Good Practice Guide in Learning and Teaching

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Quality Unit
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

HELEN HIGSON

Once again this publication is produced to celebrate and promote good teaching and learning support and to offer encouragement to those imaginative and innovative staff who continue to wish to challenge students to learn to maximum effect. It is hoped that others will pick up some good ideas from the articles contained in this volume.

We have again changed our approach for this 2007/08 edition (our fifth) of the Aston Business School Good Practice Guide. As before, some contributions were selected from those identifying interesting best practice on their Annual Module Reflection Forms in 2006/2007. Brookes' contribution this year is directly from her annual reflection. Other contributors received HELM (Research Centre in Higher Education Learning and Management) small research grants in 2006/2007. Part of the conditions were for them to write an article for this publication. We have also been less tight on the length of the articles this year. Some contributions are, therefore, on the way to being journal articles. HELM will be working with these authors to help develop these for publication.

Looking back over the last five years it is brilliant to see how many different people have contributed over the years and, therefore, how much innovative learning and teaching work has been taking place in ABS over this time. In the first edition we were just pleased for people to write a few pages on their teaching. Now things have changed dramatically. The majority of the articles are grounded in empirical research (some funded by HELM small research grants) and Palmer's article was produced as part of the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching. Most encouraging of all, four of this year's articles have since been developed further and submitted to refereed journals. We await news of publication as we go to press.

It is not surprising that how to manage large groups still remains a central theme of the articles, ABS has a large and still growing student body. Essex and Simpson have looked at trying to encourage students to attend taught sessions, on the basis that there is a strong correlation between attendance and higher performance. Their findings are forming the platform of a further study currently being carried out in the Undergraduate Programme. A number of the other articles concentrate on trying to encourage students to engage with study in an innovative way. This is particularly obvious in Shaw's work. Everyone who has been around campus lately has had evidence that the students on Duncan's modules have clearly been inspired. I found myself, for example, playing golf in the student dining room as part of this initiative!

The articles by Jarzabkowski & Guilietti and Ho involved much larger surveys. This is another first for the Good Practice Guide and marks the first step on what will clearly be larger research efforts for these authors in this area. We look forward to the journal publications which will result from this work.

The last articles are the result of HELM's hosting of the national conference of the Higher Education Academy's Business, Management, Accounting and Finance (BMAF) Subject Centre Conference in May 2007. Belal and Foster have written about their impressions of the Conference and Andrews has included the paper she gave. The papers on employability and widening participation are the centre of HELM's current work.

In the second volume we mentioned the launch of the School's Research Centre in Higher Education Learning and Management (HELM). Since then HELM has stimulated a lot of activity across the

School (and University) particularly linking research and teaching. A list of the HELM seminars for 2007/2008 is listed as ***Appendix 1*** of this publication. Further details can be obtained from Catherine Foster (c.s.foster@aston.ac.uk), who coordinates the HELM seminars. We have also been working on a list of target journals to guide ABS staff who wish to publish in this area. These are included as ***Appendix 2*** of this publication.

May I thank the contributors for taking time out of their busy schedules to write the articles and to Julie Green, the Quality Manager, for putting the varying diverse approaches into a coherent and publishable form and for agreeing to fund the printing of this volume.

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DOES ATTENDANCE MATTER?

GARY SIMPSON AND ANNE ESSEX

What we did?

Aston Business School Undergraduate Office undertook a series of pilot exercises to monitor student attendance. The aim of the pilots was to gain an understanding of the issues and resources required to monitor attendance and to make recommendations for monitoring the attendance of first year students in October 2007. With the help of academic staff attendance information was obtained from a variety of modules including Business Decision Analysis (BDA), English Language Support Classes, Value Based Strategy, European Computer driving License (ECDL) and the Business Game. Business Decision Analysis was used as the main case study. Data was collected by tutors in lectures and/or tutorials. For speed, students were asked to add their candidate number to lists sent round the class. Candidate number, lecture/tutorial and time were then entered into a database; BDA students who missed lectures in both weeks one and two were sent a standard poor attendance letter used regularly by the Undergraduate Office. Letters were sent to their term time addresses.

What happened?

The letter asked students to contact a named person to explain their absence. Fifty nine percent of these students responded by e-mail, in person or by telephone. The data collected in weeks three and four appears to show that all students who received a letter attended lectures in week three and/or four, but due to the large number of students in each lecture it is impossible to tell whether or not some were signed in by other students.

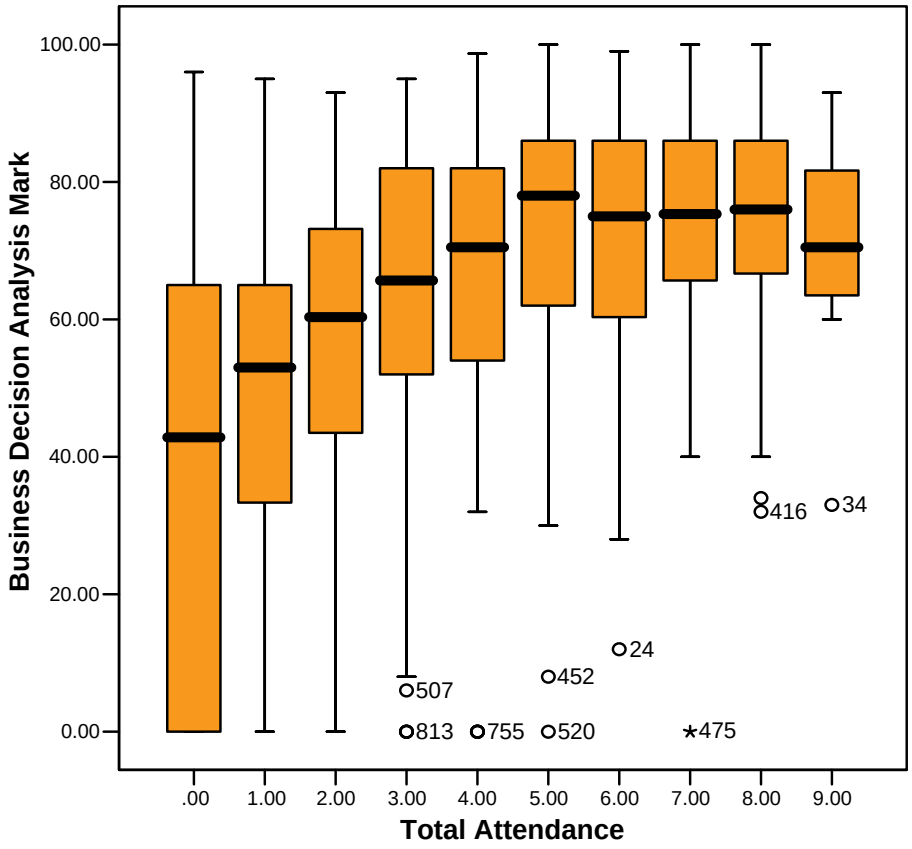
What we found?

We examined the effect of attendance on marks achieved in the module using a multiple regression methodology (all variables significant at the 5% level of significance).

Dependent Variable: Business Decision Analysis Mark	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	**95% Confidence Interval for B**	
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**			**Lower Bound**	**Upper Bound**
(Constant)	23.832	2.277		10.468	.000	19.363	28.301
Qualitative Techniques Mark	.535	.031	.513	17.317	.000	.475	.596
Number of attendances at correct lecture	2.387	.450	.197	5.304	.000	1.503	3.270
Number of attendances at other lecture	3.077	.606	.183	5.080	.000	1.888	4.266
Number of tutorial attendances	2.545	.728	.127	3.496	.000	1.116	3.974
Number of lectures recorded attending repeatedly	-4.613	2.233	-.069	-2.065	.039	-8.997	-.228
Number tutorials recorded attending repeatedly	-6.757	2.755	-.072	-2.453	.014	-12.165	-1.349

Firstly, we noted that prior attainment is important; the mark that the student achieved in the preceding Quantitative Techniques module is the most important single factor and on its own explains about 30% of the variation in marks achieved.

Both lecture and tutorial attendance has significant effects on the mark attained in the module, this is shown graphically in the box plot below which shows the distribution of marks against the number of lectures and tutorials attended in total (out of a possible nine; three tutorials and six lectures) during the first six weeks of the module. Note that this gives some indication that the effect may not be linear as performance is flat for attendance at five or more. This may be in part because of the unreliability of the tutorial absence data, with tutorial sheets for some tutorial groups being lost or tutorials being cancelled because of staff illness or interrupted by fire alarms! It is also likely, however, to reflect the high attendance of the "enthusiastic strugglers", those students who know they have difficulties with a subject and take the advice to attend everything.



For the current sample, there is no evidence that attendance at the correctly timetabled lecture rather than the alternative lecture has a differential effect on performance (the confidence intervals for these coefficients overlap). Many students varied which lecture they attended and, if anything, attendance in the "wrong" lecture appears to be an indicator of a better student, perhaps indicating enthusiasm or diligence in seeking to attend at an alternative time if unable to at the correct time.

Being recorded as present more than once, however, for the same lecture or tutorial appears to be an indicator of poor performance. The wide confidence intervals here are an indication of the small number of students where this occurred. It is likely that these students may have not attended at all and may well have been signed in by several friends independently.

Below is shown a regression that simplifies the above factors regarding attendance and further investigates the behaviours displayed by the students. Again, only variables that are significant at the 5% level are shown and prior ability is included using the students mark in BDA. We now consider,

however, the total number of lecture and tutorial events attended (net of any repeated attendances) and the number of times attendance was recorded repeatedly, and three additional binary variables indicating if a student adopted a particular behaviour.

Dependent Variable: Business Decision Analysis Mark	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	26.520	2.369		11.194	.000
Mark in Quantitative Techniques	.522	.031	.500	17.067	.000
Total Attendance (net)	1.964	.311	.203	6.305	.000
Number of Repeated attendances recorded	-6.621	2.714	-.071	-2.440	.015
Varied which lecture time attended	2.924	1.447	.059	2.021	.044
Failed to respond to warning	-9.420	2.713	-.107	-3.472	.001
Claimed attendance at least one of missed lectures	6.909	3.263	.062	2.117	.035

It can be seen that the 50 students who received a warning about attendance but failed to make contact to explain their lack of attendance attained significantly lower marks, attaining marks nearly ten percentage points lower in the module than those students with similarly low attendance but who did respond. Whereas those 30 students who claimed that they had attended at least one of the two lectures, but for various reasons this had not been recorded, are probably to be believed.

Also, as previously noted, students who varied which time they attended the lecture appear to do better than other students with the same overall level of attendance but who always attend at the same time. This behaviour is less likely to be displayed in future as students now receive individual timetables and so will be generally unaware of any alternative time for the lecture.

Note that the students who where warned and did respond are not significantly different to the other students with the same level of attendance and prior ability. This is not, however, the same as the warning having no value as we do not know the extent to which the warning caused students to attend. In order to assess the value of a warning as an intervention in an individual students' behaviour we would need to have a control group of students who we did not warn even when their attendance was poor. This raises both practical and ethical problems and would still not address the issue of the extent to which monitoring attendance itself encourages students to attend.

What were the practical issues?

During the project, we encountered a number of issues which should be taken into account when monitoring attendance:

- Circulating attendance sheets in large lecture theatres is quicker if sheets are distributed at the start of the lecture and collected at the end.
- Occasionally attendance sheets went missing. Circulating multiple copies reduces the amount of information lost on any single sheet.
- Students who arrive late need reminding to complete an attendance sheet.
- Some students sign in for absent friends.
- Collecting candidate numbers allows speedy data entry, whilst using names can be problematic and slow.
- Some students incorrectly guess their candidate number or write their name illegibly and it takes time to attempt to match these with known students on a module.

- Once two absences are noted letters should be sent quickly to encourage students to attend the next session.
- Attendance monitoring and dealing with responses is time consuming so it is important to target monitoring where it is most effective.
- Staff resources need to be available to deal with at risk students identified during the attendance monitoring process.

What else is known?

There has been previous work investigating the effect of attendance on academic performance. Some of the most notable papers are:

- Paisey C & Paisey NJ (2004) who looked at the reasons and effects of non-attendance in a final year accounting module at a Scottish university and find that paid work is the most common reason for non-attendance. It found that attendance was correlated with performance but did not take into account prior attainment. It also found that the time of day had an influence on attendance.

- In an American context Cohn, E & Johnson, E (2006) did take prior ability into account when considering an Economics class, and found that attendance did have a significant effect on performance even after taking into account ability and that very low attendance was particularly important. They also noted that poor results in class tests did not reduce future attendance after overall ability was taken into account.

- Lin, Tsui-Fang & Chen, Jennjou (2006) attempted to disentangle the affects of student motivation and attendance while correcting for prior attainment for a third year economics class and found that while the effects of attendance were overestimated if motivation was not considered it was still a significant factor.

What next?

It is clear that students who regularly attend lectures are less likely to fail modules than those who either do not attend or attend sporadically. Good practice would be to encourage students to attend in their first year, as this should enforce the habit in subsequent years. In the year starting October 2007 it is intended to:

- Monitor first year students' attendance at lectures in weeks two and three of term and send e-mails to students who fail to attend both weeks.
- Make information on failure/pass rates against attendance available to students in fresher's' week.
- Make new students aware that attendance letters will be kept on file and that the information they contain may be used when writing references.
- Remind new students of how little class contact time they have each week and the hours within which they are expected to be available to study on campus.

References

Paisey, Catriona and Paisey, Nicholas J. (2004) 'Student attendance in an accounting module - reasons for non-attendance and the effect on academic performance at a Scottish University', Accounting Education, 13:4, 39 – 53

Cohn, Elchanan and Johnson, Eric (2006) 'Class Attendance and Performance in Principles of Economics', Education Economics, 14:2, 211 - 233

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BN1106/BN1113: Business Decision Analysis and other modules

VIDEO NASTIES: EMERGING EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

ODETTE HUTCHINSON

Introduction

The virtual learning environment has become an integral component in the delivery of many higher education courses. This development has been instrumental in augmenting several innovative educational technologies. This contribution to the Good Practice Guide sketches my experiences, introducing video and MP3 lectures to final year undergraduate students studying Business Ethics.

A Primer

I first encountered video lecturing three years ago whilst undertaking my PgCert Ed. I was impressed, but as a reasonably inexperienced lecturer I could think of few things more ill advised than recording my inexperience for all to enjoy. The concept of video lecturing remained a fanciful notion until last year when Business Ethics was regrettably scheduled for the 6-8pm slot on a Tuesday evening.

It is not unfair to suggest that many lecturers experience a steady decline in attendance as the module and academic year unfolds[i]. If your dynamic and exciting module is scheduled for the 'graveyard shift' a furrowed brow and feelings of angst are perhaps not unjustified. Couple this with several other issues, which find resonance I am sure with many lecturers:

1. A proportion of the substantive material for the module is dry and technical. The students appear overly anxious about these subjects during the lead up to the examination; revision sessions tend to be devoted entirely to these subjects.
2. Office hours are increasingly dedicated to international students, voicing similar concerns about the pace of the module and understandable uncertainty with the terminology.
3. Student absence from key sessions on coursework preparation and examination preparation; the endless and repetitious conversations and emails attempting to re-deliver core information.
4. A belief that my module should be participatory in nature. Institutional squeeze, increasing lecture group sizes and limited resources challenge us all to juggle the delivery of substantive material with more effective pedagogical methods.

The Lecture Schedule

Week	Subject	Mode of Delivery
14	Introduction to the course	Real Time Lecture
15	Philosophical Ethics	Real Time Lecture
16	Applied Ethics	Debate & Guest Lecture
17	Corporate Criminal Liability	Video Lecture
18	CSR	Video Lecture
19	Ethical Decision Making	CSR Workshop and Ethical Decision Making Game
20	NHS Rationing	Guest Lecture Operations Director and Strategic Director Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Rationing Lecture MP3
21	Advertising	Real Time Lecture
22	Employees	Video Lecture
23	Stakeholders	Employee Privacy / ?Nestle Problem Based Learning
24	Government	Real Time Lecture and Guest Lecture Gisela Stuart MP
25	Revision	MP3 Lecture (available from week 22) and Contact Time

The Technology

With considerable support from Steve Ellis in Aston Media and Gillian Bishop in Information Systems Aston (ISA), who kindly uploaded the final lectures onto Blackboard™, I recorded several core lectures using PowerPoint Producer. This software is a free download, which enables users to film themselves delivering a PowerPoint presentation using a standard digital camcorder or a web cam.

The mode of delivery for this module differed from approaches adopted by colleagues who have created MP3 lectures; the video lectures were not available in addition to the 'real time' lecture, they were used as an alternative to 'real time' delivery. My objective was to weave the video lectures into the module in order to liberate the lecture slot. This would in turn enable me to schedule interactive sessions for the students to actually apply their emerging knowledge, a more effective use of contact time and one which I believe better equips our students to problem solve and risk manage.

Positive Aspects

I certainly feel that I received fewer questions from the students seeking clarification on what was presented in the video lectures, fewer than I would normally encounter had the lectures been delivered in 'real time'.

