How can curious, playful thought incite intuitive pedagogy? – A workshop

Jane Bartholomew
Senior Lecturer in Academic Mentoring, Nottingham Business School, NTU
Researcher, Author, Designer, Business Woman
…and still learning.

j.bartholomew@ntu.ac.uk

AdvanceHE Teaching and Learning Conference 2019 -
Teaching in the Spotlight: Innovation for Teaching Excellence
We intrinsically know that student behaviours, and their levels of engagement, can be hugely influenced by our teaching styles (Kahu, 2013).

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

...and when we do find time to reflect on all of this?
...and who do we share our thoughts with about this?
...and what actions do we take?

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

Hamish Coates, 2005
When playing the game, you are invited to ...

- share a constructive and creative attitude
- have a sense of humour
- be supportive yet questioning of others to encourage debate
- be open minded to identify opportunities to move your practice forward

Jenny Moon 2008

‘Use points of instability to examine old structures, behaviors and beliefs’.

Michael Hohl, 2015
In summary, the workshop invited us to:

1. To take part in a game designed to promote playful reflection about delivery styles;
2. Interact with others and share stories and thoughts about our teaching practice;
3. To think like a student and consider how they prefer to learn;
4. To build an individual Pedagogy Action Card pack that enables further action and/or reflection about out teaching practice.

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

George Kuh, 2003

Final Year student’s Industry Project: Day 1 and 6 weeks later..
Professional Doctorate in Education

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

‘gaps between student survey responses and faculty perceptions’

Coates and McCormick, 2014
Case Study — Qualitative Research using Grounded Theory methodology

Part One: **Student Narratives**

25 final year students wrote down their personal stories;

‘At some point in your education it is likely that you will have experienced a point when you felt completely engaged and motivated by what you were doing – can you tell me about it?

*Write down the thoughts as they come to you and include as much detail as you can remember.*

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

Part two: **Semi-structured Interviews**

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

*Aim:* To obtain a greater **understand of the similarities and differences of opinions** between the students, lecturers and managers about what motivates and engages students in higher education today.
**Grounded Theory** is an inductive, analytical technique that allows the researcher to observe themes and patterns that are emerging from the qualitative data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Bowen 2006; Mishler, 2009; Yin, 2014).

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

My sensory perceptions of the individual student’s experience heightened as I continued to immerse myself in the memories depicted in their personal stories. I did this by inhabiting their world and ‘*scrutinising the material*’ (Griffin and May, 2012).

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

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

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

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

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

‘one to one support helped kick me into doing the work’

‘taking on board constructive criticism was useful in exploring new ideas’

‘[The teacher] had a very open approach to teaching, not forcing her opinion but advising’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Number of stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td>New/challenging activity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal determination/passion</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on a single activity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning environment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning by themselves</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry-related experience</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team-working</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimenting/taking risks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selected to participate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhanced engagement</strong></td>
<td>Learning community</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching quality</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom to play/experiment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affirmation (by others) of capability</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal driven</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student-centric</strong></td>
<td>Fun to be in education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning styles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments relating to stress</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact</strong></td>
<td>(4) Impacted on future plans</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) Increased personal satisfaction levels</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Inspiring new knowledge/skills/practice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7) Increased self-awareness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Inspired to do more</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Increased confidence</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Had positive impact on others</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

‘I benefit from one to one support more than being taught in a large class’
CASE STUDY - Part two: Semi-structured interviews

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

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

**Key:**
- **Managers’ comments**
- **Lecturers’ comments**
- **Students’ comments**
Factors that affect students’ motivation, engagement and autonomous learning habits...

**Opportunity for course teams to consider whether their curriculum provides:**

- Regular challenges / develop problem solving skills
- Learning experiences that develop resilience / determination / criticality
- Time to focus on a single activity
- Team-working
- Peer learning opportunities
- Ways of broadening their passion for the subject
- Freedom to play/experiment/take risks
- Encourage students to determine their own reading
- Industry-related experience

**Opportunity for course teams to consider enhancing the following:**

- Learning environments
- Learning community
- Sense of belonging
- Mentoring systems to support personal development
Describing a problem as ‘wicked’ (Rittel and Webber, 1973) alerts us to the fact that it is a complex, multi-layered set of problems which include a wide range of factors that all need investigating more deeply in order to be able to shed light on the larger overarching problem.

Many lecturers intuitively know that students best learn when they;

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

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

- increasing student numbers with a diverse range of learning styles and needs
- space for academics to engage with pedagogy
- student attendance
- timetabling and resources
- room layouts
- technology
Engaging the individual’s mind to be curious and playful

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

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

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

John Dewey (1910) highlighted the problem by stating that ‘the training of mind remains an incidental and secondary consideration’ to the acquisition and confirmation of knowledge.
So, by talking to and working with students as partners when we design learning and by identifying ways to deliver sessions that maximise their motivation and engagement levels, we will;

- gain a greater understanding of the different ways in which different students prefer to learn,
- facilitate greater levels of autonomous behaviour,
- prepare graduates who can problem solve, think creatively and are resilient and pragmatic in the face of change.

‘develop curiosity and messy journeys with no pre-determined destinations’

Jessica Riddell, 2018
References


https://www.jessicariddell.com/public-scholarship

https://psychicelements.com/blog/6-signs-of-sixth-sense/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sense
Thank you

Jane Bartholomew

j.bartholomew@ntu.ac.uk