University of Hertfordshire

The Learning and Teaching Institute

July 2013

Blended Learning in Practice

Incorporating **The Blended Learning Unit** a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Contents

Editorial

Phil Porter

Welcome to the latest edition of Blended Learning in Practice, the University of Hertfordshire Learning and Teaching institute's online e-journal.

As usual we present our regular 'how to do it' section where Suzanne Fergus and I provide some hints and tips to help you liven up your lectures!

Lectures then form part of the discussion in our 'student voice' section; University of Hertfordshire students share their opinions on a variety of common teaching methods and as is often the case, the viewpoints expressed may not be quite what you expect!

This edition is also a celebration of success, as our two research papers are presented by two recently graduated students from our Continuing Professional Academic Development (CPAD) programme. Andy Saunders discusses the importance of work-based learning and employability to students seeking employment in the music industry, while Peter Ross assesses the pedagogic implications of a variety of teaching methods used to provide in-service training for physiotherapy students. Of note is the fact that both these papers were originally submitted as an assessed coursework element of one of our CPAD modules and have subsequently been developed by Andy and Peter for publication.

This then brings me to the sadness with which this edition of Blended Learning in Practice is tinged, as it is the first edition to be published since the unexpected death of our friend and colleague Areles Molleman in September 2012.

Areles was a pivotal figure in the CPAD team and was instrumental in helping to re-design the CPAD programme when he joined the Learning and Teaching Institute in 2008. Areles was also module leader for the third of our four CPAD modules, now entitled 'Linking Pedagogic Theory with Practice' and I was privileged to work with him when I took over the leadership of this module last

Editorial

year. Areles inspired and enthused all whom he came into contact with and his calm and friendly nature made him a pleasure to work with.

It is therefore fitting that we should publish here two papers initially submitted as part of the assessment on the CPAD module that he led. Areles implemented an assessment on that module where student work was to be submitted in the style of a journal article. It was the possibility of working these journal articles into a publishable form that proved to be a defining moment when in 2009 I was discussing with colleagues the format of Blended Learning in Practice. I am therefore delighted that we have been able to work with CPAD participants since 2009 to develop their work into a publishable format as a key component of each edition of the journal. The innovative assessment implemented by Areles has resulted in great opportunities for staff studying on the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, and this assessment will continue to do so, as we see staff submitting their work for publication in Blended Learning in Practice and elsewhere. What a wonderful legacy he has left us.

Areles will be sorely missed by us all and in his memory we will each year at graduation, award the Areles Molleman prize for the best journal article assignment submitted as part of the module 'Linking Pedagogic Theory with Practice'. We believe that this prize is a fitting gesture that acknowledges not just Areles' massive contribution to the LTI, but also the fact that this journal and its promotion of pedagogic research talent in the form of published CPAD research papers, is inextricably linked with the innovative assessment methods that he introduced and developed.

Dr Phil Porter
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In Memory

In memory of our friend and colleague Areles Molleman

8th November 1960-3rd September 2012

Contributor Profiles

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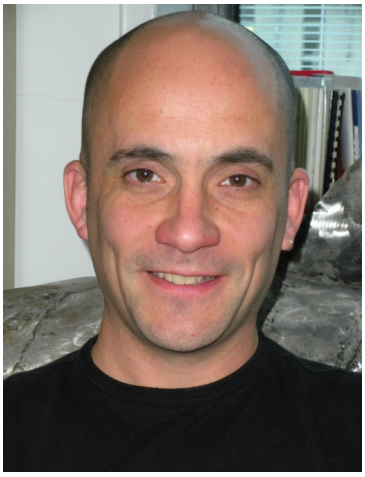

Along with being the editor of Blended Learning in Practice, Phil Porter is a Senior Lecturer in Physical Geography at the University of Hertfordshire in the School of Life and Medical Sciences and has been active in glaciological research since 1993. After completing a PhD (Leeds) in borehole instrumentation of fast flowing glaciers, Phil took up lectureships at Manchester and Leeds and joined the University of Hertfordshire in 2003. His current research interests concern the response of the cryosphere to environmental change. Phil is also a LTI teacher taking a lead on 'research informed teaching' and is currently working with undergraduate students to film and edit a series of reusable learning objects (RLOs) that will help students and educators in the earth and environmental sciences teach specific field skills. The 'under construction' website that hosts these RLOs can be viewed at: http://sarahnolan15.wix.com/fieldworkforstudents#!video-menu/cupt

Andy Saunders

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Andy Saunders is a Lecturer in Music and Entertainment Industries Management at the University of Hertfordshire. After graduating from Middlesex Polytechnic in with a BA in Combined Studies in 1987, Andy starting work at a small independent record company, his first job in a career that would see him working for almost 25 years at a senior level in the British music industry. After a ten-year tenure as Director of Communications at Creation Records, Andy launched Velocity Communications in 2000, which remains one of the UK's leading corporate PR and marketing companies, specialising in music industry work. His current clients include industry trade organisations, record labels, digital music companies, artist managers, music publishers and major conference and festival events. Andy is also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

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Peter graduated from Brunel University in 1995 as a Physiotherapist and subsequently worked clinically in many different specialities, both here in the UK and in New Zealand. In 2002 Peter became a Clinical Specialist/ Superintendent Physiotherapist specialising in vascular surgery and amputee rehabilitation. He was also responsible for the education & mentoring of all undergraduate physiotherapy students as well as a range of qualified & non-qualified junior staff. In 2007 Peter began working as a visiting lecturer on the undergraduate Physiotherapy courses at Brunel University, and here at the University of Hertfordshire, where he also began an MSc in Physiotherapy-Clinical Education. This was completed in 2010. He has also been an active member of the British Association of Charted Physiotherapists in Amputee Rehabilitation (BACPAR) since 2000 and has also recently been co-opted on to the Educational sub-committee where he is currently co-authoring the revised 'BACPAR Student Guidelines'. In 2010 Peter joined the University of Hertfordshire as a full time Senior Lecture in Physiotherapy, where he teaches on a wide variety of undergraduate modules and post-graduate short courses .

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Suzanne Fergus is currently a Senior Lecturer in Pharmaceutical Chemistry within the School of Life and Medical Sciences and also a Principal Lecturer with the Learning and Teaching Institute at the University of Hertfordshire. Suzanne completed her PhD at University College Dublin and then carried out postdoctoral research at the University of Milan and the University of Cambridge. Her research interests focus on student learning, student motivation and student engagement. Suzanne has contributed significantly to curriculum design within her discipline in order to contextualise chemistry for pharmacy students. She has utilised new technologies (student generated content using a wiki and peerwise) in her practice and shares these concepts and approaches with other staff at the University of Hertfordshire through CPD workshops and activities.

Applying work-based learning practice and theories to the employability skills and learning opportunities of music students

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Abstract

The music industry is a highly fragmented commercial sector, which is facing major challenges and undergoing rapid change. When evaluating potential employees during a time that key roles are evolving to meet the demands of the contemporary marketplace, the music industry attaches real credence and weight to practical experience in addition to academic achievement. This article considers the importance of students not concentrating solely on their academic work, but also applying focus on acquiring employability skills, experience and work-based knowledge. For example, highly structured, short–term, work-based learning activities and the knowledge and employability skills these opportunities provide students are considered. Looking at how various learning styles and theories can be applied to enhance the experience of individual students, it is clear that, although most music industry related companies offer work placement opportunities which are unstructured, the integration of activities such as reflective and analytical dissertations aimed at building self-awareness, self-reflection and self-confidence, are just as important as practical experience and can cater for the needs of a diverse range of learning styles.

Introduction

The formal study of music industry history, theory and structure is a relatively new addition to the roster of academic options available at most universities. As such the direction, shape and output of these courses is, in most cases, still evolving. At a time when the music industry is facing significant challenges in terms of falling product sales and declining revenues across most of its sectors according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI, 2012), universities

are facing questions from both undergraduates and the industry about how best to design these relevant music-based courses to ensure a tangible benefit for all involved. In particular, with employment opportunities in the industry becoming ever more limited, key questions being asked include: how much do work placements within companies operating in the music industry sector help undergraduates with their studies and how, in turn, does this add to their learning and attainment of practical experience, knowledge and future employability? This article will examine whether undergraduates undertaking the type of courses that purport to offer a holistic overview of the music industry, should have a reasonable expectation of employability at the conclusion of their studies. In addition it will examine whether undergraduates undertaking relevant and productive work- based learning and work placements are, as a result, in a position to fulfill the requirements of employers.

