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The *Journal of Contemporary Development and Management Studies (JCD&MS)* is a national peer-reviewed journal dedicated to connecting research to practice. *JCD&MS* recognises the value of qualitative, quantitative and mixed/interrelated methods in analysis of data. The journal seeks to be relevant both to a core disciplinary constituency of Alternative Providers of education, of Universities as well as a broader readership. It is the official research journal of London Churchill College (LCC) and actively encourages contributions from individuals and other educational institutes.

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Editorial. *Fiat Lux: Let There Be Light Again*

Professor Nick Papé, PhD

After an extended silence, this journal returns not as ceremony but as necessity. The previous edition was published in 2022, during the uncertain aftermath of a global pandemic that severely disrupted academic institutions, narrowed access and undermined confidence in higher education. London Churchill College, like many, was tested, not just in its enrolment figures but in its institutional purpose. This volume marks the return of the Journal of Contemporary Development and Management Studies as well as the steady re-establishment of LCC's academic voice.

That voice is now strengthened by the launch of the *LCC Research Centre*, which aims to bring together researchers, practitioners and policymakers around applied and socially relevant scholarship. The Centre will act as the institutional base for future academic publications, research partnerships and dissemination activity. We are presently canvassing suggestions for a name that captures the Centre's seriousness of purpose without veering into cliché. We welcome ideas; please direct them to the Editor.

The contributions in this volume reflect clear thinking and focused enquiry. They are grounded in serious work, not slogans and they reflect the College's renewed attention to adult and widening participation learners, constitutional analysis and public health inquiry.

Power Without Accountability? The Royal Prerogative Revisited

Nasser Amin opens the volume with a trenchant analysis of Royal Prerogative power in the British constitutional system. With particular reference to war powers, Amin makes the case that this vestigial authority remains weakly scrutinised, insufficiently codified and politically expedient. His argument that the courts' emerging sliding scale of review still falls short of necessary democratic oversight is both convincing and measured. This is a timely piece, raising questions few wish to confront.

Hungary's Public Health Emergency: A Stark Review

In a wide-ranging scoping review, Dr Ilias Mahmud and Dr Russell Kabir catalogue the environmental, social and psychological drivers behind Hungary's persistently high suicide rates. Their work is unsentimental and evidence-led. With 29 studies reviewed, the findings expose failings in national prevention strategies and highlight neglected variables including marital status, education level and healthcare access. This is a paper that resists alarmism but provides ample cause for concern.

Teaching and Learning: Practice Grounded in Reality

Teaching, Learning and the Politics of Motivation

Gerry Takamura contributes a focused piece on the neglected role of Western women in shaping Japanese education during the Meiji period. The subject is rarely addressed in detail and is usually smoothed over with lazy praise. Takamura avoids this and treats the topic with restraint and avoids both romanticism and caricature. It is a short article, but it adds something new to a well-worn subject.

This section also includes cluster of contributions addressing educational practice for mature students, with a particular emphasis on London Churchill College's own learning environments. The article by Nick Papé and colleagues on student motivation at an

independent college draws on qualitative interviews and push-pull theory to illuminate what drives adult learners into Higher Education. Their conclusion is clear; motivations are varied and deeply personal, but they converge around financial gain, personal transformation and tutor relationships. These cannot be treated as marginal concerns.

Papé continues this theme in a review of teaching strategies linked to performance management, where he argues for clearer institutional alignment between what motivates mature students and how learning is delivered. The recommendations are grounded in data and demonstrate an ambition to improve practice, not just document it.

In a separate contribution, Nazim Uddin outlines the College's Active Learning Framework, a structured pedagogical model intended to support Widening Access Mature Students (WAMS). The paper combines theoretical reflection with practical application, drawing upon Kolb's experiential learning cycle and Freirean principles of dialogic education. The ALF has yet to be fully embedded, but its intent is serious: to move beyond traditional passive modes of delivery and create a participatory space for adult learners.

Reflection and Renewal

This volume also includes a thoughtful cultural piece by Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak on the meaning and continuing relevance of Ramadan in a secularising world. Though shorter than others, the article is a reminder that higher education does not belong solely to the economic or political domain. There is room, too, for reflection, spirituality and quiet conviction.

The re-launch of this journal, supported by the new Research Centre, is a beginning, not an end. If it is to survive, it must resist self-congratulation and publish material that is not only competent but necessary. There is still much to do. But the College has moved from passive survival to active re-engagement.

Fiat lux. Let there be light. And this time, let us make sure it stays lit.

August 2025

A law unto itself? Is the British Government's use of archaic Royal Prerogative power sufficiently regulated by legal and political avenues? An analysis, with special reference to the prosecution of war.

Nasser Amin

Abstract

The executive branch of the British state retains a significant gamut of powers which it inherited from the absolute monarchies of the past that existed until the major constitutional upheaval of the 1688 'Glorious Revolution'. Known as Royal Prerogative powers, these archaic rights remain largely outside of Parliamentary scrutiny, and Ministerial use of a number of the powers has been deemed to be not fully justiciable by the courts. Thus, their reform is seen by commentators as 'unfinished constitutional business'. This paper explores whether the use of these powers is sufficiently regulated through current legal and political avenues within the British constitution. It focuses on the recent history and controversies of one of the most momentous of prerogative powers: the prosecution of war. Parliamentary possesses no legally enshrined or constitutional role in decisions for Britain to go to war. Operational and political shortcomings should a notional 'War Powers Act' emerge are discussed, though these particular concerns could be accommodated within an imaginative legislative form. Arguing that the use of Prerogative powers is not subject to adequate scrutiny currently despite a clear caselaw trajectory – particularly since the watershed GCHQ case in 1984 - in favour of the review of the Executive's use of it through the emergence by the courts of a 'sliding scale' approach which allows a higher intensity adjudication on matters pertaining to rights, with a lighter touch on those concerning the political, this paper nonetheless rejects the view that codification into statutory form of the Prerogative would wholly redeem it. The paper does so by advancing the view that even in the event of constitutional reform that ended any residual impregnability of extant Prerogative powers by replacing them within Parliamentary Acts, the thorny question of the appropriateness of the Courts making decisions on political actions by the State would nonetheless remain intact within a codified dispensation – thus failing to resolve all of the manifold faults of the status quo. This is because the English courts' notable and long-established normative caution in handling cases of a policy or high political nature holds whether the relevant governmental powers issue from parliamentary acts or the application of the Royal Prerogative.

Key Words: Royal Prerogative; British Constitution; Parliamentary supremacy; English Law; Justiciability; Rule of Law; Judicial Review; War Powers.

Introduction

This paper provides a summary and critical analysis of the main themes of the debate, central to modern British constitutional law, of the ongoing function of Royal Prerogative discretionary powers, their current regulation by various mechanisms and the pitfalls and advantages of their codification into statute, with a particular focus on the prerogative power that arguably has the most gravity, that of prosecuting wars.

Defining Prerogative Powers

The continued existence of Prerogative powers within the British constitutional arrangement is one of its most curiously vestigial components, and one which has significant import given

the wide-ranging powers it currently places under the purview of the Executive, and, more narrowly, in the hands of the Monarch. Prerogative powers were originally the exclusive right of monarchs to enact decrees that were binding on all of those within the Kingdom; with the 1688 settlement that initiated the sovereignty of Parliament, and the attendant primacy of statutory law, many of these powers continued to be recognised in Common Law but were transferred by constitutional convention – but not through statute - to the domain of the Executive branch of the Government.

Extant discretionary powers can be categorised into three broad categories.¹ Firstly, the Monarch's personal Prerogative powers. These are mainly the assent to primary legislation; appointing – or removing - senior Cabinet Ministers, including the Prime Minister; providing advice to Ministers; and dissolving/proroguing Parliament. Attendant to this are various legal Prerogatives, which include the right to own various birds and mammals, and the press-ganging of adult males into the Royal Navy. Commentators also include the significant established legal principles that the Crown is not bound by statute (except when expressly stated within legislation), and legal immunity from prosecution for the Sovereign himself into this second category². The third category, which is arguably the most constitutionally significant and controversial and which this paper focuses on, are the powers that are delegated to respective Ministers; *inter alia*, the conduct of external governmental relations, including the making and withdrawal from treaties; the pardoning of those convicted of criminal offences; recognition of new states; issuing or revoking British passports; the governance of former British colonies, foreign policy in general, and significantly, the defence of the realm. Prerogatives can be applied directly, or through indirect devices known as 'Orders in Council' – the latter is very similar to statute in the authority it provides for Ministers.

The History of a Constitutional Problem

The courts were faithful to a tradition – until 1984³ – of regarding as inadmissible attempts to subject prerogative powers to full judicial review. Critics charged that placing in the hands of the Executive apparently unfettered powers of great political and social import that have not been subject to Parliamentary deliberation and scrutiny (and on account of their not possessing a statutory basis can be beyond the justiciability of the Courts) was an unconscionably archaic practice that has no place in a modern democracy.

The maintenance of these relics was considered to be at odds with three indispensable features of the British constitutional settlement: Parliamentary Sovereignty, the Separation of Powers and the Rule of Law. Prerogative powers were said to jar with the notion of the supremacy of Parliament in that they appeared to give the Executive primacy in these areas over and above lawmakers, while the fact that these powers do not derive from primary legislation meant that not all of them were susceptible to full Judicial Review – the main mechanism within the British system for the judiciary to hold the Executive to account for abuses of power or to uphold individual rights, within the Separation of Powers. A coach and horse was driven through Rule of Law principles in that the Government in its use of these powers placed itself beyond the reach of legal reproach and did not have to have a legal justification beyond the power itself. Given that the Executive's Prerogative powers incorporate matters of life and death (for instance in the prosecution of war) and individual rights of British

¹ Derived from Bartlett and Everett

² *Ibid.*, p9.

³ Until the landmark GCHQ case that we discuss below.

passport holders, the violation of the Rule of Law inherent in Executive discretionary powers extended from its basic procedural conceptions to more substantive and normative notions.⁴

From the mid-1980s onwards, however, cases were adjudicated upon in the courts concerning how a prerogative power has been exercised. We shall examine the significance of the GCHQ case from 1984 below.

How the Courts have dealt with the Problem

The history of case law reveals a gradual but *in toto* substantial eroding of the variety and exercise of governmental non-statutory discretionary power over the centuries to the extent that today the Courts play a vitally important constitutional role in clarifying not just the existence and degree of these prerogative powers, but also whether they have been lawfully deployed, in much the same way that decisions issuing from Acts of Parliament are. This trajectory calls into question an assumption that existing legal means have insufficiently regulated the Prerogative.

Even within the pre-revolutionary era, it was recognised that the then exclusively *Royal* Prerogative did not allow monarchs to summon up seeming prerogative powers *ex nihilo*.⁵ This suggested that the Prerogative of the King, subsequently bequeathed to a non-Monarchical Executive, could not be expanded in scope. The finite nature of the Prerogative was further clarified centuries later in the *BBC v Johns* case (1965), where the broadcaster argued that it ought to be exempt from income tax on the basis that it was a statutory body created by a supposed Prerogative power. This was roundly dismissed, with Lord Diplock memorably commenting in his judgement that it was:

*350 years and a civil war too late for the Queen's courts to broaden the prerogative. The limits within which the executive government may impose obligations or restraints on citizens of the UK without any statutory authority are now well settled and incapable of extension.*⁶

Whilst these decisions have been ordinarily cited as closing the book on the possibility of the expansion of Prerogative power beyond that which it has been regarded as encompassing, two problems present themselves here. The first concerns the lack of clarity as to the totality of all extant Executive prerogative power – where is the exhaustive list of all such powers contained? Whilst it is established that the Courts are authoritative in determining whether a particular Prerogative exists, what of the many Prerogatives for which, as Bartlett and Everett remind us, there are “no recent judicial authority and sometimes no judicial authority at all.”⁷ Such opaqueness makes it difficult to decisively determine that Lord Diplock was correct, for, in order to be certain that the extant prerogatives cannot be added to, one would surely need a definitive list of them. The second issue is related but suggests that even with an authoritative list, the supposed circumscription of the Prerogative may fall prey to an identical complication that has afflicted statute: the pace of technological change may occasion a novel interpretation by the Executive of prerogative powers that effectively brings into existence a new one. This possibility was vividly hinted to by the 1915 *Petition of Right* case, wherein the Court utilised its powers of interpretation to support the Executive's contention that the notion of ‘invasion’ by a foreign power could be extended to mean the presence of a German airship within British airspace, something which was not a possibility before the then recent advent of

⁴ As laid out by Bingham.

⁵ The 1611 Case of Proclamations

⁶ *BBC v F.D. Johns* (HM Inspector of Taxes) (1965)

⁷ Ministry of Justice in Bartlett and Everett, p4

air travel⁸. There is reason to conclude therefore that the Courts may broaden the ambit of legally acceptable prerogatives in light of changes in technology, or indeed wider social or political developments, for, as Loveland reminds us “prerogative powers are – like statutes – ‘always speaking.’”⁹ Three hundred and fifty years and a civil war have not necessarily silenced all of them, *pace* Lord Diplock.

In the 1920 case of *De Keyser v Attorney-General* the Law Lords importantly clarified that in instances in which Acts of Parliament have been passed on the same terrain as an established prerogative, the latter cannot be enforced¹⁰. The case concerned the requisition by the Government of a private hotel for use by the armed forces during the First World War. De Keyser, the hotel owner, attempted to claim compensation from the Government under the Defence Act 1842, a statutory law passed by Parliament. The Government rejected this and argued that the seizure of the hotel had been undertaken by right of *Prerogative*, and thus no compensation was payable to the claimants, despite the 1842 law stipulating that it ought to. The court rejected the Government’s attempt to rely on the Prerogative at the expense of statutory law, arguing that statute takes precedence over prerogative powers where the former concerns the same ground as the latter. This major judgement muzzling the Executive’s ability to deploy a ‘pick n mix’ approach nonetheless preserved an element of discretionary power in its perplexing determination on the status of a prerogative so abridged. Lord Atkinson said: “[T]he Crown can only do the particular thing in accordance with its statutory provisions, and that its prerogative power to do that thing is in abeyance.”¹¹ That the particular prerogative side-lined in judgement here is merely suspended rather than decisively overruled according to the statutory interpretation offered can be seen as a limitation on confidence that the judicial review and other legal means are in fact ‘chipping away’ at these archaic relics. This is because an analogous scenario with respect to some notional fresh primary legislation would see the implied repeal of an existing statute with which it was inconsistent. Yet that principle is not being applied in this judgement.¹²

Indeed, the 1989 case concerning *Northumbria Police and the Home Secretary*¹³ further underscored this limitation since it contained a judicial decision to the effect that the statutory power of the police to issue weaponry co-existed with the discretionary power of the Minister in question indicating, as Loveland states, that “the doctrine of implied repeal does not apply to prerogative powers”¹⁴, suggesting that the means of revoking specific prerogatives is through Parliament *expressly* repealing them, rather than legal means in the form of statutory interpretation by judges.

A feature of the foregoing judgements was that the Courts had remained at a superficial level in their approach to the Executive’s deployment of the prerogative; the matters investigated were the existence of the powers, and their interplay with statute. That discretionary powers were treated differently from cases where the power in question derived from an Act of Parliament was a significant lacuna in judicial oversight: cases of the latter can and do involve determinations on whether the Executive had acted unlawfully. Yet, if individual’s rights had been violated by the state, it would in nearly all instances not matter whether the source of the

⁸ Loveland, p82

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *De Keyser v Attorney-General* (1920)

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Loveland, p86.

¹³ *R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, ex parte Northumbria Police Authority* (1989)

¹⁴ *ibid*

violation was as a result of the misuse of statute or the unlawful application of Ministerial discretion. It was in this context that arguments for codifying on a statutory basis all existing Governmental powers that did not derive from statute but have a significant effect would be a progressive step in the direction of high-level accountability, placing the full gamut of Executive power under the scrutiny of Parliament, and, by extension, the review of the Courts.

The landmark GCHQ case¹⁵ in 1984 brought in place a sea change in the regulation of prerogative powers of the Executive as for the first time the judiciary made determinations on the manner and lawfulness of its use. The case was lodged by the Council of Civil Service Unions following the decision of the Thatcher Government to ban employees of GCHQ from joining trade unions on the grounds of national security. The Government did so on the basis on an Order-in-Council deriving from a Prerogative power. The House of Lords determined that prerogative powers can indeed be subject to review by the Courts, overturning the Court of Appeal's prior decision in this case that it was a non-justiciable matter. However, despite this unprecedented incursion into the Executive's hitherto exclusive domain, with the court acknowledging that the terms of civil service employment were indeed a justiciable matter even though they issued from a prerogative power, the claim failed as the Government successfully argued that it can be lawful to frustrate a legitimate expectation (on the grounds of national security). Lord Roskill, in a significant obiter statement in the 1984 judgement, suggested that some powers may continue be beyond the purview of judicial deliberation. These were "the making of treaties, the defence of the realm, the prerogative of mercy, the grant of honours, the dissolution of Parliament and the appointment of Ministers."¹⁶

Thus, the sanctity of core Executive functions seemed to remain beyond the oversight of any body within the constitution. Significantly, the judgement has led to the development of a 'sliding-scale' approach in cases which are deemed justiciable, with a differential amount of intensity shown depending on the case to be pronounced on.¹⁷ A higher intensity is to be expected on matters that are administrative, that concern legality or individual rights; the judiciary are less inclined, by contrast, to delve fully into claims connected to high policy matters – in such scenarios, a light touch shall be applied. It should be noted that this scale applies as much to statute-based powers as it does to the exercise of prerogative powers.

Britain's withdrawal from the European Union provided the recent context for the Supreme Court to show its increasing confidence in pronouncing upon matters that Ministers nonetheless held to be political in nature. Both of these EU-related 'Miller cases' can be said to demonstrate, in different ways, the readiness of the judiciary to protect Parliamentary supremacy from the dictates of Governmental use of the prerogative. In the first Miller ruling, the Supreme Court ruled that the use of prerogative powers by the May Government could not frustrate a piece of established legislation, namely the European Communities Act 1972.¹⁸ The second Miller decision was even more momentous with the Court overturning as unlawful the Johnson Government's prorogation of Parliament (which occurred through the deployment of a prerogative power), determining that "An unlimited power of prorogation [of Parliament] would [...] be incompatible with the legal principle of Parliamentary sovereignty."¹⁹

¹⁵ Council of Civil Service Unions v Minister for the Civil Service (1984)

¹⁶ In *ibid*

¹⁷ Loveland, p568

¹⁸ R (on the application of Miller and another) (Respondents) v Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (2017)

¹⁹ in R (on the application of Miller) v The Prime Minister (2019)

Political and Conventional Regulation: the War Powers debate

As a prerogative power exercised by the Cabinet, in conjunction with senior military commanders and the National Security Council, decisions to engage Britain in military conflict contain no current legal requirement to seek approval by Parliament. Given the gravity of the decisions made, and concerns about legality of wars, this can be seen as a rather serious deficiency in our system. The UK's participation in the controversial 2003 Iraq War, which many have argued was prosecuted on the basis of falsehoods and a spurious international legal basis²⁰, highlighted the perils of Executive action being made by a small coterie of politicians in conjunction with foreign powers, arguably without proper scrutiny. However, it is important to recall that in the run up to the commencement of the conflict in March 2003, the Labour Government did accede to calls for a vote in the House of Commons, which was comfortably passed. Whilst the fact the Conservative opposition supported the decision to go to war may be taken together with the shortcomings of the unenforceable Ministerial Code (which some commentators deemed Ministers to have broken)²¹ to be seen as a profound deficit in political regulation of the Prerogative, the vote itself is regarded by commentators as a defining moment in the process that governments are expected to follow in future when going to war. This is because it represented the first time in the modern era that a British Government had sought Parliamentary approval to go to war. Although the Blair Government was confident beforehand that it had the numbers to prevail and, as Mills observes, the timing of the debate, only 48 hours before the war formally began, created something of an inevitability about the outcome of the vote²², this nonetheless has been seen by many as establishing a convention on future Executive war-making decisions.²³ Indeed, when the coalition Government lost a Parliamentary vote in 2013 to deploy airstrikes against Syrian Government installations, the intended military action did not go ahead.²⁴

Does this convention create an effective Parliamentary brake on future Executive decisions to go to war? It seems unlikely, but the convention to consult would appear to hold. Mindful of the limitations of this emerging convention, some, such as former Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, have called for codifying Parliament's role in authorising future military action, thus effectively placing the current prerogative on a statutory footing:

*It is for this House to take matters into its own hands and to take back control—as some might put it. I am clear that, as an absolute minimum, Parliament should have enshrined in law the opportunity to ask the following questions before the Government can order planned military action: is it necessary; is it legal; what will it achieve; and what is the long-term strategy?*²⁵

This view was echoed in the aftermath of the Iraq war in the Public Administration Select Committee's final report which went further in calling for all Prerogative powers to be transformed into Acts of Parliament:

The Government should initiate before the end of the current session [2003-04] a public consultation exercise on Ministerial prerogative powers. This should contain proposals for legislation to provide greater

²⁰ eg Professor Philippe Sands QC in Carrell and Verkaik

²¹ in Woolf

²² Mills, p63

²³ Mills, p24

²⁴ Mills and other commentators rightly see this as a turning-point in terms of conventions, but perhaps understate the differential geo-political pressures on British governments in 2013 versus 2003: clearly the Bush White House was far more gung-ho in embarking upon war in the Middle East than the Obama Administration was a decade later. This created a markedly different level of British Executive interest in prosecuting war on each of these two occasions – although one should also state that this is a *political* observation, rather than one with strictly legal-constitutional import.

²⁵ Cited in Mills p38

parliamentary control over all the executive powers enjoyed by Ministers under the royal prerogative. This exercise should also include specific proposals for ensuring full parliamentary scrutiny of the following Ministerial prerogative actions: decisions on armed conflict; the conclusion and ratification of treaties; the issue and revocation of passports. This is unfinished constitutional business.²⁶

Such a move would herald the possibility of challenges in English courts to decisions to go to war. Ministers, senior military officials and other commentators have raised serious issues with a legislative approach to determining military engagement, underscoring the propensity of statute to hamstring the fleetness of foot of the Executive to conduct its affairs, in this case diplomacy and going to war. One retired General highlights an adverse effect on operational effectiveness and agility, as a Parliamentary debate would undermine the “secrecy, security and surprise” that is necessary for success on the battlefield.²⁷ It is also argued that the expanding definition of military action to include special forces operations and the advent of unmanned aircraft further complicate attempts to neatly enshrine war powers into law²⁸, reiterating the point above about statute not necessarily keeping pace with social or technological developments. As a counter to this view, it might be said that a notional ‘War Powers Act’ could be imaginatively drafted to incorporate procedural requirements and palpable limitations that could accommodate these operational, ‘on-the-ground’ exigencies.

Conclusions

The prerogative is a vestigial component of the British constitution that can be seen to afford excessive and unwarranted arbitrary power to the Executive in a manner that may serve to undermine Parliamentary supremacy and the Separation of Powers and is contrary to the Rule of Law. Despite valiant attempts by much of the judiciary over particularly the last four decades, firstly in the GCHQ case and most recently in the Miller rulings, a significant portion of the discretionary powers remain protected from scrutiny. Existing conventional (and still less purely political) avenues of regulation have been found to be unsatisfactory in reining in Ministers in their use of the Prerogative.

Nonetheless, the oft-demanded codification into statute of these powers would not be a panacea. Indeed, it would raise fresh complications of its own. We have seen how statute can circumscribe too heavily and not keep up with changes on the ground; this could be a particular concern in the rapidly changing theatre of war. But more fundamentally, the fact that the basis of judicial reticence in cases involving ‘high policy’ is their claimed *non-justiciability* is a practice that would presumably continue to hold even in the event of all Prerogative powers being fully susceptible to Judicial Review because they had all been subject to legislative action. As Loveland remarks:” The GCHQ Civil Servants would not have won their case if their employment derived from statute rather than the prerogative.”²⁹ Britain’s participation in the Iraq War is still likely to have occurred if statute had mandated the Parliamentary vote that took place.

Indeed, one senses that the debate rather misses the point: it is perhaps not the lack of codification into statute that currently makes Courts queasy about regulating much of these powers, so much as the Judiciary’s considered opinion that, consistent with the UK’s

²⁶ Cited in Mills, p16

²⁷ Cited in Mills, p61

²⁸ *ibid*, p47

²⁹ Loveland, p99

constitutional settlement, they do not have a lawful basis on which to ask searching questions of policy decisions made by an elected government.³⁰

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³⁰ Beyond the constitutional necessity of fidelity to the Separation of Powers, the English courts continue to show a 'deference to expertise' approach in some other fields too. Notable cases concerning academic matters within the Higher Education sector have also been deemed to be beyond consideration by the judiciary, and this may also be the case in confessional issues, or those concerning artistic merit or value:

"disputes suitable for adjudication under [the University's] procedures may be unsuitable for adjudication in the courts. This is because there are issues of academic or pastoral judgment which the university is equipped to consider in breadth and in depth, but on which any judgment of the courts would be jejune and inappropriate. This is not a consideration peculiar to academic matters: religious or aesthetic questions, for example, may also fall into this class." (Sedley LJ in *Clark v University of Lincolnshire and Humberside* (2000))

Factors Responsible for Suicide and Suicidal Ideation in Hungary – A Scoping Review

Dr Ilias Mahmud; Dr Russell Kabir; Gabriella Csik

Abstract

Suicide represents a major global public health challenge, with the World Health Organisation estimating over 700,000 deaths annually worldwide. Despite being preventable, suicide rates remain alarmingly high in certain regions. Hungary has historically recorded one of the highest suicide mortality rates globally for several decades, making it a critical case study for understanding suicide risk factors. This review examines both suicide and suicidal ideation (defined as thoughts about taking one's own life, ranging from passing considerations to detailed plans) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing suicidal behaviour in Hungary.

A scoping review was conducted following the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) guidelines to identify English or Hungarian-language articles published from 2000 onwards focusing on the factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary. Five online databases were searched to identify eligible articles. The articles were analysed for key themes and findings.

In total, out of 1,520 articles initially identified, 29 eligible articles were selected and included in this review.

Three main themes emerged from the articles: environmental context, socioeconomic and demographic factors, individual factors, and mental health. Main risk factors for women include being retired or economically inactive, widowed, divorced, or with a history of depression. Main risk factors among men are unemployment, living alone, never having been married, and addiction. Female gender, higher educational attainment, younger age, and marriage are significantly associated with lowered suicide risk. There is a significant association between seasonality and suicide rates, with a peak in late June-early July.

This review mapped the existing literature on the factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary. This review highlighted the need for further research investigating the relationship between specific factors and suicide in the country. There are no available full-text studies that focus on suicide among groups of minorities, access to healthcare, and there is a lack of longitudinal studies.

Keywords: Suicide | Suicidal ideation | Scoping review | Hungary

Introduction

Although suicides are preventable, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that over 700,000 individuals across the globe take their own lives every year. This staggering number highlights the immense challenge that suicide poses to global public health – sadly, it often fails to get the priority it deserves (World Health, 2019). The Hungarian suicide mortality rate has historically been among the highest worldwide for decades (Rihmer et al., 2013, Lester, 1995). During the period from 1960 to 2000, Hungary consistently had the highest suicide rate in the world in most years. The reason behind this exceptionally high suicide mortality in Hungary remains not fully understood. One possible explanation is that Hungarian medical

examiners may classify deaths as suicides that would otherwise be related to other causes. However, it is noteworthy that Hungarian immigrants in the United States have the highest suicide rate among all immigrant groups (Lester, 1995, Rihmer et al., 2013).

Suicide was Hungary's leading external cause of death during 1995–2017, with more than an average of 2500 deaths annually (The World Bank, 2023). Between 2000 and 2018, the suicide rate decreased in most EU countries (including Hungary), but the Hungarian rate remains alarmingly high (Öngyilkosság – Fenntartható fejlődés indikátorai) and has not improved since 2006 (Rihmer et al., 2013, Lantos et al., 2021).

In 2020, there were 47,252 deaths due to intentional self-harm in the European Union, corresponding to an average of 10.2 deaths per 100,000 population. Among the EU countries, Hungary registered the second-highest rate of suicide, with 17.1 deaths per 100,000 people. Only Lithuania had a higher suicide rate in the same year (21.3 per 100,000 people) (The World Bank, 2023). When looking at regional data, the South Great Plain region in Hungary recorded the highest standardised death rate for suicide in the European Union, at 23.9 deaths per 100,000 population, well above the EU average (10.24) (eurostat, 2023).

In 2020, there were 28 deaths by suicide per 100,000 male inhabitants and 8 per 100,000 female inhabitants in Hungary. The suicide rate for men was almost four times that for women, and the 55–64-year-old and 65-year-old and older age groups were the most at risk for suicide in both males and females (Öngyilkosság – Fenntartható fejlődés indikátorai).

