduateness that capture the ways in which students are transformed through their engagement in higher education and how this transformation prepares them to contribute to their societies. This perspective is intended to offer an alternative to dominant approaches to graduateness that focus predominately on the employment outcomes of graduates. These dominant approaches to understanding graduateness tend to perpetuae social injustices by favouring students who are socially priviledged (Ashwin 2020).

Each of the three papers in the symposium are positioned in conversation with the Pedagogic Quality and Inequalities project of Monica McLean, Andrea Abbas, and Paul Ashwin (McLean et al., 2018). This project originated in the notion of higher education as a 'pedagogic device' (Bernstein, 2000), which showed how knowledge moves from a research context to higher education curricula and to the understandings that students' develop through interacting with this knowledge. The three papers presents their own take on this perspective, searching for critical ways of understanding 'graduateness' that do not reproduce inequalities different settings.

Link to conference theme

This symposium links to the conference theme by taking a critical approach to the notion of 'graduateness'. Collectively the think pieces raise a series of questions about the role of the universities in making knowledge accessible to all students and how this has been impacted by increased marketization and competition (Komljenovic), the continued slow progress towards transformation and inclusion (Hlengwa), and pressures on researchers in producing knolwedge (Macfarlane).

Paper 1

Ashwin, P., Blackie M., Pitterson, N. & Smit, R. ***Knowledge-rich conceptions of Graduateness in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering.***

In this paper, we examine how students studying Chemistry and Chemical Engineering in South Africa, the UK, and USA are changed by their engagement with knowledge over the course of their

undergraduate degrees. Drawing on a phenomenographic analysis of students' accounts of chemistry and chemical engineering, we explore the variation in students' understanding of their subjects of study and how these change over time. This allows us to explore the transformational impact of these disciplines in terms of the ways in which they transform students' sense of identity as they engage with disciplinary knowledge. This is a key element of 'graduateness' that is characteristic of higher education and will provide new understandings of how undergraduate degrees in these areas prepare students to be critical citizens and the differences between how students' understanding develops and changes across these two subject areas.

Paper 2

Weenink, K., Roelofs, E., Park, N. and Griffioen, D. *Changing perceptions: balancing professionalism during bachelor education*

This paper focuses on how students in applied bachelor programmes transform from students to professionals during their educational path. At the brink of their educational pathway towards professionalism, students bring their own beliefs and expectations of what it entails to become a professional through higher education (Brownlee et al. 2009). It is, however, unclear how students' interaction with the systematised body of knowledge and with the professional fields, both provided by higher education, result over time in professionals. Hence, the aim of this project is to understand howstudents' professional identity, knowledge, and action transform during their bachelor trajectory.

In this paper, the notion of higher education as a pedagogic device through interactions with knowledge is expanded to becoming a professional, which implies changed knowledge, as also identity and actions of students. Combined knowledge, identity, and action comprise their professionalism (Griffioen, 2019). As (Young & Muller 2014) note, for a student, each step taken requests a transformation and therefore a struggle for knowledge, identity (see also Trede et al, 2012), and for action. While the construct of professionalism was conceptualised as a balancing of these three elements, it is so far unclear, how these three notions play out and relate with each other empirically at different moments in the students' development towards professional.

The presentation focuses on the methodological aspects in the analysis of the development of the student through four professional disciplines as captured in multiple interviews. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior is used as an analytic lens (Ajzen, 1991). The findings are expected to contribute conceptually by expanding the Theory of Planned Behavior (intention to action) to a new Theory of Planned Professionalism, with an addition of intentions of knowledge and intentions of identity.

Paper 3

Abbas, A., Gao, J. and Ismail, G.: *Addressing the complex knowledge needs of contemporary graduates and societies: critical provocations.*

This paper connects with the conference and symposium focus on the need to increase the value of critical perspectives, in relation to a concept of graduateness (Stuer et al, 2012). As with the other papers in the symposium it engages with McLean et al's (2018) understanding of the role of the pedagogic device in facilitating graduateness. This pertains to a form of development in which students' understanding of critical knowledge and transformative knowledge is necessary to the form of broader intellectual, personal and moral development that students need to access socially just outcomes and to be able to play a role in generating just societies and professions.

Three brief provocations based on analysis of research data show how critical concepts might be integrated into the pedagogic device to facilitate broader and deeper understandings of injustices. Our work relates particularly to Amanda Hellengwa's focus on 'higher education institutions spaces that are democratic and inclusive promoting belonging and a social justice agenda'. However, there are implications for some of the issues about research raised by MacFarlane in his think piece (Ismail and Abbas). Also, the increased marketisation and some of its consequences alluded to at the start of

Parallel Session 4   **Symposium 2**   **Bowland 1**   **Tuesday: 15.30 – 17.00**

Komljenovic's think piece. In addition, our work speaks to Phipp's paper regarding the issue of how to interact globally and ethically being central to all of our work.

