



UALL Work and Learning Network: Network News: April 2021

Welcome to the April edition of the newsletter.

Editorial

This has been an eventful month for news as the UK and its institutions step closer towards full campus reopening. In this April edition we have included a fantastic spotlight contribution from Lester who has a unique perspective on degree apprenticeships, some useful updates from the Government regarding Covid-19 reopening plans, some notes on UALL's engagement with the new debates surrounding lifelong learning and UVAC's timely *State of the Nation* event. We have a reminder for registration at the 'Work Integrated Learning Among Gen Z and Y Conference' and a first call for a free network event *Equality Diversity and Inclusion: Championing Working Practice That Empowers And Sustains Change (working title)* taking place online on the 30th of June 2021.

Spotlight

Dr Stan Lester is an established researcher and writer in the field of work and learning with many ground-breaking projects and commissions. Stan's work is both accessible and significant for identifying current trends and further research. As academic practitioners, we have used Stan's Model A and Model B professionals with degree apprentices as a way of introducing the possibilities of 'change' that could be applied to professional practice. Stan has kindly provided links to his website and publications.

Dr Stan Lester: Degree Apprenticeships and professional registration

I started a DProf at Middlesex University back in 1998, and it fuelled both my work with professional bodies (the project was about setting up a qualifying and registration system for conservators) and work-based higher education. Over the last two decades I have been involved in consultancy with membership and registration bodies from fields

as diverse as law, mediation, occupational rehabilitation and architecture, as well as research and development on various aspects of work-based learning (WBL) mainly with colleagues from Middlesex. In the past the main crossover has been experienced practitioner entry, where APEL and project-based learning has allowed unqualified practitioners to gain academic qualifications and professional accreditation, and continuing development. Degree Apprenticeships have brought a WBL approach to mainstream professional entry-routes, and they provide a neat convergence between two major areas of my work. Since the 1990s and involvement with Higher Education for Capability and the Ufi-Learndirect 'Learning through Work' scheme (both long-gone) I have been an advocate of work-based or work-integrated professional entry as an alternative to the dominant 'sequential' route (a full-time degree followed by full-time work-based training), and it has been good to see it finally being given some impetus at a national level. To offer some thoughts:

- Degree Apprenticeships are facilitating new entry-patterns in fields as diverse as policing, where they are contributing to an updated approach to professionalism and an all-graduate workforce, nursing, where among other things they are opening up progression pathways for assistant-level staff, and architecture, where they offer an arguably more relevant (if currently minority) alternative to lengthy and expensive full-time education.
- Degree Apprenticeships need to do more than run 'on' and 'off-job' learning in parallel – done well, they should integrate academic and practical learning seamlessly. This makes effective three-way working relationships – learner, employer and university – critical.
- Integrated learning can enable entrants (including school-leavers) to reach the point of being able to practise competently and independently more quickly than sequential routes – sometimes much more quickly – although the evidence is localised and this is a good area for further research.
- To facilitate new forms of entry, professional and registration bodies need to have a clear notion of what practitioners need to be able to do to act effectively, now and into the future – not in terms of narrow competencies or behaviours, but in a resilient and global sense that allows for emergent career patterns, developing technologies and changing working contexts.

Some further reading:

Lester (2014) *Association and self-regulation in smaller professions* (Avista Press), <http://devmts.org.uk/asr.pdf>

Lester, Bravenboer & Webb (2016) *Work-integrated degrees* (QAA), <http://devmts.org.uk/wid.pdf>

ComProCom Erasmus+ project on professional competence, <http://devmts.org.uk/comprocom.htm>

Lester & Bravenboer (2020) *Sustainable Degree Apprenticeships* (Edge Foundation study), https://www.mdx.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0033/565863/sustainable-degree-apprenticeships-2020.pdf

Lester (2020) New technology and professional work, *Professions & Professionalism*, <http://devmts.org.uk/tech&prof.pdf>

There are more professions- and WBL-related resources at <http://devmts.org.uk>

Stan is sole principal of Stan Lester Developments and lives in Dulverton, on Exmoor. His spare time is divided between exploring the moors and surrounding area with his partner Philippa, and running a walking web site, exmoorwalker.uk.

Post Covid – What will Work Based Learning Look like after the country ‘re-opens’?

At the end of March, the UK took additional steps towards ending the pandemic isolation to allow gatherings of up to 6 outside. On the 12th of April, non-essential retail shops and hospitality venues reopened, with restrictions due to loosen further on the 17th of May with the allowance of 6 allowed indoors, and by the 21st of June all limits on social contact should be removed. Despite a disconcerting lack of news in the early part of the year as commented on by The Guardian in this article: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/apr/06/universities-angry-failure-include-reopening-covid-roadmap>. The Government issued a statement on the 13th of April that the opening of universities will coincide with step three of the roadmap out of lockdown, which will take place no sooner than the 17th of May 2021.

