2018-10-16

Let me edutain you! Practices of student engagement employed by new lecturers

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HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1532984

Let me edutain you! Practices of student engagement employed by new lecturers

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years, student engagement has become a commonly used term in HE across the United Kingdom, American and Australasian higher education (HE) systems. This article presents research on an area of student engagement absent from the literature, that of new lecturers' practices. Following detailed analyses of interview data after one year of teaching, the findings reveal a range of perceptions, pressures and tensions relating to student engagement which influence practice. Most lecturers described engagement as an emotional construct (the need for students to 'like' learning) as well as a cognitive construct (what they learn). However, there were tensions between the two and a need to overcome perceived barriers. We argue that lecturers can best be supported by acknowledging the time it takes to gain confidence, experiment and take risks, and appreciating their need to respond to different expectations.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 3 October 2017
Accepted 8 August 2018

KEYWORDS
Academic development; higher education; interactive; student engagement; teaching

Introduction

In an era of 'commodification of education' (Smith, 2007, p. 684) and changes to policy, practice and funding (Tomlinson, 2017), student engagement has become a contested area. Critics maintain that the concept has been weakly theorised (Kahn, 2014), has no single definition (Kahu, 2013) and requires a more holistic perspective (Zepke, 2015). There are calls for an enhanced understanding of the term to benefit students, who have to learn the rules of engagement to participate in academic practices and processes (Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013). Despite these debates, student engagement remains generally presented as a 'progressive' approach emphasising process, activity and interaction, as opposed to a 'traditional' conception of education focusing on academic content (Trowler, 2010).

Researchers agree engagement is a multi-faceted concept (Bloom, 1956; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Studies including behavioural (e.g., attendance, positive conduct), emotional (e.g., interest, enjoyment or a sense of belonging) and cognitive components (e.g., meets assignment requirements) (Lee, 2014) are often described as mainstream research (Zepke, 2015). Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013, p. 321) unpacked

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emotional engagement to reveal issues of resistance and resilience in the face of 'alienation, lack of relevance and the drudgery of study'. Others have included active citizenship in their definition (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Leach & Zepke, 2011). Kahu (2013) also integrates sociocultural perspectives (e.g., institutional culture), arguing that the process and outcome of student engagement are often confused and conflated.

Descriptions of engagement typically involve interaction and participation. Coates (2007) claimed active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging academic activities and formative communication with academic staff are features of student engagement. Interaction is a significant theme; though Gourlay (2015) argues that a focus on activity and participation threatens to undermine listening and thinking, skills still required for assessments. Massification and internationalisation also represent challenges to engagement as some students may lack the social capital such as cultural literacy and social networks to practice interaction (Krause, 2005).

Despite opposition, universities use student engagement survey data to measure and monitor HE (Trowler, 2010). At an institutional level, managers use engagement to assess good practice and areas for improvement, possibly leading to institutional change (Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2010). As a marker of success, the influence of engagement on retention rates and dropout has also featured in research. One of the reasons for this emphasis is financial, as universities seek to allocate resources appropriately (Ryan, 2005) and others avoid the financial penalties of withdrawal. Yet as Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008) highlight, this places the onus on students to take up available support.

Responsibility for student engagement has been widely debated. For many, it lies with the student, specifically '*the time and effort students devote to activities …*' (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2010, p. 1). The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2008) describes engagement as: '*the process whereby institutions and sector bodies make deliberate attempts to involve and empower students in the process of shaping the learning experience*' emphasising the role of the institution in engaging students. Bryson and Hand (2007) recommend three levels of engagement which lecturers should model: discourse with students, enthusiasm for the subject and professionalism with the teaching process. Finally, there is a view that all parties need to work together for engagement, as Harper and Quaye (2009, p. 6) discuss:

> … students should not be chiefly responsible for engaging themselves … but instead administrators and educators must foster the conditions that enable diverse populations of students to be engaged.

