‘The answer is brought about from within you’: A Student-Centred Perspective on Pedagogy in Art and Design

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Abstract

This article reports on the ways that a group of third-year undergraduate art and design students conceptualise the pedagogy they experience on their course. This study is part of broader research funded by the Group for Learning in Art and Design (GLAD) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) that employs qualitative interviewing approaches to explore the ways that a small sample of art and design students studying in two English post-1992 universities interpret and understand the questions in the National Student Survey (this is a questionnaire that UK students complete during the final year of their undergraduate studies). The analysis suggests that the students’ conceptions of art and design pedagogy might be best understood as a form of ‘reverse transmission’ that places the students as active co-producers of their learning. The study reflects on the centrality of project centred learning in art and design and explores the challenges concerning the nature and scope of the art and design lecturers’ role, particularly in the context of the UK’s increased student fee regime.

Keywords
art and design, higher education, National Student Survey, pedagogy, teaching and learning, studio, curriculum

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Introduction

In the UK all final year undergraduate students are invited to complete a satisfaction survey called the National Student Survey (NSS). This was introduced in 2005 as part of government policy to offer national benchmarking data on student satisfaction rates in relation to the quality of university teaching. It is a government requirement that this information is made public so that prospective students can use it to inform choice. Whilst the NSS is a controversial evaluation tool that has been questioned in terms of its empirical robustness (Harvey 2008), the university league tables that incorporate NSS results are an important part of the terrain of Higher Education evaluation, and UK universities chase higher ratings through a variety of initiatives to improve student experience. The development of the NSS in the UK was informed by the use of the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) in Australia which predates it by several years and, to a lesser extent, by the use of the National Survey of Student Engagement evaluation tool (NSSE) in the USA. In the UK this focus on measuring student satisfaction coincided with the introduction of annual tuition fees for undergraduate students (now around £9,000 per annum). This fee regime means that UK students are experiencing tuition costs that are similar to those paid by undergraduates in other countries (for example the USA and Australia).

The NSS is the subject of considerable debate in the UK higher education art and design community, because art and design students, as a group, give lower ratings when compared to many other subjects. Thus the average score for art and design is lower than the average score in many other subjects. There is much speculation about why this might be so. Vaughan & Yorke (2009) were the first to study the NSS in art and design. They carried out a quantitative exploration of the NSS data in creative subjects and they interviewed art and design lecturers and managers. In their conclusion they point out that a study into the ways that students understand the NSS questions would be of value and the research reported here responds to this invitation.

We know how students answer the questions in the NSS. The results are published and analysed every year. We know much less about how the students understand the questions themselves. The NSS questions are uniform across all disciplines to allow sector comparisons to be made. The questions aim to be generic but concerns have been expressed in the art and design community that the questions can not be easily applied to the experience of art and design education. This study explores these concerns. One aim of this research concerned itself with understanding the ways that art and design students interpreted a selection of the NSS questions (Blair *et al.* 2012), whilst a second aim of the study was to explore the students' representations of the art and design pedagogy they experience to build a picture of pedagogy as described from the perspective of the student. By asking the students to comment on the NSS questions, the students are invited to offer a portrayal of teaching and learning in their discipline. It is this second research aim that is reported on in this article. This study resides within a constructionist paradigm taking the view that 'All knowledge, therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their worlds, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context' (Crotty 1998, 42).

Method

Third-year undergraduate art and design students from two post-1992 English universities were invited to participate in a study about the National Student Survey. Twelve students agreed to be interviewed (six at each university). The researchers employed in-depth semi-structured interview approaches. The researchers asked the students to reflect on what they were thinking about when they completed the National Student Survey and what they understood by 8 of the 22 questions (see the Appendix for a list of all 22 questions and the 8 questions selected for the research). The study focused on eight of the questions to allow for

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in-depth questioning approaches to be adopted and to ensure that the interviews did not last for more than 45 minutes (the duration of the interviews was limited to promote participation). The eight questions selected by the researchers all had particular reasons for inclusion. The questions that had a pedagogic focus relating to the research question were selected. Thus questions on teaching, assessment and feedback were included because there was an interest in mapping students' understanding of these questions with the ways that teaching, assessment and feedback are managed in the studio. Questions on organisation, management and resources were selected because art and design courses (like other practice-based courses) are premised on the organisation of specialist space, technical support and teaching that is in contrast to non-practice-based subjects where generalist teaching spaces are used. It was also noted that NSS scores in this area are low.

