Retention and attainment in the disciplines: Art and Design

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Contents

1. Executive summary

This report considers the retention and attainment of students from diverse backgrounds within the subject discipline of Art and Design at university. It focuses on the data for the area and identifies key issues that need to be addressed. It gives a background to the subject area itself to understand what is happening within the discipline to heighten levels of vulnerability for certain students in relation to persistence and attainment. The culture and custom of the subject area is also explored with reference to key texts.

This report also includes some key examples of interventions that have been introduced to make a difference to the student experience. They are in the form of case studies and illustrate how changes could be made. Finally, areas of future research are identified as well as some important recommendations going forward.

Evidence from the 'What Works' programme (Thomas 2012) has revealed:

> the importance of students having a strong sense of belonging in HE which is the result of engagement and this is most effectively nurtured through mainstream activities with an overt academic purpose that all students participate in. *(Thomas 2012, p. 12)*

These mainstream activities happen within the area of study. Therefore, firmly keeping this work within the subject area of Art and Design is essential to ensure higher retention and higher attainment rates.

It is hoped this report will be of use to a wide range of Art and Design institutions, departments, and staff who work within them, and who are committed to changing the student experience for all. It should encourage a more collaborative way of working across institutions, sharing good practice across the subject discipline.

2. Context

Within the changing context of higher education, as a result of widening participation initiatives, a rise in international students, and changes to disability legislation, there is now an increasingly diverse student body. There is an expectation that all students will succeed to the best of their ability; however research shows students from diverse backgrounds participate, persist and attain in higher education (HE) at differing rates. This has been highlighted in a recent report from the Higher Education Academy (HEA) (Woodfield 2014) where undergraduate retention and attainment across the disciplines is discussed. The report concludes that there is a need for a better understanding of how some groups of students experience different disciplines and how their background characteristics interact with a variety of disciplinary contexts to become more or less vulnerable to withdrawal and low attainment.

This report focuses on the subject discipline of Art and Design, identifying the key data around student characteristics and retention and attainment. It then discusses the key curricula, culture and practices at the subject level and how they interact with the characteristics of the diverse student groups to produce the variable retention and attainment patterns that are clearly present in the data. It also includes a set of case studies on interventions from a range of Art and Design HE institutions that attempt to address this disparity. The case studies are examples of activities from institutions across the country that have begun to intervene and make attempts to enhance pedagogy, the curriculum, student experience and/or destinations to employment. It is hoped that these can be adapted to suit local contexts and inspire transformation across the sector.

This report is in no way definitive, as the sector has been addressing this area over the past few years; in addition, not all key factors are included. However, it is a reflection on the discipline itself and how it may privilege or exclude certain students in the course of their studies. It also identifies areas for future research and includes some tentative recommendations for the whole sector.

It is hoped that this report will act as a catalyst for staff to make changes through being better informed about the possible underlying factors that exist with the subject area that may be an obstacle to achievement.

In this document, where appropriate, we will refer to those communities associated with the terms and acronyms Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) or Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) as 'people of colour'. This is a term predominantly used in the North Americas, however:

> The term 'people of colour', although it lacks some precise conceptual clarity, has a political connotation similar to the term "Black" in the British context; the term is used to protest against stigmatising people with pigmentation that is different from the pigmentation of the dominate groups. For this reason I favour the label 'people of colour'. Race is a social construction, with significant social consequences. *(Dhruvarajan 2000, p. 166)*

3. Art and Design data

The recently published HEA report on undergraduate retention and attainment discusses the data sets from 30 subject disciplines and the different socio-demographic characteristics of students relating to the academic year 2010-11.This section pulls out the specific student characteristics of interest in relation to retention and attainment within the area Art and Design, as identified by Woodfield. The percentage of students studying Art and Design at university is 5.8%; this translates as 95,070 students and it is in the top five subject choices. The majority of the students are of a traditional age; 79% with only 22% mature. (The sector average as a whole is 40% mature students.) In relation to gender, 64% of students are women and 36% men. The report states that there is a considerable amount of missing data on reported ethnicity. Student numbers within the cohort are reported as 76% White, 2% Black British Caribbean, 2% Black British African, 2% Asian British Indian, and 1% Asian British Pakistani. There was also 4% identifying as from another ethnicity and 12% not known. The overall conclusions are that it is predominately populated by white students. Within the area of disability the discipline has higher numbers of students with a declared disability, a specific learning disability: dyslexic students represent 11% of the cohort, higher than the sector average, which is 4%. The mode of study is predominantly full-time at 93%, and the majority of the students are from the UK (89%).

Retention within the subject discipline is 94%, which is the average for the sector as a whole, but the number of students gaining lower or no award is 6%, which is higher than the sector average (4%).