This approach increased student autonomy and encouraged the students to take ownership for their learning experience. Students were given independence to learn at a comfortable speed. This autonomy was curtailed somewhat by the embedded markers within the course, which required the students to have acquired a certain level of knowledge for contact sessions. This was intended to

mitigate the likelihood of students leaving it all to the last minute.

International students and students with disabilities particularly, seemed to benefit from the ability to pause the lecture and repeat the necessary part. This is an anecdotal indication from one or two students within the group.

Attendance for the contact sessions, despite the timing of the lecture, was very close to 100% for each session, with the exception of the final revision session. (I had uploaded an MP3 revision lecture prior to the final session to allow students to commence their revision early).

The lectures were uploaded in several formats: MP3 format to allow students to download the audio and learn/revise whilst on the move; pure video format with no accompanying PowerPoint presentation; and finally PowerPoint Producer format.

Students expressed a preference for the MP3 format due largely to its inherent portability, but most students felt that the lecture in the first instance should be viewed with the PP presentation.

A comments section on the module feedback form highlighted the following positive responses:

- "You never know when you need to clarify something and could do with hearing the lecture again; the lectures were really helpful for revising from"
- "I don't always get things the first time, so this was particularly helpful for the complex stuff like law"
- "I had an interview one week, but because that week was delivered by video lecture I didn't miss anything and didn't have to rely on my friends' illegible notes!"
- "I was able to go at my own speed"
- "The video lectures made up for the timing of the lecture slot".

Negative Aspects

As this mode of delivery did not involve recording a live lecture, rather creating a lecture for delivery by video, there was a good deal of additional and perhaps unexpected preparation needed to achieve this. In the first place I felt that some of the material needed to be modified and I was conscious that I was frequently omitting controversial material. My feeling was that this was suitable in a live learning environment but not suitable for the virtual learning environment. I was mindful of the fact that my lecturing style was perhaps as a direct result less engaging and certainly less entertaining.

A very small group of students acknowledged that the facility to view the lectures at their leisure resulted in their leaving this task to the end of the course. As a result their participation in group activities was limited. Of course there will always be a number of students who leave things to the last moment; whether this mode of delivery encourages this tendency is unclear.

This mode of delivery clearly does not enable two way participation and students were not able to ask questions during video lectures, however, the use of online forums allowed me to address common issues in contact sessions and to tailor those contact sessions accordingly.

This mode of delivery was founded on the premise that the students 'possessed the necessary IT skills to access and utilize this material'. A handful of comments from the students at the end of the module suggested that students attending this module would have benefited from more detailed information on how to make effective use of this technology.

The 2007/2008 session will include a hands-on session in the computer room demonstrating how to access these lectures, how to download them onto MP3 players and how to burn the files onto CDs.

This I envisage will enable students in the utilisation of the material and arguably their retention of lecture material.

The PowerPoint producer format is only available to PC users and at least two students in the group were Mac users and could not access the lectures in this format. They were however able to download the MP3 files and print off a copy of the slides. This issue can be overcome by using a software package which outputs into flash format such as Captivate ™ or Articulate™.

Negative responses included:

- "The download time was awful…it took ages"
- "On one of the lectures I couldn't navigate through the slides properly.
- "I am awful with IT"

Bonus Material

In previous years a significant proportion of the contact time with students during lectures had been 'high-jacked' by individuals wishing to address and re-address what I call foundational knowledge, for example how to research coursework; how to reference coursework, writing from a committed standpoint and so forth.

Using this medium I pre-recorded several short MP3 lectures, which addressed these issues, entitled:

- Research and preparation for ethics coursework
- Essay writing for ethics
- Exam revision and preparation
- How to debate.

I received only a handful of emails from students following the posting of these lectures seeking further clarification on foundational knowledge and a significant proportion of these were followed up by a brief email stating 'I have now listened the lecture and I understand….sorry!'

The core lectures were recorded and edited by Aston Media and as a consequence I experienced no difficulties producing the video lectures. I did however record the foundational knowledge lectures myself in MP3 format. Some of these lectures did need editing which I found to be a time consuming and laborious task, ultimately relenting and allowing imperfections in delivery to remain, largely out of my own frustration.

Feedback

A short anonymous survey was distributed at the end of the module to gather feedback. When asked whether they felt that the video lectures had complemented the module: 29% strongly agreed; 57% agreed, only 14% were neutral. No students disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

When asked whether they felt that the video lectures and MP3 lectures were useful for revision purposes: 50% of the students surveyed agreed strongly and 47% agreed. Only 3% of the students surveyed disagreed with this statement.

Finally, at the end of the module: 45% of the students had watched each lecture at least once; 36% of those surveyed had watched the lectures twice and 19% of the students had watched the lectures

three or more times. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the average number of downloads by students would have increased by the end of the revision period.

Evaluation

This mode of delivery was based on two primary assumptions, firstly that students are reasonably competent with IT and secondly that students actually want lectures delivered in this format and will embrace the technology when offered the opportunity.

Despite the very positive feedback and comments received about this module and the mode of delivery, it is clear that the use of MP3 lectures and Video lectures as an educational device needs more rigorous pedagogical research. Few studies exist of the students' learning experiences of the newest technologies, what literature does exist is limited to small projects and in a similar vein to this contribution consists predominantly of positive accounts of informal user satisfaction. As emerging educational technologies, video lectures and MP3 lectures have very relevant application in higher education, but they must be integrated carefully into curriculum design.

Future Directions

The existing lectures for this module will be updated and transferred into Articulate™ which outputs into Flash™ and will enable PC and Mac users alike to view the same content.

References

Crisp, G (2006) *First Year expectations: a report on the outcomes of the University wide survey, Keynote presented at ERGA 2006 Conference, The University of Adelaide 2006*

Littlejohn, A (2004) *The Effectiveness of resources, tools and support services used by practitioners in designing and delivering e-learning activities.*

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THE APPRENTICE: MAKE AS MUCH MONEY AS YOU CAN IN 24 HOURS

DUNCAN SHAW

Introduction

On the face of it, The Apprentice coursework requires students to make as much money in 24 hours as possible (a somewhat complex problem). Behind this lies an explicit agenda of focusing the students on using the methods taught in class to do something that is personally meaningful to them, thus enriching their experience of the methods with their enthusiasm for the coursework.

During lectures, students are taught a method called Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) (Checkland and Scholes, 1999) which helps groups to analyse a complex problem and establish a collective preference of how to address the problem. The Apprentice requires them to use this methodology to understand their motivations, agree objectives, define actions that will meet these objectives, through which they build commitment to implementing these actions. Every tutorial is devoted to using a technique from the SSM to progress their analyses of the problem they face, for example:

1. Develop a rich picture of the values which underpins your approach to The Apprentice.
2. Use root definitions to analyse different perspectives of what you are trying to accomplish.
3. Construct conceptual models of what activities you will need to do before/on the day of The Apprentice.

Each group is provided with £50 reimbursable seed-funding which helps them to get started with their activities. The coursework is assessed through a group viva which forces them to reflect in-depth on their application of the analytical methods.

This task has been run in Term one with nine groups of final year undergraduates in 2006/7. In 2007/8 it is being run with 12 groups of final year undergraduates as part of a Effective Management Consultancy module and two groups of postgraduates as part of a Structuring Complex Problems module. A group comprises six people – large enough to allow two groups of 3 people to work independently and more safely during The Apprentice day.

Objectives of the coursework

- To gain practical experience of using Soft Systems Methodology to build a plan which the students are desperate to implement.
- To reflect on the experience of using the methodology, its strengths and limitations.
- To gain practical experience of implementing a plan and realising that even great plans can fall apart very quickly and need active management to recover them.

Information sheet given to students

The task

- To use methods taught in the module to design a plan to make as much money as possible in a single 24 hour block.

How

- Use Soft Systems Methodology to structure your group into a focused, coordinated team of complementary workers.
- Design a well thought out plan of action that has the commitment of key actors.
- Groups should include six people.
- You can self-select your group if you wish.

The Rules

- A 24 hour period in a single block i.e. NOT 3 hours spread over 8 different days. Your group can start at any time you wish, finishing 24 hours later e.g. start at 8:15am on Monday thus finishing at 8:15am on Tuesday.
- All members of a single group need to play this on the same day, but you can select any day of the week and any location. Different groups may adopt for different days to other groups that are playing the game.
- You are allowed to conduct four actions in advance:
  1. Apply to the local council for a street trader's license and pay for this license, if it is necessary to implement your plan. This is only so that you do not break any laws.
  2. One calendar week before your activity day, you can advertise your events (if appropriate).
  3. One calendar week before your activity day, you can book rooms and/or get authority to conduct your activities at the venue.
  4. Three days before your activity day, you can blag anything for free, provided you do not intend to simply sell those free items. You can request permission from Duncan for special approval to conduct other critical activities up to 1 week in advance.

     Other than these specific actions, plans for action should be designed but no practical preparations can be made. For example, you can plan to buy products to sell but you should not have bought any products nor even have a supplier waiting for you nor a contract for a particular price or number of products.
- On the day you are allowed to leave your residence with what you would usually take to an Aston University lecture (plus a table, oven and cookware) e.g. you are not allowed to take a printer with you nor a play-station as you would not normally take these to an Aston University lecture. If you need anything with which to make money, then you must blag it in advance or buy it ON THE DAY.
- You must prioritise personal safety. This is a piece of coursework and you should never put yourself, or others, in situations of unusual risk.
- You are to act ethically with respect for the public and not bring the university into disrepute.
- Each group must complete a 'Risk and Ethics Awareness' form and each group member must sign the form. Failure to submit a suitable ethics form will disqualify you from the game, prevent you from implementing your plan, and mean that you do not get seed-funding.

Funding issues

- Your group can do anything it wants with the profits from the exercise but must return the seed funding. [Note: This is to force groups to negotiate their financial priorities.]
- You will be given £50 of seed funding on receipt of a well-articulated ethics form. You are not allowed to fund any activities from your own money, but you can fund your activities from the profits made during the exercise or from donations from any source.

The Assessment

- You will take part in a group viva at the start of Term 2. This will account for 20% of the module's assessment.
- The exam will require you to have implemented your plan. You will need to have reflected on the methods used, and your performance on the day (using the methods). The exam will not require you to simply tell us what you did on the day.

The above guidelines are meant to shape the spirit of the task but also create many ambiguities and thus make the group's task more complex when deciding what lies within the spirit of the task. Multiple interpretations lead to conflict, requiring intense negotiation to resolve them.

The plan

Before the seed-funding is given to the students they have to prove that they have considered issues of risk and ethics. Personal safety is paramount and the students often need to be reminded of this especially when they propose ideas like going to a known drug area of a city to sell glow-sticks or Santa hats. They are much more concerned with not exploiting drunk people or grannies or bringing the university into disrepute, but still it is useful to ensure this is the case across all students. Consequently it has been necessary to ask questions which demand a thoughtful response ....

Risk Awareness

1. Briefly, what are the main tasks you will complete during The Apprentice?
2. What are the main risks you might encounter?
3. How will you ensure that you do not put yourselves in situations of unusual risk?

Ethical Awareness

4. What does the term 'ethical practice' mean to you in this context?
5. Outline the main ethical issues with which you might be confronted during your project.
6. Comment on how you will tackle the three most likely ethical issues identified above.
7. What will you/your group do if you witness unethical practice in this module?

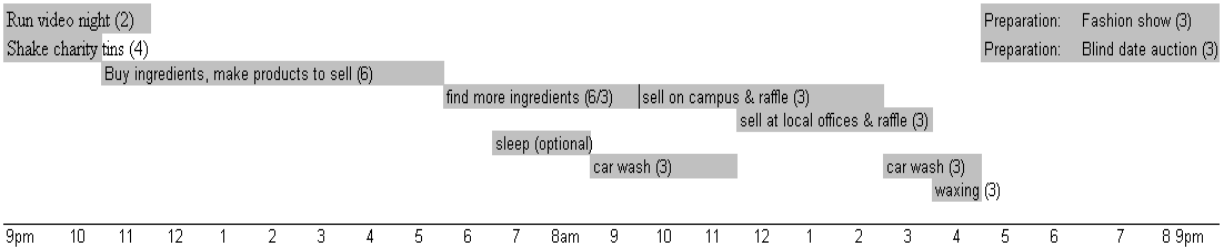
The importance of safety and the reputation of Aston are reinforced by Aston's Head of Security who meets with all groups before they conduct activities on campus. During a short meeting they discuss the potential risks of the activities and the importance of being cautious, remaining safe, being aware of undesirables, and contacting Security if they get into difficulty.

A typical plan

In terms of what a typical plan comprises, normally they start off very modest and unaware of the need to break away from thinking of this as a conventional piece of coursework and thinking creatively about what can be done in a day e.g. modest plans of two small activities covering 8 hours of a day. They usually flourish their modest ideas into ambitious plans once it is pointed out that sleep is optional, that they may never get another opportunity to do this type of thing again, and if they lose the £50 then it will not effect their grade if they can demonstrate advanced learning.

Some activities are generally undertaken a week in advance: contact charity and get promotional items; book room/location; advertise events; find out where we can buy ingredients and the cost; blag free stuff from local shops. The aim is purposefully to limit this so that they do not spend a disproportionate amount of time on this coursework – even these rules are relaxed from last year due to student requests to allow more preparation.

On the day, a typical plan might involve making money in the late evening before to be able to buy enough ingredients to make product during the night. Several coordinated and/or unrelated events are often undertaken the next day, often culminating in a main event that evening, for example (where the number in parenthesis is the number of people running the activity):



Aston Business School

Students' learning

The aim is for students to use the methods taught in class to develop a robust plan to which all the group are keen to implement. Instead of working on a hypothetical problem or published case study of my choice, from Week 1 they are focused on developing a plan that they are actually going to implement. This brings reality into the classroom that requires them to negotiate with classmates on what is feasible in this coursework and what they are personally willing to do/sacrifice in pursue of doing this task well.

Equally as important, they get first-hand experience of their best laid plans crumbling around them on the day as, for example: they break five of their six sewing needles only one hour (11pm) into an 8 hour wheetie manufacturing activity; when their confirmed beauty specialist cancels on the day of their event and they have already sold tickets; when they only have six guys and one lass turning up to a speed-dating event; when they run out of Krispy Creme donuts 2 hours into a 5 hour stint; when the linchpin Snowman cannot fit into his costume; when they have to compete with less-than-patient established stall-holders; when Santa rips his trousers!

Also relevant to their future careers, students get practice of direct selling – a small point, but a useful one for many students who have not had experience of persuading strangers to part with money as they may have to do in a client/consultant relationship. It also provides them with amusing and interesting interview material.

Reflections

This is a fun activity for the students and the lecturer. It is critical that the fun activities do not dominate the tutorials/coursework and that the methods of analyses and the negotiation with classmates always take priority. This is especially important in the viva when the group need to defend their analyses and reflect on the methods used, rather than simply tell you about the fun they had and recite amusing stories.

Celebrating the successes is important as well – as one of the things taught in class is to communicate successes to encourage others. For this, I normally donate money from the seed-funding to each group on delivery of photos of their tasks. They know that these photos will then be integrated into the Term 2 lecture slides as a way of groups finding out what others have done. For the undergraduate class this also aims to build into the Term 2 coursework which is run with the same groups.

Students seem to enjoy The Apprentice and find it a useful experience. Two students have received offers of job interviews from people who they were trying to blag free things off! Others have 'used contacts they never realised they had'. One of last year's students has mobilized Accenture and they have volunteered to come and support the assessment of the students. They are also due to sponsor a prize for the best performance.

I feel that it is partially my fault, however, that staff are now annually accosted by students to buy hand-made (student-made) mincepies, wheeties, Christmas cards and cakes or buy some marked-up store bought item that I have been unable to persuade them against trying to flog 'Derek Trotter' style. It is definitely the students' faults for: volunteering for a sponsored chest wax; auctioning themselves to the higher blind date bidder; to be a Santa (or a little helper) having their photo taken in certain poses with the students at Aston's 'School Days' Party; trying to wash cars in freezing conditions; being dressed for skiing in the car parks of Birmingham Children's Hospital or standing outside the same venue selling balloons; buying a lollypop for 5p and selling it for £1 in a nightclub (with brushes and various other items); growing a beard from Day 1 of the module and bleaching it on the day of The Apprentice to authenticate his Santa impersonation. A few of the inventive ideas from this year's cohort include: getting sponsorship for a world-record attempt at fitting people inside a telephone box;

gaining media exposure through their charity and personal contacts for the event they are running; selling balloons in the Bull Ring with email addresses on them to see which travels the furthest in 1 month; trying to blag items off a supplier in India; blagging free restaurant reservations in fifteen city centre establishments with the promise of free promotion in office blocks; trying to get a local MP to open their event. Publicity and marketing is important for their activities and many groups are featured in campus publications. This year, two alert groups have appreciated their bargaining position and have negotiated to sell me (for a decent sum) a mention of ABS in their local newspaper article (one group was twice mentioned in the same edition of the Birmingham Post newspaper). Another group had a two minute interview on a local radio station's morning drivetime, and a second group sold me their radio 'shout out' which advertised drumming activities.