Most research on engagement centres on inter-relational engagement: engagement as autonomy, emotional engagement and engagement as connection and disjunction (Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013). Engagement in terms of autonomy reflects transitional agency whereby students develop awareness and insight over time (Case, 2007). However, student engagement can also be characterised by anxiety about contributing to class activities and class discourse (Kettle, 2011). For some students then, engagement entails demonstrating resilience and persistence (Bryson & Hand, 2007). Connection and disjunction might be said to encompass these tensions by showing to what extent learning connects to students' current meaning systems, possibly leading to feelings of isolation and alienation.

Few studies have focused on lecturers' views on engagement (Trowler, 2010). This is despite student engagement often being defined as 'educationally purposeful activities' or 'effective educational practices' (Kuh et al., 2008, p. 542) that require the 'right' behaviour of teachers and students. Indeed an academic's style and approach can adversely affect student engagement (Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013). Whilst many studies are said to demonstrate a positive correlation between teacher behaviour and student learning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), research focusing on teacher behaviour and student engagement are rare.

An exception to this is the Zepke, Leach, and Butler (2014) study of students' and teachers' perceptions of engagement in New Zealand. They identified nine teacher actions: feedback to improve learning, challenging students to think, availability for discussion, teaching to enable learning, providing opportunities to promote application of learning, caring about learning, making the subject interesting and encouraging students to question and challenge lecturers. The latter action is linked to developing active citizens – teachers have a responsibility to teach beyond operational principles to encompass questioning, participatory and ontological engagement (McMahon & Portelli, 2004). This reported that teacher views of engagement tended to focus on student behaviours rather than on their own. It concluded that teachers need to recognise engagement as a shared responsibility, so that the onus is not on students alone.

The paucity of research into lecturers' views on engagement may reflect the perception that student learning is rooted in an interest for the subject rather than in a learning-centred approach, indicating the on-going dominance of content-based approaches (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2008). As Zepke (2015, p. 395) reported:

> Teachers are aware of what students want from them but they are also blindsided, unaware of how important some teacher behaviours are to students.

Methodology

The research setting

This research was based in a post-1992 UK university with participants studying the postgraduate certificate in teaching and learning. 1992 was the year that John Major's government granted university charters to a number of former polytechnics and colleges of HE, providing opportunities to a wider population. Post-1992 universities are said to attract less research funding compared to older universities and to generally contain more ethnic and class diversity in the student body (Hunt, 2016). At the time of this study, the certificate was tied to probationary requirements; lecturers with less than three years full-time teaching experience were required to complete the programme. The course provides an introduction to teaching, supporting and assessing students, with elective modules providing space to consider agendas relevant to contemporary HE, for example, employability. The programme could be completed within 12 months with successful completion leading to recognition as a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The new lecturers had been university employees for varying timescales and teaching responsibilities. Most were on academic contracts with an expectation to engage in research activities. A few had arrived toward the end of the

previous academic year, but most had arrived immediately prior to the start of the taught programme.

The university has a long history of supporting teaching and learning; it was an early advocate of postgraduate teaching qualifications for new lecturers. As an HEA accredited qualification its content and focus align with similar courses offered across the sector (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009). It is foregrounded in student-centred learning (e.g., active learning, classroom interaction and peer-learning), inclusivity and research-informed teaching, with considerable emphasis on modelling practice.

This study was designed to examine the knowledge and experiences lecturers used to shape their practice. Specifically, the analysis presented here sought to address the following research questions:

(1) What practices do new lecturers employ to engage students?
(2) What does this tell us about how new lecturers perceive engagement?

Recruitment

University lecturers represent a hugely diverse community; lecturers can enter university teaching from a variety of routes (Butcher & Stoncel, 2012). Many become lecturers following a period of research training, and possibly post-doctoral experience. However, many enter HE based on their professional experience (e.g., teacher and nurse educators, health professionals, engineers and lawyers). Therefore cohorts on postgraduate teaching qualifications are recognised as interdisciplinary (e.g., Comber & Walsh, 2008). Academia is also a mobile profession, with new lecturers often geographically relocating (Green & Myatt, 2011). To accommodate this diversity a purposive sample of 13 new lecturers was selected for this study. The sample is too small to draw conclusions about differing entry profiles and prior experiences on lecturers emerging practice. However, this reflects the cohorts usually studying postgraduate teaching qualifications in HE (Comber & Walsh, 2008).

