TOJNED
The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education

The Online Journal
of
New Horizons in Education

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Contact Address:
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Message from the Editors

TOJNED welcomes you…

We are happy to inform you that the first issue of TOJNED has been published.

"The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education (TOJNED)" is an online journal for scientists, academics, teachers and educators. TOJNED promotes the development and dissemination of theoretical knowledge conceptual research and professional knowledge.

Numerous short-lived "innovations" have passed through the classroom, minds, budgets, and in-service programs of the educational establishment. While educators may have adopted new programs, they have seldom institutionalized that change by aligning the curriculum, instruction, school organization, and assessment to match the goals. As a result, the purposes of programs such as "modern math," "individualized instruction," or "process approaches" seldom were realized. Tests which measured low level thinking signaled low level teaching strategies which, in turn, proclaimed achievement of low level goals.

If these educational purposes are to be realized; if we wish to overcome the "this-too-shall-pass" syndrome, then educators must develop new capacities for empowering school staffs, community groups, administrators, legislators, board members and corporate leaders to work together. They must collaborate in the future as a basis for deriving educational goals, for continually clarifying those goals, and for operationalizing them into appropriate curriculum, instructional, and organizational practices

The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education (TOJNED) diffuse the scientific knowledge and researches among academicians and lead to development in academia.

Without the authors TOJNED would of course have been impossible. I would like to sincerely thank all of authors for sharing their articles.

Thank you...

Prof. Dr. Aytekin İŞMAN   **Prof. Dr. Cem BİROL**
   Editor in Chief   Edior

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Intelligence Studies In Higher Education. Designing An Intelligence Studies Curriculum For The Romanian Civilian Universities

Claudia CRISTESCU
Department of Political Science
West University of Timisoara (Romania)
claudia.cristescu@polsci.uvt.ro, claudia_cristescu@yahoo.com

Abstract: As part of the wider doctoral research „Reforming the intelligence sector through academic education. Implications for the military higher education", the paper focuses on the lack of intelligence education as a threat to the national security and also on the *Intelligence – University nexus* as a critical part of todays Knowledge Society and of the Bologna process to create the EHEA by making academic degree standards&quality assurance standards compatible throughout Europe. Firstly, we will examine the use of Open Source Intelligence OSINT in the academic field and its importance in designing Intelligence Studies curriculum for the Romanian Higher Education. Then, we will argument the need for Intelligence Studies as a new field of intellectual inquiry, scholarly debate and as an academic study program within the fundamental field of study "Political and Social Sciences", based on the new context of the 21st century: the heightened role of intelligence in international affairs and in its influence upon political agenda setting, decision making and policy making; the preminence of intelligence and security issues in political discourse as well as at the level of public opinion. A key-issue of the paper is about the research and institutional efforts to be made in order to 1.describe the conceptual framework in which intelligence will be studied, considering that Intelligence Studies can support a considerable number of diverse subject areas, and can be accurately described as interdisciplinary; 2.identify the beneficiaries and the potential educational bidders; 3.validate the Intelligence Studies as a new qualification by the ACPART (*National authority for establishing and regularly updating the national framework for higher education qualifications*).

Keywords: Intelligence studies, Academic Outreach, Research cluster, Interdisciplinary, Intel curriculum

Introduction

While intelligence is not a new phenomenon, the academic study of intelligence is. Intelligence studies as an academic discipline was slow to develop in universities. Perhaps the cause was the secrecy attaching to intelligence matters, or the reluctance of academe to engage with clandestine services. This article looks at the status of intelligence studies as a discipline and as a study program, then consider the relevant academic initiatives in intelligence studies, also revealing the main approaches to studying intelligence.

Currently, the intelligence paradigm shift is heading to a decentralized type of intelligence as opposed to the concept of "central intelligence". Similar to Robert Dahl's *Polyarchies* - where power is no more concentrated at a single decision centre, instead dispersed within society – the covert hierarchical intelligence model seems to be surpassed by an open source pluralist intelligence model. It is precisely such a model upon which the emergence of intelligence studies curriculum is based.

Methodology

Premises

The main premise of the paper regards the lack of intelligence education as a potential national security threat due to the fact that the future public officials, policy makers or political consultants educated at civil universities could bias the intelligence process by not acquiring and not possessing the necessary skills and knowledge of it.

Secondly, we consider the emergence of the "Clearances Matter Less Than Knowledge" doctrine to be relevant in designing Intelligence Studies curriculum for the Romanian Higher Education. From this point of

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view, currently, the intelligence paradigm shift is heading to a decentralized type of intelligence as opposed to the concept of "central intelligence". Similar to Robert Dahl's *Polyarchies* - where power is no more concentrated at a single decision centre, instead dispersed within society – the covert hierarchical intelligence model seems to be surpassed by an open source pluralist intelligence model. It is precisely such a model upon which the emergence of intelligence studies curriculum is based.

Objectives

The main objective of the paper is about argumenting the need for Intelligence Studies as a new field of intellectual inquiry, scholarly debate and as an academic study program within the fundamental field of study "Political and Social Sciences", based on the new context of the 21st century: the heightened role of intelligence in international affairs and in its influence upon political agenda setting, decision making and policy making; the preeminence of intelligence and security issues in political discourse as well as at the level of public opinion.

As secondary objectives of the paper, we will firstly point out the status of intelligence studies as a discipline and as a study program in the American and European academia, then consider the relevant academic initiatives in intelligence studies. Secondly, we will identify the relevant approaches for designing an intelligence studies curriculum but also the research and institutional efforts to be made in order to institutionalize „Intelligence Studies" as an academic study program within the fundamental field of study "Political and Social Sciences" in the Romanian civilian universities.

Research Method

The predilect research instrument used within the paper is the qualitative method of documentary research involving the use of reliable academic texts and official government documents as source materials to support and argument our viewpoint by revealing the main theoretical approaches, policies and doctrines regarding intelligence studies.

Biases, Prejudices and Misperceptions Toward the Intelligence Activity. The Romanian Context
The Intelligence – University Nexus during the Communist Regime

Before 1989, Romania featured a repressive Communist regime that used its intelligence apparatus, the "Securitate", to transform the country into a police state dominated by physical and moral torture, fear, intimidation and suspicion among citizens. The so called "enemies of the regime" underwent permanent surveillance, harassment and imprisonment, but the "Securitate" maintained control over the entire population, keeping records via a network of recruited collaborators and informants of all ages and social backgrounds. The "Securitate" had special units monitoring Romanians, dissidents living abroad and political prisoners. The First Unit of DSS (Directia I) had the mission of monitoring, neutralizing and attract as informants the academics and intellectuals who criticized the Communist regime and its "Cultural Revolution" which aimed at creating a new intellectual elite and "The New Man" that lacked a critical spirit through the ideologization of the educational system by replacing academics with communist activists, by suppressing the university autonomy, by replacing the academic disciplines with courses of "Marxism Leninism" and "dialectical and historical materialism", by the mandatory imposition of Russian language, by physical removal of those academics and intellectuals resisting communism, by exclusion of students having "bourgeois" family background, and, last but not least, by using the "re-education through torture" method in regime's prisons.

Post-Communist Romania: The "Securitate" Legacy & Public Hostillity

The lack of transparency, the politicization and the illegal procedures used for telephone surveillance of journalists and politicians, the abuse of the agencies' exceptional powers (used for vendettas, personal or electoral reasons, rather than national security), the engagement in acts of corruption, bankruptcy and smuggling activities, the involvement in partial or total disappearance of certain "Securitate" files an records or the use of the remaining files for blackmail, along with the population's hostility toward the former "Securitate" officers, shed a bad light on the intelligence agencies during the first years of transition, in the aftermath of the anti-Ceausescu revolution.

With the enactment in 1999 of The Council for Studying Securitate Archives (CNSAS), many politicians, academics, writers, journalists, intellectuals, athletes, clergy members were exposed as former collaborators. The declassification process revealed that even high-school and college students were envolved in spying by informing the "Securitate" when their classmates or families criticized the Communist Party.

Lack of Intelligence Education as a National Security Threat

To end up with the "Securitate" legacy, Romania has been undertaking a major reform of the intelligence system; efforts have been made to professionalize the Intelligence Community (IC) by institutionalizing a new personnel management system. Nevertheless, the unilateral perspective regarding intelligence proposed within the internal education centers and departments of each intelligence agency (such as the Romanian National Intelligence Academy ANI and the National Intelligence College, created by the SRI, National Defense University, Technical Military Academy, National Defense College) is clearly insufficient mainly because their rigid eligibility entrance criteria (medical, psychological and IQ strict testing), but also because their target on training the future intelligence practitioners.

Moreover, the lack of intelligence education can become a national security threat due to the fact that the future public officials, policy makers or political consultants educated at civil universities could bias the intelligence process by not acquiring and not possessing the necessary skills and knowledge of it. It is well known that only an adequate *intelligence* can guarantee the success of *decision and policy making;* governmental policy makers shall be able to make relevant internal political or diplomatic intercessions, only if they assimilate the information regarding the global security and political context and try to adapt it to the strategic situation, risks, threatening or existent opportunities. One way to overcome the public apathy toward intelligence and wipe away the "Securitate" stigma is by cultivating a political culture that supports and trusts intelligence. Thus, contributions to developing an intelligence awareness among IC outsiders must include building an higher educational capacity in intelligence studies that would create an enabling environment for universities to exercise intellectual leadership in addressing societal demand for knowledge about intelligence and national security affairs.

The Intelligence Community - Academia Partnership. The International Context Approaches for an Academic Outreach of Intelligence

Building partnerships between the scientific and intelligence communities could help our country to better balance relative risks and benefits as viewed from the different perspectives of the university and security communities. Such collaboration will help improve the knowledge of both communities in order to achieve a better understanding of the security issues and the consequences for science, higher education, and the future of the Romanian economy.

Giving the new context of the 21st century (with the heightened role of intelligence in international affairs and in its influence upon political agenda setting, decision making and policy making, the prominence of intelligence and security issues in political discourse as well as at the level of public opinion), we argue in favour of the need to bring non-governmental expertise into the intelligence process, referring to this source of knowledge as "the missing dimension of intelligence"; outside experts with academic background can assist the intelligence community in better understanding the context underpinning unprecedented challenges posed by the age of transnational threats and in creating new knowledge on priority issues driving the political and security agenda.

By reaching out to the academic community and increasing the ties between the IC and the university system, the IC can gain meaningful insights and alternative opinions: the academics could be used to review analytical assumptions and logic, to examine alternative approaches to an issue, to argue the pros and cons to a judgment involving uncertainty, ambiguity, or debate, and to provide technical peer review. The U..S Intelligence Community Directive 205 dated 16 july 2008 defines analytic outreach as „the open, overt, and deliberative act of an intelligence community analyst engaging with an individual outside the IC to explore ideas and alternate perspectives, gain new insights, or generate new knowledge."

According to Gregory F.Treverton (2009), the main approaches to academic outreach for intelligence are: co-production by outsourcing certain analysis task to outsiders with academic background, virtual co-production

(e.g. wikis, blogs, U.S.Intellipedia), occasional consultation of academic experts, joint working groups on particular issues, IC publications made available for academic researchers, occasional conferences to enable the dialogue between the intelligence and academic communities, use of intelligence services Web sites for interaction.

Those types of outreach involve relations with academics designed mainly to build long-term relationships or platforms for public discourse on issues related to national security, and not necessarily to produce immediate analysis. For example, the British Defence Academy'Advanced Research and Assessment Group (ARAG) organizes its work in „research clusters" by holding research based thematic seminars with participants from intelligence community and the Academia. The results of the research are discussed by intelligence and academic experts, along with policy makers as intelligence consumers. Similarly, the *SHARP workshop* is but one of a wide array of outreach projects now underway in United States, involving millions of dollars in contracts, fellowships, conferences-even wikis and blogs-directed at scholars and other IC outside experts. Organized under the auspices of The Office of the Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis, the Summer Hard Problem Program (SHARP) brings together annually leading specialists from the social sciences and government analysts with the goal of engaging external (non-government) experts on issues of critical interest to the Intelligence Community, as part of the White House initiative/commitment to create and institutionalize a culture of Open Government

Even tough Robert David Steele talks about "public intelligence", "multilateral information sharing rather than unilateral secrecy" and about the emergence of academia as one of the seven "intelligence tribes" (Steele, 2003), the outreach varies in extent and form across nations. For instance, the German external (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*) and domestic intelligence services (*Bundesamtes fur Verfassungsschutz*) do not cooperate with any NGO or academic consultant. In Spain and the UK outreach activities mostly evolve around the concept of "open source" aiming at promoting an "intelligence culture" as the knowledge base citizens must have about intelligence agencies in order to perceive them as integral part of society itself. To accomplish this, the Spanish and British intelligence seek to make intelligence an academic discipline to be studied at universities and also tend to cooperate with Academia in order to benefit from its knowledge base on topics of interest for the IC.

In general, the European governments are more reluctant to academic outreach for intelligence, and the private-public cooperation is rarer than in United States or Canada. The main instrument to build an IC-Academia relationship in the European context would be through the establishment of an independent open-source research that benefits both IC (by supplementing internal analysis) and Academia (1.by encouraging the inclusion of intelligence content in teaching about international relations, which would help foster greater public interest and understanding of the role of intelligence in statecraft; 2.by creating a culture of openness toward discussing policies and procedures employed by the intelligence organizations; 3.by offering the opportunity to the political scientists, historians, psychologists to test their own theories in a policy-infused setting and to subject them to the scrutiny by fellow scholars, policy makers as well as analytic practitioners (Bowmann, 2008); 4. by developing an intelligence paradigm (Johnson, 2007) in an effort to apply analytic methodologies and insights drawn from the social sciences, to understand the fundamental nature of intelligence, to explain the history of intelligence successes and failures, to understand intelligence organizations and processes, and to assess and improve upon the craft of analysis itself).