Next year I hope to encourage a realistic world-record attempt with a substantial financial incentive, and I will also put much clearer emphasis on what donations I will give to groups who secure local and national publicity (especially encouraging TV coverage). These are all complex problems which the group can use SSM to try to generate a plan to solve. Some of the wildest ideas will probably be implemented quite successfully and staff will surely see these around campus in the lead up to Christmas. In the first year (2006-7) of running this coursework around 55 students made £2,012, a fabulous effort and in no way overshadowed by one group from this year (2007-8) that has collected £1,902 by getting Beaverbrookes to match what they made on the day and by eleven groups (so far this year) who have collectively made £8,140..

It is easy to lose the students' focus, but, the learning here is around becoming proficient in SSM, being able to critique the approach and gaining experience having to save plans which are clearly not working as anticipated.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks must go to Ian Harrison and Aston's Security staff who support the coursework through screening the plans and by providing their thoughtful attention to the safety of the students in the dead of night and as they work on the day. Also, many thanks go to Dr Helen Higson who patiently fields students' many requests (and who was photographed playing golf in the students' dining room – a copy of that photo cost me an additional donation).

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Example used with final year undergraduate and postgraduate students
BN3370: Effective Management Consultancy
BNM703: Structuring Complex Problems

MEASURING PERFORMANCE OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT SYSTEM

WILLIAM HO

Introduction

Virtual learning environments (VLE) have become a prevalent tool in higher education institutions for supporting and facilitating both teaching and learning. They form a platform for teachers and learners to access lecture notes, read announcements, communicate with others, complete assignments, participate in discussions and group work, and take quizzes and tests. Nowadays, there are plenty of commercial VLE systems available in the market. Each of them possesses its own characteristics and features. To the best of our knowledge, there is no study that measures the performance of these systems, and thus decision makers may have difficulties in selecting the appropriate system for their institutions. This article develops an integrated multiple criteria decision making approach, which combines the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) and quality function deployment (QFD), to evaluate and select the best system. The evaluating criteria are derived from the requirements of those who use the system. A case study is provided to demonstrate how the integrated approach works.

General Background of VLE

A VLE is a software system designed to support teaching and learning. VLEs generally operate on the World Wide Web, and, therefore, they can be accessed both on and off-campus, provided that the users are registered and can access the Internet. This overcomes the limitation of traditional face-to-face teaching, and ensures that learning is neither confined to geographical location nor time. VLEs are becoming more popular and embedded in many higher education institutions around the world. It is not only because of their flexibility, but also they provide a wide variety of tools or facilities, including content delivery, assessment, communications, and so on (Chin, 2004):

- Content delivery – documents, including module syllabuses and timetables, lecture notes, tutorial exercises or other assessment materials, past examination papers, reading lists, and so on, can be accessed by students at any time. This can be a useful aid for teaching and learning;
- Assessment – various assessment methods, including multiple choice questions, true or false answers, fill in the blank, ordering or matching questions, calculation, and short-answer questions, can be uploaded for self-assessment;
- Emailing support – it is a prevalent form of communication for every university stakeholder;
- Discussion boards/forums – in which students and lecturers can post a message to express their thoughts, respond to others, and collaborate with others virtually;
- Digital dropbox – it allows students and lecturer to exchange files, such as submission of course work and reports to module leaders;
- Module marks/grades viewing – students can check their marks or grades of assignments, reports, tests, and exams;
- Announcement – it can be regarded as an online notice board. Administrative staff and faculty members can post the updated information on it.

VLE in Higher Education

There are various commercial VLE products or systems available, such as Blackboard™, COSE™, Learnwise™, and WebCT™. Each of them possesses its own characteristics, and is used in different higher education institutions. A question is, therefore, raised "Which VLE system performs the best?" The advantage of selecting an optimal VLE system is to facilitate faculty members in the management of module contents and also enhance the learning experience of students through the assessment, evaluation, and communication tools. Therefore, an evaluation and selection of VLE systems is a crucial strategic decision for a higher education institution.

To assist the VLE system evaluation or answer the above query, this chapter develops an integrated multiple criteria decision making approach that combines the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) and quality function deployment (QFD). In the approach, multiple evaluating criteria are derived from the requirements of higher education stakeholders using QFD. The importance of evaluating criteria is prioritized with respect to the degree of achieving the stakeholder requirements using AHP. Based on the ranked criteria, alternative VLE systems are evaluated and compared with each other using AHP again to make an optimal selection.

Analytic Hierarchy Process

AHP comprises three main operations, including hierarchy construction, priority analysis, and consistency verification. First, the decision makers need to break down complex multiple criteria decision problems into its component parts of which all possible attributes are arranged into multiple hierarchical levels. The goal, criteria, and alternatives of each criterion are in the first, second, and third levels, respectively.

Second, the decision makers have to compare each cluster in the same level in a pairwise fashion based on their own experience and knowledge. Every two criteria in the second level are compared at each time with respect to the goal while every two alternatives in the third level are compared at a time with respect to their corresponding criteria. A judgment is made about which is more important and by how much. Subjective judgment can be depicted using quantitative scales which are usually divided into 9-point scale to enhance the transparency of decision making process. Based on the pairwise matrix, the priority of each element in terms of its contribution to the overall goal can be calculated. This process is referred to as synthesization.

Because the comparisons are carried out through personal or subjective judgments, some degree of inconsistency may occur. To guarantee that the judgments are consistent, the final operation called consistency verification, which is regarded as one of the greatest advantages of AHP, is incorporated to measure the degree of consistency among the pairwise comparisons by computing the consistency ratio. If it is found that the ratio exceeds the limit (0.10), the decision makers should review and revise the pairwise comparisons. Details of AHP can be found in Ho et al. (2006; 2007).

Quality Function Deployment

QFD is a structured product (or service) development approach. It is so-called because it emphasizes understanding and achieving customer requirements. In addition, this approach uses interfunctional team from marketing, design engineering, and manufacturing for developing the product or service. One of the tools of QFD is the HOQ, which is a matrix for relating the customer requirements with the product.

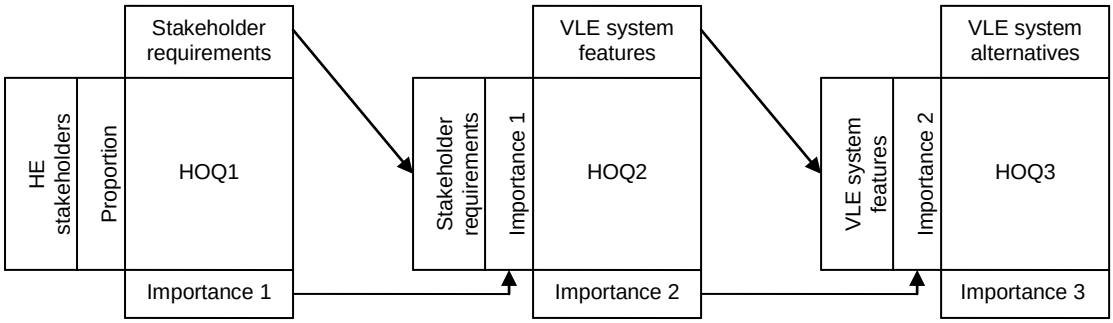
There are several steps in constructing a generic HOQ. First of all, the interfunctional QFD team develops a list of customer requirements for the product. These requirements are then ranked in order

of importance according to the customer perspectives. The third step is to identify specific product characteristics, features, or attributes that will satisfy the customer requirements. After that, the team relates customer requirements to product attributes, that is, determining the relationship weightings. Next, the team determines the relationships among the product attributes. This step aims at finding any conflicting product attributes, and then making a trade-off decision to overcome the conflicts. Based on the importance ratings of customer requirements and the relationship weightings, the importance ratings of the product attributes are computed. This step aims at determining the order of importance for the product attributes, and deciding which set of attributes should be given priority in product development. Following that, the performance of competing products is evaluated with respect to the customer requirements. Finally, the team determines the optimal settings for the product attributes, and compares the company performance with the competitor performance with respect to the optimal attribute settings.

Proposed Methodology

The proposed methodology, integrating AHP and QFD, for benchmarking VLE system alternatives is illustrated below, the approach comprises a series of three houses, including HOQ1 (linking higher education stakeholders with their requirements), HOQ2 (linking stakeholder requirements with VLE system features), and HOQ3 (linking VLE system features with VLE system alternatives). Note that AHP is used to determine the relationship weightings in each of these three HOQs.

Proposed methodology for VLE system benchmarking



A Case Study

At Aston University, Blackboard™ is used by Aston Business School and the School of Languages and Social Sciences, whereas WebCT™ is used by the School of Engineering and School of Life and Health Sciences. Both VLE systems are web-based e-learning platforms which full-time, part-time and distance learners can access course materials on or off-campus anytime and any place. With the VLE systems, staff and students can do a range of useful activities that facilitate their teaching and learning, such as access lecture notes, read announcements, communicate with others, complete assignments, participate in discussions and group work, and take quizzes and tests.

To evaluate and select the best VLE system, the higher education stakeholders who use the VLE systems are identified first. In this case, there are four categories: administrative staff, faculty members, postgraduates, and undergraduates. Then, the proportion of each stakeholder category is determined. In the third step, the stakeholder requirements are identified. According to the results of questionnaire, there are nine requirements. To calculate the importance of stakeholder requirements, the relationship weightings between the stakeholders and their requirements are determined using AHP. The structure of HOQ1 is shown in ***Table 1***.

After completing HOQ1, both stakeholder requirements and their corresponding importance ratings are copied into HOQ2 as shown in ***Table 2***, which links the requirements and VLE system features. In this case, there are 28 features that the VLE system should possess in order to achieve the stakeholder requirements. Similar to HOQ1, AHP is used to calculate the relationship weightings between the stakeholder requirements and VLE system features in HOQ2. Certainly, the size of each pairwise comparison matrix is varied, and is dependent on the number of system features that will achieve a particular requirement. For example, there are four elements in the matrix for the requirement "upload/download documents and course work efficiently". They are "system speed", "multiple file uploads", "digital dropbox", and "continuous product evolution". All these four system features or elements are relevant to the requirement. After determining all relationship weightings between the nine stakeholder requirements and their related system features, the importance ratings of each feature can be computed in HOQ2.

In the last stage, both system features and their corresponding importance ratings are copied into HOQ3 as shown in ***Table 3***. The system alternatives can be evaluated with respect to the 28 system features, which are regarded as evaluating criteria.

Recommendations

In our implementation, Blackboard™ scores higher than WebCT™. This implies that it is more effective in achieving the stakeholder requirements. Nevertheless, it can be further developed in order to support and facilitate both teaching and learning. The following shows some suggestions for Blackboard™:

- Blackboard™ should pay more attention to the improvement of its search engine. In the current version, it can only be used to search for the modules by module names or codes. To facilitate users in finding the documents and course information easily, the search engine should be able to search for a particular document and file and also be incorporated with basic, advanced, or even expert search selection;
- Blackboard™ should provide a direct link to the student record system or SITS. This enables the students to find out the course and personal information easily, including module scheduling, examination scheduling, student placements, and so on;
- Blackboard™ should be able to inform stakeholders of new documents. For example, a popup window is shown if there are new documents and announcements. Moreover, different hyperlink style is used to differentiate between read and unread documents;
- Blackboard™ should incorporate a book function to allow users to find their favourite and frequently visited locations easily;
- Blackboard™ should allow users to upload multiple files to the system at a time. This will certainly increase the efficiency of administrative staff and faculty members in cases where they have plenty of files to post;
- Blackboard™ should enhance its emailing function. In its current version, it can only be used to write and send (but not read) emails. Besides, emails can merely be sent to a specific group of stakeholders. To overcome this drawback, it should provide a direct link with the university Webmail portal so that the stakeholders can communicate and collaborate with others easily;
- Blackboard™ should provide an instant messaging feature in the discussion board or forum. This enables a real-time communication between the stakeholders, and fosters knowledge sharing and transferring among the stakeholders;
- Blackboard™ should allow students to check the availability of module leaders and also make appointments for consultation;
- Blackboard™ should also be able to inform the stakeholders of new emails as the case with Microsoft Outlook Express;

- Blackboard™ should provide a direct link with the library information system portal. This enables the students to search for reference materials directly and easily even if the module leaders have not provided a hyperlink to the portal.

Conclusions

This article presented an integrated multiple criteria decision making approach to measure the performance of alternative VLE systems. A case study was given to demonstrate how it works. In the approach, QFD was used to translate the higher education stakeholder requirements into multiple system features, which were also regarded as the evaluating criteria for benchmarking the systems. AHP was used to determine the relationship weightings consistently. The major advantage of this integrated approach is that the evaluating criteria are of interest to the stakeholders. This ensures that the selected system will achieve the requirements and satisfy the stakeholders most. Another advantage is that the approach can guarantee the benchmarking to be consistent and reliable.

There are three potential beneficiaries of this project, including decision makers of higher education institutions, higher education stakeholders, and VLE system developers. First of all, the proposed approach can support the decision makers of universities in reviewing their existing VLE systems and determining whether it is necessary to replace the existing systems by a better one. Besides, the proposed approach can support the decision makers of universities, who are planning to set up a VLE system, in evaluating and selecting the best system. Certainly, the selection and adoption of an appropriate VLE system in a university is beneficial to its stakeholders in terms of teaching and learning. Finally, the proposed approach can support the VLE system developers in analyzing their strengths and weaknesses, and also identifying the opportunities and threats against the competing systems.

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Table 1: HOQ1 – linking HE stakeholders and their requirements

HE stakeholders	Proportion	**Stakeholder requirements**								
		1. Upload/download documents and course work efficiently	2. Find and locate documents and course information easily	3. Communicate and collaborate with others	4. Search for reference materials	5. Provide emailing support	6. Be aware of unread documents/ messages	7. Customize displaying layout and appearance	8. Get started easily	9. Provide after-sale services
1. Administrative staff										
2. Faculty members										
3. Postgraduates										
4. Undergraduates										
Importance ratings of stakeholder requirements										
Ranking										

Table 2: HOQ2 – linking HE stakeholder requirements and VLE system features

Stakeholder requirements	Importance of requirements	1. System speed	2. Multiple file uploads	3. Digital dropbox	4. Link to SITS	5. Module marks/grades viewing	6. Search engine	7. User interface	8. Ease of navigation	9. Bookmark function	10. Discussion boards/forums	11. Instant messaging	12. Community network	13. Announcement	14. Appointments making	15. Link to library IS portal	16. Link to e-resource databases	17. Link to Webmail	18. Alerting of new emails	19. Address book	20. Alerting of new documents	21. Alert through Webmail	22. Manage course menu	23. Course design	24. User-friendly	25. User manual/Tutorial guide	26. Multi-language support	27. Ease of maintenance	28. Continuous product evolution
1. Upload/download documents and course work efficiently																													
2. Find and locate documents and course information easily																													
3. Communicate and collaborate with others																													
4. Search for reference materials																													
5. Provide emailing support																													
6. Be aware of unread documents/messages																													
7. Customize displaying layout and appearance																													
8. Get started easily																													
9. Provide after-sale services																													
Importance ratings of VLE system features																													
Ranking																													

Table 3: HOQ3 – linking VLE system features and VLE system alternatives

VLE system features	Importance of features	**VLE system alternatives**	
		Blackboard™	WebCT™
1. System speed			
2. Multiple file uploads			
3. Digital dropbox			
4. Link to SITS			
5. Module marks/grades viewing			
6. Search engine			
7. User interface			
8. Ease of navigation			
9. Bookmark function			
10. Discussion boards/forums			
11. Instant messaging			
12. Community network			
13. Announcement			
14. Appointments making			
15. Link to library IS portal			
16. Link to e-resource databases			
17. Link to Webmail			
18. Alerting of new emails			
19. Address book			
20. Alerting of new documents			
21. Alert through Webmail			
22. Manage course menu			
23. Course design			
24. User-friendly			
25. User manual/Tutorial guide			
26. Multi-language support			
27. Ease of maintenance			
28. Continuous product evolution			
Total score			
Ranking			

IS STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT EDUCATION RELEVANT IN PRACTICE?

SOME EVIDENCE FROM AN ALUMNI SURVEY [1]

PAULA JARZABKOWSKI AND MONICA GIULIETTI

Introduction

When strategy is taught in business schools, students are introduced to a number of strategy tools, such as five forces, core competences, strategic group maps, or the BCG growth-share matrix. Recently there has been much debate about the usefulness of this kind of education and implicitly about these kinds of tools (Baldridge, Floyd, & Markoczy, 2004; Mintzberg, 2004). Yet, this debate is taking place in the absence of detailed knowledge about how, or indeed, whether, managers use the strategy tools that they learn in a management education (Keep and Westwood, 2003).