Within the attainment rates across the sector as a whole, 65% of students achieved an 'upper' degree' (first or upper second), while in Art and Design it is 61%. All but one discipline within the Arts and Humanities recorded higher rates of upper degrees than the sector as a whole and this being Art and Design. It appears that socio-economic class (SEC) also impacts on students' achievement of an upper degree. Overall, 71% of students from SEC one and two achieved and upper degree compared with 65% of students from lower SEC three to nine. In addition, there are some significant findings around attainment, and students from ethnically diverse backgrounds within Art and Design. 31% of Black British Carribbean and Black British African students gain an upper degree in comparison to 64% of White students (Woodfield 2014, pp. 63-4). This is an attainment gap of 33%. Looking at students of

colour as a non-homogeneous group within the data collection allowed the nuances of difference to be identified in this area.

Art and Design is one of the disciplines with the highest percentages of students leaving with no award (6%) with a disproportionate difference between White students (6%) and Black student groups (Black British Caribbean 9%, Black or Black British African 13%, other Black backgrounds 10%). The need for further raw data is required across a range of achievement levels to understand more, as we only have information on those who achieved upper degrees and those who leave without a degree. Another area where there is a noticeable difference in leavers without a degree is between part-time students (13%) and full-time students (6%).

Three main questions emerge from this research linked to specifically to Art and Design:

> Why do particular background characteristics of students create disadvantage across the Art and Design disciplinary context?
> What is happening within the subject discipline of Art and Design to heighten levels of vulnerability leading to lower continuation and or lower attainment rates?
> What types of activities and interventions are taking place to impact the over-arching differing attainment and retention of students of colour in Art and Design subjects?

4. Curriculum, culture and custom in Art and Design

This section considers the key research that has been undertaken within the Art and Design subject area under the themes of curricula, culture, pedagogy and practice. It seeks to inform the reader of the specific disciplinary practices that exist within Art and Design and how these may affect the learning of students from diverse backgrounds and their success in higher education.

Many of the publications have been supported by the subject organisations such as the Group for Learning in Art and Design (GLAD), National Arts Learning Network (NALN), and the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD).

This body of literature also includes two reports, which are based on institutional research over the past two years within an Art and Design higher education institution. This research explores students' higher education experience across a four-year period from different ethnic backgrounds, linked to attainment. This work is, as yet, unpublished but it is important to include as its results are emerging and will influence strategic discussions going forward.

Finally, other key texts were found through the HEA website using the search terms: 'attainment', 'assessment' and 'Art and Design' and through academic journals such as *International Journal for Art and Design* (IJADE) and *Art Design Communication in Higher Education* (ADCHE). Emergent themes from across all these sources were identified and detailed notes taken of the key findings. These themes provide the basis of the discussion in the remainder of this section of the report.

4.1 Cultural capital

Before considering the students' experience on an undergraduate degree course, it is essential to understand the type of students who access Art and Design in higher education and what the admissions practices look like. These ideas are discussed by Burke and McManus (2012) in their seminal work *Art for a Few* about admission practices within Art and Design institutions within the context of widening participation policy, addressing national and institutional concerns to create inclusive, equitable and anti-discriminatory practices in Art and Design admissions. Their findings show

that, to some degree, the processes of selection that the admissions tutors engage in, draw on concepts of recognition and misrecognition, which are central to judgments about who has, and who does not have, 'potential' and 'ability':

> For Bourdieu, it is an 'obvious truth' (Bourdieu, 1991) that art is implicated in the reproduction of inequalities, and that the relationship between culture and power is such that taste creates social differences. Certain kinds of art can only be decoded, and appreciated by those who have been taught how to decode them (Bourdieu, 1984). The cultural capital of the working classes, and certain ethnic groups, is devalued and delegitimised (Bourdieu, 1984). *(Burke and Mcmanus 2012, p. 21)*

Bhagat and O'Neill (2011a) discuss how the concept of cultural capital is pervasive in art education within widening participation 'where the disciplines of Art and Design as 'creative subjects' see themselves focusing on 'talent' rather than privilege' (Bhagat and O'Neil 2011a, p.20). They posit that this view needs to be problematised and critiqued and that it is important to understand,

> not only how class works as a barrier, but how socioeconomic privilege works to thicken and complicate the barriers of age, disability, gender, race and sexuality. *(Bhagat and O'Neil 2011a, p. 21)*

Sabri (2015) discusses the exclusionary practices within the Art and Design subject area which can be observed at times in the Academy, and within the retention and attainment data, where, although there is a liberal sense of all-encompassing, tolerant, open, risk-taking and democratising spaces within the art studio, some students soon learn that these are not places for them.

4.2. Art and Design pedagogies

The pedagogy within the Art and Design discipline of project-centred learning creates a sense of agency for students, which is linked to the individual direction of their studies (Orr, Yorke and Blair 2014). Through project-centred learning there is the opportunity for discovery based and experiential learning which, it could be argued, is linked to encouraging individual responses within the work created around personal identities. Students see the studio as being concerned with divergent learning and self-direction and the opening up of possibilities. Therefore, it could be said that Art and Design already caters for difference and focuses on identity work. The students' conception of the Art and Design pedagogy is one of co-production and co-construction.