Nevertheless, as Kenneth E. Roberts points out, the main obstacles to government outreach toward academic expertise by working from unclassified sources and providing unclassified information on topics related to the security could include: inadequate funding, prejudice in the academic community against the intelligence community, that lack of access for academics to classified reporting that makes their analysis less timely and less informed. In addition, the writing styles of academics are often different from the needs of policymakers and intelligence analysts. (Roberts, 2005)
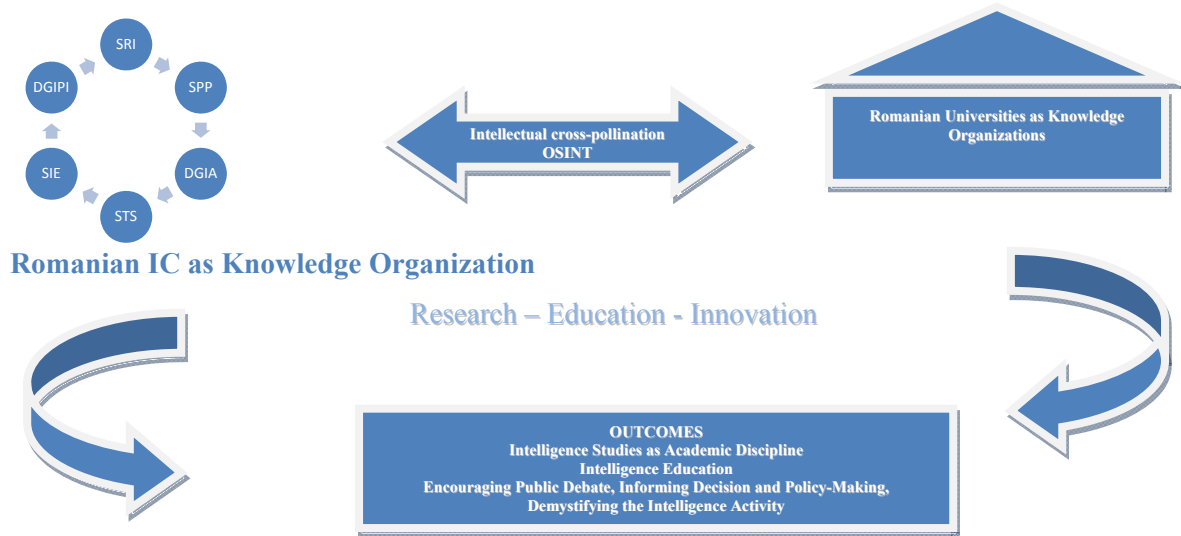
Figure 1. IC – Academia Partnership to Enhance Knowledge

The emergence of the "Clearances Matter Less Than Knowledge" doctrine

Proliferarea Internetului ca instrument de diseminare a informaţiei deschise multilingvistice, dublată de "explozia" informaţională materializată în augmentarea exponenţială a materialelor publicate, deci, implicit a cunoaşterii şi de manifestarea unor tipuri de ameninţări non-tradiţionale transnaţionale, au legitimat ipoteza declinului doctrinei tradiţionale a intelligence-ului în favoarea intelligence-ului substatal, public şi al intelligence-ului surselor deschise fundamentat pe doctrina „Clearances Matter Less than Knowledge".The proliferation of the Internet as a tool of open multilingual information dissemination, accompanied by the information "explosion" as the rapid increase in the amount of published *information* and of knowledge, have legitimized the decline of traditional covert intelligence hypothesis, in favour of the white intelligence based on the doctrine of "Clearances Matter Less Than Knowledge". Emergenţa noii paradigme pe fondul revoluţiei informaţionale a impactat toate nivelurile ciclului de intelligence, afectând cele patru tipologiii de informaţii deschise şi intelligence: open source data (OSD), open source information (OSIF), open source intelligence (OSINT), respectiv validated OSINT (OSINT-V) [6] .The traditional model of intelligence, focused on centralized management, hierarchical command structure and formal procedures, failed to manage *information overload* (Liaropoulos, 2006)*.* În contrapondere, noua paradigmă a OSINT poate asigura controlul fluxului informaţional, prevenind diseminarea sa biasată. In counterpart, the new paradigm of OSINT can provide control over the information flow, preventing its biased dissemination. Avantajul raportului cost – eficienţă, dublat de caracterul nonrestrictiv al *white intelligence* (în raport cu *covert intelligence* -ul) face ca 70-80% din volumul total al intelligence-ului să fie asigurat de OSINInformation from publicly available sources are vital to any process of information gathering upon: historical background and political context, economic and demographic data etc. Due to its indiscriminate *addressability*, increased accessibility and broad range of topics covered, the media (print, audiovisual or Internet) are the prevalently used publicly available sources.

OSINT's advocates believe it to be the answer to many of today's intelligence challenges. They call for a new intelligence paradigm marked by the open source information and a trans-sector intelligence collaboration that includes a broad network of public and private actors. For example, www.isn.ethz.ch and www.oxan.com are two academic websites that provide a wealth of open source information for researchers and analysts. Based at the Center for Security Studies at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, the **International Relations and Security Network** (ISN) collects and manages resources from hundreds of different think-tanks, research institutes, international organizations, and government agencies in its digital library and also publishes a daily news analysis service, Security Watch. **Oxford Analytica** is a premium rate strategic analysis and consulting service drawing on a network of university researchers and faculty members at Oxford and other major universities around the world. OSINT is not limited to the Internet, although it is here that an increasing volume of valuable information is to be found. The public agencies, think-tanks, NGOs, the private sector and universities all constitute open sources of information.

According to Prof.Martin Rudner, university-based research represents a valuable means of building knowledge at the leading edge of historical and policy-oriented intelligence and security studies (Rudner, 2009). The academic research can offer an outside perspective based on open sources that allow new insights, comparative assessments or analytical reviews on intelligence and security policies, organizations and activities. Even if, in the past, intelligence agencies were reluctant to the research inquiries into their secretive domains, today, in most democracies, academic research is recognized as contributing added value to broader governmental and public knowledge of the intelligence community.

Institutionalisation of Intelligence Studies in Academia
Academic Programmes in Intelligence Studies

Intelligence has become a quasi-intrinsic component of contemporary state structure, based on essential information supplied by important policy makers whose decisions can guarantee the protection of national interest and security. By implication, and mostly after the terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September 2001, several degree programmes and courses in intelligence studies were established at various universities such as: Mercyhurst College in Pennsylvania and Georgetown University in the United States; Brunel University and the Universities of Salford and Wales-Aberystwyth in the United Kingdom; Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University in Canada. In Spain, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid in 2005 set up a Cátedra Servicios de Inteligencia y Sistemas Democráticos offering a dedicated academic programme in intelligence studies. Subsequently, in 2006, the Instituto Juan Valáquez de Velasco de investigacion en Inteligencia para Securidas y la Defensa was established at Universidad Carlos III in Madrid.

Only a few departments of intelligence studies have been established in academia. Most frequently, universities have arranged for the intelligence studies programmes to be included within the framework of their interdisciplinary schools of international studies; other universities have incorporated intelligence studies as part of congenial, discipline-based graduate degree programmes (e.g. University Roma Tre, Faculty of Political Science; University of Salford School of English, Sociology, Politics and Contemporary History; University of Wales, Aberystyth, Department of International Politics). In France, the political studies program at l'Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV introduced a *Diplôme de 3e cycle* in Intelligence Studies, jointly with the Centre Français de Recherche sur le Renseignement in Paris. Many other universities in countries as Austria, Germany, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands have introduced intelligence course content into their undergraduate/postgraduate programmes in international history, political science and security studies, or have adopted a dual academic-professional orientation within joint degree programmes.

As Rudner points out, the study of intelligence incorporates a multitude of governance, policy, institutional, operational parameters and a wide spectrum of conceptual-theoretical perspectives. This syncretism has generated new paradigms, and empirical case studies into the academic repertoire of intelligence studies, making interdisciplinarity the hallmark of Intelligence Studies.

The teaching of intelligence

Intelligence studies is a relatively recent addition to academic study, emerging as an independent discipline in the 1970s. The degree brings together the fields of criminal justice, political science, sociology, with a dose of high tech development in the area of information collection. A relevant definition of the discipline has been advanced by the Chair of the IAFIE (International Association for Intelligence Education) Educational Practices Committee: "*Intelligence studies* is the study of the theory and practice of applying information gathered by both open and clandestine methods for the purpose of strategic planning, criminal investigation, and policy implementation by governments, law enforcement agencies, and business". The teaching of intelligence had begun within the US higher education system with academics having an intelligence background and after the publishing, in 1960, of an article written by a former practitioner, Peter J.Dorondo, who detailed what he believed ought to have been the way intelligence was taught at universities: the course should begin by identifying what is the meaning of "intelligence," before proceeding to a consideration of how intelligence is the "foundation" for policy planning.

The aim set for intelligence studies can be summarized as promoting multidisciplinary understanding of the concepts, issues and debates regarding intelligence in order for the public to become more aware of issues around the meaning, value, nature and proper use of intelligence. As Michael S.Goodman points out, the study of intelligence can either be predominantly historically case-study-based or it can be primarily abstract in nature.

In the United States, the subject has largely been located within political science departments, consequently there is less emphasis on historical case-studies and a greater attention paid to theoretical deliberations. In Europe, the subject has a far more historical grounding, with the major emphasis on empirical case-studies. The courses tend to reflect accurately the departments they are sited within. Thus, courses offered through politics or international relations departments largely consider the role of intelligence in those contexts; whereas history department courses are far more case-study based, centered around institutions, countries, or epochs. Courses within multi-disciplinary faculties do not fall into either category. The undergraduate degree programmes include individual courses on intelligence, and tend to emphasise the basic disciplinary paradigms - most usually political science, international relations or history. At the masters level, curricula are typically designed to reinforce disciplinary training with advanced enhancements, often focusing on theoretical issues in the discipline. Masters programmes in international affairs, in particular, tend to emphasise interdisciplinary curricula that integrate academic and professional approaches. At the doctoral level, the orientation is usually toward preparation for the research initiative that that is expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the given field of study.

In his pioneering academic treatment of the subject, Prof. Stafford Thomas detailed four approaches to studying intelligence: (1) the *historical/biographical approach* —within this category studies look at specific historical case-studies or chart chronological periods. As part of this, the work can either be memoir-based or archive-based; (2) the *functional approach*— **this category** studies the intelligence cycle appropriate for the needs of a national security strategy; looks at the development of intelligence activities, processes, and technologies; (3) the *structural approach* — studies the institutional development of the intelligence community; (4) the *political approach*—this concentrates exclusively on the political dimension of intelligence and examines the ethics of intelligence gathering, sharing and public (Thomas, 1988). Going further, the Canadian intelligence scholar Wesley Wark identifies eight methodologies: (1) the *research project* - utilizing primary source archival evidence; (2) the *historical project* - case-study based accounts; (3) the *definitional project* - concerned with the foundation of intelligence studies; (4) the *fourth perspective* - using case studies to test the theoretical deliberations; (5) *memoirs* - can be both the first treatment of a subject, or designed to offer first-hand perspectives; (6) *civil liberties* project- designed to reveal those activities of intelligence agencies that impinge on domestic life; (7) *investigative journalism*, (8) *popular culture project.*

Recommendations
Designing an intelligence studies curriculum. Steps to be made

Any preliminary academic initiative in Intelligence Studies should start with conferences, seminars, workshops involving scholars, journalists, business people, think tank experts, representatives of NGOs, scientists, retired senior policy officials, and other specialists from the private sector in order to formulate the prototypal curriculum template for intelligence studies by identifying the core concepts and materials needed for teaching intelligence and also by exploring the already institutionalized methodological and teaching approaches of intelligence studies. At this point, becomes important to distinguish the "Intelligence Studies" (as academic discipline or field of study of the theory and application of intelligence) from "Intelligence Education" (as career oriented interdisciplinary undergraduate or postgraduate education that prepares students for career in intelligence).

Prof. Gregory Moore (2008) identifies several questions to be considered when promoting *Intelligence studies* as an academic discipline: Does Intelligence Education require the emergence of a new academic discipline, i.e."Intelligence studies", or can effective intelligence education be created from existing curricula? Is there a specific body of knowledge about intelligence that students have to acquire through undergraduate and postgraduate programs: More specifically, what should an undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum look like? Should Intelligence Studies be a subset of an existing discipline or could it stand on its own? What will it take to win recognition as an academic discipline: a body of literature, an Intelligence theory, applied and theoretical concepts, emergence of recognized scholars, emergence of scholarly organizations devoted to intelligence studies, research, doctorates in the field of intelligence studies? How to coordinate the views of the intelligence community with those of academia: practitioners cannot dictate what an intelligence studies curriculum should look like, but academia should consult practitioners to assure that the discipline reflects the appropriate knowledge base. Who will benefit most from earning a degree in intelligence studies: analysts, scholars, future political consultants or public officials, knowledge workers? What problems must be overcome: faculty reluctance to support a program in intelligence studies for moral or political reasons, the amount of material that

remains classified impossible to be used in developing courses and, finally, who is qualified to teach intelligence studies curriculum; where will the first generation of instructors come from?