The lack of empirically-informed debate on the relevance of management education is a serious problem, as organisations target recruitment at business school graduates, as well as funding or partially funding employees to complete an MBA or other business qualification. Employees also, in a bid to develop their skills and further their careers, make time and pay fees to gain business school qualifications. At the same time, business schools and their accrediting agencies go to great lengths to demonstrate their engagement with practice. An important question for organisations, employees, business schools and accrediting agencies, therefore, is; which tools and techniques learnt during a management education are adopted by graduates in their workplaces and how are these tools used?

This paper reports some results of a mapping study of the adoption and uses of strategy tools and techniques learnt in management education by domestic and international alumni in UK business schools. As it was not possible to undertake a detailed mapping study of all management tools and techniques in a single survey, one functional specialisation within management education, strategic management, was surveyed for three reasons. First, strategy is commonly taught as a foundation course in business qualifications (Pettigrew et al, 2002). Second, applicants to management courses typically express an interest in improving their strategic thinking (Carroll and Levy, 2005). Third, the relevance of strategic management education to management practice is an increasing topic of policy and academic concern (Baldridge et al, 2004).

Research Design

A survey method has been used to map the adoption of typical strategy tools by a population of domestic and international alumni from nine of the top 30 UK business schools. Alumni were selected because they meet our first criteria for target population; those who have had at least a foundation course in strategic management, and thus might be expected to use or not use its products on a reasonably informed basis (Keep and Westwood, 2003; Priem and Rosenstein, 2001). Higher-ranked schools were selected because these schools have higher graduate employment, ensuring the target population is employed in positions where they might reasonably have an opportunity or need to use

[1] We wish to thank the Advanced Institute of Management (AIM) and Aston Business School for the financial support that enabled us to conduct this study and the business schools that participated in the data collection. We also thank ABS doctoral student, Qin Zhou, for her assistance with survey design and data collection, management and coding.

tools. As the study does not query how institutional ranking or quality of the educational experience shapes tool adoption, limiting the study to higher-ranked schools with high graduate employment was felt to control for unintended educational variation effects.

A list of 20 tools typically taught in foundation strategy courses was established through an email survey of 66 UK strategy academics. We then developed a survey instrument to map tool use according to contextual and individual features, tool characteristics, and processual and socio-political uses. In developing this questionnaire, most existing studies lacked consistent measures. Some questions and measures were, therefore, developed from qualitative interviews. Three pilot studies were conducted, refining the questions and pre-coded answers between each pilot. The survey was then administered online between February and May 2007 to a population of 20,108 alumni in nine out of the top 30 UK business schools. These schools were selected pragmatically because they were prepared to email our survey link to their alumni databases in this time period. The sample population covered undergraduate and postgraduate alumni, both domestic and international, who had graduated within a 20-year period to allow for career progression. The response rate from the target population (business school alumni who have done a foundation strategy course) is unknown, as we do not have figures for non-responsive email accounts and were not always able to isolate emails to only those alumni whose degree included a foundation strategy course. In June 2007, however, our response rate from total emails in nine schools, without excluding non-responsive emails or non-target population, was 14.2%. This resulted in 2,049 useable responses. This paper presents some findings about the top tools used, weighted frequencies for their use according to some individual, organizational and educational characteristics, and correlations of their volume-of-use to perceived value within different stages in the strategy process.

Results

What tools are used?

Rank order of tool use: Table 1 addresses respondents' awareness and use of tools.

Table 1: Tool rank order according to awareness of tool and its use
(Underline indicates outlier; Dividing line with italics below, indicates tools where last 2 columns make up some 70% of respondents)

Tools	Currently used %	Used but not now %	Heard of, not used %	Never heard of %
SWOT	76%	13%	10%	1%
Key Success Factors	58%	13%	21%	8%
Core Competences analysis	47%	19%	25%	9%
Scenario Planning	45%	19%	29%	7%
Value Chain	41%	20%	34%	5%
Porter's Five Forces	39%	25%	30%	6%
Resource-Based Analysis	38%	14%	33%	18%
Industry Life Cycle	36%	21%	33%	10%
PESTLE Analysis	33%	14%	38%	30%
Portfolio Matrices, e.g: BCG or McKinsey	29%	20%	40%	13%
Porter's Generic Strategy Model	23%	19%	36%	18%
Strategic Groups Analysis	18%	12%	*35%*	*34%*
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	15%	14%	*42%*	*36%*
Porter's Diamond	12%	18%	*40%*	*28%*
Merger and Acquisition Matrices	8%	7%	*28%*	*45%*
Dynamic Capabilities Analysis	8%	6%	*24%*	*59%*
Globalisation Matrices	6%	7%	*26%*	*53%*
Methods of Expansion Matrices	4%	7%	*26%*	*63%*
Corporate Parenting Matrices	4%	5%	*26%*	*65%*
Bowman's Strategy Clock	3%	6%	*26%*	*65%*

Table 1 rank orders the 20 tools according to highest current use, showing also those tools which have been used but are no longer used, those tools which participants have heard of but do not use and those tools of which participants have not heard. SWOT is found to have the highest use, consistent with others' comments on the ubiquity of SWOT, which is perceived as simple, practical and easy to use (e.g. Dyson, 2004; Hill and Westbrook, 1997; Pickton and Wright, 1998). Interestingly no tools are entirely unused, although the last nine tools have low adoption with 70% or more of respondents either never having used these tools or not being aware of them. PESTLE is an outlier with 30% of respondents claiming unawareness, given the relatively high current use. This maybe because respondents recognize the tool by its various names, such as SLEPT and PEST. This consideration of nomenclature must also be given to other tools, which might not be recognised by their names in this study, albeit that these are common strategy textbook names for tools.

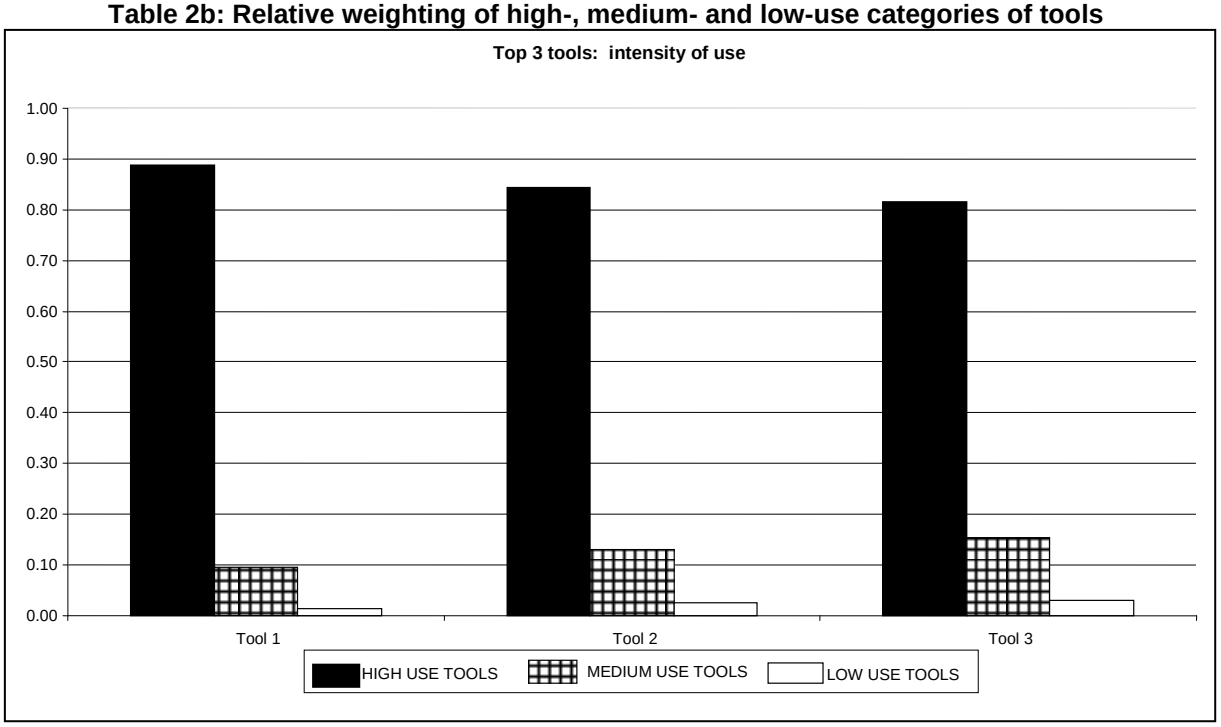
Table 2a: Results from rank order of top three tools
(Cut off lines represent high-use tools, medium-use tools and low-use tools)

Top 1		Top 2		Top 3		
SWOT	**444**	SWOT	**273**	SWOT	**207**	
Scenario Planning	**204**	Key Success Factors	**220**	Key Success Factors	**173**	
Key Success Factors	**167**	Core Competences analysis	**134**	Core Competences analysis	**137**	
Value Chain	**126**	PESTLE Analysis	**121**	Scenario Planning	**108**	**HIGH USE**
Core Competences analysis	**91**	Scenario Planning	**102**	Porter's Five Forces	**102**	
Porter's Five Forces	**84**	Porter's Five Forces	**94**	Value Chain	**90**	
PESTLE Analysis	**73**	Value Chain	**91**	Resource-Based Analysis	**81**	
Resource-Based Analysis	**61**	Resource-Based Analysis	**90**	PESTLE Analysis	**78**	
Portfolio Matrices, e.g: BCG or McKinsey	**46**	Industry Life Cycle	**61**	Industry Life Cycle	**71**	
Industry Life Cycle	**46**	Portfolio Matrices, e.g: BCG or McKinsey	**45**	Portfolio Matrices, e.g: BCG or McKinsey	**52**	**MED USE**
Strategic Groups Analysis	**16**	Strategic Groups Analysis	**33**	Strategic Groups Analysis	**24**	
Porter's Generic Strategy Model	**15**	Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	**25**	Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	**19**	
Ansoff's Product/Market Matrix	**13**	Porter's Generic Strategy Model	**10**	Porter's Generic Strategy Model	**18**	
Merger and Acquisition Matrices	**8**	Merger and Acquisition Matrices	**9**	Merger and Acquisition Matrices	**11**	
Bowman's Strategy Clock	**7**	Dynamic Capabilities Analysis	**8**	Globalisation Matrices	**8**	
Dynamic Capabilities Analysis	**3**	Porter's Diamond	**6**	Porter's Diamond	**8**	
Porter's Diamond	**2**	Bowman's Strategy Clock	**4**	Corporate Parenting Matrices	**3**	**LOW USE**
Methods of Expansion Matrices	**1**	Corporate Parenting Matrices	**3**	Dynamic Capabilities Analysis	**3**	
Corporate Parenting Matrices	**0**	Globalisation Matrices	**3**	Methods of Expansion Matrices	**3**	
Globalisation Matrices	**0**	Methods of Expansion Matrices	**1**	Bowman's Strategy Clock	**1**	
	1407		**1333**		**1197**	

Tables 2a and 2b present respondents' rank ordering of their top three tools. This analysis indicates that there are three categories of tools; high-use, medium-use and low-use tools. ***Table 2a*** presents these findings, with the raw data, to illustrate that eight tools consistently occur among the top three

tools used by respondents, a further five tools occur as medium-use tools and seven tools have low use, although no tool is totally without use. We might thus define the top eight tools as the core strategy 'toolkit' (SWOT, KSFs, Value chain, Core competences, Five forces, PESTLE, RBV). The difference between these categories of tools in terms of relative weighting is graphically expressed in ***Table 2b***, which illustrates the high dominance of the top eight tools, compared to the medium and low-use tools.

Table 2b: Relative weighting of high-, medium- and low-use categories of tools



Tool use in the strategy process

Respondents were asked about what stage of the strategy process they used their top three tools. Consistent with other surveys (e.g. Clark, 1997; Frost, 2003; Stenfors et al, 2007), we divided the strategy process into four main strategy activities, which we explained: strategy analysis and formulation; strategic choice; strategy implementation and an 'other' category in case none of these activities covered respondents' uses of a tool. Respondents were able to select multiple activities for any tool. The results of this analysis for the top 11 tools used are presented in ***Tables 3a and 3b***. ***Table 3a*** illustrates the proportional use of each tool according to different phases of the strategy process. ***Table 3b*** illustrates the relative weighting of tools in terms of their use in different stages of the strategy process, where tools tend to follow their rank ordering from ***Tables 2a and 2b***.

Table 3a: Summary of top three tool use in stages of the strategy process

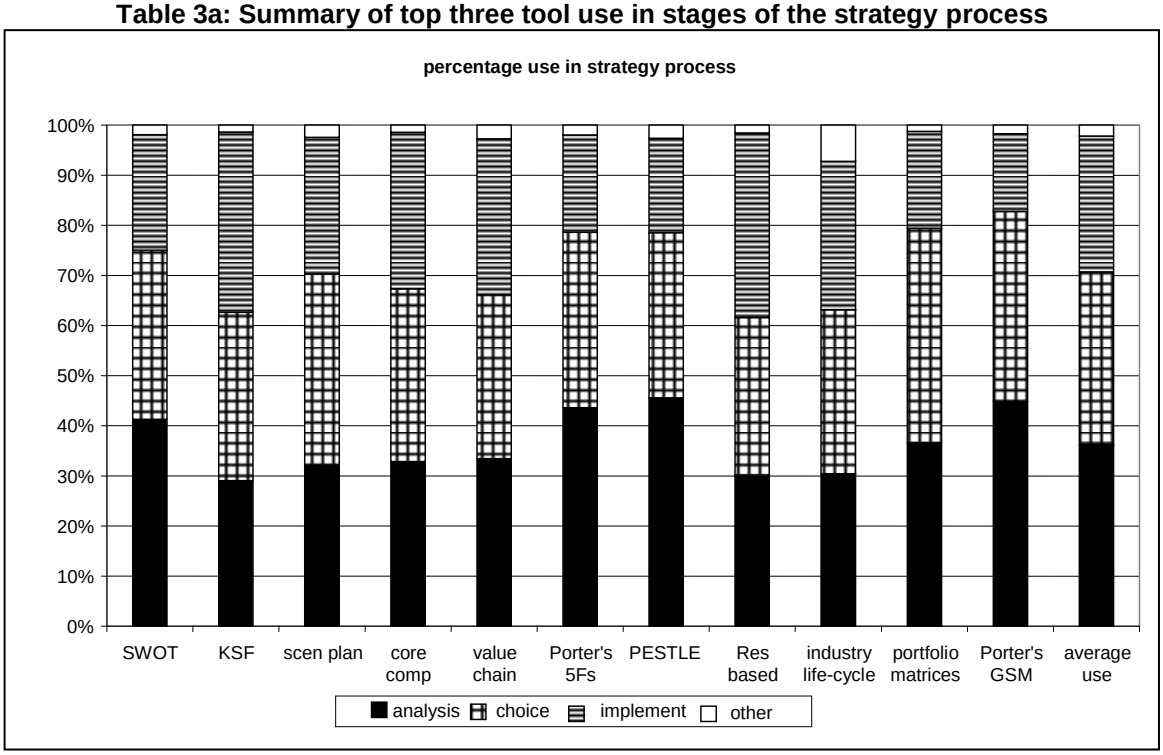
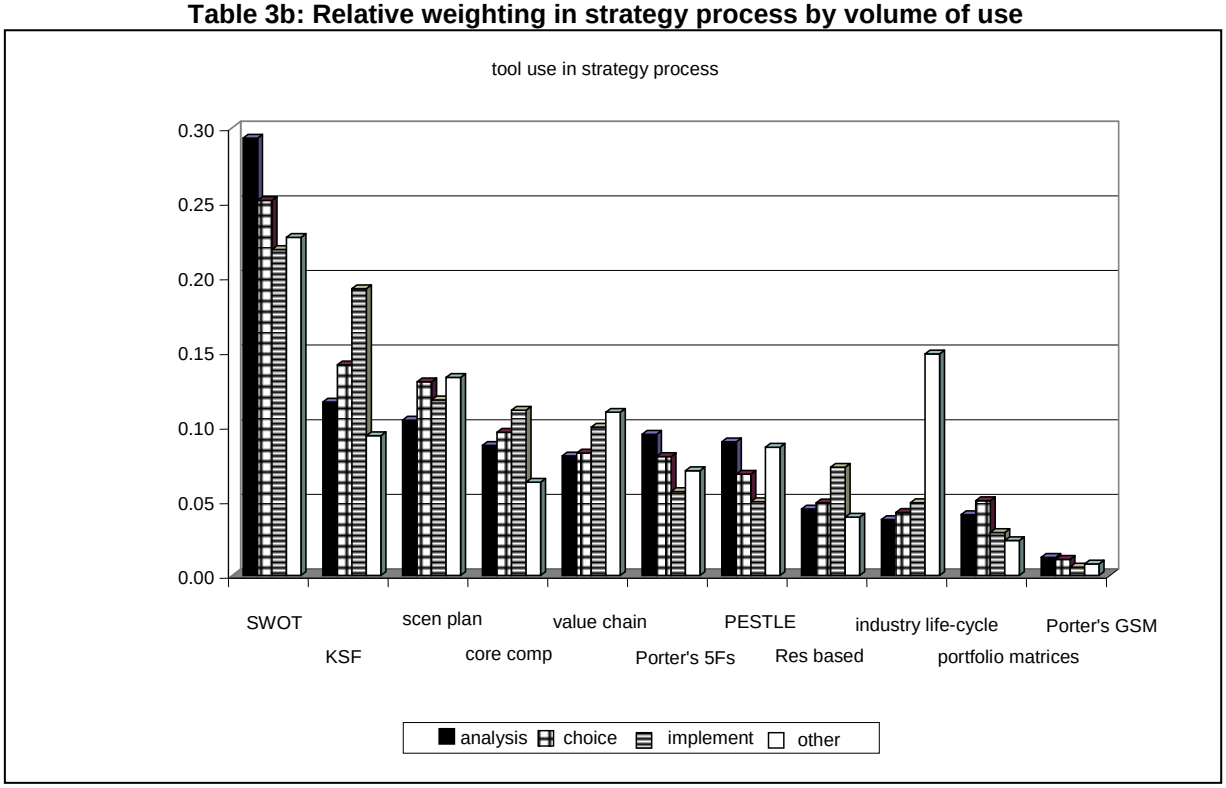


Table 3b: Relative weighting in strategy process by volume of use



Consistent with other studies (e.g. Clark, 1997; Frost, 2003), we find that tools are not specific to a single phase of the strategy process. Indeed, any tool might be used in any stage of the process, which suggests that instrumental (Pelz, 1978) considerations of use in terms of selecting the 'best' tool for a task may not guide tool adoption. Rather, practitioners might adopt tools for some other

reason (perhaps familiarity, organizational symbolism, or some design characteristics) and adapt it to the tasks they need to perform (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2006).