The first by Abbas brings an intersectional lens to some of the original data from Mclean et al's (2018) project and illustrates how the injustices associated with disability and ethnicity (and their other gendered intersections) cannot be separated with the injustices embedded in all 3 stages of the pedagogic device (Abbas, 2020). The second by Ismail illustrates how Freire's concepts (1974, 1997) are a helpful addition to the pedagogic device in identifying the difficulties Arab PhD students' have in applying their UK based transformations to generate knowledge for students who become academics in their home countries. The third by Paul Gao illustrates the importance of the addition of the concept of 揚棄(youki), also known as 止楊 (shiyou) (derived from Hegel's philosophy of Aufheben (e.g. Masato, 2021) to understanding the way in which graduates returning to China from the UK are transformed and apply their knowledge. Together they reflect the levels of complexity and the depth of change required for socially just pedagogic devices and the consequences such actions would have for universities.

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Doing, Embedding and Allowing Criticality in English for Academic Purposes

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Abstract

Courses in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are now offered globally across Higher Education institutions and institutions providing pathways onto degree programmes where the medium of teaching is English. As Hlengwa notes, Higher Education is a mode of responding 'to multiple, complex, and urgent transformation imperatives such as making higher education institutions spaces that are democratic and inclusive promoting belonging and a social justice agenda' (Badat, 2016; CHE, 2016). This inevitably requires deep levels of criticality from both a teaching but more arguably learning perspectives if such educational spaces are to be fertile grounds for invoking social justice transformative practices. As EAP is a crucial Higher Education channel for 'allowing' or facilitating internationalisation of education and in particular in my own teaching experience, what I would put down to the inclusion of 'others' who differ both culturally and linguistically to students from Western universities, critical thinking becomes even more of an imperative embeddable skill. While both critical thinking and critical pedagogy invoke the term 'critical' as a pivotal point of reference in promoting scepticism in students of commonly accepted values and more importantly the role of teachers in facilitating and encouraging this practice to take place in spaces of teaching and learning (Popkewitz and Fendler, 1999), the question is, to what extent do we as EAP facilitators do this, embedding it as a skill and allow students to demonstrate it?

This presentation will focus on the conceptual issue exploring the meaning of 'critical' and 'criticality' within a higher education context; the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) particularly in UK universities – its role and purpose and the challenge of essentially how much criticality is allowed within this field. Moreover, this presentation will consider the perceived norms of writing in EAP have been shaped by the dominance of the English language across a wide range of different sectors including business, economics, finance, media and most notably education (McIntosh, Connor and Gokpinar, 2017).

I will also consider the issue of writers and an audience that are becoming increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse which raises questions regarding the adequacy of more suitable theoretical frameworks that are required in order to cater to the reality of teaching academic and professional writing practices. These insights will facilitate further critical discussions on importance of the role EAP plays in the internationalisation of education as well as channelling what are considered as appropriate academic conventions acceptable by the standards of powerful Western universities.

Keywords

English for Academic Purposes, EAP, Higher Education, International Education, teaching critical thinking, embedding critical thinking skills

An English literature curriculum study: intersections between the macro and micro

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Abstract

This paper draws on data from a PhD study that looks at an English literature curriculum at a distance education institution: the University of South Africa (UNISA). The study uses Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to make explicit what is legitimated in the curriculum and to consider the extent to which pedagogy and assessment enable epistemological access to the discipline. The LCT dimension of 'Specialisation' is used to unpack what forms of knowledge and what kinds of dispositions or 'ways of knowing' are valued within the discipline (as practised at UNISA). It is also used to consider the extent to which there is alignment between different modules in the curriculum; between course outcomes, pedagogy and assessment; and between student and lecturer expectations.

The PhD is a close-up case study which looks at a specific curriculum within a specific context. It draws on various datasets to come to a nuanced understanding of the particularities of the case. However, early on in my research, it became clear that macro and meso factors in the higher education landscape have a significant impact on student learning and on academics' abilities to create constructive alignment between disciplinary values and the forms of pedagogy and assessment that they employ. These factors include those highlighted by Hlengwa (2021) such as massification, globalisation and a tension between universities serving economic imperatives and the public good. Other factors include the online distance education model and the UNISA's unique role in the South African higher education sector.

This paper investigates the impact of these macro and meso and factors as they relate to a specific discipline, English literary studies, and to the teaching and learning experiences of English Department staff and students. In doing so, the paper suggests one way in which we can "place close-up research within macro phenomena" (Komljenovic, 2021). Interviews with UNISA academics revealed that many hope that students will undergo a transformative learning experience through studying English literature, coming to think more critically about themselves and the world around them. The paper considers how macro and meso factors impact on the curriculum's ability to facilitate this kind of learning. I argue that an understanding of how these larger factors play out in relation to specific disciplines is necessary if university management is to make informed decisions that facilitate the function of higher education as a social good.

Keywords

A critical approach to accounting education

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Abstract

Accounting education is typically focused on technical, rule-based content knowledge. Students are taught about accounting and the things accountants must do, often without acknowledging the universal nature of accounting and the wider societal role it needs to fulfil. The curriculum is strongly focused on the transmission of knowledge while the 'knowery' aspects of the field, that is the desired disposition of an accountant and who they need to be as a person, are largely absent, downplayed or implicit. The discipline is criticised for not preparing students adequately for an unknown future in a rapidly changing world, that is further impacted by financial disasters and environment ills.