> Co-construction implies that the students and lecturers have equal stakes in the production of the student artwork, however ... the students view themselves as the owners and producers of the work. *(Orr, Yorke and Blair 2014, p. 41)*

Students see themselves as the experts in their practice and look to lecturers for feedback to extend or strengthen their work. However, with increasing group sizes, and the increase in diversity within Art and Design studio spaces, providing feedback at an individual level for learning becomes increasingly challenging. The 'atelier' method of working, which includes the "watch me and learn from me", or the "sitting next to Nellie" approach (Swann 1986, p. 18) is no longer feasible. This relied on the serial one-to-one tutorial model of pedagogy and the tutors' "pearls of wisdom" approach (Orr, Yorke and Blair 2014). Even with the larger groups this method of one-to-one feedback within the studio is still used today. This leads to students feeling there is very little teaching on the course:

> I wasn't expecting to be left to do projects completely on your own. I was expecting more guidance with it being first year and I didn't know what kind of work they were looking for. *(Yorke and Vaughn 2012, p. 24)*

This also can relate to the low scores in the National Student Survey (NSS) for the sector:

> There was a widely held view that the pedagogy of the Art and Design through which students are encouraged to explore and navigate their own way through projects with support did not sit well with the NSS questions, which related more to subjects with highly timetabled, lecture based structure. *(Vaughn and Yorke 2009, p. 3)*

Another factor to consider is the implicit 'pedagogy of ambiguity' present in Art and Design education, which involves practice-based learning with open briefs:

> where students have to engage in active negotiation and problem solving is key ... as is more frequent use of modes of formative assessment, through informal discussion and critique ... there is an unspoken requirement that students experiment, take risks. *(Austerlitz et al. in Drew 2008, p. 32)*

This openness can raise particular challenges for students. The implicit value of ambiguity, Austerlitz *et al.* (2008) argue,

> creates vagueness and insecurity for many of our first year students who have expectations based on the concrete and the certain *(p. 127)*, and

> The activity in such disciplines ... has neither one correct end-result nor one way to get there ... Engaging with these open-ended tasks is accompanied by an associated intensified emotional component. *(Austerlitz et al. 2008, p. 21)*.

So, students in their first year of study are constantly looking for certainty and reassurance, while staff are encouraging ambiguity and risk taking and expecting a tacit knowledge of how the subject is delivered. They rely on their tutors for guidance and for evaluation of the quality of their work.

This relationship is paramount and influenced by the degree to which students could benefit from feedback. Sabri (2014) discusses how it is important for tutors to reflect on the characteristics of the "intellectual project that is the course" (p. 1), and the extent to which it reflects the identities of the course team members and the extent of its relationship to students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Tangney (2013) discusses the humanist perspective of student-centred learning in creative subjects. She comments on how difficult it is to create a piece of artwork without an emotional investment or an emotional consequence:

> The piece of work is inevitably how the artist sees the world and their place within it. *(Tangney 2013, p. 270)*

Therefore, it is important to build trust with the student group to ensure that the students will find their voice. The tutor's role here is key. If conceiving and making work is a key role for students, and the work itself produced is emotional, then the relationships with tutors are intrinsic to its development. At times students may feel at odds with the tutors' aesthetic sense, which may link to their own identity (Sabri 2014). Students should be able to bring themselves into their work. However, this is harder for some to do than others.

4.3.   Inclusive curriculum and identity work

Reflecting on identity is often assumed to be something that art and design does well. Often staff remark: "that is what we do, we create spaces for students to explore their identity and have a very student-centred approach." This view is not always shared with some students studying on Art and Design courses. They perceive that some tutors' preferences have a large role to play when it comes to

getting a good grade. According to Sabri (2015) if they are at odds with the tutor's aesthetic they often leave their own ideas and follow the guidance of the tutor. This view is also reflected within the student voice project, '*Tell us About It*' where students identified a key strategy for success was having the possibility to explore personal identity in the creative process on their course. This could make a difference in creating work that is more risk-taking and experimental.

If there were no real spaces to explore their own identity in their work, this could cause confusion and separation from the work , as this fine art student explains:

> I relied and drew from my cultural experience (White South African student) … at least I did until my course director strongly recommended a steering away from the African … I spiralled into a sense of confusion … it (my work) didn't belong to me and I didn't belong to it – as in the case of displacement, it felt as though my work and I were sitting in that area between space and place, where relationships between objects had not yet been formed. *(Fine Art student, Finnigan 2009, p. 143)*

Art and Design educators need to be aware of the power they have in encouraging or discouraging students to develop their own practice. They often talk about students coming out of their comfort zone and thinking about exploring something that is not so close to their own personal identity. Hatton (2015) states that:

> Art education has generally been conservative, repetitive and exclusive. Art education theorists have even described art education as Eurocentric, racist and imperialist and have called for curriculum reform and social change. *(Hatton 2015, p. 3)*

This may be part of the reason why some students from diverse backgrounds do not persist on the course or succeed at high levels.

Bhagat and O'Neill (2011a) argue for a shift in the field of higher education itself, so that HE moves toward inclusive practices to develop a transformative approach in all its actions: that is, to develop flexible and anticipatory approaches. This approach is being adopted across the sector with the support of HEA research and funding for inclusive learning projects (Thomas 2012). More recently, subject-specific practitioner guides have also been produced to support staff in their approach to working with diverse students within Art and Design (Richards and Finnigan 2015).