Our findings also suggest that some tools are more typically used in some phases of the strategy process than others. For example, using a cut off of 38% to indicate dominance of a tool in one phase of the strategy process, we find that the top four tools for strategy analysis are, in rank order; PESTLE, Porter's GSM, Porter's 5 Forces and SWOT. In strategic choice, there are three top tools; Portfolio Matrices, Porter's GSM and Scenario Planning. Strategy implementation does not fare well, with most falling below 30% and no tools meeting the 38% cut off, although two tools stand out as being more useful than others; KSFs and Resource-based Analysis. Thus, foundation strategic management courses appear to provide, on a sliding scale, more resources for strategy analysis, some resources for strategic choice and few resources for strategy implementation.

What has perceived value? Interestingly, some tools which did not feature in the 'High-Use' category from ***Tables 2a and 2b*****,** such as Porter's GSM and Portfolio Matrices, did score highly in terms of use within one or more phases of the strategy process. Such tools, while they may not be highly popular by volume of use, may be perceived as useful. This finding is further validated when we examine responses to the perceived value of tools within different phases of the strategy process, which were scored on a Likert scale of 1 (adds little value) to 5 (adds high value). This analysis indicates that the tools with the highest perceived value in each stage of the strategy process, in rank order, are: Strategy Analysis: Porter's 5 Forces, Porter's GSM, PESTLE, SWOT, Core Competences, Portfolio Matrices; Strategic Choice: Porter's GSM, Scenario Planning, Portfolio Matrices, Core Competences; Strategy Implementation: KSFs, Resource-Based Analysis. Greater insights may be gained by plotting volume of use from ***Tables 3a-3b****,* with perceived value of tools, which is presented in ***Tables 4a-4c***.

Table 4a: Use to perceived value in Strategic Analysis phase of strategy process

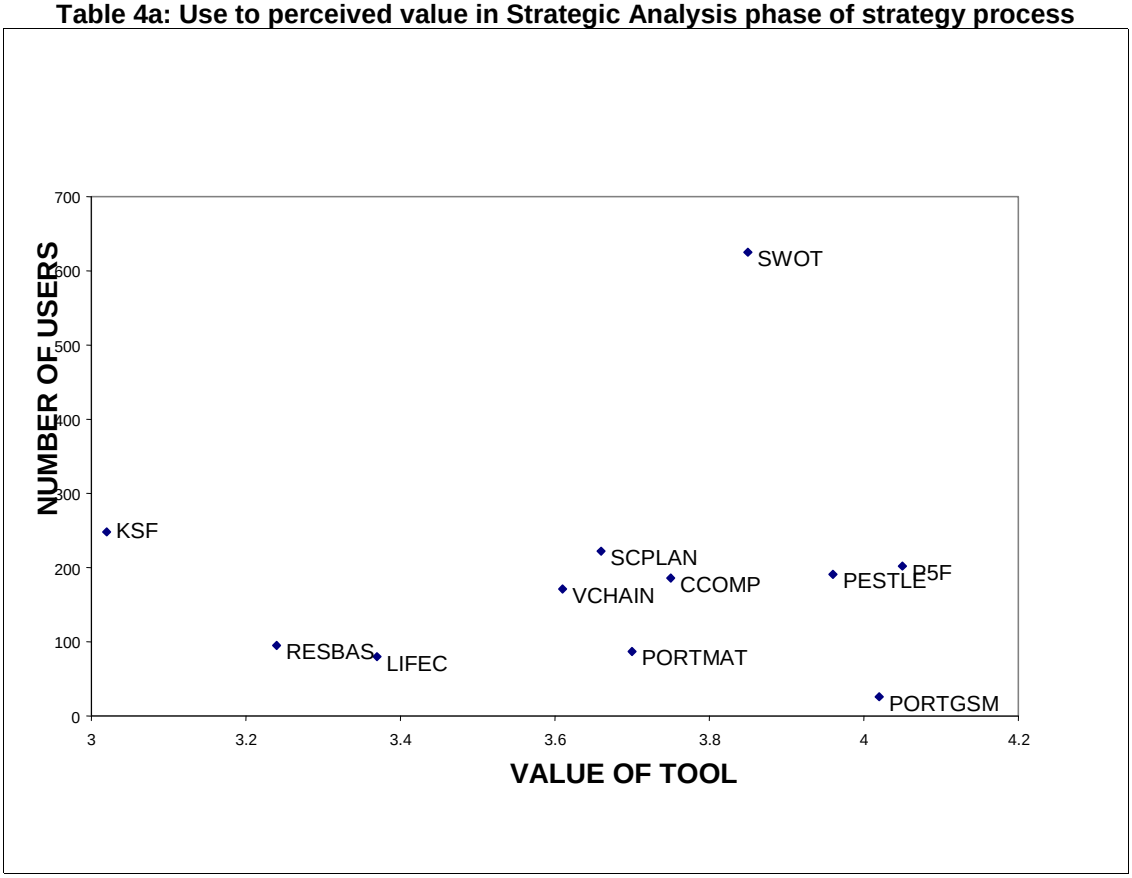


Table 4b: Use to perceived value in Strategic Choice phase of strategy process

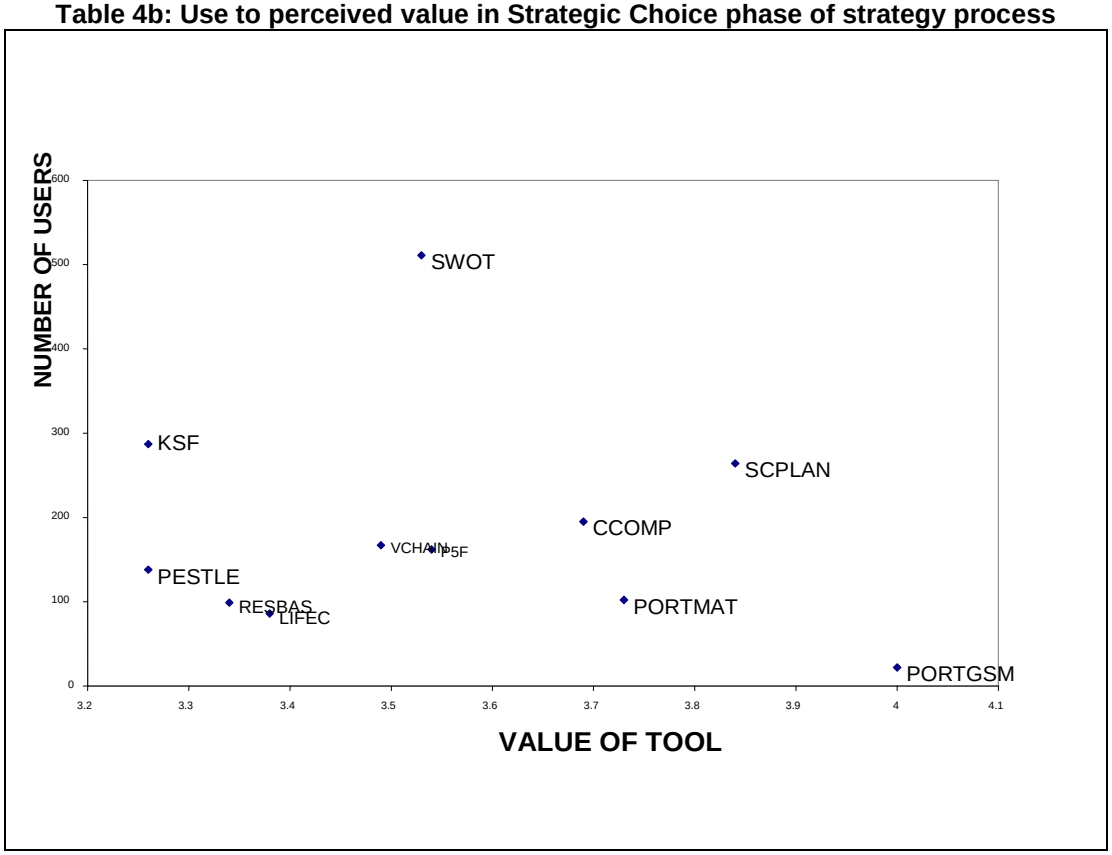
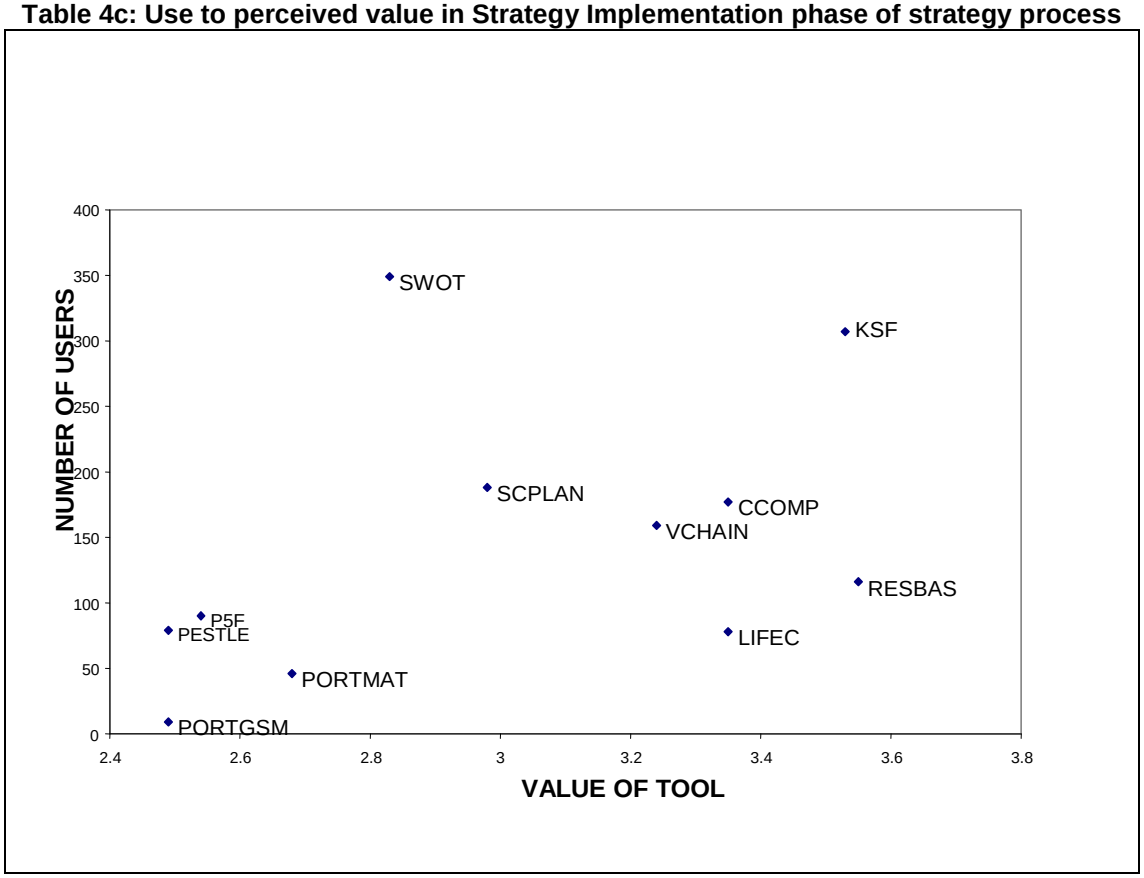


Table 4c: Use to perceived value in Strategy Implementation phase of strategy process



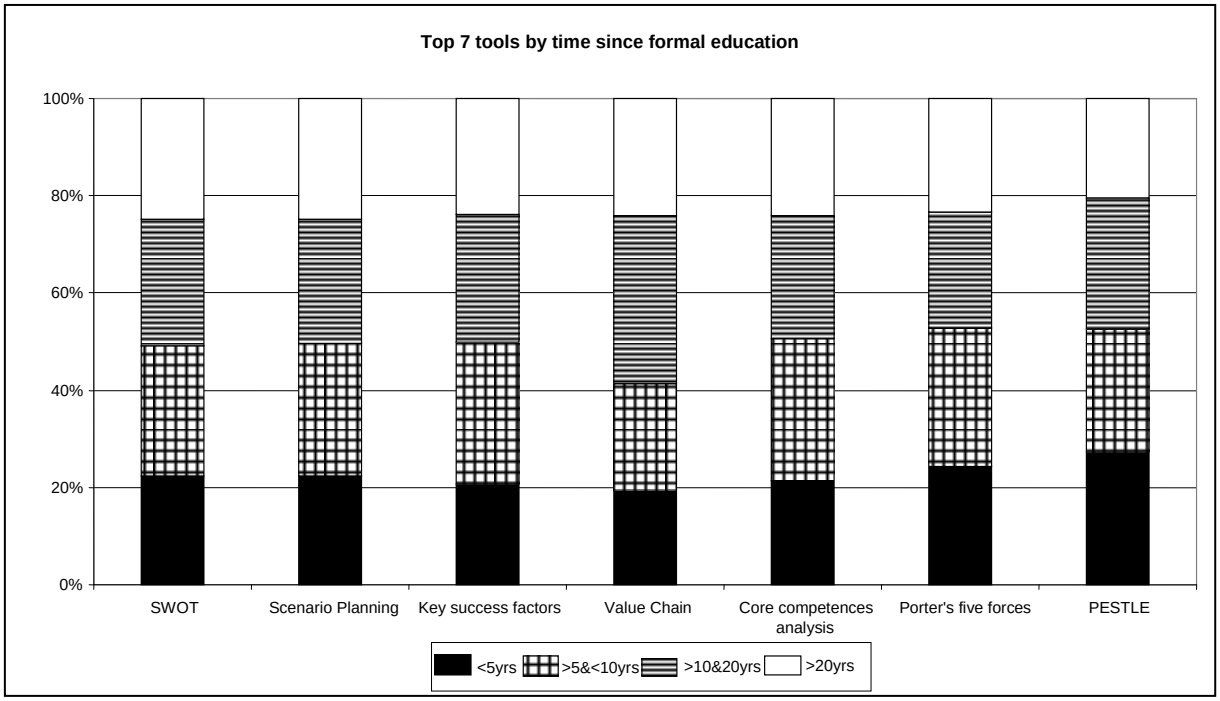
In these tables, the outliers, such as SWOT and Porter's GSM, are particularly interesting. SWOT continues to have high use in all three phases of the strategy process, despite being of decreasing usefulness in each phase, while Porter's GSM has relatively low use in all three phases but is of high perceived value in strategy analysis and strategic choice. Extant research provides some reasons for the finding on SWOT. Specifically, SWOT is considered easy to use and commonly understood, which explains its high use, but also to be of relatively limited analytic value because it encourages lists rather than providing analytic categories (e.g. Dyson, 2004; Hill and Westbrook, 1997; Pickton and Wright, 1998). The GSM finding is more complex as it appears that some tools that are not widely adopted may have high value (see also Priem and Rosenstein, 2000).

Interestingly, while many tools, including GSM and SWOT, are perceived to have low value for strategy implementation, they continue to be used. These findings further corroborate our proposition that tools are not used for instrumental purposes of getting a job done (Pelz, 1978), as users acknowledge the relatively low value of some tools, even as they continue to use them, while other tools which are perceived as of high value when used have relatively little use. Something other than instrumentality, thus, is associated with the use of tools, which we hope to better explain when we correlate use to factors such as organizational familiarity, tool design features and socio-political characteristics of use.