Although suicide is a complex, multicausal phenomenon, with medical-psychiatric, psychosocial, cultural and demographic components (Tímea et al., 2012), globally, research consistently shows that approximately 90% of individuals who commit suicide have one or more major psychiatric disorders at the time of their death (Hawton and van Heeringen, 2009). The most common of these are major depressive episodes, alcohol/drug addiction, and schizophrenia. On the other hand, it is also true that most psychiatric patients will never commit suicide (Hawton and van Heeringen, 2009, Tímea et al., 2012), which points to the importance of investigating the role of further factors.

Furthermore, due to Hungary's persistent struggle with suicide, there may be certain distinctive characteristics that account for the high suicide rate in this country. A scoping review was deemed to be a suitable study design to identify specific factors responsible for suicide risk and to understand the extent and nature of the evidence related to Hungary (Munn et al., 2018). A preliminary search of Embase, PubMed and Scopus online databases was conducted and no recent systematic reviews or scoping reviews on the topic were identified.

This review aimed to provide a comprehensive overview and synthesis of the available evidence on factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary, using a scoping review methodology (Munn et al., 2018). The specific objectives of this review are (i) to identify the patterns of suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary, (ii) to explore the background characteristics of people with suicidal ideation and those who commit suicide in Hungary, and (iii) to determine the major factors that influence people to commit suicide or have suicidal ideation, in Hungary.

Methods

A scoping review of articles was conducted of peer-reviewed publications focusing on the factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation among people living in Hungary. We used the guidelines from the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Manual for Evidence Synthesis to map

the current literature. These guidelines, developed by the JBI, provide a comprehensive framework for conducting evidence synthesis and ensuring the quality of the scoping reviews (Peters et al., 2020). According to the JBI methodological guidance, in most cases, the goal of a scoping review is not to synthesise the results or outcomes from the included articles. This scoping review is particularly relevant in the contemporary context of global mental health priorities and the growing recognition of suicide as a preventable cause of death. By mapping the existing literature on suicide factors in Hungary, this review contributes to the broader understanding of mental health challenges in regions with historically high suicide rates and can inform targeted prevention strategies. As such, the analysis of the extracted data does not involve anything more than a primary descriptive analysis (e.g., populations, location of studies, or frequency counts of concepts) (Peters et al., 2020). In line with this guidance, the extracted data were analysed using thematic analysis to map the available literature.

The scope of this review limits a comprehensive discussion of the terminology, but we define some key terms. The WHO's International Classification of Diseases for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics defines suicide as intentional self-harm with intent to cause one's death and suicidal ideation as ideas or thoughts about the possibility of ending one's life, ranging from believing that one would be better off dead to the formulation of acting on these plans (World Health Organisation, 2025). The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) similarly describes a *suicide attempt*: a self-destructive act carried out with some degree of intent to end one's life and *suicidal ideation*: a broad term used to define a variety of thoughts, wishes, and preoccupations with suicide (Klonsky et al., 2016).

Search Strategy

Embase, PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science and CINAHL Complete were the databases used to identify published articles. Table 1 presents the search terms used. Boolean operators 'AND' and 'OR' were used, as shown in Table 1, to ensure all relevant articles are found discussing the factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary.

Table 1. Search terms and Boolean operators for the literature search.

Suicide		Factors		Hungary
Suicide		"Risk factor**"		Hungary
OR		OR		OR
"Suicidal tendency**"		factor*		Hungarian*
OR		OR		
"Suicidal ideation"	AND	Influence	AND	
OR		OR		
"Suicidal behavior**"		correlate*		
OR		OR		
"Suicide attempt"		precursor*		
OR				
"Attempted suicide"				

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Eligibility criteria were determined according to the Population, Concept and Context (PCC) framework. The population referred to those with suicidal ideation or who committed suicide; the concept included the factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation in the context of Hungary. Articles published from the 1st of January 2000 onwards, focusing on factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary, were included. This timescale was selected recognising the significant socio-political and economic transformations Hungary experienced throughout the 1990s following the fall of communism. By starting from 2000, this review captures the factors influencing suicide within the context of Hungary's post-transition period, offering insights into more contemporary patterns while maintaining a reasonable timeframe for analysis. This timescale was selected to provide an adequate overview of the patterns and factors behind suicide in Hungary. Studies were included if they researched factors responsible for suicide or suicidal ideation in Hungary. Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method studies were eligible for inclusion. In addition to articles written in English, articles published in Hungarian were included. Studies published in Hungarian were reviewed by a co-author of Hungarian origin.

Articles were excluded if they did not provide specific data on suicide risk factors, suicide rates, or factors associated with suicidal ideation in Hungary or were published before 2000. Grey literature represents a significant source of information that could have provided valuable insights, particularly governmental reports, policy documents, and unpublished research on suicide prevention efforts in Hungary. However, as grey literature can differ in format and length, reviewing it and identifying relevant information within it would require significant time and resources, which were beyond the scope of this review; thus, these were excluded. This is acknowledged as a substantial limitation that should be addressed in future research on this critical topic.

Table 2. Eligibility criteria for the publications to be included in this scoping review

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Studies:	Original studies in English or Hungarian	Articles published in languages other than English or Hungarian
Design:	Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies	Articles that are not original studies (e.g. publications in the form of editorials, reviews or opinion articles)
Context:	Articles focusing on the Hungarian population	Articles that do not focus on the Hungarian population
Population/Concept:	Articles focusing on factors responsible for suicide or suicidal ideation	Articles that are not on suicide or suicidal tendencies
Published:	Articles published from 2000 onward	Articles published before 2000

Selected studies

In total, 1520 articles were found through the database search. Of these studies, 552 related articles were identified in Embase, 365 in PubMed, 299 in Web of Science, 257 in Scopus and 47 in CINAHL Complete. Search results were exported to Zotero, a referencing management software. Zotero was used to minimise duplication bias and detect potential duplicates. 675 duplicate articles were removed before transferring the files into Rayyan – a web-based, intelligent research tool – for screening the titles and abstracts and for full-text review (Ouzzani et al., 2016).

162 articles published before the 1st of January 2000, and 17 articles written in languages other than English or Hungarian were removed before other inclusion and exclusion criteria were implemented. For screening the remaining 666 articles, Rayyan was used. Following the initial screening, 210 articles were selected to assess further eligibility and were read in full.

Search results

Of the 210 records screened for eligibility, 29 articles advanced to full-text review. No additional articles were identified via references or hand searches; thus, these 29 articles were included in the review. The PRISMA diagram is depicted in Figure 3 (Tricco et al., 2018).

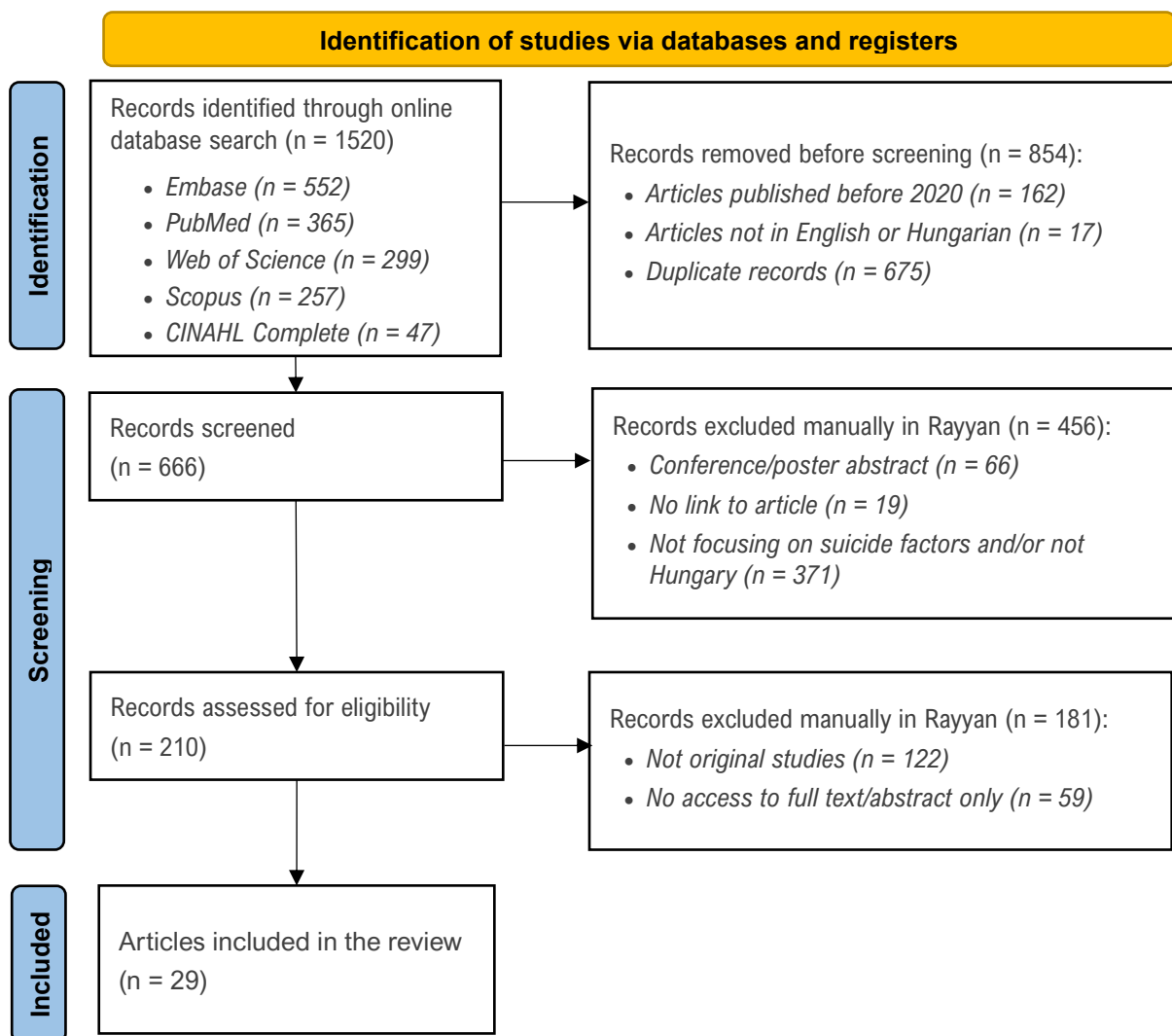


Figure 1. PRISMA diagram – flow chart of articles identified, screened, and included.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from the articles was entered into an extraction form. The form included details on authors, year of publication, location, setting, population, period of data collection, method, data sources, factors investigated, key findings and main limitations. The extracted data was then analysed using a thematic analysis. The key characteristics of the included articles are summarised in Appendix 1.

Study characteristics

Of the 29 articles, 13 investigated environmental factors, such as seasonality, sunshine hours, COVID-19, and contaminants in drinking water. Fifteen articles investigated the relationship between individual factors and suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary; these include mental health issues, depression, Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), substance use, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and other physical health characteristics. In 9 articles, the demographic and socio-cultural factors were investigated, such as age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, and political and religious integration. Three main themes emerged from the articles: (i) environmental context, (ii) socioeconomic and demographic factors, (iii) individual factors and mental health. The results are organised and presented starting from the broader context, moving towards the individual factors.

The study designs used in the 29 selected publications were time-series analysis (n=15), cross-sectional studies (n=12) and retrospective observational studies (n=2). The most common data sources used were national statistical and mortality databases, interviews and questionnaires, and autopsy and police records. Ten studies used data from Budapest, the capital of Hungary, or other major cities, and 19 used information from national databases or nationwide surveys. There was only one article that focused on territorial differences.

Environmental factors

Seasonality and weather conditions

Eight articles investigated the relationship between seasonality and suicide (Kmetty et al., 2018, Lantos et al., 2021, Tőro et al., 2009, Bozsonyi et al., 2017, Lantos et al., 2019, Bozsonyi et al., 2020, Zonda et al., 2008, Seregi et al., 2017). The numerical distribution of suicide cases was found to be uneven during the calendar year and a peak in the number of suicide cases in early summer (Bozsonyi et al., 2017, Lantos et al., 2021), during warmer weather (Tőro et al., 2009, Bozsonyi et al., 2020, Seregi et al., 2017), on Mondays, and New Year's Eve. During Easter and on Christmas Day, suicides were less frequent, but only for men. However, national holidays did not influence the frequency of suicide (Zonda et al., 2008).

Significant seasonality in death rates from suicide was identified, with a peak in late June to July. Non-violent suicides peaked in early June, with the peak of violent methods following half a month later (Bozsonyi et al., 2017, Lantos et al., 2021). Furthermore, a more marked seasonal variation was observed for suicides committed with violent methods, compared with non-violent suicides (Lantos et al., 2021). Specifically, violent methods showed a 25% higher amplitude in seasonal fluctuation compared to non-violent methods, with peaks occurring primarily in late spring and early summer months.

The impact of warm temperatures on suicide rates was evident, with a higher frequency of suicidal deaths during periods of warm weather (Tőro et al., 2009). Bozsonyi et al. (2017) first did not find a significant direct relationship between the number of hours of sunshine and the number of committed suicides, yet, in their 2020 study, they identified a weak yet statistically significant relationship between daily sunshine duration and daily changes in temperature with suicide rates. Specifically, they found a correlation coefficient of 0.11 ($p < 0.01$) between sunshine hours and daily suicide counts, suggesting a small but measurable effect (Bozsonyi et al., 2020). This discrepancy could be attributed to the aggregate ecological data used in these studies, which does not allow for the detection of individual causal relationships. The correlations found can be considered as indirect evidence of the relationship between weather conditions and suicide. Another study also demonstrated a weak but statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.08$, $p < 0.001$) between daily sunshine duration and suicide numbers on the same and subsequent days (up to 11 days). The researchers concluded that sunshine appears to have a prompt but distinctly weak increasing effect on suicide risk, particularly for violent suicide methods among males. Sunshine has a prompt but distinctly weak increasing effect on suicide risk (especially violent cases in males) (Seregi et al., 2017).

The impact of solar and lunar phenomena on suicide risk was also investigated. Suicide risk during proton solar events significantly increased among women aged 20–49 years. On the other hand, a slight but significant decrease in suicide risk was observed among women aged 50–59 years during magnetic storms and full moons (Kmetty et al., 2018).

Drinking water contamination

The relationship between drinking tap water contaminants and suicide rates was examined in two studies (Izsak et al., 2022, Rihmer et al., 2015). A significant negative association was established between lithium levels and the standardised suicide mortality ratio in the total population and among males, respectively. By contrast, no such preventative association was found among females (Izsak et al., 2022). By contrast, when the impact of arsenic-contaminated drinking water consumption was investigated, a positive association with age-standardised suicide rates was found (Rihmer et al., 2015).

However, both studies share identical limitations. They rely on aggregated (i.e., non-individual) data that may lead to the 'ecological fallacy'. Furthermore, no data were collected on differences in bottled water consumption, which can influence individual exposure.

COVID-19

Suicide mortality increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the pre-pandemic trend (Lantos and Nyári, 2022, Osváth et al., 2021). This increase was observed overall and was particularly notable among males (Osváth et al., 2021, Lantos and Nyári, 2022). Higher rates were also reported among individuals who had completed only primary education (Lantos and Nyári, 2022), as well as among those aged over 25 years (Lantos and Nyári, 2022, Balint et al., 2023). The number of suicides in the 25–64 age group increased significantly during the COVID months of 2020. Similar patterns were observed in the population aged 65 or older and among males aged 25–64, but at lower significance levels (Lantos and Nyári, 2022). The number of violent suicides also rose significantly during the COVID months (Balint et al., 2023). The number of male suicides increased significantly during

the pandemic by 18% compared to the expected numbers based on the pre-COVID-19 trend (Osváth et al., 2021). At the same time, suicide among females did not differ significantly from the expected trend (Osváth et al., 2021, Lantos and Nyári, 2022). In contrast to these findings, studies from other countries found either no change or a decrease when comparing COVID-19 suicide numbers with suicide rates from the pre-COVID-19 period (Osváth et al., 2021).

Socioeconomic and demographic factors

Gender and age

Four articles examined the influence of age and gender on suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary (Lantos et al., 2021, Bálint et al., 2016, Havasi et al., 2005, Fekete et al., 2005). Two of the studies in question (Lantos et al., 2021, Bálint et al., 2016) utilised databases covering the entire country, whereas the remaining two articles (Havasi et al., 2005, Fekete et al., 2005) relied on data from local university clinics, mortality records, and autopsy reports from two major cities. A significantly higher suicide risk was found in men than in women, and it increased with age and decreased with education level. The male-to-female ratio of committed suicides was around 70:30, reflecting male dominance (Lantos et al., 2021, Havasi et al., 2005). During the 1995–2017 period, a total of 60,210 suicide deaths were registered in Hungary, with 76% being men and 24% being women (Lantos et al., 2021). In Hungary's third-largest city, Szeged, between 1991 and 2000, a total of 719 suicide deaths were recorded, with 70% being men and 30% being women (Havasi et al., 2005). In contrast, Fekete et al. found female dominance (63%) when analysing 1,158 suicide attempts (Fekete et al., 2005). Despite the high rates of attempted suicides, the rates of completed suicides were relatively low among young men and young and middle-aged women. However, a limitation of this study is that it only included medically treated suicide attempters, excluding those who did not seek medical treatment, which is estimated to be approximately 20-30% of all attempters. These findings are also specific to the Pécs in Hungary and may not be generalisable to other populations or regions (Fekete et al., 2005).

Marital status, employment and educational attainment

Among women, the main risk factors for suicide included being retired or economically inactive (Fekete et al., 2005), widowed (Fekete et al., 2005, Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021), divorced (Fekete et al., 2005, Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021), or having a history of depression (Fekete et al., 2005). Female suicide attempters were mainly repeaters. On the other hand, a 'typical' male suicide attempter could be characterised as unemployed (Fekete et al., 2005), living alone (Fekete et al., 2005, Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021), never having been married (Fekete et al., 2005, Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021), and struggling with addiction (Fekete et al., 2005).

Further, marital status and educational attainment were also found to be associated with suicide rates (Fekete et al., 2005, Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021, Almasi et al., 2009). Being widowed or divorced is among the main risk factors for suicide for women (Fekete et al., 2005). Similarly, men living alone, never having been married, exhibited a higher risk for suicide (Fekete et al., 2005, Almasi et al., 2009). Furthermore, low education levels are also correlated with suicide (Almasi et al., 2009). Higher educational attainment and marriage were significantly associated with lowered suicide risk (Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021). The

effects of marital status and educational attainment on suicide were larger in males (Bálint et al., 2016). Marriage was a protective factor against suicide (Lantos et al., 2021).

Another main risk factor was unemployment among men and being retired or financially inactive for women (Fekete et al., 2005, Fountoulakis et al., 2014). Unemployment might be linked with suicidality in the general population with a 3-5-year delay, meaning that increases in unemployment rates were associated with increases in suicide rates approximately 3-5 years later rather than immediately. This suggests a complex, long-term relationship between economic factors and suicide risk. The economic crisis might increase overall suicidality, rather than specifically in unemployed people (Fountoulakis et al., 2014).

The relationship between suicide mortality rate and political integration was found to be negatively correlated, while the mortality rate and the lack of religious integration demonstrated a positive association. The lack of social integration (political and religious) may also contribute to the notable spatial heterogeneity of suicide cases in Hungary (Balint et al., 2014). This heterogeneity is evidenced by significantly higher suicide rates in the southeastern regions (particularly the South Great Plain) compared to western regions, with differences of up to 3.5-fold between counties with the highest and lowest rates.

Individual factors and mental health

In addition to external factors, such as environmental or socioeconomic and demographic elements, it is equally important to consider the role of individual factors. Out of the 29 articles, twelve discussed individual factors and mental health issues, including depression (Fekete et al., 2005, Elek et al., 2022, Sánta et al., 2020, Bácskai et al., 2012), hopelessness (Chang, 2017), ADHD (Bácskai et al., 2012, Balazs et al., 2014, Kakuszi et al., 2018), antidepressant use (Kalmar et al., 2008, Döme et al., 2011), substance use (Fekete et al., 2005, Havasi et al., 2005, Bácskai et al., 2012), IBS (Sánta et al., 2020) and physical health (Elek et al., 2022).

Depression, hopelessness and antidepressant use

According to the identified studies (Fekete et al., 2005, Elek et al., 2022, Sánta et al., 2020, Bácskai et al., 2012), depression has an impact on increasing suicide and suicidal ideation. Findings indicate that depression is the primary factor influencing suicide risk (Sánta et al., 2020). Depression and its symptoms had a small but significant effect on increasing suicidal ideation (Elek et al., 2022). A history of depression was also identified as one of the main risk factors for women (Fekete et al., 2005). Moreover, individuals with ADHD who are dependent on drugs exhibit more severe symptoms of depression compared to those without ADHD (Bácskai et al., 2012).

Factors that explain depressive symptoms include the degree of hopelessness (Sánta et al., 2020). Chang's cross-sectional study (Chang, 2017) also found that hopelessness and hope uniquely predicted suicide ideation among Hungarian college students – hopelessness hurt, and hope helped. High hopelessness with low hope was especially bad for suicidal ideations. On the other hand, high hope buffered the negative effects of hopelessness on suicide ideation. High-hope students who experienced high hopelessness reported lower suicide ideation than those experiencing low hopelessness (Chang, 2017).

There is a strong negative association between antidepressant use and overall suicide rate in both men and women, especially in individuals aged 70 and above (Döme et al., 2011, Kalmar

et al., 2008). However, this protective effect is absent in the youngest age group, suggesting a nuanced impact across different age groups (Kalmar et al., 2008, Döme et al., 2011). Antidepressant use remained a strong predictor of reduced suicide rates even after controlling for factors such as divorce rate and unemployment rate. However, this relationship was no longer statistically significant after controlling for alcohol consumption, suggesting potential interactions between these variables.

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder

ADHD was found to exhibit an increased risk of suicidality in treatment-naïve children and adolescents (Balazs et al., 2014) and a significantly higher likelihood of suicidal ideation in females (Kakuszi et al., 2018). In contrast to women, there was no significant difference in males with ADHD (Kakuszi et al., 2018). Furthermore, drug-dependent patients with ADHD displayed significantly higher rates of suicidal attempts and suicidal ideation compared to those without ADHD (Bácskai et al., 2012). The small sample sizes and the employed study designs could restrict the generalisability of these studies.

Substance use

The results were not consistent when exploring the role of addiction in suicide and suicidal ideation. Fekete et al. (2005) identified addiction as one of the main risk factors among men. Additionally, Havasi et al. (2005) found that 60% of all males and 18% of all females who died by suicide showed pathological signs of chronic alcoholism. In contrast, Dome et al. (2011) found no association between alcohol consumption and suicide rate, though they did observe a significant positive association between annual tobacco consumption and suicide rate.

Childhood abuse

Being victimised during childhood by parents increased the likelihood of attempting suicide in adulthood. This effect was more pronounced in females, where the risk of suicide was found to be approximately fifteen times greater than among females without a childhood abuse history. In contrast, the increase in males with a childhood abuse history was nearly double compared to males without such a history (Bácskai et al., 2009).

Other individual factors

The suicide risk among individuals with irritable bowel syndrome was notably high. In examining a sample of 300 participants living with IBS, it was found that 5.3% of patients showed a particularly high level of suicide risk (Sánta et al., 2020).

No association was found between dietary patterns, sport-related habits, and suicidal ideation or behaviour (Elek et al., 2022). On the other hand, disruption of the circadian rhythm and the sleep cycle had a significant effect on suicidal ideation. The study found that among participants reporting sleep disturbances, 38% exhibited suicidal ideation compared to 15% in those without sleep disturbances ($p < 0.001$), demonstrating a strong association between sleep disruption and suicidal thoughts (Elek et al., 2022).

Protective factors

The articles included in this review revealed not only risk factors for suicide and suicidal ideation but also identified protective factors that are associated with decreased risk of suicide.

Female gender (Bálint et al., 2016), higher educational attainment (Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021), younger age, and marriage (Bálint et al., 2016, Lantos et al., 2021) were all significantly associated with lowered suicide risk. Improvement in educational level contributed considerably to reducing suicide rates in men by approximately a third (Balint et al., 2020). High hope served as a buffer against the negative effects of hopelessness on suicide ideation (Chang, 2017). There was a strong negative association between antidepressant use and suicide rate (Kalmar et al., 2008, Döme et al., 2011), with the protective effect most evident in the 70 and older age groups (Kalmar et al., 2008). Women aged 50–59 years appear to have a slightly but significantly lower suicide risk during magnetic storms and full moons (Kmetty et al., 2018). Lastly, there was a significant negative association between lithium levels in drinking water and standardised suicide mortality ratio in the total population and among males (Izsak et al., 2022).

Discussion

This scoping review revealed that the factors contributing to suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary are multifaceted and complex. The identified factors can be categorised into three main themes: environmental, socioeconomic, and individual factors.

This review identified that antidepressants have a primarily age-dependent effect on completed suicides. A protective effect is evident in the 70 and older age groups and absent in the youngest age group (Kalmar et al., 2008, Döme et al., 2011). At present, there is ongoing scientific debate concerning the impact of antidepressant treatment on the risk of broadly defined suicidality, such as suicidal thoughts, behaviour, and attempts, as well as completed suicide (Döme et al., 2011). A comprehensive review of antidepressants identified a slight increase in suicidality risk (inducing suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts) for individuals under the age of 25 (Möller et al., 2008).

This review revealed that the risk of suicide decreases with age (Lantos et al., 2021, Bálint et al., 2016, Havasi et al., 2005). Today's post-industrial societies (especially in Europe) must face a demographic crisis of the ageing of the population. This will have a significant effect on the burden of suicide, which will need to be addressed (Churski et al., 2021). Further, more targeted studies are required to investigate suicidal behaviour in older age, especially the relationship between risk factors and suicide attempts and completed suicides in subjects above 65 in Hungary. Our research team is planning a follow-up study specifically focused on suicide risk factors in the elderly Hungarian population, with particular attention to isolation, chronic illness, and access to mental healthcare services (Beghi et al., 2021).

National holidays did not impact the frequency of suicide. On religious holidays (such as Easter and Christmas), alcohol consumption increases, especially for men. It would be expected that suicidal behaviour should also increase on these holidays. However, the data indicate no change in suicidal behaviour in women and, at the same time, a decrease in men (Zonda et al., 2008). It would be of great interest to compare the present results in countries where Buddhism and Islam are the dominant religions, given their contrasting views on alcohol consumption.

In 2020, only Lithuania registered higher suicide rates (21.3 per 100,000 people) than Hungary (17.1) among the EU countries (The World Bank, 2023). Both countries struggle with similar issues, e.g., the transition from Soviet rule and economic instability. The demographic situation that has developed in Hungary over the decades reflects the demographic phenomena that can be observed primarily in developed European countries. Still, some of its characteristics are naturally related to the political changeover that occurred in Eastern Central Europe, and its prolonged nature is specifically Hungarian (KSH Population Research Institute, 2024).

There were several limitations to this scoping review that are worth noting. First, screening records, assessing articles for eligibility, and extracting data were conducted by a single reviewer. The requirement of a second reviewer in scoping reviews, however, is recommended by JBI (Tricco et al., 2016). Second, due to the lack of longitudinal studies and the abundance of cross-sectional studies, causality between the identified factors and suicide outcomes could not be revealed. Furthermore, studies utilising aggregate data are subject to limitations due to ecological fallacy, which limits the ability to establish conclusions on an individual level. Third, the inclusion criteria limited publications to original studies only. Due to the timescale and scope of this review, grey literature and review articles were not searched and included. Including grey literature in this review may have provided a more comprehensive view of the available evidence. As such, there is a possibility that relevant data have been excluded from this review.

This scoping review highlights that the existing evidence on suicide and suicidal ideation is limited in the context of access to health care, the role of community-based prevention, mental health issues other than depression or ADHD, and among groups of minorities. Therefore, more robust analytical research designs such as case-control and psychological autopsy methods, are needed with a focus on risk factors, particularly access to health care; there is also a need for intervention studies for suicide prevention of suicidal ideation.

Conclusion

This scoping review aimed to map the existing literature on the main factors responsible for suicide and suicidal ideation in Hungary to better understand the factors behind the historically high suicide rates in the country. Socioeconomic and demographic factors, mental health conditions, environmental factors and seasonality were the main themes that emerged from the articles. Although the numbers have improved for decades, they still seriously burden society.

The review highlights the need for further research into the complex, multicausal phenomenon of suicide and the unique characteristics of Hungary's high suicide statistics. To better understand the background mechanisms, the next practical step would be to conduct a systematic review to understand the precise relationships between specific factors and suicide rates in Hungary.