Data collection

This study captured data from participants throughout their first year of teaching. Data from the first phase of the study have previously been reported (e.g., Turner, Huang, Poverjuc, & Wyness, 2016) and included findings collected in their first few weeks of lecturing through a combination of semi-structured observations of practice and stimulated-recall interviews (following the approach of Calderhead, 1981). This article reports on the follow up semi-structured interviews that were held at the end of the academic year to explore practices and perceptions. The interview questions were:

(1) What shapes your teaching and learning practice?
(2) Has your teaching practice changed over this academic year?
(3) What do you think informed these changes?
(4) What changes (if any) have you seen in your own students' learning as a result of your changed practice?

Data analysis

All interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Content analysis was employed to 'mak[e] inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages' (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). The intention of the data analysis was not to make generalisations but to highlight and explore the emerging themes and patterns. Remaining open to the discovery of new themes and categories (Smith & Osborn, 2003) resulted in the following sub-themes emerging: types of engagement; engagement practices; responsibility for engagement; and confidence to engage.

Ethics

In addition to obtaining ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee and assuring all participants that their information would remain confidential to protect their identity, they were provided with an information sheet and asked to provide their consent. This confirmed their understanding of the process and their right to withdraw at any time without needing to justify their decision. Pseudonyms have been used in this article to ensure confidentiality.

Findings and discussion

Types of engagement

Reflecting the lack of a single definition in the literature (Zepke, 2015), respondents presented different perspectives on engagement. This is important if, as Trowler (2010) argues, practices hinge on definitions of engagement. Yannis suggested that engagement is key to learning:

> [E]ngagement is critical and if you don't get them engaged then forget it, the average mark goes low, they don't like you, they don't like the subject, they don't learn and so I think it's very important.

This perspective puts emphasis on students' emotions such as 'liking' the lecturer as much as 'liking' the subject and potentially conflates this with learning. Indeed Furlong et al. (2003) also consider emotions such as enjoyment and interest as synonymous with engagement. However, the tension between the cognitive and emotional dimensions of engagement emerged as a concern. For example, Luke regarded engagement as an emotional construct, achieved at the expense of cognitive development.

> You could spend half the lecture coming up with clever strategies to get the students engaged, but then you would be covering a lot less material. And in the end, I mean, what the students want is for you to cover the material that they need to know for the exam, you know, or for the assessment … and they would be annoyed with you if you spent all the time getting them to play games and then not telling them stuff.

In this way, Luke alludes to an emotional 'instrumental' approach to engagement representing 'false engagement' (Bryson & Hand, 2007). In other words, this approach does not necessarily support learning. However, as Kahu (2013) argues, the main problem with engagement may simply be a lack of distinction between the state of engagement, its antecedents and its consequences.

Ivan appeared to address engagement by distinguishing between enthusiasm for learning (emotional) and the level of difficulty (cognitive):

> If the students aren't getting it and they're not enthusiastic you know you've got to do something about it. If on the other hand the students are enthusiastic but they simply are not understanding then again you've got a different kind of a problem and certainly I find one of the most useful things to do whenever there's any kind of difficulty with the teaching is that you just – you can just talk to the students about it and say "This isn't getting across very well is it?" and they very often will say "No, it's not." [laughs] "Okay, can we try something else?" Just negotiate, I have no problem with that.

Although Ivan's reflections resonate with those of Yannis, he is more interested in the direction of influence (Kahu, 2013), thereby distinguishing between emotional engagement *for the purpose of* cognitive engagement. So whilst this supports the point that engagement might be categorised as cognitive and emotional (Trowler, 2010), for some lecturers the process required an understanding of how these interrelate.