In Romania, the institutionalisation of *Intelligence Studies* as a new field of intellectual inquiry, scholarly debate and as an academic study program within the fundamental field of study "Political and Social Sciences" needs a sociological research to test the level of intelligence knowledge among students, also institutional efforts&lobby among the Romanian Minister of Education but also among potential beneficiaries, and finally, a curriculum projection**.** Several steps should be made: 1.describing the conceptual framework in which intelligence will be studied, considering that Intelligence Studies can support a considerable number of diverse subject areas, and can be accurately described as interdisciplinary; 2.identifying the beneficiaries and the potential educational bidders *via* a sociological research involving the use of two quantitative instruments: the questionnaire to test students knowledge about intelligence and the standardized-interview among academics and beneficiaries to help designing the intelligence studies curriculum and identifying the competencies and skills to be developed by the given discipline; 3.validating the Intelligence Studies as a new qualification by the ACPART (*National authority for establishing and regularly updating the national framework for higher education qualifications*). A consensus on a prototypal curriculum may be possible by making from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach the norm. Thus, intelligence studies as an academic discipline will most resemble Political Science including three instructional elements: **Core courses** dedicated to interdisciplinary courses on intelligence topics (*Comparative intelligence systems*, *Intelligence and statecraft*, *Intelligence strategies and operations*, *National security law*); **Cognate courses** meaning specified courses in related academic fields (*Area studies*, *Conflict analysis*, *Philosophy of law*), and **Optional courses** meaning recommended courses that deal with particular issue areas, institutions and policy matters of interest and relevance to intelligence studies (*International/national intelligence history, Ethics of intelligence, Financial intelligence and terrorism resourcing , Peacekeeping intelligence, National security accountability and intelligence oversight National security, civil liberties and human rights, International intelligence relations and alliances, Intelligence and the media*).

Conclusion

While it may not have as long a tradition as in the United States, overall in Europe, intelligence studies is one of the fastest growing disciplines in academia, with increasing number of courses and modules offered. Given the secrecy surrounding intelligence organizations, and the sensitivity of political leaders to the use and abuse of intelligence work, progress in implementing intelligence studies in Romanian academia will be slow, and new knowledge will inevitably be based on historical case studies rather than on contemporary events. Moreover, one of the largest challenges facing the institutionalization of intelligence studies will be to demystify a biased view that many students have regarding the national intelligence community.

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DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF INTEGRATION IN CULTURAL DIVERSE RURAL SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

G Alexander
Department Psychology of Education
Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
alexanderg@ufs.ac.za

Abstract: In 1994 the new democratic government brought with it a desegregated national education system, that resulted in an influx of large numbers of black learners into formerly white schools, whether in urban or rural areas. These schools became thus the sites of cultural convergence-where diverse and previously divided cultures met for the first time, on supposedly common ground. According to Meier (2005), some of the black learners who were integrated into formerly white schools found it difficult to adjust to the new educational environment because they lacked the language skills and required background to deal with the curriculum content and medium of instruction (Afrikaans and/or English) whilst white educators, representing the majority of the staff complement (Kivedo, 2008), are often not motivated because they lack the cultural diverse teaching skills, the Africanisation of learning content and strategies in the management of overcrowding in classrooms. In concurrence with the latter, national and local media frequently report on aspects relating to cultural-diverse learning environments and how it coincides with numerous challenges (racial conflict amongst learners; cultural misunderstandings, negativity, confusion and low morale amongst educators) facing schools in rural communities.

Despite efforts by the National Department of Education to integrate schools, the majority of black children in rural poor communities are receiving less than their right in a democratic South Africa (Nelson Mandela Foundation in Fox, Vos & Geldenhuys, 2007) and lags behind educational development in other parts of the country.

With the above said in mind, the purpose of this mix method research study was to investigate the complexities associated with the integration of cultural diverse rural school communities in the Northern Cape province of South Africa and to propose recommendations for dealing with present and future challenges.

Keywords: integration, cultural diverse learning environments, Northern Cape province, rural school communities

Introduction

The historical development of education for cultural diverse school communities in South Africa can only be effectively evaluated against the backdrop of the educational history of the country. Before 1948 a limited mixing of races occurred in certain areas. The official and formal segregation of schools along structured racial and ethnic lines commenced in 1948 when the Nationalist Party seized political control. The racial, ethnic and geographical separations within the education system led to the birth of 17 separate education departments up until 1994 (Naicker, 2000). These divisions in education were supported and upheld by apartheid legislation such as the 1953 Bantu Education Act, the 1950 Group Areas Act, the 1954 Native Resettlement Act, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, the Population Registration Act, the Homeland Act, and so forth (Mda, 2000). This separate system of education, characterised by race, class, gender and ethnic divisions (Alexander, 2004) resulted in the provision of uneven access to schools, unequal educational opportunities, irrelevant curricula, inadequate infrastructure, facilities and a qualified educator complement (Kivedo, 2007). More significant and still evident is that communities confined to the ' homelands" or Bantustans had to endure poverty, isolation and reduced services such as the availability and lack of basic services (piped water, tolerable roads, electricity); inadequate physical and infrastructure conditions (buildings, toilet facilities, telecommunications); distances travelled to school (children walk long distances, inadequate transport provision); quality education (shortage of qualified educators and teaching aids, lack of Early Childhood Development education, irrelevance of curricula, large classes, higher learner-educator ratios, language of teaching and

learning, rote learning approaches); curriculum relevance (need for Maths, Science and Technology, understanding of local and global environment, need to promote critical thinking and useful skills) competing priorities between education and domestic chores (child labour); educational disparities for girls and boys infringing the right to education and minimal support for the district education offices(Gardiner, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2005). The majority of South Africa's 350 000 educators and almost 12 million learners are concentrated in provinces (Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo) that are predominantly rural and which include former 'homelands' (Chisholm, 2004). The sample province (Northern Cape) for this study, is characterized as a rural province with 96 primary schools and 45 high schools. It needs to be noted that between 1994 and 1999, the democratic government of South Africa introduced a range of initiatives to improve access, equity and quality. The integration of schools can be viewed within the context of the latter said.

Accordingly and justifiably, I contend that all educational change endeavours in post 1994 South Africa were and still are largely driven by imperatives such as overcoming the devastation of apartheid, and the provision of equal, quality education to all citizens within a system that enhances democratic participation, human dignity, equality and social justice, and the redress of imbalances, as well as the empowerment of all citizens(Abdi, 2001; Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk, 2006). The integration of learners to former white schools, however, did not take place without some daunting challenges. To this effect, Goduka (1999) protests that in spite of the diverse groups of learners, these previously white schools continued to function as mono-cultural schools. Learners with different backgrounds had to adapt to the European culture of the school. The curriculum of the schools was based on European traditions while learner expectations were grounded on the experiences of educators who were never prepared to deal with diversity. Learners enter specific schools whose immediate contexts, histories, memories and commitments shape their organisation and practices (Banks & Banks, 1995). In no terms am I proposing, that issues relating the school ethos and culture in former white school settings be changed overnight, but that a constant awareness amongst the entire school population be created for the recognition of diversity.

It is therefore important for education in cultural diverse rural school communities of the Northern Cape province not to be internalised as a version of apartheid education; one that merely seeks to integrate and acculturate black learners into an existing Euro-centric structure, without challenging educational and psychosocial inequalities. It is only when the latter issues, amongst others, are fully comprehended by white educators in former white schools in the Northern Cape, that the school situation might be perceived as accepting and accommodating by black learners. The motivation for using white educators as the sample group for this study is that they represent, in terms of color, the majority of the staff complement (91 %) in former white high schools in the Northern Cape province. Thus, how they relate to black learners (69 %) during the teaching and learning situation, is a question that evoked interest and became a subject for this research.

In the wake of the above-mentioned purpose of this study, it becomes imperative to explore issues relating to integration in rural school settings.

The Need For Cultural Diverse School Settings In The South African Landscape

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1983), the word "diversity" originates from the Latin term *diversus*, which means more than one, of a different kind, or variety. Diversity therefore constitutes any kind of variety in humankind, such as personality, aptitude, appearance, sexual orientation, disability, learning preferences, nationality, educational level, age, marital status, parental status, etc. In educational terms, the concept "multicultural" is sometimes inadvertently used to describe the diverse nature of society (Lemmer et al., 2006). The concept often lead to misunderstanding, in the sense that it only emphasizes cultural, racial and ethnic groups, instead of being seen as an encapsulating term that includes all kinds of diversity. Educators often make snap judgements, based on their perceptions, about learners and go on to treat them differently. Many educators interact with learners differently according to the learners's race and socio-economic status (Alexander, 2004). These sentiments are supported by Bennett's (2007) research findings that educator attitudes influence learner achievements. It further discovered that the expectation of educators can sometimes and do affect educator– learner interaction as well as learner outcomes, however the processes are much more complex as originally believed. One conclusion is that teacher beliefs and expectations interact with learner beliefs and behaviours. She draws a parallel between ethnicity and educator expectations and is convinced that educator expectations, influences beliefs and behaviours in the same manner as ethnicity does. Many white educators have low expectations of their non-white learners, simply because of their belief that black students have less innate potential as their white counterparts. A classroom atmosphere of acceptance among learners, were more likely to exist when educators did not distinguish between the learning potential of black and white learners. The

findings also revealed that educators interact with low- expectation learners in intellectually limiting ways and are more supportive and stimulating with white and light-skinned learners.

The possibility does exist that the above-mentioned misunderstanding could also be prevalent at cultural diverse school settings in the Northern Cape. It is for this reason that both educators and learners in cultural diverse classes should thoroughly understand that diversity involves much more than just issues of race ethnicity, language or religious groups. The thorough understanding of the concept "diversity" by the mentioned parties might minimize potential conflict and might enhance the integration of black learners in rural schools of the Northern Cape province.

From the above-mentioned, it can be deduced that a cultural diverse classroom situation should be characterised by the understanding It therefore becomes imperative, that educators are equipped with the skill to observe and interpret culturally-diverse classroom behaviour, in a manner that is not based on myths and stereotypes, influenced by race or culture. Educators, and particularly educators in cultural diverse rural schools, need to establish a classroom atmosphere of acceptance, where all learners are expected to achieve their optimal academic potential. This expectation should be based on the learner`s intellectual abilities and not on educator prejudice. In this regard, educators in cultural diverse rural schools should be encouraged to remain objective at all times. This objectivity may assist educators to become aware of their innate prejudices which may cause them to have low expectations for some learners.

Furthermore Lemmer et al. (2006) are of the opinion that the national and at times, provincial Departments of Education in South Africa often believe that by simply bringing different groups of learners together who have previously lived, grown up and schooled in isolation, barriers to inter-racial contact will fall away naturally and positive social contact will ensue. Casual contact, however this does not necessarily bring about improved inter-racial relations or reduce racial and cultural prejudice. It is therefore important to create suitable learning environments that foster inter-group contact which should be facilitated by appropriate education and support.

Clearly it can be stated that the first democratic elections of 1994, have reshaped the political, social and educational landscape of South Africa. The new government inherited a country that had been shaped by colonial rule and apartheid policies which are largely still reflected in the provision of quality educational opportunities for the marginalized and excluded (Alexander, 2004). However it must be noted that much has changed since 1994. South Africa has been called the "rainbow" nation and rightly so. Cultural diversity is characteristic of South African society and impacts on all spheres of life, including education. This diversity was largely regulated by law during the era of apartheid. This is no longer the case and in the new open South African society, cultural diversity directly influences the context within which schooling takes place and the manner in which it is offered, as well as the content of the syllabi (Lemmer et al., 1997). In addition to this, a non-racial national Department of Education, together with nine other provincial departments has been charged with the task of providing schooling for the learners of the country Lemmer et al. (2006).

In practice, the above implies that educators in the South African society are faced with the challenge of teaching increasingly culturally diverse classes. Gollnick et al. (2002) supports this view and is convinced that educators today are faced with an overwhelming challenge to prepare students from diverse cultural backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society and a world in which some groups have greater societal benefits than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, class , language, religion, ability, or age. It could therefore be expected, that the schools of the future will become increasingly culturally diverse.

The desegregation and more specifically, the africanisation of schools in South Africa, has further brought about a need for a school revise curriculum that will change the nature of teaching and learning, so that the needs of all learners will be met. It further implies that suitable learning environments should be created, for motivating learners towards acquiring the necessary skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to enable them to participate meaningfully in modern and post-apartheid cultural diverse society.

In spite of the above-mentioned, many learners, parents, and sadly educators still experience great difficulty in coping with this inevitable reality and at times find it difficult to change, whether at the individual level, the institutional level, or societal level. Because of the way in which these individuals were socialized, their way of doing have become so much a part of them that they find it very difficult to think that things can be done in any other way (Cushner, 1992; Scott, 2004).

Moletsane (1999) concurs with the above and emphasises some of these challenges. In this regard she states that, the need and mandate for transformation in our schools have been demonstrated in widely reported racial violence and the failure of black learners in desegregated as well as mono-racial schools in the media, research findings, and national education policy documents (e.g. The South African Schools Act of 1996). She reiterates, that these demands for change in all school contexts include responding to: 1) socio-political context of the school, the country and the international and global arena, 2) differences in individual and group identities,

and 3) changing curriculum policy and precise to address the learning needs of all learners. In this regard, McCray & Gracia (2002) and Johnson (2003) found that even graduates of diverse educational programmes, mostly socialise in the current structure of public schooling and therefore sacrifice their personal ideology and professional identity in favour of educational practices that maintain the status quo. Kivido (2006) admits that the South African education system is in a state of transformation, that brings along the willingness to alternative ways of thinking and doing.

Problem Statement

Former white high schools in rural areas of the Northern Cape have enrolled a number of black learners and are therefore profess to practice cultural diverse education . Many of these schools have not adapted their admission requirements, policies, curriculum or staff development programmes. The question thus is whether these schools are indeed practicing integrated schooling or whether they are merely assimilating black learners into the existing system. Claasen in Le Roux (1997) supports this view and explains that mere integration of cultural or ethnic learner groupings in a single learning situation does not necessarily imply a cultural diverse education milieu. Similarly, the staff complement in most former white schools may not necessarily reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the learners enrolled. In the Northern Cape, for example, approximately 69% of all learners registered at former white high schools are black, while only 9% of the teaching staff is black (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). Kivedo (2006) and Diamond Fields Advertiser (11 February 2002) argue that this state of affairs may result in cultural misunderstandings and the consequent breakdown of educator-learner relations.