Analysis

All the interviews were transcribed and analysed. The analysis was an iterative process in which emergent categories were checked and rechecked (Smith 2002; Wengraf 2001). The three researchers verified the emergent categories as part of an ongoing dialogue to reach consensus. As stated, another element of the study foregrounded the students' understanding of the NSS questions (see Blair *et al*. 2012), and one element of the study foregrounded the students' conceptions of pedagogy. For this second element of the study all references the students made to the approaches to teaching or their experience of learning were coded. This led to the identification of an overarching category which we labelled Project Centred Learning (PCL). Beneath this overarching category lay three sub-categories pertaining to different aspects of PCL namely:

- sharing responsibility for learning
- expertise and meaning making
- managing diverse feedback.

Finally, there was a fourth category that collected students' understanding of learning and teaching in relation to theory and practice in art and design education.

Project centred learning

As the two extracts below illustrate, the students frequently alluded to the project based nature of their learning: 'You kind of make it yourself, like you choose your own project, you pick what you want to do.' 'You choose your own brief, you make it your own.' The students talk about being given projects or briefs that provide a vehicle for their learning. Project centred learning is portrayed in the extract below. The student explains that they are told what they need to hand in (the output) but that this is very open ended so that individual student outputs are distinctive and diverse. The student sees the brief as a means for students to demonstrate their initiative, and whilst this particular student was initially bewildered he concludes that this approach is needed in art and design education:

I think explaining things – they [the lecturers] didn't . . . really – they told you what they needed you to hand in, but never really went into as much depth about what they wanted so people kind of had to discover that, people were handing in totally different things to what other people were handing in, so we had to discuss amongst ourselves what we were going to do, sort of thing, and, like, someone would hand in something that's totally different, and we'd go heck, well, what's that? We did know about that, but they didn't explain about it. People were just going off on their own initiative and doing stuff which is obviously, what we should be doing, really.

Another student says that a project-based approach to learning means that:

They [the lecturers] don't spit it out for you but they get you to think, and sometimes that can be frustrating because when they're not telling you the answer because there is no answer.

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This view is underlined by another student who comments:

I am starting to realize that they're not trying to tell us to do anything, they're just trying to give us ideas to do it ourselves in the end.

The students' initial bewilderment with creative pedagogy is echoed in Akalin & Sezal's study (2009) of architectural education in which they point out that 'the lack of formal methods in architectural design puzzles each generation of students entering studio'.

The brief sets the student out on a process of discovery. For these students the assignment is not testing knowledge, it is offering them a means to conduct their own learning and development. The extracts offer us a student's view of the project centred learning which Dineen & Collins (2005, 47) refer to as the 'backbone of post-compulsory art and design education'.

A key element of project centred learning is the assignment brief. As the students explain, the briefs that lecturers prepare encourage the students to respond in individual and diverse ways. In Swann's words 'most staff expect a small group of students to take off in different directions once they have been briefed with a problem (Swann 1986, 18). Dineen & Collins (2005, 46) underline this when they observe that 'the creative process begins with a self-set or imposed task – however vaguely defined' and they go on to comment 'the route-map does not exist. The explorer must find his/her own way through territory which is at least partly uncharted.' When students are set a generic project brief this acts as a starting point for learning. Project centred learning is a foundational element of art and design education (Reid & Davies 2000), and the categories outlined below are linked to this overarching theme.

Sharing responsibility for learning

Project centred learning forces students to take a degree of responsibility for the shape and direction of their studies. One consequence of this is that the course content students experience will vary dependent on the nature of the work they pursue. This results in the students viewing themselves as sharing responsibility for course content and the trajectory of their learning. In the two extracts below students explain what this means: 'You are kind of teaching yourself almost.' 'We are not actually taught anything. It is very self directed.' One student makes the interesting observation that if their individual project work is not stimulating or engaging them then they are partly to blame:

I was thinking about my own self-initiated projects that I've done myself, and then ones that have been set for each year. A little bit about dissertation. Again, that was… that's your own, you decide what you want to do yourself so if you weren't doing something that was stimulating… (finishes sentence with a questioning tone implying that this would then be the student's responsibility).