Strikingly, Ivan's quote also supports McInnis (2003) who argues that engagement must be negotiated with the student. Like Ivan, Kacey relied on dialogue with students to understand their cognitive engagement:

> if you're teaching 160 students and a large number of them say "that was really hard, we didn't get that" then that's obviously made me try to ensure that the next session was not necessarily simpler but easier for them to understand. I would not use the same format that hadn't gone down very well, because that would be pointless if they didn't like it or it wasn't working. So basically trying to respond to student feedback as you go rather than waiting until you get to the end of a module and it's too late.

In other words, the lecturer must adapt engagement practices according to the student response and foster social connections (Krause, 2005). However, this process relies upon students' accurate self-regulation (Fredricks et al., 2004) as well as on a positive relationship between staff and students (Smith, 2007).

Engagement practices

The majority of data in this study described engagement in terms of interaction (Trowler, 2010), via questioning, discussion, group work and problem solving. However, there were a number of perceived barriers to practicing these methods, including group size and content. For a few, overcoming these issues meant they could consider further developments such as constructive alignment and active citizenship.

Group size

Interaction was most notably problematic in large lectures, otherwise referred to as 'large group anonymity syndrome' (Trowler, 2010, p. 45). Imogen presented these as issues outside of her control (e.g., room size and time of day) and resigned herself to accepting the department's privileged teaching approach:

> I have discussed this with my colleagues and it turns out that most of them do not leave the students to work on their own during the lecture, not even to solve exercises on their own, they say it would be very difficult for them to be calm again because they start talking either for how to solve the exercise or for any other reason and we have big groups so it's very difficult to manage bringing them back to order. Yeah, so I realised that I cannot really do

> things as I would like in some occasions and that is one of these occasions because things in my department work in a certain way. So I cannot come and change things.

To address these perceived problems, lecturers needed time and confidence to explore strategies. Yannis made a series of attempts to engage the whole class before she found the technique that worked best for her – physically moving to the back of the lecture theatre:

> students are frightened to talk in front of another 220 – so it worked, absolutely worked and that became my routine since then. And I thought I'm not only engaging the front of the class, I'm engaging the back, I'm engaging the middle and I'm engaging people who would not normally talk.

As this indicates, encouraging interaction could involve relatively small changes. For others, bigger changes were planned through incorporation of group work and out-of-class activities:

> I'd like to include more tutorials, trying to split into smaller groups because I think next year I will have a larger class than this year, even bigger. So I'll try to organise some tutorials with exercises and maybe start with these practical sessions earlier and maybe during this I can also add more exercises, maybe put these exercises on the portal, ask them to do them in advance and then check them during the lectures.

Here Lucy was beginning to focus on process activities in order to develop students' minds (Trowler, 2010). To do this, she was planning to present content of the sessions in other ways at other times.

Content

Trowler (2010) describes traditional approaches to teaching as focusing on the transmission of information to students. Lucy's response suggests that in some disciplines, these traditional, content-based approaches still dominate (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) acting as a barrier to interaction.

> [I]n my discipline I cannot organise a session completely based on discussion with the students because, yes, I need to show them some facts and some theorems, you know, in maths things. Yes, I can have a discussion about the interpretation and results but not on the entire lesson, so that type of activity doesn't fit my subject.

However, even when lecturers did encourage student interaction, it was not always considered successful, as found by Bryson and Hand (2007). Luke recognised value in students influencing each other (Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013) but described problems stimulating interaction, even in smaller groups:

> [I]t's meant be an interactive experience and I found it very difficult to get them to do that. I found myself, essentially, talking for an hour and even when I said, "Break up into groups of two and work on this together." They'd just sit there silently staring at the bit of paper in front of them and it felt a bit hopeless.

Natasha spoke about how she had revised the amount of information she covered in lectures:

> [T]he first lectures were with a lot of information […]. So in future lectures I tried to decrease the amount of information and go into details and highlight information and reinforce

> information with videos, and I think that was better, that was better for the students, that helped them a lot.