A key theory that can attempt to move this work into inclusive and transformative learning with Art and Design teachers is that of critical pedagogy (Freire 1968; hooks 1995). This concept considers how education can be seen as transformational and linked to social justice.

4.4. Assessment in Art and Design

A core assessment practice that exists within Art and Design is the 'group crit' (group critique). In this situation, the feedback will often take place in an emotionally charged face-to-face meeting where verbal criticism, both negative and positive, takes place in front of an audience (Day 2013).

This does not happen in other subject disciplines where students mostly receive feedback in a written form, in an individual way.

The 'crit' can be a very intimidating experience for the students, although it is a formative opportunity for them to gain feedback on their work. The 'crit' should be seen as a process wherein the community supports the individual to create their work. The work of Blythman, Orr and Blair (2009) which critiques this assessment process also provides a useful guide for Art and Design tutors to use to make more explicit this form of assessment and for it to be used in a more supportive way.

All in all, this form of assessment could have some part to play in the retention and attainment of Art and Design students across the three years, but specifically within the first year of their studies.

4.5. Art and Design teachers

Many staff who teach within the Art and Design discipline on a part-time basis are themselves practitioners who may still work in their own studios. This brings its own benefits around student motivation and links to becoming practitioners themselves (Shreeve 2009). Clews and Clews (2010) also discuss the key role teacher practitioners play in the studio and the workshop.

They teach from and through professional experience through a pedagogy of shared enquiry. They also relate the knowledge on course to professional and vocational practice. This encourages a practitioner-led and practice-informed pedagogic approach. The institution needs to make a decision on how many part-time staff they employ, as opposed to full-time and fractional staff, and ensure that all staff are adequately inducted and supported into their roles. There is a need to continue to train and support new staff who bring industry experience and their own creative practice but also will be working with large diverse groups of students within the studio.

This point is linked to ensuring that artists and creative practitioners of colour, practitioners with a disability, or transgender practitioners are among the staff body in an increasing number. The percentage of staff of colour at present is very small at 3.6% (See Appendix A) and does not in any way reflect the student cohort. These staff bring a positive experience to diverse students on course in the form of role models. The under-representation of particular communiities is of great concern to students more generally and is contained in the NUS (2011) report *Race for Equality* included in 'Recommendation 10' specifically related to staff of colour:

> Ethnic diversity among staff is important for both Black and White students, as it provides positive role models, as well as a range of perspectives that enrich learning and demonstrates an institution's commitment to diversity. Universities and colleges need to improve the diversity of their staff to better reflect the diversity of their student body. *(NUS report 2011, p. 61)*

It is thus essential to consider whether employment practices within the institution are fair and accessible. With a greater diversity of staff comes more expansive creativity and genuine new opportunities opening up.

5. Case studies

The following case studies focus on Art and Design in further and higher education in a variety of settings and from differing perspectives. They illustrate some of the sector's ambitions to actively bring about awareness and transformations of the issues that may affect retention and or attainment. These activities all aim to support transformative environments, practices and/or outcomes for students and staff alike. For the purpose of this document, the case studies are grouped under three main headings, though there are crossovers and resonance among all of them:

> staff development;
> student-centred learning and teaching;
> race equality.

Each case study is supported by the research of others in the form of a quote. This highlights that while the process, activity and or attributes may be unique, there is supporting evidence that gives context to the given case studies' purpose and/or approach.

5.1. Staff development

The following case studies set out to offer some evidence as to activities within strategic staff development within Art and Design education institutions. This takes the form of planned organisational processes and activities to pursue a direction, ethos, and/or practice that will contribute to an evolved future. This needs to provide opportunities to reflect on inclusive practices as pointed out below:

> The implementation of inclusive learning in art and design higher education is a work in progress. It needs to have a strategic focus across all aspects of the institution and a targeted approach at curriculum and pedagogic level. *(Richards and Finnigan 2015, p. 12)*

The case studies take into account the role and power of the academic and the potential impact on retention and attainment through pedagogy and assessment, curriculum design and advantage/disadvantage of cultural competency and currency through the presence of diversity.

The work that is undertaken by students is not usually done for the good of the group of learners or other community, but in order to satisfy the requirements of the teacher and the institution. (Mann 2001, p. 13).

With this said, review, training and development of staff is imperative.

5.1.1 Case study 1: curriculum audit (Ravensbourne)

> …statistics which might seem to suggest that representation of BME students in HE is not a matter for concern in fact mask huge problems … This means that BME students are less likely to find role models among faculty staff than in north American universities. They are also less likely to find diversity tackled as part of their intellectual experience of university. *(Bhagat and O'Neill 2011a, p. 31)*

Attainment focus

Strategic inclusive teaching and learning practice through a culturally democratic framework

Leads

> James Ward, james.ward@rave.ac.uk
> Dr Deborah Gabriel, info@blackbritishacademics.co.uk
> Aisha Richards, info@shadesofnoir.org.uk

Activity

Staff and student ambassador workshops
Inclusive practice evaluation (handbooks, briefs, and resources)

Overview

The objectives of all activities were to support the staff teams in the further education (FE) programmes in the ever-changing context in Art and Design education, the expectations of the ever-growing diverse student population, and the broader situations in society as students of globalised environments (including the physical and virtual world). The activities agreed were workshops (termly for staff and a

day session for students), and an audit/review of all handbooks, briefs and resources lists. These were delivered by Black British Academics founder and CEO Dr Deborah Gabriel and Shades of Noir founder Aisha Richards.

