

Editorial. Surviving and Transiting 2020: A Year like No Other Years

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The Covid-19 pandemic impacts on every fibre of our educational society. As a medium size HE Institute, London Churchill College has witnessed events, participated in events, been affected by events and mitigated against the impact of events that could never have been previously imagined. Perhaps like wider society, the experience has changed and is still changing the outlook and even the *modus operandi* of higher education. Gone is the widespread belief that students' education can only benefit from campus-based locations, which eschews positive aspects of teaching online. Gone is the fear that students will be inattentive and non-attending if physical presence is not ensured, as if head-counting is a primary aim for entry level Higher Education. Gone is the belief that the essentiality of personal contact with the tutor, so much heralded and researched as being a prime facilitating factor, is irreplaceable.

What is left, what is gained?

Colleges as educators still retain responsibility for education. Students are readjusting to cope with current realities and take increased control of their own education. Time will tell if the students' increased commitment continues. However, the auguries are positive, as data for the latter half of 2020 evidences higher attendance figures, higher retention and higher award metrics. Whether this is ephemeral, without a firm base for continued performance improvement, is still to be discovered. The freedom now experienced by students has potential downsides, being able to prioritise in the life/study conundrum can be challenging and sometimes defeating, as can be the way such decisions are made. Resilience and adaptability emerge as if ever-present but needing a stimulus.

College and staff benefit from the new scenario of increased student responsibilities. Pressure on facilities and resources are lessened, although these may well be replaced by other pressures. There is now a greater reliance on primarily working from home, so concordant with family freedoms missing in the traditional office-based working models. The move from hours worked evidencing function accomplishment, to tasks completed, can be both challenging and rewarding for staff and managers alike. Creating and adopting scales to make such measurements, continues to stimulate fertile and creative minds. The imperceptible attitude permeating within the College authority, that prescriptive expectations based on hierarchy have served so well in the past, have been supplanted by encouraging increased individual autonomy and creativity. This of course is balanced by multilateral decision-making and individual actioning.

The ground needs to be receptive for such development. The collegiate culture espoused by senior general College management must be achievable and sought after and be appreciated by participants. In other words, like students in the new learning environment, control of working conditions falls to individual staff to overcome domestic and other pressures and prioritise delivery of performance targets and goals under working from home arrangements.

The importance of understanding and developing the mode of teaching is not new. The College's senior management have continually examined how we can increase student engagement and interaction. Academics have used many techniques and methods and involved students formally and informally, as the important stakeholder, in all major decision processes and indeed every aspect of College life. This is in the knowledge that education is not 'done to them' by the educator but is a bipartisan compact, giving real involvement in each stage of change brought about proactively or by reaction to circumstance. Thus, online teaching is born. Already the use of virtual learning platforms has introduced learners to some benefits of studying remotely; now the ability to attend lectures online at a time of choosing in a convenient locale, is time and again identified by individual students and the complete body, as being highly preferable. This message is 'Manna-from Heaven' to the College. Now that students' preferences are known, the College can adapt teaching and learning practices to meet online mode preferences of (blended) learning. Staff retraining has to be undertaken, practices of communicating with students have to be relearned and IT support and monitoring has to be realigned.

Adversity can breed creativity. The need for external intervention is understood to trigger either actions or indeed reflections, as if cognitive processes are only more fully used in a defensive reaction formation in preference to autonomous decision making and mind stretching. Somehow, access to creativity is prevented when experiences warn against risk and perhaps become shackled by the mores of society and regulations couched as expectations in the educational milieu. Research suggests that risk-taking and appropriate intimacy in the lecturer-adult learner relationship can encourage play affording creativity. The nurturing relationship, so crucial for entry level students, provides the opportunity of taking risks in a safe environment, and creativity helps to describe intramental thinking.

To access these processes can be challenging, when opportunities for developing the nurturing relationship are lessened somehow by distance learning. Requirements and resources are needed to access developmental ideas on both interpersonal and intrapersonal planes. To enter debates which afford the opportunity for new perspectives and to use learning from these to reflect on previous or current behaviours are the very essence of personal development. Hence creativity can also describe the processes whereby learners are encouraged to tackle tasks on different planes, where such attempts can be appreciated for the process as well as the content and, most importantly, the individual can take responsibility for development and recognise the steps taken.

This journal edition has real examples of creativity, shown individually and collectively. Starting with the deep-thinking of Don Carveth, so imbued with the struggle of immorality and conscience, superego and obligation, the two models of depressive guilt and reparative guilt; to the breadth of discussion of literature reviews by College academics Sisi Wang, Mehfuzul Haque, Golam Faquzzaman, Tasnim Jahan, Sraboni Sikder, Don Dulari Wijesuriya, Shohidul Rajeb and Sohel Rana; to Nicolas Verger's research project focused on the perceptions in France of higher education programmes taught in English; to the teamwork of Nick Papé, Rahaman Hasan and Mazharul Islam representing London Churchill College's senior management, collaboratively sharing some College experiences; to Abbas Razak and Sayed Hanif's reflections on globalisation and the Muslim world; to Nasser Amin's thought provoking offering on Camus's philosophies; and finally to Anna Stetsenko's beautifully crafted paper on individuals as co-creators of their own lives.

Some of the articles have been composed with students particularly in mind, these are the literature reviews written to promote further thought and research. Indeed, this journal issue is a challenging read for everyone, whatever the interest level, there is something within these pages that will fascinate and stimulate. That is the hope.