This acknowledges that engaging students can result in deeper learning (Hockings, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty, & Bowl, 2008), focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of information (Bryson & Hand, 2007). Indeed, several lecturers such as Ivan discussed the need to strike a balance between delivering sufficient subject content and enabling students to pursue self-directed or experiential learning tasks:

> I probably gave them too much freedom because I was frightened of making it too structured but clearly there was some kind of compromise between the two that's required. It's definitely a balancing act and I didn't get the balance quite right. And the best I can say is they all seemed to really enjoy it and they've been very appreciative of the unit at the end.

Consideration of this balance not only shows consideration of learners' needs but also recognises another important trait of deep learning, the extent to which students practice autonomy (Bryson & Hand, 2007).

Constructive alignment

So far engagement has been described in terms of interaction within sessions, but for some new lecturers this had already sparked ideas about how to incorporate assessment. The explicit linkage of teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks leads to constructive alignment. Reflecting a learning-centred approach to teaching (as opposed to a teacher-centred or student-centred) this has been shown to help students construct their own learning more effectively and independently (Biggs & Tang, 2007).

For Ivan, assessment was integral to the engagement process and he was aware of the alignment needed for students to fully engage:

> I want to integrate the assessment and the teaching processes so to introduce the assessments right at the beginning, so that they can be thinking about it and working on it right the way through so that they will be relevant for the lectures and that kind of thing.

This is important if as Krause (2005) suggests, engaging teachers use assessment to shape the student experience and encourage engagement. By doing this Ivan describes engagement in terms of active learning (associated with deep learning (Hockings et al., 2008; Kuh et al., 2008)), integrated assessment and developing students' self-awareness (Case, 2007).

In turn Ivan developed enough confidence to enhance his process and experiential oriented teaching method:

> I actually want to change it and start to introduce much more consideration of processes … So they'll have to research the materials to do their particular piece of assessed work, but they will also have a much broader understanding of the interrelationships. So when they go and research the materials for themselves they will know what characteristics they're looking for, what it is they need to understand about the origins, the chemistry, the physics, whatever. Much more process based, less dry.

This shows the process of learning to teach and the importance of trial and error. Indeed, there is acknowledgement here that engaging students more effectively required curriculum re-design and professionalism with the teaching process (Bryson & Hand, 2007).

Active citizens

Given the relatively little time lecturers had been teaching, it is perhaps unsurprising that wider engagement of students outside the classroom had not yet been considered. However, Ray had been pleased with the results of his module in terms of the behaviour of the students outside the classroom:

> [I]t's not just their understanding of the subject, I've actually seen them go out and do more things which is what I'm encouraging them to do. So, you know, the students who were on the module set up the [xxxx] society at the University and they're all really active in it.

Trowler (2010) refers to this type of engagement as 'social reconstructionism' which empowers students to see the inequities in the world and to change it. This perhaps reflects the increasing emphasis on developing active citizens as a feature of engagement (e.g., McMahon & Portelli, 2004). It also supports Wimpenny and Savin-Baden's (2013) observation of the connection between engagement in meaningful learning and innovation.

Responsibility for engagement

Given the conflicting views about responsibility for student engagement in the literature, it was interesting to explore how new lecturers perceived their role.

Student responsibility

Despite endeavours to engage students, and alter their teaching to facilitate effective learning, most lecturers iterated that engagement is a two-way process, requiring commitment from the student as well as the lecturer, as explained by Kacey:

> [S]sometimes you think, well, I'm trying to help the students, I'm trying to help them to learn or encourage them to learn and there has to be a certain level of commitment on their part. So it's just made me think that you can go out of your way to help them to learn and encourage them to learn and create a good environment but they also have to put the effort in as well and – it's not always down to the lecturer, it's kind of a relationship between the lecturer and the student.