An issue linked to integration not only in the Northern Cape but country wide, is the ever increasing demand exerted by the Department of Education on staff representation in former white schools. In a radical attempt aimed at deracialising the education system, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has cautioned former white schools to employ at least 50% black teachers by 2005 as part of its equity plan.

Two teacher unions, the National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (Naptosa) and the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) support this initiative from the National Department of Education but indicate that such a plan to address racial and gender representation needs to be coordinated with thorough consultation.

Against the background of the statement of problem, this study is aimed at assisting white educators in former white rural high schools of the Northern Cape province to fully comprehend their role, to understand the underlying pedagogical challenges which they face, and to embrace concomitant problems relating to the integration of learners in cultural diverse settings.

Theoretical Framework

According to Khosa (2000), after the 1994 South African elections, all schools were open to all children. This led to a process of black flight from schools located in black residential areas to those within white residential areas. This flight was, however only unidirectional. The influx of black learners to previously exclusively white schools led to the emergence of diverse races, cultures and religions in schools – a phenomenon for which educators had not been trained or prepared. The problem of deracialisation and integration was exacerbated by the education policy prior to 1994. The apartheid education policy was aimed at brain-washing all races into believing that everything about blacks was barbaric and inferior and vice versa.

Soudien (2001) records the availability of very little research work done in post- apartheid South Africa on how learners are coping within their new settings, and in particular how they are dealing with integration at predominantly white schools. Furthermore, he argues that there seems to be a limited understanding of the complex relationship between school and identity and that this complexity applies both to the apartheid and post-apartheid period.

In South Africa, the pre-apartheid education systems have openly marginalised African indigenous knowledge. In post Apartheid society emerging debates/discourses are enhanced of bringing indigenous knowledge systems into focus as a legitimate field of academic enquiry (Mkabela, 2005).

The Afrocentric paradigm attempts to locate research from an African viewpoint and creates Africa's own intellectual perspective-it focuses on Africa as the cultural centre for the study of African experiences. The paradigm aims to interpret research data from an African perspective (Asante & Asante, 1995). Africanisation is closely related to the Afrocenric paradigm. Teffo (1996, p. 144-145) describes Africanisation as: *"the process of inseminating African value systems, concepts and moral ethics into all our human activities …The true search*

for an African identity, the recognition of the environment in which that identity is sought, become a concept that enables blacks and whites alike, to conceptualise and articulate Africa as the motherland. This ought to be done to affirm our being, personhood and nationhood."

It is against this back-drop, that the Afrocentric paradigm is used to locate the integration of learners in cultural diverse rural school settings of the Northern Cape province.

Research Methodology
Purpose of The Research

The main objective of this empirical investigation was to collect data to ascertain the perceptions of white educators in former white rural high schools with regard to cultural diverse education.

Selection of respondents

With regard to the sample size of the population of this research, the researchers identified a total sample of *n* = 260 white educators from 10 former high schools, representative of the 4 educational districts (Francis Baardt, Siyanda, Pixley Ké Seme and Namaqua) of the Northern Cape province. A total of 100 learners selected from these 10 former white schools were interviewed as to siege an understanding of their experience in integrated school settings.

The Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was employed to investigate the perceptions of educators in former white schools with regard to integration**.** A total of 241 educators (128 male and 113 females) completed and returned the questionnaires, thus ensuring a 92.3% response rate. In this case, a very high degree of validity was ensured. In this questionnaire, Section A dealt with the biographical information of the educators, whilst a 4-point Likert scale dealt with Section B (perceptions of educators regarding integration). Educators were asked to indicate the preference for each item dealing with a specific issue/aspect related to integration as: 1- strongly agree (SA); 2- agree (A); 3- disagree and 4- strongly disagree (SD). A learner survey capturing qualitative responses of 100 participants were also analysed.

Findings And Discussion

The first section of the educator questionnaire consists of personal particulars such as, gender, race, age teaching experience, academic qualifications, professional qualifications, rank, educational district, historical type of school and language in which the educator feels most comfortable to teach.

The majority (53%) of the educators in former white schools in the Northern Cape are male whilst 46, 50 % of the educators are females. This development may be attributed to the fact that males are in the majority in the high school section, which represents Grades 8-12 (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). In terms of race, all educators targeted for this study were white, although between 1-5 % of educators at former white schools are of colour. In general, white educators are in the majority at former white schools (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). With regard to teaching experience, the majority (65,9%) of the respondents' teaching experience ranges between 10 and 39 years. Those having teaching experience between 1 and 9 years were in the minority; namely 43.2%. This tendency is a definite indication that most of the educators were trained in racially segregated training institutions, during the apartheid period and are therefore not fully trained for a cultural diverse education system. Additionally, these educators may find it extremely difficult to change their fixed and ingrained ways (McCray & Gracia, 2002; Johnson, 2003). With reference to academic and professional qualifications, most educators (59,3%) and (96, 7%) indicated that they were in possession of a B-degree and a teaching diploma. In terms of rank, the majority (77%) of educators are on the rank of educator (post level 1) and only 21,6% formed part of the school management team. Therefore, it has become necessary to review the manner in which educators and school management teams are trained and how their perceptions about cultural diverse learning environments are moulded (Meier, 2005; Rios, 1996). In relation to language in which it is most comfortable to teach, the majority (78, 5 %) of respondents chose Afrikaans (one of South Africa's official languages) and only 15% teach in English. This situation is of concern, as black learners constitute the majority at former white high schools and receive their lessons in English.

Table 1: Perceptions of educators regarding issues/aspects relating to cultural diverse school settings(n=241)

		1-Strongly Agree		2- Agree		3- Disagree		4-Strongly Disagree			
1	**Items**	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Arith-metic Mean	Mean
1.1	The establishment of a cultural diverse school climate is embedded in my school's mission statement	58	24.1	103	42.7	38	15.8	42	17.4	2.504	2.00
1.2	In my school all learner racial groups are served by a cultural diverse teaching staff	19	7.8	20	8.3	85	35.3	117	48.6	2.254	2.00
1.3	Values and norms as included in my school's code of conduct are directed at the creation of democratic citizenship	31	12.9	39	16.2	69	28.6	102	42.3	2.216	2.00
1.4	Multilingualism is promoted in my school	30	12.4	27	11.2	69	28.6	115	48.0	2.538	2.00
1.5	At my school educators make learners aware of fostering understanding for	32	13.3	39	16.2	44	18.2	126	52.3	2.373	2.00

	different cultures									
1.6	Educators at my school support a learning environment where participative decision making is being applied	62	25.8	76	31.5	47	19.5	56	23.2	2.245	2.00
1.7	In the school curriculum certain important aspects regarding social justice issues are outlined	23	9.5	40	16.6	65	26.9	113	46.7	2.353	2.00
1.8	I have lower academic expectations for my black learners	79	32.8	29	12.0	51	21.2	82	34.0	2.349	2.00
1.9	I don't see why I should change my teaching style because I view it as being effective for me	65	26.9	95	39.5	38	15.8	43	17.8	2.243	2.00
1.10	I make an effort to learn about the cultures of my learners	24	10.0	37	15.4	50	20.7	130	53.9	2.348	2.00

Items 1.1 – 1.10 (Table 1) are discussed below.

Most of the educators (66.8%) are of the opinion that aspects relating to their school's cultural diverse climate is embedded in the mission statement. This is a good sign of the intent of former white schools to aspire to becoming inclusive. Of concern is that 33,2% of educators hold the opposite view to item 1.1. As portrayed from statistics (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008) and evident in the analysis of the data, 83,9% of educators are of the opinion that racial groups are not served by a cultural diverse teaching staff (item 1.2). The National Department of Education postulates that this trend needs to change at former white schools and that a concerted effort should be made by the school management to recruit educators across the colour line. According to the Gauteng Provincial Department of Education (GDE) learners, mainly black, are almost exclusively taught by white teachers. The culture and environment of former white schools do not implement the process of transformation in line with the new democratic dispensation that promotes cultural diversity and a positive appreciation of indigenous African and disempowered cultures (Independent Online-The Star, 2001).

Relating to item 1.3, most educators (70, 9 %), indicated that values and norms as included in the school's code of conduct are aimed at enhancing democratic citizenship. These schools should study relevant policies such as the Constitution, the South African Schools' Act (SASA) and the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), so as to orientate educators and learners in the core values enshrined in these documents. With regard to item 4 a total of 76, 6% of educators alluded to multilingualism not being promoted at former white schools, yet it can be argued that these schools have 69% of black learners (Northern Cape Department of Education, EMIS 2008). Educators need to be equipped to deal with the challenges of multilingualism in an ever-changing class situation, as most of them possess a low level of English (Alexander, 1994; Sieghrun, 2002). The National Department of Education's Language-in-Education policy document should be used as a guide to promote the use of more than one language in the teaching and learning environment in former white schools.

Regarding item 1.5, 70,5 % of educators indicated that a non-awareness exists at their schools concerning the promotion of an understanding of different cultures. An adequate teaching and learning culture needs to be created that encourages educators and learners to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to participate in meaningful ways in the classroom setting (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993; Massey, 1991). Furthermore a total of 29.5 % of educators are of the opinion that they create awareness for the promotion of understanding of different cultures at their school. Adams, Pardo, & Schniedewind (1991) and Alexander (2004) posit that educators in culturally diverse school settings, such as in former white schools, need to make a focused effort to know and show an interest in the cultures of their learners; in other words they need to 'step outside themselves' and look for the habitual values, norms, beliefs and practices required to construct their own cultural backgrounds.

In reference to item 1.6, the majority of educators (57, 3%) indicate that they support a learning environment where participative decision making is being applied. This is healthy for processes in which a degree of consensus seeking and decision making is necessary and in essence, promote democratic classroom practices. It is for the principal and members of the School Management Team (SMT) to initiate inexperienced educators into decision making processes. Only 42,7% educators are distancing then from this statement. Item 1.7 reveals that the overwhelming majority (73,6 %) of educators view important aspects such as social justice, not being included in school curricula. Harley and Wedekind (2002) concur with the above position and view the curriculum as a tool that should be constructed in such a way that it allows for the uniting all learners as equals in a democratic and prosperous school and classroom setting. The minority (26,5 %) of educators were in agreement regarding the inclusion of social justice issues in the curriculum. Educators and learners will respect one another's diversity if notions of social justice such as racism, poverty and other societal challenges are more clearly articulated during the curriculum development processes (Shulz, 2007). Moreover, most educators (55.2%) as observed from item 1.8 have indicated they have higher expectations for their black learners. In contrast, 44.8% of educators maintain they have lower expectations for black learners. Lemmer et al. (2006) concurs with the latter view and are convinced that many white educators have low expectations of their black learners and tend to be more supportive and stimulating to their white learners, with the result that black learners underachieve. Regarding item 1.9, the 66,4% of educators do not see the need to change their teaching style. Against the learner-centred Outcomes Based Education (OBE), as South Africa's official approach to learning, educators in former white schools need to mindful that not only is the demonstration of knowledge required via this approach, but also high-level skills, values and attitudes; thus, the educator should have a more holistic, formative and developmental approach to learning (Naicker, 2000). There should not only be a focus on the 'how much of learning' but invariably also on 'how do learners learn?' and 'what do they learn?' The minority (44.8%) of educators indicated that they would change their teaching style when conditions dictate. This is the type of educator who needs to be educated into culturally diverse schooling settings in South Africa; the kind of educator who needs to be willing to reflect on his/her own practice and constructing meaning-making opportunities, as a means of teaching learners from their own realities (Alexander, 2004). Regarding item 1.10, the majority of educators (74.6%) are of the opinion that they do not need to know the cultures of their learners which is a worrying response. Educators should support learners to develop their ethnic identities, their knowledge about other cultural groups and competence in one or more cultural systems. On the other hand, 25.4% of educators indicated that they would like to have a better understanding of their class's cultural diversity.

The qualitative responses of the learner survey are outlined in table 2. Learners were requested to briefly expound on their responses.

Table 2: Experiences of learners regarding issues/aspects relating to cultural diverse school settings (n=100)

QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO LEARNERS	YES %	NO %	MAIN ISSUES EMANATING FROM RESPONSES
Did you have expectations of the school you attending currently?	**82**	18	High academic standards
Do racial incidents often occur at your school ?	**56**	44	Perceptions
Are learners, irrespective of their cultural background treated the same in your school ?	40	**60**	Cultural misunderstandings, stereotyping
Do you think that the enrollment of non-white learners in former white schools led to a drop in standards?	48	**52**	Difficulty in communication and understanding
Are black learners more withdrawn than white learners during group work and other class activities ?	**57**	43	Limited interaction on social and academic level
Do educators use experiences of learners during lesson presentation?	37	**63**	Unawareness to life world and world view
Are your need for belonging met by your school ?	23	**77**	Eurocentric school culture / Referrals to 'us' and 'them'
Do you think that educators in former white schools are more committed than those teaching in townships and non-white areas ?	**66**	34	Educator strikes and absenteeism
Do you find living in a non-white area / township having a direct effect on your academic performance?	46	**54**	Lack of facilities and resources
If I could choose, would you prefer to attend a historically non-white school?	32	**68**	Good pass rates

With reference to table 2, questions in which the majority of learners were in agreement (yes responses) were: expectations of school where attending (82%); occurrence of racial incidents(56%); withdrawn from group work and class activities (57%) and more committed educators (66%). The occurrence of racial incidents in cultural diverse school settings raises concern as one would think that South Africa's first democratic elections were held in 1994- surely education authorities should make a concerted effort in delimiting racial incidents in rural integrated school settings. Another issue, reflecting a majority response (57%) is that of black learners being more withdrawn than white learners during group work and class activities. With regard to the latter it's crucial for white educators to have expertise on cooperative learning techniques. Cooperative learning according to van Wyk (2007) is a teaching method which could be used to enhance social skills and intergroup interaction in cultural diverse class environments.