Opening Institutions

As of the 13th of April 2021, a statement has been issued that Universities are now set to reopen no sooner than the 17th of May. Some providers have been critical of this decision – read more in this article from The Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/apr/13/university-campuses-in-england-will-not-reopen-until-mid-may>. To read the letter from the Minister Of State For Universities to providers about returning to in-person teaching, please click here to download - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/16e7f22b-c7a8-4a86-9f2c-9b8008ec7321/letter-to-aos-130421.pdf>.

In preparation for reopening, the government has provided HE tiers of restriction for institutions to follow:

HE tier 1 (default position)

HE providers should combine blended learning with face-to-face tuition while following the requirements of this guidance, and public health guidance (for example, the appropriate use of face coverings).

HE tier 2 (fallback position)

HE providers should move to an increased level of online learning where possible. You should prioritise the continuation of face-to-face provision based on your own risk assessment. We expect that, in the majority of cases, this will be for those courses where it is most beneficial (for example, clinical or practical learning and research).

HE tier 3 (where stricter measures are needed)

HE providers should increase the level of online learning and only retain face-to-face provision for priority courses (for example, clinical and medical courses), and in as limited a number of situations as possible.

Students should follow government guidance published as part of any national restrictions, including remaining in their current accommodation and not returning to their family home or other residential accommodation. This is to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus through travel. In these circumstances, you should support students who remain by keeping services for students open, such as university libraries and catering facilities.

HE tier 4 (last resort)

We expect the majority of provision to be online, with buildings open only for essential workers and students who are required to attend because in-person teaching is essential. This should include the continuation of essential research. In the event of a possible outbreak on site, you should refer to the relevant [Education Action Card](#) that relates to managing possible outbreaks in education settings (GOV.UK, 2021).

These tiers and more can be found via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>

Although some study spaces and libraries are becoming available to students in reduced capacity (for example, singular study spaces on separate library floors), most teaching campuses are currently remaining closed. Please find a detailed list of all UK universities and their current statuses below:

<https://www.studentcrowd.com/article/university-responses-to-covid-19>

Teaching – in person, online or both?

One of the difficulties in this transitional period of re-opening is deciding on the methods of teaching for the next section of the academic year. There are three possibilities that seem to present themselves: a return to in-person tutelage, the opportunity to remain solely online, or the possibility of a ‘hybrid’ approach that combines the two. Currently, only practical courses with hands-on learning courses (for example, nursing within work-based learning) are requiring the presence of the students upon campus, with other courses taking place online until the 17th of May.

The QAA has recently published the results of its latest survey in the impact of good practice in digital delivery on student engagement, progression and achievement, which can be found below:

https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/the-impact-of-good-practice-in-digital-delivery-on-student-engagement-progression-and-achievement.pdf?sfvrsn=fbfad581_10

Business/Education

Those within the field of work and learning who have direct interactions with employers and employees have experienced an entirely different academic year to any that they have taught before. Although the ‘policy’ to work from home wherever possible is still in place throughout this period, it will be interesting to see how businesses adjust to the re-opening and how our students/apprentices/learners will be affected. Both Covid and Brexit has affected businesses during this period, The Confederation of British Business Industry (CBI) points to some of these changes for the UK <https://www.cbi.org.uk>.

As practitioners of work and learning, we are well accustomed to the ‘blended’ approach that operates both on a personal level and at a distance. However, it is clear some models adopted within this Covid time-period will have an influence upon educational structures within universities and businesses for years to come. Is the hybrid model sustainable for a new post-covid digital landscape if universities return to an older face to face model of services? For those who have learners off-campus, there

could be added complications for campus re-openings that must consider the uncertainty for 'partner' businesses that now have to adjust how their employees access the workplace. For many, it is too early to tell what will be happening within work spaces until after the summer openings.

More information as to the return of businesses outside of the hospitality and retail sectors can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/closing-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-england>

Returning to work will now be a more tangible reality:

<https://www.iwfm.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/covid-19-guidance-returning-to-work.html>

Graduation 2021

Disappointingly for some students, it is becoming more and more unlikely that universities within the UK will be hosting summer graduation ceremonies. The Times Higher writes in their weekly roundup from the 2nd of April:

Graduation ceremonies planned for the spring and summer are increasingly being cancelled or postponed in the UK and further afield as it becomes clear that the crisis is unlikely to be over in the near future. The universities of Edinburgh, Durham and East Anglia are among those that have told students that their usual graduation ceremonies would not take place as planned, while others have announced that events will be postponed or combined with autumn ceremonies instead (THE, 2021).

This excerpt can be found within the roundup at this link:

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/week-higher-education-2-april-2020>

Although the lack of ceremony is discouraging, it is hoped that students this year will be graduating into a more thriving business environment, and that those who graduated in 2020 will find pathways for future employment. For those on furlough and part-time and mature learners, we hope that coming out of lock-down will offer new opportunities.