In the NSS, question 15 asks students to comment on the organisation and management of their course. The students viewed themselves as bearing some responsibility for the management of their own learning. For example, in the extract below the student explains that lecturers *and* students share responsibility for the organisation of the course:

Well… [long pause] *it* [the course] *may not run smoothly for me for… any reason, for many reasons. Or it might. But I think… I don't know, I think the organisation… may help towards the feeling of the course running smoothly and your own individual experience of it, but I think…* it's partly to do with taking responsibility for your learning; it's partly to do with maybe your personal circumstances; partly to do with how you're finding it, and whether you're managing the workload, organising yourself (authors' emphasis).

This suggests that the students share the view of Mendoza et al. (2007) that art and design education is a 'living method of self-education'. Joint responsibility for learning was viewed by

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these students as a key element of pedagogy. This leads us to a consideration of the nature of expertise in relation to project centred learning.

Expertise and meaning making

In this category we explore the students' views in relation to ascribing meaning and value to their work. One premise of project centred learning is that the student work produced is very diverse, which has the potential to challenge the view that the teacher is always the holder of expertise in relation to the work. Lecturers are unlikely to have the same level of expertise and knowledge to respond to all the materials, methods and ideas that the students exploit to produce work. In this category the students' views sit across a spectrum from one end which views the lecturer as the holder of expertise with the ability to ascribe meaning and value to students' work to the other end of the spectrum which sees the lecturer as offering merely 'another perspective'.

In the extract below the lecturers are viewed as experts who can read meaning into the student work and who then 'tell' the student what this meaning is:

The tutors have helped me to… has pushed me on to ***tell me about my work*** *and push me on further by saying this is what you're saying now and this is what you could be saying. And it's like, oh that's better. That's more like it, yes* (authors' emphasis).

This student relies on the lecturer to assign meaning to the work. The lecturer is the meaning maker. This is in contrast to the view expressed in the extract below where the student finds the lecturer feedback useful but then appears to dismiss it as simply 'another point of view'. In this extract the student's words suggest that they include themselves as someone who is able to give meaning to the work and perhaps they also include and value the perspectives of fellow students. In this case the lecturer is viewed as adding meaning to the work, but the authority invested in the lecturer's views is diminished when it becomes just 'another point of view' from someone who is seeing the work for the first time. The extract suggests that the lecturer is able to read meaning because they are new to the work, rather than because they are experts:

But it's always good to ask them what they [the lecturers] think, because it does… it has another point of view. It's another point of view to what you're looking at, because you can look at your work for days and not realise something that they've realised in an instant because they're new to it.

This extract is suggestive of an attribution by the student of shaky knowledge authority. Thus, the lecturer's view is not always viewed as the voice of the expert but it can be another voice in the range of views given in response to student work.

Question 9 in the NSS asks students the extent to which they agree with this statement: 'Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand.'

When students were asked to explain how they interpreted this statement, they expressed a range of views about exactly what needed clarifying and what it might be that it was assumed they did not understand. In the extract below the student reports that they were given feedback but, because this student has so much invested in her own work, she indicates that she feels she can reject the lecturer's evaluation. The student implies that this is a conversation of equals:

Student: *Yes, because things . . . it depends what things. Because* for our course it would be explaining what do we think our works *means, or what it relates to*. (authors' emphasis).

One student commented that 'we [the students] explain to them [the lecturers] what we are doing', whilst another student said that 'they [the lecturers] need to be good at just trying to explain what it is you are trying to do'. This element of pedagogy relies on the lecturer asking the student questions to help draw out meaning and to co-evaluate the work. In a sense

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this relates to asking the students to justify the work. The aim is to reach a shared understanding. These comments point to a co-constructive and co-productive view of art and design learning. For these students the work's meaning is co-produced.

Managing diverse feedback

Question 8 in the NSS asks students to respond to the statement: 'I have received detailed comments on my work.'

Responses to this statement led students to reflect on the nature of feedback in art and design. The students frequently pointed out that different lecturers respond to their work in different ways 'because everyone has different opinions on your work'. In this category the key point is that students share the view that art and design work is experienced and responded to in different ways by different people. Thus the students appear to have a relativist view of their work. The students do not appear to think that their work will have a singular or stable meaning that is experienced in any universalistic sense. However, they do struggle with the implications of this view. In the words of one student, 'one lecturer would say one thing and then another say something different and they are conflicting … '.