I argue that accounting education needs a better understanding of the gaps that exist in preparing a student to become and be an accountant. Students need to be equipped to face the challenges of a changing business world; they must be able to make ethical decisions and be environmentally conscious. Being equipped for the changing world entails acquiring the relevant accounting knowledge and skills, as well as the development of the attributes and dispositions to be and become an accountant.

Students must be able to trust that the qualification will prepare them adequately to be and become an accountant. Macfarlane (Thinkpiece, 2021) speaks about a declining level of trust in professional expertise and empirical evidence. I want to extend this notion of trustworthiness to accounting education. With the changing world and the financial and environmental disasters, there is an increased need to think critically about how we equip students for the future.

This study posits a critical pedagogy for accounting education. The research focusses on the kind of knowledges that are legitimated and the kind of knowers that are valued in a three-year diploma in accounting. The data includes competency frameworks of professional bodies, qualification documents, and lecturer interviews. In this paper, I present an analysis of the data, using the Specialization dimension of Legitimation Code Theory. I present data that shows that alongside a very strong focus on technical knowledge in the curriculum, there is also a tendency to hold the 'knower' at bay by absenting the normative issues underpinning the technical knowledge.

Identifying these gaps in the current curriculum opens the conversation as to how a critical pedagogy with its humanising approach might assist lecturers to address the gaps and think through what kind of person could be nurtured through the curriculum.

Keywords

Knowledge, Accountant, Legitimation Code Theory, Specialization, Critical pedagogy.

The limits of criticality: the need for explanatory theories in higher education

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Abstract

This paper addresses a key question raised by the conference theme, namely the role of higher education (HE) research in critiquing and challenging the practices and values of the academy. My argument is about the limits of criticality when not linked to causal explanations and theories of change. Much of the HE literature contains calls for change, whether for reasons of efficiency or justice and equity. However, Hlengwa's think piece highlights the difficulty of bringing about real structural transformation in HE, despite the good intentions of (some) social actors. And Lee and Green, referring to doctoral education, speak about the "curious persistence" in practices, despite a widespread scholarly recognition of alternatives (2009:616).

Understanding the processes by which higher education practices could change, requires an understanding of the causal mechanisms involved in their production, reproduction and transformation. Margaret Archer's social realist framework (1979, 1995) generates such explanatory theories by, amongst other things, reframing the micro/macro divide in social research. From a social realist perspective, this distinction has less to do with the size of the social unit being investigated, than with the distinction between system level features on the hand, and the social interaction of contemporary agents on the other (Archer, 1995). The systemic and the agential aspects of social reality have distinctive kind of powers, many of them not observable, that act as causal mechanisms interacting to produce social phenomena. By rejecting empiricist assumptions, the distinction between "close up" and "large scale" studies can be reframed: underlying systemic mechanisms can and should be identified in both micro and macro level studies.

Archer's morphogenetic framework (1995) theorises the interaction between the systemic and the agential. A key assumption is that all social phenomena, including systemic features, are (or have been) created through the interaction of people. But once systemic features exist, they are relatively enduring and condition the current context. Current agents can work to change these systemic features, but their interest and ability to do so are also conditioned by them. Social structures have histories, and their features—often not directly observable—can be best explored through investigating the historical interactions from which they emerged. Through linking structure and agency diachronically. this approach highlights the underlying causal mechanisms that maintain practices, as well as those that could potentially transform them.

Keywords

Effective change in higher education: exploration through a practice lens at the meso level

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Abstract

Organisational change in Higher Education Institutions occurs in a variety of contexts and may be initiated by diverse sources, by government, the institution or locally from within departments. In her Think Piece, Hlengwa (Hlengwa, 2019) focuses on a change initiative originating at national level and explores the effectiveness of that change at the level of the individual, with mentoring of new appointments as a delivery mechanism. She highlights some of the multifaceted issues which may act to inhibit change and refers to a 'glacial' rate of progress. This paper suggests an alternative option for evaluating change taking the department as the basic institutional organisational unit and outlines options for studying the effectiveness of change at this 'meso' level, as opposed to the broader macro level of the whole institution or the more limited micro level of the individual. Social Practice theory, coupled with a layered, critical realist ontology, provides one methodology for the evaluation of change at this level, and may be more optimal when compared to techno-rational, or managerial, theories. Simple social practice models allow the use of a wide variety of research methods to gather rich data which can then be analysed at different depths and from the perspectives of different staff groups. Straightforward models also have the benefit of being more comprehensible to research participants and can add methodological coherence of an inquiry. The reported study started by drawing on the findings of a broad reaching survey, which then allowed an interview protocol to be derived. The consequent semi-structured interviews elicited further insights of meaning into the understanding of the change initiative by different staff groups. These were then compared to documents, meeting observations and reports. Results gained through this process demonstrated the multi-dimensional complexity of materials, meanings and competencies. The literature and data demonstrate that evaluating change in this manner presents some fundamental challenges: indeed, the theoretical under pinning can be seen as debatable and consequently other aspects of the methodology can also be challenged. Nevertheless, the richness of the data obtained can be used to derive some insights into factors which encourage and inhibit effective change at this meso level, possibly extendable to other contexts. The simple theoretical model used has some limitations and a more refined model is proposed.