The music industry's attitude to graduates seeking employment

The music business is a multi-faceted industry with numerous sectors competing against one another for a share of rapidly declining consumer revenues. According to the British Phonographic Industry (BPI, 2012) official website, "the music business is composed of rich, diverse and passionate organisations…that includes self-employed individuals, small businesses and large multi-national companies." The modern music industry has evolved along highly entrepreneurial lines with few obviously defined career paths. While some of the larger companies, particularly the major record companies (e.g. Sony Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group and Universal Music Group), do offer structured graduate entry schemes, the majority of companies do not. Employability remains a key challenge for any university course but particularly for those courses with a vocational emphasis. The Confederation of British Industry (2011) stated that, "Universities, student unions, businesses and other agencies….have an essential role to play in getting the message across to students about the importance of shaping up their employability and giving them ways to develop and practice these essential skills." In addition Brown *et al* (2002) quotes one human resources manager as saying, "academic qualifications are the first tick in the box and then we move on.

Today we simply take them for granted." It is also worth noting that the traditional entry points for those wanting a career in the music industry have tended to be either unpaid internships, junior positions or recommendations through personal networks with the employee then working their way 'up the ladder' to more senior managerial positions. The attainment of a relevant degree level qualification in music industry studies, while a useful and potentially valuable addition to a *curriculum vitae* does not, in itself, guarantee the employability of the graduate. It can further be argued that work placements and work-based learning for undergraduates during their period of study on music related courses are among the most important aspects of their learning and development. Mantze Yorke (2006), for example, argues that whilst employers might ask for multi-competent graduates, some aspects of employment-related capability can only be developed in the employment context: work placements of various kinds during a higher education programme may, therefore, make a significant contribution. In other words potential employers in the music industry tend to look beyond the classroom achievements of graduates and towards the efforts and achievements of graduates in relevant work environments and will usually value 'hands on' experience over academic study in isolation.

Understanding why and how work placements are important

When studying for any qualification that has a vocational focus there is a danger that the student may become trapped in an insular academic environment which has the potential of limiting the practical application of their learning and potential employability. A period spent on work placement therefore, can enhance student learning through experience and lend weight and credibility to their academic achievements. Knight and Yorke (2004) suggest that higher education establishments can provide an effective employability curriculum by emphasizing 4 key areas they refer to by the acronym 'USEM':

- **U**nderstandings about work
- **S**killful practices (the deployment of skills in different and/or new situations),
- **E**fficacy beliefs (legitimate self-confidence in one's capacities to achieve and succeed at work)
- **M**etacognitive capabilities

Moreland (2005) takes Knight and Yorke's USEM approach and adds further detail as follows:

- Learning about oneself – one's capabilities, confidence, life interests and career orientations (Efficacy and Metacognition);
- Learning and practicing skills and personal attributes of value in the world of work (Skillful Practices)
- Experiencing the world of work (or facsimiles thereof) in order to provide insights
- Learning into the world of work predominantly associated with the subjects of one's higher education studies (Understandings)
- Experiencing and learning how to learn and manage oneself in a range of situations, including (of course) those to be found at work and central to self-management and development activities (Metacognition)

Therefore taking on board both Knight & Yorke and Moreland's work around the USEM model, it can be argued that self-awareness, self-reflection and self-confidence are just as important as practical experience and that practical experience in and of itself lacks viability if these other aspects are not incorporated in the overall development of 'self'. Another key factor to consider when understanding why work placements are important to the learning and skills development of students, is the changing face of the modern employment market (Buff, 2011).

This article considers the music industry sector, but it can be argued that the employment market in general is evolving, with people now applying different criteria when making employment choices. Edgar Schien (1978 & 2007) who created the influential 'career anchor' theory in the mid-1970's, which broke down the reasons why people made career choices into five categories reflecting basic values, motives and needs, has recently updated his findings and now feels that careers in the future will be governed by 'internal' factors rather than 'external' ones in the rapidly evolving employment market. He asks, "Will there even be a concept of an 'organizational' career or will careers become a more fragmented set of jobs held together far more by what I have labeled the 'internal career' – a subjective sense of where one is going in one's life, as contrasted with the 'external career, the formal stages of what an individual can expect in the occupational structure." It is interesting to link Schien's ideas with those of Knight, Yorke and Moreland and to note that they all emphasize the need for self-analysis, intuition and reflection when considering both work placement and career choices. In a fractured and fast evolving marketplace like the music industry it can be unsettling for students witnessing the roles they might see themselves undertaking in the future changing, sometimes beyond recognition, in relatively short spaces of time. With the advent of digital technology, for example, the consumption of music by consumers has shifted away from physical formats, such as the compact disc, towards Mp3 downloads and online platforms. This has meant radical new ways of working for people in a number of key roles within the music industry. Marketing, promotional, sales and numerous other disciplines have had to adapt to these seismic changes and new skills and approaches have had to be developed by those practicing them. Students entering a work placement, particularly one which may require them to involve themselves in any of these changing roles, need to be aware, therefore, that the adoption of those key concepts of self-awareness, self-reflection and self-confidence are just as important as the practical experience of 'being there' if they are to gain maximum benefit from the exercise.

The ability to absorb information and engage with new ideas within a fast evolving environment is a prerequisite of working in the modern music industry and the more the student engages with this process and takes responsibility for their own experience the more they are likely to gain from it.

Adding value to students learning experiences and employability

There are arguments for and against the type of structure and indeed the type of work placement that will enhance a student's learning experience and employability. It can be argued, for example, that any length of time spent working in a relevant organization will enhance the experience and employability of a student regardless of the structure and that simply by 'being there' the student will learn and benefit from the experience. Conversely some would argue that without a defined structure and tangible learning outputs work-based learning may be of limited value. The Quality and Curriculum Authority (2003) defines work related learning as, "planned activities that use the context of work to develop knowledge, skills and understanding useful in work, including learning through the experience of work, learning about work and working practices, and learning the skills for work." The use of the phrase 'planned' activities could, however, be seen as contentious, as the effectiveness and validity of either approach depends of the student and their individual learning style.

Building on earlier learning style concepts developed by David Kolb (1984) a number of theories were published by Peter Honey and Alan Mumford (2000) that saw them break down individual learning styles into four separate 'personality' types: 'Activist', 'Reflector', 'Theorist' and 'Pragmatist'. Students who fall into the category that Honey and Mumford define as 'activist' tend to have a number of key characteristics which include: a gregarious personality, a desire to seek challenge and immediate experience, an open-minded attitude and a tendency to be bored with implementation. They would perhaps benefit from a fairly unstructured work placement that required them to be self-motivated and to use their own initiative. This type of work placement may also suit 'pragmatists' who tend to: seek and try out

new ideas, are practical, down-to-earth, enjoy problem solving & decision-making quickly, and are easily bored with long discussions. A ‘theorist’, however, may benefit from a highly structured and rigid placement that obliges them to follow set guidelines and an inflexible programme, their key qualities being: the ability to think things through in logical steps, assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories, be rationally objective, and reject subjectivity and flippancy. The same environment may also suit a ‘reflector’ who could be defined as someone who: 'stands back', gathers data, ponders and analyses, delays reaching conclusions, listens before speaking and is thoughtful. A conclusion could be made therefore that work placements should, wherever possible, be tailored to the individual’s particular learning style. Adopting too rigid an approach when putting students into work placements could, it might be argued, not play to the strengths of that individual and indeed prove to be a counterproductive experience. There is, however, a counter-argument that exposing students to learning styles that do not exactly match their own personality type is a good thing in that it may be a more accurate representation of the real world employment environment.

Another issue to consider is resource. To find, vet and design work placements for upwards of 40 students studying on the Music & Entertainment Industry Management (MEIM) course at the University of Hertfordshire would take a huge amount of time and energy and this simply isn’t possible given the resources available to the department. The answer therefore is to encourage students to, wherever possible, find and secure their own work placements during the final academic year of their studies. The course leaders provide guidance and assistance where necessary, but the process of securing their own placements by contacting employers directly is seen as a valuable learning experience in itself. The music industry traditionally prizes initiative and enthusiasm, and asking students to identify and secure their own work placements is an exercise in both. Most students on the MEIM course have an idea of which sector of the music industry they would like to work in and as such, target their efforts in that particular direction. A student, for example, who is keen to work in live music, might approach promoters, agents or venues in the hope of securing a work placement. If successful, the course leaders

would contact the employer to ensure the relevant insurance and health & safety assurances were in place before approving the placement. From that point on it is entirely up to the student how that work placement is carried out. It is a fact that most work placements undertaken by students in music industry related companies are wholly unstructured. Students are expected to carry out low-level tasks such as making tea, data input, filing, manning reception desks and so on. It is therefore incumbent on the student to make their time on work placement worthwhile by showing initiative and enthusiasm. This situation clearly suits students who fall into the 'activist' and to a certain degree 'pragmatist' categories but may not be particularly fruitful for 'reflectors' or 'theorists'.