In the extract below the student says that she prefers the lecturers to write the feedback down because this 'fixes' and secures the feedback. The lecturer response is felt to be more reliable and less fluid if it is committed to paper. The student echoes the point made above when she suggests that she does not need to listen to some of the feedback given. She can decide whether or not she takes this feedback on. For this student the authority of the feedback connects to the expertise of each lecturer. The student 'takes on' the feedback from the designer who works in the same territory as the student:

Interviewer: *So detailed comments for you are written comments.*

Student: *Written comments. Yeah, written comments about it, and… obviously, verbal feedback is great as well… but, yeah, writing it down is a lot better. And comments from each of the lecturers as well. Because obviously everybody has different views and opinions on your work, and obviously you don't have to stick to, you don't have to lis … you kind of have to get a… erm…even ground on that, whatever anyone said, sort of thing, so… You don't have to listen to some people as much as you do others, it just depends what you…*

Interviewer: *So you like getting detailed comments, from different lecturers?*

Student: *Yeah. Because they've all taught us, at the end of the day, and I think it's… it's because some of them do textiles, some of them do product design, some of them do something else, and if I've designed a chair, to get feedback from somebody who's got textile experience – it's helpful, of course it is, because they've obviously got a lot of knowledge about the design world and stuff, but it's just… not as… erm helpful… as obviously product design.*

Thus whilst there is broad acceptance amongst the students that people will respond differently to their work, this view co-exists with the contradictory view that they want consistent and stable feedback.

Theory and practice

It is of interest to note what the students did not talk about. One such absence is the role of theory in their education. The students rarely referred to the theory element of their courses, in fact, this element was omitted completely from some students' narratives and for some it is only mentioned when a prompt is offered. There are several ways to read this. It may mean that the theoretical elements of the courses were very well integrated into studio practice and thus this is a 'natural background' not requiring comment. This view is suggested by the student who says 'we never had a lecture like where we sat down'. Or it may mean that the lecture series sometimes associated with 'theory' or 'contextual studies' was not regarded

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as noteworthy or of relevance to the NSS. In the words of one student, 'we do have lectures obviously but I think the main bulk of our course is a lot of self direction'.

As the extract above suggests, when this aspect of the students' study was referred to, it was to draw attention to what they regarded as the binary between the practice-based elements of their course and what they regarded as the more 'academic' component. The territories of visually and textually based learning in art and design have been explored elsewhere (see, for example, Candlin 2008; Macleod & Holdridge 2011). The key point to note here is that the students see the studio as being concerned with divergent learning and self direction. This is about an opening up of possibilities – in contrast they view the theory element as more convergent - an area where there is a curriculum and a set of answers, as the following extract underlines:

When it says my work, you have studio work, dissertation work, and they are two completely separate things because dissertation, that's the more academic side so that's definitely got a question and you answer it, whereas our studio work is a lot different to that and so there's no clarity in the question as to which it's referring to. But I would always, most of the time, think about my design work because that's what is most important.

When the more theory-led elements of the course are referred to, the comments suggest that students see the studio as essentially about learning and theory as essentially about being taught. In a contextual studies lecture or seminar the topic under discussion will usually be preset by the lecturer and as a result there is a curriculum that the students can recognise. As one student comments, 'you know what you are going to receive with all the theory stuff'. In the studio the theory that lecturers introduce is likely to relate more specifically in response to the student's individual work and how it develops over time. Thus the curriculum is emergent and co-produced. In the studio, as one student puts it, 'there isn't a set curriculum that you have to learn'. The ideas explored above are powerfully articulated in the extended extract below in which the student reflects on the NSS statement 'Staff are good at explaining things':

But it's difficult, in art. To me, the only things that would need explaining would maybe be theory or theoretical terms or philosophical ideas and I think from my experience those things, with lectures with… they've been explained well. But I think, I'm not sure, because for me, that… I don't really know what they have to explain. Do you understand what I mean? Whereas in regards to, if you're talking about my work, I think the thing that I benefit from the most, have benefitted from, is those kind of moments of creating a tutorial where you're almost empowered, or enabled, or somehow the answer is brought about from within you, so you're not told, well do this. I think a real skill is to be able to empower and enable an art student to come up with their own solutions, if you like. Or way forward.