There had been some excellent blogs and tweets shared during this past year. If you have written a Covid-19 piece that would be a benefit to others at this time – please do let us know for the Network News. We would especially like to know how campus access, or a lack of, may have affected your practice this year.

New Strategic Goals for 2021

As Professor Jonathan Michie for UALL has previously affirmed that it is time for a new lifelong learning strategy on a national level in the UK. He has highlighted 4 areas for further development:

1. Skills
2. University level critical thinking across all disciplines
3. Collaboration with employers
4. The need to support long and flexible career structures

To read more on Michie's post, please check the link below:

<https://www.uall.ac.uk/posts/it-s-time-for-a-national-lifelong-learning-strategy-in-the-uk>

More about what this vision might look like can be found on the Guardian article:

<https://www.uall.ac.uk/posts/guardian-opinions>

UVAC Event – Review

University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) recently hosted a *State of the Nation* event <https://uvac.ac.uk/uvac-state-of-the-nation-spring-special-31-march-at-10h00/> that featured much up to date policy news regarding Degree Apprenticeship – thanks to Mandy Crawford and Adrian Anderson for hosting and putting together such a powerful message about the changes that are in motion. Speakers included Gillian Keegan MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills) and Jennifer Coupland, Chief Executive for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). The event covered areas such as:

- policy clarity
- measures of success – social mobility, levelling-up, tackling skills goes, productivity
- appropriate quality, assurance, inspection and audit systems – including Ofsted role, EQA of EPA
- qualification reform and higher technical education – review of post-16 qualifications, T levels and HTQs
- funding and appropriate funding bands
- refresh of degree apprenticeship
- Skills for Jobs White Paper – impact on HE (UVAC, 2021).

The policy paper mentioned in reference was:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>

UVAC's main website is <https://uvac.ac.uk>

Linking London

If you haven't already heard about 'Linking London' it's been a great source of information over the years. Sue Betts and others have been staunch advocates for lifelong and vocational learning.

On the website is a brief description:

About Us - Linking London is a unique collaborative partnership of London higher education institutions, colleges and other members (London Councils Young People Education and Skills team, OCN London, Pearson and unionlearn) who work collaboratively to maximise our contribution to targeted widening participation, student engagement and success, social mobility and in pursuit of improvements in social justice through education. We have been in existence since 2006. The core aims of our partnership are to support recruitment, retention and progression to and through higher education, in all its variety, including full and part-time, higher and degree apprenticeships and work-based learning into employment (Linking London, 2021).

Contact information for Linking London:

<http://www.linkinglondon.ac.uk>.

Email: info@linkinglondon.ac.uk

Tel: 020 3073 8186

Twitter: @Linking_London

UK, European and World news of interest

There is so much out there now about the world. Here are a few links that might be of interest.

UALL links to world associations

<https://www.uall.ac.uk/links>

Apprenticeships in Scotland:

<https://www.apprenticeships.scot>

Apprenticeships in Ireland

<https://apprenticeship.ie>

Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships>

Higher Education in the USA

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/college-finances-crisis>

Inside Higher Ed - USA

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/04/09/live-updates-latest-news-coronavirus-and-higher-education>

MIT - USA

<https://news.mit.edu/2021/building-more-diverse-global-lifelong-learning-community-during-pandemic-0222>

An April reminder that registration is still open for the Work Integrated Learning Among Gen Z and Y Conference

Supported by ESREA, Pearson College London will host an international book-launch conference on work integrated learning, taking place on 29 April 2021.

The new publication, Applications of Work Integrated Learning Among Gen Z and Y Students, contains 13 chapters from practitioners from the US, Canada, UK, Italy, France, Cyprus, India and Australia. The anticipated publication will be complemented with the virtual conference on 29 April.

Attendees can register their attendance free-of-charge on the conference website [here](#).

Here is the website address if the link needs to be reset:

<https://www.pearsoncollegelondon.ac.uk/pearson-business-school/visit-us/events/work-integrated-learning-conference.html>

Finally

A Call for a network online event will soon be going out for *Equality Diversity and Inclusion: Championing working practice that empowers and sustains change (working title)*. The event will be scheduled 30th June 2021 – with the draft schedule for 2 hours am and 2 hours pm. The event will be completely online and free of charge. Contact p.nottingham@mdx.ac.uk if you are interested in taking part in this event.

Social justice has always been a prevailing theme for those who have a stake in University work and learning, and this drive can be manifested in many ways: through teaching and facilitation, through supporting local skills enhancement, community service, or through collaborative employer engagement, and through influencing government policy. Creating opportunities for learning are at the heart of the practice

How might we revitalise this core principle of practice? We will find out in June...

Please keep sending us any news or links of interest! We are interested in all disciplines, transdisciplinary practice, work placements, internships, apprenticeships and continuing education. Let us know what is happening so that we can share and promote your work.

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