Questions in which the majority of learners were in disagreement (no responses) were: learners from diverse cultural backgrounds treated the same (60%); enrollment of non-white learners led to a drop in standards (52%); educators use experiences of learners during lesson presentation (63%); need for belonging met by your school (77%); living in a non-white area / township having a direct effect on your academic performance (54%) and preference to attend a historically non-white school (68%). Educators need to be aware that all learners irrespective of colour must be treated in a fair, just and humane manner. The Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) demands that the core values enshrined in it, be implemented through education policies. Moreover it becomes critical that educators in cultural diverse rural school settings acquire the knowledge and skills to teach learners from different cultures.

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Implications Of The Study

Chisholm (1997) postulates that the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 signalled major changes in the South African educational sector. Official state education policy that was historically geared towards affirming whites and male superiority was reoriented towards "redressing inequalities between black and white on principles of inclusion, social justice and equity. This reorientation had implications for the South African teacher Education sector. The implications include policy proposals in Teacher Education which according to the Department of Education policy document, (Department of Education, 1997) must develop" dynamic, transformative and emancipatory model" that embraces the "principles and values that inform South African democracy" . James, Ralfe, van Laren, & Ngcobo, (2006) insists on the necessity of this policy, because prior to the democratic elections teachers in South Africa were deprived of acquiring knowledge and skills which allowed them to creatively capitalise on South Africa's rich diversity and instead were forced to focus narrowly on defined and racist stereotypes of people in" their own" race group.

Lemmer et al. (1997) however, warns that before an approach to the enhancement of cultural diversity can be successfully implemented on a large scale, much more research must be done and various problematic issues ironed out. Even then the success of integrating black learners in cultural diverse rural school settings will not necessarily be guaranteed. Educational changes are important, not only in teaching and learning *per se,* but also with regards to learners who, as the next generation, carry ideas, attitudes and behaviour into the future and into society at large.

Conclusion And Recommendation

Dealing with the complexities of integration in cultural diverse rural school settings of the Northern Cape province of South Africa requires a holistic approach. The development of educational programmes and curricula that enhance awareness, knowledge, and skills for learners is vital if these schools are to provide culturally relevant, respectful, and affirming quality teaching-learning environments. To that end, the development of culturally sensitive teaching, learning and intervention strategies, as well as professional training needs to take place. It is important that the latter actions should be structured along the lines of awareness, knowledge, skills development and an awareness of cultural diversity.

In the wake of the purpose of this study, we propose the following recommendations:

Educators to be provided with adequate, appropriate and effective training and guidance in all the aspects relating to school integration.

Erasmus & Ferreira (2002) argue that tolerance in itself is insufficient, as it indicates a mere endurance of and not necessarily respect for other cultures. It would seem that the solution involves a change of attitude towards, rather than only the acquisition of knowledge about other cultures. Furthermore, the integration of learners into cultural diverse school settings should not only be treated as a series of isolated experiences; rather, it should form part of the curriculum, whilst educator training should incorporate cultural awareness, knowledge and skills as part of the educator's course. Modules and courses on cultural diversity should be made compulsory in teacher-training programmes at institutions of higher learning The initial focus should be on persuading student teachers to actively assess their perceptions of learners from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

Equipping the school management teams integrated rural school settings with the necessary strategies to celebrate this diversity should be an indispensable necessity.

Any knowledge production process, whether at school, university, home or community should be relevant to the social and economic needs of South Africa (Winburg, 2006). From the survey, it could further be deduced that learners from diverse cultural groups may continue to present challenges to integrated schools and those providing educational and support services. The development of educational curricula that enhance awareness, knowledge and skills for learners is vital if these schools are to provide culturally relevant, respectful and affirming teaching environments. To that end, the development of culturally sensitive teaching, learning and intervention strategies, as well as professional training, needs to take place. It is important that the latter actions should be structured along the lines of knowledge, skills development and an awareness of diversity. In relation to the hands-on practical activities as an instructional strategy, Moore, Madison-Colmore & Collins (2005) advise that learners should become acclimatised to content on diversity through the early exploration of issues of diversity and self-reflective activities.

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Creating educational opportunities for educators and learners.

Educational opportunities which seek to include all learners create multiple opportunities for educators and learners to experience diverse views and people on a daily basis and to converse about difference, human rights and social justice. Neither recognition nor redistribution of resources as a means of addressing socio-economic inequalities alone, can make education more socially just; students also require both respect and adequate social goods to develop holistically and pursue and achieve their academic and lifelong goals (Lynch & Baker, 2005).

Educators to ascribed to the characteristics of culture, race and class.

Lemmer et al. (2006) appropriately point out that culture, race, and social class are used to construct the major groups of people in society. Thus, educators, especially in former white schools, need to understand how the ascribed characteristics of culture, race and class may influence their understanding of learners. It may be important to consider these characteristics collectively and not separately, since all learners are members of all three status groups. It is this simultaneous membership of all these groups that influences learners' perceptions and actions. This challenge may be addressed if a concerted effort is made by SMTs to recruit the best qualified, experienced and 'fitting profile' educators of colour. I am not implying that competence and quality should be jeopardised in the process, but I contend that these schools should reflect the diversity of the learner population.

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Student Engagement In The Context Of Work Based Learning As An Unconventional Form Of Higher Education

Irem Inceoglu
Institute for Work-Based Learning
Middlesex University, London
i.inceoglu@mdx.ac.uk

Natasha Shukla
Institute for Work-Based Learning
Middlesex University, London
n.shukla@mdx.ac.uk

Abstract: This particular paper is derived from a research project funded by Higher Education Academy (HEA) in the UK as an exploratory study. The research is concerned with the concept of student engagement in the context of Work-Based Learning (WBL) at Middlesex University. This paper draws attention to the distinction between WBL and more conventional university-based courses in relation to considering student engagement with the university. Our research showed that the literature on student engagement assumes in the most part that students are full-time undergraduates or graduates studying university-based programmes. Nevertheless, the fairly new field of WBL provides a focus of study outside the university in a work context which overrules these assumptions. This study aims to provide an understanding of the WBL students experience, identify any gaps that exist between current provision and expectations, and achieve indicators of good practice at institutional level to strengthen work based learners' engagement.

Introduction

WBL is designed around the idea of learning that provides a flexible learning experience which is delivered through work, in work, for work. At the Institute for WBL the candidates are offered a university level learning in their workplace. Through accreditation of candidates' work experience via self-reflective report the Institute guides the candidates through BA, MA or DProf degrees. The outcome of the process of studying at a WBL programme could be summarized as constructing worker researchers/learners.

All students enrolled in WBL programmes are experienced workers and they carry out their studies on a part-time basis which is based in their work environment. Due to this unique student profile, student engagement in WBL programmes requires a through understanding of the concept of engagement within a part-time and distance learning setting. For this purpose, the research focused on the perception of engagement by the Work based learners at Middlesex University. In order to grasp an understanding of the needs and perceptions of these learners we conducted in-depth interviews with eight recent graduates. The research adopts a holistic approach to include the two main components of student engagement: the learner's context and motivations, and the approach and strategies of the HEI. This study aims to provide an understanding of the WBL students experience, identify any gaps that exist between current provision and expectations, and achieve indicators of good practice at institutional level to strengthen work based learners' engagement.

The WBL students differ from more traditional forms of higher education and WBL students' experience a more individualised and self-motivating form of engagement. Therefore they pose a challenge to the traditional teaching and learning methods within universities and urge a reconsideration of involvement ranging from administrative staff to the ICT used in teaching and learning. An important element of work based learning is that the focus of study is outside the university in a work context. The conclusions from this study are therefore to some extent generalisable to other work based courses.

It is important to draw a distinction between work based learning and university based courses when considering student engagement with the university. The literature on student engagement assumes on the most part that students are full time undergraduates studying university-based programmes. This is discussed in relation to gaining a clear definition of student engagement and getting to the essence of what is involved in a good quality of experience for students. There follows some literature which addresses part time students' experiences and this adds relevance to the part time WBL students that form this study. Finally the limited literature on WBL students' experience with their HEA is briefly reviewed.

Literature on Student Engagement

It is widely understood that the level and quality of student engagement with their higher education institutions is critical in determining student retention, learning, achievement and graduation (Laird et al, 2008; Bryson and Hand, 2008). Student engagement has also been cited as an important mediating factor in the development of students' sense of belonging to their educational institutions (Coates, 2006).

In order to guide the present study, the operational definition of student engagement provided by Harper and Quaye (2008) is adopted. They state:

Student engagement is simply characterised as participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to a range of measurable outcomes (p1).

Despite the growing academic interest in student engagement in higher education, theorisations of this concept are still emergent and under contestation. Broadly, conceptualisations of student engagement encompass two dimensions that appear to be in close interaction with each other yet represent separate conceptual planes on which student engagement is manifested. Student engagement consists of, on the one hand, the student's active involvement in learning, i.e. the learners' motivations, inclinations and efforts to engage with their learning. Student engagement also consists of institutional engagement, i.e. the institutional support structures and organisational approaches that promote inclusive and open interactions with and between students (Harper and Quaye, 2008; Kuh, et al 2007). Researchers and academics appear to vary regarding which of the two dimensions they emphasise in their conceptualisations of student engagement. Some focus on the learners (Riggs and Gholar, 2009) and some on the institution (Little et al, 2009). In this study, a holistic approach is adopted that acknowledges the mutual interaction between these two actors in constructing student engagement.

The facilitating and inhibiting factors identified in the literature have largely been researched and understood in relation to student engagement within mainstream higher education in the form of taught, campus-based courses. However, higher education is increasingly extending to include part-time modes of study and distance/online courses to accommodate a changing student demography that is more mobile, digitally connected, professionally established and diverse in terms of age, culture and economic background. It is likely that student engagement within these different educational contexts will show commonality with 'traditional' student engagement, but also exhibit unique features and forms as well as different strengths and challenges.

Though research on student engagement is emerging within newer modes of education, it still remains incommensurate with the growing numbers of students drawn towards such study, and the policy focus on lifelong learning which turns a spotlight on these areas of higher education. The emergence of WBL programmes as a form of flexible distance learning is one such area where research on student engagement processes is required and where a limited amount of research has taken place.

Little et al (2009) found that "institutions view student engagement as central to enhancing the student experience, but more emphasis seems to be placed on viewing students as consumers and rather less on viewing students as partners in a learning community" and this is where work based learning students may to some extent benefit in their engagement. WBL students are invited to be partners in a learning agreement (or contract) with the university and their place of work (Garnett, 2000). The three-way partnership links work based learning students into an engagement with both an HEI and a work community adding a different dimension to notions of engagement. Successful work based learners will have developed themselves successfully through university learning and have also made a significant impact on their work situation (Nixon, 2008). Brennan (2005) found that integrating work-based learning into higher education requires a whole range of supporting structures and changes of attitude towards learning. New approaches to learning require new thinking from all the stakeholders involved in university work based learning. Young and Stephenson (2007) focus on how an interactive learning environment can support work based learning whilst Boud and Costley (2007) show how the work based learning student's experience is based on engagement with the university that requires a pedagogical approach that supports the three-way connection.

Methodology and data analysis

A literature search was conducted to gain an overview of conceptualisations, debates and approaches towards student engagement. This was then used to inform the construction of a semi-structured interview schedule and a student survey in order to examine students' engagement with the IWBL.

In line with literature which supports the conceptualisation of student engagement as a dual interaction between students' expectations and institutional strategies, informal and formal conversations and interviews were held with members of staff at the IWBL in order to explore its institutional approach. This methodology coheres with the holistic approach to student engagement that is adopted by this study.

The semi structured interviews were conducted with a selection of undergraduate and postgraduate students who graduated in 2009. Interviews were conducted by two independent researchers who had had no contact with the research participants prior to the commencement of this study.

The two researchers who collected the data initially worked independently of each other to code the interview material and then compared their codes while making necessary adjustments through a process of dialogue and discussion. Analysis was related to literature in order to contextualise the findings and develop recommendations.

The framework for WBL student engagement

WBL programmes are based in students' actual work as well as having a distance relationship with the university and this is reflected in the kinds of support, resources and interactions that students receive and garner for their learning. The most important source of guidance is certainly the HEI, but the workplace, with its concrete and immediate bearing on students' lives, is also a contributor.

Institutional support, interaction and resources

Students' contact and interaction with the IWBL and the HEI in general took tangible form predominately through their relationship with their assigned WBL adviser (commonly referred to as an 'academic adviser'). In many cases this was the sole personal relationship that students had with the HEI. The fact that communications between students and advisers were based almost entirely on email contact, supported sometimes by telephone conversations, is an important indicator of the university-related aspect of the WBL study experience. Email and telephone communication was used to ask questions, discuss ideas and get clarifications with email having the added use of enabling students to submit work and receive written feedback.

