

Pedagogies of Liberation: Challenge, change, compassion, collaboration

18 June 2024, Novotel Sheffield Centre Hotel

Session abstracts

Keynote presentation, 09:35 – 10:15, Room: Loxley Firth Suite

Dr Manny Madriaga, University of Nottingham

Session 1.1, 10:20 – 11:00, Room: Loxley Firth Suite

1.1a Liberating learning: Empowering change in traditional education

Brett Koenig, De Montfort University

This session looks at revolutionising education through Immersive Learning. Embark on a journey to redefine traditional legal education by immersing in innovative pedagogical approaches.

Explore how we reassess curriculum design and teaching methods to prioritise critical thinking, creativity, and student autonomy. Through immersive learning experiences, we dismantle oppressive structures, promote diversity, and foster inclusive environments where freedom flourishes. Ultimately, enacting the promise of change within traditional educational models requires a collective effort to challenge norms, amplify marginalised voices, and reimagine education as a tool for liberation and empowerment.

1.1b Tackling awarding gap in third year engineering individual project for the advancement of ethnic minority students: Interventions inspired and informed by students

Dr Tosha Nembhard, University of Leicester

In 2020/2021, the awarding gap for a Good Honours degree between black students and white students was 17% on average across the UK. At university of Leicester, for the same year, the awarding gap between black students and white students was 14%, slightly better than UK average; however, the same figure for engineering was 31%. Further investigation revealed that the third-year individual project module was the worst performing module. Most UK undergraduate engineering programmes include an individual project conducted in the third year of the degree. The engineering project is delivered by the student but supervised by an academic.

Often, the research topic is set by the academic in line with their research field and the student's topic covers a portion of the academic's research interest.

To understand the factors contributing to the awarding gap, a research study was conducted in 22/23 and 23/24 involving general student surveys and focus groups with BME students. Its findings and implementation impact will be discussed in this presentation.

Session 1.2, 10:20 – 11:00, Room: Brealey Suite

1.2a Teaching as a social practice: Inclusive education for students with invisible disabilities

Dr Pratibha Ram, Kings College London

This session focuses on student-centred learning and explores how this pedagogical approach champions inclusivity and caters to the diverse needs of all students. Acknowledging that a positive and inclusive learning environment is vital for enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic success for all learners, it is crucial to address invisible disabilities, including cognitive, physical, and psychological challenges such as neurodivergence, chronic pain, and other mental health-related issues. The session aims to explore the challenges faced by these students, discuss effective approaches to address them, and reflect on the implementation of these strategies to promote inclusivity in educational settings, fostering a more inclusive and equitable education for all.

1.2b Co-produced knowledge and transformative optimism: Building resources to increase cultural competency through a student-staff research partnership

Dr Laura Kelly, Obed Addai Asantewaa, Soha Almeahadi, Leah Bedwin, Greta Doig, Dr Sarah-Jane Fenton, Dr Sarah Hall, Hiu Kei Priscilla Kam and Dr Carlette Ritter, University of Birmingham

The 'Talking Heads' project is funded by the University of Birmingham Education Enhancement Fund and involves a team of academic and professional services staff and student co-researchers. The research explores the experiences of students and staff who identify with one or more of the characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. This paper reflects not on research findings, but the process, through which various power relations were exposed, explored and remade. We reflect on our experiences and the ways in which they intersected with the challenges the project aimed to address, enabling new ways of thinking about recommendations for change.

Session 1.3, 10:20 – 11:00, Room: Huntsman Suite

1.3a Learning with the soles of the feet: Walking pedagogy and the development of a heritage trail

Dr Marcella Daye, University of Northampton

This presentation discusses a case study of the development of a community-based, participatory collaboration in the curation of a Black Heritage Walk which aimed to promote a sense of belonging, wellbeing and inclusion in a Midlands town. It focuses on the process of integrating personal memories, historical archives, and shared knowledge to inscribe new narratives of place that acknowledge and celebrate the presence and contribution of people of colour. Attendees will benefit from an insight on how to utilise walking pedagogical methods to create transformational educational experiences in public spaces.

1.3b Holding (green) space for students: A case study of improving mental wellbeing for students with "down to earth" environmental enterprise.