Keywords

Organisational change, academic department, social practice theory, meso

Can applying the practice sensibility involve a critical and radical approach to change processes?

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Abstract

The practice sensibility is an acquired way of seeing social practices in operation (Trowler, 2020). Its acquisition involves shifting in perception away from individualism and psychologism towards seeing recurrent practices in operation. This sensibility appreciates the structural conditioning of these practices by ideologies, discourses, symbolic structures as well as by contextually-specific materiality, power plays and intersubjectivities. But it also appreciates the agentic ability to reconfigure practices.

Social practice theory, from which this sensibility is derived, has been criticised for having a conservative approach to change, for not being critical and for being overly structurally determinist (Archer, 2008). The argument runs that practice theory explains stasis well, but cannot explain change, only describe it. This is because the theory of change, such as it is, in social practice theory, involves seeing changes as emergent from the past, as incremental and as heavily influenced and constrained by present practices and structures.

Change agents with a practice sensibility, say the critics, adopt a social democratic reformist approach which fails to challenge inequities of various sorts. Naidoo's think piece alerts us to the "erosion of criticality" within higher education, and sounds alarm bells about "the trap of cynicism and despair". Practice theory could be accused of under-reaching for the types of fundamental change which involve "thinking otherwise".

A **critical** practice sensibility, set out in this paper, pays special attention to the values, perspectives and symbolic structures of those in positions of subordination. Like institutional ethnography, it has positionality. Like CDA it is focused on inequities. It sees how practices in place advantage some and disadvantage others. It sees how discourses shape what can be said and what cannot be said, and to whose advantage. It sees how "problems" come to be defined as such, and how that definition works for some and not for others. It does not take an individualistic "standpoint" position, as institutional ethnography sometimes does, but sees the larger factors in play conditioning practices, and their differential outcomes.

The critical practice sensibility uses social practice approaches to change to reveal how practices can be re-crafted to redistribute advantage. It works to privilege the underprivileged in terms of their perspectives, discourses and rewards.

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Keywords

Social practice theory, practice sensibility, critical theory

Abstracts: Parallel Session 5

Analysis of Doctoral Supervision

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Abstract

Sustainable development goal four is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all by 2030. One target of achieving this is by 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education. Egerton University has been a recipient of several postgraduate scholarships in the past few years, mainly; the World Bank's Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture and Agribusiness management, the Regional Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture and the African Development Bank. The availability of these scholarships has catapulted enrolment into doctoral studies by students from several African countries. Majority of supervisors in the field of agricultural science at Egerton University are guiding their first doctoral students. The quality of their supervision practice has not been examined. Assessing supervision practice and addressing weak points can result in better relationship between student and supervisor, and ultimately produce quality graduates who will in turn spur research and development. Government industry and business are interested in high quality graduates. The aim of the study was to contribute to the quality of doctoral students by assessing perception of their supervision. The postgraduate research experience questionnaire (PREQ) was issued to soil science doctoral students in order to obtain information on their perception of supervision. The study recommends (i) self-evaluation of supervisors. This will point out weak areas in supervision and when corrected will ensure quality of graduates, (ii) include doctoral students from all University programmes in a future survey to determine perception of their supervision, preferably after thesis examination, and (iii) conduct tracer studies of doctorate graduates. The career history information for holders of research doctorates can help Universities prepare students for the job market. The paper fits within the conference theme "Critical Approaches to Close-Up Higher Education Research". The relationship between disciplinary knowledge and teaching and learning is assessed by understanding how agricultural doctoral students perceive their supervision. This paper therefore relates to the keynote think piece of Amanda Hlengwa which is based on transformation agenda of higher education.

Keywords

Africa, doctoral education, supervision, quality

Title: The necessity of and value in researching power dynamics in candidate-supervisor relationships in South African doctoral education

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Abstract

This abstract enters into conversation with Amanda Hlengwa's (2021) HECU2022 think piece: Is mentoring higher education's novice academics a safety mechanism against transformation? In particular, its focus is trained on the issue of mentoring young academics within a diverse cultural and socio-economic higher education landscape, and within the doctoral supervision relationship specifically.

One of the subjects relevant to transformation in South African higher education is doctoral study attrition. The issue of attrition in doctoral education is both complex and important. It is important for a variety of reasons, including the fact, as Hlengwa (2021) notes, that "higher education institutions grapple with the challenge of recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of qualified academic staff to cope with the implications of massification and globalisation." The objective of nurturing and training a new generation of academics is undermined by attrition in doctoral study.

A significant number of student-supervisor relationships involve cross-cultural and contrasting socio-economic dynamics inevitably impacting the nature, efficacy and outcome of the mentoring process. When the paths of seasoned mentors/supervisors (generally representing Western, European or Anglo-Saxon values and attitudes) converge with a younger, culturally diverse body of mentees/students, it seems inevitable that some form of transformation will occur. The key question, however, as Hlengwa (2021) alludes to, is whether the potential and diversity of this student cohort is celebrated and empowered to challenge and transform the higher education status quo, or whether they are instead pressured to conform to the existing structure(s) in order to retain their place at the table. Who determines what is valued within the field of doctoral education, and who gets included or not as a consequence?

