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Increasing Students' Engagement by Treating Learning in Research Mode

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Friday 30 March 2012   Second Conference on Active and Interactive
Learning (AIL 2012)

The development of **research-based teaching** and learning methods implies the examination of various ways in which research-teaching connections are used to enhance **students' employability** and **lifelong learning skills** via engagement with the research process.

Friday 30 March 2012   Second Conference on Active and Interactive
Learning (AIL 2012)

Active learning opportunities have been created and implemented enabling higher level of engagement of post-graduate students in research-based learning.

They focused on the study and critical appraisal of current **discipline-based research issues** and **development of research solutions**.

The presentation will analyze how creating an **inclusive community** where learners, lecturers and researchers are seen as scholars in the common pursuit of knowledge by promoting the **inquiry-based learning** contributes to the university strategy to excel in **research, innovation** and **education** and have a critical mass of research excellence across a wide range of disciplines.

How academics conceptualise research and scholarship ?

COMPONENTS OF RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS

Teaching can be *research-led* (i.e. include the products of the research process)

Teaching can be *research-orientated* (i.e the curriculum includes an understanding of the research process)

Teaching can be researched-based (i.e. the curriculum is designed around inquiry-based activities, the practice of research)

Teaching can be *research-informed* (i.e. based upon research into teaching and learning)

" **Good scholarship**, in the sense of remaining aware
of the latest research and thinking within a subject, **is
essential for good teaching.**

This is not sufficient to achieve the aim of **excellent
and inspirational teaching in a research-intensive
context**."

The Future of Higher Education - 2003 White Paper

Content

" **Good scholarship**, in the sense of remaining aware of the latest
research and thinking within a subject, **is essential for good
teaching.** "

Good scholarship to support and deliver teaching goes significantly
beyond the scholarship that is necessary to provide the
context and linkages to specific research projects.

https://elgg.leeds.ac.uk/tanrnexux/weblog

Reputation and excellence in research does not automatically correlate with excellent or inspirational teaching.

Teaching of this calibre requires advanced skills (particularly working and communicating with students) that are not necessarily part of a researcher's skill set.

Developing and producing curriculum - the ability to do this is required to convert both research and scholarship into excellent and inspiring teaching and an excellent student experience.

https://elgg.leeds.ac.uk/tanrnexux/weblog

Linking research to teaching and learning involves far more than constructing modules with the latest research results as content:

engaging students in research and research-like activities

inducting students as practitioners and partners into a research community and culture with their lecturers and tutors

developing students' skills to collaborate in the knowledge construction process and become aware of the nature and status of knowledge as constructed, provisional, negotiated and sanctioned.

https://elgg.leeds.ac.uk/tanrnexux/weblog

'Discovery' research and scholarship

Process of research

Process of knowledge construction

Process of learning

Current learning trends
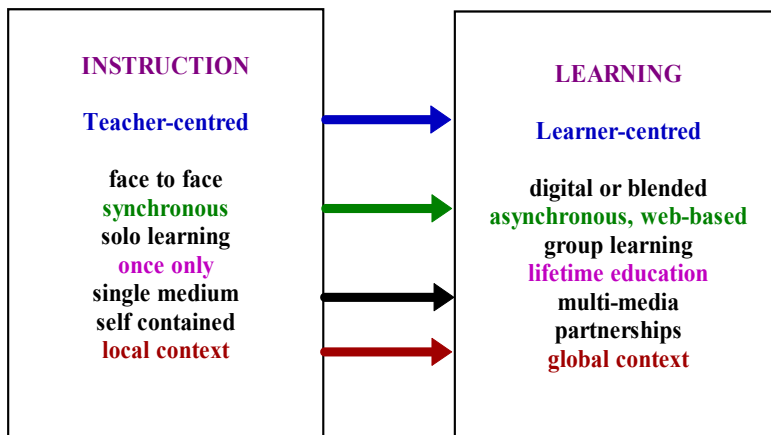
INSTRUCTION		LEARNING
Teacher-centred	→	**Learner-centred**
face to face		digital or blended
synchronous	→	asynchronous, web-based
solo learning		group learning
once only		lifetime education
single medium	→	multi-media
self contained		partnerships
local context	→	global context

Questions to promote reflective practice in teaching

What do we want our students to learn?

What learning opportunities do we provide?

What feedback do we give?

What assessment tasks do we set?

What methods of assessment do we use?