This extract merits detailed analysis. The student views the tutorial as a key site for learning because the tutorial offers a learning site which is empowering and enabling. The student regards the object of learning as his own responsibility because 'the answer is brought about from within you'. The student suggests that having the ability to empower and enable students is an important lecturer skill that promotes student learning. This student's key point is that students do not receive an art and design education – they are supported in educating themselves and they 'own' their work. This extract underlines the ways that project centred learning configures the lecturer's role as that of a facilitator.

Discussion

The students offer a convincing portrayal of the key characteristics of a creative education. They have been immersed in a studio environment for three years and their narratives point to a strong level of enculturation (Walliss & Greig 2009). In this section we reflect on the findings and explore the role of the lecturer, the content of art

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and design education and we propose an emergent theory of students' learning.

What is the role of the lecturer?

Within project centred learning the role of the lecturer is to facilitate, listen and draw out. They create briefs that are discovery based and experiential. This leads to responsive assessment rather than prescriptive assessment. For Dineen & Collins (2005, 46):

The teaching styles [which are] most conductive to the fulfillment of creative potential are those which encourage student responsibility through ownership, trust and low levels of authoritarianism, providing opportunities for individual attention and opportunities for independent learning.

As such, the lecturers might be viewed as the midwife for the student work. This view of the lecturer as midwife has been explored by Graham (2009) in the context of performing arts education. Graham explores the ways that the dramaturge/midwife helps bring the student performance to life but ultimately the work belongs to the student. Once the student has created the work the lecturer's role (like that of the midwife) may be rendered invisible. In earlier work Orr discussed the ways that lecturers pass on their 'skills, knowledge and attitudes through an engagement with the students' emergent art work' (Orr 2007, 50). From this perspective the lecturers' role is to create the framework for engagement, but, in the students' eyes at least, 'we [the students] always had to do it ourselves'. The students view themselves as makers of their own learning. Corner (2005, 339) writes that art education is an 'empowering process as students come to learn how to work honestly owning their success and failure'. Dineen & Collins (2005, 46) unpack this further when they suggest that art and design pedagogy 'narrow[s] the gap between the teacher and the learner, which cast[s] the teacher in the role of facilitator and provide[s] opportunity for active, even playful engagement by learners'. For Dineen & Collins (2005, 48), project centred learning encourages 'ownership', which 'is a central feature of the art and design curriculum'.

Where is the content?

The analysis above reveals that the students view themselves as active agents in the production of their learning. They explain that project centred learning means that students experience different content that is contingent upon the individual direction of their studies. The students have little sense of a stable art and design 'content'. This raises a number of questions in relation to curriculum in art and design. What might 'content' look like in relation to studio-based practice? Indeed, can content be described in terms of studio-based skills? Or putting it another way, can studio-based study be conceptualised as 'content'? Within the studio would content relate to the process of research itself – learning about the development of ideas and the realisation of these ideas into a final project? Or would a studio-based content relate more to acquiring a range of skill and techniques, for example drawing or using specified workshop tools and processes? Williamson (2009, 239) explores the Bauhaus position that art and design education curricula should concern itself with 'the grammar of art'. Drawing on the ideas of Bauhaus and that of Johnstone (1980), Williamson (2009, 240) sets out the view that the 'content' of art is the experience of it, 'the method and matter take on equal importance'. In contrast Corner (2005) argues, in the context of fine art, that curriculum or content is best understood as a set of principles and characteristics.

Some commentators might assume that it would be easier to 'pin down' the content in the theoretical component of art and design education. However, as Elkins (2002) observes, there is very little consensus about the theoretical content in an art degree. The content of what is variously called visual studies, cultural studies, contextual studies and art history varies considerably across the sector and may range from traditional grand narrative art history to a consideration of contemporary cultural studies.

Clearly there is contestation about core curriculum in all disciplines in higher education.

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However, whilst the canon may be contested and its boundaries fiercely debated, the idea that there is a body of knowledge or indeed a 'content' exists in most subjects. In art and design the very idea of agreed content itself is more problematic. Linked to this issue is the role of theory and its relation to practice. It is common for art and design lecturers to refer to the idea of theorised practice (or praxis) and the Quality Assurance Agency (2009) Benchmark statements for Art and Design assume that students will experience 'the integration of theory, practice and specialist knowledge'. As discussed in the analysis, this integrative view of theory and practice was not reflected in the students' narratives. They either ignore the presence of theory or, if it is referred to, it is described as a peripheral and relatively unimportant component of their study.