So, how do we ensure that work placements add value to all students learning experiences and employability? The answer is straightforward: we play to their strengths. Every student undergoing a work placement during the final year of their studies is required to submit a dissertation on their experiences, which counts towards their final grade. They are expected to evaluate their own experiences during the work placement in a reflective manner, to provide insight and comment on the structure, workings and practices of the company and to provide a wider industry context for their thoughts and analysis**.** The students completed dissertation is usually shown to the employer, which they often find revelatory and extremely useful. On several occasions this document has actually led to students securing permanent employment with the company on the completion of their studies. This exercise ensures that 'theorists' and 'reflectors' also gain from the experience alongside 'activists' and 'pragmatists'. 'Activists' and 'pragmatists', therefore, thrive in an unstructured work placement, where they are able to use initiative and self-motivation, while theorists and reflectors can use the experiences they have gained to provide insight and analysis.

Work placements in a structured environment

As well as work placements that are, as mentioned, sourced by students themselves and that cover a set time period lasting weeks or even months, it is also

possible to create and engage in intensive, highly structured work-based learning. We are fortunate that the MEIM course has nurtured excellent relationships with the music industry and as such we are able to draw upon those relationships to create opportunities for students to experience work-based learning in real-life environments. An example is an exercise that MEIM runs on an annual basis with The Ministry of sound Group, a successful, London-based music company specialising in recordings, events and branded products. Positioned as a one-day programme, MEIM takes 12 students to visit the Ministry of Sound offices for an intensive series of presentations from the key departments that make up the company, for example recordings, events, digital, sponsorship, marketing and so on. Following these presentations, which take place in the morning, the students are given lunch and have a chance to interact and ask questions of the staff at the company.

The afternoon session is comprised of 'innovation workshops', whereby students work with department heads to find ways to improve their current products and practices and to come up with new ideas for enhancing the company's commercial offering. This exercise is successful because it is a mutually beneficial experience. The students enjoy a focused, stimulating, practical work-based learning experience in a 'real-life' environment and Ministry of Sound receive access to bright, motivated students who bring ideas and fresh thinking to the challenges facing their company. Stephenson (1992) argues that 'capability' should be a key employability aim of all higher education and states that skills and knowledge make up only part of the equation. This idea of 'capability' takes on real clarity when applied to this type of highly structured work-based learning, when students are immersed in problem solving, innovative thinking and challenging tasks. This also links to the ideas of self-awareness, self-reflection and self-confidence discussed earlier in this article.

Summary and conclusion

Given the challenges facing the modern music industry and the fact it has been in a state of rapid evolution for a number of years (Alhadeff, 2006) it can be

concluded that there is a need for students seeking employment opportunities on graduation to have made full use of work placements and work-based learning opportunities during their period of formal study. The music industry attaches real credence and weight to practical experience and it is therefore important that students do not concentrate solely on their academic work, but also focus also on acquiring employability skills, experience and work-based knowledge. While it is important to recognize the individual learning styles of students when evaluating effective work-based learning and identifying work placements it is not always possible, due to resource issues, to match individual students to their ideal environments. This is not to say that the inability to achieve this necessarily impacts adversely on the opportunities available to students. Asking students to find their own work placements is a valuable learning exercise in itself.

Given that most music industry related work placements are unstructured, it is interesting to conclude that students who gravitate towards the Honey and Mumford (2000) 'activist' and 'pragmatist' learning styles are well suited to these opportunities as they tend to thrive in these type of environments, but the use of reflective and analytical evaluation exercises, such as in-depth dissertations, can be extremely useful for those students who have what are described as 'theorist' or 'reflective' learning styles. Also, where possible highly structured short-term opportunities, such as the Ministry of Sound example described above, can also provide a stimulating, practical work-based learning experience in a 'real-life' environment, which adds considerable value to student's learning experiences and employability skills. To quote Stephenson (1992) again, "The educational challenge is to devise courses and invent learning experiences which help students acquire the necessary expertise - both knowledge and skills - for effective performance in familiar and predictable circumstances in ways which give students confidence in their ability to cope equally effectively with uncertainty and change."

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Ten Top tips to liven up your lectures!

Ten Top tips to liven up your lectures!

Phil Porter and Suzanne Fergus

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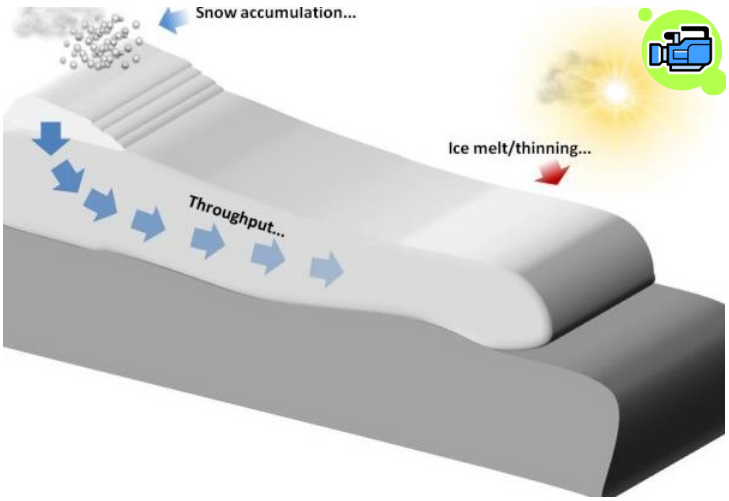
Like it or not, many of us will deliver the bulk of our teaching to large groups through the traditional lecture format. The advantages and disadvantages of this teaching format continue to be discussed and debated at length, but it is clear that one of the challenges with teaching large groups is to maintain student engagement. The following are our top ten tips to assist in maintaining student engagement.

Get animated! Phil Porter.

Using visual animations in lectures can be a powerful tool to assist in explaining complex or abstract concepts. This can be particularly useful when trying to engage students with research, when the complexities of our research may make this material relatively inaccessible for students. Clearly the use of on-screen animations can also assist visual learners and anecdotal evidence indicates that overseas students find the use of animations to be particularly useful.



Given that most of us will be using PowerPoint for presenting our lectures, the use of the powerful animation tools embedded within the package is an obvious starting point and the image above shows one such animation created in PowerPoint (click on the image to see the animation in action). Using PowerPoint to create animations is simple, quick to learn, maintains low file sizes (as opposed to embedding movie clips into a slide) and avoids the need to learn a new package. Step-by-step guidance on how to create animations in PowerPoint can be found in the June 2009 and March 2010 editions of Blended Learning in Practice.

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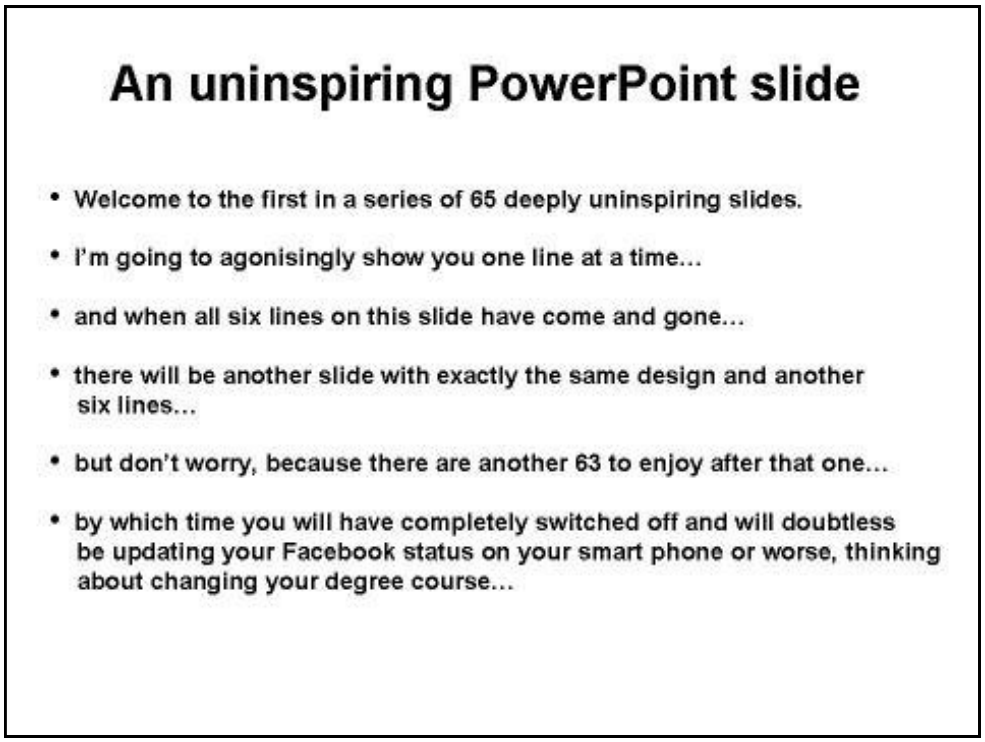
No more death by PowerPoint! Phil Porter.

Staying with PowerPoint, clearly it is a wonderful teaching tool, if used appropriately. However, if your lecture comprises slide after slide after slide of text/bullet point-based detail then the audience is liable to rapidly switch off! The tongue in cheek slide below illustrates an extreme example!