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Details of the articles included in this review are presented in Appendix 1 on the following pages.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Kalmar et al., 2008	national mortality data 1999-2004 period all age groups	national database	antidepressant use	trend analysis	mortality data prescription data	There is a strong association between antidepressant use and suicide rate in both men and women. The protective effect is most evident in the 70 and older age groups and absent in the youngest age group. Antidepressant use was a strong predictor of lowering the suicide rate.	Quasi-experimental design may introduce confounding factors and limit the ability to establish a causal relationship between antidepressant use and suicide rates.
Elek et al., 2022	N = 763 N = 617 women age: 18-80 years data collection:	Nationwide	COVID-19 sleep depression diet	cross-sectional	online questionnaire	No association found between diet-specific and sport-	No limitations acknowledged by the authors.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
	April 2020-March 2021		physical activity			related habits and suicidal ideation. Depression had a small but significant effect, increasing suicidal ideation. Disruption of circadian rhythm had a significant effect on suicidal ideation.	A cross-sectional study design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables.
Bálint et al., 2016	Nationwide databases data from 1980, 1990, 2001 and 2011 age: >20 years	national databases	marital status educational attainment gender age	Repeated cross-sectional study	census data Hungarian Demographic Register database	Female gender, higher educational attainment, younger age and marriage were significantly associated with lowered suicide risk. The effects of marital status and educational attainment on	Ecological study design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. Categories used in the study for marital status may not cover the entire range

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						suicide were more prominent in males.	of marital statuses in a modern society.
Balazs et al., 2014	N = 418 age: 3–18 years Child Psychiatric Hospital, Budapest	Budapest	ADHD	cross-sectional	structured interview	ADHD symptoms are linked with an increased risk of suicidality in treatment-naïve children and adolescents.	Cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish any causal relationship between the investigated factors. A treatment naïve clinical sample may represent a less severe end of the spectrum.
Osváth et al., 2021	observed number of suicides March-December 2020 vs. The expected number of suicides was	national database	COVID-19	interrupted time-series	mortality records	Overall and male suicides increased significantly during the pandemic compared to the expected	Methodology: not suitable to provide clear evidence of a causal relationship between

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
	calculated between 2010 and 2020 N=21,463					numbers (by 16 and 18%). Suicide among females did not differ significantly from the expected trend. This contrasts with findings from other countries, where no change or decrease was found.	COVID-19 and the rising suicide rate or to help identify the factors that mediate this possible relationship.
Balint et al., 2020	data from the national statistical database 1990 vs 2011	national database	educational level	unlinked cross-sectional analysis	national statistical records	Improvement in educational level contributed significantly to reducing suicide rates in men (by about 30%). The impact of educational attainment on women's suicide rates was notably	"Unlinked data" was used, which can lead to the so-called "numerator-denominator bias", leading to inaccurate estimates

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						smaller (13.0%).	
Havasi et al., 2005	Period: 1991-2000 N = 719 (men: 501, women: 218) age: 16-93 years	Szeged	Age gender alcohol consumption	retrospective observational study	autopsy records	In men, the largest age group was 41-50; in women, there was a "double-peak" of age groups 41-50 and 71-80. Male-to-female ratio = 70:30, male dominance. 60% of all males and 18% of all females showed pathological signs of chronic alcoholism.	No limitations acknowledged by the authors. The study may have a relatively small sample size, which could limit the generalisability of the findings to the larger population.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Fekete et al., 2005	N = 1,158 registered suicide attempts Period: 1 July 1997 to 30 June 2001 age: 14-89 years	Pecs	gender unemployment marital status addiction depression	retrospective observational study	mortality records, University Clinic records	Main risk factor for women: retired or economically inactive, widowed, divorced, or with a history of depression. Female attempters were mainly repeaters. Main risk factors among men: unemployment, living alone, never married, and problems with addiction.	Only included information about medically treated suicide attempters, which may not represent the entire population of attempters. Multiple attempts may have influenced the results of statistical analysis (via being evaluated numerous times).
Chang, 2017	N = 395 college students (206 women, 189 men) public university age: 18-30 years	Budapest	hopelessness	cross-sectional	survey	Both hopelessness and hope uniquely predicted suicide ideation Hopelessness hurt, hope	Cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish any causal relationship between the investigated

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						helped, and high hopelessness with low hope was especially bad for suicidal ideations. High hope buffered the negative effects of hopelessness on suicide ideation.	factors. The study was conducted with college students; this limits the generalisability of the results to other populations.
Sánta et al., 2020	N = 300 patients with IBS (men 47%, women 53%) age: 18-65 years	Budapest, Szeged, Pecs	IBS	cross-sectional	self-filling questionnaire	5.3% of patients with IBS showed a particularly high level of suicide risk. Findings indicate that depression is the primary factor influencing suicide risk.	Self-filled questionnaires – assessment by professionals is missing.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Izsak et al., 2022	age- and gender-standardized mortality ratio for suicide by districts (N = 197) tap water lithium level (N = 1,325)	national database	drinking water	time-series analysis	national statistical records	There is a significant negative association between lithium levels and the standardised suicide mortality ratio in the total population and among males, respectively. No such preventative association was found among females.	Aggregate district-level data, which may lead to the 'ecological fallacy'. The results may not necessarily hold at the individual level. There is no data on bottled water consumption, which can influence individual lithium exposure.
Balint et al., 2014	N=17,384 suicides from the national database Period: 2005-2011 age: 15-64 years	national database	political integration religious integration	cross-sectional	national statistical records election records	Mortality rate was significantly associated with the 'political integration' variable in a negative and with the 'lack of religious	Aggregate district-level data, which may lead to the 'ecological fallacy'. The results may not necessarily hold at the

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						integration' and 'disability pensionary' variables in a positive way. The lack of social (political and religious) integration may be responsible for the notable spatial heterogeneity of suicide cases.	individual level.
Kmetty et al., 2018	National databases N = 130,860 committed suicides female N = 36,084, male N = 94,776 Period: 1976-2010	national database	Solar and lunar phenomena	time-series analysis	national statistical records meteorological database	Among women aged 20–49 years: significant increase in suicide risk during proton solar events. Among women aged 50–59 years, a slight but significant decrease in suicide risk during magnetic	Ecological analysis: aggregate data may lead to the 'ecological fallacy'. The results may not necessarily hold at the individual level. Relatively rare events were examined.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						storms and full moons.	
Lantos et al., 2021	N = 60,210 Period: 1995–2017 annual population data and the monthly birth and death data from the nationwide population register	national database	age gender educational level marital status seasonality	time-series analysis	national statistical records	Significantly higher suicide risk in men than in women, increased with age and decreased with educational attainment. Marriage was a protective factor against suicide. Significant seasonality in suicide rates: peak in late June. Non-violent: early June; violent: half a month later.	Data obtained from vital registers: there may be cause-of-death biases (e.g., youth suicides recorded as fatal traffic accidents).

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Fountoulakis et al., 2014	National statistical records on suicides and unemployment Period: 2000-2011	national database	Unemployment	time-series analysis	national statistical records	Unemployment might be linked with suicidality in the general population with a 3-5 5-year delay. The economic crisis might increase overall suicidality, rather than specifically in unemployed people.	Analysis based on population data: overlapping of populations is significant; the degree of overlapping of unemployed populations is unknown.
Rihmer et al., 2015	2005 and 2011 settlements with a population over 500 (N = 1639)	national database	drinking water	cross-sectional	national statistical records	Positive association between age-standardized suicide rates and consumption of arsenic-contaminated drinking water. Consumption of arsenic-contaminated drinking water may be associated	Aggregated (i.e., non-individual) data may lead to the 'ecological fallacy'. There is no data on bottled water consumption between settlements, which can influence

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						with suicidal behaviour.	individual exposure.
Törö et al., 2009	N = 4,918 (3,099 male, 1,819 female) suicidal deaths Period: 1995-2004.	Budapest	temperature	time-series analysis	police records autopsy records meteorological databases	Suicide rates were influenced by warm temperatures. A higher frequency of suicidal deaths was found in warm weather with low relative humidity.	No limitations acknowledged by the authors. The study relied on aggregated data; this limits the ability to establish conclusions on an individual level.
Bozsonyi et al., 2017	Period: 1971–2000 Sunshine hours Completed suicides (N = 127,877)	national database	sunshine	time-series analysis	National statistical and meteorological records	There is no significant direct relationship between the number of hours of sunshine and the number of committed	No limitations acknowledged by the authors.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						suicides. There is no correlation between the number of hours of sunshine and the number of violent suicides, either.	
Almasi et al., 2009	N=194 suicide deaths N = 194 control Period: 2002–2004)	Budapest, Pest County	marital status educational level unemployment religion	controlled psychological autopsy study	interview - family members of the deceased	Factors found associated with suicide: being unmarried or no current relationship, lack of social contacts, low education level, history of self-harm, unemployment, changes in living standards, or practising religion.	Psychological autopsy design does not allow the establishment of a causal relationship between the identified factors and suicide.
Lantos et al., 2019	N = 53,769 suicide deaths (national statistical database)	national database	seasonality	time-series analysis	national statistical records	Seasonality in death rates from suicide/self-	Data collected from vital registers

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
	Period: 1995-2014					harm: peak in June to July.	which could have been influenced by a simplification in categorization during the study.
Kakuszi et al., 2018	N = 103 patients N = 103 controls Data collection: 2012-2017	Budapest	ADHD gender	cross-sectional	interview	Compared to controls, the likelihood of suicidal ideation was significantly higher in females with ADHD. The difference was not significant in males.	The study was limited to a clinically-referred population, which limits the generalisability of the findings. Limited sample size – restricted statistical power to compare controls with subgroups of ADHD patients.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Bácskai et al., 2009	N = 172 alcohol dependent patients Data collection: August-October 2005 age: 18-65 years	Budapest	childhood abuse	cross-sectional	face-to-face interview	In females, being victimised during childhood by their parents increased the likelihood of attempting suicide by around fifteen times. In males, the increase was approximately double.	Cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish any causal relationship between the investigated factors. The small sample size and the specific geographically defined catchment areas may limit the generalisability of the findings.
Balint et al., 2023	N = 10,179 completed suicides Period: 2015-2020	national database	COVID-19	interrupted time-series	national statistical records	The number of suicides in the 25–64 age group increased significantly during the COVID months of 2020. Similar	Non-individual level data used and therefore unable to control several risk and protective factors at the

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						patterns were observed in the population aged 65 or older and among 25-64-year-old males, but at lower significance levels. The number of violent suicides rose significantly during the COVID months.	level of individuals.
Bozsonyi et al., 2020	N = 91,509 suicide data from the national database sunshine duration Period: 1971-2013	Southeast Hungary	sunlight	time-series analysis	National statistical and meteorological records	Daily sunshine duration and daily changes in temperature displayed a weak yet statistically significant relationship with suicide rates.	Used aggregate, ecological data: individual causal relationships cannot be detected.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Zonda et al., 2009	N = 133,699 suicide data from the national database Period: 1970-2002	national database	public holidays	time-series analysis	national statistical records	More suicides were committed on Monday and fewer on the weekends in both males and females. On New Year's Day, more suicides were committed than expected. Easter Sunday/Monday and Christmas Day suicides were less frequent, but only for men—no change in suicidal behaviour in women. National holidays did not influence the frequency of suicide.	No limitations acknowledged by the authors. Despite the high-quality vital statistics performance index and low rates of garbage-coded deaths in Hungary, there may be cause-of-death biases.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Lantos and Nyári, 2022	number of suicides (pre-vaccination): March–Dec 2020) vs expected numbers without COVID-19 (monthly data from January 2010 to February 2020).	national database	COVID-19	interrupted time-series	national statistical records	Suicide mortality increased significantly compared to the pre-pandemic trend: overall, among males, among vocational school graduates, and especially in the 35–49 years age group. Significant growth in suicide rates was detected in the two regions with the lowest COVID mortality rates.	Possible ecological fallacy: Individual-level associations may not always be reflected in ecological-level associations.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
Döme et al., 2011	Suicide data from the national database alcohol and tobacco records	national database	tobacco antidepressants	time-series analysis	national statistical records	A significant positive association between annual tobacco consumption and suicide rate. Negative significant association between antidepressant use and suicide rate. No association between alcohol consumption and suicide rate.	Ecological study design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables. Monitored only completed suicides, but not other forms of suicidal behaviour (i.e., suicide ideations and attempts).
Bácskai et al., 2012	10 drug centres outpatients age: 18 -40 years Period: Jan-May 2007	Budapest and other cities	ADHD	cross-sectional	face-to-face interview	Drug-dependent patients with ADHD displayed significantly higher rates of suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts and	No further diagnostic instruments or psychometric assessments were used for ADHD classification. A relatively small sample

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						more severe depression symptoms than the ADHD-negative group.	size may limit the generalizability of the findings.
Seregi et al., 2017	N = 122,116 suicide data from the national database daily sunshine duration Period: 1979-2013.	national databases	sunlight	time-series analysis	national statistical records National Meteorological Database	Daily sunshine duration and suicide numbers on the same day indicated a weak but highly significant positive correlation. Positive significant correlations between suicide risk and averaged sunshine duration in the previous days (up to 11 days). Sunshine has a prompt but distinctly weak increasing	The study relied on aggregated data and had no data on the sunlight exposure of individual suicide victims before their final act; that may be the source of 'ecological fallacy'.

First Author and Year	Population/setting	Location	Main factors	Study method	Data sources	Main findings	Key limitation
						effect on suicide risk (especially violent cases in males).	

Western Women's Influence in Japanese Education, 1868–1912

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Abstract

Between 1868 and 1912, Japan underwent a radical transformation as it emerged from over two centuries of relative seclusion and launched an ambitious programme of modernization. Central to this national project was the reform of education, marked notably by the 1872 *Gakusei* (Education Order), which aimed to reshape Japan's schooling system along Western lines. This study reframes the narrative of Meiji educational reform by highlighting how Western women, many of them missionaries, reformers, or independently hired educators, helped redefine female education and expand the horizons of Japanese womanhood in ways that both aligned with and subtly challenged the Meiji government's domestic ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* ("good wife, wise mother"). Their influence, though often omitted from mainstream accounts, was crucial to Japan's transformation and offers vital insights into the gendered dynamics of cultural exchange during a pivotal era of global change.

The study draws on memoirs, letters, and institutional records to explore how these women interpreted and navigated Japanese society. Rather than passive transmitters of Western ideals, they engaged in complex negotiations of identity and cultural difference. Many challenged Victorian gender expectations even as they embodied them, asserting intellectual agency in a space historically defined by domesticity. Their experiences reveal how gender conditioned their access to Japanese households and their ability to shape cross-cultural interactions through the informal realm of "soft diplomacy," influencing social attitudes and fostering intercultural understanding from within the private sphere.

This project contributes to a more gender-sensitive historiography of the Meiji era, engaging with scholarship that has typically privileged race and nationality while sidelining gender as a lens of analysis. It also addresses contemporary relevance: Japan's current ranking of 118th in the 2024 Global Gender Gap Index underscores the need to historicize gender inequality and recognize the long-standing struggles and contributions of women - both foreign and Japanese - in shaping educational discourse. By focusing on themes such as cross-cultural adaptation, and the role of women in knowledge transmission, the research positions Western women not as peripheral figures but as active participants in Japan's modernizing project.

Keywords: Education, Japan, Western women, Meiji era, Gender, missionaries.

Introduction

Between 1868 and 1912—a transformative period in Japanese history marked by rapid modernization and the Meiji government's ambitious nation-building efforts - Western women played a pivotal yet often overlooked role in shaping Japan's educational landscape. The era was inaugurated by the *Gakusei* (Education Order) of 1872, a landmark reform that sought to modernize the national education system through the adoption of Western pedagogical models. Within this framework, Western women - many of them missionaries, reformers, or

independently contracted educators - became key agents in introducing modern curricula, teaching methods, and new ideals of women's education.³¹

This biographical project investigates how Western women interpreted, navigated, and influenced Japanese society during the Meiji era (Meiji jidai, 1868–1912), with a particular focus on how gender shaped their experiences, contributions, and cross-cultural adaptations. Their stories illuminate not only the educational transformation of Japan but also the complex negotiations of identity and cultural difference in a period of intense social change.

The ongoing relevance of gender in historical inquiry is underscored by contemporary data such as the Global Gender Gap Report 2024, which ranked Japan 118th out of 146 countries - well behind its G7 counterparts (The Global Gender Gap Index 2024 rankings). This reinforces the importance of integrating gender perspectives into historical and cultural scholarship, in alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Drawing on memoirs, letters, and other personal writings, this research explores themes of gender and education. While previous scholarship has focused largely on race and nationality in Western engagements with Japan (Brecher, 2018), gender remains an underexplored lens. The project brings renewed attention to figures such as French nun Mère Mathilde Raclot (1814-1911), Annie L. Howe (1852–1943); Margaret Clark Griffis (1838-1913) and Methodist missionary Dora E. Schoonmaker; Jean “Jennie” Margaret Gheer (1846–1910) and Elizabeth Russell (1836–1928).

Through the examination of themes such as mixed marriage, exogamy, and cultural adaptation, the study reveals how these women negotiated dual identities, redefined traditional roles, and offered alternative perspectives on gender and modernity (Sterry, 2009). By critically engaging with the historical marginalization of women's voices (Atwood, 2017; Beard, 1991), this project contributes to a more inclusive and nuanced historiography, enriching our understanding of the gendered dimensions of cultural exchange in Meiji Japan.

These women worked in schools across Japan, from Tokyo to more rural regions, where they taught not only English but also science, hygiene, literature, and Western cultural values. Their roles were particularly influential in the development of girls' education, which the Meiji state recognized as essential to shaping future wives and mothers who could contribute to the moral and intellectual strength of the family and the nation. Western women often established or supported mission schools for girls, such as Doshisha Girls' School in Kyoto and Ferris Seminary in Yokohama, where their influence extended beyond language instruction to the development of values associated with Christian ethics, self-cultivation, and civic responsibility.

Education Reforms in Japan

Following more than two centuries of self-imposed seclusion under the *sakoku* (鎖国, “closed country”) policy from 1639 to 1853, Japan underwent a series of radical transformations. J.D. Davies wrote: ‘The fleet of “barbarian” ships which cast anchor in the Bay of Yedo on that Sabbath morning, July 7, 1853, under the command of Commodore Perry, finally caused the

³¹ This article is based on research generously supported by the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation Travel Grant awarded in 2023. During the three weeks course of this project, I conducted archival research at the following institutions: Ferris University Library Archives (FULA) in Yokohama; Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts Library in Kyoto; the library of the International Christian University (ICU) in Mitaka, Tokyo; and I accessed primary sources housed at the Hannah Riddell and Wright Memorial Hall in Kumamoto. All remaining research was undertaken at my home institution, the University of Buckingham, in Buckingham and London, UK.

nation which had been closed for two hundred and fifty years to open its gates to the world.' (Davies, 1894). Although traditionally portrayed as completely isolated, the *sakoku* system has been re-evaluated by modern historians who note that while contact with Western powers was indeed highly restricted, Japan maintained regulated relations with neighbouring Asian states and permitted controlled trade through limited channels—most notably with the Dutch and Chinese at Dejima, Nagasaki (Toby, 1984; Hesselink, 2001; Chaiklin, 2003). Despite this limited openness, European access was strictly confined. Foreign women were explicitly banned, reinforcing gendered boundaries in diplomatic and trade encounters.

A notable exception occurred in August 1817, when Jan Cock Blomhoff, the Dutch *opperhoofd* (director) of the trading post at Dejima, arrived with his wife Titia Bergsma (1786–1821), their infant son, and wet nurse Petronella Muns. Titia, often regarded as the first Western woman to set foot in Tokugawa Japan, was not allowed to remain in the country. Despite her brief stay, her presence caused a sensation; hundreds of images of her were created by Japanese artists, fascinated by a figure they had never encountered before (Bersma, 2020). Her forced departure symbolized the rigid exclusionary policies of the period, particularly towards Western women.

The eventual *opening of Japan* - sparked by Commodore Perry's expeditions and culminating in the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868 - ushered in the Meiji period (1868–1912), during which Japan rapidly transitioned from a feudal society to a centralized, industrialized nation-state. This transformation was not only technological and institutional but also deeply educational. Modernizing the education system became one of the Meiji government's top priorities in its mission to build a strong and competitive nation. Education was seen as a cornerstone of *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment), reflecting the broader goal of *fukoku kyōhei* ("Enrich the country, strengthen the army"), and young people were encouraged to study Western ideology and Western languages (Fukuchi, 1993). In March 1868, the Five Oaths issued in the name of the Emperor put forward the basic principles of Japanese educational modernization reform, namely "breaking the old bad customs" and "seeking knowledge from the world" (Ogata, 1972)

Key figures such as journalist and historian Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957) advocated for the emulation of Western models as the best path forward. To accelerate modernization, the government hired foreign advisors known as *oyatoi gaikokujin* across sectors such as engineering, medicine, and education. Among these were numerous Western missionary women who became central to Japan's evolving pedagogical landscape. However, the enthusiasm for foreign expertise was not indefinite. As Japan developed a robust domestic knowledge base, the influence of foreign professionals began to wane. American physician and missionary John C. Berry (1847–1936), for example, remarked in 1912 that "service of foreign physicians became unnecessary" by the late 1880s (Berry, 1912), signalling growing national confidence and self-sufficiency.

One of the most ambitious state-sponsored efforts to absorb Western knowledge was the Iwakura Mission (1871–1873), a diplomatic and educational expedition led by Iwakura Tomomi. This extensive delegation of over 100 officials and students toured the United States and Europe, aiming to renegotiate unequal treaties and study Western institutions, including legal systems, industry, and education. While overtly political, the mission also carried a subtle but far-reaching cultural agenda: the reformation of Japanese society through the modernization of its education system—especially for women.

A revolutionary element of the Iwakura Mission was the inclusion of five young girls—Tsuda Umeko, Yamakawa Sutematsu, Nagai Shigeko, Ueda Tei, and Yoshimasu Ryōko—who were left behind in the United States to receive a Western education. Aged between six and fourteen, these girls symbolized a radical reimagining of women's roles in the future of Japan. At a time when female literacy was limited and educational opportunities scarce, sending these girls abroad was both an ideological and strategic investment. The most well-known among them, Tsuda Umeko (1864–1929), would later found Joshi Eigaku Juku (the Women's Institute for English Studies, now Tsuda University) in 1900 and advocate tirelessly for women's higher education. Her efforts went beyond the traditional ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* ("good wife, wise mother"), a slogan that would come to dominate state rhetoric, promoting instead the vision of educated women as civic-minded, globally engaged individuals (Koyama & Sylvain, 1994; Koyama, 2012).

The presence of these girls in the West reflected the Meiji state's recognition that women had a vital role to play in shaping the nation's moral and intellectual fabric. Their education abroad served not only their personal advancement but also national goals of modernization. This move implicitly challenged entrenched gender norms, positioning women as cultural mediators and agents of transformation within a rapidly changing society.

Western missionary women and educators later built on the precedent set by the Iwakura girls. In schools and seminaries across Japan, they introduced curricula that emphasized hygiene, moral instruction, critical thinking, and language acquisition, while promoting a broader conception of women's roles beyond the domestic sphere. Their efforts found fertile ground in a reformist climate, particularly after the enactment of the 1899 Girls' Higher School Law, which mandated that each prefecture establish at least one public middle school for girls. This law institutionalized female education as part of the national agenda and reflected the long-term impact of earlier reform efforts initiated by both Japanese and foreign women educators.

The Gakusei of 1872 laid the groundwork for a national education system in Japan. The government recognized that women, as future mothers of the nation, needed to be educated. Yet, the infrastructure and philosophy for educating girls were underdeveloped. This created an opportunity for foreign actors—particularly Western women—whose involvement filled a gap in both resources and pedagogical expertise.

In sum, Japan's education reforms in the Meiji era were not simply the result of top-down modernization policies. They were shaped by a diverse array of actors—including Western women—whose influence extended beyond traditional male spheres of politics and industry. Through their teaching, advocacy, and lived example, these women helped redefine the possibilities of female education in Japan, challenging domestic roles, reshaping gender expectations, and contributing to a more inclusive vision of national progress.

Pioneers

While much has been written about the men who spread Christianity in Japan, such as Jesuit Francis Xavier (1506-52) and Fr Bernard Thaddée Petitjean (1829-84), the women who venture to the archipelago have often remained unacknowledged by history. When their stories are included, they are frequently relegated to footnotes within male-centred narratives. However, female accounts offer a richer and more subtle view. As American educator Alice Mabel Bacon (1858–1918) observed: "Only life in the home itself can show what a Japanese home may be; and only by intimate association – such as no foreign man can ever hope to gain." (Bacon, 1891). Bacon draws a striking distinction between the experiences of foreign

women and foreign men. Her statement suggests that foreign men were inherently excluded from the domestic sphere in Japan, implicitly reinforcing contemporary gender norms by situating men in the public realm and women within the private domain. This delineation echoes Victorian ideals of masculinity, which prized professional success, public reputation, and chivalrous behaviour, while defining the domestic sphere as the woman's domain (Pearson, 2010). Men were expected to earn their living and maintain their status in the public world, not to engage in household duties such as child-rearing or cooking. However, Bacon's reflection also hints at the tensions women experienced during this era. In April 1900, she was invited to Japan to help establish the Joshi Eigaku Juku (Women's English Preparatory School).

Many women were beginning to challenge the constraints of traditional domesticity, signalling a broader movement towards redefining women's roles beyond that of wife and mother. Rather than being confined to domesticity, many of these women redefined it as a platform for cultural engagement and soft diplomacy, using their positions to foster cross-cultural understanding and advance new models of womanhood. Women began rejecting the limitations of being merely wives and mothers, seeking instead to assert intellectual and social agency in a rapidly changing world. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) reflects how these constraints were beginning to be pushed. When the character Jane offers to accompany St. John Rivers to India as a sisterly companion, he rejects the idea, insisting that only a "missionary wife" would suffice. In the early 19th century, the term *missionary* typically referred to a man. His wife, if present, was a "helpmate," expected to support his calling. As literary scholar Valentine Cunningham points out, Jane's wish to be a "fellow missionary" was "an impossibility," as missionary work was seen as an exclusively male role. Yet by the late 19th century, shifting social norms and opportunities in Japan allowed women to begin carving out spaces for themselves—not only as companions, but as independent agents of cultural, educational, and spiritual exchange.

While gender and educational norms were evolving in the West, Japan during the Meiji period was actively seeking knowledge from foreign educators. The value placed on English language acquisition was especially high, as it was seen as a gateway to modernity and upward mobility. In her 1910 book *Behind the Shoji*, British writer Evelyn Adam (possibly a pseudonymous), offers a vivid snapshot of this linguistic enthusiasm. She notes that the desire to learn English was not only widespread but often expressed with urgency and practicality: 'Teach us to write English—and teach as cheaply,' young Japanese asked, she recalled, explaining that many hoped to 'unlock the doors of Tokyo officialdom with this magic key of language' (Adam, 1910). Adam observed that while the zeal for English was commendable, the outcomes were occasionally less than successful. She warned against economizing on language instruction, emphasizing that poor mastery of English could lead to confusion or unintended humour, especially when students passed along flawed advice to local merchants eager to advertise their services in the foreign tongue. The results, she noted, were both charming and comical:

A certain barber's sign is as good as some of our epitaphs in country churchyards. 'Hairs shaved here. Porpoises (paupers presumably) need not apply.' The typical general storekeeper proudly puts up 'Dealer in Sack Doods' over his door, the egg-seller, 'Extract of Fowl,' a butcher, 'Beef and Hen Met,' and a milkman paints upon his little handcart the puzzling inscription, 'Whole Milk,' which leaves the prospective customer to guess whether the milk is all milk and not half water, or whether it is wholesome. (Adam, 1910).

These anecdotes, while humorous, underscore a broader reality: the English language in Meiji Japan was a symbol of both aspiration and anxiety. For many Japanese, especially those navigating the new bureaucratic and commercial landscape of a rapidly modernizing society, English represented access to international standards and cultural capital. Western women like Adam, who taught and observed closely, played a unique role in shaping this linguistic transformation while also documenting the occasional missteps along the way.

This period in Japan, coincided with an outburst of conscientious Christianity in the West and the Meiji government's decision to lift the ban on Christianity in 1873. Many foreign women filled with religious zeal and with the aim of propagating the Christian religion, entered Japan as nuns and missionaries (Harrington, 2001). Although it must be pointed out that the term missionary only began to be applied to religious women by the 1880's, and the canon itself did not change until 1983. Their role in Japan would vary, Elizabeth K. Eder calls them 'foreign nation-builders,' especially in regard to their role as educators (Eder, 2003).

The majority of young women missionaries recruited in the late nineteenth century had little or no prior experience earning their own living. For these women, missionary service abroad - particularly in Japan - offered not only a religious calling but also a rare path to financial independence within a socially sanctioned framework. Working under the institutional protection of missionary organizations provided them with both economic security and a degree of autonomy that would have been difficult to attain at home, especially within the constraints of Victorian ideals of femininity.