Dr Joanne Maddern, Swansea University

This paper provides an overview of a 1 day induction workshop with new, year 1 Geography students in a venue outside the walls of the University in collaboration with the environmental and social enterprise "Down to earth". Data collected on student well-being before and after the course showed a significant improvement in well-being after 1 day spent in nature and engaging in specific, curated activities.

Session 2.1, 11:15 – 12:15, Room: Loxley Firth Suite

2.1 Mental health in the classroom: ‘Collective close-reading’ as compassionate pedagogy

Dr Claire Hurley, University of Kent

According to a 2019 government report, the number of students in higher education experiencing mental health problems has doubled since 2014. As educators, how do we create learning environments that are caring and compassionate towards students with a range of mental health conditions? In this session all attendees will be asked to participate in a ‘collective close-reading’ exercise, to help build confidence through a collaborative learning effort. By creating structures and tasks that require our students to become active and collaborative participants in the learning culture of the classroom, we can improve students educational wellbeing, and help them to feel like valued members of our academic community.

Session 2.3, 11:15 – 12:15, Room: Huntsman Suite

2.3 Time for change: The anti-discriminatory personal tutoring framework

Sarah Shrestha Nèe Penney, Catherine Elliot, Dee Goldstraw and Professor Peter Wolstencroft, Manchester Metropolitan University

If you want to know how can you deliver an evidence-informed personal tutoring service that is empathetic, proactive, inclusive, student-centred, anti-discriminatory to a large number of students; this workshop is for you.

Session 3.1, 13:05 – 14:05, Room: Loxley Firth Suite

3.1 Noise in the learning space: Increasing our awareness of ‘noise’ and breaking down barriers that impact teaching and learning.

James Leinster, Antonia Genghi and Dr Fotios Mitskis, Nottingham Trent University

Noise in the learning space within higher education has not been highlighted in depth for some time (Hativa, 2000). We shine a light into the Noise Impact Space (NIS) on the beacons that emit noise to develop our understanding of noise and how we might manage it and create a better teaching and learning experience.

Session 3.2, 13:05 – 14:05, Room: Brealey Suite

3.2 Building a Holistic Foundation – Growing the Student Voice Through Transparent Introspection

Dr Thomas Malcomson, Cardiff University

As we look to promote holistic learning environments for our students, we must actively acknowledge the root challenges we aim to address; their manifestation; and if we’re authentic and realistic in our pursuit of solutions. This workshop presents three concepts:

1. Mental Health and Recovery in the Academic Cycle
2. Covert Inspiration for Introspective Self-Awareness
3. Authentic Transparency as Permission for Honest Reflection

Each concept will break down a challenge facing both students and educators, and limitations of traditional approaches. Providing actualised examples, participants will be

invited to share their own experiences and work together to develop approaches they can implement in their own practice.

Session 3.3, 13:05 – 14:05, Room: Huntsman Suite

3.3 Collaborative, playful, inclusive curriculum design using design thinking methods

Dr Carly O'Neill-Barrett and Sarah Briggs, University of Leeds

This workshop provides an overview of the Design Sprint method, an inclusive tool to facilitate change and create teaching communities championing change.

We will take you through the Design Sprint method and how it can be applied to create inclusive teaching spaces and to foster community. This includes activities that give a taste of the tools employed in the process, and opportunity to reflect on what this means for your context.

You will leave with a way to co-create inclusive solutions to learning and teaching problems that are impactful and joyful to participate in.

Session 4.1, 14:10 – 15:10, Room: Loxley Firth Suite

4.1 Rolling on the floor laughing: Learning from rolf movement to embody the pedagogical encounter

Dr Naomi Wynter-Vincent, Northeastern University London

How can we be more present in our bodies as we teach? How can we create safety in our bodies when we lecture, lead discussion, and sometimes encounter student resistance to active participation?

This workshop will draw on work in the field of somatics by pioneers Ida Rolf, Moshe Feldenkrais, Peter Levine, and Eugene Gendlin to explore the physical experience of teaching.

There will be time for sitting, talking, standing, walking, and – perhaps – rolling on the floor laughing (no promises!). Participants are invited (but not required) to explore simple, everyday movements and teaching postures with critical awareness and emotional presence.