Liven up slides with imagery and animations or insert a few Electronic Voting Systems (EVS) slides to give students a short break and allow them to assess their knowledge. You could also ditch the PowerPoint altogether and experiment with a package such as Prezzi (see: www.prezi.com/) or be radical and teach the way we used to teach 30 years ago, with no visual aids beyond a whiteboard/chalkboard and pen/piece of chalk! After all, any of us really ought to be able to deliver a lecture should the technology fail, but how many of us really ever prepare for this eventuality?

Break it up. Suzanne Fergus.

Student performance and attention has been shown to decline over the duration of a lecture (Figure 1). Students may be recording fewer notes and these notes may be less accurate and contain fewer key ideas. This phenomenon of rapidly declining attention is most dominant when the attention task is passive. In situations where the learner is actively involved, attention is not affected to the same extent.

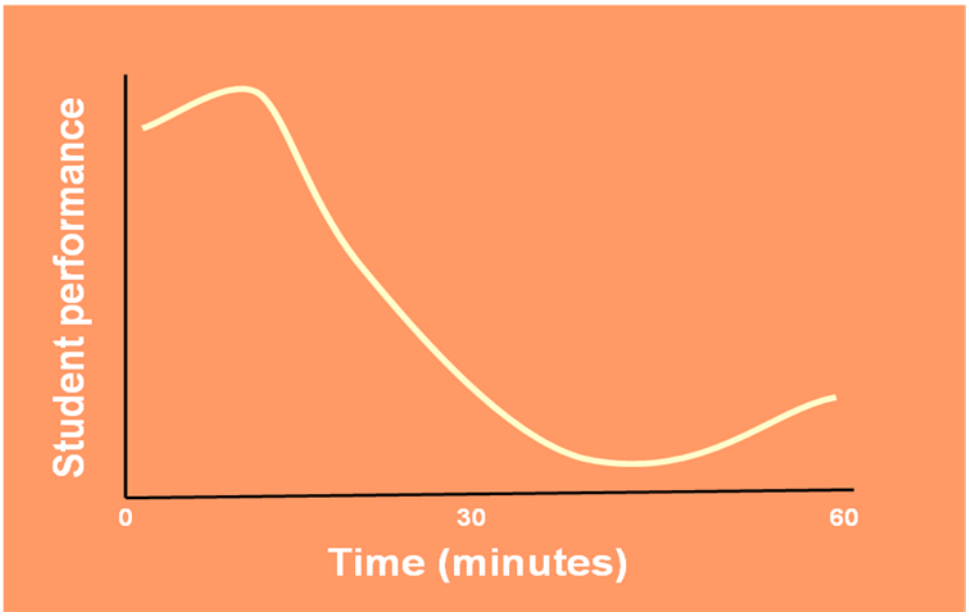


Figure 1. *Student performance and attention fluctuations*. Adapted from Gibbs and Habeshaw (1989).

The steepness of the decline in attention and performance is also affected by factors such as time of day, number of students present and room temperature/other environmental factors. This decline in performance is also relevant during inde-

pendent study (e.g. during passive reading) and to lecturers whilst they are giving lectures!

Breaking up the lecture with activities helps to restore learners close to their original level of performance. The following are examples of activities that you may want to consider:

- **Video clips/Podcasts:** with or without activities
- **Buzz groups:** set a specific question or topic for a short exercise in small groups
- **'Pyramid':** work as an individual then in pairs then in fours then report back to the whole class in a plenary session.
- **Individual tasks:** e.g. ask spend 3 minutes revisiting your lecture notes thus far as a silent task
- **Teaching themselves:** provide a page of theory for each group and give them time to prepare a brief teaching sesison for the other students.
- **Line-ups:** e.g. ask students where they stand on a continuum of an idea?
- **In-class tests** e.g. multiple choice questionnaires, EVS use.
- **Rounds:** ask students to state one thing that they will take away from this session.

It is possible in certain situations to maintain high levels of attention for prolonged periods, for eample:

- When the task is very important and relevant e.g. exam preparation.
- When the task is very interesting, novel and has personal relevance.
- When intellectual involvement and challenge is high (although excessive demands can also overburden learners and cause other problems).

Ask for help. Suzanne Fergus.

"*I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work*" ~Thomas Edison

There are occasions when something doesn't work as effectively as planned. This could be perhaps something related to technology, student discipline, student performance issues or student feedback.

It could also be that you recognise a need to do things differently in your own practice. The Learning and Teaching Institute at the University of Hertfordshire therefore offers a number of workshops and seminars throughout the year for continuing professional development. These workshops are aimed to help staff develop skills and knowledge to enable them to enhance the student learning experience.

Some examples of workshops are listed here:

- Refreshing your practice
- Using Adobe Connect as a virtual classroom
- Developing screen capture and narrated presentations to enhance teaching.
- Getting started in using Electronic Voting Systems in teaching
- Podcasting and editing using Audacity
- Reducing the degree attainment gap between White and Black, Minority, Ethnic students: what can you do?
- Using curriculum design toolkits
- Using Video within teaching
- In and out of class assessment
- Providing support for students with deferrals/referrals
- Feedback and marking
- Developing Multiple Choice Questionnaires (MCQs).

6. Escape from the front! Phil Porter.

If the design of the lecture theatre will allow it, using a wireless presentation 'clicker' can help you escape from the lectern or console at the front of the room, because you can advance your slides and use the laser pointer installed within the clicker to highlight on–screen objects or text. This can help student engagement because a lecturer moving about the class immediately provides a more dynamic environment and for those students who may be distracted by, for example, their mobile telephones, an approaching lecturer generally helps focus the mind! If you allow laptop use in your lectures it also gives you the opportunity to check that students are genuinely looking at your slides or making notes!

5. Make use of props. Phil Porter.

There are many reasons why the Royal Institution Christmas lectures are so absorbing and engaging. However, one of the elements that helps engage the audience in these lectures is the regular use of props. This is a perennial element of the Christmas lectures that helps to maintain audience interest and when the audience physically engage with the props (e.g. a volunteer comes form the audience or the object is passed round the audience) engagement becomes even more obvious. Showing your students what something looks like and/or feels like is a powerful way of generating interest and helping students remember the topic under discussion.

4. **Check understanding. Suzanne Fergus.**

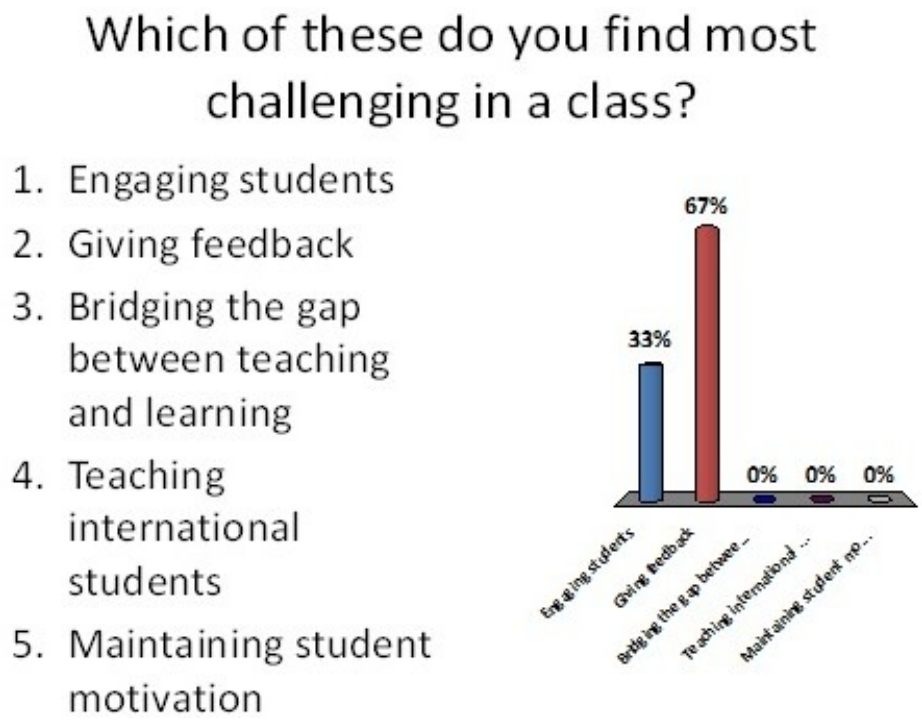
Could this be your lecture?

In a teaching session how do you know what the students are thinking? If you ask the question “does everyone understand?”, are you really likely to receive a response and, even if you do, can you accurately assess the level of student understanding?

One approach to check understanding and to help engage students is to use Electronic Voting System (EVS).

Some of the benefits of EVS include

- ✓ Encourages greater engagement in module and a better level of attendance
- ✓ Allows students who may not have confidence to speak to express their understanding
- ✓ Reinforces active learning throughout the year
- ✓ Provides ongoing feedback on personal understanding throughout the year
- ✓ Enables individual members of an audience to respond to questions, not just those who have the confidence to do so
- ✓Enables answers to be collated, saved and processed for assess ment purposes.