Other institute resources were also used to facilitate student learning. These included guidebooks and other reading material, often posted to students, containing the programmes' structure and module content and guidelines for planning and writing course work. Students rarely used the on-campus library because of its distance from their workplace and residence and because of lack of time. However, while distance library resources, including online journals and books were also available, these were not widely used due to technical difficulties with the university's ATHENS account that enables remote access to resources. The WBL student evaluation survey conducted in 2009 found that only 20% of respondents used the online library resources with many describing attempts to use online facilities as "frustrating". Although the HEI has pursued the development of virtual learning environments (VLE), their structures and procedures are complex and difficult to understand. There are multiple types of software with separate purposes and functioning which require training to gain optimum benefit. Given the complexity of these online software products, one-off training courses do not fully prepare students for their use, especially amongst those students who have had limited prior experience of using information technology in general. More sustained training sessions, however, are difficult to provide to learners that are based at a distance. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the virtual learning environments are not used efficiently by work based learners.

On a few occasions students visited the campus for face-to-face meetings with their advisers, to attend the induction sessions and research methods modules and to present their final research projects.

Though administrative staff were another source of support that students could draw upon to deal with practical matters, they were not often approached. This may indicate the lack of administrative difficulties faced by students. Indeed some students reported not requiring administrative assistance. However, it may also be suggestive of a lack of identifiable and direct channels and of visibility of the administrative staff of IWBL. Many students did not know the names of people working on the IWBL administrative team. Therefore, when practical enquiries arose, students often directed these to their advisers or asked them to suggest other people who could help them. Others located administrative help by making a general enquiry through the university switchboard.

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Clearly, administrative problems related to funding can have a detrimental effect on the student's study experience. The problems faced by this student indicate the importance of good coordination and communication between the HEI staff and sponsoring employers. When these are government employers, with whom traditional delays in funding have been observed, there is an added need for tolerance and flexibility on the part of the HEI.

Of the many different ways in which students could access, use, and engage with the HEI, it is apparent that communications with the adviser were the most frequent, in-depth and fruitful conduit through which this occurred:

In the eventuality that their assigned adviser was unavailable for guidance, or when contact was insufficient, students were generally unaware of, and did not seek, other sources of personal and direct support from within the HEI. Within the context of work based learning studies, therefore, the adviser is fundamental to mediating student experiences and engagement with the HEI. Whereas students of campus-based taught courses have direct access to a vast array of HEI facilities and services, and are in contact with a wide range of teaching faculty with whom fruitful interactions can be established, work based learners' experiences and interactions with the HEI are determined largely by their relationship with an individual adviser. This places a heavy onus on advisers in enabling student engagement with their learning. Such individualised forms of student interaction with their HEI also lead to vastly different experiences and perceptions of the HEI from learner to learner.

Interaction with other learners

In contrast to the various ways in which work based learners engaged with the HEI, their interaction with other learners was minimal. Lack of peer interaction was due to:

- the distance learning nature of the course
- part-time status of students
- individualised course content

Since students were studying at a distance there were very few opportunities to meet other people. On rare occasions, students met each other when they visited the campus to attend short courses. However, these meetings were not prolonged or regular enough to facilitate the formation of friendships. With their busy schedules, work based learners also did not feel they had time to maintain contacts, as is suggested by a student here as she talks about her lack of contact with other learners:

> *No I didn't. I think that is because of the nature of my work, which is just to go to school the whole day, teach and come back. It's a bit isolating, so it's difficult to find time to even phone someone. (W3)*

Another very important factor that explains lack of peer interaction was the individualised content of each learners WBL programme. Unlike students of taught courses, work based learners did not share a common academic or professional area within which ideas and thoughts could be exchanged and discussed. This lack of common ground may have reduced the relevance of peer interaction for these students. This point is illustrated again by the following student:

> *...with WBL everyone is doing something different to do with their own jobs. So having contact with others would not have been quite as relevant. (W3)*

While some students did find the absence of peer interaction 'isolating', most students did not particularly miss the lack of social and intellectual stimulation from other learners even though they acknowledged its possible benefits in providing emotional support. This lack of need for social interaction was often attributed to their focus on their studies:

The focus on completing their individual projects and lack of time to engage socially explains why students did not seek and maintain interactions via email or through online forums. In contrast to 'traditional' students, peer interaction does not appear to be a central concern of work based learners and plays a very marginal role in their engagement as students.

Support from the workplace

Apart from the HEI, learners' workplaces were another source of practical, emotional, and intellectual support. Practical support came in the form of full or partial funding of the WBL programme, or more indirectly

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in that the workplace provided a resource base that could be used by employees. Thus some people used the library at their workplace rather than the HEI because it was more accessible. Since students' research projects were conducted at their workplace, colleagues sometimes provided logistical help, such as facilitating access to research participants, helping to conduct surveys and organising research related meetings and workshops. A few employers also gave study leave.

The workplace was also a source of emotional support through the encouragement shown by employers and other colleagues:

The head of music [department] was supportive. He would ask how I was getting on and offer encouragement, which was really good. (M2)

It also reduced feelings of isolation by filling the void in social relations arising from the distance learning nature of the WBL programme, as one learner states:

I think it is the nature of the course. You are kind of 'flying solo' it feels like that. I had a work colleague who completed her masters two years ago and she was quite good, so I did have support. And I had my line manager... So I think people who go on to this course need to be fairly grounded and have contacts already in the workplace or wherever for support. (W2)

Employers and colleagues also provided intellectual support by giving advice and feedback, and discussing ideas. These people were particularly well placed to give such support because they were aware of the context of the study, perhaps more so than the WBL adviser. Their inputs were highly appreciated.

The support from my workplace was quite important because in my research, I did the observation in my institute and I discussed the results of observing with the focus group of colleagues. With this focus group I could discuss the evolution of my project because they know the organisation, they know the way it works, the limitations and then the opportunities and it was interesting to discuss this with them and that really helped. (M3)

The workplace is an important source of support to work based learners in their academic pursuit. While scholarship on student engagement focuses on the role of academic institutions in facilitating student learning, in the context of WBL studies, the important role of the workplace also needs to be acknowledged.

Processes in student engagement with WBL

Whilst the engagement of work based learners is supported by a framework of resources, contacts and interactions, student engagement itself is constituted of deeper, dynamic processes. These processes relate to the students' engagement with the university's expectations and academic requirements, students' involvement and ownership of their learning and the imperative to engage and make a difference through project work with their organisation or professional field. The ways in which these interconnected processes are played out in WBL studies, creates a unique picture of student engagement and identification in this educational space.

Academic integration

The first step in WBL students' engagement with their learning and their HEI was the process of encountering, trying to understand and meet academic standards, as well as grappling with self-directed learning. This equates to a process of academic integration, involving socialisation within the HEI culture and norms, which, in terms of student retention, is a central determinant of whether students continue with their studies.

As discussed earlier, many work based learners have had no prior experience of university education. Initially, therefore, students had anxieties about what was expected of them and whether they would be able to meet the academic standards of a WBL degree. Support and feedback from the adviser and guidance from course hand books were critical in helping students develop a workable understanding of academic standards and expectations:

I was able to send him (adviser) drafts of what I was doing just to ensure I was pitching on the right level and I had the appropriate content. (W2)

Apart from academic standards, students also had to get used to engaging in self-directed learning and develop ways of managing it, though initially some students found this quite challenging:

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Online assignments are very difficult because you don't have a one-to one, you don't have the opportunity of speaking to the lecturer every week and the lecturer telling you "listen; this is what you're doing wrong, this is where you need to improve. (W1)

Learners acknowledged that they required a high level of self-sufficiency and maturity to be self-directed in their learning, indicating that such form of study might not be suited to younger students who form the bulk of the university population:

...when you don't know what you are expected to do, you have to have a strong character. In fact I was going to give up. The first six weeks I was going to give up. And because I had a supportive family who egged me on and called me a "loser" that really shocked me. I said no, I can't, I mean that's my character. I am quite a "go getter". You have to be determined to succeed, because an online degree is not easy. (W1)

Students often used HEI resources such as the course handbook to structure and organise their learning. As students developed a firmer understanding of academic requirements, they also gained greater confidence in being able to progress and accomplish a degree. Their reliance on the support and guidance from the tutor reduced and students increasingly took the front seat in managing their studies. Internalising the universities standards, expectations and norms of academic discourse were essential in enabling them to engage more fully with their learning and to galvanise their own self-motivation towards completing the degree.

This is not to suggest that the adviser's support became irrelevant, indeed it continued to be valued in that students felt 'supported' when they had this guidance and 'less supported' when they did not. However, if, for some students, the initial phase of establishing contact with the adviser, and through this, socialisation within the academic culture, does not go smoothly or remains weak, doubts regarding their desire to continue the program become stronger and may lead to a less positive perception of the study experience.

This occurred in the case of one individual whose contact with his adviser was unsatisfactory:

I was frustrated because I didn't think I was getting the advice that I needed. I was struggling to get in touch with my advisor a lot of the time. (M2)

These feelings of alienation led this student to consider withdrawing from the programme but encouragement from a close friend who "convinced me to keep going" prevented the student from doing so.

The role of the WBL adviser and HEI is one of introducing and familiarising work based learners with the academic culture, rather than providing directed mentoring in the traditional sense. Therefore, the HEI, in the context of WBL studies, is a background facilitator of learning by providing a more structured support that is conducive to self-directed reflection and academic development.

Taking ownership of learning

Another indicator of student engagement in work based learning studies is the process of students taking ownership and responsibility for their learning. This process is particularly encouraged by the learner-negotiated course content of the WBL degrees.

As was demonstrated earlier, many students were driven to do a WBL degree because it gave them the ability to exercise greater choice and control over the content of their learning and was significant for their work. Learners could draw and build on their prior work experience while also channelling the learning gained during the degree back into the workplace in ways that were immediately relevant to their professional life. The high degree of choice and control in constructing their learning objectives and the immediate relevance of the course to their work role enabled students to experience an important sense of ownership of their learning which they did not feel they could experience within traditional taught courses.

I was looking around for all sorts of things to do and I particularly wanted to do something of my own choice because with the cert. ed. you are forced into studying certain aspects which sometimes you might not be interested in, you'll do it, but you are not interested in. But I wanted to do something that was very relevant to my particular work so this suited me perfectly, this one.(W4)

The flexible structure of WBL degrees meant that students could organise their study time according to their own schedules. For some students this further facilitated a sense of ownership over their learning:

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I didn't have to be coming down to Middlesex for regular tutorials, it all seemed to be in my hands you know, and with full time work, time was quite limited for studying so I had to put certain chunks of time aside to study...And as long as I met my dead line it was up to me when I did that work and I just felt incredibly comfortable with the way it worked out, and I didn't ever feel pressurised by it... (W2)

Active engagement of students with their learning could also be seen in the manner in which they created time to study, in spite of hectic work schedules, by sacrificing personal, family, and social time. Here some students describe these sacrifices.

Identification with the HEI

The distance learning nature of WBL degrees has a strong bearing on the extent to which learners feel a sense of identification with their HEI. As earlier mentioned, work based learners have little physical contact with the HEI as a whole with interactions mostly limited to their individual WBL advisers. The physical remoteness of the HEI also limits students' involvement in the social aspects of student life such as making friends and participating in social events. For most students this lack of physical and social presence of the campus in their lives contributed to a lack of sense of belonging to the HEI.

...I didn't really feel I was at university. I didn't really think I was part of the social fabric of the whole thing because it was distance learning. So I wasn't that involved socially. (M2)

However the lack of connection to the HEI was not simply a result of physical isolation. Students also perceived the university as a 'young' space, which they, as mature people, did not fully feel part of.

...I must say I saw the differences with mature students that we don't feel quite part of it as the full time students do. So, it's always a different experience. So I wouldn't say I would ever really at this stage access any of the student sites or really the general university and you know what's available on campus all that stuff goes on. (W2)

Therefore, for most WBL students, engagement in terms of experiencing a sense of belonging or community with their particular HEI is relatively weak. This can be attributed in large part to their physical and social isolation from the campus as well as their own perceptions of themselves as older students for whom 'university life' is not relevant.

On the other hand, students of work based learning studies expressed a more abstract identification of themselves as learners. This was visible in the importance they attached to getting a degree as recognition of the learning they had engaged in throughout their professional life and the academic skills they had gained through the course of their studies.

In fact it (the degree) helps you discover what your work is all about. It wasn't just learning it was experiencing it and putting it in paper. (W1)

Though students might not have a strong sense of attachment to their particular educational institution, it appears that association and identification with academia in general is important to work based learners and obtaining a degree is an important signifier of this.

The graduation ceremony was, therefore, an important event for students because it was here that they got a tangible experience of their isolated study as connected to a wider academic establishment and community of learners. The social affirmation and recognition that they got from this experience added to their sense of accomplishment.

I think it [graduation ceremony] kind of closes it and finishes it and makes it feel real... But you don't really feel you are part of a university in a way, because you are at home. And I suppose this made it real for me, to go there and have your name called out and be given the piece of paper and be part of it, it made me feel like I really had done it. (W3)

Students' identification of themselves as learners and researchers could also be seen in the way in which they expressed a sense of solidarity with other researchers. Thus when asked why participants had chosen to take part in the study, many replied that this was because they now understood what it means to do research and were aware of the difficulties that researchers encountered in getting interviewees.

Conclusion

In the context of work based learning studies, the personal characteristics of learners are an important determinant of student engagement, more so than within traditional, campus-based education. To meet the challenge of distance learning, students need to have high levels of self-motivation, determination and self-sufficiency. The learner-centred pedagogy of work based learning and learning content which has a high degree of relevance to students' professional and career objectives, encourages students to take ownership and responsibility for their learning and so also contributes to student engagement. Support from the HEI in the form of adviser guidance and interaction, learning resources and administrative help is another critical factor in student engagement. Through this support, learners proceed to understand HEI standards and norms and achieve academic integration which is vital to student retention and achievement. The workplace, with its concrete and physical presence in learners' lives also facilitates their engagement by providing various forms of practical, emotional, and intellectual support that cannot be provided by the distant university. Social networks of friends, family and work colleagues play a similar supportive role.