Hlengwa (2021) notes that limited opportunities exist to closely examine challenges related to cross-cultural mentoring relationships, arguing that in-depth research is required to answer the question of whether the mentoring process within an establishment ultimately has the potential to rock the establishment's boat. Gaining a deeper understanding of the inner workings of this (often) private relationship may yield insights into the current nature and efficacy of the mentoring aspect of doctoral supervision, and whether it may result in positive transformation in South Africa's higher education sector, and beyond.

In addition to exploring mentoring dynamics in doctoral supervision, this abstract argues that there is both the need to elevate and value in elevating the voices of doctoral candidates who contemplate leaving or who have indeed left their doctoral degree programme.

Parallel Session 5   **Paper 41**   **Bowland 1**   **Wednesday: 09.00 – 11.00**

Critical for whom? Reflecting on supervision experiences of educational technology research.

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Abstract

In the last two decades, educational technology research has morphed from a focus on tips and tools using various technological models to deeper engagement through the use of social theories and methodologies. This shift has been fuelled by multiple calls for an overhaul of our approaches to, and assumptions about, educational technology research and practice. Additionally, especially for educational technology researchers focusing on the African context, there needs to be an acknowledgement of a different layer of constraints, including a rich cultural diversity, a colonialist past and widespread economic and academic inequities. There also needs to be a recognition that the majority of technologies used for teaching and learning in this context are sourced from the global North – and consequently embedded with assumptions about teaching and learning, as well as access and knowledge, which more often than not are Western-focused.

Doctoral candidates, as highlighted by Prof MacFarlane in his thinkpiece, often mechanically draw on critical close-up language and terms without authentically engaging in critical practices in their research studies. Hence, criticality becomes a tick-box exercise to meet the university's ethics requirements, the supervisor's demands as well as theoretical or methodological requirements. However, the way that this criticality plays out in the field is, according to MacFarlane, inauthentic and ultimately a form of strategic deception. We argue in our presentation that while there is a lack of resources to guide doctoral candidates in developing their criticality and they may need to 'fake it until they make it', criticality should actually be a default lens for educational technology researchers, particularly in the African context. Because of their personal experience of the constraints mentioned earlier, they often start out with a keen desire to not only explore but transform their contexts through their studies.

Through the lens of Paulo Freire's (2005) critical consciousness, our presentation reflects on how critical approaches to educational technology research are communicated, learnt and applied through the supervision relationship. The purpose of our presentation is to reflect on our experiences as supervisor and doctoral candidate in terms of incorporating a critical approach to researching educational technology – and whose purpose this critically is meant to serve.

Keywords

Educational technology, criticality, doctoral supervision, critical consciousness.

Managing Loneliness among Doctoral Students

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Abstract

The doctorate is important in the promotion of innovation, development and knowledge economy of the African continent. Enrolment into doctoral programmes at African universities has been rapidly rising in the recent years. To ensure good quality of the doctorate, training of supervisors on supervision is imperative. The Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science, and Technology based at Stellebosch University in South Africa carried out an online training course for supervisors of doctoral candidates at African Universities. The training took place in 2020, for a period of six months. Over seventy supervisors, both male and female, senior and junior/novice drawn from several African Universities participated in the training. One of the topics addressed in the training was the subject of loneliness among doctoral candidates. Loneliness when compounded with liminality, crossing conceptual thresholds and imposter syndrome, negatively affect students' progress and throughput rates, and quality of the doctorate. In one of the discussions fora, on the topic of loneliness, the question "what one can do to resolve the problem of the 'lonely scholar' and help students develop supportive communities for the postgraduate journey?" was posed to participants. All participants responded to the question. In this study, the participants' responses to the question were compiled and grouped into themes and sub themes based on similarity, while comparing with literature review on the subject. This comparison was necessary for gauging whether the approaches for managing loneliness suggested by the supervisors was reflected in the existing body of literature. An integrated framework for addressing loneliness was subsequently developed. In the framework, effective support systems for addressing the problem of the lonely scholar are recommended. These are Institutional, supervisor based and peer to peer support systems, and to a limited extent an external support system involving leveraging on expertise and resources from outside the Institution. An integrated approach is preferable because there is no single support mechanism that is a one fit all solution to loneliness. These approaches when adopted are expected to manage loneliness among the doctorate candidates, and subsequently promote their progress and throughput rates, and quality of the doctorate. The paper relates to the conference theme "Critical Approaches to Close-Up Higher Education Research and Bruce Macfarlane's think piece on academic freedom, the ethics of academic practice, and intellectual leadership.

Keywords

Africa, Doctoral students, Loneliness, Support systems

Academic Identities for 'Wicked' Problems: Braving Transformative Work in the Face of the 'Competition Fetish' in Higher Education

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Abstract

This presentation is based on a project that explored how academics across a research-intensive university worked with students as they learned about wicked problems and how they developed as academics willing to engage with wicked problems. Wicked problems are complex and bring together stakeholders with diverse and often contradictory perspectives. These problems tend to be messy and lack clear definitions and boundaries. Attempts to solve wicked problems may lead to unforeseen outcomes. Examples of wicked problems include the climate and biodiversity emergencies, health inequality and conflict.