The figure above shows the nature of the answers displayed when using EVS, which is visible after a question has been answered by the students.

EVS can be used in a variety of ways, such as regular question and answer sessions during the lecture in order to keep track of understanding and engage the whole class. Seeking opinions e.g. ethical issues is another useful approach. Diagnostic tests and a record of attendance are other uses of EVS.

3. Engage with research. Phil Porter.

Engaging students with research can inspire and enthuse and any university student has a right to expect their curriculum to be informed by current research and scholarship in their chosen discipline. If you are research active then try to engage and involve your students with your research; I have seen many students flourish and attain great things through engagement with staff research. If you are not research active you still have great opportunities to enthuse your students by the research of others and to foster an environment where enquiry and research are promoted and valued. The University of Hertfordshire Learning and Teaching Institute has created a series of curriculum design toolkits to assist staff in addressing key agendas in Higher Education and there is a toolkit specifically aimed at research-informed teaching that may serve as a useful starting to point to assist you in furthering your engagement of students with research.

2. Visualise. Phil Porter.

This tip relates to tips 1 and 2. There is no doubt that visual elements in any presentation can assist with audience engagement. It could be as simple as a photograph or diagram, or an animation, or an embedded movie clip or indeed a DVD or video played as part of the session. Whatever the method, there is no doubt that for most of us, we remember what we see much more readily than what we read or hear. Visual elements in a teaching session can also help us to explain complex concepts to our students and are particularly important if we are discussing environments or issues where the students have no prior experience or knowledge; a visual element in the teaching session to help students conceptualise can be a real help. Don't forget that most teaching rooms now have electronic

visualisers and so you can also use these to show students paper based text or objects and props. I have even seen a visualiser effectively used to show students an application working on an iphone!

1. Start and finish with a bang!

A lecture is a performance and like every memorable performance it needs to start and end with a bang! Think about it, would a rock band start a concert with a ballad? Unlikely! Would a magician finish a stage performance with a close-up card trick? I doubt it! Starting and ending your lecture with something captivating helps to make the lecture more memorable for students and helps them engage with the subject matter. It could be as simple as an interesting background image on your opening slide which is on display as students take their seats such as the example below, it could be a 'volunteer from the audience' style exercise at the end.

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Why the picture of Freddie Mercury? Well for a lesson in starting and ending with a bang and keeping an audience captivated!

A Physiotherapy practice educator's reflection upon changes in teaching carried out for student practice placements

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Abstract

This article is a reflective account of a Physiotherapy educator's efforts to improve the facilitation of learning for undergraduate students, by implementing changes to the 'In-Service Training' (IST) or in-house teaching, based on accepted educational theories and relevant literature. The qualitative experiences of two subsequent pairs of students on the same practice placement were reviewed, before and after changes were made to the planning, structure, teaching methods and facilitation of the IST. The changes implemented resulted from the collection and analysis of student-generated feedback in the form of reflective pro-formas, learning style inventories, as well as the authors own reflective analysis. These raised concerns about the pedagogical, inflexible and didactic nature of the educational methods utilised. Changes to the facilitation of education in this practice placement were instigated for the second pair of students, which incorporated a transition to andragogical strategies/approaches, consisting of for example; greater evaluation of student centred factors such as their individual learning styles/ instructional preferences and learning processes, as well as the implementation of jointly set learning outcomes and more flexible participative methods of education. Following these changes, greater learner satisfaction was reported and a more consistent faster and broader achievement of the student's individual and placement learning outcomes was noted.

Introduction

Physiotherapy students are required to spend 1000 hours, or approximately 1/3rd of their undergraduate training, in clinical placement settings (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 2012). Consequently, a large proportion of their education is provided by practice educators, who often have little or no training on how to effectively teach students and facilitate learning. The aim of this reflective article is to analyse and demonstrate improvement in the facilitation of learning of undergraduate students through the teaching provided by the author whilst the students were on one of their physiotherapy practice placements. A case study of two consecutive student placements (pseudonyms of Cathy and Claire, Jane and Jenny are used to ensure anonymity) will be discussed in detail.

The formalised education, or 'In-Service Training' sessions (IST) were the main focus, as concern existed that the teaching/facilitation of learning had been too rigid, didactic and not learner-specific. This pedagogical approach encourages superficial learning (Atherton, 2005), and inhibits deeper understanding, problem solving, and transferability of knowledge/skills to differing situations (Knowles *et al*., 1998). These are all necessary attributes that undergraduate physiotherapy students need to acquire to become effective professionals (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 2012; Health & Care Professions Council, 2007; McMahon, 2006).

Baseline feedback on the author's teaching was gained from the first pair of students and is initially discussed and analysed in the methodology section. Arising from this evidence, changes in strategies in relation to learning & teaching theories will be discussed as will the results of applying these new strategies, which were put into practice with the second pair of placement students.

Methodology

1- Baseline Evidence:

The first pair of students, Claire and Cathy, provided reflective feedback, as advocated by the professional body (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 2012), concerning methods and the style of teaching received and the subsequent effects upon their learning over the course of their five-week placement. This took the form of independently completed written evaluation summaries (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, 2010) of the teaching received. This was supplemented by the authors' reflections on the content, level and delivery of the IST.

It was recognised that the feedback gained, although informative, was not necessarily directly transferable to subsequent students, as factors such as personality and learning styles could be very different for each student/pair of students. For example, students with pragmatic learning styles may prefer practical 'hands on' IST, whereas theorists would potentially engage with and learn more from formalised theoretical discussions (Wessel *et al*., 1999; Heron, 1988; Honey & Mumford, 1982). It was, however, hoped that regardless of individual learning styles, the student's reflection would be a good representation of the author's facilitation and in-service teaching, and that, even with student differences (such as personality), this would have some relevance to the next student placements, and thus serve as a guide to areas for improvement in the authors education style and methods.

2-Baseline feedback evaluation

Summarising Claire and Cathy's feedback forms, it became evident that satisfaction with the teaching and learning they received was quite different. Claire appeared satisfied with the IST stating that:

> "Overall the IST was very good" "presentations really worked ….. I learnt of lot from my educator"

Whilst Cathy's feedback was more critical:

> "content was comprehensive, but too in-depth to understand…..the take home message got lost"
>
> "I did not feel able to contribute, relying entirely on my educator'
>
> "I prefer more 'hands on', rather than just talking about patient problems and treatments"

Although at the time as Cathy's educator I had not picked up on this, her feedback made me subsequently question the value of these sessions to her.

There could be several reasons for the disparity in the feedback and the perceived value of the IST for students. Both attended the presentations together, so content was identical. The learning taken from the sessions, however; was very different. This may relate to the individual cognitive ability/style, (Cassidy, 2004), with factors such as perception and thinking being set within one's personality (e.g. Sadler -Smith & Riding, 1999; Riding & Cheema 1991).

In 1983 Curry attempted to resolve the variety of differing learning style models, theories and instruments in existence and conceptualized a three–level system, known as the layers of an onion, the so-called 'Onion Model' (Figure 1). The first and innermost layer of Curry's model relates to various personality models that describe the influence upon learning, referred to as the cognitive personality style. This personality style is described as being a relatively permanent dimension, involved in adapting and assimilating information. This layer is described as the deepest and most difficult to access and, being independent of the environment, is regarded as the most stable level of the model. It is thus unlikely to be altered via external influences such as changes in teaching methods or the physical surroundings.

The second or middle layer represents the individual's information processing style and is related to how external stimuli and information are processed, or put simply; how an individual learns. Curry (1983) suggests this layer is also relatively stable but can be subject to change via external influences such as instructional preferences or teaching styles. This concept was built on by Hartley (1998), who considered the application of this cognitive ability to be relatively fixed, but recognised that adaptations could be achieved, given optimal circumstances, for example, the application of suitable teaching methods to individual learning situations or environments.

The third and outermost layer of Curry's onion (Figure.1) is directly exposed to the environment and external stimuli, and is thus considered the least stable and displays the most potential for change. It relates to the individual's instructional preferences or their learning styles, as well as how they identify and choose learning situations and interact in given environments (Patterson & Pratt, 2007; Sadler-Smith & Riding, 1999).