Yet the relationship that Kacey speaks about is, according to Smith (2007, p. 12), under threat:

> HE teachers are increasingly likely to find themselves struggling against cultures that objectify students and reduce them to customers and consumers of 'product' courses, and while their professional discretion is increasingly eroded, teachers still, through their efforts, prop up the very regime they oppose by supporting students at a human level.

So despite changes to HE, students reflecting on their role and what it can do for them (Tomlinson, 2017), a shared responsibility for engaging students was recognised. However, as demonstrated by Ray this was coupled with an appreciation of academic challenge:

> you don't want to make them completely anxious but you want them to be slightly uncertain, right? So that's the experiential learning cycle, right, so I think that, as far as that goes that was quite good.

This supports the view that although academic challenge is an important facet of engagement (Zepke et al., 2014), students tend to develop an awareness of this over time (Case, 2007). It also suggests that engaging teachers create a stimulating intellectual environment and value high standards (Krause, 2005).

Some of the literature on engagement focuses on the potential anxiety caused by interaction (Kettle, 2011). Ivan also noted the potential for certain activities to impact on students' emotional engagement:

> [W]hen you do participatory activities people have to be prepared to speak up in front of and talk to their peers. Quite a lot, particularly at undergraduate level, find that difficult and it's not always a case of group size but that's clearly a contributing factor. Some of them are terrified to speak to anybody because they're frightened of being stared at or ridiculed for their ideas.

This demonstrates an awareness of the support students require to overcome challenges of interaction. Indeed, Oscar too made a pertinent comment about the importance of guiding students towards deeper engagement:

> [T]here is a term in education, delayed appreciation, when they might have really negative views on an activity at the start but then in, after some time, realise that in fact, it did help them to learn more where you develop particular skills and knowledge and they come to like it and come to appreciate and value these sort of activities. [It's about] being honest to them about that and saying, this is going to be challenging; that's the point, you're learning stuff, you might not always find it totally comfortable but that's, that's, finding that balance I think is tricky.

Achieving this balance is important if students are to be resilient and resistant in the face of alienation as discussed by Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013). Indeed, this balance is all the more important in light of Gourlay's (2015) point that valorising interaction might put some students at a disadvantage in HE.

Lecturer responsibility

Despite advocating a shared responsibility for engagement, there were ways in which lecturers recognised a need to develop their own practice. Kacey drew attention to the importance of physical performance (e.g., pace of delivery and physical positioning within the classroom).

> [I]f there's one thing I could work on, more than anything, it would that, just to really have a strong sense of a good way to deliver and pace it and think about some clarity, just clarity of voice, trying to engage people just with the voice and things like that … Initially, you just want to, sort of, get through it, get the content there, deliver the lecture. And then once you've done that and you know you can do that, then you want to do it a bit better.

Interestingly, Ivan also identified enthusiasm for the subject as a tool for engagement:

> I'm just there and I'm talking about something that I like and care about and that I find interesting and that seems to be far more useful than any kind of trickery in the production of a lecture or anything like that.

This is especially important in light of findings from Bryson and Hand (2007), who found that enthusiasm was more important for engagement than professional skills.

Another view put forward by Ray was that lecturers, rather than acting immediately on student response, should develop a more critical approach to feedback:

> You can't always teach them the way they want to be taught but you cannot get too far away from it, so you've just got to experiment on them all the time, with them all the time, experiment with them. I think that's really important.

Arguably, this kind of experimentation and risk taking has been made harder since the introduction of the National Student Survey (NSS) and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017). Indeed, researchers focusing on the emotional labour of lecturers (Berry & Cassidy, 2013) and coping mechanisms in the face of increasing student numbers and workload (Darabi, Macaskill, & Reidy, 2017) have argued for more lecturer support. One suggestion has been to utilise a transition strategy for supporting lecturers as they move from early, to mid, to later career (Fraser, Greenfield, & Pancini, 2017). This approach would usefully acknowledge the time required for lecturers to refine concepts such as student engagement and develop practices.