In relation to curriculum and content we propose that project centred learning itself can be understood as a form of curriculum. This aligns with Blair *et al*. (2008, 81), who suggest that 'the project is an established and universal vehicle used by tutors to teach and for students to explore studio curriculum'. If we return to the students' conceptions of pedagogy, then it is important to note that the project centred learning the students experience does frame and direct the learning. The frame may be loose and allow for divergent outcomes, but there is a frame in place. What we have might be usefully referred to as a Shell Curriculum. Thus the curriculum or frame (recognised by the students as the brief) offers a scaffold or a shell which the students populate in a shape that is contingent on the artistic/design direction and interests of the student. The idea of a Shell Curriculum appears to align well with the Quality Assurance Agency Benchmark statement for Art and Design that states that art and design study at undergraduate level 'may be understood as a framework within which the student exercises considerable autonomy, and where study methods are developed and sustained largely by students themselves as they take responsibility for their own learning' (Quality Assurance Agency 2009, section 5.5).

A Shell Curriculum can offer a balance of freedom and constraint that encourages and nurtures creativity (Williamson 2009). In addition, it incorporates the view of the project as facilitating problem-based learning that focuses on themes rather than curriculum content (Akalin & Sezal 2009). A Shell Curriculum usefully builds on Corner's (2005) requirement for students to be offered a 'cognitive framework' that supports the development of their creativity. For Corner (2005) this frame offers a reference point that encourages risk taking and boundary pushing. At its centre the Shell Curriculum offers the environment for creative learning.

What is the students' theory of learning?

The students' conceptualisation of art and design education may be familiar to an art and design readership, but the views expressed disrupt and fracture mainstream (non art and design) accounts of Higher Education pedagogy. This fracture becomes apparent if we look carefully at the ways the questions are worded in the National Student Survey. The NSS questions offer an implicit view of higher education pedagogy that appears to make the following assumptions:

- There is a formal statement of content that students construe as a description of the curriculum (see question 2).
- It is the job of the lecturer to explain the content of this curriculum (see question 1).
- It is the lecturer's job to make the course interesting and to organise the course well (see questions 2 and 15).
- It is the lecturer's job to clarify things that the students find difficult or hard to understand (see question 9).

The NSS questions hint at a transmission view of learning where the course is delivered to the student. In a study into linguistic students' understanding of the NSS questions Canning (2012, 5) states that the NSS questions 'impl[y] that the student is passive in his or her learning, waiting to be entertained, by staff charged with enthusing otherwise dormant students'. Trans-

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mission conceptions of learning are frequently discussed in Higher Education teaching and learning literature (for example see Kember & Kwan 2000) and it is a theory of learning that underpins lecture-based teaching. At its simplest, within this model lecturers see themselves as responsible for transmitting the curriculum to students. Increasingly, this is viewed as an outdated mode of teaching that is unsuited to the needs of the contemporary student, but its legacy is influential in the teaching practices still found in many Higher Education departments and its ubiquity is implied in the NSS questions.

This transmission view of pedagogy stands at odds with the students' portrayal of the art and design pedagogy they have encountered on their course. The students see themselves as active agents in the construction of their programme of study. This echoes Walliss & Greig's (2009, 295) view that creative practice students are 'active definers of the discipline as distinct from passive observers… thereby increasing ownership of their learning experience'. Their agency serves to co-produce course content and course organisation. Throughout this article we have repeatedly observed that the students' conception of pedagogy is one of co-production and co-construction. At this point we seek to complicate this conception of pedagogy. Co-construction implies that the students and lecturers have equal stakes in the production of the student artwork, however, as discussed, the students view *themselves* as the owners and producers of the work. Returning to the view of pedagogy as midwifery, the parent and midwife do not share the baby at birth. Equally, the students and lecturers do not share the work produced. This means that we need a more developed theory of pedagogy that accommodates this complexity.