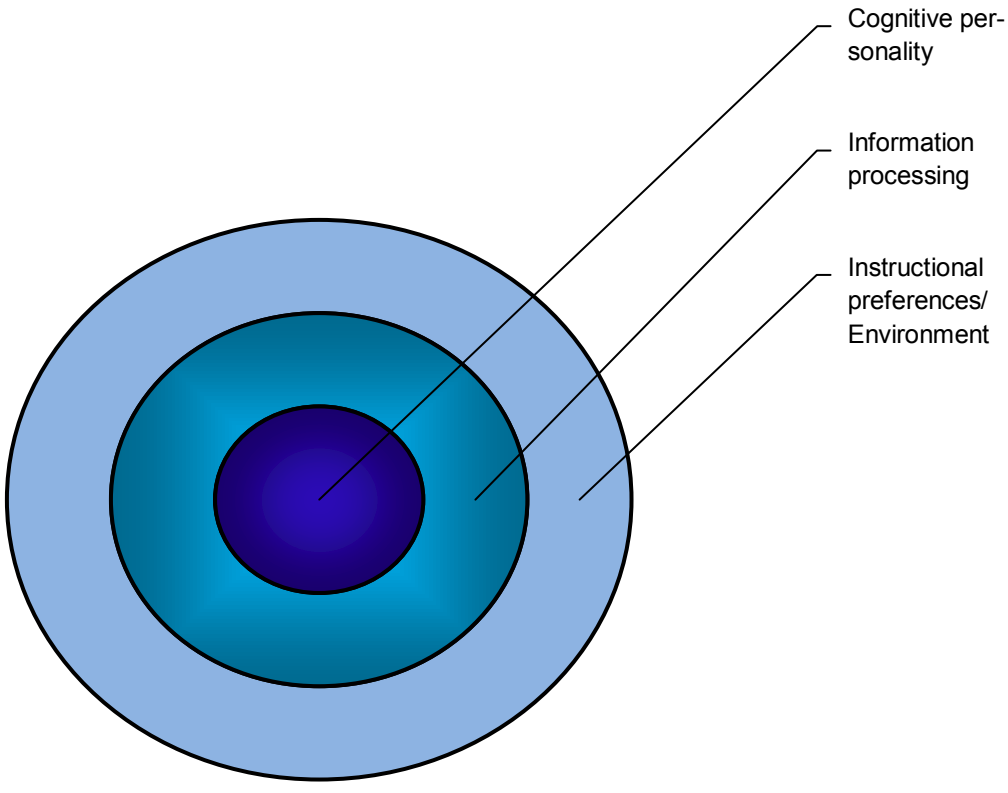

Figure.1 *Curry's Onion model.*

Subsequent authors, (Cassidy, 2004; Hayes & Allinson, 1994) have also recognised that this outer layer of Curry's onion, relating to learning preferences, can be influenced by external factors such as the environment, resulting in short-term changes in the student or learner. It would therefore follow that this is the layer that a teacher or educator is most likely to be able to influence by skilled manipulation, of for example; a classroom or meeting room, the content, or methods of facilitation, teaching materials and aids utilised.

Learner preferences have also been closely linked to the application of cognitive ability/style by Kolb, (1984) and by Honey & Mumford (1986), who make direct comparisons within their learning style categories, to Kolb's learning cycle (1984), (Figure.2). Kolb describes how the different application of ability or processes such as "Concrete Experience", (the "doing") or "Abstract Conceptualization", (the "concluding or surmising"), may be used at different stages during learning.

Learners may have stronger preferences or motivations for different processes/ levels within Kolb's cycle, depending upon their previous learning experiences. The didactic IST used with the initial pair of students could have, for example, suited Claire better as she may have preferred "Abstract Conceptualization", whereas Cathy may have preferred "Active Experimentation" or "Concrete Experience" and required more practical 'hands on' IST, to enhance her learning. Instructional preferences relate directly to how learners will interact with different tasks and facilitation. For example, a "Pragmatist" who is keen to try things may not participate or learn from lengthy theoretical discussions. It is possible that Cathy and Claire's instructional preferences may explain the differing experiences from the ISTs and hence differences in the feedback.

Potential incompatibility with my facilitation/teaching style could also have contributed to the disparities seen in the learning and feedback. A potential 'matching' (Hayes & Allinson, 1996) of my initial didactic, theoretical, discursive type of teaching style to Claire's instructional preference was noted from my IST reflection.

It appeared that Claire responded well to my teaching methods which could indicate that she possessed traits similar to myself, that of a "Theorist" and a "Reflector" (Honey & Mumford, 1986) and that she may therefore also have had preferences towards "Reflective Observation". Hence my instructional/teaching style could have inadvertently matched her learning preferences.

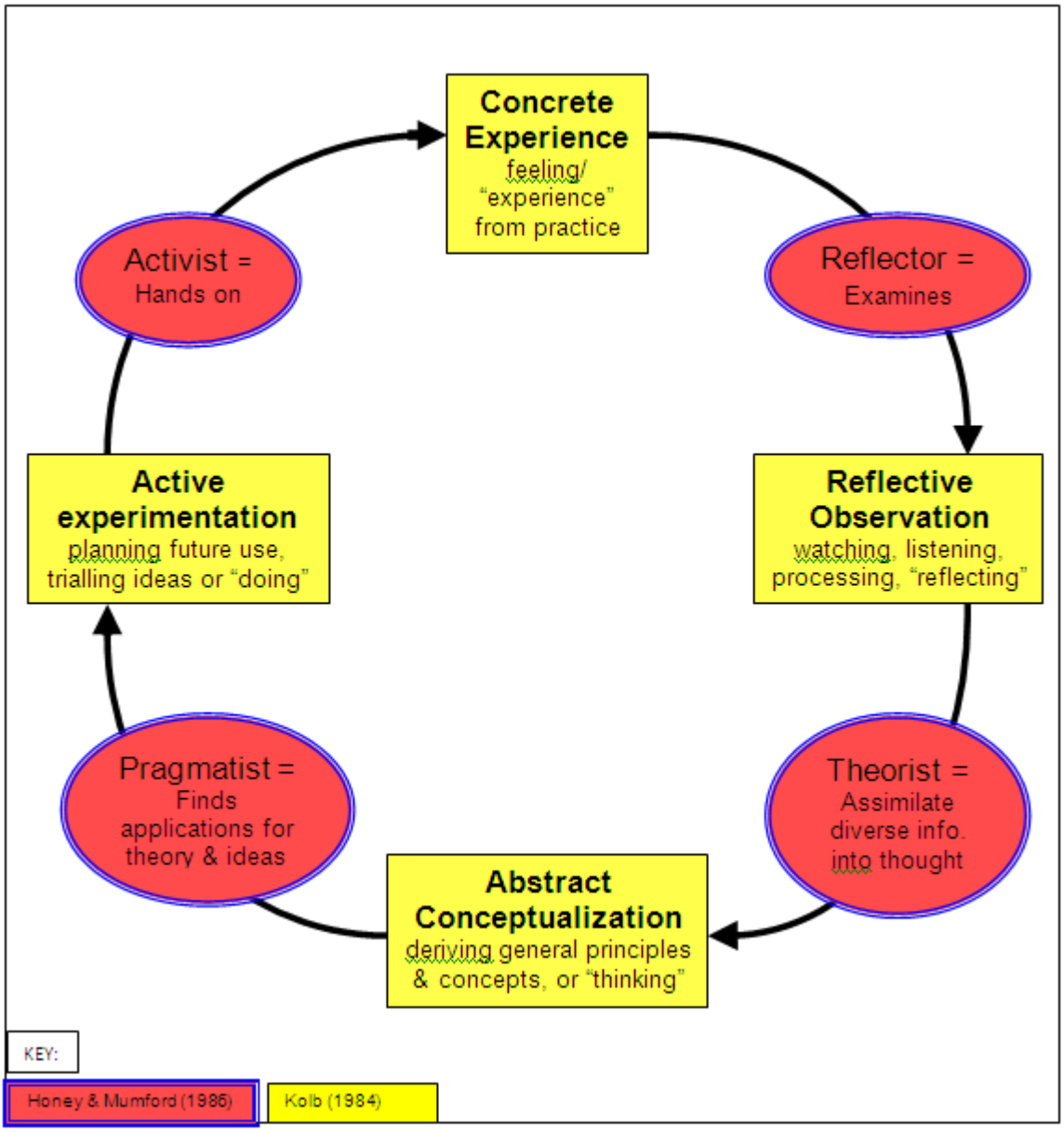

Figure.2 *Relationship between Kolb's model of experiential learning & Honey & Mumford's learning style inventory*.

As a result of this, Claire appeared to really engage in the ISTs and was a lot more responsive than her peer. This could have enhanced her achievement and satisfaction, whereas Cathy on the other hand may have experienced a 'mismatch', whereby her learning preferences may have been in opposition to my instructional preferences, resulting in reduced application of cognitive ability, participation, motivation, and understanding on her part. These mismatches could potentially be eliminated, as teaching or facilitation styles relate directly to an individual's cognitive style and hence their instructional preference, (Curry's outer layer) which can be altered (Garlinger & Frank, 1986). Hayes and Allinson (1996) describe empirical evidence supporting the view that instructional preferences, and by default teaching styles, can therefore be adapted to differing situations.