As Elizabeth Eder notes in her study of American missionaries such as Margaret Clark Griffis and Dora E. Schoonmaker, teaching in Japan served as "a way to escape the confines of locality, domesticity, poverty, and dependence" (Eder, 2003). For many of these women, including Griffis, religious service offered an escape from limited life prospects in their home countries (Usui, 1990). Griffis's diaries from 1858 to 1861 reveal her acute awareness of her family's financial instability, voicing fears of becoming an economic burden. Such personal reflections highlight the deeply intertwined motivations that shaped missionary careers. Economic necessity was not separate from spiritual conviction but often reinforced it.

This dual drive - spiritual devotion and the desire for economic self-sufficiency - was characteristic of many Western women missionaries during this period. In choosing to teach, evangelise, and serve abroad, they were not only spreading their faith but also asserting a new, more independent identity as professional women in a global context. Their participation in missionary work thus reflected both a commitment to religious ideals and a practical strategy for navigating the socioeconomic limitations of their time. Ultimately, the missionary field became one of the few avenues where women could simultaneously pursue purposeful work, personal development and financial independence, albeit within the moral and organizational boundaries set by the church.

Catholic nuns dedicated their efforts towards the promotion of female education and charitable organizations. The first Catholic sisters ever to set foot in Japan arrived on 28 June 1872, led by French nun Mère Mathilde Raclot, at the age of 59, and four other French and Irish nuns from the *Soeurs de l'Enfant-Jesus*, also known as the *Dames de Saint-Maur* (Fauconnet, 2022). They founded the first Catholic school in Japan, now known as Saint Maur International School). It remains the oldest international school in Asia and third-oldest in the world. The first class of students included girls from many countries, with Japanese girls joining them in 1899. In her extraordinary career in Japan, Mère Mathilde founded orphanages and institutions including the prominent Futaba Gakuen schools, which includes the Empress and the Crown

Princess amongst their past students. Other female religious orders would follow, such as the *Sœurs de l'Enfant-Jésus* (1877), and the *Sœurs de l'Enfant-Jésus de Chauffaillle* (1878).

A defining feature of the Protestant evangelical revival in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain was the establishment of foreign missionary societies dedicated to spreading the Gospel among what were termed the "heathen." This movement, rooted in both spiritual zeal and a sense of civilizational mission, soon extended across the Atlantic, with American counterparts forming similar organizations. One such group, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), sent Reverend J.D. Davis to Japan in 1871. Davis quickly became involved in promoting Christian education, particularly for girls, in Kobe.

Deeply moved by the transformation he observed among Japanese women who had embraced Christian teachings, Davis became a strong advocate for expanding educational opportunities for girls. When he learned that Japanese Christian reformer Nijima Jō (1843–1890) was planning to establish a Christian school for boys in Kyoto (what would become Doshisha University in 1920), Davis urged that a girls' school be founded alongside it to offer women equal access to moral and intellectual development. In response, American educator and missionary Alice J. Starkweather (1850–1926) was invited to Japan. She arrived in 1876 to become the leading teacher at the newly established School for Girls, which would later evolve into Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts. Starkweather's arrival occurred during a growing wave of missionary engagement; by that year, sixty-two Western women were already working in Japan as missionaries, many of them educators.

The late nineteenth century saw a marked increase in the number of Western women missionaries in Japan, particularly from the United States. While some accompanied their missionary husbands, others, like Starkweather, came independently through women's missionary societies. By 1881, the majority of foreign female missionaries in Japan were married, and American women had come to outnumber their British counterparts—reflecting not only changing recruitment patterns but also the burgeoning enthusiasm for overseas missions in the postbellum United States.

These women played vital roles not only in supporting the work of their male colleagues but also in leading their own educational and healthcare initiatives, many of which were specifically designed to uplift and empower Japanese women and children. Their work resonated with the Meiji state's own ambitions for modernization, particularly in education and social reform. While their presence also carried the cultural weight of Western assumptions and religious superiority, their contributions to the development of Japan's early women's education system were significant and enduring.

American missionary and educator Annie L. Howe was a pioneer who played a pivotal role in advancing girls' education during Japan's Meiji period. Arriving in the 1870s under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, she came at a time when Japan was embracing Western models to modernize its society, including the education sector.

Howe's most enduring contribution was her leadership at the Doshisha Girls' School in Kyoto, an institution founded by Nijima Jō (Maxey, 2020). As principal and lead educator, she introduced a broad liberal arts curriculum far beyond traditional teachings for women. Her educational model included subjects such as English, mathematics, science, history, music, and religious instruction—reflecting a holistic and progressive vision for female learning (Nishida, 2022).

Howe also emphasized moral and character development, grounded in Christian principles, nurturing integrity and social responsibility. Beyond classroom teaching, she trained Japanese women as educators, ensuring that her influence extended to future generations. Despite her Western Christian background, Howe demonstrated cultural sensitivity by adapting teaching methods to local contexts and working collaboratively with Japanese colleagues. Howe introduced Friedrich Froebel's (1782-1852), principles of teaching children in Japan (Nishida, 2022).

Her impact reached beyond Doshisha, as she helped establish a network of Christian girls' schools and offered a template for women's education that aligned with Japan's modernization efforts. Although her mission was rooted in religious and Western ideals, her work significantly contributed to legitimizing education for women as a means of national development. Howe promoted Christian values and higher education for women, and focused on moral development alongside academic instruction.

Howe's legacy is evident in Japan's continued investment in women's education and institutions like Doshisha Women's College. She remains a key figure in the history of cross-cultural exchange—both empowering and complex—between Western missionaries and Meiji Japan.

American missionary and educator Mary Eddy Kidder (1834–1910) was the first woman educator sent to Japan by the Reformed Church in America (RCA). In 1875, Kidder founded Ferris Women's Seminary (now Ferris University), the first Christian women's college in Japan, dedicated to educating Japanese women. She advocated for girls' education and was a pioneer in introducing Western-style liberal arts to young Japanese women. Her students were among the earliest cohorts of women who moved into public life or became teachers themselves.

Western women educators played an essential role in this transformative period. Notably, their presence helped facilitate a cultural negotiation between Japanese reformers and foreign educational models. For some, such as Clara Hepburn (1818-1906), their involvement extended beyond supporting their missionary husbands. Clara, the wife of James Curtis Hepburn (1815–1911) - famed for introducing the Hepburn system of Japanese romanization - opened the Hepburn Juku, a school that would later evolve into Meiji Gakuin University.

American Presbyterian missionary and pioneering educator Julia D. Carrothers (1830–1894), arrived in Japan, with her husband Christopher, in 1869. She returned to San Diego in 1877. In 1879 she published her experiences of missionary-life in a book titled: 'The sunrise kingdom: Or, Life and Scenes in Japan, and Woman's Work for Woman There.' Julia Carrothers played a foundational role in advancing women's education in Meiji Japan. Her vision combined Western liberal arts education with Christian moral instruction, reflecting the broader missionary goal of cultivating both intellectual and spiritual growth.

Carrothers was deeply committed to her work, but her writings also reveal the challenges she encountered in adapting her educational mission to the cultural and social realities of Meiji-era Japan. In her book, she candidly expresses her frustration at the difficulties of maintaining student engagement and navigating cultural expectations:

The [Japanese] women listened very attentively, but at times there comes such a feeling of helplessness in the effort to teach them! So many come only once or twice, and we see them no more. What should we say to such? (Carrothers, 1879, p. 289).

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the first U.S. missionary agency that was founded in Boston, sent Eliza Talcott (1836–1911) and Julia Elizabeth Dudley (1840–1906) to Japan. They came to Japan at the beginning of the Meiji Era as pioneering missionary single women. In 1873, as American missionaries and educators, they opened a private day-school in Hanakuma-mura (Hanakuma village), Kobe, and in 1875, they founded “Girls’ School,” a boarding school for girls, on Yamamoto Dori (Yamamoto Street), Kobe. Talcott was the first principal and Dudley, the matron. Eventually it developed into Kobe College. They promoted English-language instruction and Western literature and encouraged the intellectual and spiritual development of women.

American Methodist missionary Dora E. Schoonmaker, at the age of 23, was sent to Japan on October 28, 1874, by the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. She was the society's first single missionary in Tokyo. In 1874, Schoonmaker opened *Joshi Shogakko*, the oldest origin of Aoyama Gakuin and a pioneering school for girls' education. Until 1879, when she returned to Illinois, she taught and administered the school. Schoolmaker promoted Christian education in a Japanese context and advocated women's empowerment through bilingual instruction and intercultural exchange.

Canadian Martha J. Cartmell (1845–1945), was the first Methodist missionary sent by the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada (currently the United Church of Canada), for Japan in 1882. In 1884, she established the *Toyō Eiwa Jogakkō* (now Toyo Eiwa University) a Christian school for girls in Roppongi, Tokyo. Cartmell is one of the most influential figures in Christian education in Tokyo. Her efforts assisted in the revolutionising of education for women in Japan, and she is revered to this day. She aimed to provide Christian-based education to Japanese girls, integrating English, music, and Western etiquette.

The American Methodist Episcopal Church began to establish a missionary presence in Japan prior to the Meiji government's decision in 1873 to lift the ban on Christianity. One of its early emissaries, John Carrol Davidson, had been dispatched to Nagasaki, where he founded a Methodist church in Dejima in 1876. Recognizing the pressing need for women's education, Davidson appealed to the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS) to send female missionaries who could support this vital work.

In response, the WFMS appointed missionary and educators Jean Margaret Gheer and Elizabeth Russell. Russell would later reflect on her decision to embark on this journey to a land she “knew nothing of... save that it was a little spot on the map near Asia” (Seat, 2008). Just one week after their arrival at Nagasaki Port, Gheer and Russell established Kwassui Jo Gakko (*Kwassui Girls’ School*) on December 1, 1879, in the foreign settlement of Higashi Yamate, Nagasaki. The school quickly became a pioneering institution in Christian-based education for girls and women in Japan.

In addition to her educational work, Russell founded the Kwassui Girls’ Home in response to the needs of orphaned children, and also established a seamen's home, part of a broader moral reform movement aimed at guiding sailors arriving in Nagasaki away from the temptations of “worldly pleasures” during their time ashore (Seat, 2008). Over her forty years in Japan, Russell made substantial contributions to women's education, social welfare, and missionary activity. In recognition of her service, she was honoured by the Japanese emperor's blue-ribbon medal in 1919.

In 1884, Christians in Fukuoka City requested the establishment of a similar educational institution. Gheer responded by founding Ei Wa Jo Gakko (later renamed Fukuoka Jo Gakko) in 1885. Decades later, under the leadership of Elizabeth Lee, then principal of Fukuoka Jo Gakko, the school introduced a Maypole Dance with a May Queen in 1916 as part of its anniversary celebrations, held annually on May 18.

In 1921, Elizabeth Lee introduced another transformative innovation: the sailor-style school uniform (*sērā fuku*), now widely used in Japanese schools. The adoption of this uniform reflected a fusion of Western naval attire and emerging ideals of modernity, practicality, hygiene, and mobility in girls' education. Lee's legacy remains visible in the ongoing cultural and educational practices shaped by her vision.

Christian missions - primarily from the United States and Britain- established some of the earliest formal institutions for girls' education in Japan. These schools, often founded and led by Western women, combined academic instruction with moral and spiritual education rooted in Christian values. This broader conception of education challenged traditional norms that had confined girls' learning to household skills or basic literacy.

However, not all Western missionary women focused on education or were explicitly evangelical. One notable example is Hannah Riddell (1855–1932), an Englishwoman selected by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). She arrived in Japan in 1891 and settled in Kumamoto, on the island of Kyushu. While visiting Honmyōji Temple, she encountered leprosy patients begging for help—an experience that moved her profoundly and led her to dedicate her life to their care. In 1895, Riddell opened the Kaishun Hospital (Kumamoto Hospital of the Resurrection of Hope) to treat people suffering from leprosy. Later, in 1918, she established Japan's first scientific research laboratory dedicated to the study of leprosy (Boyd, 1996). Riddell is known as the "Mother of Lepers" in Kumamoto.

Western women educators introduced progressive teaching methods such as interactive learning, the use of textbooks, and moral education that emphasized individual conscience and self-discipline. Many of them also worked on teacher training, equipping Japanese women to become educators themselves—thus multiplying their influence across generations.

Moreover, Western women offered alternative role models to the confined gender norms of the period. Their very presence—as professional women leading institutions and publishing educational materials—posed subtle challenges to the domestic ideal of the *ryōsai kenbo*. However, many of these women also operated within the limitations of their own cultural assumptions, often seeing themselves as civilising agents within an Orientalist framework.

By 1912, Japan had made significant strides in developing a national system of girls' education, increasingly under state control. Nonetheless, the foundational work of Western women persisted in several ways. The inclusion of liberal arts, music, and ethics in girls' education reflected the values these women helped promote. These women influence enabled a generation of Japanese women to access new social roles—as teachers, writers, and public figures and social mobility in general.

Conclusion

Western women were key contributors to the emergence and development of girls' education during the Meiji Era, operating at the intersection of education, gender reform, and cultural exchange. Their work unfolded within a complex historical context marked by both progressive

ideals and colonial hierarchies. While their motivations were often shaped by missionary zeal or reformist convictions, their actions left an enduring legacy in Japan's educational landscape.

Figures such as Elizabeth Russell and Jean Margaret Gheer founders of *Kwassui Jo Gakko* in Nagasaki and *Fukuoka Jo Gakko* in Fukuoka, played pioneering roles in establishing formal schooling for girls that combined academic learning with Christian moral instruction. Elizabeth Lee, principal of *Fukuoka Jo Gakko*, not only introduced the Maypole Dance and the now-iconic *sērā fuku* (sailor-style school uniform) but also fostered a vision of modern femininity rooted in both Japanese and Western ideals. Martha J. Cartmell and Dora E. Schoonmaker contributed significantly to early girls' schools such as *Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin* and *Joshi Shogakko* in Tokyo; while Eliza Talcott and Julia Elizabeth Dudley were instrumental in founding a Girls' School in Kobe. Others, like Julia D. Carrothers, Clara Hepburn, Mary Eddy Kidder, and Annie L. Howe, extended this legacy across multiple cities, laying the groundwork for Japan's modern female education system.

Beyond education, some women, such as Hannah Riddell, engaged in social welfare work that addressed the neglected and marginalized. Riddell's lifelong commitment to caring for leprosy patients in Kumamoto and her founding of the *Kaishun Hospital* and Japan's first leprosy research laboratory illustrate the breadth of missionary women's impact beyond the classroom.

The Meiji Era was a turning point in Japan's history—a time of rapid modernization, centralization, and negotiation with Western knowledge systems. Education was both a tool and a battleground for this transformation. Western women educators and reformers played a crucial, though complicated, role in this process. Their work introduced new pedagogical models, expanded opportunities for female education, and helped redefine womanhood in a changing Japan. Their roles were also shaped and sometimes limited by colonial assumptions and gendered hierarchies. Many saw themselves as bearers of progress and enlightenment, but their efforts were often entangled with paternalism and Orientalist perceptions. Despite these contradictions, their contributions—particularly in founding institutions, training teachers, and designing curricula—had profound and lasting effects.

Ultimately, the legacy of these women reflects the interplay of cultural imperialism, gendered agency, and cross-cultural dialogue. Studying their influence not only brings to light their often-overlooked contributions but also enriches our understanding of how Japan selectively absorbed and adapted foreign ideas in its journey towards modernity. Their stories remain essential to any comprehensive history of education in Japan.

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Discourse and Analysis of Student Motivation: the Unique Nature of Mature Students and their needs and expectations in attending Higher Education: case study of mature students' motivation at an independent College

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Abstract

Extracted from original research, this article explores the motivation of students to undertake Higher Education as adult learners. Qualitative analysis of eight students' interview texts highlights the necessity for tutors to be aware of students' different needs and stages of development. This article identifies and addresses the unique nature of mature students and suggests some ways forward for educational providers and educators prompted by the complexities involved in teaching mature students.

Findings of motivational factors may be grouped into nine headings: financial benefits; practising learned skills; future benefits; transformation; subject content; gaining certifications; imparting knowledge to others; networking with peers, and satisfying a curiosity. All have the underlying theme of the relationship with the pedagogist.

Conclusions drawn include the essential nature of offering encouragement to students to consider their perceptions of what motivates them to study and the benefit gained from students expressing themselves so that tutors can scaffold new learning.

Key Words: Mature students; Motivation; Push and pull factors; Extrinsic; Intrinsic.

Introduction

In this article, we argue that the external forces pull individuals to embark on formal educational journeys, whereas the internal forces act as push factors. However, not all students are influenced by the same push and pull factors. Even if a group of individuals are influenced by the same push or pull factors, the degree and intensity to which they are pushed or pulled will be variable. The focus of investigating is on widening access to mature students for a number of reasons, not least because the independent tertiary sector recruits a significant majority of its students from a widening access, mature student background. Additionally, the authors cannot simply ignore the mature student group, not least because there are genuine demands for Higher Education among mature students.

Designing educational opportunities for adults is challenging; adults pursue Higher Education for a plethora of reasons which often revolves around day-to-day and career needs. Additionally, the adults' pre-existing mindsets and their life experiences may not have adequate congruity with the academic theories and concepts. This is particularly true for mature students who often have life experiences that are rich but often complex and may have strict pre-existing mindsets. Traditionally, Higher Education has been delivered by established providers to young students who are still in their formative years and providers often are grounded in a long academic tradition supporting individuals pursuing intellectual excellence. Mature adults with long life experience joining the HE educational providers create a dilemma

for these institutions (Chen, 2014), especially in relation to addressing vital foci, including (a) whether these providers design an educational culture and setting where youthful energies and exuberance are nurtured, as opposed to making the culture and setting inclusive for all ages; (b) should these providers recruit those mature students without any entry qualifications thus increasing the academic risk; (c) as more adults are joining Higher Education courses for a plethora of reasons, we need to design learning opportunities so that the formal educational setting addresses the unique needs of these adults and as well can harness the various motives and motivational energy they have; (d) how do we deliver learning opportunities to accommodate the large number of adult students and their varied needs and motivational sources.

As adults use their life experience as a resource and often use this to validate and justify the knowledge they gain, educators must find content and examples to illustrate the theoretical concepts to which adults can relate. The purpose of investigating sources of motivation (Pap   *et al*, 2022) for undertaking Higher Education courses is mainly to improve the learning and teaching environment within the educational setting. If Higher Education providers cannot fully align their educational provision to cater for students' needs and harness these varied motivators, we could find that many mature students will be unlikely to attend the course and those who enrol may not continue with the course. The authors note from studies that mature students seek providers offering flexibility in scheduling, personalised instruction and educators who support students' needs (MacDonald, 2018). Therefore, understanding how mature students learn differently from traditional young students can help educators integrate more appropriate teaching strategies into their courses (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

This article identifies and addresses the unique nature of mature students and their needs and suggests some ways forward for educational providers and educators prompted by the complexities involved in teaching mature students. It is intended to enlighten the public, including HE practitioners, about the intrinsic and extrinsic reasons (London, 2009) motivating students to pursue higher education study and the context or situations that have typically influenced or affected their decision to do so. We explore whether decisions were driven by intrinsic desires, such as curiosity or the simple enjoyment of knowing a subject that internally pushed them. or extrinsic benefits such as imparting knowledge or skill to others, support their career need via gaining some practical skills, earning a certificate at the end of the course, securing worthwhile employment, earning improved financial incentives, meeting new friends and lecturers tempted them to choose their mode of study. Li and Bray (2007) posit push-pull factors are external motivating forces which impact on behaviours and choices made by students, the influence depends on the personal characteristics of the actors, which is considered to be the main limitation of the push-pull model, although it has valuable mechanisms. These characteristics may include gender, age, academic ability, socio-economic status, motivation and aspiration. However, while some individuals may decide to respond to push and pull forces, others may not do so.

Once there is familiarity with students' expectations from their course and what motivates them, the next challenge for adult educators is to understand adult students, their characteristics and personalities, so as to enable us to individualise and tailor our teaching method for the good of each adult. One of the most important elements for instructors to remember is the need to treat adult learners as adults and maintain a positive learning environment and communication (Mostafa, 2017). In the rapidly changing world of work, where a career for life is no longer relevant for a vast group of adults, there are many societal benefits

of educating mature students who are in between career changes. In addition to the utilitarian benefits of Higher Education for individuals and the economic benefits of adults updating or renewing competence, knowledge and qualifications, adult Higher Education has been attributed to promoting a number of societal benefits, including cultivating a sense of belonging through positive social and academic interactions. In addition to the utilitarian benefits of Higher Education for individuals and the economic benefits of adults updating or renewing competence, knowledge and qualifications, Goncalves & Trunk (2014) propose adult Higher Education has been attributed to promoting a number of societal benefits, including cultivating a sense of belonging through positive social and academic interactions. Engesbak *et al.* (2010) argue that the aim has changed from enlightenment to simply education and then increasingly more work-related and/or as a part of identity-shaping and self-realisation with education and training now intended to prepare the population for societal and working-life changes.

Teaching Methods

Caruth (2014) found that mature students' past experiences and knowledge of the community, employment, and balancing family life with work can offer the mature students as a valuable resource. These experiences can allow them to deeply engage with the content of a course. Once educators are familiar with students' expectations from their course and what motivates them, the next challenge for adult educators is to understand adult students, their characteristics and personalities so as to enable a teaching method for the benefit of each adult. Understanding adults will help create a positive learning environment, and one of the most important elements for instructors to remember is the need to treat adult learners as adults and maintain a positive learning environment and communication (Mostafa, 2017).

Considering the heterogeneous nature of adults' background, motivation, learning styles, interests, needs and goals, adult education should be contextualised and grounded in students' own experience and wherever possible include dialogue and experiential techniques (Chakanika, *et. al.* 2016). The Socratic method of teaching is based on the teacher and student dialogue, where teachers ask leading questions and guide the learner to discovery. The dialogue uses critical inquiry to challenge preconceived thoughts and established doctrines (Bates, 2019). Both allow the learner's understanding to emerge rather than presenting it already packaged and completed (Buckingham, *et. al.* 2011). When a student responds to the constructive cross-examination begins, the teacher responds with another question that prompts the student to think more deeply and offer a new answer. Noddings (2018) recognise the process continues until either teacher or student or both decide the analysis has gone as far as they can take it at the moment.

In terms of methods, dialogue is pivotal to the success of adult learning programmes. For Freire (1972), dialogue takes the centre stage of all adult learning processes and argues that it is through dialogue that people's world views are transformed. Chakanika, *et al*, 2016 posits that dialogue during the active learning phase allows educators to incorporate several views of a discussion topic by making use of the differing views and backgrounds within the classroom. Dewey on the other hand advocated an organic, even holistic approach (Johnston, 2010), where education provides students with opportunities to explore the everyday world, introducing new topics through connection to the old and stressing interpersonal and relational dimensions of development through shared activities. Educators can actively involve mature students in learning through group discussions, simulation exercises, problem-solving activities, case methods and experimental methods rather than using transmittal techniques.

In terms of methods, the authors propose the adult learning environment should accommodate a variety of interactive methods, including brainstorming, group discussions, role playing and simulation exercises, problem-solving activities, case studies and experimental methods in preference to transmittal techniques. There is an increasingly competitive market where student choice is at the heart of education regulations; mature students tend to make higher education decisions based on the flexibility of scheduling, payment options and relevance to training needs (Stevens, 2014). Educators should make educational provision as adaptive as possible to meet the needs of mature students (MacDonald, 2018). If Higher Education providers cannot fully align educational provision to cater these needs and harness varied motivators, many mature students will be unlikely to attend the course, and those who enrol may choose not continue. Mature students perform relatively poorly in retention, participation and attainment. The answer partly lies in a possible expectation gap between what mature students expect and what is delivered. Studies (MacDonald, 2018) posit that mature students look for providers offering flexibility in scheduling, personalised instruction and educators who support students' needs. Therefore, understanding how mature students learn differently from traditional young students can help educators integrate more appropriate teaching strategies into their courses (Merriam and Bierema, 2014).

Students Preferences Evidence

The starting position for many researchers comes from a sense that tutor-student relationships might well be significant and wide-ranging in relation to student learning. This is borne out from experiences by both tutors and lecturers. Case-study research (Yin, 2003) does not 'prove' the significance of this relationship but instead provides rich data that has the potential to illuminate the issues. In education the researchers believe in the need to adjust the teaching programme to the needs and interests of the individual. Bell (1996) proposes that it is necessary to direct the attention of the tutor toward the student as a person and away from specific subjects. Thus, the individual's motivations become important.

There is strong integration between theoretical and conceptual propositions expounded by authors and students' direct responses to questions about learning preferences. Using contextual research (Papé *et al*, 2022) increases the credibility of findings and evidences the results are congruent with each other (Onwuegbuzie, *et al*, 2010).

Rationale for Contextual Research

Petry (2018) claims that omission of rationale can be criticised as the most frequent incidence in research papers shows a lack of contributions to theory and/or practice. The rationale is necessary to justify the need for the research and the approach taken. In establishing rationale for the research, we argue that contributions flow naturally during interviews as the rationale for the study is provided and justified within existing literature.

By starting with an observed problem, a researcher can then pose scientifically interesting questions that build upon prior research to address the problem. Levitt (2005:114), proposes:

You are almost never the first person to try and answer an interesting research question...if you are, the question may not truly be very interesting

The debate about what makes an article interesting is for elsewhere, but if guided or evaluated by a wide readership assumes priority over the search for evidence-based knowledge, then research will continue to be of interest to the few who have the desire to challenge and explore margins of knowledge. The reasoning requires authors to show that they have critically

engaged in, and have mastery of, existing research that they wish to extend. This will provide confidence that the research question is not trivial and would contribute to our community. Moreover, the authors have mastery of relevant theory pertinent to the problem context, including those originating in other fields. However, while references to the theory developed in prior work help to set the stage for new arguments, listing references to these theories alone is not sufficient. Instead, authors need to critically engage with this prior work to show their logic and explain their rationale (Sutton and Staw, 1995). Hence our detailed selected literature review throughout this article, gives evidence to such positioning. Rationale, including critical engagement with existing work, clear constructs and relationships and compelling evidence with logical reasoning, can provide new insight, challenge existing perceptions and provide utility to inform future research and practice.

Whilst the reader might reasonably expect rationale to be focused when the main research question incorporates seeking reasons, the researchers note the breadth of the rationale evidencing for those undertaking Higher Education, a number of themes and subthemes, among which were explicit pressures from within families (Pap  , 2017) '*... [I need] to get out of the house...*' and '*...I've spent 21 years just being at home, I wasn't working...*' (St 1); '*... my mind was just going to sleep and studying anything was waking me up...*' (St 2). Some of these texts might also be grouped as evidence of the tension between personal development and familial duty (Hochfeld, 2008) '*...I think over the years you forget what actually [happened] when you start looking after your family...*' (St 2) and '*...stuck in the house and you forget how much brain power [I have]...*' (St 2). Responses underlined how personal development added value to the household understanding the choice dilemma or prioritisation of professional or family obligations (Fairchild, 2003), balancing the need for adequate resources (Quimby and O'Brien, 2004). '*...If I study more, my family will...benefit...*' (St 3), which perhaps provided a strong impetus for individual's progress. Research (Caston, 2019) contributes to the goal to have a deeper understanding of the family and extended family living with the respondent and how knowledge of the family might enable twenty-first-century tutors' education and training needs to include the well-being and goals of every student.

Thus, within rationale we might consider the motivation of personal development, interestingly cited by adult students. What emerged from transcripts was the wish for personal development to occur in the extrinsic or conscious paradigms. '*...when my daughter is older, I will go back to University and I will get my degree; that's the main motivator that was for me...*' (St 2). The respondent recognises education can provide the prospect for her development in an environment that values human diversity and quality of opportunity, perhaps not knowing that some sociodemographic student groups (i.e., female students, older migrant students) face, in fact, a higher risk of attrition from online or blended education programmes than others (Stoessel *et al*, 2015). The knowledge that '*...[It will] benefit my career...*' (St 5) and '*...the professionalism and of course, widen my scope of life...*' (St 5) is identified consciously as an opportunity to '*... undertake education so that I can get more knowledge and skills and they become a professional with good credibility...*' and thus an aim becomes the motivation. The statement that '*...I have always wanted to...go to higher education and get more knowledge...*' (St 2) is perhaps reminiscent of the unconsciousness incompetence of an apprentice level student in which education is understood at the prescriptive level of being taught by rote. Here we might expect an introduction of theoretical concepts and basic skills. She has still to develop from unconscious incompetence to conscious incompetence (Anderson *et al*, 2003), a feature of this early period of development. At this beginning stage, her motivation seems important, launching her into a life that hopefully bring further rewards.