Educational status and tool use

Amnesia effects?: Organizational behaviour and learning theory suggest that those most recently exposed to education are most likely to use educational products, while familiarity and use are expected to decrease the longer and individual is out of formal education; a case of forgetting over time (Hebb, 1949; Priem and Rosenstein, 2000). However, as ***Table 5*** shows, weighted results indicate little difference in the use of the top seven tools between those less than five years out of education and those in excess of 20 years out of education, with the exception of value chain, which has greater use by those in the 10-20 year leaving bracket, which may be driven by other factors such as the stage of career progression at which value chain is typically used or other job or organizational characteristics.

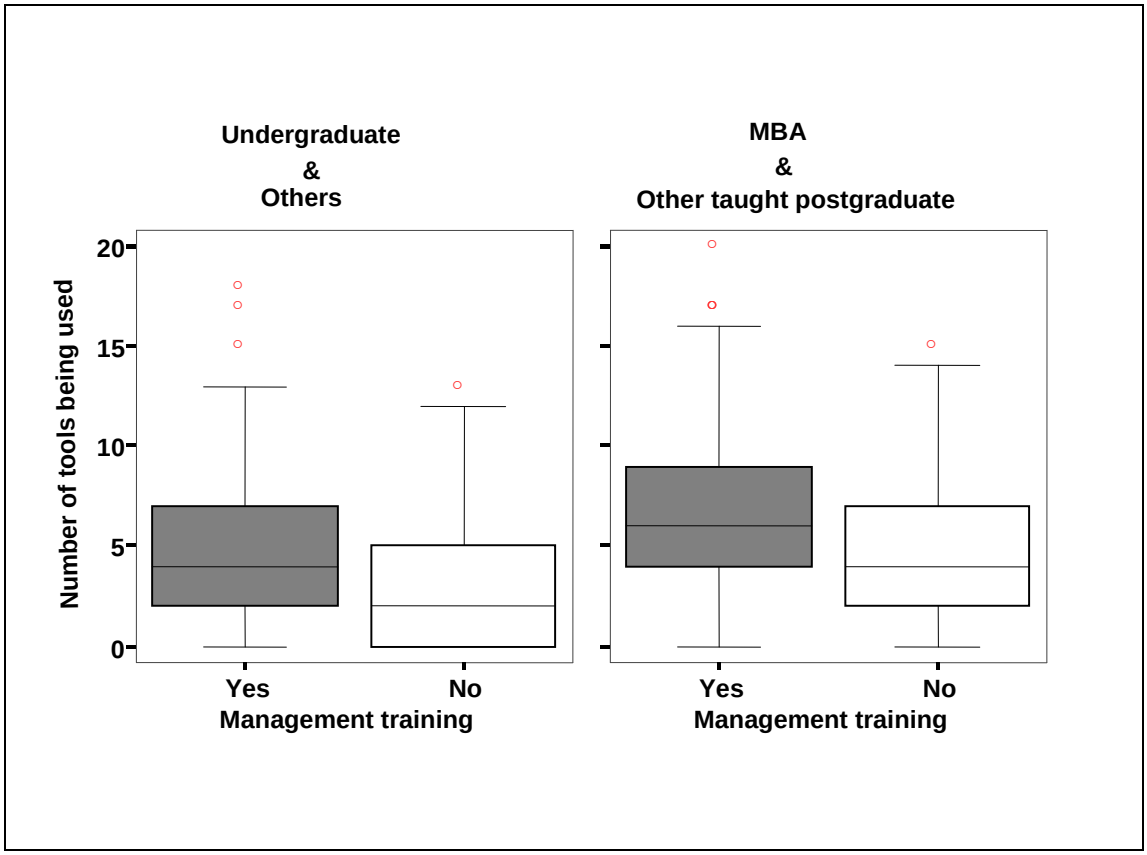
Table 5: Amnesia effects? Use to time since formal education



This lack of distinction between different time-since-education brackets may have at least three interpretations. First, these tools may be useful throughout a career and hence to be remembered regardless of distance since education because they are in frequent use. Second, these tools may have become part of a general lexicon of strategy, such that even without conscious 'remembering' they are used as a matter of course (see also Barry and Elmes, 1997; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Seidl, 2007). Third, while we had only a slight dominance of responses from those finished in under five years to the next two categories of response, we had few responses from those over 20 years out of formal education. These respondents may thus be those who have retained a high interest in the educational process and its products, as indicated by their ongoing interaction in alumni events, such as our survey.

Education level effects: Table 6 presents our final findings for this paper, looking at the relationship between strategic management education level and the number of strategy tools used. We find that taught postgraduate or MBA study tends to increase the use of strategy tools over undergraduate degree level education. Management development training (MDP) also increased the use of tools in both categories, those with a postgraduate or an undergraduate education. Interestingly, an undergraduate education, supplemented by management development training gave a similar level of tool use to a postgraduate education with no management development training. The reason for increased use may be based in the teaching approach (Knowles, 1990), as postgraduate and management development teaching tends to use a combination of case method and practical experience and, particularly for MBA and management development, often requires practical experience as a prerequisite for enrolment (Christensen and Hansen, 1981; Greiner et al, 2003). These characteristics may increase the relevance of tools to the individual at the time of learning (Knowles, 1990) and, hence, their retention in the workplace. There may also be career effects here, as postgraduates and management training participants have often selected or been selected for management training as a career move. Hence, the use of tools learned in that training may be part of a career strategy.

Table 6: Educational level association with use



Conclusions and Implications

These results inform the ongoing relevance debate in management in two ways. First, they indicate that strategic management tools are used by practitioners who have been exposed to them through education. Furthermore, some tools are perceived by alumni as adding value to their strategy processes. This suggests that strategic management tools meet some practitioner criteria of relevance, answering at least some of the ongoing academic soul-searching over whether business schools have relevance.

Second, our results inform the problematic concept of relevance (Baldridge et al, 2004). Pelz (1978) suggests three ways of understanding relevance, based around the different ways that practitioners use social science theory: instrumental, meaning direct application of theory to practice; conceptual, meaning using theory to enlighten practice; and symbolic, meaning the ceremonial adoption of theory with little significant alteration of practice. Any of these uses might be relevant to practitioners, in terms of fulfilling their needs in adopting a theoretical framework. Academics have tended, however, to regard only the first of these, instrumental use, as indicating relevance. Alternative or non-instrumental uses of theory may be regarded as a matter of deviance, deliberate distortion or corruption (Lozeau et al, 2002). That is, any use of strategy tools other than direct instrumental application is regarded as either a failure of management, who are unable or unwilling to use the tool adequately, or a failure of the tools, as it is not able to have the desired effect (Lozeau et al, 2002). However, our results, particularly those on the volume and perceived value of tools to different stages of the strategy process, indicate that tools are applied, albeit not always in the stages of the strategy process we might consider most applicable, and that they continue to have high volume of use, even where their value to the tasks of the process may not be highly regarded. It thus appears that instrumental use is only one, and perhaps not the most important, reason why practitioners use tools. We have speculated on some of these reasons in interpreting the results, including educational and career path considerations. However, social, political and symbolic factors also need to be considered.

Further analysis is needed to make more of the results presented in this paper, particularly in examining what other factors drive tool selection and use. We suggest, however, that these results inform the relevance debate by indicating that strategic management tools typically taught in foundation strategy courses are used in practice. Furthermore, the results inform the relevance debate by indicating that instrumental applications of strategy tools in order to complete tasks does appear to guide selection. It is not the only reason, however, why practitioners use tools, indicating that multiple interpretations of relevance are necessary. We emphasize that *all* of these interpretations of relevance, if they guide practitioner selection and application of tools, should be considered important evidence of academic relevance.

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BETWIXT SPACES AND UNIVERSITY PLACES: STUDENT ACCOUNTS OF TURNING POINTS IN THE FIRST YEAR TRANSITION

MARK PALMER

Introduction

We frequently encounter transitional spaces in our lives. To cite but a few, motorways, lobbies, airports, waiting rooms and, more noticeably, moving house and/or moving to a new country of residency. But we do more than simply pass through these spaces, by acting in and reacting to each of these "non-places" they acquire a character of their own. In a similar way, the entry of students into university places encompasses many sorts of transitional changes and challenges. Indeed 'not belonging' is a prevalent issue in the accounts of first year student experiences (see for example the work of Solomon, 2007). This research project takes up this important finding and extends the debate on this transition by assuming a more active role for "liminality". Derived from the Latin word limen, meaning threshold, the paper argues that students can be suspended between one place (i.e. their home) and another place (i.e. the university) which results in an "in-between-ness" – a betwixt space – which, in turn, creates this "lack of belonging" or a sense of "placelessness". This study therefore explores this betwixt space, together with the concept of a turning point, in light of how first year students make meaningful connections to university places.

The first year experience is now seen as one of the high priority research areas not least because of the significant consequences of student attrition and failure upon university reputations and bottom-lines (Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld 2005). Indeed most, if not all, universities adopt some deliberate form or method of intervention to help embed students and enhance the learning and retention during the transitional period into university. In this entry practice, it is suggested that universities have a tendency to celebrate their structural or functionalist initiatives – Open Days, Induction Days, How-to-Study-at-University Days – in managing the student transition. Most treatments of the management of the university transition discuss their function and concentrate on the design and management of university activities. Rather than work within these structural initiatives of transition, however, this research wants to show that students are not simply located in a place – a university – but can belong instead to a transient, betwixt space and their experience in this space is what determines a student's movement towards the university place.

The overall aim of this paper is to explore the uses of, and different senses of belonging to, betwixt spaces. The specific objectives of this study thus are threefold: (i) to investigate the beginnings of a turning point (that is the shift from the betwixt space); (ii) to interpret students' means of coping with the turning point experience; and, (iii) to ascertain how students carry forward their transient turning point experiences into the university place.

Key Findings

The importance of turning points as a feature of the student's transition within betwixt spaces is illustrated in several ways from the research findings.

Duality of barriers and motives
The exploratory findings highlighted a range of powerful experiences that are associated with the betwixt space. These experiences were both positive and negative, in so far as they not only related

to stressful occasions (e.g. dissolution of parent-sibling relationships), but also highlighted positive effects (e.g. a growing sense of identity, the beginnings of mental activity, the beginnings of new relationships). In this sense, betwixt spaces, can act as a motivation to overcome perceived barriers. The importance of "dealing" with initial experiences including, the anxiety of the first lecture, the first feedback from assessments and the first doubts, takes on a new importance.

Inclusion and exclusion forces
In understanding students' turning point experiences, the relationship between inclusion and exclusion is highlighted. The relationship, however, between inclusion-exclusion is not straightforward. As the inclusion process deepens, by implication, so does the exclusion process also gain momentum. The exploratory evidence from both exercises highlights how the functional activities of inclusion such as Induction Days, Fresher Weeks, etc. also sow the seeds or conditions for exclusion. The panacea becomes the poison. As Engstrand and Stam (2002, 360) rightly point out, "the same strong ties that help members of a group often enable it to exclude others". Therefore, Fresher Week activities can also serve to exclude, especially if students cannot get involved in this week or arrive late. Socialisation and other rites of passages can simultaneously exclude – for example, not going out on the first night, living at the parent's home or living away from the halls of residence.

Fluidity of betwixt spaces
The transition for the student from one place (i.e. the home) to another (i.e. the university), or more widely, "studentland", is not static, nor can it be taken-for-granted. Development is not continuous and can be subject to reversals and changes of direction. Indeed, some students seemed to be concerned about "going back" into the betwixt space, even beyond to the home place and questioned whether it was "really possible" to fit into these environments again. For others, moreover, transition implies constant reassurance and feedback, monitoring and circuits of action and reaction.

Relationships and critical threads
It is evident that the betwixt experiences span from those over which the student has no control – accidents, shocks, family circumstances – to those that are firmly within their control. The exploratory findings confirm that stabilization in both the individual and with surrounding relationships can ease the transience within the betwixt (Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld 2005; Solomon 2007). Most significant in this process is the reliving and integrating of the past, present and future experiences, which also confirms the recent work of Skyrme (2007). Our exploratory findings extend Skyrme's discussion through the notion of a critical thread, which provides a sense of direction for the student's perseverance and allows them to regain control. Hanging to this critical thread, in the face of adverse turning point experiences, it seems, is a way of dealing with, belonging to and making meaningful connections to university places.

Symbolic objects
What also emerged from our preliminary work is the importance of symbolic objects. In order to provide some sense of continuity, students, for example, frequently bring an object that symbolizes their home environment and such objects can take on a sacred quality. These can act as transitional objects in the same way that a child's stuffed animal or blanket may act to smooth the early development of the child. The transitional object, as conceived by Winnicott (1971), refers to some 'entity' that enables intellectual and emotional development by providing a temporary source of support allowing the student to "let go" of a former, dependent relationship. Indeed little is known about objects that help students span the boundary between university and home. Not only had Winnicott's research been concerned with the object *used* but also the *use* of the object. In a similar way, the transitional object for students may be conceived of in three ways: as typifying a phase in the student's normal emotional development; as a defense against separation anxiety; and, lastly, as a neutral sphere in which experience is not challenged.

Concluding remarks and some implications

This research has attempted to open up and explore Solomon's (2007) notion of "not belonging" and the turning points that allow students to make "meaningful connections" to fit in at university. Much is made of the importance of the social connections to universities within the first six weeks. Students experience a range of emotions; chaos, confusion, loneliness, and conflicts of interest while crossing the boundary and making the transition into university. Less is known, however, about the spatial dimension – the geography of university enrolment. Recognizing this concern, we build on a theoretical perspective that recognizes the "in-between-ness" which students experience whilst making the transition into higher education to bring us a step closer towards the change, which lies at the heart of the entry process of universities. We also introduce the notion of a *turning point* in the transition of the student. The beauty of using a turning points framework is its simplicity, but also its richness in terms of understanding how such turning points alter behavior, cognition and context, all of which can result in transition from the betwixt space towards the university place. In this experience, the boundaries between places and spaces begin to appear for some students whilst for other student these boundaries quickly disappear: they are marked or ignored depending on the interests and forces that are at stake.

Having reviewed the literature on the first year experience, one of the main criticisms identified is the dominance of the functionalist emphasis in which university management can at will intervene with impunity in the management of the transition – "I have a problem but now I have a toolkit of solutions". Not all of this transition activity is down to formal schemes or plans. Our main conclusion is that *university registration is not a proxy for residency*. The implication of viewing this transition in spatial terms is that the role of the university managers has its limitations. Although they make changes that involve or necessitate shaking university inclusion boundaries, they also need to recognize much more about how the practices of inclusion are linked to exclusion.

The implication of this study is that, despite the best intentions of universities in facilitating the transition, university management has a limited capacity to intervene in this space. That is to say, students perceive that university managers/lecturers do not belong to this space and, consequently, cannot possibility understand their situation. This has an important implication for those managers/lecturers who seek to intervene and "manage" the transition. This is not a unilateral activity. It is therefore a moot point whether university management ought to assume that they are the only one managing students. Students may be heading in exactly the opposite direction, away from the university, managed by other actors such as a parent, girlfriend/boyfriend or employer. More recognition and explication of the dilemmas and levels of contestation that exist within the university environment might go some way towards mitigating this.

Furthermore, for students the transition does not start and end with the Induction Day. Indeed the conditions of the rite of passage into studenthood have been learned long before the entry into university through perceptions, prejudices via stereotypes of university places such as parties, drinking and iconic images and objects such as doctor martin boots and fruit of the loom jumpers or however university places are perceived nowadays. The expectations and stereotypes of university student life needs to be more fully understood, both from a student and university perspective.

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USING MODULE REVIEWS TO ENHANCE LEARNING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER: A MODULE REVIEW EXEMPLAR

NAOMI BROOKES

Commentary on the Module Review

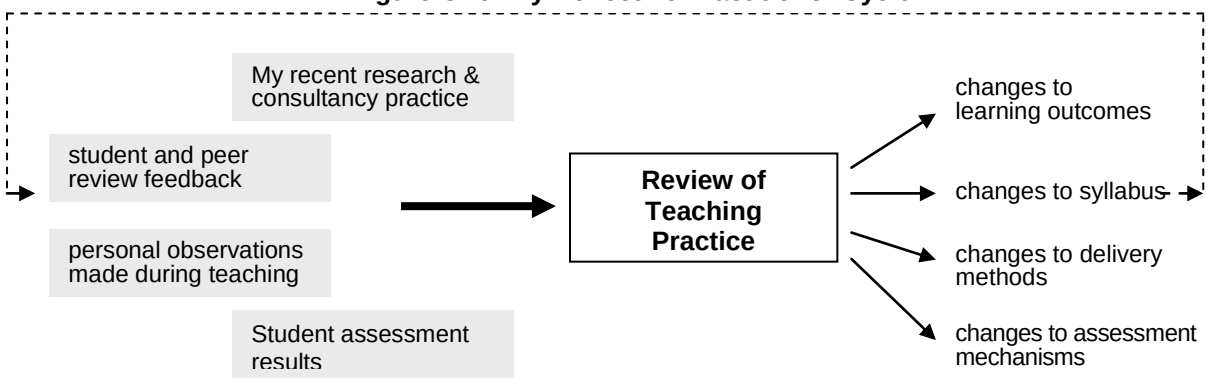
The module review contained in this article is typical of the reviews that I undertake in my practice as a reflective teacher. In presenting it here, I hope that other lecturing staff may find it a useful template for reflecting upon and capturing the learning from their own teaching. I undertook the module review for BN3322 'International Operations', a double final-year undergraduate module. In order to understand why I adopt this approach, it is useful to explain my background as a reflective practitioner and the role that the module review plays in this reflective process.