This paper response to the think pieces by Phipps and Naidoo (the latter from the postponed HECU conference). Naidoo identified one of the key barriers to academics engaging with the social purposes of higher education as being the 'competition fetish' in higher education. Phipp's evocative think piece focuses on the devastating impact of sudden funding cuts to crucial social research focused on wicked problems, such as conflict and trauma. This paper asks, who becomes the kind of academic who will work with wicked problems in the context of the competition fetish and broken funding systems?

The objective of the narrative analysis presented is to illuminate what kinds of academic identities underpin the will and capacity to research and teach about 'wicked' problems in higher education and how these identities can be supported. Twenty of our semi-structured interview participants had practices centred on wicked problems. We also interviewed fifteen academics for our comparison group who were not focusing on wicked problems. The findings draw out how academic identities that cohere around wicked problems – rather than around disciplinary or traditional researcher identities - can underpin the will and capacity to work with wicked problems in contexts where this may not be fully supported.

The conclusions of the paper point to the value of narrative perspectives on identities to underpin critical analyses of how academics can thrive while working on challenging topics in contemporary higher education. Implications for policy makers include the importance of challenging the competition fetish and broken funding systems and of providing role models, drivers and opportunities for academics to explore their roles as activists, change agents and educators.

Keywords

Wicked problems, academic identities, competition fetish, Higher Education funding

Exploring critical theories and methods to enhance academic development as a profession with status in South African higher education.

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Abstract

This paper responds to the thinkpiece by Hlengwa in which she argues that transformation initiatives in the higher education sector need to "navigate the complex organizational cultures of the academy" and trouble "the nature of academic work, academic identity and career pathways" (p.2). Our focus academic staff development (ASD) and academic staff developers (ASDs) in the South African Higher Education context.

ASD is diverse and exists in the spaces between academic disciplines and departments and institutional leadership and management. ASDs contribute, *inter alia*, to activities to enhance teaching and learning: conceptualising, designing and facilitating workshops, informal or formal programmes on various aspects of the teaching role of academics; induction programmes for new academics, supporting curriculum development processes, managing and supporting teaching awards and fellowship programmes and engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning. If ASDs are to make a meaningful contribution to the professional learning of academics they need specialized knowledges that can help to ameliorate the current high-participation-high failure/high-dropout scenario in South African higher education (Scott 2010). They also require the capacity to devise "new and innovative ways of responding to the changing academic" context (Hlengwa, p. 3) and be able to work with academics who may not always be convinced that higher education practices need to change, in response to diverse student cohorts and academic needs.

The authors are members of a national project tasked with exploring ways to enhance the field of ASD in SA and will therefore examine what (should) constitute(s) the shared knowledge and practice base for ASD while recognizing that different institutional contexts are likely to require different approaches to ASD. In addition, the project team must understand the ways in which diverse histories have shaped institutional structures and cultures and what this conditioning context means for ASD.

This paper will explore what theoretical and methodological tools will enable the kind of critical close-up research the project team will need to conduct and to prepare for the project and as it proceeds so that they are able to contribute meaningfully to the stockpot of powerful knowledge that will enhance the field of AD as a profession with status in the South African higher education context.

Keywords

Staff perspectives on the connection between internationalisation and inclusiveness in a UK university

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Abstract

Institutional internationalisation agendas underpin the recruitment and presence of staff and students from diverse nationalities on university campuses. However, the extent to which inclusive learning pedagogies are fostered on internationalised campuses is less understood. In this session, we discuss preliminary findings of our ongoing mixed-methods research project that examines staff perspectives on connections between cultural inclusion and normative manifestations of internationalisation as facilitating diversity on campuses.

For the research, we collected data at three stages. Stage one involved a scoping exercise to navigate the terrain of the study's context. This revealed sparse references to inclusion in internationalisation-related university documents. Stage two involved using an online survey, which was completed by 127 staff from all 21 Schools across the University. Further demonstrating engagement with the project, 28 survey respondents indicated interest to participate in follow-up interviews for the third stage of data collection. Purposeful sampling and snowballing helped further to expand the range of participants across varying disciplines, including the arts, humanities, social sciences, sciences, engineering, medicine and veterinary medicine. For this third stage, the research team organised 26 individual interviews and 5 focus groups (3 – 5 participants). The research design provided a rich tapestry of viewpoints on how teachers perceive and navigate their roles working with culturally diverse individuals in internationalised classrooms. Emerging findings reveal differing perceptions on the intersection of inclusiveness and internationalisation in policy and practice.

The considerations of interactions within internationalised spaces link our research to Dr. Hlengwa's think-piece on intra-academic power dynamics in a South African mentorship programme. Hlengwa contextualizes mentorship relationships with internationalisation alongside higher education institutions' and senior academics' self-interests in preserving institutional status quo. While the UK is not a settler colonial context and does not have the same dichotomy of 'historically black' and 'historically white' higher education institutions, we can take a lens similar to Hlengwa and apply it to the cultural and power relationships that may manifest for academic teaching staff in an internationalised university.