The evaluation that was undertaken reviewed handbooks, briefs and resources that are a pedagogy in and of themselves. These materials move beyond the walls of the institution while still embodying elements of the ethos, rituals and expectations of a given institution. The evaluation considered inclusivity through language, examples, resources used and content, seeking examples of good practice that could be shared and inform further development within the context of a culturally democratic framework.

Key areas covered in the activities included:

> unconscious bias and stereotyping;
> pedagogies of social justice;
> inclusive practice;
> universal design.

Moving forward

The curriculum audit has resulted in:

1. Reviewing and starting to update all course/curriculum material to reflect findings.
2. Reviewing FE quality procedures to identify and monitor greater inclusive practices within course materials.
3. Discussing cross institution how the FE findings can be considered within the broader college (such as higher education programmes). A paper for internal boards will be written.
4. Revising student ambassador training to reflect their workshops.

Lessons learnt

This work has shown the importance of:

> diversity in the representation of staff taking part including the grades and or roles within academic practices;
> making sure that training needs are relevant to that particular institution and then supported by the UK context;
> auditing of written content is best developed with staff training to offer support and context to change.

5.1.2   Case study 2: The inclusive learning and teaching in higher education unit, Teaching and Learning Exchange (UAL)

Most college and university instructors continue to teach in culturally neutral ways. Faculty socialisation is conceivably the most salient explanatory factor. More often than not faculty members have not been trained to seek out and infuse diverse readings and pedagogical methods into their courses. (Quaye and Harper 2007, p.36)

Attainment focus

Inclusive learning and teaching

Strategic staff training

Leads

> Siobhan Clay, s.clay@arts.ac.uk
> Terry Finnigan, t.finnigan@fashion.arts.ac.uk
> Aisha Richards, a.m.richards@csm.arts.ac.uk

Activity

Staff training on inclusive practices – 'Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education'

Overview

Hosted at University of the Arts London (UAL) within the MA Academic Practice Provision and the Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert), a unit entitled 'Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education' (ILTHE) has been created. It was initially developed by Terry Finnigan and Aisha Richards with contributions from Ellen Sims.

This programme aims to encourage participants (who are academic members of staff already in role within an institution) to reflect on themselves and their practice. This allows discourses on the 'individual' to emerge and creates opportunities to unpack the predominantly white female cohort (a variety of age groups) positions. The reflection time supports and contextualises the rest of the course and the learning of inclusiveness within their own practice. They are required to discuss a range of diversity and equality issues through a blog, write an essay illustrating their understanding of these topics (with reference to literature), and then undertake a curriculum innovation linked to their professional teaching context. All activities build upon the students' knowledge base, and the confidence to develop practices that support pedagogies of social justice.

The key outcomes of this course is to transform teaching practices and demystify any assumptions, level the playing field for disadvantaged students, and create cultural currency and value that benefits all students and teachers.

The impact of the course so far includes:

> the pilot of blind marking;
> transformational teaching both for our students and the students they teach;
> the support of critical thinking including critical race theory;
> the creation of pedagogical interventions;
> the support of innovation through collaborative working practices;
> the benefits of peer-to-peer feedback.

Moving forward

The most notable development since the 2015 case study is that this course is now stand-alone as well as part of the MA Academic Practice and PG Cert teaching qualifications. The strategic decision to allow the course to be a stand-alone unit aims to allow inclusive access and greater opportunities for staff within Art and Design HE and FE to contribute without committing to the full teaching qualifications.

Lessons learnt

This work has shown the importance of:

> making the small changes linked to inclusive learning within teachers own practice, giving them choice, is motivational, transformational and leads to creative interventions;

> building on the interventions and sharing them more widely across the institution leads to lasting institutional change;
> exploring ways for all staff to access this module in its existing format or in a more condensed form needs to have institutional backing and support.

5.2. Student-centred learning and teaching

The following case studies offer some evidence relating to activities within the area of cultural competence within Art and Design educational institutions. This takes the form of artefacts and activities to support the knowledge, understanding and value of diversity through student-centred learning and teaching. Additionally, these examples all have the collaboration with students and recent graduates as a focal point in their approaches. The pedagogy of student-centred learning creates opportunity for a "kind of exchange" between tutors and their students (Shreeve *et al.* 2010), and also exchanges of peer-to-peer learning.

> Diversity, learning and engagement are cyclical and largely dependent upon accountability, collaboration and multicultural consciousness among faculty. *(Quaye and Harper 2007, p.39)*

Cultural competence is a term that originated in the health care industries that referred to 'cross-cultural' challenges in clinical encounters.