To do this we take a transmission view of teaching and learning and reverse its focus. Thus the students' conception of learning and teaching could be characterised as 'reverse transmission'. An overarching theory of reverse transmission brings together several elements of this analysis. Firstly, it accommodates the students' view that it is they (not the lecturers) who explain their ideas and their work *to* their lecturers. Secondly, reverse transmission aligns with the students' view that they generate their own curriculum via their project centred learning. Thirdly, reverse transmission accounts for the reversed conceptions of expertise where the students view themselves as experts in their own work (as opposed to the lecturer holding this expertise). The theory of reverse transmission is powerfully illustrated when one student comments: 'The answer is brought about from within you.'

Some of the students in this study put forward the view that they are the experts of their own practice and they seek to share their work with lecturers in order to get feedback that might strengthen the work or extend its potential. Within reverse transmission, teaching and learning are primarily concerned with students being enabled to meet their full potential. The students' narratives offer an articulate representation of the power relations between the lecturer and the student. In earlier work Orr (2007) and Barrow (2006) have both drawn on the work of Foucault to explore the power relations between lecturer and student. In their analyses the lecturers pass on their values and they construct and legitimise the student as artist. Seen through the lens of the students in this study, this view of the power relations is overly simplistic because it does not adequately recognise the students' agency. In this study students again and again state that they are active agents in their own learning.

Whilst there is much to be commended in the students' portrayal of art and design pedagogy, their narratives do point to areas of concern. Firstly, if the students do not fully recognise the lecturers' framing of their learning then they may wonder what their fees are paying for. Secondly, it is important to note that according to the NSS league tables published each year, art and design students are less satisfied than students in disciplines that adopt lecture/seminar pedagogies. This could mean one of two things. Either the students in this study can articulate art and design pedagogy well but they remain unhappy with it, or they find the ques-

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tions in the NSS of such limited relevance to the course as they experience it that the answers do not reflect their satisfaction in any meaningful way at all (see Blair *et al*. 2012 for a fuller discussion of this point).

In the seminal paper 'Nellie is Dead', Swann (1986 republished in 2002), characterises the traditional model of studio-based teaching as:

A discussion about a particular project on which the student is working. It is usually an examination of the work 'on the drawing board' and often results in the tutor demonstrating his/her own expertise to improve some aspects of the students' work – more or less a 'sitting by Nellie' approach. (Swann 1986, 18)

He goes on to argue that this 'over the shoulder advice' (Swann 1986, 20) – that is, a serial one-to-one tutorial model of pedagogy – is outmoded and that it should be replaced with planned group teaching (closer to a North American approach to studio education). In his words: 'It [studio teaching] requires more recognition of what is teaching and what is learning, an objective analysis of what is being taught and less reliance on spontaneous pearls of wisdom transmitted over the shoulder from tutor to student (Swann 1986, 20).

As early as 1986, Swann was arguing that this shift in approach was necessary given the increase in student numbers in the studio. His work is of particular relevance today for two reasons. Firstly, the NSS results indicate that art and design students appear to be less satisfied with their teaching experience when compared to students in some other disciplines so it may be timely to revisit, re-think and re-imagine pedagogy. Secondly, due to higher tuition fees, students may expect a clearer articulation of what the teaching and learning offer is and, by extension, value for money. They may expect to be taught in a more explicit way than that experienced in the traditional art and design studio.

We recognise that *reverse transmission* and Shell Curriculum are concepts that merit further development, but we share them to offer a platform for further debate concerning the specificity of art and design pedagogy in higher education. By starting with the portrayal of pedagogy as understood by its key stakeholder, namely the students, we seek to understand what Higher Education art and design pedagogy is and might need to become.

Appendix

Teaching and learning

1. Staff are good at explaining things*
2. Staff have made the subject interesting
3. Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching
4. The course is intellectually stimulating*

Assessment and feedback

5. The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance
6. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair
7. Feedback on my work has been prompt*
8. I have received detailed comments on my work*
9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand*

Academic support

10. I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies
11. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to
12. Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices

Organisation and management

13. The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned
14. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively
15. The course is well organised and is running smoothly*

Learning resources

16. The library resources and services are good enough for my needs
17. I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to

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18. I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms when I needed to*

Personal development

19. The course has helped me present myself with confidence
20. My communication skills have improved
21. As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems
22. Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the course*

* These questions were the focus of this study

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