Our research makes a contribution in two main ways. First, our scoping work highlight the gap created by treating internationalisation and inclusion as unrelated initiatives. This points to the need to embed inclusivity into the development of internationalisation strategies. Second, academic staff insights reveal the support needed for working in internationalised universities. This informs our recommendations on developing initiatives to ensure that internationalisation does not merely represent diversity, but how diversity endears inclusivity in internationalised universities.

Keywords

Internationalisation, inclusion, inclusive practice, inclusive pedagogy

What close-up research is needed for responsive academic development practices?

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Abstract

This paper is situated in the field of academic development. The most often cited definition of the field as practised in South Africa is: " Academic Development is an open set of practices concerned with improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education and training through integrating student, staff, curriculum, institutional and research development" (Volbrecht & Boughey, 2004:58). Although it has been a useful definition, it does not signal the importance of context. As pointed out by Hlengwa (HECU Thinkpiece 2020), "Higher Education is called to respond to multiple, complex, and urgent transformation imperatives". There have been significant cultural and structural upheavals in the South African higher education context in the last 15 years. Cultural changes include a much greater concern for access *with success* for Black students; the need to balance issues of equity, redress, quality and development; and most recently the call to decolonise all aspects of higher education. Structural changes in the system include massification without the requisite increase in state funding; legislated institutional differentiation; institutional mergers, and changed student and staff demographics. All these changes have implications for the practice of academic development. The nature of these changes needs to be fully understood if the field wishes to contribute to a more socially and educationally just higher education system that takes account of the socio-economic realities in South Africa and how they impact on higher education.

To better understand what these changes mean for the field, this exploratory paper attempts to answer the following question: What are the issues in the broader context, specifically in South Africa, which the field of academic development has to respond to and that requires more close-up research? Our aim is to adopt a

critical approach which focuses on the interaction between "broad and macro analysis of the HE sector" and close-up research (Janja Komljenovic, HECU 10 Thinkpiece).

To develop a nuanced understanding of the most important contextual conditions that impact on the practice of academic development in South Africa we will analyse /examine existing close-up research on how higher education institutions and academic development practitioners have responded to the changes and challenges in the context. Most importantly, from our analysis of the literatures, we will set out to identify absences (Bhaskar 1993) in the practices of academic development in relation to the challenges in the context - particularly those that impact on teaching and learning.

Keywords
Academic development, South African context, responsiveness

Listening with Compassion: Evaluating the use of podcasts to foster compassionate pedagogy within an academic enhancement programme.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on how to foster compassionate pedagogies and cultures to address inequalities in higher education. In this paper I present a close-up, process evaluation, using logic chains and a theory of change model, of a pilot academic enhancement programme in a UK arts university that aims to develop compassionate pedagogy to reduce ethnicity awarding differentials. Inequitable outcomes continue to persist in UK higher education despite ongoing efforts to address racial injustice. In their think-piece, Dr Amanda Hlengwa echoes the 'glacial pace of transformation' and the need to challenge the role of higher education structures and processes. In this small-scale qualitative study that combines interviews with graphic-elicitation methods, I focus on the experiences of academic and support staff of listening to two podcasts that explore belonging and relationality in higher education. The evaluation provides insights for future design and iteration of educational development to address inequity and informs recommendations to create compassionate cultures for staff; devise inclusive and affective resources and develop interventions that provide space for both epistemic and practical considerations.

Abstract) Keywords

Compassionate pedagogy, academic enhancement, logic chain, theory of change, process evaluation, visual methods

The learning experience through art-based research: Opportunities for a critical understanding of learning research

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Abstract

"Art, then, is an increase of life, a sort of competition of surprises that stimulates our consciousness and keeps it from becoming somnolent" (Bachelard, 2014, p. 17). This quote leads to wondering, just as 'boring' lectures are Morpheus' playground for tired students, are we decreasing life from the study of learning as well? Research not only needs to be detailed, thorough – or 'close-up' – to comprehend wicked issues like learning experiences, but also needs to bring back life into it, increase it.

The actual learning experiences and processes have a richness that dwells from a complex understanding of them, for example, considering the emotional and affective aspects as well as the cognitive, reflective, amongst others, or by understanding learning experiences as dialogic mediated productions. This complexity and dynamism that is also usually found on the messiness of educational research arguably gets diluted into clarity by research methods, thus prompting alternative ways of conducting research that not only acknowledges it, but that it actively fosters said characteristics.

Working with Bruce Macfarlane's think piece, doing research about learning experiences in a careless way could make the researcher encounter some issues with positionality, outsiderism, 'thin descriptions' or even leaving unintendedly the participants out of the research project by turning dialogue into a monologue. One possible solution argued in this paper is conducting research through art-based research.

Art-based research is not about taking art as a mindless technique within the research procedure but means to conveys a certain epistemology that understands knowledge production as relational, dialogical, and processual. Thus, with it, the research endeavour is twisted rhetorically by granting a new place of scientific, valid, and systematic knowledge to the artfully produced data, while properly constructed and open-ended in its meaning and interpretation.