Two experiences were key in my development as a reflective practitioner. The first arose from a lecture by an ex-RAF trainer (complete with handle-bar moustache) whilst I was still working in the aerospace industry and before I ever had any intention of becoming a lecturer. I was one of the first students on a course that he had instigated called 'Training the Trainers.' He revealed to me and to my fellow students the self-evident truth that every piece of teaching should have some objective and that the trainer needs to assess the students' learning against this objective.

The need to have a clear learning outcome and the need to assess whether or not that outcome had been reached acted as the foundations for my next formative experience in becoming a reflective practitioner. By this time I had taken-up a lecturing position at Loughborough University and was one of the first students on a newly developed probationary lecturer development programme. The successful completion of this programme led to the membership of the fore-runner of today's Higher Education Academy. In order successfully to pass this programme, probationary lecturers were asked to produce a portfolio tracking their teaching over a three year period. Probationers were asked to demonstrate what they had learnt from their teaching and to demonstrate how this new knowledge had changed their future teaching. I found the process of developing learning outcomes, determining appropriate teaching methods, delivering the teaching and then assessing learning outcomes fascinating. Learning from each journey around the cycle and informing decisions made on the basis of previous experience was very awarding. This was especially true when the students learning outcomes demonstrably improved following changes I had made to my teaching by reflecting on previous experiences.

In my teaching at Aston, I am committed to acting as a reflective practitioner. I use a wide variety of forms of feedback to understand how I can better achieve my learning outcomes or even if my learning outcomes themselves need to be changed. The data and processes that I use are explained in the figure below. I formalise this process by producing a full report in addition to the Module Reflection form required by ABS quality procedures. It is the most recent report for BN3322 'International Operations' that is contained in this best practice guide. I hope that you will find it useful as a possible template for the crucial process of capturing your own learning as a reflective practitioner.

Figure One: My Reflective Practitioner Cycle



BN3322 – International Operations: Module Review 2006 - 2007[1]

Participating Staff

Dr Naomi Brookes – Staff member responsible for the module
Ms Lydia Matheson – Information Specialist
Prof. David Bennett – O&IM Group
Mr. Breno Nunes – O&IM researcher
Mr. Amrik Singh – O&IM researcher

Module Student Population

The number of students increased from 48 in 2005-6 to 58 in 2006-7. Students of this module come from 13 programmes across the university. This year saw a significant increase in the number of BAM students and a decrease in the number of IBML students.

Changes to Teaching for the 2006-2007 Session

A number of changes were made to the teaching of this module for the 2006-7 session:

- **Removal of Tutorial Groups as Assessment and Replacement with Case-Based Workshops**

Previously tutorials in this module had comprised a series of group presentations on topics related to the module content. The assessment of the presentation (and an associated report) formed part of the formal assessment of the module. This was problematic for a number of reasons:

- Groups on occasions would present erroneous material or interpretation of course content that needed to be immediately corrected
- The assessment did not differentiate successfully. (Most groups scored similar marks)

Additionally, tutorials in their existing format meant that two thirds of students were passive during the tutorial and not developing their critical analysis and synthesis abilities. Furthermore, tutorials provided a limited opportunity for a 'real-time' evaluation of how far students were attaining particular learning objectives from lecture sessions.

It was therefore decided to eliminate group presentation tutorials and to replace them with a series of workshops that explored relevant learning outcomes for the module through the use of two cases. (Two cases were used throughout the module so that students could spend more time exploring the issues rather than familiarising themselves with new material.) These provided the opportunities for all students to be engaged in achieving their learning outcomes. By structuring workshops so that each activity had a deliverable, workshops also provided an opportunity for the real-time assessment of learning outcomes and the chance to make-u' disparities in learning there and then.

- **Up-grading the Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment**

One of the comparatively weaker areas of student feedback returns for the previous year had been the area of reading and library resources. The nature of material presented in this module precluded the use of a single text book to which students could refer. To overcome this problem, a detailed reading package (including pdf copies and relevant web-links) was created on Blackboard for each individual topic so that students were provided with an extensive and directly related source of extension reading materials.

[1] This review does not relate to the part of this module undertaken by IBML students in their chosen specialist language. The teaching for this component of the module is not the responsibility of the member of staff but developments this year indicate that there needs to be a much greater involvement.

- **Changes to the individual assignment:**

The demonstrated standards of literature searching and referencing in the individual assignment in 2005-6 were poor. In order to address this issue, a new active-learning workshop was developed with Information Specialists from the library. This provided students with 'hands-on' opportunities to define and use computerised search strategies and a series of exercises on how to reference this literature once it had been located.

The previous timing of the individual assignment meant that any gaps in achieving learning outcomes that this highlighted could not be addressed before the exams. To this end, the submission date for the individual assignment was moved a month earlier to provide an opportunity for remedial teaching. Additionally, because some of the critical analysis revealed in the individual assignment in the 2005-6 session had been poor, and additional teaching session was inserted to demonstrate how secondary sources can be analysed and the results of that analysis used to synthesise appropriate interventions for an international operations environment.

- **Introduction of new curriculum content:**

The impact of global supply chain management on international operations needed explicit recognition in the module's curriculum. A new topic of 'Global Supply Chain Management' was therefore introduced which covers topics included global procurement. This enabled the involvement of the O&IM group's research directly into the content for students through 'guest lecture spots' by Group researchers. The course content was supplemented with new illustrative cases throughout (e.g. TATA's acquisition of CORUS, BAE Systems and corruption charges)

- **New module framework**

Key to achieving clarity in learning is the ability to present students with a framework of a module that enables them to understand its totality and to relate separate elements of learning through that framework. A new framework was developed based on Slack *et al*'s conceptualization of operations as an input/output/ control process. This framework was used at the start of each lecture to contextualize the ensuing learning.

Assessing the student's learning experience

Evidence to assess the students' learning experience was gained from the following sources:

- an ad hoc class test
- informal email feedback from students
- examination and assessment results
- external examiner feedback
- student feedback returns

Results from the class test

The test covered simple recall of material taught in the course to November 2006. (No critical analysis was required.) This highlighted that students were much more likely to recall material to which they had previous exposure (e.g. FDI, Bartlett and Ghoshal's matrix.) The were much less likely to be able to remember new material. The exception to this appeared to be Kanter's concept of simultaneity. (Interestingly the only distinguishing feature of this concept appears to be the lecturer's inability to pronounce it.)

Informal email feedback from students

Students sent informal feedback following a request from the lecturer on the way that the new tutorial system was working. This indicated that students enjoyed the interaction, the whole group involvement and the deliverables and deadlines. One student remarked that tutorials were rushed but did point out that it was probably lack of familiarity with the case material that led to this.

Examination and Assessment Results

The overall assessment average for the students rose from 57.7% to 61.9%. (The standard deviation of the marks was very similar.) Differences in achievement profiles across programmes from 2005-6 to 2006-7 were difficult to establish because of the small numbers involved apart from MAS and BAM whose achievement profile reflected that of the whole module. The average mark for the individual assessment increased from 55% to 66%.

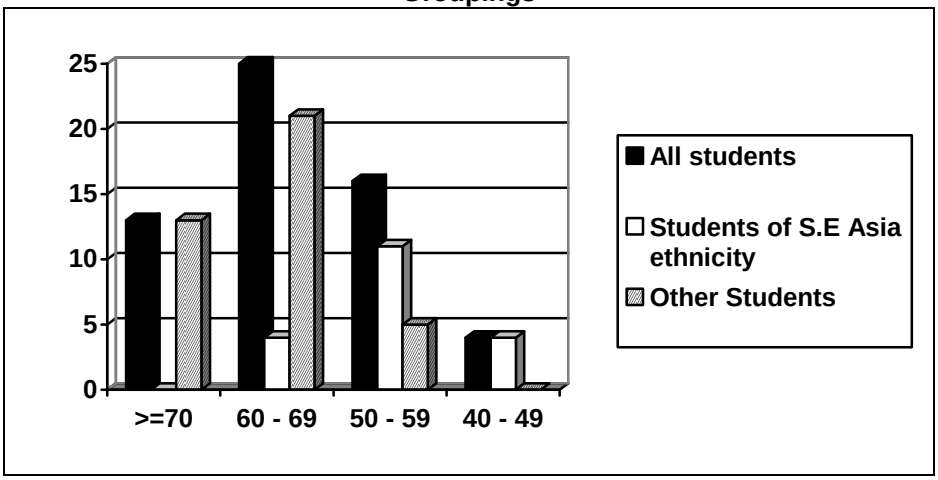
There appears to be a relationship between those students who attended the Library workshops and those students who did well overall:

Table 1: Disparities in performance between students attending and not-attending library workshops

Percentage of students in the top-half of the class assessment attending the library workshops	97%
Percentage of students in the bottom-half of the class assessment attending the library workshops	59%

Additionally, students of South-East Asian origin demonstrate difficulties in performing well in this module:

Figure 1: Comparative Assessment Performance of Students from South East Asian Ethnic Groupings



External Examiner Feedback

The external examiner commended the quality of students' work on this module and the level of effort that this represented.

Student Feedback Returns.

The student feedback for this module represented a very high level of satisfaction with the module and an improvement from last year.

Table 2: Student Feedback Return Scores

	Clarity	Achievement	Lecture content	Presentation	Lecture Room	Tutorial Content	Appropriate Tutorials	Tutorial Room	Handouts	Reading	Library Resources	Appropriate Assessment	Assessment Feedback	Perceived Relevance
2006-7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.7
2005-6	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.1	4.4	4.2	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.4

Statistically significant improvements were achieved in all areas bar clarity.

Qualitative transcripts also related a very high level of satisfaction with the module especially in terms of the knowledge of the lecturer and the relevance of the module. The impact of tutorials was noteworthy. In response to the question 'what where the things that you particularly liked about this module?' students responded:

' The tutorials and group interaction'

'Tutorials were interesting to apply theory to practical examples'

'Tutorials were informative and got a chance to use what you learnt in lectures in examples'

'Tutorials very interesting, helped to reinforce the topics.'

There were no common themes in terms of the limited suggestions for improvement made by students.

Reflection on the Impact of Changes Made and the Learning Experience of the students

The effect of individual changes on the learning experience of students is always difficult to discern. If the module is viewed holistically, the students demonstrably received a better learning experience that in the previous year both in terms of their levels of attainment and the way that the experienced the teaching to reach those levels of attainment. Evidence to support that individual changes to the module made at the beginning of the year were successful is presented below.

Table 3: Evidence for Successful Changes to Teaching Practice

Change to Teaching	Evidence for Success
Introduction of Workshop Tutorials	- better critical evaluation and synthesis skills as evidenced by improved assessment results - informal feedback from students - increase in student feedback rating on 'tutorial content' and 'tutorial appropriateness' - qualitative comments on student feedback returns
Up-Grading the Blackboard VLE	- improvement in the student feedback rating on 'reading'
Changes to the Individual Assignment	- significantly increased levels of achievement in the individual assignment - significantly increased levels of achievement between those students who chose to participate in library workshops and those who didn't - external examiner's comments
Introduction of new curriculum content	- increase in 'relevance' rating - qualitative comments from student feedback returns
New Module Framework	- limited evidence in terms of a slightly increased 'clarity' rating.

Proposed Changes to Teaching for the 2007-2008 Session

The success of the changes to the module means that very little should be changed in overall terms for the module apart from insuring that the case-studies and illustrative examples are updated and made more relevant.

The focus of effort should be on improving the learning experience of those groups of students whose are currently under-performing. The identification of best-practice in this area needs to be identified and implemented within the context of this module.

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Example used with BN3322 – International Operations,
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CONCEPTUALISING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY: REFLECTIONS ON A EUROPEAN STUDY

JANE ANDREWS AND HELEN HIGSON

Abstract

Commencing with a brief overview of previous literature in this area, this paper draws attention to eight 'Employability Competencies' articulated utilising knowledge gained during an EU-funded Leonardo international study that analysed graduate and employer perspectives over a two year period. These competencies, which are summarised for the purposes of this paper, represent part of a much larger Employability Framework developed by the paper's authors using the empirical study findings from four countries involved in the study. These countries were: UK; Austria; Slovenia and Romania.

Background.

The notion of graduate employability is a contentious issue that is both difficult to conceptualise and measure. Whilst some definitions of employability focus on graduates' abilities to synthesise personal and academic skills (Pierce, 2002: Knight & Yorke, 2004), nearly two-thirds of all graduate vacancies are open to graduates from any discipline with the type of skills required dependent upon the role to be carried out within a particular organisation (Raybould & Sheard: 2005).

In the UK graduate employability is often associated with graduate employment and measured as an educational outcome under the auspices of 'first destination' statistics; these statistics show the percentage of graduates in employment six months after graduation (Harvey et al: 2002). Whilst statistical league tables have become part of everyday life in Higher Education, it is difficult to see how they relate to the work-based requirements of employers. One study which did, however, aim to conceptualise and assess graduate employability was undertaken by Smith et al (2000), who developed a method of measuring graduate employment outcomes based on cohorts of UK students since 1992.

The performance measures developed and utilised by Smith et al revealed that at an individual level, the probability of unemployment or inactivity six months after graduation is influenced strongly by the individual's class of degree, subject studied, prior qualifications and social class background (2000). It would seem, therefore, that in addition to the quality of degree and level of transferable skills possessed by graduates, other factors come into play when determining employability. Such transferable key skills and competencies, which are identified in the literature, may be summarised as follows:

- Professionalism:
- Reliability:
- Ability to cope with uncertainty:
- Ability to work under pressure:
- Ability to plan and think strategically:
- Ability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking:
- Good written and verbal communication skills:
- Information and Communication Technology skills:
- Creativity and self-confidence:
- Good self-management and time-management skills:

- Willingness to learn and accept responsibility.

Adapted from: McLarty (1998), Tucker et al (2000), Nabi (2003), Raybould & Sheard (2005).

Methodology

Utilising a mixed methodological approach, the project comprised three distinctive stages: a literature review; an exploratory study; the administration of a large quantitative questionnaire (preceded by a pilot study). The management of the project was shared between Aston Business School's Research Centre in Higher Education Learning and Management (HELM), who led the first two stages, and the Fachoschullen Joanneum (Austria) who led the final stage. Throughout the project HELM acted as 'scientific advisor' to the project partners who included representatives from industry, higher and further education and graduate employment agencies.

The exploratory stage of the project comprised 35 qualitative interviews with graduates and employers across all four countries. Grounded in themes and issues identified during the literature review, the graduate interviews aimed to capture individual experiences of making the transition from education to employment. The employer interviews focused on managerial perspectives of supervising 'new' graduates during the first 12 months of employment. The interviews were conducted in the 'native' language of each country and, where appropriate, later translated and transcribed into English. They were then analysed utilising grounded-theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Following analysis of the exploratory study findings eight key ***Employability Competencies,*** were defined and framed for the purposes of the Project. A statistical research instrument in the form of a detailed questionnaire was developed in order to test graduate and employer perceptions of the value, relevance and usefulness of these competencies. Based upon discipline-focused knowledge and skills, two separate questionnaires were formulated; one for employers and one for graduates. Following a pilot study, 6000 questionnaires were administered to recent graduates and employers across all four countries. The response rate was just over 10%.

The Employability Competencies.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the Employability Competencies developed and tested during the project. This is followed by a brief discussion highlighting the project findings in respect of each competency.

Figure 1: Key Employability Competencies:

	Competencies	Definition
1	**Communication Skills**	The ability to communicate clearly and concisely, using a range of verbal and written methods)
2	**Team-working & Relationship Building Abilities**	The ability to work in teams and to utilise appropriate interpersonal skills to build relationships with colleagues, team members and external stakeholders
3	**Self and Time Management**	The ability to organise oneself, one's time and one's schedule effectively in any given work-related situation.
4	**Ability to See the 'Bigger Picture'**	The ability to see how things are interconnected and to approach work-related issues in a strategic and innovative manner.
5	**Influencing and Persuading Abilities**	The ability to communicate at all levels using influencing techniques and negotiation skills to positively influence others.
6	**Innovation & Problems Solving Abilities**	The ability to analyse problems and situations in a critical and logical manner and to apply workable, innovative and logical solutions to such problems.
7	**Leadership Abilities**	The ability to lead a team whilst taking responsibility for a task, giving direction, providing structure and assigning responsibility to others.
8	**Presentation Skills**	The ability to prepare and deliver effective presentations to different audiences in a wide-range of circumstances.