As well as possible mismatches in instructional and teaching preferences, the method of delivery could be questioned, as a didactic lecture type approach was used throughout all IST. This pedagogical method was historically used for children and can encourage learner dependency by promoting submissiveness (McMahon, 2006: Knowles *et al*., 1998). A didactic pedagogy ensures the teachers exclusive responsibility for decision making regarding the content of the taught session, the method, timing and evaluation (Knowles *et al*., 1998). This approach often encourages superficial, 'rote' learning, used for example, to pass exams (Atherton, 2005; Boud *et al*., 1999). This type of learning allows factual recall within similar contexts, but is potentially less useful for professionals, (McMahon, 2006), as the transferability of skills and knowledge to different situations encountered in clinical practices may be limited.

Andragogy in contrast, can promote independence, deeper understanding of concepts and represents the adult end of the child/adolescence/adult learning continuum (McMahon, 2006: Atherton, 2005; Knowles *et al*., 1998) This adult model is based on the premises that adults know why they need to learn, are self-motivated and want to learn, possess responsibility for decision-making and have greater breadth of experience (Knowles *et al*., 1998).

To promote andragogy, learners should make decisions regarding their own learning, (in this study, the IST's), which unfortunately was not the case with Cathy and Claire, as the IST programme and objectives for their learning were set in isolation before their placement began.

Knowles *et al*., (1998), acknowledge that instances may exist when different pedagogical strategies are needed for particular learners or goals. The students' situation here may be an example of this, as being completely new to a specialist area and with minimal relevant experience to draw upon, they may have been more dependent and required more direction. Students on placement will sometimes often have to 'rote' learn standard information quickly, to be able to reproduce and perform routine tasks effectively and safely and therefore, didactic pedagogical approaches may be more appropriate, particularly in the early stages of their placement learning. The need for different learning processes is discussed within the literature, but with recognition of the need to move towards andragogy to increase personal responsibility for learning, as opposed to remaining dependent upon facilitators with continued pedagogy (Knowles *at al*., 1998). As clinicians are generally not formally taught how to teach, but instead how to practice (Twinn & Davies, 1996), it is likely that I replicated my experiences of undergraduate teaching when 'educating' my students. Literature suggests that adequate training is necessary to ensure facilitation is carried out in an appropriate and supportive manner (Mackreth, 1997, Porter, 1997; Kilminster & Jolly, 2000), a lack of which in my case may have led to, for some, less optimal supervision.

From my own reflection on the IST programme, it was evident that the method of facilitation adopted was familiar and easy to reproduce, irrespective of the students' personalities and learning styles. I was perhaps comfortable with the pedagogical responsibility for learning, as I believed that this kept students more dependent and served to reinforce my positional and expert power (Etzioni, 1975). Without any challenge to my teaching/facilitation from peers, I had not sufficiently reflected, or taken the necessary steps towards abstract conceptualization or active experimentation.

The method of feedback used to gain Cathy and Claire's evidence, is also worthy of investigation, as differences may have been due to the modality used (written). Claire's feedback for example, was significantly shorter. If she had a strong aversion to written learning and been an "Activist" or "Pragmatist" (Honey & Mumford, 1982; Honey & Mumford, 1986), she may not have fully participated with this mode of feedback, and therefore an alternative, such as verbal feedback, may have been more appropriate. If conversely she had had a strong preference for "Read/write" learning, (Fleming, 1992) she may have engaged more in the reflective feedback process and potentially identified deficits in her learning.

It should be noted, however, that the literature questions the relevancy and accuracy of student evaluation/feedback. Pounder's (2007) comprehensive literature review concludes that research into student evaluations does not demonstrate any concrete relationship with teaching performance. He cited many examples of unrelated variables influencing evaluations, from time of day/week, teacher's personality, to students giving positive feedback to keep on the 'teacher's good side'. Much of the literature concurs with Pounder, (e.g. Crumbley *et al*., 2001; Smith & Kinney, 1992; Dowell & Neal, 1982) which is troubling in view of the widespread use of student evaluation's (Seldin, 1993).

It is therefore acknowledged that there are limitations in this approach to gaining student evaluation and feedback, especially in this case with only two students. It was, however, hoped that despite the issues concerning usefulness of evaluative feedback, the information gained could be used to devise a more effective learning experience for subsequent students.

3-Strategies for the next two students

i) Learning Contracts:

Following discussions with the next two students, Jenny & Jane, at the beginning of their practice placement regarding their perceived strengths & areas of weaknesses, they were encouraged to identify and document their expectations, aims and objectives, and personal learning needs and strategies in the form of a learning contract (LC).

The students agreed these would be used to evaluate progress instead of the generic pre-set placement learning aims and outcomes utilised previously. Whilst Boud (1992) suggests LCs can limit opportunities, such as spontaneous learning situations/environments, several authors (e.g. Laycock & Stephenson 1994; Solomon, 1992) state that improvements in ownership, participation and motivation are identifiable, as LCs are focused on learner's needs and wants, and provide a summative function to assess development (Laycock & Stephenson, 1994).

Use of LCs also satisfies two of Sadler's (1989) three conditions necessary for learners to benefit from feedback. These consist of possession of achievable goals/standards, and the structure/ability to compare performance against these goals/standards. This allows LCs to be used for formative as well as summative assessment. Many authors (McMahon, 2006; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Torrance, 2001; Sadler, 1989) demonstrate that formative assessment and feedback benefits learners by promoting evaluation and self-reflection, clarifying good performance, and encouraging self-esteem and motivation. It also identifies weaknesses and allows subsequent improvements to be implemented before summative assessment. In addition to the formative function of LCs, the students in this case suggested a need for on-going assessment and feedback following specific IST sessions, which was also implemented.

ii) Peer Learning:

To satisfy the perceived need for on-going feedback, the concept and positive aspects of peer learning and assessment were introduced and discussed. These included improving reflection, critical enquiry and communication skills, as well as promoting lifelong, deep and andragogical learning (Boud, *et al*., 1999; Lincoln & McAlister, 1993). It was agreed that assessment/feedback would be facilitated via the introduction of peer clinical supervision sessions. These would enhance learning and transference of skills into clinical practice, as well as facilitating timely feedback, active learning, reciprocity and cooperation between the students, thereby satisfying three of seven principles of good practice for undergraduate

education (Chickering and Gamson, 1987).

As advocated by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (2010), supervision logs were used to promote awareness of the processes of supervision and assessment and the concept of 'good feedback' (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). My monitoring of every third supervision session was agreed to moderate assessment and feedback, to facilitate debriefs with appraiser and appraisee, and to minimise the adverse effects of peer supervision, as described by Declute & Ladyshewsky, (1993) and Boud *et al*., (1999), such as competitiveness, exploitation or factual inaccuracies.

iii) Learning styles:

In order to identify how the IST programme could be designed to ensure optimal learning a 'learning style' or 'instructional preference' questionnaire was identified (Fleming, 2005) that both Jenny and Jane, as well as myself completed and compared. The "Visual, Audial, Read/write, Kinaesthetic" (VARK) inventory (Fleming, 2005), was selected as it was free, easy to administer (taking only 10 minutes to complete the web based questionnaire - essential in clinical practice where time is very limited) and had no commercial bias. However, as validity and reliability are not yet proven, caution was used in its interpretation (Coffield *et al*., 2004). The results of the completed inventories clearly showed Jenny's and my own learning styles of *"Read/Write"* modes matched (with very similar scores across the categories), whilst Jane mismatched, with *"Multimodal"* preferences (weak scores across the four learning mode), and a slightly stronger tendency towards the *"Kinaesthetic"* mode of learning. Based on this result Jane may therefore learn best when she actually experiences situations or events, such as physically feeling patients muscle tone or joint movements, or practising communication techniques. Conversely, Jenny for example may benefit from reading about differences in muscle tone or theories of communication and writing notes. Following the students and my own comparisons of the findings from the VARK, both Jenny and Jane were keen to determine which instructional method would be optimal to facilitate their learning and at which stages of their placement. Therefore discussions were had regarding the difficulties in using different instructional preferences

concurrently, as well as the pros & cons of 'matching' and 'mismatching' differing learning and instructional styles (Ford & Sherry, 2001; Sadler-Smith & Riding, 1999; Hayes & Allinson, 1996). As both Jenny and I had strong *"Read/Write"* preferences and Jane was *"Multimodal"* with elements of *"Read/Write"*, this was agreed upon as the initial matching preference to improve short-term learning (e.g. Hayes & Allinson, 1996; Riding & Douglas, 1993; Riding & Sadler-Smith, 1992). The students also decided that as they become more familiar and confident within the speciality, the facilitation method of the ISTs could include more 'hands on' practical approaches to allow a greater match to Jane's *"Kinaesthetic"* preference. This would serve to enhance Jane's learning, whilst challenging Jenny to develop and adopt a more multi-modal learning approach, which is useful in enhancing flexibility in differing learning environments and situations (Hayes & Allinson, 1996)

iv) Active participation in IST:

During agreement of their LCs, discussion was facilitated with the students, both individually and jointly, to identify their educational needs in order to agree and prioritise the IST programme. This early collaboration in the decision-making and IST planning, promoted movement towards andragogy (Knowles *et al*., 1998) and away from the pedagogical pre-emptive setting of a standardised IST programme. The improved ownership resulting from cooperative/collaborative approaches (Declute & Ladyshewsky; 1993) was seen to increase the student's awareness of their needs and motivation towards participation in the IST.