Extrinsic Domain: Entrepreneurship as a Motivator

Further evidence for motivation is offered by an expectation of career development involving perhaps start-up or growth of business '*...I start in UK as a normal worker...and then [started] the study of Entrepreneurship...to make my future better for me...*' (St 4). Indeed, the title of the course studied includes the word 'entrepreneurship'. Thus, the learning for the College is to ensure the curriculum is set to encourage a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, but our study cannot make any suggestions as to which type of entrepreneurship education is most suitable for stimulating entrepreneurial behaviour, as this will be a matter of identification of opening, provider expertise in pedagogy and student demography. The reason for commencing the course, for this student, was defined as a motivator of personal development tempered by ambivalence about career change '*...advancement in career...I should be able to manage the project and make a business plan...*' (St 3), the implication being expressed as a hope to be successful in the studies.

For another student the rationale for undertaking a Higher Education course is because it '*...gives me more chances of getting a different job...or maybe even doing...my own business...*' (St 8). This might be considered as a tension between career decision self-efficacy and career indecision (Grier-Reid & Skaar, 2010). In addition to shedding light on the nuanced relationship between empowerment or career decision self-efficacy and indecision, the text indicates that potential constructivist career development can empower culturally diverse college students.

The role of the tutor has particular significance for students' learning and therefore it is essential for tutor training to include a detailed knowledge of entrepreneurial behaviour, which could be modelled for students at this formative stage of their chosen careers. The relationship with the tutor, plays its part in encouraging student learning, perhaps in the expectation that such modelling would reinforce the student's wish for '*...the business course [to] help me to know business, [to] plan my business...*' (St 2)' in the expectation that '*...entrepreneurship is the best way to fulfil [my] goal in the future...*' (St 2). Research evidence (Hessels *et al*, 2008) explores how socio-economic variables can explain the prevalence of aspiring entrepreneurship and whether socioeconomic variables can explain an individual's entrepreneurial motivations. Although many papers have been written on aspects of entrepreneurial enthusiasm in relation to starting or taking over a business, little is known about the contributing factors of various entrepreneurial motives. These can include motives of innovation as necessity and of autonomy or independence, one of the most cited 'pull' factors for starting a business (Carter *et al*. 2003) with financial gain as a highly referenced 'push' factor. Of course, individuals may also be pushed into entrepreneurship under a number of different scenarios.

The general pattern of age differences in motivational factors, indicate factors motivating self-employment are systematically intertwined with and embedded in, both age and culture. The fear of losing ability due to the ageing process is counterintuitive to those who consider expertise increases with experience. However, for this student, the ageing process seemed to be a challenge '*... as I grow older, I was not able to do...work efficiently...*' (St 7). Minola *et al* (2016:189) propose that the motivation for self-employment happens over a lifetime, being:

... intertwined with, and in part an expression of, the person's general psychosocial development. This general development is a lifelong process from birth to late adulthood and follows certain normative timetables and developmental trends within biological and social potentials and constraints across the lifespan.

So perhaps we can consider this is a feature of psychosocial rather than chronological development.

Intrinsic or Affective Domain

The drive to attain criteria benchmarked against regulatory standards can mitigate against the individual student's personal aspirations or goals (Hassel & Giordano, 2015), which can be partly assuaged by appointments of staff as 'student affairs specialists' under the more general guise of customer service (Bauman, 2018). Personal development as evidenced in student responses of stated goals '*...I wish to become a better person...*' and '*...it [studying] will personally make me happy...*' (St 1) can be understood as being prime goals of education and ideally addressed by student engagement officers. Baumann (2018) further proposes that education must be able to be responsive to students' goals, whilst understanding the balance between providing education as a dilution of the experience, in the belief that the paying customer is right, and true learning, however uncomfortable for the student.

A product of education is individual change, again evidenced in students' comments '*...I'm a very outspoken person, it helped me realize [I am] that at home...*' (St 5), so listening assumes a higher priority for this student, which is also reflected in the comment '*...I'll have to really think and think so that I don't forget the question...*' (St 5). To make a change to 'escape' comfort zone seemed an aim of these students, very much arbiters in personal development. Both students concentrated on their own personal development when reflecting on the theme 'changes', without eschewing the parts played by the tutors and peers. Perhaps this indicated a stronger reliance on self and understanding of their movement towards autonomy in learning, accepting that their only responsibility is change to self.

Intrinsic change assumes the initial general education delivers the basic knowledge necessary before proceeding to more specialised study (Most & Wellmon, 2015). The absence of formal secondary education does not of course either preclude or enforce change of personal development, nor does it lessen educational objectives of engaging students as partners in learning and teaching. It does have the propensity however, to encourage students to take on new learning quickly, evidenced by '*...Life is changing, so the old way will not do, [as] it is different from now...*' (St 3) and thus, facilitates change.

Extrinsic Domain

Financial Benefits

To understand the meaning of future financial benefits, the authors keep in mind the relationship with and impact on some non-monetary benefits of education, which could include benefits of lifestyle, health, fertility, familial and savings (Vila, 2000). Qualitatively (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) defining a 'better career' is very dependent on the source, which anecdotally is described through this research. Students, attending are at or near entry level to Higher Education and in general have still to achieve sophisticated careers. Earning levels are mainly in the potential stage and much excitement is expressed in interviews about the challenges and rewards resultant in exploring the benefits that additional financial resources can offer. All participants are studying business management and entrepreneurship courses; so we might expect career improvements to be included as well as heightened abilities to develop the operation of individually owned companies.

When considering financial benefits, the spectre of educational debt and repayment may be interpreted from some responses. Nonis, *et al.* (2022) suggest that the ease and swiftness

with which students can accrue large sums of debt may influence students' opinion about educational finance debt, especially in terms of costs and benefits. Indeed, although financial benefit is a main theme in our findings, there is evidence of interviewees' refusal to discuss this theme in detail, which might be understood as students being aware of increasing the risk of default and thus reduction in general fiscal well-being. This also has the potential to result in negative outcomes including dropping out of college, high levels of stress and low self-esteem and insofar these are conscious, or the fear is conscious, avoidance to address financial issues in detail is understandable.

On the supply side of financial benefits, it can be argued that loans and debt are most likely to deter poorer groups from participating in higher education, as low-income families do not always accept middle-class values of debt as a way of life. At present, paradoxically, the policy of paying for wider access to Higher Education increases the financial consequences of participation because of a careful assessment that it is financially sensible. Thus, a student expresses both hope and fear of financial benefits '*...there is a less possibility of losing money on it, because as I know [it] as a prediction by my book-wise and academic background...*' [St 4]. Financial motivation is strengthened in the knowledge that learning will follow from educational courses attended, highlighting the need and ability to practice financial prudence. Christie & Munro (2003) collate research that suggests that immediate financial rewards are not substantial and the repayment of the loans is a real burden, which perhaps is not surprising as financially inexperienced students may not know what it will be like to repay the debt incurred. However, there is little or no evidence to suggest that better knowledge would have dissuaded some of our interviewees from making the choices they made.

In terms of outcomes, interviewees' responses evidence instances of future financial benefits being placed at risk as individual's own private means were used to pay educational fees '*...I didn't get finance for the whole time that I was at LCC...*' (St 2). Indeed, this student underscores the risk by placing herself at a seeming disadvantage '*...(I) sacrificed many things including finance to achieve what (I) wanted to achieve...*' (St 2). Thus, the drive to undertake education seemed more important than the goal of future financial benefits, although she was able to access funding for the following year '*...at University without the student finance, I would never have been able to do this in the last year...*' (St 2). The commitment to study was so strong that even the soaring costs of the course fees did not deter this student.

Determination to make use of the learning opportunity is encapsulated in the statement '*...look I can manage as long as you're satisfying what you want to do...*' (St 2), with only an implication that as finances are highly prioritised, attendant financial benefit is implicit rather than explicit. Perhaps more evident of seeking financial benefit are the statements '*...I like making money...*' (St 6) and '*...I have (to) find more at the end of my days...*' (St 6). There is recognition that students can and should play a part in managing their own occupations. This may mean they have to be more proactive in their own career choice and progress, for example, getting to know prominent people, pursuing assistance and bringing attention to their accomplishments. Sturges, *et al* (2002) research finds that links do exist between career management and successful financial benefits, with the former begetting the latter. Being positive that financial benefits will accrue from education leading to a worthwhile career is the statement '*...(I) wanted to build a good career and secure my financial future...*' (St 1). Financial benefits will not only assist the development of the individual but also the individual has the opportunity through education to stimulate the much sought-after benefit of increased incomes. This is succinctly summed up in the student's phrase '*...I have to be a good businesswoman*' (St 1).

There is little or no evidence of students opting to choose the course for immediate financial benefits. Students did not explicitly mention or made an inference that they undertook the study to gain financially whilst they are studying. It is not surprising given that they are aware that these were loans that they have to pay back and whilst they were studying they sacrifice their times and efforts to pursue, which had a high opportunity cost.

Enjoying practising the skills needed in my life and career

The authors examined the transcripts meticulously to identify the main thrusts as well any emerging themes within the transcripts and then judiciously decide the extent to which these themes relate to the questions used in the quantitative survey instrument. In this section we explore the extent to which the transcripts provide evidence in support of question three in the Quantitative survey instrument, which is “enjoying practising the skills needed in my life and career”. Simply using the key word ‘skills’ or its synonyms may not provide a fuller picture, so we decided to identify any signals/hooks/proxy words which can help us to determine the importance of seeking or practice skills motive to the prospective students.

Fotopoulos (2012) posits that education has an increased acceptance in the developed world, as the responsibility of the state, and it is perhaps this acceptance that has been integrated by learners as a paradigm of liberal modernity. This paradigm is characterised by the belief in an autonomous unbiased truth, culminating in minimisation of social controls over markets for the protection of learners. This ‘neo-responsibility’ has the potential for the learner to avoid accountability for action, evidenced by an unconscious defensive minimisation, inasmuch one respondent proposed practising learned skills to be an ‘...*ancillary reason; almost like a by-product...*’ (St 2); thus, the fear of change was exhibited by minimising importance. This is even more noticeable in the statement that although seeking transformation (McCune *et al*, 2010), the denial of learning outcomes does not include consciously attaining expertise or proficiency ‘...*I did not intend to acquire any particular skills...*’ (St 3). Those who adopt a superficial approach perhaps have less interest and adopt tactics which minimise both time on the task in hand as well as the task itself. In one case the task and desired outcome is to ‘...*start [a] business...*’ (St 1), with personal development mentioned ‘...[to become] ‘...*a better practitioner...*’ (St 1). Skills are not mentioned.

Conversely two skills identified as being sought were presentation and negotiating, often considered ‘soft’ skills (Sparrow, 2018) concerning competencies and behaviour. Soft skills might be considered to cover

...multifarious abilities such as communication and interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, team skills, negotiations skills, social grace, time management skills, business etiquettes. Soft skills are becoming essential for professional success... (Sparrow, 2018:556).

Given the importance of these skills, we could support student learning in pedagogy and assessment in at least some of these skills in adult classes, whatever the challenges, in the interest of better preparing our students for their futures. The strong incentive for understanding these implicit and explicit skills motivates those engaged in critical discussion, which involves them to resolve disputes by stimulating self and others to express opinions on the issue, examine each other's work, think about others' points of view, make comments and negotiate meaning (Yan & Kember, 2004). Such active interchange is advantageous to acquiring alternative perspectives and the construction of personal meaning, which is significant to the growth of the critical mind very much found in ardent learners, exemplified by the student's statement ‘...*to work smart instead of pure hard work...*’ (St 5). Thus, the recognition of skills possession becomes a targeted outcome. However, for another student

‘...gaining the skills was not the main driver...’ (St 6) but rather transformation included skills without being identified or explicit. At a visceral level this can be understood but again, denial is presented as a mechanism to protect the individual from negative external influences. However, from the same student there is acceptance of the *‘...desire to make a difference in [my] own life...’* (St 6) as being the reason for choosing this course. Although, in some respondents no skills are explicitly mentioned, it is implicitly shown in two students’ statements in which they expected the course to help provide resource for an improved future *‘...I want to establish a better career... and to be able to deal with people...’* (St 5) and *‘... developing [my] career was the principal reason...by improving professional skills’* (St 4). This was further offered by the student *‘... I understood that writing, presentation and negotiation skills were not good enough...I pursued this course to develop [my] career and acquire these skills...’* (St 7).

The authors are aware that ‘skills’ possession is a means which can help individuals to achieve other motives including sharing knowledge/skills, the dream of transformation, immediate and future financial benefits. Therefore, if a student claims to study the course for a better career, we can assume that an implicit means to gain a better career is gaining or practising skills. Additionally, if a student wishes to pursue a higher education to have a certificate/credential, they might assume that credential/certificate is evidence of knowledge and skills as certificates can only be gained if a student fulfils the learning outcomes of the course aims.

We believe that skills acquisition is a reason for study for most students interviewed; however, it is unclear whether the reason itself was deemed as important. In the transcripts we looked at attributes and adjectives used to which could be understood as proxy indicators for importance, however, the attributes and adjectives did not give us substantial information for us to safely label the responses in the transcripts as having overriding status.

Future Benefits

Osborne, Marks, and Turner (2004) reported that the UK Higher Education (UKHE) sector has experienced a decline of mature students re-entering full-time education within UKHE in the recent past, whereas increase of part-time students has been evidenced specially among women (Davies, 1999), and that influenced them to undertake a study investigating the rationale behind such decline; very similar to this study where we investigated the rationale of a mature student undertaking higher education in an Alternative Provider with the UKHE. Osborne, *et al*’s (2004) study outlined number of factors influencing the decision making of a mature student in undertaking higher education, which could be categories in four main areas broadly:

1. national policies related to recruitment, e.g. Student finance, widening access
2. economic and labour market conditions
3. the policy and practice of individual institutions within HE and FE
4. personal background and circumstances of potential student

Acknowledging Davies and Williams’s (2001) claim that identifying the key factor influencing the decision of a mature student to re-enter HE is complex, the factors could be further classified in two categories:

1. Positive factors, such as, anticipation of benefits, cognitive interests, self-confidence, self-respect and self-belief and support from family

2. Negative factors, such as, anticipation of limited benefits, attitude to debt, lack of confidence and self-belief, family and employment constraints and unresponsive institute

Reviewing the factors and categories, it becomes evident that many of the reasons influencing a mature student in undertaking higher education are associated with uncertainty in the future. As a result, the authors investigate how this uncertainty of 'what will happen in some future situation' influences our research participants. A theme that emerges is the impact Higher Education might have on future situations of participants although there is little evidence that students identified a future situation as being a driver for study. Reflecting on thinking about future situations as praxis, encourages participants from early on in the course to become conscious of shared objectives to obtain competency in chosen profession and passing the certification examinations. There was a sense that the individual could increase agency and control over learning by contributing to the collective agency and control (Emad & Roth, 2016); there was therefore a sense that contributing to increasing the learning opportunities of others enhanced individual learning opportunities, thus further improving possibilities for the future. This is expressed generally as *'...to build up my career, develop my career ... to getting a good career...'* (St 4). In a formal adult educational setting, if a common goal emerges for learners to work collectively to accomplish success by fully participating in the course tasks, classrooms can support and stimulate plans and goals in which future situations become verbalised, understood by one participant aspiring to work in marketing as *'...by engaging with curriculum... it sparked me, you know it...'* and *'...I realise that this is what I like doing. I didn't know that before. So, coming into College and starting this course has made me realise that I like these sorts of things, marketing is basically meeting other people...'* (St 2).

In the educational environment, the intermediate stage of making decisions which might impact future situations, could be considered as the commitment to study, whether for its own sake or for a particular purpose. Indicative of this are the statements from one participant *'...I have to go through; I have to study more to do something in my future. That's why I have the idea...'* and *'...to go and study more and if you study and succeed, then [at] any age studying you can do anything [in work] ...'* (St 3). Solid reasons were expressed through the impact of study *'...if I study more, my family will benefit, my friend[s]...it will be beneficial'* (St 6) and *'...I have to just study first and then the things I mentioned [advantages], that will come later...'* (St 7). The observation that study is beneficial reflects the increasing societal requirement that colleges must become more responsive to national economic needs (Alexander, 2000) and regulatory demands for increased performance.

The many reasons discussed in this paper for undertaking learning for an improved future, include social conscience *'...in [the] health sector I want to care more efficiently...'* (St 5) and altruism *'...to invest in the poor people who can learn to study, I can help the poor people ... I wanted to leave a legacy...'* (St 8). Ethical values, both innate and learned, provide the opportunity when individuals experience a high degree of career satisfaction, no better exemplified than the wish of one participant to *'...to open the Caring agency is in my future plan...'* (St 1). Research (Valentine *et al*, 2011) demonstrates that ethical values, career satisfaction and altruism are inter-related, suggesting that it is essential for educational organisations to advance an ethical environment to ultimately enhance work-value congruence.

Higher Education for adults provides opportunities for students to learn at a graduate level from both pedagogy and experience (Jarvis, 2014) *'...I was [one of] those with hardly any*

communication with anybody ... going to College, I found that I was able to bring out that side of me... (St 2) and perhaps more precisely *'...I wanted ... to learn from College and activate my business...'* (St 8). In the future, this might provide a situation in which status is gained *'...to professionally react, like educated persons who understand the area they are talking about...'* (St 7). These students' texts are preparing the ground for the future, without actually identifying the sought changed scenario as they make preparation for academic work and for careers outside of academe by;

the development of scholarly competencies, involving conceptual understandings of a field, knowledge, and skills relevant to their area of study, interpersonal skills, and professional attitudes and beliefs; ... more frequent, and more expansive; a sense of community, in which students feel they can turn to advisors and not only friends for support and belonging; quality of life, wherein students are able to ascertain ways in which academics navigate and integrate professional and extra-professional life domains (Hermanowicz, 2016:293)

However precise outcomes are identified *'...[to] set up my own business, be a master in my own life ...'* (St 2) and *'...to manage the project and manage a small business project, make a business plan...'* (St 8). Evidence emerges of entrepreneurship *'...it gives me more chances of getting a different job or maybe even doing my own business...'* (St 5) and *'...I want to be an entrepreneur, to learn and activate my business knowledge. I set up a business, become an entrepreneur and want to employ people...'* (St 8). Included in the College's core curriculum is to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills for opening a business or acting entrepreneurially in other ways. By offering entrepreneurship courses, training, and extra-curricular support, the College aims at creating a supportive context for entrepreneurship, thereby enhancing students' motivation and capability for starting a business (Walter *et al*, 2013), so necessary for the interviewee who also sought advice *'...I have to open my own business and I have no idea who need to talk where I should go for learn all of this...'* (St 1). The authors believe that the prevalence of and networking with fellow students who have attended entrepreneurship education, increases students' own tendency to carry out a first entrepreneurial activity, even when controlling for individual-level experience and learning has been largely contained from own course participation. While this peer effect is likely to hold for nascent entrepreneurship (Bergmann *et al* 2016), there is perhaps less reason to assume that it also affects further progress in the project creation process, i.e., new entrepreneurship. Students have typically only little industry experience and are, therefore, unlikely to be able to provide contacts which might contribute to the establishment of a new business, hence the importance of networking and group studying.

The dream of transformation

Transformation is described in much of community literature as the facilitators' cultural work building a sense of agency and societal direction anchored in relationships with peers. Thus, the experience enabled the learning individual to take on other roles and responsibilities in the surroundings and the community. As with the roles in equitable alliances, the parents and community members who made these relationships, began to be seen and to see themselves as leaders and change agents. Moreover, an emerging body of community-based education reform literature suggests that not only are learners' critical stakeholders in educational transformation (Hong, 2011), but also that they can provide much needed social and intellectual resources and collective political will and power to college improvement efforts (Ishimaru, 2014).

Much has been written on both transformation in the education milieu as well as the dream of transformation by individual students. Students generally were adamant they wanted a better

life brought about by education by *'...changing the status quo...'* [St 2]; *'...be a master in my own life...'* [St 8]; *'...I can make myself something...'* [St 6]; *'...be able to gain sense of achievement...'* [St 5] and *'...to be able to react professionally...'* [St 7]. All these might be considered from the aspect of projected expectations from emerging learners of success including business and personal development. Research provides evidence of substantial over-optimism in expectations, in that:

...nascent entrepreneurs overestimate the probability of their nascent activity becoming an operating venture... (Cassar, 2010: 838)

However, this evidence does not deter the respondents, believing that the learning will be for both *'...my own personal development and career...'* [St 1] and *'...those sorts of things make you perfect...'* [St 7].

Enjoying the subject content

To what extent pursuit of curiosity about a subject area, deriving pleasure in engaging with subject content, or even for deriving instrumental benefits of knowing a body of knowledge be it for mastery of a subject or developing skills and competencies played a role for students to undertake a higher education course at LCC is the subject of our interviews with students. In this theme, the researchers focused on to what extent intrinsic motivation deriving from enjoyment of the subject content itself played a role. Tate (2020) proposes that for those who are open to learning and enjoy the process will develop as individuals, becoming self-actualised and potentially find their purpose or calling in life. Within this self-actualisation, the attraction of the subject content and favoured way of learning perhaps is projected as an ideal and fairly rapidly modified by experience. There are of course those students who are activists in the sense of protesting (Gagnon, 2018), and many of the respondents show signs of firm beliefs and goals, with definite preferences in where learning enjoyment is located. Symptomatic of this is stated evidence that reading (Clark and Svinicki, 2015) and tutor guidance as a study method helped with subject enjoyment more than perhaps any other *'... I prefer where teachers give examples and can leave the group with case study [to read] ...'* (St 8) and coupled with interacting *'...Yes, this case study and question I like...'* (St 1). Throughout students reflected on the content of their business programme as being enjoyable and one of the reasons that education was attractive to them *'... [I am] really good at studying...so I joined up and I loved studying business...'* (St 2) and *'...spend some...time together in study is a fun time...'* (St 6), perhaps highlighting how learning can best be undertaken when enjoyment is experienced, projecting gratification onto the content itself. Another respondent was precise of what particular learning process is enjoyable *'...I upload the photo...online and think I like, I love it...'* (St 6), going on to identify satisfaction with potential pecuniary benefit *'...I like that, that's making money...'* (St 6).

Respondents do indicate a preference for learning socially with others, as part of a grouping or in the company of peers *'...I say teamwork is what I like as well...'* (St 4) and *'...my personality preference is being in a [learning] group...'* (St 1), which perhaps underscores the dissemination of learning and knowledge is essential for the reflective experience of constructing knowledge and developing skills in the process of interaction and teamwork. Pedagogical innovations help enable the individual's development through access to and equality in learning and teaching, which is aided by significant collaborative efforts (Ossiannilsson *et al*, 2016). The argument that learning is best achieved in an enjoyable environment is already made and the process that leads to subject enjoyment can be understood as the favoured style of learning. Interaction is preferred *'...the students got to*

understand the topics better as they saw different sides to the arguments, the argument brought us together, so the debate is very good... (St 8), allowing the student to be inquisitive and not to be taught didactically *'...this is not this way, you have to go look for that way, that's why I think this [use of] question is much better...'* (St 7) and *'...yes, this case study and question...'* (St 1). Also *'...but yeah. Yeah, because I like to, I like to take some time as well. I'm the only one I have no other success...'* (St 6).

Projection into the future is a favourite occupation of respondents, as it not only enables goal-setting but also protects the student from making decisions about addressing present issues. Such avoidance can stimulate the maxim that thinking about the future can lead to better decisions (Thorstad & Wolff, 2018), so this further supports the process. Wanting an improvement perhaps not only in lifestyle but also gratification in learning, this respondent finds attraction in *'...the study [in] entrepreneurship because [it] is making my future nicer if I am able to do any business, then I think it will be better for me...'* (St 3). Dey & Lehner (2017) caution that the promise of enjoyment might cultivate a passive attitude of empty 'pleasure' which effectively deprives learners of its more deep-seated opportunities, with social engagement becoming the preferred outcome to the detriment of learning, *'...I'm meeting some people and a socialising as well; so great, I found some good friends...'* (St 4). Equally, there is evidence of learning enjoyment being secondary to employment fulfilment *'...I've actually got a job in marketing, market research at the moment...I'm enjoying that more...'* (St 2), further explaining *'...the [learning] business side of it, sort of taking a side-track...'* (St 2). Interestingly, from this intervention, there is no indication the benefits of study will increase enjoyment or satisfaction, although the same student did offer enjoyment of learning to be a motivating factor, as above. The drive to be active is apparent here with enjoyment experienced by action *'...I'm just saying I like to do something...in the future I don't know because outside I can support...'* (St 6), with uncertainty and reservation apparent. Evidence is also provided in participant's text that enjoyment in learning is not immediately apparent *'...I have to study, I have to just study...'* (St 3) and here the authors might conclude that the 'drivenness' to study perhaps conceals a satisfaction and enjoyment which introduced the student to education in the first place.

Credentials and Certificates

A credential or certificate not only signifies achievement of a qualification, but it also demonstrates competence and skills and that an individual is trained and equipped to perform certain duties. Perhaps due to the reliance of organisations on credentials to filter candidates or use it as an indicator for knowledge and skills, many students might be interested to study a course of instruction. Therefore, the value of credentials and its role in students' decision to pursue a course of Higher Education has been explored through interviews. There were specific questions and as well probing questions were asked to students to elicit information to what extent credentials/certificates played a role in their decision to pursue the course.

The benefit of gaining a certificate explains only a small variance in the effectiveness of a learner for future employment, Clark *et al* (2017) positing the best assessments of students are those based on classroom performance rather than holding credentials. Perhaps the most common measure of educational attainment is years of completed schooling. This is the credential many of the respondents rely upon when embarking on Higher Education, also appreciating the need to gain further recognition *'... [I have] a school certificate of course; well the higher education I love to study and it was a big gap...'* (St 3). Participants are thus aware of the value of possessing such credentials, one respondent wishing to seek further integrity

and achievement recognition of a professional status *'...The application of my higher education becomes more credible in my workplace...'* (St 5).

Students returning to education receive lower returns to experience and years of schooling than those entering Higher Education without substantial delay, but generally have higher commitment and attainment in completing educational programs. So, the students who pursue the award of a certificate to validate their learning, can anticipate higher financial gains in the employment market and higher confidence as credential holders. When questioned whether the motivation for studying was to gain skills or to gain recognition, i.e., a certificate, the respondent was emphatic, highlighting perceived complexity *'...a very good question, the answer will be very big but I'm going to do it...'* (St 3) but affirming successful certification gained will bring sought rewards *'...If I study more, my family will benefit, my friends will benefit, my communities, everything...'* (St 3). Extensive research by Ferrer & Ridell (2008) concludes credentials are, in an important sense, valued in the labour market and relative to students without a degree, those who have completed an educational programme receive substantial earnings gains associated with these credentials. These earnings gains are as large as, and generally greater than the gains received by non-certificate holders.

There is appreciation by one respondent that certification has been planned for a considerable time *'...I never had any short-term thinking; I wanted to receive a certificate and knowledge from the course from the beginning...'* (St 8), which certainly highlights the commitment of this participant to the course. The participant makes a further rejoinder that benefits will accrue from successful matriculation *'... I thought about the long-term benefits from the course...'* (St 8). The value of College certificates to adult students is explored in Kim & Tamborini's (2019) research, which evidences those annual earnings and earnings growth of vocational certificates are higher over early to mid-adulthood than comparable early entry graduates and indeed many are associated with higher payoffs than bachelor's degree holders.

Imparting/sharing knowledge or skill to others

Another theme developed in the research under the general overall theme of transformation is imparting knowledge or skills to others. In the College context, whilst the operation is in the general milieu of education, the focus of transfer of knowledge can be considered as having the potential to increase social intelligence. Desjardins, in his 2015 seminal discourse *'Education and Social Transformation'*, suggests education is conveyed for the transformation of culture in ways that are in harmony with concepts of social legitimacy and intelligence. Indeed, the authors strongly support this view of transformation, which underlies the College's drive to bring education to widening demographics. The caveat exists that an exclusive focus on factors within educational systems of teaching and learning exchanges and how these are managed, might be too restrictive. We need to include the responsibility of wider institutional learning and other simultaneous outcomes associated with welfare and students' personal development. It is the learned skill that can evidence this in the application in the learner's world, no better explained perhaps by the respondent *'...to educate myself, gain more knowledge to improve my professional skills with good credibility...'* (St 5)

The application of a learned skill is perhaps one aim of education very much evinced by the respondent statement *'...Learning is being able to take something that somebody said, maybe use it somewhere else...'* (St 2), further exemplified by *'...it's a skill, being able to take that and transfer it into some other way...'* (St 2). The understanding and indeed attraction of attending the chosen course, is planned to *'...broaden (my) knowledge and make you come across things probably not needed in your work...'* (St 5), showing an acknowledgement that

learned skills can impact a broad swathe of life, not only the current employment. Equally interesting is the statement ‘...*The course will help me to use some things I learn in my business, like business strategy which I learned...*’ (St 8) suggesting skills and knowledge usage can also be beneficially applied to the present occupation perhaps without appreciation of the broader benefit. This is partly ameliorated by the response ‘...*I can also use the knowledge in various personal occasions, helping my friends to make plans...*’, with the potential to increase the social network as the progression from unconscious incompetence to conscious competence is predicted.