Confidence to engage

For many participants confidence was integral; over time they could learn how students best engage and have the confidence to utilise different strategies. Yannis expressed anxiety about possible scenarios if students did not respond:

> when you want to engage them you get frightened yourself – what if I start engaging them and they don't want to get engaged? What if I ask them and they don't answer my question, what if I get them to talk and I can't get them to shut up and lose the control?

Though Bain (2004) described the best teachers as surrendering power as experts and becoming co-learners with students, these responses suggest a more complex picture. Lecturers have to negotiate privileged teaching practices and disciplinary norms, as well as develop strategies and confidence over time. Yannis charted the progress she had made growing in confidence on each occasion, and reaching the point where she felt comfortable. Realising she could 'control' the large group was an important moment:

> But I think in terms of confidence, in terms of how do you engage the student, in terms of how to deal with the big group and not to be frightened of them and knowing you can control them and it's not about your size, it's not about your gender, it's about what is good in here, I mean your confidence, how you deal with them and you've done it once, you can do it twice.

Sometimes feedback from colleagues helped their development. Initially, Polly found it difficult to gauge how far she should, or could, interact with her students, and found peer feedback helpful in developing interaction:

> [O]n the whole I like to get the group doing and I think over the last year I've become more confident in allowing that to happen and not jumping in too quick, getting them to come up with the answers more, questioning more.

Similarly, Luke hoped that his teaching schedule the coming year would allow him to develop his presentation style, particularly since his teaching content has already been planned:

> I'm hoping that I will have a bit more flexibility or a bit more opportunity to work on how I'm presenting it and looking at things like interaction and that sort of thing.

An important assumption here is that lecturers will have certain freedom and flexibility to develop their teaching in response to lessons learned and improved confidence. However, as this article demonstrates, there are many factors and unforeseen pressures that can influence these processes.

Conclusion

Despite an increasing emphasis placed on student engagement by universities and politicians, there is a surprising lack of research into lecturers' views on student engagement. This article sought to investigate *practices* of new lecturers to engage students and sheds light on how new lecturers *perceive* engagement.

Perspectives on engagement highlight the emotional dimension of engagement and perceived tensions between this and students' cognitive development. Whilst some appeared to conflate the two and resisted spending too much time enthusing students, others recognised emotional engagement as a prerequisite for cognitive engagement.

There was a shared understanding of engagement as interaction during individual sessions. However, incorporating questioning, discussions and problem solving activities into their teaching required confidence and risk taking, especially to overcome perceived barriers such as group size and content. For a few this had already led to new considerations about how to better design assessment for engagement and to encourage students to become active citizens.

The interviews revealed deep-seated anxiety about interacting with students and fear of 'getting it wrong'. As such this study hints at an emotional impact of engagement for lecturers as well as students, which warrants further research. This may in part be due to the monitoring of HE via surveys and their impact on retention and attendance (Trowler, 2010).

Encouraging a more critical perspective among new lecturers might help legitimise their questioning and address the broader picture of student learning rather than narrow notions of 'right' behaviours (Kuh et al., 2008). This might, for example, include different concepts of engagement and the long-term implications if only certain behaviours are of value (Gourlay, 2015). In the face of increased monitoring and evaluation, all academics must be constantly supported to develop resilience and persistence so they can take risks and experiment with teaching methods.

One way to do this is to take a transition strategy as argued by Fraser et al. (2017), with stratified support according to whether the lecturer is in their early, mid or later career stage. Arguably the requirements for a new lecturer learning to engage with students are different to a mid-career lecturer with responsibilities across a programme or stage. This approach would not only acknowledge the time it takes for lecturers to develop positive relationships with students, as well as their confidence and practice as teachers, but allow for the refining of learning practices that are integrated and intentionally designed. It could also contribute to a positive culture of professional development that extends across a lecturer's career, rather than concentrating on the initial teaching qualification.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr Lynne Wyness and Oxana Poverjuc for their support with this research.

Disclosure statement

AQ1 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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