> Many have thought of cultural competence simply as the skills needed to address language barriers or knowledge about specific cultures. Previous efforts in cultural competence have aimed to teach about particular groups — the key practice "dos and don'ts" ... Cultural competence has thus evolved from the making of assumptions about patients on the basis of their background to the implementation of the principles of patient-centred care, including exploration, empathy, and responsiveness to patients' needs, values, and preferences. *(Betancourt 2004, p. 953)*

In the context of Art and Design higher education cultural competence is not 'patient-centred' but 'student centred'. This means seeing students as contributors to their own learning is vital. Additionally, this style of teaching and learning must be supported through the creation of processes (space and time) in the curriculum to share perspectives, research and ideas. This encourages the evolution of all students through supporting understanding and permits development of critical thinking.

5.2.1   Case study 3: 'Tell Us About It' (UAL)

> Our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. *(hooks 1994, p. 13).*

This is a clear example of a student-centred approach to learning.

Attainment focus

Enhancement of cultural currency and diversity to elevate practices

Leads

> Creator Terry Finnigan, t.finnigan@fashion.arts.ac.uk

Activity

Students learning and progression
Staff development through the voice of students

13

Overview

'Tell Us About It' is an intervention designed to explore the narratives and learning experiences of final year students from diverse backgrounds studying within the Art and Design discipline who have succeeded at a high level. It was, at the start, a collaboration between the institution's Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and the diversity team. The initial general aims were to extend the range of institutional strategies to support students effectively in their learning and progression, with a bank of positive case studies to be shared with staff and students to inform and enhance learning and teaching across the institution. The students were asked to reflect on their overall learning experience on their course.

Between 2007 and 2009 the students from diverse backgrounds, who had achieved at a high level on their course, were nominated via their Course Directors to an open call. From 2009 to the present day, the focus has evolved to highlighting high-achieving students of colour. This is to support understanding, attainment and retention of these students given the current disparities across higher education.

Currently, there are around 50 students from across the University that have been involved in and contributed to the project. They have created written pieces, photo books, sketchbooks, mind maps, DVDs and other artefacts which are all housed within the Stanley Kubrick Archive at London College of Communication and available by appointment.

Moving forward

In order to develop its reach, the student artefacts are used in interactive staff workshops internally and externally and a website will be created to make these pieces more accessible for staff and students. Additionally, a digital format is being developed to be accessible on the 'Shades of Noir' website (www.shadesofnoir.org.uk).

Lessons learnt

This work has shown the importance of:

> the power of listening to students' voices in creative ways which can bring change;
> encouraging students to produce something that reflects their learning experience in Art and Design is transformational. The pieces can be used in interactive ways in workshops for students and staff and the haptic approach leads to deep reflection and questioning. Housing the artefacts within the archive makes these student objects important and long lasting. They are available for research into inclusive pedagogy and inclusive curriculum.

5.2.2   Case study 4: collaborative learning (Plymouth College of Art)

Attainment focus

Encourage non-hierarchical collaboration

Department(s)

BA (Hons) Film

Leads

> Lucy Leake, Programme Leader, lleake@pca.ac.uk

Activity

Develop a community of filmmaking practitioners, and therefore develop students' professional working practices.

Overview

Film is a collaborative art form, and demands students to work flexibly, often in crews. Research by film staff has indicated that industry is looking for students who demonstrate, not-only well-developed craft skills, but also versatility, adaptability and excellent communication skills to support holistic collaboration.

In 2014-15 there were three developments that made a massive difference to how students work together across the years:

1. The space was converted into open-access and encouraged the students to take ownership of it. There was an agreement that all students could use the space whenever they needed to. This included use of the space while sessions were taking place. A meeting/coffee space was introduced, which allowed students to use the Macs (with headphones) so they could carry on working on creative projects while using these spaces.
2. Monthly student rep meetings were introduced , with programme leaders (PLs). This was a great opportunity for students across the programmes to get together, and get to know each other. There are 12 reps in total, all of whom have been active in bringing issues to light, and in feeding back to their cohorts. They have brought others from their cohort together for various events that we have advertised, for example, film screening events, visiting lecturers, etc. Again, this has proved a chance to take ownership of their experience.
3. A shared Facebook group was created, in response to student requests. It has 110 members, and is administrated by PL. This has proved to be an excellent tool for communication, and is used productively by all three years of students. Students share events, critique each other's work, share research and communicate effectively through this medium.

Outcomes

For staff, this has created the kind of environment that has been envisaged over the last four years. Students are self-initiating film projects, both curriculum-based and 'for fun', and attending college much more than the bare minimum required by timetabling.

This increase in student productivity has allowed there to be further development around film specialisms such as set design and art direction because students are communicating well enough to collaborate fully on each other's projects.

There have been extensive collaborations across all three years. First and second year students have successfully worked on third year final projects. This has impacted in a couple of ways, most importantly that students in year three do not have to make a whole film by themselves. Instead they can develop their particular skill, be it producing, art direction or cinematography, and work on other people's projects, as part of a crew.