Teaching the English language at the College, although not a main focus of studied courses, is very much part of the curriculum. All pedagogy is undertaken in English so a proficiency must exist before courses can be attempted but enlargement and refinement of this proficiency is an attractive feature for this respondent ‘...I learned to gain knowledge, not only the communications of speaking English...’ (St 3). Vetter *et al*, (2018) posit the imperative is clear, that teacher educators must engage in critical conversations about identity and teaching practices in Higher Education to include language as a core discipline.

One of the skills identified is for the learner to become integrated ‘...I never had the knowledge of being organised properly, planning properly, for many things...’ (St 8), classified as what to integrate and what systems to employ to accomplish goals. The ultimate measure for this phase of integration does not lie simply in the insight of a student's beliefs but in the extent to which other people adopt, use, or benefit from the suggestions (Zhu *et al*, 2016).

How such learning might be beneficial for others is not per se the subject of this research but the opportunity to impact others’ lives constructively certainly provides a motivating factor for many respondents.

It appears from the above discussion that sharing knowledge although not expressed extensively among all participants as a reason for pursuing the higher education course, however, being able and confident to share knowledge is an outcome of educational aims of the course the students studied. Adults constantly share their opinions and knowledge with their friends, colleagues and family members. Being able to share knowledge confidently and competently in social, work and personal settings are hugely important. Despite that the findings suggest that imparting knowledge was not considered as an important factor for students choosing the course at LCC.

Networking with peers and superiors

Networking with peers is a broad term used as a possible reason for students to choose the course and this instance include both being introduced to new friends, classmates, staff and other students. Therefore, in the transcripts the authors considered various synonyms to determine the extent to which networking was ascribed as a reason (albeit teleological) for their study with the College. The semi-structured interview is designed to elicit information which students associated with networking and what role it plays for students to choose the course.

A further theme identified by respondents is networking with peers and superiors, considered by students to be beneficial whilst attending the College. From peers, friendships are created in multiple shapes and patterns and can be identified in almost every social realm and across time yet is often an overlooked social relation. In many ways, friendship is both an equivocal social relation and social institution. The relational aspect might be represented by the respondent statement ‘...*I need to create an impact on some people which I'm doing now...*’

(St 6) and socially shared experiences can be attractive *'...now I make (a) friend, I have to go out sometime going to cinema with him, sometime going to the park...'* (St 1). Mortensen (2019) reflects on the tension between being highly dependent on others in the everyday, while simultaneously being reluctant to be involved with friends for fears, real or imagined. Such might comprise understanding of friendships that is open to and includes stress, conflict and distrust as individuals recognise their lives can be vulnerable and fundamentally intertwined with and dependent on others and at risk of being hurt, exposed or betrayed. However, despite these caveats, the attraction remains *'...if people meet good people, they changed...'* (St 3) so the benefit of friendship is identified.

From establishing friendships, the student will build a network, which is particularly important for the individual's support as well as contributing towards a social structure to help performance. Research by Balkundi & Harrison (2006) concludes that networking can help team performance and poses the dilemma whether teams become more viable because of a central leader, or maybe their viability encourages the leader adopt a central position. This reciprocity is evidenced in the interviewee statement *'...Basically, socially I'm meeting some people and I learned lots of things and I help them out on lots of things as well...'* (St 4), so learning may be seen to be from both peers and superiors.

Satisfying a curiosity

It is to be noted that curiosity could power individual to actively engage in study. Dehaene (2020) considers active engagement as one of the four important pillars of learning (others are attention, error feedback and consolidation). Attention amplifies the information we focus on and active engagement (also known as curiosity) which encourages our brain to ceaselessly test new hypotheses. Curiosity is important as it also linked to memory, the more curious you are about something, the more likely you are to remember it. Considering that almost all students who we interviewed are first generation immigrants and English was not their mother tongue, the researchers used a wide range of synonyms as proxy indicators for the curiosity, including enjoy study, ambition to do the course, reading for pleasure, seeking information for pleasure, information hungry, etc. Studying curiosity and how satisfaction can be gained may be dependent on interest and engagement as well as being a basic instinct, as being born curious (Arnone *et al*, 2011) and certainly increase motivation. Curiosity itself supports a myriad of definitions and explanations, perhaps represented well by the epistemologist's perception understanding and explaining why:

...we seem to value true belief intrinsically insofar as we are spontaneously curious creatures, for curiosity is an interest in finding (and believing) truths... (Whitcomb, 2010:666).

Curiosity resulting in the identification of unknown fragments of information below the level of conscious awareness (Grossnickle, 2016), successfully combines information search with innateness and is a definition that the authors apply to this research. This innate predisposition manifests in participants' texts in many different ways and outcomes, the statement from one participant *'...I'm so interested in creating job opportunities. I want to support my community...'* (St 2) perhaps begs the question 'How can I?', seeking answers to enable the desired outcome. As does being inquisitive in *'...asking them questions; I need to create an impact...'* (St 8). In both these examples of participants' words there is a clear connection between cause and effect, one relying on the other and bringing satisfaction. What curiosity does is to stimulate the process. Considering curiosity satisfaction from an awareness-based view, explains why some good educational practices tend to yield knowledge and importantly how

this removes risks from reward, establishing benefits and fulfilment for them providing sought answers and outcomes. If curiosity takes the participant on a path that is a *cul-de-sac*, alternatives are considered '*...if something go wrong, I can talk about what is Plan A, what is Plan B...*' (St 8), thus increasing the chance for awareness and ultimately satisfaction.

One of the often-stated outcomes by participants for satisfaction is to support development of a future enhanced lifestyle. From satisfaction gained in a more general sense that '*...my future [is] nicer if I am able to do any business; I think it will be better for me...*' (St 3) to a definite goal, studying '*...is to build up my career...*' (St 4). For teaching institutes, providing direction for undergraduate educational programs that are intended to meet the career needs of the adult learner, is a continuing focus. This is supported by research (particularly Basham and Buchanan, 2009), which concludes that business students may be more interested in maximising their outcomes in organisations that are profit-driven, very much a factor in students choosing business-related courses. This is further highlighted by '*...I love to do business in future, and this is the best course...*' (St 3) offering affirmation of a satisfactory goal. Studying with an outcome of curiosity satisfaction is also referred to in students' texts as creating prospects. '*...I have to study more to do something in my future; that's why I have the idea...*' (St 3) and if '*...I think if I go...and do a degree course it will make me much more satisfied...*' (St 5). Satisfaction in the educational environment contributes to the development of intrinsic and continued motivation to learn. Educationally, satisfaction is often described as the sense of accomplishment learners feel at the conclusion of a learning event when the outcomes of their efforts are consistent with their expectations; this is what seems to be hoped for in participants' texts. Gaining the ability to '*...react to professionally react, like educated person who understand the area they are talking about...*' (St 7), giving the learner the opportunity of experiencing feelings of enjoyment, pleasure, and accomplishment (Small & Venkatesh, 2000); this is satisfaction gained from studying and motivation stimulated by curiosity.

Conclusion

Some particular implications from the research, for Higher Education establishments undertaking or planning pedagogy include, when designing HND courses and course activities, how it is essential to encourage students to offer their perceptions of what motivates them to study. The advantage of being able to incorporate students' views, at this time, is clearly demonstrated in this research. The opportunities for the student to express opinions also presents openings for the tutor, as the more experienced other, to scaffold new learning in the ZPD. The role of the tutor has particular significance for students' learning and therefore it is essential for tutors to include a deep understanding of students' needs at this formative stage of their chosen careers (Grier-Reid & Skaar, 2010).

Students move through stages and can regress. In all preferences established in this research, there is clear evidence that students have different achievements and needs, not just of learning factual content but also understandable from the perspective of educational theories and concepts. It is essential for tutors to recognise and understand the process of defence mechanisms and be able and prepared to work with students during problematic times. These defences might include self-sabotage (Metzl, 2010), repeating behaviours which were learned through reliance on unconscious defences and power-sharing, giving and receiving, which is symptomatic of progression-regression repetition (Shabad, 1993).

Care is taken not to suggest generalised implications from a limited number (eight) of student participants' responses and reflections. However, there are messages contained in the

research that are repeated time and again, by student interviewees, in an effort to convey what they considered is important for their learning. A further implication from the research is the benefit gained from students expressing themselves so that tutors can scaffold new learning. This is a substantial and important implication, touched on throughout the research. The final implication we draw from this research, can be found in qualitative analysis. The very nature of emerging themes has been restricted to students' words and analysis of data is therefore limited to the narratives themselves, alongside interpretations and reflections.

The research shows that what these students want and require is a sophisticated and highly-informed level of teaching when studying. Students report they require the tutor to be an experienced pedagogist. Much importance was placed by students, in the learning relationship on the tutor's ability not only to present and model skills but also to share practical experiences.

It seems from research interviews undertaken, the balance of support and challenge offered by the tutor is experienced by students as both facilitating and inhibiting. Use of self (by the tutor) thus becomes an important part of the tutor-student relationship and it is in this relationship that the teaching alliance is formed. Some considerable thought and preparation by the tutor for relationship with students is therefore recommended as being in students' best interests in enabling them to experience beneficially their learning journey.

Understanding students' views through this research has the potential to add to knowledge and contribute to a greater understanding of the subjective dimension of learning. One of the benefits of a positive experience in learning is that student receptiveness and motivation can be enhanced (Ramsden, 2003), which in itself is likely to lead to improved learning outcomes (Moulding, 2010). Qualitative analysis of students' interview data evidence student-centred emphasis seems more supportive to learning than tutor-directed course delivery, however also noting these are early entry students' needing to be metaphorically 'fed' by a didactic mode of delivery.

From the interview data and reflections, clearly some emphasis is placed on the relationship with the tutor, whether this is close or distant. Additionally, there is an appreciation of how external factors impinge on the learning experience and getting this right, that is so they did not negatively affect the learning process, remains a priority for the tutor. Thus, the general drive towards student autonomy (Furlong, 2003) has been seen as a preferable goal of the tutor, as well as being appreciated by students, although some awareness emerges of the rate autonomy is achieved, as some students state they want a period of nurturing and metaphorical feeding by way of feedback and tutor engagement.

Students of the course highlight the importance of the relationship with the tutor to their learning and this emerges as a clear over-arching theme throughout the research. However, students state they had little idea why this should be the case, other than meeting the basic needs, which includes being metaphorically 'fed' information (Christopher *et al*, 1992). To some extent this depends on students' prior knowledge and understanding, as well as their self-confidence in their ability to learn and self-efficacy to become cathartic (Osborne *et al*, 2004). It is interesting in this study to see the depth of importance interviewed students place on this relationship, for example whether students show this relationship to be the main factor, or equally so with peer relationships, or even simply as one of the main factors.

In conclusion, analysis reveals the importance of seeking students' opinions when designing HND courses. Students are in a social state when they engaged in studying and recognition is given '*...to the unequal distribution of power between those who teach and those who are*

taught...' (Mann, 2000:315). It is in understanding this power imbalance (Ernest, 2006) that underlines the importance of seeking students' views.

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Review of Practical Implications of Research Aligning Student Motivation With Teaching Practices Through Performance Management

Professor Nick Papé, PhD

Abstract

Performance management of staff in higher education is essential for enhancing the learning experiences and outcomes of mature students. With the increasing number of adults returning to education, it is vital to understand their specific motivations and apply strategies that cater to their needs. Mature students often pursue higher education driven by external factors of career advancement, financial stability and personal development. These motivations require educational institutions to design programmes that are practically oriented and directly relevant to students' career goals. While external motivations are significant, internal factors including the enjoyment of learning and personal growth also play a role, albeit to a lesser extent. To address the needs of mature students successfully, performance management should focus on creating an educational environment that supports both career aspirations and personal development. This involves incorporating practical skills into the curriculum through methods including case studies, simulations and problem-solving activities, which enhance students' readiness for the workforce. Institutional policies should aim to reduce barriers to participation, offering flexible learning options and personalised support that recognises the diverse backgrounds of mature students. Nurturing an intellectually stimulating environment that acknowledges the importance of internal motivation is crucial. By balancing external and internal motivational factors, performance management can create a more complete educational experience that meets the immediate and long-term goals of mature students.

Key words: Performance management / Mature students / Higher education / Motivation / Career advancement / Financial stability / Personal development / Practical skills / Curriculum design / Flexible learning / Institutional support / Educational outcomes

Introduction

The increasing presence of mature students in higher education (HE) has prompted a growing interest in understanding their unique motivations, preferences and challenges. This review provides perceptions into the motivations of mature students and offers practical recommendations for educators and administrators seeking to enhance the learning experience and outcomes for this growing segment of the student population. Mature students, typically defined as those over the age of 21 years at the start of their undergraduate studies, often bring different expectations and life experiences compared to their younger counterparts. These differences necessitate a partial rethinking of traditional teaching methods, support systems and performance management strategies within educational institutions.

This review examines the first of four academic articles commissioned by the College, each contributing to a broader research project aimed at improving the educational experiences of mature students. The article under review, entitled:

‘Navigating motivational landscapes; understanding the dynamics of mature students in higher education for enhanced performance management: a case study,’

seeks to identify the key motivations that drive mature students to pursue higher education and to explore how these motivations can be addressed through practical strategies in both teaching and administration as essential components of Performance Management.

Review of the article

(This section refers directly to the reviewed article)

The article begins with a short literature review followed by an understanding of motivation dynamics and forces and insights integrating performance management. It highlights the distinct motivations of mature students, which often differ from those of younger learners. While younger students may be more focused on social experiences or the pursuit of a traditional career path, mature students are often driven by the desire for career advancement, personal development or a change in life circumstances. Understanding these motivations is crucial for educators who aim to engage mature students effectively and for administrators tasked with providing the necessary support to ensure their success. The article discusses how these findings can be interpreted into practical strategies within the educational setting. For educators, this may involve adapting teaching methods to more closely suit the learning styles and preferences of mature students, who often benefit from a more flexible, interactive and practical approach to learning. The use of life examples, opportunities for peer learning and a focus on practical skills are highlighted as particularly effective techniques for engaging this demographic. In addition to teaching strategies, the article accentuates the importance of administrative support in facilitating the success of mature students. This includes providing flexible scheduling options, offering targeted academic advising and ensuring that resources of childcare and other assistance are accessible to those who may be balancing education with other life responsibilities. Throughout the article, performance management is presented as a key theme, with the multiple authors outlining steps that both educators and administrators can take to improve the overall educational experience for mature students. By closely monitoring student progress, providing regular feedback and adapting strategies as needed, institutions can better support mature students in achieving their educational goals.

In critique, whilst the opening sections provide a solid discussion on the motivation of mature students in higher education and the role of performance management in enhancing their educational experiences, there are improvement possibilities for consideration. The text tends to be overly dense with references and theoretical concepts, which might make it difficult for readers to follow the main argument. While the inclusion of multiple sources is commendable, the text could benefit from clearer connections between these references and the main points being made. Also, more critical engagement with the theories and studies it references does not appear until later in the article, perhaps offering this concurrently might help the reader. Description of the application of performance management is informative but tends to repeat similar points about the importance of matching strategies to individual motivations. The text could include some of the most critical aspects of performance management, as they relate specifically to mature students.

The qualitative analysis presented demonstrates a thoughtful and structured approach to understanding the motivations of mature students in higher education. The use of a hermeneutic theoretical perspective and grounded theory methodology is well-suited for this type of research, allowing the authors to explore the lived experiences of the participants in depth. The analysis is thorough, with the authors carefully coding the data to identify key

themes and patterns. The progression from open coding to axial and selective coding reflects a rigorous analytical process, enabling the researchers to connect individual responses to broader motivational themes. This method provides a solid foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions from the data. One of the strengths of this analysis is the way it quantifies qualitative data through frequency distribution of codes, which helps to highlight the most significant motivational drivers among the participants. This approach bridges the gap between qualitative and quantitative data, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the research findings. However, the analysis could benefit from more direct engagement with the contradictions or complexities within the participants' responses. For instance, while some themes like 'future financial benefit' and 'career development' are given prominence, the discussion could be enhanced by exploring any potential conflicts or tensions between different motivations, for instance personal development versus financial gain.

The quantitative analysis includes the consistency between mean and median values across various questions indicating a reliable dataset with minimal variability, which strengthens the overall findings. The fact that the lambda values are consistently within an acceptable range suggests that the independent variables account for a meaningful portion of the variance observed in the dependent variables, thereby enhancing the validity of the results. A strength is its ability to pinpoint specific areas where different demographic factors, e.g., age and ethnicity, influence motivations. For example, the identification of significant associations between ethnicity and several motivational factors, of 'imparting/sharing knowledge' and 'future financial benefits', provides valuable insights into how different student groups may prioritize their educational goals. Use of statistical methods to test associations is particularly commendable, as it allows a more understanding of how various factors interact to shape student motivations. This level of analysis supports the qualitative findings and offers a quantitative foundation upon which further research and practical applications can be built.

The article's analysis and conclusions provide a detailed and structured exploration of the motivations driving mature students in higher education. The joint display of quantitative and qualitative findings is particularly commendable, as it effectively creates data from both methodologies, offering a balanced view of the students' motivations. This integrated approach enhances the validity of the conclusions drawn, as it cross-verifies the results, ensuring that the identified trends are both statistically and contextually grounded. The analysis successfully identifies the dominance of extrinsic factors, particularly the desire for career advancement and financial gain. The breakdown of these motivators into specific themes provides valuable insights for educators and administrators. These findings are well-supported by both the quantitative data and the qualitative narratives, which add depth and context to the statistical trends. The analysis could be strengthened by a more critical examination of the interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. While the article acknowledges that intrinsic factors play a role, this aspect is somewhat overshadowed by the focus on extrinsic drivers. A more balanced discussion might have explored how these two types of motivation interact, potentially influencing each other, as while external factors of career advancement often dominate, intrinsic motivations like self-fulfilment and intellectual curiosity can also play a significant role in adult learners' engagement, as highlighted by Gorges & Kandler (2012), who argue that the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is often more complex than initially perceived. The conclusions are well-supported by the data, perhaps the article could benefit from a more explicit discussion of the implications of these findings for educational practice. Although recommendations are made, they are somewhat general and

the article could have provided more specific strategies or examples of how institutions might practically apply these insights to support mature students more effectively.

Performance Management Definition

Performance Management in this article is understood as an ongoing process designed to improve the educational experiences and results of mature students by closely matching educational provisions with their varied motivations (Agars 2004). This approach requires a modification to traditional methods, focusing instead on understanding and responding to the specific needs and goals of mature students of career progression, personal development and the achievement of qualifications. The process involves providing regular feedback, setting clear objectives and offering development opportunities that are specifically matched to individual students, ultimately leading to better performance and educational outcomes (Baker & Turner, 2020). While performance management is traditionally applied in organisational settings (Armstrong & Baron, 2005), recent studies indicate the growing importance of its application in higher education. For example, studies by Blackmore (2017) highlight the need for performance management systems that specifically address the learning outcomes of non-traditional and mature student.

Main drivers for motivation

The article concludes the most significant motivator for mature students is future financial benefit and career development, with many expressing a clear connection between their education and the desire to improve their careers and financial stability. This finding is supported by Santos (2020), who emphasises the importance of financial considerations and career advancement in students' decisions to pursue higher education. According to Mezirow (1997), transformative learning is key for mature students as it promotes a change in personal perspectives and fosters critical reflection, particularly relevant for those re-entering education after significant life experience. Transformation is another major motivator, as students sought education to change their lives, achieve personal growth and gain a sense of accomplishment both personally and professionally. Ceglie (2019) posits that for some mature students, the value and opportunities provided by a degree, along with the advancement of personal knowledge, are strong intrinsic motivators. Studies by Illeris (2009) propose the importance of integrating lifelong learning principles into higher education, particularly for mature students seeking vocational advancement. Practising skills for life and career is also a significant reason for their studies, with most students indicating it as a key factor, although some viewed skills as a by-product rather than the main goal. This matches the findings of MacDonald (2018), who notes that skill acquisition is often linked to career development but may not always be the primary focus. Understanding and preparing for future situations was also important, with several students making connections between their studies and future aspirations, particularly in relation to their careers. This motivation is consistent with the observations of McCune *et al.* (2011), who found that mature students often pursue higher education with a clear understanding of its relevance to their future plans.

Credentials and certificates were somewhat important, with students recognising the value of formal recognition and professional status, including the long-term goal of gaining a degree for personal satisfaction and social recognition. Merriam and Bierema (2014) support this by stating that formal qualifications often provide mature students with a sense of achievement and social credibility. The enjoyment of subject content was mentioned by many, although it was not overwhelmingly considered the main reason for their studies. Enjoyment often stemmed from interactive and practical elements of the coursework, a finding echoed by

Chakanika et al. (2016), who advocate for engaging and experiential learning techniques in adult education.

The impact of education on the family is also a motivating factor for some students, who see their studies as a way to benefit not only themselves but also their households and loved ones. This motivation reflects the broader social benefits of education, as discussed by Johnston (2010), who proposes the relational dimensions of learning. Networking with peers and superiors was less of a priority, with only a few students mentioning it indirectly as beneficial in forming friendships and learning from others in a social context. Yin (2003) notes that while networking can enhance the learning experience, it is not always a primary motivator for mature students. Sharing knowledge and skills, while recognised, was not a major motivator for most students. Immediate financial benefit was not a motivator at all, with some students highlighting the financial sacrifices made to pursue their education, as noted by MacDonald (2018). Curiosity was the least significant motivator, with only a few students making indirect references to it and even then, it was not considered a primary driver, a finding consistent with the overall focus on more practical and outcome-oriented motivations in mature students' educational pursuits.

Application of practical teaching methods and classroom practices

Recognising and incorporating the life and professional experiences that mature students bring to the classroom is crucial. Encouraging students to share these experiences in relation to course content can make discussions more engaging and relevant. This approach helps to create a learning environment that values and utilises the rich backgrounds of mature students, as noted by Caruth (2014). Understanding the unique motivations, backgrounds and learning preferences of mature students is essential for effective teaching. Educators should adapt their methods to meet these individual needs by offering flexible learning schedules, personalised feedback and varied assessment methods. This approach respects the diverse circumstances of mature students and enhances their educational experience, as supported by MacDonald (2018).

Practical teaching methods are essential for mature students, as noted by Tennant et al. (2010), who emphasise that case studies and simulations help learners bridge the gap between theory and real-world application. Active learning methods of group discussions, role-playing, problem-solving activities, case studies and simulation exercises, are particularly effective in engaging mature students. These methods encourage deeper engagement with the material and make learning more interactive and practical, as suggested by Chakanika et al. (2016) and Dewey's (1938) educational philosophy (Johnston, 2010). Dialogue-based teaching techniques, including the Socratic method, can be particularly beneficial for mature students. This approach encourages critical thinking and allows students to explore their understanding through discussion. It respects the preference of mature students for a more collaborative and less didactic learning environment, (Freire, 1972; Bates, 2019). Courses should be flexible in terms of scheduling and payment options (where appropriate) and the content should be directly relevant to the students' career goals. This approach ensures that the educational experience is meaningful and engaging for mature students, as informed by the findings of Santos (2020) and Merriam and Bierema (2014). Creating a supportive classroom atmosphere where mature students feel respected and valued is essential. Educators should acknowledge the challenges mature students may face in balancing their studies with other responsibilities and provide the necessary support to help them succeed. This approach is crucial for maintaining a positive learning environment (Mostafa (2017). As

Houle (2013) points out, mature students often face unique challenges in balancing academic responsibilities with work and family commitments, requiring institutions to offer more targeted support mechanisms. Regularly seeking feedback from mature students can help educators understand their needs and preferences better. This feedback should be used to make ongoing adjustments to teaching methods and course content, ensuring that the educational experience remains relevant and effective.

Accentuating the practical application of skills and knowledge in life situations helps students understand how their education can directly benefit their careers and personal development. This focus on practical outcomes is a key motivator for mature students (MacDonald, 2018; Ceglie, 2019). Encouraging opportunities for networking and interaction among students, though not always a primary motivator, can still be valuable. Supporting collaboration among students can lead to the sharing of different viewpoints and the development of supportive relationships, enhancing the overall learning experience (Yin, 2003). Addressing any gaps between what mature students expect from their education and what is delivered is essential for improving retention and overall performance. Ensuring that course content, teaching methods and support services meet their expectations can lead to better outcomes for mature students (McCune *et al.*, 2011; Feters *et al.*, 2013).

Adapt and build teaching methods

Educators are encouraged to consider the below findings and explore ways to incorporate these methods more widely into their teaching practices. By doing so, they can create a more engaging, practical and relevant learning experience that prepares students for their future careers.

The article suggests six main alternative teaching methods can complement didactic lecturing and other prescriptive activities, identified as:

Method	Benefit	Score out of 10 (1 unimportant, 10 very important)	Ranked in order of importance (1-6)
Group Discussions.	Engaging students in discussions allows them to share their experiences and insights, making learning more interactive and relevant	8	1
Case Studies	Utilising real-life examples helps students connect course content with actual situations they may encounter in their (professional) lives.	7	2
Dialogue-Based Teaching (Socratic Method)	Involves a question-and-answer format that encourages students to think deeply and explore different aspects of a topic through guided discussions.	7	3
Problem-Solving Activities	Encourages active participation by challenging students to think critically and apply their knowledge to solve practical problems.	6	4
Simulation Exercises	Provides an immersive learning experience where students can practise skills in a controlled environment that copies life's conditions.	6	5
Role-Playing	This method enables students to apply theoretical knowledge in simulated everyday scenarios, which can be particularly engaging and educational.	5	6

The fact that 1 is highest in the scale, rather than the lowest is evidenced from the following text, but one might wish to note that in the table all of the six alternative teaching methods of

many identified, can significantly enhance traditional didactic lecturing, providing notable benefits for both educators and students. These methods introduce diverse approaches to make learning more interactive, engaging and relevant to personal situations. Whilst these methods are already in use to varying degrees, informal surveys and discussions with academics and administrators reveal that there is still ample opportunity for wider adoption and greater prioritisation. The authors acknowledge different teaching methods may be better suited to different topics and depending on the subject matter and available resources, a combination of these methods might more effectively meet students' learning needs. The article recognises that no single approach works universally for all learning contexts and that an adaptable, blended approach is often the most effective in promoting deeper understanding and student engagement. This flexibility ensures that educators can tailor their teaching to the unique demands of each topic and classroom environment.

Group discussions stand out as the most effective method, scoring 8 out of 10 and ranked highest in importance. This method allows students to actively participate in their learning by sharing experiences and ideas, which not only deepens their understanding of the material but also enhances their communication and collaboration skills critical in professional environments. The interactive nature of group discussions transforms the learning process from passive absorption of information to active engagement, making the content more relevant and memorable. Case studies, ranked second with a score of 7 out of 10, bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. By analysing live situations, students can see how the concepts they are learning apply to everyday contexts, thereby reinforcing their understanding and preparing them for similar challenges in their professional lives. This method encourages critical thinking and problem-solving, as students must navigate the complexities of everyday scenarios. Dialogue-based teaching, or the Socratic method, also received a score of 7 out of 10 and was ranked third. This approach encourages students to think critically and explore different dimensions of a topic through guided questions and discussions. The Socratic method is particularly effective in engaging students with complex or abstract ideas, as it promotes deeper reflection and understanding. By challenging students to defend their viewpoints and consider alternative perspectives, this method encourages analytical thinking and the ability to reason logically. Problem-solving activities, ranked fourth with a score of 6 out of 10, offer a crucial opportunity for students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, promoting active engagement, critical thinking and creativity. These activities challenge students to test their understanding and develop the confidence needed to tackle practical problems. By navigating structured challenges, students build essential skills for addressing real-life scenarios both academically and professionally. To enhance the impact of problem-solving exercises further, integrating real-life projects provided by employers or businesses can give students valuable exposure to industry practices. This approach deepens their learning by allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge directly to relevant, real-world tasks. Additionally, inviting guest speakers from industry to demonstrate how theory translates into practice can provide students with powerful insights, enriching their academic experience.

Simulation exercises, also scoring 6 out of 10 and ranked fifth, provide an immersive, hands-on learning experience. These exercises replicate real-world environments, allowing students to experiment and develop skills in a controlled, risk-free setting. Mistakes made in simulations serve as valuable learning opportunities, helping students refine their abilities without real-world consequences. Simulations are especially effective in fields requiring practical experience of healthcare, engineering and law. Simulations offer students a safe space to

gain confidence and proficiency before stepping into professional environments. Incorporating simulations that are directly linked to industry standards or procedures can additionally enhance their relevance and value. Role-playing, ranked sixth with a score of 5 out of 10, remains a highly effective method for bridging the gap between theory and practice, despite its lower ranking. It immerses students in simulated scenarios where they adopt various roles, helping them see how theoretical knowledge applies to real-life situations. Role-playing fosters not only deeper understanding but also essential soft skills of empathy, communication and teamwork. This method is particularly appropriate for disciplines where interpersonal skills are crucial, including social sciences, education and management. To strengthen the connection between academic learning and practical application, HEIs should offer more work placements during holiday periods for students lacking relevant experience. Optional work experience modules integrated into programmes would provide students with hands-on exposure in their chosen fields. Encouraging students to base their assessments on workplace experiences would also create a powerful feedback loop between learning and practice, reinforcing the practical value of their studies. This approach would ensure students are well-equipped for their future careers, combining theoretical knowledge with real-world application.