The study suggests that taking ownership of learning is a vital aspect of student engagement. Within WBL degrees this process of ownership is facilitated in large part by the relevance of the course to learners' work context and professional development. This provides an important factor for enhancing student engagement in taught courses. If students are to be engaged with their learning, courses need to be made relevant to them.

To increase the relevance of university education to students, course content and advising, needs to be framed in ways which encourage students to draw connections between abstract discipline knowledge and the real-world context they live in. Beyond this, lecturers should pay greater attention to enabling students to draw out the ways in which course material is personally, socially and politically significant to themselves and their fields of work. Overall, student engagement in the field of WBL differs from more traditional forms of HE. WBL students experience a more individualised and self-motivating form of engagement which is mostly an outcome of their level of professional experience, maturity and expectations from a degree programme.

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PRE-SERVICE BIOLOGY TEACHERS' ATTITUDE, FEAR AND DISGUST TOWARD ANIMALS AND DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF LIVE ANIMALS

Iztok Tomažič

Biotechnical faculty

University of Ljubljana

Ljubljana, Slovenia

iztok.tomazic@bf.uni-lj.si

Abstract: In 2006, the European Parliament published a framework of eight key competences for lifelong learning, each as "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context". Biology teaching in Slovenian schools is primarily knowledge-oriented, less concerned with developing skills, and largely negligent of attitude as a constituent component of competences. This paper presents a research of attitudes, fear and disgust that first- and final-year pre-service biology teachers have expressed toward 25 animals, in connection with direct experience of individual animal species. Students' attitudes and emotions were assessed with a self-report questionnaire. Results show that final-year students on average rate their attitude higher (more positive) and fear and disgust lower (less negative) than their first-year counterparts. That applies mostly to animals which students encountered and worked with at biology didactics classes. Implications for biology education are discussed.

Keywords: animals, attitude, fear, disgust, pre-service teachers

Introduction

Every day, the media report about a number of endangered species and the reasons for their protection. There are many campaigns organised each year by different institutions to address this issue and present it to the public at large. The United Nations declared the year 2010 the *International Year of Biodiversity*. On its webpage, the UN says: "*It is a celebration of life on earth and of the value of biodiversity for our lives*" (http://www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/). The UN appeals to the world to take action to safeguard the variety of life on earth – biodiversity.

Schools have an important role in addressing this issue and presenting it to children. They inform children and thus influence their attitudes and future actions (behaviour). According to Kellert (1996), education plays a crucial role in creating environmentally conscious citizens. A similar view is held by the Society for Conservation Biology, which published Conservation Literacy Guidelines (Trombulak et al., 2004). The Society proposes that educators should seek to develop in people a deeper understanding of the importance and tools of conservation biology. What is important in its view is that education is the most effective when people develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes through direct experience. Also, conservation biologists, in their opinion, have a unique set of knowledge, skills, and concerns to share with others.

Not only conservation biologists but also biology teachers should be educated in such manner. Slovenian biology curricula stipulate that every person, in the course of their education, should acquire knowledge about main biology topics and at the same time develop appropriate attitudes toward these topics, nature and biology on the whole. Furthermore, during the course of their formal education, students should acquire as much direct experience as possible of various organisms and their living environments. To be able to provide children with such direct experience, student teachers (and teachers) need first develop appropriate attitudes with as little negative emotions toward organisms as possible. A biology teacher, for example, with an irrational fear of spiders or some invertebrate species would hardly be effective if working with such live animals.

It is well known that factual knowledge alone is not sufficient for developing appropriate attitudes and skills (Morgan, 1992; Prokop et al., 2009), especially when it comes to unpopular animals. (Prokop et al., 2009; Prokop and Tunnicliffe, 2010, Tomažič, 2008).

Morgan (1992) argues that in order to achieve a balance between knowledge and attitudes, a certain level of involvement and amount of information are needed. If students have the opportunity to work with live organisms, they can acquire the most vivid experiences and develop strong emotions about their subjects. Students can truly understand living things when they are allowed to have direct contact with them (Lock 1994,

Lock & Alderman 1996). Direct experience, in contrast to indirect experience, differently influences attitude formation. Attitudes based on direct experience are known to be more persistent, stronger, held with greater certainty, more stable over time and more resistant to counter-influence (Fazio & Zanna 1981).

The most common reasons, as reported by teachers themselves, for not using live animals in the classroom include restrictive environmental and veterinary legislation, unfavourable public (and student) opinion, inadequate facilities, insufficient funding, problems with animal care, and restrictive school policies (Adkins & Lock, 1994). When teachers work with primary teaching materials (live organisms), they must frequently negotiate their own and students' interpersonal barriers that can significantly affect the quality of students experience (Adkins & Lock 1994, Bixler & Floyd 1999). Emotions such as fear and disgust affect teachers' attitudes towards animals and can affect their (non)use in the classroom. Studies of people's attitudes toward and knowledge of (familiarity with) different animals often focus on the general public or students, but seldom on future biology teachers (Thompson & Mintzes 2002, Barney & al. 2005).

The questions used for the purpose of this study were:

a) How many students have direct experience of animals at the beginning, and at the end of, their studies?

b) How do first-year and final-year pre-service biology teachers rate their attitudes, fear and disgust toward certain animals?

c) How does direct experience of individual animal species influence students' ratings of their attitudes?

d) How will animals be grouped in different categories as a result of factor analysis of students' attitude ratings?

Methodology

The study was undertaken in 2006 (with 51 first-year students and 41 final-year students), and in 2007 (with 48 first-year students). It included a total of 99 first-year and 41 final-year pre-service biology teachers, with the mean ages of 20.0 years and 23.2 years, respectively. The respondents were studying to become primary school biology (science) teachers. Most of them were female. As only six male students participated the data gathered was not analysed according to gender.

Attitudes and emotions were assessed using a self-report questionnaire which recorded the prospective teachers' attitude, fear and disgust toward 25 animals in connection with direct experience of individual animal species. All ratings were based on a five-point scale. The scale for fear was adapted from Davey et al. (1998). Self-report items about **fear** were rated on the following scale: 1 = 'I am not afraid of the animal.'; 2 = 'The animal sometimes frightens me.'; 3 = 'I am afraid of the animal.'; 4 = 'I am very afraid of the animal.'; and 5 = 'I am terrified of the animal.'. Self-report items about **disgust** were rated on the following scale: 1 = 'The animal is not disgusting.'; 2 = 'I have an unpleasant feeling when close to the animal.'; 3 = 'The animal is disgusting.'; 4 = 'This animal makes me sick.'; and 5 = 'This animal makes me vomit.'. And self-report items about **attitude** were rated on the following scale: 1 = 'I do not want anything to do with this animal.'; 2 = 'I do not like this animal.'; 3 = 'I do not have a special attitude toward this animal.', 4 = 'I like this animal.'; and 5 = 'I like this animal very much.'.

Data was analysed according to the year of study and student direct experience of animals. To further analyse data from the attitude part of the questionnaire, principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was used. After factor analysis, animals were grouped into five factors according to attitude ratings. Eigenvalue above 1.0 was used for the final factor solution. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of the sampling adequacy test (0.863) and Bartlett's test for sphericity ($\chi 2 = 1634.92$; df = 300; p < 0.001) suggested that factor analysis was appropriate for this data set, because the value of KMO exceeded critical value 0.7 (Leech et al., 2005). First factor explained 31.82% of total variance and all five factors explained 63.38% of variance.

The questionnaire focused mainly on animals that are usually harmless to humans and can be used in the classroom (e.g. snails, cockroaches, spiders, earthworms, leeches, amphibians), but can evoke relatively high disgust responses.

Findings and Discussion

Results show that final-year students on average rate their attitude higher (more positive) than their first-year counterparts (Figure 1). For example, only 30% of first-year students reported direct experience with the toad. In contrast, 95% of final-year students reported having direct experience of the same animal (Table 1). The

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difference between their ratings for attitude toward the toad was 1.0, while the differences between average fear and disgust ratings were 0.7 and 0.9, respectively.

Figure 1 represents changes in attitude, fear and disgust ratings according to the year of study. Animals are distributed according to descending average values of student ratings. Figure 2 represents differences in attitude ratings according to reported direct experience of individual animals.

According to factor analysis of attitude ratings, animals were grouped in five categories as shown in Figure 3: "Disgusting" (toad, frog, salamander, cockroach, spider, earthworm, snake, snail, leech, rat and scorpion); "Pets" (guinea pig, hamster, rabbit, cat, dog and mouse); "Fierce" (bear, wolf, and shark); "Sting" (fly, wasp and tick) and "Unusual Pets" (walking stick and turtle). Crombach alphas for individual factors were 0.91, 0.80, 0.83, 0.68 and 0.60, respectively. The differences in attitude ratings between students of different grades were found mainly for animals from the first factor ("Disgusting"). The only exceptions were the walking stick and the cat, which were ranked in separate factors (Figure 1, A). A comparison of student attitude ratings according to reported direct experience revealed additional differences for the rabbit, the mouse, the wolf and the turtle, but no differences were found for the cat (Figure 2).

Table 1: Differences in reported direct experience with animals between first- and final-year students.

| ANIMAL | DIRECT CONTACT (f) | | | | | SIG. | | |
| | First year | | Final year | | | | | |
	Yes	No	Yes	No		$\chi2$		p
Guinea pig	93	6	40	0		4.181	*	*0.041*
Hamster	91	8	41	0		5.743	*	*0.017*
Snail	93	5	39	2		0.003	*	*0.956*
Snake	74	25	41	0		12.604		*<0.001*
Turtle	92	7	40	1		1.345	*	*0.246*
Salamander	34	64	37	4		35.697		*<0.001*
Toad	29	69	39	2		49.675		*<0.001*
Frog	63	33	38	3		10.858		*0.001*
Walking stick	77	19	41	0		9.421		*0.002*
Spider	85	14	39	2		2.835	*	*0.092*
Scorpion	14	85	27	14		37.438		*<0.001*
Cockroach	39	58	39	2		35.366		*<0.001*
Shark	6	93	0	40		4.181		*0.041*
Cat	99	0	41	0		NC		NC
Dog	99	0	40	1		NC		NC
Wolf	5	92	2	39		0.005	*	*0.946*
Bear	8	87	2	39		0.567	*	*0.451*
Mouse	75	22	38	3		4.586		*0.032*
Rabbit	98	1	36	5		7.952	*	*0.005*
Rat	74	25	21	20		8.861		*0.003*
Earthworm	87	12	39	2		1.913	*	*0.167*
Tick	96	3	40	1		0.038	*	*0.846*

Fly	98	1		41	0		NC		NC
Wasp	92	7		33	8		4.286	*	*0.038*
Leach	18	80		17	23		8.739		*0.003*

Notes: * Likelihood ratio; NC - Not calculated.