Thus, the opportunities with art-based research are at least twofold: from an epistemological standpoint, art lays the foundations for new perspectives on doing research of/from learning experiences and from a conceptual standpoint, art itself could be thought of as an experience. Here, the case of art-based research can be explained as the possibility of study a learning experience as an experience thought art. It is in that specific sense that some opportunities for a critical understanding of learning research arise: to study learning experiences as an experience, the researcher must device/produce an experience. Research for these purposes should be done as art, following John Dewey's (1980) understanding of art as an experience.

Keywords

Art-based research, learning, experience, epistemology, close-up research.

The capacity of pedagogical agency developed by pedagogy students in their passage through initial teacher formation: A critical approach to foster social justice.

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Abstract

This conference addresses higher education as an *educational* space -this is, more than *training*- in which students of pedagogy, future teachers, can develop a capacity of pedagogical agency as a requisite to contribute to social justice, and seeks to explore how this pedagogical agency is deployed in initial teaching experiences. For that, some theoretical antecedents are offered to understand *initial teacher formation, pedagogical agency*, *pedagogical interactions,* and *social justice* from a critical perspective, and to provide some preliminary reflections about pedagogical agency from the analysis of some critical incidents as a research method.

This discussion is part of my PhD research "The importance of developing the capacity for ethical-political-epistemic agency in novice teachers during initial teacher formation to contribute to social justice", guided by a deep concern of forming teachers for social justice understood from the critical perspective developed by Iris Young, the *lack of institutionalized oppression*. Following this premise, any teacher eager to fight for social justice should be able to recognize and be sensitive to oppression, both as receiver or issuer of it, in the channel through which power passes: *pedagogical interactions,* which shape political, ethical, and epistemic subjectivities.

This talk wants to invite to reflect that prepare teachers for social justice demands learning to deal with oppression, which is particularly difficult in neoliberal times, as we have naturalized domain-based relationship forms. This is especially serious for initial teacher formation: as forms of relation based on control and dominion are naturalized and reinforced, the possibility that students of pedagogy change something once teachers seems more difficult. Then, educating the *gaze* to identify oppression -not only in human relations, but in political devices such as the official curriculum- is something basic for any program that intends to contribute to social justice, as it is to model democratic and dialogical interactions to advance to a fairer and empowered society.

A big gap of knowledge we have, however, is the kind of interactions offered in initial teacher formation programs: what we know about initial teacher formation is generally related to aspects of the visible curriculum but not the hidden one. For this lack of evidence, we can, however, study the result of that formation: novice teachers´ capacities, or, from the interest of this talk, *how able are pedagogy students in their first pedagogical experiences to act and make decisions based on autonomous criteria in the school environment to educate children* beyond technical criteria imposed by the curriculum, putting formative purposes above technical or bureaucratic issues.

Keywords

Initial teacher formation, pedagogical agency, social justice, pedagogical interaction, hidden curriculum

Can a critical understanding of emotions enable the creation of more inclusive spaces for belonging and transformation in higher education? Interrogating early career scholars' mentoring into the academy

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Abstract

Early career is a particularly difficult academic career period, marked increasingly by casualisation, pressure to publish, teach, supervise and participate in departmental life, and decreased job security. This period may be even more difficult for scholars who identify as Black, non-binary, LGBTQI, as women, Indigenous, international, non-English speaking. Despite measures to advance equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education globally, academics that do not look, sound, speak or behave like the 'somatic' or cultural 'norm' do experience discrimination, both subtle and open in nature (Puwar, 2004; Gagnon, 2021). In these contexts, increasing numbers of early career researchers, including doctoral students, are struggling with the intellectual, personal and emotional issues that the early career period can give rise to, especially where who you are is deemed deviant from the 'norm' and therefore in need of change or subsumption.

Megan Boler contends that academia, like the wider societies it is part of, uses emotions to police ways of being, setting up the 'right' and 'wrong' ways of behaving, being and engaging in academic life. She argues that paying attention to emotions is key to enabling and widening a social justice agenda (Boler, 1999). Emotions here are not understood as personalised feelings but are theorised as sociological artefacts that move and 'stick' within and between different spaces (Ahmed, 2014). Emotion can shape and demarcate belonging; but emotions are hard to pin down and even harder to talk about because they are carefully policed. I argue, therefore, that we need to pay critical attention to what kinds of emotions are constructed in university spaces inhabited by early career and doctoral scholars, and the work that these emotions do. In this paper I connect with both the Hlengwa and Macfarlane thinkpieces, using data from narrative interviews with early career academics which included both visual methods and participatory methods, in that participants were invited to co-create the interview questions or focus with me. In particular, I am interested in how the academics came into academic work, how they are navigating it, and what their sense is of the structures or systems that 'police' belonging. I hope to contribute to the wider conversation on how we create and sustain more socially just, open and transformed universities through adding to the explanatory frameworks and tools we have for exposing exclusion that can be hard to see, and harder to challenge.

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Keywords

diversity, early career researchers, emotional labour, inclusion, feminist theory, social justice

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