The students subsequently decided initial IST should be on safety issues and theory associated with using specialist equipment on their placement. Despite Jane's *"Kinaesthetic"* preference, both students described didactic lecture style IST as their preferred facilitation method for these sessions. This pedagogical need felt by the students could relate to their feelings of dependency and reliance upon set procedures, polices and more experienced staff, such as myself, as both were new to this highly specialised area with no previous experience.

To ensure promotion of andragogical interaction and facilitate deeper and more active learning, the new IST programme was less structured and didactic, with

content being focused on the students' actual needs rather than my perceptions of them. This incorporated case studies and problem based learning, as well as practical sessions. Hand-outs were still provided to promote latent reflection, but were less formal and lengthy than those used for Cathy and Claire, and included diagrams and pictures to include more varieties of learning and instructional preferences. To further reduce learner dependence, peer learning was facilitated whereby the student's chose, researched, and presented topics in less formal sessions, stimulating cooperation and reciprocity, as well as encouraging deeper learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Results - Evaluating changes

In order to evaluate the changes in facilitation of learning with the second pair of students, I continued my self-reflections following each IST session, but these were more evaluative and focused upon change. The abstract conceptualization was stronger and greater efforts were made to actively experiment (Kolb, 1984) with different styles and methods of facilitation.

It became evident upon analysing my reflections that moving away from my original didactic style, towards a more fluent facilitatory approach, whilst daunting with feelings of loss of control and worry about digressing from my plans, promoted more free thinking. The sessions became more productive and interactive, stimulating active learning as we explored and discussed many associated relevant topics prompted by the students, rather than simply following my perceptions of what I felt they needed to know. The overall scope of the IST's, as well as the essential content was however maintained to ensure the relevant learning experiences for their practice placement were still achieved.

The students also continued to feedback on the IST, via reflection on-action (after the event), using modified written pro-formas, which provide constructive and positive comments such as;

"Less formalised approach worked as I was not afraid to speak up even though I was not sure I was right"

"It was great we could both help…. and problem solve why my way would not work"

"I was worried about not being given the right answer by my peer ……, it was good our educator could guide us if we went wrong"

Resulting from raised awareness of learning styles and instructional preferences, the students suggested using visual analogue scales in addition to written comments on their IST experiences, to enhance objectivity and quality of their feedback. With the IST being less formal and with greater student participation, verbal reflective feedback was also discussed and implemented successfully. This occurred both 'in-action' (concurrently during the IST), which allowed the IST to be adapted or focused more to suit the students' needs during the session, as well as 'on-action' (latent reflection) which occurred after the IST and served to inform the facilitation method for future ISTs.

In addition to the introduction of peer clinical supervision and formative feedback sessions, I also asked colleagues to peer evaluate the IST sessions to provide impartial feedback in an attempt to offset some of the validity issues relating to student evaluation and feedback (Pounder, 2007). Ellington & Ross (1994) described benefits of introducing peer assessment into university teaching evaluations. In their example 'mentors' were specifically trained and whilst voluntary uptake was low, 8 of the 12 who volunteered considered it to be "extremely helpful" and the other 4 "reasonably helpful". The model I introduced, whilst similar, was more akin to Adam's (1994), 'Buddy' system, whereby peers without formal training were invited to observe teaching activities. I found this approach non-threatening and the 'Buddies' provided critical and constructive feedback which could be discussed analysed and conceptualised, and then actively experimented with by implementing further changes.

Perhaps the most reliable method of identifying changes in learning, resulting from improvements in the IST sessions, was to evaluate achievement of the students

objectives. The LCs were constantly referred to during the placement to provide formative feedback, with final summative assessment performed at placement completion. Unusually, significant progress was consistently observed towards achieving Jane and Jenny's personal objectives, contributing to full achievement at the end of the placement. With previous students, including Claire and Cathy, progress was usually slow, with frequent non-completion of some objectives, despite increased activity towards the end of the placement, . Jenny and Jane's improvement may have related to improved participation, motivation and compliance, secondary to improved ownership, (Atherton, 2005; Knowles *et al*.,1998), and/or from the continued timely formative feedback, as advocated by Chickering and Gamson (1987). It is noted however, that the depth and breadth of individual students' knowledge, skills and motivation, as well as their ability to participate, learn and change over the course of practice placement is very variable. Hence, the positive outcomes noted following changes to the IST, may simply be attributed to the latter pair of students being relatively brighter, better engaged and more competent than the former. Further research would be required in order to draw a more substantive conclusion.

Conclusion

Over the course of these two placements, I became more aware of the importance of focusing facilitation of learning towards individual learner needs and preferences, rather than remaining an "unconscious incompetent" (Bandler & Grinder, 1979), within my comfort zone of didactic formal teaching. I had to continue to assess the learning styles and instructional preferences of students whilst considering relative merits of matching and mismatching. My facilitation needed to be tailored to meet the student's needs, dependent upon their experience, stage of learning and whether the aim at different stages of the placement was more towards deep or superficial learning. Continued effort at revisiting these principles and those of pedagogy and andragogy need to be made with every new learner encountered, in order to understand and respect their diverse talents & learning preferences.

The process of self-refection/evaluation and peer observation to inform change in facilitation was uncomfortable due to the challenge of my historical, deeply ingrained familiar methods of teaching. Examples of this include feelings of loss of control as I implemented less structured IST, as well as potentially reducing my expert/positional power over my students However, in spite of these concerns, positive comments and feedback were gained from students and peers regarding improvements in facilitation. Despite the learning structure and the order and rate of learning being different, both with regard to the summative assessment and personal observations, I recognised that Jane and Jenny's achievement of knowledge, concepts, and skills was deeper and more transferable than those of the previous students.

Resulting from the personal learning undergone, I am now more familiar with different learning and facilitation strategies, types of IST and media that could be used, and also the variety of evaluative tools available. I am now better equipped to facilitate learning in a wider variety of individuals and circumstances. The biggest challenge that remains is to ensure that I continue to self-review and actively complete learning and reflective cycles so that my ability to facilitate learning continues to evolve.

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Student Voice

Many teachers in Higher Education rightly devote a good deal of time planning and implementing a variety of teaching methods in order to enhance student engagement and cater for a wide range of student learning styles. However, how often do we speak directly to our students and ask them what they think of our modes of teaching?

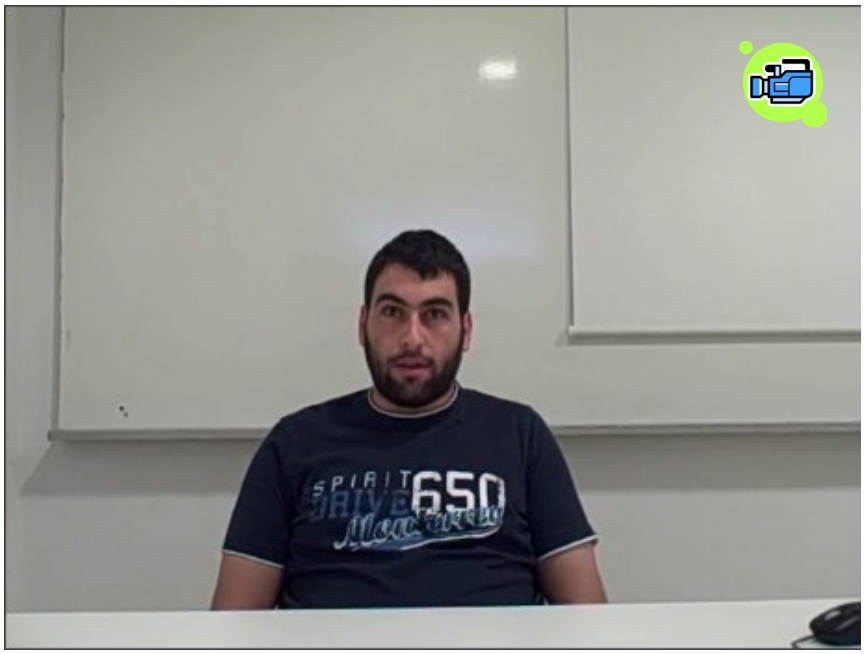
We therefore decided to ask four students what their thoughts were of traditional lectures, small group teaching (e.g. seminars, tutorials) and fieldwork/ trips off campus.

Level 6 University of Hertfordshire (UH) undergraduates Tom Porter and Lucia Lencioni provide their views of university teaching methods in the U.K., while University of Nicosia students Maria Savva and Constantinos Agrotis, studying on the UH franchised Environmental Management programme, give us their views from Cyprus!

Lucia Lencioni

Student Voice

Tom Porter



Costantinos Agrotis

Student Voice

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