What our students learn?

How do we know?

Brown, R. B. and McCartney, S. (1999). Multiple mirrors: Reflecting on reflections. In D. O'Reilly, L. Cunningham and S. Lester (Eds), *Developing The Capable Practitioner.* Kogan Page, London, pp 16-32.

How do we know ?

Through assessment – but strategic students present declarative rather than functioning knowledge (Biggs, 2003)

Through course evaluation – but influenced by students' characteristics and lecturers' charisma

Through pedagogical research – generic (scholarship of teaching and learning) and subject specific
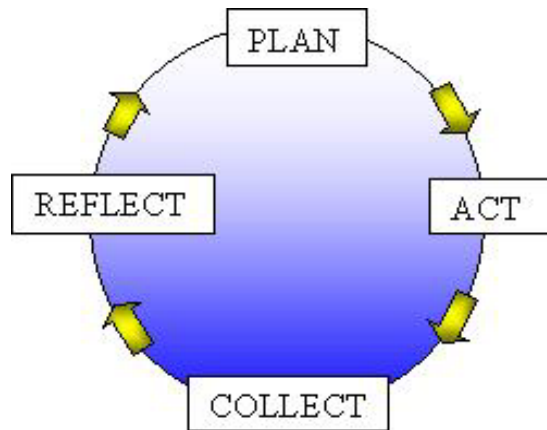
Through carrying out our own action research where the aim is to modify practice

Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University.* 2nd edition, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Action research cycle

Improving teaching practice
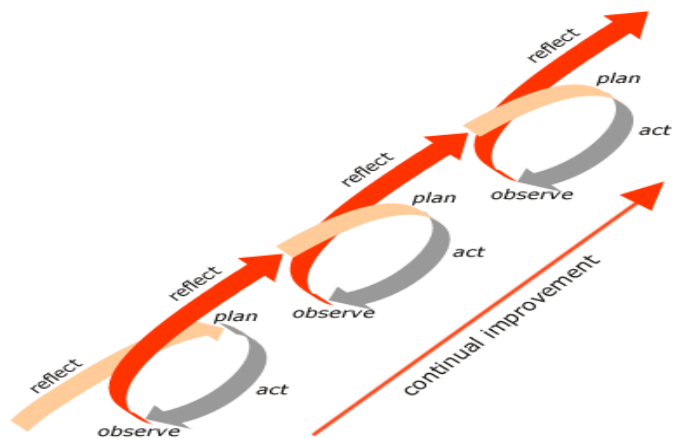
Higher Education Academy (2008) *Action Research Cycle*. **[online] Available:**
www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/heinfe_exchange/act_res_cycle.doc
[Accessed 10 Mar 2012].

" Universities should treat learning as not yet wholly solved problems and hence always in research mode"

Von Humboldt,1970

Strategies for linking teaching and research within courses and programmes

Develop students' understanding of the role of research in their discipline

Develop the curriculum to bring out current or previous research developments in the discipline

Develop students' awareness of the nature of research and knowledge creation in their discipline

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Develop students' ability to carry out research

Provide 'training' in relevant research skills and knowledge

Develop students' involvement in research

Progressively develop students' understanding

Provide induction sessions for students about the role of research in their discipline and present knowledge as created, uncertain and contested

Master modules should require the students to do research projects with progressive move to projects of greater scale, complexity and uncertainty

Manage students' experience of research

Support students in making clear to them the employability elements of research.

It is important for the students whose focus is on using a degree to get employment, and who may not otherwise appreciate the value of research-based approach.

Healey, M. and Jenkins, A. (2008) Developing students as researchers, *University and College Union Magazine* October 17-19

Advantages

Learners could have:

- role-taking experiences (**learning through active involvement in real situations**)

- **provision of personal support for the learner**

- **reasonable level of challenge** and the opportunity of continuous guided reflection with a balance between action and reflection

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Advantages

- Use assessment to discover **the strengths and weaknesses of students** and provide appropriate support to improve student performance.

- Give **effective and efficient feedback to students** and encourage them to reflect upon their own learning because awareness and motivation are essential to learners' professional and personal development during active learning process.

- Enable students to develop **wider perspectives** and **respond positively to challenges**.

Conclusions

Active learning opportunities have been created and implemented enabling higher level of engagement of post-graduate students in research-based learning.

They focused on the study and critical appraisal of current **discipline-based research issues** and **development of research solutions**.