Possible barriers to introducing different teaching methods

Addressing obstacles requires a concerted effort from both institutions and educators to create an environment that supports and encourages the use of diverse teaching methods. There are several potential obstacles to implementing different teaching methods in educational settings, despite their recognised benefits. One significant barrier is the traditional mindset that dominates many institutions. Lecturers and educators who have long relied on lectures and other conventional methods of prescriptive non-experiential teaching, may be resistant to change, preferring to stick with what they know rather than experiment with new approaches. This resistance can stem from a lack of familiarity with alternative methods or a belief that traditional techniques are more effective in conveying information. Another obstacle is the pressure of time constraints. Many educators face heavy teaching loads, with little time to prepare for classes. Incorporating different teaching methods, of group discussions or simulations, often requires additional preparation time, including the development of new materials and activities. For educators already stretched thin, the additional time commitment can be a deterrent. Moreover, these methods may require more time in the classroom, which can be challenging in tightly packed curricula where content coverage is prioritised.

Resource limitations can also present a significant challenge. Effective use of certain teaching methods of simulation exercises or role-playing, often requires specific resources, including technology, space, or specialised materials. Institutions may not have the financial means to invest in these resources, making it difficult for educators to implement these methods fully. In addition, large class sizes can hinder the effective use of methods that rely on interaction and participation, for instance dialogue-based teaching or group discussions. Managing and engaging a large number of students in these activities can be challenging, leading educators to default to more traditional, lecture-based approaches. Assessment practices can also act as a barrier. Many education systems favour standardised testing and written assessments, which may not align well with alternative teaching methods. Methods like case studies or problem-solving activities, which emphasise critical thinking and application, may not be adequately reflected in standardised assessments. This misalignment can discourage educators from adopting these methods, as they may feel pressured to focus on other preparations instead. Of course, there is also the issue of student resistance. Some students,

accustomed to passive learning through lectures, may resist more active methods that require participation and engagement. They may perceive these methods as more demanding or feel uncomfortable stepping out of their comfort zones. This resistance can discourage educators from experimenting with new approaches, particularly if they think it might negatively impact student satisfaction or performance.

The relevance and application of Performance Management

Performance management plays a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of mature students in higher education. As more adults return to education, it is essential to understand their specific motivations and apply effective strategies to enhance their educational outcomes. By focusing on teaching methods, assessment practices and institutional support that resonate with the motivations of mature students, performance management can help create an environment that better addresses their needs and challenges.

Mature students are often driven by external factors like future financial benefits, career advancement and personal development. Many see higher education as a path to improving their economic stability and professional standing. This emphasis on tangible outcomes requires educational institutions to design strategies that meet these expectations. Studies by Adams and Dennis (2021) and Chen and Smith (2021) indicate that mature students often pursue higher education with the goal of securing better career opportunities and achieving financial security. These motivations highlight the importance of designing educational programmes that address the practical needs of adult learners. While external motivations are predominant, internal factors also play a role, though to a lesser extent. Enjoyment of the subject matter and the pursuit of personal growth are significant for some mature students. Vallerand et al. (2022) note that internal motivation can enhance overall satisfaction and performance, making it an important aspect of educational design. However, for most mature students, the practical application of their studies to their career goals remains the primary driver. This focus on practicality underscores the need for educational institutions to prioritise career relevance in their strategies.

To effectively address the motivations of mature students, performance management must focus on creating an educational environment that directly connects with their career aspirations. Courses should be designed to provide practical skills and knowledge that can be applied to normal life situations. Flexible learning options, such as part-time study or online courses, are essential in accommodating the busy schedules of adult learners. These approaches not only improve accessibility but also enhance the relevance of education to the lives of mature students, supporting findings by Wang and Wang (2021). The development of practical skills should be a key focus. Including case studies, simulations and problem-solving activities in the curriculum allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios, reinforcing their learning and improving their readiness for the workforce. Rauch and Hulsink (2015) highlight that entrepreneurship education, which emphasises life applications, can significantly increase students' engagement in entrepreneurial activities. By incorporating these elements into the curriculum, institutions can better support the career goals of mature students. Institutional policies that support the unique needs of mature students are also critical. These policies must aim to reduce barriers to participation and ensure that adult learners have the resources and support they need to succeed. Government policies also play a crucial role in supporting mature students, as discussed by Slowey & Schuetze (2012), who review the policy frameworks for lifelong learning in several countries.

These policies must aim to reduce barriers to participation and ensure that adult learners have the resources and support they need to succeed. This includes offering personalised feedback, recognising the diverse backgrounds and experiences of mature students and providing tailored guidance that aligns with their professional and personal goals. The importance of such support is evident in the work of Fitzsimmons and Tizard (2023), who found that mature students often face additional challenges in balancing their studies with other responsibilities, making institutional support crucial to their success.

The role of internal motivation should not be overlooked. While external factors may dominate, the enjoyment of learning and the pursuit of personal growth can significantly contribute to a student's overall experience and success. Educators should strive to create a learning environment that is both engaging and intellectually stimulating, recognising that the internal satisfaction derived from learning can enhance performance. This approach is supported by Deci and Ryan (2000) and Ryan and Deci (2021), who posit that internal motivation plays a crucial role in self-determination and sustained engagement in educational activities. Performance management in higher education must therefore balance the practical needs of mature students with opportunities for personal growth and intellectual engagement. By doing so, institutions can create a more complete educational experience that not only meets the immediate career goals of students but also supports long-term personal development.

The integration of both external and internal motivational factors into performance management strategies is essential for addressing the diverse needs of mature students. The effective application of performance management in higher education requires a thorough understanding of the motivations driving mature students. Institutions must design their educational offerings to be directly relevant to the career aspirations of these students, while also providing the flexibility and support necessary to accommodate their unique circumstances. Practical skill development should be prioritised, with curricula designed to include real-world applications that prepare students for the workforce. At the same time, the importance of internal motivation should be recognised, with efforts made to create an engaging and intellectually stimulating learning environment.

Conclusion

Performance management, as outlined in this review, refers to the continuous process of monitoring and evaluating performance to improve the educational outcomes of mature students. In higher education, it requires adjusting traditional methods to accommodate the distinct motivations and needs of mature students, many of whom return to education for career progression, personal development, or a significant life change. By setting clear objectives, providing consistent feedback and creating opportunities for skills enhancement, institutions can support the success of these students (Agars, 2004). Adapting teaching methods, support services and assessment strategies is essential to ensure mature students can achieve their goals effectively (Armstrong & Baron, 2005).

The article *"Navigating Motivational Landscapes"* emphasises that mature students are driven by motivations different from younger learners. For many, the primary goal is career advancement or financial security, using education to improve their job prospects, gain promotions, or transition into new roles. Personal development is also a key factor, with some students seeking intellectual growth or the satisfaction of achieving long-held educational ambitions. The article presents valuable recommendations for enhancing the educational experience of mature students. It advocates for teaching approaches that incorporate real-life case studies, problem-solving tasks and simulation exercises. These methods offer students

the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to practical, life scenarios, helping them build confidence and competence. In fields where hands-on experience is critical, including healthcare and engineering, these approaches are especially effective, allowing students to develop the practical skills necessary for their professions. As well as evolving teaching methods, the article highlights the importance of strong administrative support. Many mature students must balance work, family and other responsibilities alongside their studies. Offering flexible study options, including part-time programmes or evening classes, is key to enabling these students to manage their commitments. Institutions should also provide targeted academic advising, access to childcare and career services to help mature students navigate the challenges they face. These resources play a crucial role in ensuring that students can remain focused and perform well in their studies. The article suggests increasing opportunities for work placements and practical experience, particularly for students lacking relevant professional exposure. Offering placements during holiday periods or integrating optional work experience modules into degree programmes can provide mature students with the chance to gain valuable hands-on experience. Additionally, encouraging students to complete assessments based on their workplace experiences can strengthen the link between academic learning and practical application, giving students a clearer understanding of how their education relates to their professional goals.

In conclusion, performance management is shown as a critical tool for improving the educational outcomes of mature students. By adopting practical, experience-based teaching methods and offering robust administrative support, institutions can meet the specific needs of this growing demographic. Future research could explore more targeted approaches for engaging mature students across different disciplines and examine the impact of their motivations on academic success. By continuing to develop these approaches, educational institutions will be well-positioned to support mature students in achieving both their academic and professional objectives.

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Enhancing Student Learning through LCC's Active Learning Framework: A Pedagogical Approach for Adult or Widening Access Mature Students

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Abstract

Drawing upon contemporary learning theories and empirical research, this article evaluates the foundational underpinning, **role and implementation** challenges of Active Learning Framework (ALF) for Widening Access Mature Students (WAMS) at London Churchill College (LCC) in enhancing student engagement, retention, and academic performance. The study provides an evidence-based theoretical **foundation** for the design of the ALF and **offers recommendations** for its effective implementation within higher educational pedagogy for adult in general but with particular focus for WAMS citing references to key findings from recent research on adult learning strategies, and personalised pedagogical approaches.

This article explores the principles, methodologies, and implications of ALF in the context of higher education. The framework encapsulates and promotes active learning by incorporating interactive learning, real-world applications, and continuous formative assessments to create an active and dynamic academic environment.

Key Words: Active Learning; Adult Learning; Widening Access Mature Students; WAMS.

Introduction

The ALF at LCC is designed to enhance engagement and retention, foster critical thinking, and bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application for WAMS. Active learning is particularly suitable for WAMS as the study finds that they prefer to use their experience as a resource and they expect higher education to be relevant to their life and/or career (Uddin, 2022; Uddin 2023). Therefore, any design of an active learning framework for institutions with sizeable WAMS should bear in mind that, unlike traditional students, WAMS enter higher education with diverse backgrounds, prior experiences, and specific expectations regarding their learning journey. They often juggle multiple responsibilities, including employment, caregiving, and financial commitments, which necessitate a learning environment that is flexible, interactive, and directly applicable to their lived experiences (Uddin, 2022; Uddin, 2023).

Despite explicit benefits and relevance of active learning methodologies for WAMS, there is a paucity of research on the development or even availability of active learning frameworks adopted by various adult educators and institutions in their practice setting. Due to absence of research on these often informal frameworks, many adult educators have to “reinvent the wheel” and still pursue “trial and error” to formulate yet another informal framework for their own practice. Many such educators have advocated for a formal framework to be used as a reference point to align their teaching practices.

As part of the teaching and learning strategy, London Churchill College (LCC) has recently designed and introduced the Active Learning Framework (ALF) to foster an inclusive and dynamic educational environment. ALF aligns with contemporary pedagogical strategies, aiming to shift from passive knowledge transmission to student-centred, interactive learning. By incorporating life-centred teaching, collaborative activities, and experiential methodologies, ALF aspires to enhance student engagement, knowledge retention, and professional readiness. Given its particular relevance for WAMS, the framework seeks to provide structured

learning experiences that cater to their diverse needs. However, as ALF is in its early stages of adoption, this article offers the foundational underpinning particularly in regard to the active learning for adults, its role in enhancing student engagement, retention, and academic performance, explores its initial implementation, identifies challenges faced by LCC educators in integrating active learning strategies, and suggests a way forward for its effective implementation in higher education.

Active Learning and its role for Widening Access Mature Students (WAMS)

A broader pedagogical model, the NCL Teaching Practices Framework, was developed by Uddin (2022) for another higher education provider. This framework underscores active learning as a student-centred process in which WAMS collaborate with fellow students and educators, who act as facilitators, and engage through structured, meaningful discussion and activities such as case studies, problem-based learning, and experiential applications (Uddin, 2022). The underpinning concept of the teaching practices framework is in line with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, asserting that adult learners engage more deeply when prompted to critically reflect and reassess their assumptions. Through interaction, collaboration and reflection, active learning enables students to connect academic theory with lived experience, making it particularly effective for mature learners.

The NCL Teaching Practices Framework highlights the importance of connecting theoretical knowledge with practical, context-dependent experiences, which is critical for WAMS' academic achievement and career progression (Uddin, 2022). By encouraging a dynamic and inclusive learning environment, active learning mitigates barriers to participation, thereby facilitating the academic success of WAMS.

The NCL Teaching Practices Framework offers a structured yet adaptable approach to enhancing student success by guiding lecturers in addressing key factors influencing the teaching and learning processes. Combining normative and prescriptive elements, it provides a conceptual foundation alongside practical strategies for effective teaching. The framework emphasises five core elements: collaborative and engaging learning environments, career-focused and skills-based instruction, the application of theoretical models to real-world contexts, reflective and reasoned learning, and the cultivation of mindsets, values, and aspirations (Uddin, 2022; Uddin, 2023). While comprehensive, its broad scope lacks the methodological precision, collaborative tools, pedagogic techniques and practices necessary for the design of the teaching delivery, particularly in fostering active learning.

The design and implementation of an Active Learning Framework (ALF) is essential in addressing the limitations of the NCL Teaching Practices Framework, particularly in providing structured methodologies to enhance student engagement and facilitate learning. While the NCL framework acknowledges collaboration, it lacks specific strategies for implementing interactive and participatory teaching methods. In contrast, the ALF is a structured pedagogical approach that integrates evidence-based techniques to enhance student engagement and knowledge retention. This framework includes strategies such as think-pair-share, flipped classrooms, case-based learning, and problem-solving exercises, each of which has been shown in educational research to promote deeper understanding and critical thinking. However, the effectiveness of these methods varies depending on subject matter, learner preferences, and instructional design. Rather than presenting active and passive learning as a strict dichotomy, ALF acknowledges that well-structured lectures, when combined with reflective activities, can also foster meaningful learning.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that active learning enhances cognitive retention through mechanisms such as retrieval practice, scaffolding, and increased student interaction. Retrieval practice, also known as the testing effect, involves actively recalling information, which strengthens memory retention. Research indicates that effortful retrieval from long-term memory enhances learning outcomes (Yang et al., 2022). Scaffolding, which provides structured support to learners, helps manage cognitive load by regulating the flow of information within working memory. This approach enables learners to build upon their existing knowledge without becoming overwhelmed, thereby facilitating deeper understanding (Kirschner & Van Merriënboer, 2024). Increased student interaction, particularly through collaborative learning and teaching others, has been shown to improve comprehension and retention. The "protégé effect" suggests that teaching someone else about a subject can enhance one's own learning, as it encourages the teacher to engage more deeply with the material (Carey, 2024).

While ALF encourages the application of theoretical concepts to practical settings, the definition of "real-world contexts" should be carefully considered, as not all disciplines offer immediate opportunities for direct application. Instead, simulated scenarios, case studies, or interdisciplinary approaches may serve as effective bridges between theory and practice. By incorporating these nuances, the ALF provides a more comprehensive and adaptable approach to improving the overall learning experience.

Collectively, these strategies within active learning frameworks contribute to improved cognitive retention and a more robust learning experience. The need for an ALF is particularly pronounced for WAMS, who face unique challenges in balancing academic, professional, and personal commitments. These learners require structured yet flexible learning experiences tailored to their specific needs, ensuring that academic content remains both relevant and applicable.

Theoretical Underpinnings for an Active Learning Framework (ALF)

The design and adoption of any teaching framework must address the multifaceted objectives of adult educators, which range from meeting institutional standards and regulatory requirements to fulfilling student expectations and adopting a pedagogical approach that aligns with the diverse backgrounds of both students and tutors. Therefore, an Active Learning Framework (ALF) should provide a clear pedagogical structure that aligns with institutional and regulatory expectations while accommodating the varied needs of mature students. Active learning, as a critical pedagogical approach, serves to address the specific needs of Widening Access and Mature Students (WAMS), ensuring that their life experiences are recognised as valuable resources in the learning process. A Billsett (2001) posits, learning must be situated within authentic contexts, enabling students to connect academic content with real-world applications, a crucial feature for WAMS who bring diverse personal and professional experiences into the classroom. Moreover, Giroux (1988) underscores the significance of participatory and democratic education, which empowers learners, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds. Thus, any ALF must incorporate a participatory and democratic educational model that actively engages learners in knowledge construction through experiential, collaborative, and reflective practices. Grounded in Giroux's assertion that education should empower underrepresented learners, an ALF should integrate real-world case studies, peer-to-peer discussions, and problem-based learning to foster an inclusive and dynamic learning environment. This approach not only fosters critical inquiry and encourages validation of lived experiences but also promotes dialogue between theory and practice,

ensuring that learners, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, develop confidence, competence, and agency in their academic and professional pursuits.

Many WAMS have previously encountered educational barriers, and active learning offers an inclusive framework that nurtures confidence, competence, and motivation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Rather than making general claims about active learning fostering these qualities, it is essential to delineate the specific mechanisms through which these benefits materialise. ALF achieves this by embedding experiential learning, reflective inquiry, and peer-to-peer collaboration within the curriculum, enabling students to contextualise theoretical knowledge within real-world applications. This approach aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which asserts that learning is most effective when it follows a cyclical process of experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation. Furthermore, Knowles' (1980) andragogical model emphasises the importance of self-directed, problem-based learning, allowing WAMS to integrate their personal and professional experiences into their academic development. Through this process, learners not only acquire theoretical knowledge but also cultivate the confidence and motivation essential for academic success and lifelong learning. To ensure the ALF's effectiveness, theoretical concepts must be contextualised through meaningful, relevant, and structured learning experiences. By equipping learners with the analytical skills to critically assess and apply theoretical models, ALF facilitates academic development and enhances employability by ensuring students acquire practical competencies. Ultimately, by embedding active learning strategies into the pedagogical framework, ALF upholds the principles of inclusive education, ensuring that higher education remains accessible, relevant, and transformative for WAMS. Integrating career-oriented teaching, collaborative learning, and context-specific exercises, ALF bridges the gap between academic theory and professional practice, ensuring that WAMS derive tangible value from their higher education experience (Uddin, 2023).

Due to limited prior academic qualifications, WAMS often rely on life experience as an essential resource, making active learning an appropriate pedagogical approach for integrating academic content with prior knowledge and experience, thereby enhancing the relevance and applicability of academic learning (Uddin, 2023). This is supported by Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, which reinforces the need for an engaging and meaningful curriculum. Similarly, Knowles' (1980) andragogical model suggests that adult learners thrive in self-directed, experiential, and problem-based learning approaches that align with their intrinsic motivations and professional aspirations. Furthermore, research by Uddin et al. (2023) and Billett (2014) indicates that personalised learning, constructive feedback, and problem-centred teaching significantly enhance engagement and academic success for WAMS. Theoretical models such as Knowles' andragogy (1980) and Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) underscore the importance of self-directed, experiential, and reflective learning, all central to active learning practices.

Active learning is a pedagogical approach that engages students in the learning process through critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflective inquiry, rather than the passive reception of information (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory conceptualises learning as a cyclical process involving experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation, which aligns closely with the principles of active learning. Similarly, Knowles' (1973) andragogical model emphasises self-directed learning and the integration of prior experiences, further reinforcing the effectiveness of active learning for adult learners. Additionally, a study by Uddin et al. (2023) highlights the importance of

personalised learning and positive feedback for mature students, finding that those who received tailored feedback and were encouraged to reflect on their learning were more likely to retain information and perform well academically. An ALF would systematically incorporate these elements, ensuring that WAMS receive the support necessary for success.

Beyond addressing individual student needs, the ALF also supports broader institutional and pedagogical goals, particularly those related to widening participation and fostering inclusive education. Scholars such as Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlight the importance of engagement and practical relevance in higher education, especially for non-traditional learners. Similarly, Giroux (1988) advocates for participatory education models that empower underrepresented students. The ALF not only aligns with these principles but also equips educators with concrete tools to bridge the gap between academic rigour and practical application. By integrating active learning strategies into lecture design, assessment, and pedagogy, the ALF ensures that higher education remains equitable, inclusive, and effective, preparing WAMS for both academic success and professional advancement.

Principles and Methodologies of an Active Learning Framework (ALF)

The Active Learning Framework (ALF) is particularly well-suited to adult learners, who bring a wealth of life experiences to the learning process, enriching their capacity to validate and contextualise new knowledge. Research has shown that adult learners engage more effectively when theoretical concepts are presented in a way that resonates with their lived experiences. Thus, it is imperative for educators to integrate real-world examples, case studies, and experiential learning into their pedagogy. Uddin (2022) found that interactions between lecturers and students at Nelson College London highlighted the central role of experiential learning in enhancing cognitive engagement. Before introducing theoretical constructs, educators can employ storytelling or mini case studies to establish relevance, allowing students to identify issues or challenges that serve as the foundation for subsequent theoretical exploration. This reflective process not only facilitates the refinement of personal experiences into abstract propositions but also links them to established academic theories. By encouraging students to engage in peer discussions, ALF fosters a collaborative learning environment that strengthens the connection between theory and lived experience.

A central feature of the ALF is the 'Fostering Wisdom Process,' as articulated by Uddin (2022) for Nelson College London. This process involves a structured, scaffolded approach to learning through iterative stages. Initially, real-world experiences or case studies are introduced (Stage 1), followed by a systematic examination to identify key information and patterns (Stage 2). Students then analyse weaknesses, issues, and areas for improvement within the given context (Stage 3). In the next stage (Stage 4), learners collaborate to formulate potential solutions or strategies for addressing the identified problems. The final stage (Stage 5) entails distilling insights into abstract rules and tentative propositions, which create a conceptual bridge to established theories and models. This structured approach not only cultivates analytical and problem-solving skills but also ensures that theoretical knowledge is internalised through practical application. By actively engaging with the material and critically assessing its relevance to their own experiences, students develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of academic concepts.

The validation of theories within the ALF is a reciprocal process, where abstract models and frameworks gain meaning when mapped onto real-life experiences. This dynamic interaction is facilitated by a cyclical sequence: the introduction of theory (Stage 1), assessment of its

relevance (Stage 2), application to practical scenarios (Stage 3), and subsequent validation through experiential insights (Stage 4). This iterative process reinforces the applicability of theoretical constructs, demonstrating their utility beyond abstract academic discourse. The incorporation of collaborative and peer learning further enhances engagement, as students are encouraged to test, refine, and adapt theoretical knowledge in relation to real-world challenges. Ultimately, ALF transforms the learning process into an interactive and dynamic experience, where theory is not merely transmitted but co-constructed through lived experience and critical inquiry.

Core Principles of an Active Learning Framework

1. **Student-Centred Learning:** Actively encouraging participation through discussions, group work, and case studies.
2. **Practical Application:** Integrating industry case studies and business simulations to bridge the gap between theory and practice.
3. **Class-Based Formative Assessment and Feedback:** Utilising formative assessments, peer evaluations, and self-reflection exercises to foster ongoing development.
4. **Collaborative Learning Environment:** Promoting teamwork, peer-to-peer learning, and cross-disciplinary engagements to enhance knowledge sharing.
5. **Reflective and Adaptive Teaching Methods:** Facilitating ongoing curriculum adjustments based on student feedback and performance data, ensuring continued relevance.

Methodologies Used in ALF

To implement these principles effectively, educators should employ a variety of instructional methodologies, including:

- **Problem-Based Learning (PBL):** Students engage with real-world business challenges through research and analysis, fostering critical problem-solving skills.
- **Case Study Approach:** By examining corporate strategies, students develop decision-making skills in realistic contexts.
- **Flipped Classroom Model:** Providing pre-class reading materials enables class time to be used for active discussions and problem-solving activities.
- **Active Engagement Strategies:** Group debates, peer presentations, and interactive role-playing further promote student engagement and application of knowledge.

The ALF Model at LCC

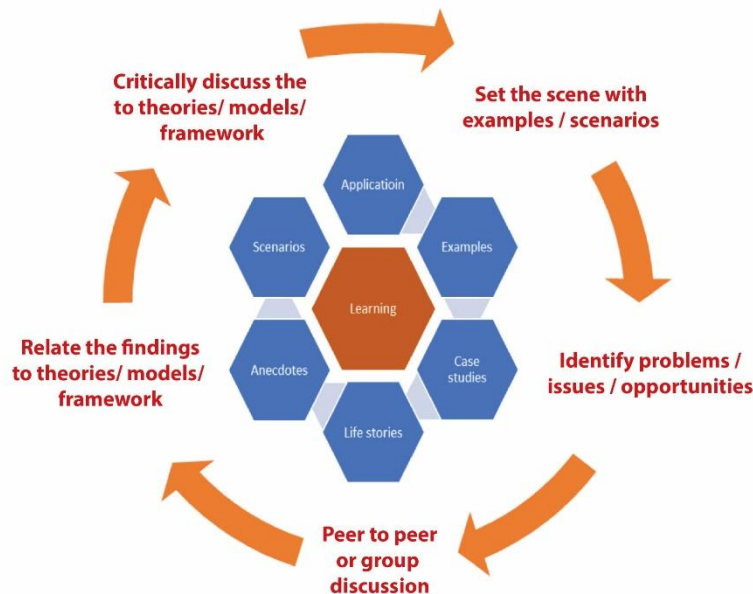
The image below illustrates LCC's Active Learning Framework, structured around a hexagonal core that represents key learning components. At the centre is "Learning", surrounded by six interconnected elements: Application, Examples, Case Studies, Life Stories, Anecdotes, and Scenarios. These components form the foundation of an applied, experiential learning approach. The framework visually emphasises the integration of diverse learning methods to enhance understanding and engagement.

Encircling the hexagonal structure is a cyclical learning process, depicted through a series of arrows guiding learners through key stages. The process begins by setting the scene with

examples and scenarios, followed by identifying problems, issues, or opportunities. It then progresses to peer-to-peer or group discussion, leading to the application of findings within theoretical models or frameworks. Finally, learners are encouraged to critically discuss and evaluate theories, models, or frameworks to reinforce deeper understanding.



LCC'S ACTIVE LEARNING FRAMEWORK



Author: Nazim Uddin

The Active Learning Framework, as illustrated by LCC's hexagonal model, offers a robust approach to adult education by integrating diverse, experiential learning methods. At its core is "Learning", surrounded by Application, Examples, Case Studies, Life Stories, Anecdotes, and Scenarios—elements that resonate with the principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1980) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). By engaging adult learners through real-life contexts, this framework leverages their rich prior experiences, making learning both relevant and immediately applicable. This structured approach, underpinned by theoretical models such as Knowles' (1980) andragogy and Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, ensures that learners engage with academic material in a meaningful, relevant, and applicable manner. By aligning theoretical knowledge with real-world experiences, ALF enables educators to create an inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environment. This alignment prepares students not only for academic success but also for professional advancement, ensuring that their education is both practical and transformative.

In conclusion, the ALF model provides a robust framework for adult learners, facilitating the integration of theory with practice, fostering critical inquiry, and creating an inclusive, student-centred environment that is adaptive to the diverse needs of mature students. The framework effectively supports adult learning by promoting engagement through varied, experiential methods that honour individual experiences and cultural narratives. Nonetheless, its success

depends on thoughtful implementation and appropriate scaffolding to mitigate potential drawbacks, ensuring that the framework remains both inclusive and effective.

The Role of ALF in Enhancing Student Engagement, Learning, Retention, and Academic Performance

The Active Learning Framework (ALF) has gained prominence as a pedagogical approach designed to enhance student engagement, learning, retention, and academic performance, particularly for adult learners who draw upon their diverse life experiences and professional expertise. By shifting the learning paradigm from passive receipt of information to active participation and reflective practice, ALF enables students to become co-creators of their learning experience.

ALF's participatory approach is instrumental in fostering deeper learning, improving retention, and ultimately enhancing academic performance. However, despite the substantial advantages of the Active Learning Framework (ALF), notable limitations warrant critical consideration. Active learning frameworks may inadvertently increase cognitive load if the diversity of methods is not sufficiently scaffolded (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006). Moreover, a heavy reliance on peer-to-peer interaction might disadvantage those less comfortable with collaborative settings or who prefer structured guidance, and some studies suggest that while active learning can boost engagement, its impact on long-term retention does not always surpass that of traditional methods (Mayer, 2009).

Using ALF in cohort-based classes can also be potentially impractical, given that traditional higher education often follows rigid, standardised curricula that may not address the unique knowledge gaps, career transitions, or upskilling needs of mature learners. While active learning methodologies are widely recognised for engaging students, there remains limited research on their adaptability within a cohort-based, career-integrated framework that accommodates personalised learning pathways. Addressing this gap, current research explores how a cohort-based active learning framework can be designed to provide structured yet flexible opportunities, enabling mature students to tailor their education to individual career aspirations while combining the benefits of collaborative, peer-driven learning with personalised, career-oriented tracks.