Lessons learnt

This work has shown the importance of:

> giving students a sense of ownership over their environment encourages them to spend more time in the building;
> developing space to socialise and meet as crews is essential;

> regular meetings between student groups, and staff, to discuss/solve any issues, and to feedback on positive changes, is incredibly useful;

> students share their work more, and offering critique more readily because they have grown to trust each other, and feel safe enough to take risks in their creative practice.

5.3. Race equality

The following case studies are included to illustrate activities within the area of race equality within Art and Design education institutions. This takes the form of institutional staff networks and activities to support the knowledge, understanding and value of marginalised groups and the impact this could have on an institutions recruitment, retention and attainment of staff of colour. The importance of this in relation to students of colour and their experiences, including retention and attainment, is interlinked to role models.

> Individuals seek others with some similarities, as they are informative for making accurate self-assessments and can be inspirational for self-improvement (Lockwood and Kunda 1997) … It is frequently assumed that, by hiring more minorities and women, the power balance will improve, but identity groups need to be equal in their access to power resources (Kanter 1983) for an improvement of attitudes (Kossek *et al.* 2003). *(Sealy and Singh 2010).*

With this said, the following examples are all led by people of colour supported by diverse senior stakeholders that enhance the strategic institutional development.

> It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressor. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves. It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught; and the contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of the new man: neither oppressor nor oppressed, but man in the process of liberation. *(Freire 1968, p. 30)*

5.3.1   Case study 5: GEMS (University of the Arts London)

The term 'institutional racism', as defined by Macpherson (1999), has been used to describe the experiences of some BME staff in higher education (Leathwood *et al*. 2009, p. 31).

Attainment focus

Race equality

Leads

> Elected Co Chairs Tanicia Payne, t.payne@arts.ac.uk
> Aisha Richards, a.m.richards@csm.arts.ac.uk

Overview

The Group for the Equality of Minority Staff (GEMS) was developed by a number of staff of colour including Avril Horsford in the late 1990s to create a space for staff of colour to connect and to provide a mechanism for support of an under-represented group (Appendix 1) particularly in Art and Design HE and within the University of the Arts London.

In 2012, Tancia Payne and Aisha Richards were elected as Co-Chairs, and re-elected in 2014. This was the first time staff within both administration and academia collectively ran to be elected as Co-Chairs within UAL, Tanicia Payne (administrative staff) and Aisha Richards (academic staff). Together, they

endeavour to support the visibility and strategic development of both staff and students of colour. To date they have increased staff membership, which is now at just under 100 individuals – making up one-third of the total population of staff of colour in this institution.

These activities have created some identifiable differences to the institution and the once silenced voice of this marginalised community in the sector, which include:

> visibility;
> community;
> influence.

Moving forward

As a group, there are three items currently being lobbied for:

1. Research of our members by members
2. Representation on all committees and sub committees
3. Reflection of GEMS input and contribution, for example in the welcome pack details for new staff and students

Lessons learnt

The work has shown the importance of:

> creating opportunities to network as it supports a sense of community;
> building relationships with senior management for strategic support;
> supporting institutional programmes through offering consultation to contribute and embed diverse voices;
> encouraging visibility of members through highlighting awards, activities and good practice that can inspire others;
> assisting members to join committees and boards through leading by example.

5.3.2   Case study 6: 'Staff of the Future' (London College of Fashion)

Higher education institutions need to foster:

> …a climate in which staff and students feel safe in clarifying their assumptions to deal with cultural dissonance. *(Shields, Larocque, and Oberg 2002, p. 130)*

Leads

> Chair: Angela Drisdale-Gordon

Attainment focus

Staff of the future – transitions into creative academia for under-represented groups

Activity

A group to improve staff of colour's representation across staffing groups within the College and Chaired by a person of colour; with over 20 years experience within this institution.

Overview

A team of senior individuals across the college were selected to support the Chair. They discussed data, having invited external specialists and staff networks to contribute to the discussion, and then devised

actions that would be feasible, have longevity, and make a difference to the ethos of the London College of Fashion (LCF) and University of the Arts London (UAL).

After understanding the issues at play and piloting some activities, the group has suggested that this work be extended into next year's project cycle to enable the additional suggestions to be borne out and put into practice. One of the interventions piloted was 'anonymised shortlisting'. This has already show some signs of impact, LCF saw a rise in BME academic staff last year 2014-15 from 7.7% to 10.7% meeting the target of 3% set by the University. It was felt that this action increased awareness of the discussions and an understanding that the college and institution want the *best* candidates for the role.

Moving forward

Many other areas that have been highlighted, and these include the following suggestions and activities:

Implement and establish mandatory training – 'unconscious bias' either as a stand-alone module or incorporated into/part of, for example, 'Selecting the Best' courses has been suggested as training for *all* new and present staff.

Build a BME talent pool – members of the group will be meeting with representatives, formerly of the BBC to seek advice and guidance on moving this forward. The initiative would proactively seek out individuals (e.g. alumni) who meet the criteria but are requiring support, for example, CV surgeries and networking evenings.

Positive website profiling – internal press stories on BME staff at all different levels.