1. *The ability to communicate clearly and concisely using a range of verbal and written methods.*

The importance of good, all round, communication skills and abilities was emphasised throughout the Project by both employers and graduates. One of the main areas of weakness identified early on in the Project reflected graduate behaviour within the work environment. Some employers felt graduates were lacking the basic 'etiquette' normally expected whilst at work. For example, many employers noted that some graduates are unaware of the need to make one's presence known when first starting work in the morning (greeting one's colleagues). Other generic communication difficulties reflected casualness in electronic communications (e-mail and telephone conversations). Communication skills may be developed and enhanced across the curricula, but particularly: in coursework and assignments (essay and report writing practices); in the process of communicating with faculty staff (notably e-mail communications); and during experiences of work-based learning.

2. *The ability to work in teams and to utilise appropriate interpersonal skills to build relationships with colleagues, team member and external stakeholders.*

The Project findings highlighted the value of teamwork and relationship building, both of which form an important part of the overall graduate portfolio. Both graduates and employers identified 'working in teams' as one of the key features of graduate employment. The nature of such teams varies greatly, from small office-based groups of colleagues who meet on a daily basis, to large international teams working together electronically and virtually. Many graduates are expected to work cross-culturally and in a number of teams concurrently. Teaching and learning strategies which may be utilised to advance student team-working and relationship skills include: group and project work; tutorials; classroom 'team' discussions and debates; group focused case-studies; and work-based learning.

3. *The ability to organise oneself, one's time and one's schedule effectively in any given work-related situation.*

Good self and time management was identified early in the Project as being one area employers believe to be of particular importance. One of the key issues identified during the study related to graduates' difficulties in making the transition from what many perceived to be a relatively informal educational environment, to a more rigorous and formal work regime. Thus, a key component of the graduate portfolio, vital in assisting individuals 'fit' into the work environment, is reflected in high levels of self and time management skills. Such skills indicate a level of maturity and independence and can be promoted during undergraduate education by: adherence to university regulations and guidelines relating to coursework and assignment deadlines; good time-keeping in attending lectures and tutorials; and the use of independent study programmes and initiatives.

4. *The ability to see how things are interconnected and to approach work-related issues in a strategic and innovative manner.*

One of the key features of 'graduateness' identified during the Project related to an individual graduate's ability to see the 'bigger picture'. Such abilities reflect student progression across the undergraduate curricula and tend to be developed gradually as students integrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills with employability competencies and other life experiences. Various learning and teaching strategies may be utilised to promote student competency in this area including: an emphasis on 'contextual' learning strategies; case-study learning techniques; critical and analytical essay writing; 'real-life' focused assignments and projects; and work-based learning.

5. *The ability to communicate at all levels using influencing techniques and negotiating skills to influence positively others.*

The Project findings highlight the importance of influencing and persuading abilities within the overall graduate portfolio. Both graduates and employers identified influencing and persuading abilities as being integral to graduate employment – particularly in work situations where graduates may be dealing with older or more experienced colleagues. Teaching and learning strategies which may be

utilised to advance student competency in this area include: group work; tutorials; classroom discussions and debates; real-life learning techniques; and work-based learning.

6. *The ability to analyse problems and situations in a critical and logical manner and to apply workable, innovative and logical solutions to such problems.*

Problem-solving abilities represented one of the key features of 'graduateness' identified during the Project. Such abilities reflect student development and progress throughout the curricula and are usually acquired and developed gradually, as students' progress through their undergraduate careers. Numerous learning and teaching strategies may be utilised to promote problem-solving abilities including: case-study learning techniques; critical essay writing; problem-based assignments and projects; and work-based learning.

7. *The ability to lead a team whilst taking responsibility for a task, giving direction, providing structure and assigning responsibility to others.*

Early on in the Project it became evident that employers conceptualise leadership abilities differently to managerial skills. Whilst recent graduates are not expected to be 'ready-made' managers, they are expected to possess leadership abilities. Such leadership abilities may be developed: during periods of work-based learning; whilst participating in 'real-life' learning experiences such as a Business-Game; during group work and projects or in extra-curricula activities.

8. *The ability to prepare and deliver effective presentations to different audiences in a wide-range of circumstances.*

The high value placed on verbal presentation skills was evident throughout the Project, identified by both graduates and employers as an area of particular importance. Possibly the area of greatest weakness, many graduates admitted struggling with oral presentations, making this an area of some concern for employers and graduates alike. oral presentation skills may developed across the curricula, particularly during formal lectures and tutorials where undergraduates should be encouraged to develop and practice making oral presentations in front of peers and teachers.

Conclusion.

This paper has provided a brief snapshot of our project findings. The Employability Competencies were found to be equally applicable in each country included in the study. However, graduate employability is not just an issue for Business and Management studies; it is an increasingly important part of the graduate portfolio – irrespective of area of study or focus of degree. The Employability Competencies are not intended to be viewed as being separate to discipline-focused skills and knowledge. They should be seen, however, as an essential part of higher education; adding to discipline-specific knowledge in such a way that enhances student learning whilst encouraging individual development and growth. In conclusion, further study regarding how the Employability Competencies might be brought into the curricula is essential if the Business School is to continue producing highly employable graduates able to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

So what should we do with them? We hope this paper will stimulate debate on how we can integrate the Employability Competencies systematically into the curriculum.

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BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, ACCOUNTANCY AND FINANCE (BMAF) ANNUAL CONFERENCE, ASTON BUSINESS SCHOOL, 2-4 MAY 2007

CONFERENCE REPORT

ATAUR BELAL & CATHERINE FOSTER

Introduction

The Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance (BMAF) Annual Conference was held on Aston University's campus during May 2007. The conference provides colleagues with the opportunity to attend workshops, paper sessions and the chance to become more familiar with what the subject centre offers to colleagues across the subject area.

Ataur attended the conference funded through Aston Business School Research Centre in Higher Education Learning and Management (HELM). He found it an intriguing experience with the opportunity of networking with the various colleagues from other universities and also an insight into the role of Higher Education Academy (HEA) and its various subject centres including BMAF.

Catherine Foster & Helen Higson presented a paper entitled "Supporting Students Who Live at Home: Partnership as a Key to Success?" as part of the Dealing with Issues around Retention and Progression stream. In addition, Jane Andrews & Helen Higson presented a paper entitled "Enterprise and Entrepreneurship through Experience: Student and Employer Perspectives of the Value of Work-based Learning in Promoting Entrepreneurialism" as part of the "Enterprising Students and Staff – The Importance of Entrepreneurial Learning for the Needs of Small Businesses and Big Organisations" stream.

Conference Themes

The main theme of the conference was

"Meeting the challenges facing learning and teaching in a globalised world through research, evaluation, and reflective practice.

Globalisation has been restructuring our lives and working worlds profoundly, so that we live in a more complex, increasingly uncertain and changing world. This means that we constantly need to re-assess whether we are equipping all students with the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to cope with and earn a living in this world.

In business, management, accountancy and finance we face a bigger challenge than many other fields of higher education. As we concentrate on professional preparation for the needs of business, how do we ensure that essential scholarship and research inform the curriculum, the life-long learning of reflective students, and the life-long development of academics?"

Further information can be found at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/events/conference/2007

The conference began with a keynote speech by Professor Margaret Price of Oxford Brookes University on assessment strategy. Professor Price touched on some important issues on assessment. She discussed assessment types (formative v. summative), functions of assessment, and assessment design issues. She urged the audience to focus on assessment to drive students' learning experience rather than marking. During the conference two further keynote speakers presented. Firstly, Mr David Sadler of HEA on the role of HEA and its subject centres in shaping business education today and finally a presentation by Professor Gilly Salmon of Leicester University on new developments in e-learning. During this presentation, Gilly demonstrated the use of a variety of new technologies currently being used by other institutions including a virtual campus which had been created within the "Second Life" virtual environment. This presentation highlighted the wealth of facilities that are now available that can easily be adapted to be utilised within education.

Workshop Sessions

Interspersed throughout the day, a series of workshop and paper sessions were available for delegates to attend. For a full detailed list of sessions, including abstracts and contact details, please visit http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/events/conference/2007. The key themes upon which the sessions were grouped were:

- The Research-Teaching Nexus – What Does it Mean and How Can it be Delivered?
- Enhancing the First Year Experience – What Works and where is the Evidence?
- Research and Reflection on Practice – Designing Innovative and Effective Assessment with Timely Feedback for Large Groups
- Dealing with Issues around Retention and Progression
- Supporting the Learning of International Students
- Supported Learning
- Beyond Standards and Recognition – Supporting our own Professional Development as Reflective Practitioners - CPD
- Enterprising Students and Staff – The Importance of Entrepreneurial Learning for the Needs of Small Businesses and Big Organisations
- Enhancing the First Year Experience – What Works and where is the Evidence?
- Developing Effective Learning
- Supporting Effective Postgraduate Student Learning
- Approaches to Quality Enhancement
- Evidence from Practice – Developing the Skills of Scholarship and Critical Reflection among a Diverse Student Body

Reflections

Assessment and the issue of timely feedback play a very important role in the students' learning process. In Margaret's keynote speech on assessment thought provoking issues were raised on the design and role of assessment in the context of resource availability and increasing number of students. In this context, it is appropriate to ask whether the widespread use of end of term 2/3 hours written examination is the most effective way to assess students' learning. How do we provide effective and timely feedback in that context or do we provide any? If we do, then do the students engage with the feedback provided to them? These were some of the questions raised in her presentation.

In another workshop Margaret Price and Barry O'Donovan discussed the principles of good feedback, which includes, inter alia, timeliness provision of feed forward and the opportunities to improve. How do we provide feedback? Via a central collection point or from tutor's office? Electronically or in class? Written or oral? These were some of the questions raised in this workshop. The presenters finally provided a few sources for further information. In this regard, Oxford Brookes University's ASKe [Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange] project and their website [http://www.business.brookes.ac.uk/learningandteaching/aske] provide wealth of information for the interested parties.

As a result of the conference, Dr Andy & Kathryn Penaluna, who presented a thought provoking session entitled "Drawing Parallels for Competitive Advantage: Designing the Student Experience" have been invited to lead a session as part of the 2007/8 HELM seminar series (Thursday 6th March 2008). Further information regarding the HELM seminar series can be found at http://www.abs.aston.ac.uk/newweb/research/HELM/seminarprog.asp.

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APPENDIX 1: HELM SEMINAR SERIES 2007/2008

Seminar Series 2007-2008

Seminars will be held 12:30pm – 2pm, AMIRS MB256

(seminars will include a sandwich lunch)

Thursday 8th November - **Pete Reddy**
(Aston University)

'Becoming an Undergraduate: Integrating study skills and Integrating students'

Thursday 6th December – **Dr Laurie Lomas**
(King's College London)

'The Locus of Power in UK Universities'

Thursday 7th February – **Dr Julia Lawrence and Dr Kelly Ashford**
(Leeds Metropolitan University & Brunel University)

'Gender Differences in Coping Strategies Of Undergraduate Students and their Impact on Self-Esteem and Attainment'

Thursday 6th March - **Kathryn Penaluna & Dr Andy Penaluna**
(Swansea Institute of Higher Education)

'Drawing Parallels: Design and Business combined for Entrepreneurship Education'

Thursday 10th April- **Dr Karen Smith**
(Heriot-Watt University)

'The Conflicts and Traditions of Working in a Mass Higher Education System'

Tuesday 27th May - **Prof Andrea Nolan**
(University of Glasgow)

'The Challenges of Quality Enhancement'

APPENDIX 2: HELM TARGET JOURNALS

HELM Target Journals

Business and Management discipline-related journals

Journal	Ranking	Comments
American Statistician	**3**	Target ESG
Business Process Management Journal	**4**	Target for TOM Group
European Business Review	**3**	Target for ESG
Human Resources Management	**3**	Target for WOP Group
International Journal of Public Sector Management	**3**	Target for Possem
Journal of Knowledge Management	**3**	Target for KM
Journal of Management Development	**2**	Journal on WOP list
Journal of Organizational Change Management	**4 (TOM)** **3 (WOP)**	Target for TOM and WOP Group Impact 0.368
Training and Development	**4**	Impact 0.102

Education-related journals

Title	Rank	Impact Factor	Comment	Issues per year	Type	Refereed	Reviewed
Academy of Management: Learning and Education			USA	4	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Active Learning					Academic / scholarly	yes	
Active Learning in Higher Education			UK	3	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Applied Measures of Education		0.419					
Assessment and Evaluation in HE							
Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice							
British Educational Research Journal		0.526	UK	Bi monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
British Journal of Education Studies		0.263	UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes

British Journal of Education Technology		0.593	UK	Bi monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
British Journal of Educational Psychology		0.810	UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
British Journal of Sociology of Education		0.476	UK	5x	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Cambridge Journal of Education			UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Canadian Journal of Higher Education			Canada	3x	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Chronicle of Higher Education		No	USA based	weekly	Newspaper / trade		yes
Comparative Education		0.593	UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Comparative Education Review		0.562	USA		Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Economics of Education Review		0.495	UK	6x	academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Educational Action Research			UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Educational Admin Quarterly		0.388					
Educational Evaluation Policy Analysis		0.703	US	Quarterly	academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Educational Leadership		0.283	US	Semi annual	Journal academic/ scholarly		
Educational Policy		0.509	Based in USA				
Educational Psychology		2.892	UK	Bi monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Educational & Psychology Measurement		0.773					
Educational Psychology Review		1.333	US	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	Yes
Educational Research – UK		0.140	UK	3x	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Educational Review		0.390	UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly		
Educational Studies		0.339					
Education and Training			UK	9x	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Education Research			Cant find				
Higher Education		0.495	Highly rated journal (based in Netherlands)	8x	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Higher Education in Europe			Based in Romania	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly		
Higher Education Management & Policy			France	3x	Magazine/ trade		
Higher Education Quarterly			UK based	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Higher Education Research and Development			Uk	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	

Higher Education Review			UK based	3x	academic/ scholarly	yes	
Innov Education							
Innovation and Learning in Education							
Innovations in Education and Teaching International		0.200	Uk	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly		
Innovative Higher Education			Netherlands	5x	Journal academic/ scholarly		
Interact Learning Environment		0.435	UK	3x	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
International Journal for Academic Development			UK	Semi annually	Journal academic/ scholarly		
International Journal of Education Development		0.233	UK	6X	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
International Journal of Innovation and Learning			UK	Bi -Monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
International Journal of Management Education			UK. Journal of BEST, not highly rated	3x	Print		
International Journal of Management in Education			UK Forthcoming 2007	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Issues in Educational Research			Australia	2x	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Journal of Education Behaviour Statistics		0.659					
Journal of Education Policy		0.671	Uk	3x	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Journal of Educational Research		0.377	Us	Bi monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Journal of Excellence in College Teaching			Chapters in Good Practice Guide?				
Journal of Exp Education							
Journal of Further and Higher Education			Paper by Ann Davis				
Journal of Higher Education		0.333	Based in USA	Bi monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Journal of Learning Science		2.792	US	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Journal of Marketing in HE			Mentioned by Colleen				
Journal of Planning Education Research		0.536					
Journal of Workplace Learning			UK	8x	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Learn Instr		1.548					
New Academic			UK	3x	academic/ scholarly		
New directions in Higher Education			Based in USA				

Oxford Review of Education		0.300					
Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education			AUA journal, not highly rated				
Reflections on Higher Education			UK	Annual	academic/ scholarly	Yes	
Reflective Practice			UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Research Higher Education		0.521	Based in USA Netherlands	8x	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Research into HE Abstracts							
Review of Education Research		1.760					
Review of Higher Education		0.292	Based in USA	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Sociology Education		1.222	USA	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	Yes	yes
Studies in HE		0.662	Highly rated journal				
Teacher Development			UK	3x	Journal academic/ scholarly		
Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice			UK	Bi monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
Teaching in Higher Education			UK	Quarterly	Journal academic/ scholarly	yes	
The National Teaching and Learning Forum			No				
ultiBASE Journal	Ceased Publishing		Australia	monthly	Journal academic/ scholarly		
Westminster Studies in Education			Renamed				

Educational Technology, Open and Distance Learning

Association for Learning Techology Journal			
Austrialian Journal of Educational Technology			
Educational Technology Abstracts			
Journal of Educational Technology and Society		0.267	
Journal of Instructional Science and Technology			
Journal of Interactive Media in Education			
New Chalk			Bi-weekly newsletter
The Technology Source			

Policy, Management, Quality

Educational Management, Administration & Leadership			
Higher Education Abstracts			
Higher Education in Europe			Duplicated in Educ Related j

Higher Education Management			Practitioners & applied France (OECD Prog Link) Also in Educ rel j
Higher Education Policy			General Trends
International Journal of Educational Management			
International Journal of Institutional Management in Higher Education			France
International Journal of Leadership in Education			
International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education			
International Studies in Education Administration			
Journal of Educational Administration			
Journal of Excellence in Education			
Journal of Higher Education Management			USA
Journal of Higher Education Policy			See below
Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management			Good journal internationally recognised
Managing HE			
Policy Studies			
Quality Assurance in Education			
Quality in Higher Education			
Technology Analysis and Strategic Management	1*	0.446	
Tertiary Education and Management			
Total Quality Management	1*		

Good Practice Guide in
Learning and Teaching

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