Session 4.2, 14:10 – 15:10, Room: Brealey Suite

4.2 Third space education: Dr. Eric Williams, a park, and the independence of a nation

Dr Melanie-Marie Haywood, Birmingham City University

In this workshop, we will explore the possibility of third space education as a pedagogy of liberation. Taking lessons from the past, and from those who led on anticolonial and political movements for the education of the masses. We will use Dr. Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago as the case study, analysing his approach to assist participants in imagining what pedagogy of freedom in UK HE could look like.

Session 5.1, 15:25 – 16:05, Room: Loxley Firth Suite

5.1a The promise of critical pedagogy: Challenge, change and compassion

Dr Naz Ali and Birte Schmitz, Buckinghamshire New University

The focus of the presentation is on the use of critical pedagogy to create safe spaces of activism where students can engage in critical dialogue and voice the barriers they encounter in the current global social and political climate.

The potential benefits to participants of attending this presentation is to explore ways of developing confident, courageous, and compassionate global citizens in and beyond the university. We will share with participants how the learning space encourages hospitality leadership students to create 'new' social movements from their experiences, that challenge discrimination, injustice, and prejudice with the promise to bring about change in the world.

5.1b Creating memorable moments of learning to support the student experience

Dr Tina Byrom and Dr Laura Crawford, Loughborough University

Creating memorable moments of learning offers institutions opportunities to radically change their approach to HE pedagogy. However, practice is stuck: stuck in traditions of accepted practice and contextual factors. Privileging the lecture, for example, although creating efficiency in terms of resource, does little to inspire and engage students if delivered didactically (Evans, 2022). This presentation will provide insights into the barriers HE practitioners face when contemplating novel approaches to curriculum delivery in addition to examples of innovative practice or memorable moments of learning, where students have been inspired and engaged with their learning.

Session 5.2, 15:25 – 16:05, Room: Brealey Suite

5.2a Category is... Staff and student experiences of rainbow office hours

Lauren McDougall, Chiara Horlin, Adrian Sandtvos, Rafael Venson, Kirsty Hacking and Emily Nordmann, University of Glasgow

This presentation introduces staff and student experiences of "Rainbow Office Hours" (ROH), a distinct, safe space for LGBTQ+ community engagement in higher education, challenging traditional professional identity boundaries and promoting visibility and representation. Originating at the University of Glasgow in 2019, students are invited to attend specific times labelled as ROH with an LGBTQ+ member of staff to discuss anything LGBTQ+ related. This initiative has helped foster an inclusive campus climate, underscoring the need for broader institutional support for LGBTQ+ identities. The ROH advocates for integrating queer perspectives across academic disciplines, emphasising the critical role of representation in educational environments that go beyond classroom walls.

5.2b Combatting racial discrimination in healthcare education: A call to action

Dr Adam Vasco, University of Wolverhampton

Explore transformative strategies to combat racial discrimination in healthcare education with our vital session 'Combatting Racial Discrimination in Healthcare Education: A Call to Action.' Drawing from the groundbreaking NHS 2022 guidelines and Kendi's (2019) anti-racist framework, this presentation will discuss the impact of discrimination on Global Majority students in professional practice. Join us to learn about the University of Wolverhampton and NHS England's collaborative study outcomes, offering actionable steps towards an inclusive and equitable educational landscape for all healthcare professionals and beyond.

Session 5.3, 15:25 – 16:05, Room: Huntsman Suite

5.3a Progress in EDI education: How to stretch and challenge students

Laura Curran, Liverpool John Moores University

The demand for meaningful, effective, and relevant EDI education is ever-growing. It is imperative that educational institutions instil confidence in students to learn about the world around them and counter unwanted behaviours. Like in academia, students should be able to make progress in their EDI education, and this workshop will explore how 'stretch and challenge' strategies can be effectively implemented to deliver this progress.

5.3b The academic passing identity: Implications for awarding gaps

Nikolai Elkins, University for the Creative Arts

This session invites participants to explore the nuanced concept of 'academic passing'— the process of navigating and conforming to dominant, often heterosexualised, academic and societal norms and expectations to achieve success or recognition. Through reflective activities and insights from current doctoral research, we will examine the intersections of academic passing with engaged pedagogies, as inspired by bell hooks. Participants will leave equipped with an understanding of academic passing in their disciplines and strategies to foster a more inclusive educational environment that celebrates authenticity and reduces disparities for marginalised students.