Interview practice – ensuring that there is a standardised approach to this and for academic staff in particular, it was felt that there needed to be 'proven' examples/demonstrations of inclusive teaching practice. There is also a need to be more transparent to candidates about what is entailed at the interview stage.

Lessons learnt

The work has shown the importance of:

> having a person of colour chairing a group such as this which shifts positions;
> having the presence of senior management and stakeholders in the group to make things happen and build strategic knowledge;
> encouraging the involvement of networks and individuals that offer knowledge, research and experience.

6. Gaps and areas for future research

There are a number of gaps within this research which warrant further development. Going forward there needs to be :

> a further review of the raw data of students by ethnicity in Art and Design subjects to understand more about the differentials;
> joint research with NUS at a subject discipline level focusing on the experience of students of colour in Art and Design;

> further exploration of staff and students of colour in recruitment, retention and attainment, building on the experience of Black and Minority Ethnic staff working in higher education and to explore the narrative and experience of staff of colour within an Art and Design context;
> further research into the different disciplines within Art and Design (fashion/graphics/fine art/textiles) around student retention and attainment with the specific subject networks (e.g. the Graphic Design Educators Network).

7. Summary

This report has identified the key data around retention and attainment within the Art and Design higher education context and sought to consider some salient issues within the culture of the subject that may be affecting this data. It has discussed the curriculum, the key pedagogies, the assessment practices and the lack of diversity within the staffing body. Additionally, it offers some insight into the subject-specific activities and interventions that are starting to impact transformation in this sector and beyond through the six cases studies discussed. These link to the areas of staff training, student-centred learning, and race equality.

There are, however, possible further questions as to the impact of the research, activities and interventions with regards to retention and attainment for some groups of students. However, if we do nothing, nothing ever changes. It may be that through legislation, time and continuity of efforts, further evolution and growing support of the activities and interventions, that the prevalent data of retention and attainment between groups of students studying Art and Design in higher education starts to shift.

Art and Design students studying a more diverse curriculum and experiencing a more inclusive pedagogy should succeed at a higher level and reach their full potential. Higher education staff acquiring greater opportunities to reflect on their practice and then being rewarded for pedagogic research into Art and Design should also support student success. With the advent of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) there is the scope for more focus to be aligned to the pedagogy of Art and Design and the research of inclusive practice in this sector. This area of exploration and focus may then have more institutional recognition, value and reward.

Throughout this document, there is a multitude of evidenced research and activities that can play a part in the reduction of the retention and attainment gap between of students within Art and Design higher education.

8. Recommendations

The following list is a summary of points that reflect on how the research evidence supports the steps forward and utilises the lessons learnt from the case studies presented to transform institutions. Going forward it is important to:

> encourage more research into the pedagogy of Art and Design and aspects of retention and attainment with special emphasis on students of colour;
> take a more inclusive approach to the curriculum by identifying more diverse reading lists and key visual references and more inclusive pedagogies, review and/or audit the inclusion of embedded diversity and student-centred learning in the curriculum and create greater opportunities for students to have a sense of ownership over their environment;
> ensure that staff of colour are involved and where possible lead in all aspects of research and involve diverse staff and or staff networks in the consultation of strategic plans, frameworks and

developments and support senior management in representing the voice of protected status groups both of staff and students;

> create a higher education subject discipline research and practice network in Art and Design around retention and attainment that is diverse , to share examples of interventions to collaborate with and inform external organisations such as GLAD/CHEAD/NALN;

> employ a variety of media to communicate the research and interventions, which do not only rely on written reports but include short films, posters, cartoons to engage more fully with Art and Design practitioners, many who respond better to the visual form;

> instigate collaborations with the European Universities Network through the Bologna process to share developments and address current limitations of student data of students from diverse backgrounds coming from Europe.[1]

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[1] Given the finding through data collection of HE students in the UK context, it seems appropriate to consider the broader European context and collation of data. As such one of the members EUROSTUDENT V consortium has been consulted, Jakob Hartl, Researcher, Department of Sociology Research Group.

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Key websites

Black British Academics: **http://blackbritishacademics.co.uk/**

Shades of Noir: **www.shadesofnoir.org.uk**

10. Appendix A

Permanent academic staff by ethnic background and subject area (percentage BME groups, 2006-07) (UK nationals only) (Adapted from Leathwood, C., Maylor, U. and Moreau, M (2009, p. 16)	
Subject area	Percentage BME groups
Biological Sciences	4.7
Business/Administrative Studies	7.3
Computer Science/librarianship/information science	8.4
Creative Arts/Design	**3.6**
Education	4.0
Engineering	11.4
Humanities	3.8
Languages	4.1
Law	6.6
Mathematical Sciences	6.1
Medicine and Dentistry	10.4
Physical Sciences	4.6
Social/Political/Economic Studies	6.1
Subjects allied to Medicine	7.2
Unknown and combined subjects	6.0
Veterinary Sciences/Agriculture-related subjects	3.4
Total with known ethnic background	6.1
Not known/not given	2,635 individuals
Total	56,841 individuals

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