The research of the effect of direct experience of animals on the emotions and attitudes of studied subjects has been gaining increasing attention. Prokop et al. (2009) for one propose that in addition to learning facts about animals students should also be exposed to direct experience with animals, especially the ones that invoke negative emotions (e.g. fear). Schools are among the most important and influential institutions that can indeed provide such experience. This study has shown that (1) as a rule pre-service biology teachers gradually acquire more direct experience of animals as they progress towards the end of their university education, while (2) teachers' attitudes, fear and disgust change form negative to more positive (and less fear and disgust).
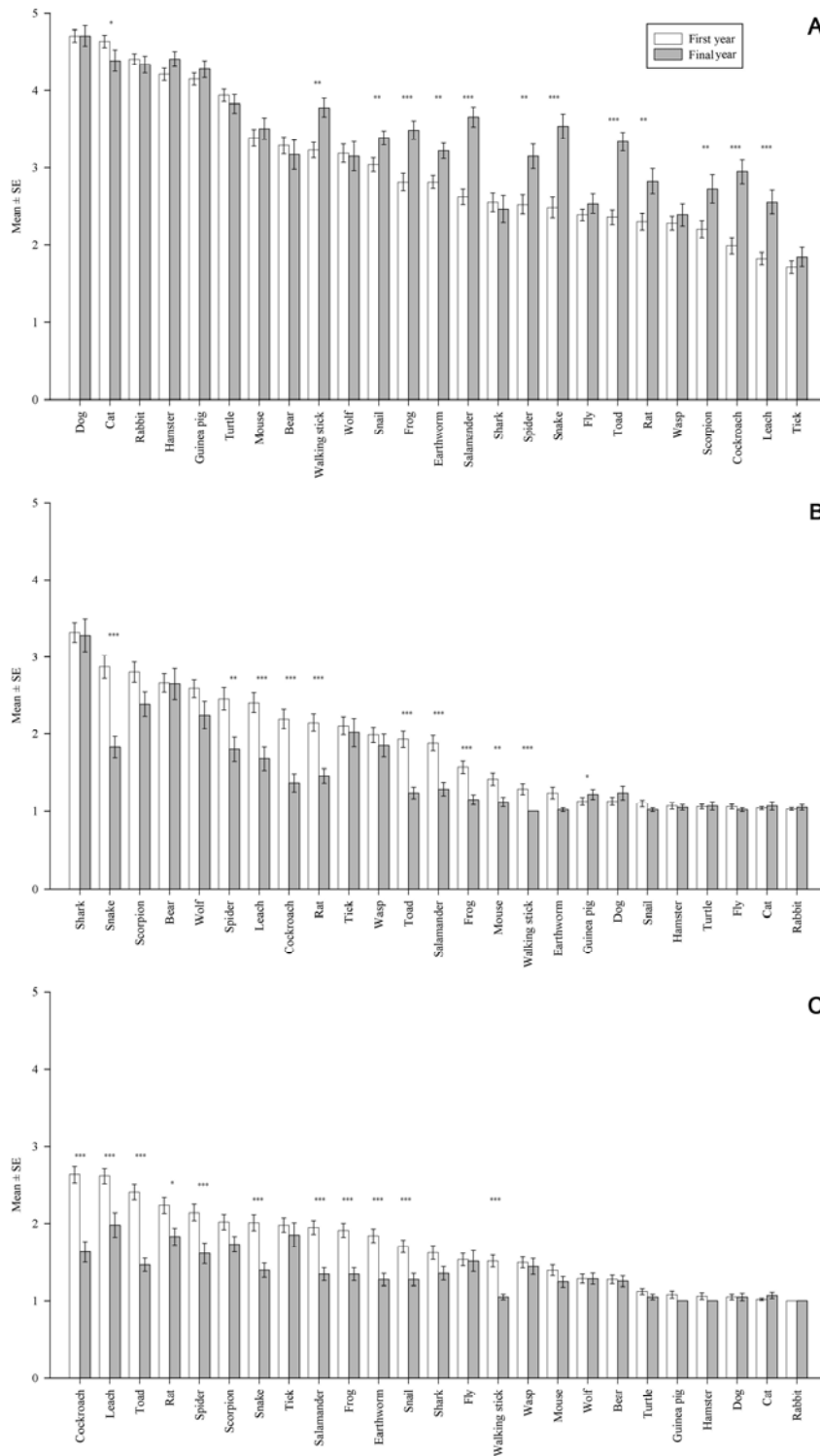
Figure 1. Differences in (A) attitude, (B) fear and (C) disgust ratings between first-year and final-year student teachers toward individual animals. Meaning of asterisks: Mann-Whitney U test; *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.
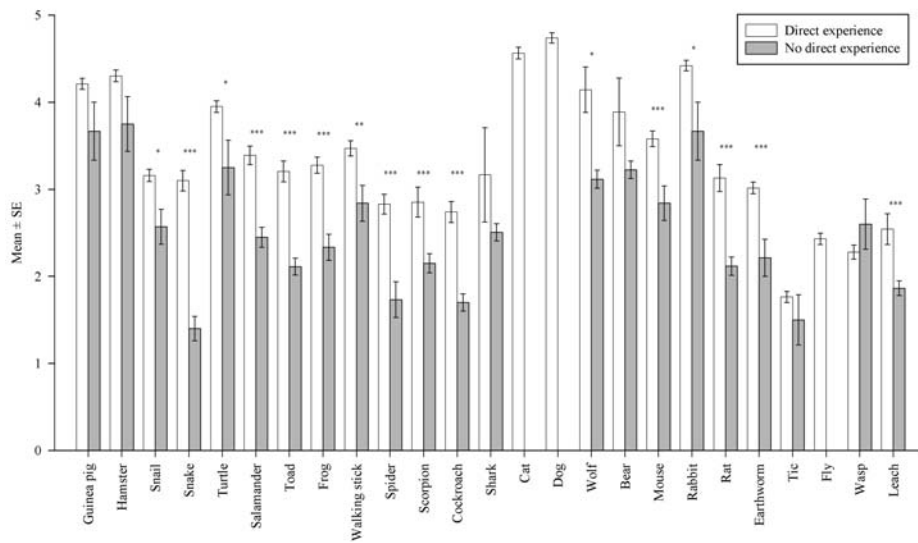
Figure 2. Differences in attitude toward different animals according to reported direct experience of student teachers. Meaning of asterisks: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.
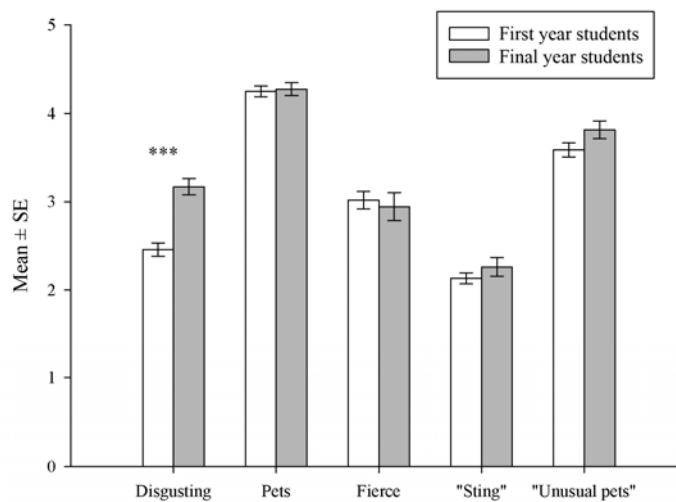

Figure 3. Differences in attitude toward different animals between first-year and final-year student teachers. Meaning of asterisks: *** $p < 0.001$.

(3) The analysis of attitude ratings revealed a change mainly in ratings for animals that can evoke a higher disgust response (for discussion cf. Davey et al., 1998, and Arrindell, 2000), which was confirmed by factor analysis of attitude ratings. (4) Reported direct experience with individual animal species influences student attitude ratings. Students with direct experiences of animals generally report better attitude than their counterparts. (5) Factor analysis of student attitude ratings grouped animals in five meaningful factors. These results yield to the conclusion that both direct experience with live animals and theoretical knowledge of animals are equally important. This was evident in ratings of animals that are usually harmless, but can evoke a greater disgust response, i.e. the animals which students encounter and extensively work with mostly in biology didactics classes (toad, salamander, frog, snake, spider, cockroach, scorpion). Students' attitude ratings of "Pets" were so high (positive) that this factor alone probably accounted for the lack of statistically significant differences. The same can be said for the "Unusual pets" factor, which included two animals, namely the walking stick and the turtle. There was also no change in attitude ratings toward animals that can be potentially dangerous and can cause physical injury (wolf, bear and shark). The same applied for animals that sting, i.e. can penetrate skin, such as wasps, flies or ticks. The last two factors suggest that in the future, there should be more

attention on working with such animals. Students must be aware that animals such as insects and fierce animals (wolves and bears) also play an important role in nature and that they should have positive attitudes toward them, too. Experiencing them would hopefully improve that (for a discussion about learning about insects see Shepardson, 2002).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Student teachers and schoolchildren alike need to directly experience a variety of animals and animal groups in order to gain first-hand experience. Such experience is believed to improve attitude and reduce negative emotions in students, who, with proper cognitive input, can consequently develop more pro-environmental behaviour. Only factual knowledge is therefore not sufficient. Future teachers should also have an opportunity to present different animals to their peers and schoolchildren of different ages. As a result of this, they might be more willing to include live animals in instruction once they become full-fledged teachers.

Acknowledgements

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Exploring Organizational Communication Through Website Analysis: A Problem-Based Learning Community Exercise

Valerie Priscilla Goby
College of Business Sciences
Zayed University
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
valerie.goby@zu.ac.ae

Catherine Nickerson
College of Business Sciences
Zayed University
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
catherine.nickerson@zu.ac.ae

Abstract: This paper discusses the pedagogic value of website analysis. It describes such an exercise administered to third-year business students at a major university in the United Arab Emirates, in which students were required to analyze a range of business school websites. The analysis was conducted employing four frameworks: (1) identification of 'concept clusters' and the linguistic and navigational creation of these clusters; (2) 'framing' of information provided to tap into students' socio-cultural, intellectual, academic mindset; (3) the navigational mode by which meanings are created in the user's mind based on the presentation and sequence of hyperlinks; (4) the Ashridge mission model of purpose, strategy, values, and behavior standards. The heuristic value of the exercise was very high since, on completion of the assignment, students demonstrated a firm understanding of how organizational realities are created through the management of information on websites, a corporate strategy which has enormous relevance for organizational development, CSR, corporate communications, and marketing.

Keywords: organizational communication, problem-based learning communities, experiential learning, information framing

Introduction

This paper describes a highly successful approach to teaching communication theory related to web site analysis and design. The pedagogic technique was formulated as a problem-based learning exercise in which third-year business students were required to analyze the websites of a range of business schools and make recommendations for the enhancement of their own business school's website. The 170 students who engaged in the exercise are completing their Bachelor's degree in business at Zayed University, a major university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with campuses in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Methodology

The objective was for students to learn how information is framed on corporate web sites, a crucial channel for organizational communication with both internal and external stakeholders. The goal was to complement theoretical learning through the practical application of theory-related skills. The pedagogic experience was cyclical, that is, it involved theoretical input followed by its practical application, which therefore contextualized and consolidated theoretical learning.

The value of choosing university web sites is that not only are students familiar with them, they also form an important group of stakeholders as (potential) students for the organizations that produce them. This facilitated their analysis of content and usability of the sites and enhanced their grasp of related communication theory. This context for learning was critical since cognition theory holds that context is central to effective learning (Sherwood, 2004). Attempting to advance student understanding of communication theory through web site analysis was apposite given the rising importance of online communication activity in general and the key role of corporate web sites in particular. The IT context was also appropriate since students at Zayed University

are highly IT-literate with each student required to use their own personal laptop daily for a variety of pedagogic and communication purposes, including Blackboard and ePortfolio. These realities established a further degree of familiarity of the context within which students were immersed while learning about new tools for corporate web site analysis, a familiarity which enhanced their absorption and application of communication theory.

Findings and Discussion

The procedure adopted in the exercise was first to teach students key concepts relating to communication strategy and website design, namely, concept clusters, framing, multi-modality, and a content analysis based on the Ashridge Mission Model. Each concept, and its application, was discussed in class and students were also provided with a set of academic papers which they could refer to in order to extend their knowledge. These are discussed in more detail below. Having learnt how these four analytical frameworks are applied to the processing of data presented on web sites, students were then asked to form themselves into groups of three or four. Luft (1970) points out that learning in groups allows students to discover more about themselves through working with others. These groups were then asked to select the website of three business schools from the Gulf region and three from other parts of the world, that were similar to their own, that is, business schools that were associated with a university. The purpose of this choice was to generate awareness of communication strategy as determined by cultural context. The Gulf web sites would have points of cultural identity with their own school while the other sites exposed them to different approaches to communication in diverse socio-cultural, political, and economic, and environments. The students selected web-sites in the UAE and beyond for the Gulf region, e.g. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, etc. For those elsewhere in the world, the typical choices were the US, the UK, Canada and Australia.

To allow the students to apply their earlier learning on how information can be framed, how concept clusters are employed to develop an image identity or brand, how the navigational choices prompted by a web site carries semantic value, and how the mission statement can be analyzed, each group was asked to analyze their selected sites employing the following four analytical frameworks:

Identification of 'concept clusters,' that is, recurring concepts that are used to create the image and perception of an organization, for example, leadership, excellence, global perspective (Planken, Waller, Nickerson, 2007).

'Framing,' that is, how the business school taps into previous knowledge, background, mental filters, and experience of the audience to direct their recognition of the school in a particular way, e.g. the acknowledgement of Islamic cultural values on business school web-sites in the Gulf region. Students were required to classify the themes that the school presents to build its identity among its audience (Planken, Waller, Nickerson, 2007). They were also asked to consider how culture may affect our reading of the site (Hynes & Janson, 2007).

The 'navigational,' function of the website, that is, how the audience reads particular sections and then navigates via hyperlinks to other sources of information on the site. Students had been taught issues relating to the fact that a web site user is required to engage in two modes when accessing information from a site – reading and navigating (Askehave & Ellerup Nielsen, 2005). The students were made aware of how such hyperlinks not only allow the audience to access related or supplementary information, but also serve to establish connections within the mind of the audience and therefore have a meaningful, or semantic, function. That is, they help in constructing a particular meaning thus determining audience response to the school. They were asked to pay attention to the number of clicks it takes to reach a particular body of information since this is a crucial factor in establishing links of meaning.

Students were instructed to analyze the effectiveness of the organizational mission of each school using the Ashridge Mission Model, that is, identifying the purpose, strategy, values, and behavior encouraged of organizational members (Rogers, Gunesekera, & Yang, 2010).

The final part of the exercise required students to peruse their own business school's site in order to identify areas that needed improvement and then to make specific suggestions for the site's enhancement. This website had been looked at in class and students had agreed on its need for improvement. They were asked specifically to relate this to their analysis and assessment of the other six web-site that they had investigated. This part of the task established a context for problem-based learning which encourages cognitive learning, affective learning, and behavioral learning (Brownell & Jameson, 2004). In formulating the activity as the identified requirement to enhance their own school's web site, the student groups were transformed into learning communities with a specific problem to address. This provided the opportunity to transfer their learning of key communication theories to a practical domain and thus consolidate and expand on the applications of this theoretical knowledge (Kloppenburg & Baucus, 2004).

The value of posing the problem as the necessary improvement of their own business school's web site was that, as experiential learning proponents insist, learning is enriched when students are academically, socially, and emotionally involved in an exercise (Kolb, 1984). The students' loyalty to their school, their strong collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1994), and commitment to their country and its development (Erogul & McCrohan, 2008), stimulated a strong emotional connection with the exercise. Working in groups was also effective given the collectivist nature of the UAE culture. This multi-faceted connection with the problem strengthened their linking of theory with practice and would arguably encourage their application of the learning achieved in this context to other contexts rendering their undergraduate studies more coherent. This is an essential part of developing students as life-long learners, an essential skill if they are to adapt to the varied business environments they will enter after graduation (Goby & Lewis, 2000).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The student development of recommendations for the enhancement of their web site's provided the opportunity for their efforts to be recognized and validated. Throughout the project, the support of senior administration within the school was instrumental in achieving this, such that the students involved could see both the immediate application and value of their recommendations. Several of their recommendations were adopted by the school at a later date and their contribution therefore became part of the marketing of the school. As a learning exercise, students became more aware of organizational communication through their website analysis. They also had an opportunity to see how an integrated approach to theory and practice can be implemented in order to improve that communication in an effective and systematic way.

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