A central feature of ALF's effectiveness in promoting student engagement is its emphasis on the practical application of theoretical knowledge. Uddin (2022) underscores that adult learners tend to thrive when academic content is directly aligned with their personal and professional experiences. By integrating real-world case studies, problem-based learning (PBL), and industry simulations, ALF contextualises theoretical concepts, making them more accessible and relevant to students' lived realities. This alignment not only increases students' intrinsic motivation but also fosters greater engagement with the material. However, this emphasis on relevance may not universally appeal to all learners. For some students, particularly those with limited prior practical experience or those from diverse educational backgrounds, the application of theoretical knowledge to real-world cases might prove challenging. The assumption that all adult learners possess the requisite experience to engage meaningfully with complex case studies and industry simulations warrants further examination. Future research could investigate the varying levels of prior knowledge and experience across diverse learner populations to better tailor ALF methodologies to different student profiles.

In addition to enhancing engagement, ALF significantly improves learning outcomes through deeper cognitive processing. Drawing upon Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, ALF promotes a cyclical learning process of experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and experimentation. This iterative process allows students to internalise theoretical concepts by actively applying them to real-world scenarios, reflecting on their experiences, and refining their understanding. While the active participation promoted by ALF undoubtedly deepens cognitive engagement, it remains crucial to consider the potential cognitive overload that some students may face. The iterative nature of the ALF cycle could be overwhelming for learners with less developed cognitive or metacognitive skills, thereby hindering their ability to meaningfully reflect on their experiences. Research exploring cognitive load and the optimal pacing of ALF cycles for diverse learners could inform better instructional design and alleviate potential barriers to effective learning.

The role of ALF in improving student retention is particularly notable, especially for adult learners who may have faced educational disruptions earlier in life. Research supports the notion that students are more likely to persist when they perceive their education as relevant and applicable to their lives (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). By embedding practical methods such as case studies and peer discussions, ALF enhances the perceived relevance of the learning experience, thus fostering greater retention. However, while ALF effectively promotes engagement, there are inherent challenges in ensuring that all students feel equally connected to the learning material. In particular, learners from diverse backgrounds or those encountering external life stresses may struggle to see the immediate relevance of the content. The potential for disengagement due to external factors warrants further exploration. Future research could investigate the intersection of personal circumstances, learning motivation, and retention within the context of ALF.

Furthermore, ALF contributes to academic performance by creating a student-centred learning environment that encourages self-directed learning, reflective inquiry, and collaborative problem-solving. Knowles' (1980) andragogical model aligns with the principles of ALF, particularly in fostering self-directed learning. By providing frameworks that encourage critical reflection and self-assessment, ALF empowers students to take responsibility for their learning. However, while ALF is designed to facilitate deep learning, its reliance on self-direction may pose challenges for students who lack strong self-regulation skills or who are accustomed to more traditional forms of instruction. The effectiveness of ALF in fostering academic performance could be compromised for these students, particularly if sufficient scaffolding and support are not provided. Further research could explore the role of scaffolding mechanisms within ALF and how these can be optimally designed to support students at varying levels of self-regulation and autonomy.

Additionally, ALF fosters the development of essential transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork. These competencies are vital not only for academic success but also for professional advancement. By incorporating formative assessments, peer evaluations, and reflective exercises, ALF encourages continuous feedback, which in turn supports a growth mindset. However, while formative assessments and peer feedback are effective tools, their impact on academic performance is contingent upon the quality of the feedback process. Inconsistent or poorly executed peer evaluations can undermine the effectiveness of ALF in improving academic outcomes. Research could investigate the effectiveness of peer feedback within ALF, focusing on the quality and impact of such evaluations, as well as the training required to maximise their value.

In conclusion, the Active Learning Framework (ALF) significantly enhances student engagement, learning, retention, and academic performance by fostering an inclusive and dynamic learning environment. By integrating real-world applications, collaborative learning, and reflective practice, ALF creates a context in which students are actively engaged in their educational journey. However, while the framework offers substantial benefits, critical attention must be paid to the potential challenges faced by diverse student populations, particularly with regard to cognitive load, self-regulation, and the perceived relevance of content. Further research is needed to explore how ALF can be adapted and optimised for different learner profiles, as well as to examine the impact of scaffolding and feedback mechanisms in supporting student success. Ultimately, ALF represents a transformative pedagogical approach, yet its full potential can only be realised through continued exploration and refinement, tailored to meet the evolving needs of learners in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

Prospects for the Implementation of ALF at LCC

The implementation of the ALF holds promising potential for improving the academic outcomes of Widening Access Mature Students (WAMS). By integrating elements of problem-based learning (PBL), personalised instruction, and collaborative teaching, LCC could enhance student engagement, retention, and performance. The framework, informed by theories such as Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle and Dewey's (1938) emphasis on real-world experiences, aligns with existing pedagogical models that suggest active learning fosters deeper cognitive engagement. However, while the theoretical underpinnings are sound, the practical application of ALF may encounter challenges, particularly in adapting to the needs of a diverse student population that may be resistant to active learning strategies. A key concern is the potential mismatch between the pedagogical intent of ALF and the readiness of both adult educators and students to embrace this shift, which could undermine its effectiveness.

One of the primary strengths of ALF lies in its focus on personalisation and collaboration, key components that are particularly beneficial for mature students who bring life and/or professional experience to their studies. By fostering a learning environment where students can relate academic content to their real-world experiences, ALF has the potential to significantly improve knowledge retention and practical application of theoretical concepts. Yet, the effectiveness of such a framework relies heavily on substantial institutional resources, both in terms of academic staff development and the creation of appropriate technological and teaching infrastructure. Research suggests that adult educators may require considerable training to effectively deliver active learning strategies, and without adequate investment in professional development, the framework's success could be limited (Uddin, 2023). Furthermore, the institutional commitment required to support these initiatives may strain resources.

Moreover, while ALF is likely to improve student engagement and academic outcomes, challenges remain in its implementation, particularly concerning student adaptation. Mature students, who may be more accustomed to passive learning methods, could struggle with the transition to a more active, problem-centred approach. This resistance may be compounded by other external barriers such as work commitments or family responsibilities, which further complicate the learning process. The success of ALF hinges not only on the students' willingness to engage but also on the institution's ability to provide appropriate support structures and also the preparedness of adult educators. Many educators may lack the necessary vocational or industry experience to effectively integrate real-world scenarios into

their teaching, which is crucial for active learning. Additionally, the time constraints faced by educators—often balancing heavy teaching loads with research, and personal responsibilities—may limit their ability to create the tailored, reflective learning environments that ALF requires. Furthermore, while anecdotes or life stories from students can enhance learning by offering relatable insights, they are time-consuming and risk losing the attention of a significant portion of the class. Such challenges, combined with the need for extensive individualised support for mature students, complicate the successful implementation of ALF, particularly in large or resource-constrained institutions.

The framework's emphasis on reflective practice and personalised learning demands considerable resources to cater to the individual needs of students, which may not always be feasible in practice, particularly in large cohorts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Active Learning Framework (ALF) offers a transformative and progressive approach to enhancing the academic experiences and outcomes of Widening Access Mature Students (WAMS) at London Churchill College (LCC). Grounded in contemporary learning theories, such as Kolb's experiential learning cycle, Mezirow's transformative learning theory, and Knowles' principles of adult learning, ALF promotes a dynamic and engaging educational environment. The framework's emphasis on interactive learning, real-world application, and continuous formative assessments aligns with best practices for adult learners, offering the potential to improve student engagement, retention, and academic performance.

However, while the theoretical underpinnings of ALF are well-supported by research, successful implementation at LCC requires careful attention to practical challenges. These include faculty readiness, resource allocation, and the adaptability of students accustomed to more traditional, passive learning methods. The ability of educators to integrate real-world scenarios, provide personalised support, and effectively manage the time-intensive demands of active learning will be crucial in determining the framework's success. Additionally, as mature students may face unique barriers such as work commitments and family responsibilities, the college must ensure that ALF is supported by appropriate structures and resources to address these challenges.

The findings of this study provide a robust theoretical justification for ALF's integration into higher education, particularly for adult learners, and highlight the importance of developing personalised pedagogical approaches that cater to the diverse needs of WAMS.

As ALF aims to foster lifelong learning, critical thinking, and professional preparedness, it represents a key opportunity for institutions like LCC to better equip WAMS with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in both academic and professional spheres. Future research on the ALF could utilise a mixed-methods exploratory sequential with a quasi-experimental design to rigorously evaluate its impact by comparing learning outcomes before and after ALF exposure with those obtained through traditional instruction. This approach would allow researchers to assess ALF's real-world effectiveness by providing a controlled comparison between the two groups.

Despite its promising potential, future research should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of ALF, particularly regarding its influence on student career trajectories and retention rates. Longitudinal studies will provide invaluable insights into the sustainability of ALF and its broader implications for institutional success. Additionally, further investigations into optimising

resource allocation, enhancing faculty development, and refining active learning methodologies will ensure that ALF can be effectively implemented across diverse educational contexts. As higher education continues to evolve, frameworks like ALF will play an increasingly vital role in shaping inclusive and effective learning environments that prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century.

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The Lasting Lessons of Ramadan: Spiritual Growth and Reflection

Dr Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak



Ramadhan, the obligatory fasting month for Muslims, falls in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Since the Islamic calendar is shorter by eleven days compared to the Gregorian calendar, the sacred month of Ramadhan moves around the Gregorian calendar, meaning it shifts each year.

As a result, Ramadhan can appear at different times of the year—sometimes during winter or summer in Western countries, and in tropical regions, it may fall during the rainy or dry seasons.

For Muslims, Ramadhan is a blessed month that revives their faith and spirit in Islam. Long before the crescent of Ramadhan is sighted, Muslims worldwide make various preparations to reap the blessings it brings.

Compared to the past, the knowledge and benefits of Ramadhan are now widely known, even among people of other faiths. Thanks to the internet and social media, Ramadhan has been shared and promoted within the global community.

The practice of Ramadhan by Muslims in the West has inspired many non-Muslims to experience fasting in the same way. Going through the experience of fasting during Ramadhan has even led some non-Muslims to embrace Islam.

This article serves as a reflection and reminder of the valuable lessons learned during

Ramadhan. Below are some of the ways in which Muslims have revived their commitment and spirit toward their religion:

Five Daily Prayers and Efficient Time Management

According to the Seerah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) became extra vigilant and efficient in managing his prayer times during Ramadhan. Muslims who follow in the footsteps of the Prophet strive to emulate him as much as possible to be closer to his practices.

Since Muslims spend less time on meals during Ramadhan, they can focus more on their prayers and be punctual. It is during Ramadhan that mosques and prayer halls worldwide are usually filled with worshippers. In addition to performing prayers on time, Ramadhan also teaches Muslims about the importance of time management.

The Study of the Qur'an

Muslims are told in the Qur'an and Seerah that the first revelation of the Qur'an was brought to the Prophet (PBUH) by the archangel Jibrail (A.S.) in the month of Ramadhan. During this fasting month, millions of Muslims around the globe attempt to read the entire 114 chapters of the Qur'an.

Some complete it once within the thirty days, while others, who have more time, may do so multiple times. This effort is made not only to gain virtue but also to enlighten their hearts with knowledge and immerse themselves in the spiritual light that emanates from the Qur'an. One can observe that during Ramadhan, Muslims dedicate more time before and after prayers in mosques and homes to reading the final message sent by God as guidance for humanity.

Charity and the Spirit of Giving

In Islam, charity, which is one of the five pillars of the religion, is an act of helping the poor, needy, and underprivileged. As a praiseworthy act, charity is carried out to alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate. According to the Seerah, the Prophet (PBUH) became more charitable during Ramadhan than at any other time.

Following his example, Muslims also become most charitable during Ramadhan. Well-to-do individuals and Muslim organizations distribute dates and other food items as acts of charity, hoping to gain virtue and the pleasure of God Almighty. Mosques worldwide prepare free Iftar and Suhoor meals, inviting both Muslims and non-Muslims, especially those in need.

In Islam, terms such as Zakah, Sadaqah, Infaq, and Hadiah emphasize the sense of togetherness that individual Muslims have with the rest of humanity. All forms of charity in Islam counter financial oppression and instill the philosophy of loving, caring, and sharing.

Mindful Eating and Avoiding Waste

Ideally, during Ramadhan, Muslims are encouraged to practice mindful eating and avoid waste in all forms. Overconsuming food during Iftar and Suhoor is discouraged in Islam. Spending excessively on meals and overeating are not praiseworthy acts. The Qur'an condemns extravagance and gluttony.

Since the vast majority of Muslims eat moderately and spend wisely, they not only emerge healthier at the end of Ramadhan but also feel spiritually rejuvenated. The month-long training they undergo teaches them valuable lessons on maintaining a healthier diet and practicing self-discipline.

Spiritual Strength and Inner Peace

The fasting and spiritual training undergone by Muslims during Ramadhan refine their character and personality. It is true that while fasting, the body may feel weak, but what is not widely known in secular perspectives is that during fasting, one becomes spiritually strong and intellectually sharp. Such a concept is best understood by those who believe in God and spirituality.

According to Muslim scholars, fasting during Ramadhan reconnects a person with their primordial nature. The rituals observed during fasting restore an individual's natural state as created by God. In other words, fasting brings Muslims back to their true human essence.

Many good qualities of a person may be overlooked throughout the year due to overindulgence in worldly affairs, but Ramadhan provides an opportunity to return to the human qualities in which God has created them. Unlike the belief in 'Original Sin,' Islamic teachings emphasize that human beings are born pure and only become corrupt due to external influences, such as improper education or an environment that does not nurture moral and spiritual development.

Take-Home Message

From the above discussion, we have learned that the blessed month of Ramadhan has many spiritual and social benefits. Ramadhan restores human qualities such as goodness, compassion, love, care, and generosity.

The fasting month, which comes like a 'Madrasah' (school) every year, refines one's character and strengthens the bond with the Creator. Ramadhan is not only a month of spiritual cleansing but also an opportunity to strengthen one's connection with humanity. As Muslims, we should not forget the valuable lessons learned during Ramadhan and strive to sustain them throughout the next eleven months of the year.

JCD&MS Guidelines for Contributors

Manuscripts must be submitted in a single Microsoft Word file. Files submitted in other text versions, for example, PDF or Apple, will be returned to the contributor for resubmission in the required application. All submissions must be emailed to journal@lcc.ac.uk and t.anderson-jaquest@lcc.ac.uk within the submission deadline.

Essential requirements for all submissions.

A Front Sheet preceding the submission providing the following information:

- Designated submission category: examples, academic articles; working papers, student submission
- The full title of the submission
- The full names of all authors (including their affiliations and email addresses),
- A Profile provided for each author (circa 200-300 words)
- Word count [excluding the abstract, reference lists, tables, and figures]

An Abstract

Abstracts are required for all submissions, except Editorials, For Debate Articles, Commentaries, Letters and Book Reviews (discussed further in the Guidelines).

Contributions without abstracts will be returned to the author for re-submission. Abstracts must be separated from the main text and should contain between 200 and 500 words. Text must be clearly stated and understandable to readers unfamiliar with the subject area. Formatting and presentation requirements are set out on page two.

Abstracts will vary according to the nature of the research undertaken, but their purpose is to provide the reader with an overview of the particular research project. In general, Abstracts should set the context, indicate the key findings and render main conclusions. References (citations), numbers, abbreviations, acronyms or measurements should be avoided, except where numerical information is essential to the conclusions rendered. Any figures mentioned in an abstract must match exactly with those given in the main contribution.

Keywords

A list of up to eight keywords should be added underneath the Abstract to identify the contents of the paper.

Section one: Formatting and Presentation Requirements.

JCD&MS will be published on-line in single column format. Therefore, all contributors are asked to observe the simple guidelines described below and illustrated in the examples provided.

Headings and Subheadings.

- Title (Arial, 12 point, bold. Capitalise 1st letters of Important words.
- Authors 12-point font, normal.
- Headings and sub-headings: Arial 11-point, Bold, with double 1.15 line spacing

Main body of text.

- Microsoft WORD 2000 or higher [Preferable using docx suffix) The version selected must be fully PC compatible.
- Margins (normal): 2.54 top and bottom and left and right.
- Alignment: justified.
- Font: Arial 11-point (normal), with 1.15 line spacing
- Paragraphs: left margin alignment: 1.15 line spacing between paragraphs. Long quotes, if any, must be indented, written in Arial 9 point, line space 1.15. Note: paraphrasing long quotes is preferred.
- Citations in Text. References to the views of others must be indicated, using the Harvard Reference System. Authors using EndNote will be required to resubmit their contributions.

Reference List, Harvard Referencing System required.

- Authors using EndNote will be required to resubmit their contributions.
- Entry by Author, alphabetical Order, Last name or family name first
- Date of publication enclosed in brackets Ex: Smith, Alan (2023)
- Titles of articles in journals enclosed in single quotation marks, with journal titles in italics.

- Titles of books in italics
- Titles of individual chapters published as part of an edited collection in plain text
- Individual Entries – Arial 10, Text - single spaced
- 1.15 space between entries.

Section two: options for submission

A list of categories most frequently used to submit contributions for publication is set out below, followed by a brief description of each option. If contributors are interested in using an alternative, they should contact the Principal Editor prior to submission. Details about each category are set out below.

- Academic Articles
- Research Reports
- Literature Reviews
- Working Papers: new section
- Student Contributions: new section
- Letters
- Monographs
- For Debate Articles
- Commentaries
- Editorials
- Book Reviews

Academic Articles (the most common category for submission)

Subject focus: Choice is wide-ranging: for example, Contemporary Developments (global, national, regional or local); Business and Management; Entrepreneurship; Hospitality Management; Healthcare; Education, including Teaching and Learning.

Indicative structure: Introduction (circa 500 words). The main body of text should include a concise, focused description of the methodology adopted and the research findings. Discussion, analyses of results and conclusions are required.

Indicative Word count: 3,000 to 6,000 words but can be increased to 10,000 words, depending on the subject and the depth and scope of coverage. Word count excludes abstracts, tables and reference lists.

Presentation suggestions: Subheadings should be concise and used only when needed. All Figures and Tables should be inserted in the main body text and the source cited immediately below each table. Legends should be provided in cases where symbols or data require further clarification.

Referencing: 12 – 50 references. Aside from older sources deemed essential to the subject (classics, for example), references should include the most recent relevant literature available and, where appropriate, not be restricted to a single research group, region or country.

Research Reports

Indicative structure: studies may be qualitative or quantitative and could involve experimental or non-experimental designs.

Indicative word count: around 6,000 words excluding abstracts, tables and references, but length may vary depending upon the complexity of the report and details relating to the findings.

Authors submitting research reports are expected to follow the same guidelines set for Academic Articles in respect of abstracts, introductions, sub-headings, the presentation of figures and tables and referencing.

Literature Reviews

Subject focus: choice is wide-ranging.

Indicative structure: will vary but will be designed to draw together a body of literature to reach one or more major conclusions, with a particular research objective in mind. Submissions must provide descriptions of the search strategy adopted and explain the selection criteria for the articles selected.

Indicative word count: around 5000 words, but could be longer or shorter depending upon the complexity of the research objectives.

Authors submitting research reports are expected to follow the same guidelines set for Academic Articles in respect of abstracts, introductions, sub-headings, the presentation of figures and tables and referencing.

Working papers

The section focused on Working Papers will widen opportunities for all contributors to share research ideas and interest with other colleagues during the formative stage of development, without going through the formal process of peer review, normally required for publishing completed academic articles in *JCD&MS*. Although it is most likely that Working Papers will eventually be transformed into completed articles, the working paper format will allow individuals the flexibility of changing directions or abandoning projects in the earlier stages of development. To submit a Working Paper:

Indicate clearly that your submission is a working paper. Failure to do so, means that it will be considered as an academic paper, subject to peer review. Provide a brief abstract: length around 150-200 words.

Produce a well-written paper: initial suggestion: 1500 – 2000 words, but length can vary upward or downward, depending upon scope and your own inclinations.

Follow the same guidelines set out for formatting and presentation that apply to all submission categories. Failure to do so, means that the Working Paper will be returned, and the author will be requested to resubmit using the required formatting guidelines.

Identify your research question and very briefly indicate what methods you intend to use to address the topic.

Discuss and cite several references (at least 5-10) to show that you've already carried out some research relating specifically to your ideas and have taken into account others' views on the subject.

Briefly describe/discuss your findings and initial opinions to date.

Indicate future plans, if any, for developing the subject further.

Provide a list of sources you've consulted.

Student Projects.

A new section has been created to accommodate student contributions. This will provide LCC students, in particular, with an opportunity to publish their final year projects or other significant academic papers completed in the final year of their programmes.

Student contributions assessed at distinction or merit will be selected for publication. To facilitate their efforts, students will receive guidance from LCC's Head of Programmes and Academic Management (HoPAM) and/or the postholder's designated representative, who will serve as a mentor throughout the process.

Student submissions are to follow the formatting guidelines set out above applicable to all contributors.

Final Projects produced for Pearson HND awards, must be submitted in full and in accordance with Pearson guidelines and requirements, including the designated word count.

Submissions should be clearly worded and well-written.

The Principal Editor will review and approve all student submissions for publication.

Letters

Subject focus: choice is wide ranging.

Indicative content: may express opinions about articles previously published in the Journal, report on a development, or comment on some issue of potential interest to readers. Letters do not normally include new findings unless such information extends the finding of a paper previously published in *JCD&MS*. If a letter contains comments upon a paper already published in the Journal, then this should be cited at the beginning of the letter. The author of the paper cited will be given the right to reply.

Indicative word count: 60-150 words and up to 20 references.

Review status: The Principal Editor will review and approve all letters submitted prior to publication.

Monographs

Subject focus: wide ranging.

Indicative content: a major piece of substantive writing and in-depth analyses and syntheses that cannot be expressed within the normal word length limits set for articles. Must provide robust theoretical underpinnings to support the primary thesis. May include extensive systematic reviews of major topics or investigate critically a series of linked studies addressing a common research question.

Indicative wordcount: up to 14,000 words, excluding titles, abstracts, tables, figures and reference lists.

Additional information: authors interested in submitting monographs are advised to contact the Principal Editor in the first instance, as only monographs will be accepted that align with the *JCD&MS* remit. Authors wishing to submit monographs for consideration should submit in the usual way, but should add a note on their cover page explaining that they would like the submission to be treated as a monograph.

Monographs should follow guidelines described for academic articles in respect of abstracts, introductions, sub-headings, the presentation of figures and tables and referencing.

‘For Debate’ articles

Subject focus: wide ranging. ‘For debate’ articles are opinion pieces, synthesising research in a way that adds new insights. Focus should be placed on making one or two key points that reflect opinion rather than fact. The point[s] will normally challenge existing thinking, raise an issue that has been neglected, take an issue forward that is currently being considered, or reinforce one side of a debate that is currently underway.

Indicative structure: varied, but should be written in a lively and engaging style.

Indicative word count: around 3500 words.

Additional information: Interested parties may submit commentaries about ‘for debate’ articles in subsequent issues. If commentaries are accepted for publication, then the author of the ‘For Debate’ article will be given the opportunity to respond to any commentaries made.

Commentaries

Description: A commentary should add a further perspective or point of view to a particularly important item published in *JCD&MS*. Rather than being a review of the article, authors should use the findings as a stepping stone to make one or two points of wider relevance to the field.

Indicative content: There is no abstract, but commentaries should begin with a one or two sentence summary setting out the main points.

Indicative word count: 500-1000 words, with up to 20 references.

Additional information: when commenting upon an item published previously in the Journal, a direct reference to the title and the author should be included at the beginning of the commentary and cited in the reference list.

Editorials

Description: Editorials appear at the start of every issue of *JCD&MS*. They are significant pieces of academic writing that differ substantially from academic articles, reports or reviews. Their purpose is to stimulate debate, identify issues and push ideas forward.

Indicative content: An editorial should make one or two key points that are more in the way of opinion rather than fact. The point[s] will normally challenge existing thinking, raise an issue that has been neglected, take a current issue forward, or reinforce one side of a current debate. Editorials should be cautiously optimistic but provocative in approach. As is the case with ‘For debate’ articles, the focus is most commonly placed on matters of policy, treatment, assessment/diagnosis, theory or methodology.

Indicative structure: Varied. There is no abstract, but editorials should begin with a statement of one or two sentences setting out the key points to be made in the work. They should be written in a lively and engaging style with the point[s] very clearly stated and take international perspectives into account.

Indicative word count: around 1500 words and contain no more than 20 references.

Book Reviews

Description: Book reviews should place the book in the context of other literature deemed to be relevant in the field, rather than just summarising the content.

Indicative content: Books selected for review should be selected on the basis of their general relevance to areas normally covered in the Journal.

Indicative wordcount: around 1,000 words and contain no more than about 10 references..

Additional information: Authors should endeavour to make them a 'good read and should identify what is good and useful in their evaluations. In cases where a negative appraisal of the book must be made, then the critique should be rendered in a professional manner.

Section three: Important information regarding submissions

English-language editing

Authors are expected to apply computerised spelling and grammar checks to their work prior to submission. If English is not the first language, then contributors are advised to have their manuscripts reviewed by an individual highly skilled in written English. The Principal Editor will only provide nominal proofreading assistance. If the meaning of the English text is not clear, then the manuscript will be returned to the contributor for resubmission.

Defamatory statements

Authors must refrain from making defamatory statements about specific individuals or organisations, or cultural practices, whether or not they believe such statements are justified.

Permission to reprint source material

If a paper uses all or parts of previously published material, it is the author's responsibility to obtain permission from the copyright holder and, if requested, to obtain permission in writing and provide copies to the Principal Editor.

Histograms

Do not include histograms with three-dimensional blocks or shading as this can make interpretation difficult.

Colour illustrations

Authors are expected to pay the full cost for reproducing colour artwork in hard copy publications. Therefore, if there is colour artwork in the manuscript when it is accepted for publication, then the Principal Editor of JCD&MS will require authors to defray such costs before the paper can be published in hard copy.

Electronic figures for publication

Please contact the Principal Editor of *JCD&MS* for instructions regarding any high-quality images that are included in the submission.

Supporting information

Additional material comprised of lengthy appendices [e.g. extensive reference lists or mathematical formulae/calculations], deemed to be relevant to a particular submission may be considered for publication in the on-line version, but it is unlikely to be included in a print edition of the Journal, due to length.

Non-compliance with requirements

A manuscript that does not comply with journal requirements will be returned to the author.

Ethical Principles

JCD&MS supports ethical principles. As such, when submitting papers online, authors may be asked to state that:

they have been personally and actively involved in substantive work leading to the report and will hold themselves jointly and individually responsible for its content;

All relevant ethical safeguards have been met in relation to patient or subject protection, or animal experimentation, including, in the case of all clinical and experimental studies review by an appropriate ethical review committee and evidence of written informed patient consent.

Papers will be returned that contain sexist, racist or other non-acceptable language.

Declarations of interest

Any declarations of conflicts of interest should appear after the list of authors and addresses. Declarations of interest do not indicate wrongdoing, but they must be declared in the interests of full transparency. For example, any contractual constraints on publishing imposed by an organisation or private party that has funded the research must be disclosed. The time window for declaring such financial links is normally within three years of the date of article submission.

If an undeclared conflict of interest comes to light, the Principal Editor reserves the right to withdraw the paper from the JCD&MS production process.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism involves using someone else's work without appropriate attribution. If sections of text numbering more than 10 words have been copied verbatim, they must be put in quotation marks and a full citation given. Plagiarism is treated as serious professional misconduct, and any evidence of plagiarism will result in the withdrawal of the submission for further consideration.

The Review Process

Each manuscript is screened initially by the Principal Editor. Those deemed to be inappropriate for publication in JCD&MS will be declined without going to full review. In those cases, authors will receive an explanation as to why the manuscript has been declined.

In addition, the Principal Editor will also return manuscripts to contributors that require substantial re-writing, because the text is unclear, the material has been poorly organised, or substantial errors in written English exist that could have been remedied had the contributors proofread their own material and conducted spelling and/or grammar checks. The initial screening process may take up to three to four weeks. Contributors who are asked to re-submit work will be given extra time to do so, but the duration will be limited.

Manuscripts, excluding Working Papers, Student Submissions, letters, commentaries, editorials, and certain smaller submissions that pass this stage, will be independently reviewed prior to selection for publication. In the majority of cases, reviewers will be JCD&MS Editorial Panel members. The Principal Editor will provide feedback to contributors.

If authors are invited to revise and resubmit a manuscript, then they should submit the revised version by the due date set by the Principal Editor in order to meet issue publication deadlines. An extension may be granted in unusual circumstances. A decision on the revised version may be taken by the Principal Editor or she/he may consult an Editorial Panel member or put the revision through another full review process, depending on the nature and extent of the revisions requested. A decision on the revised version should normally take less time than the original review process.

Evaluation Criteria

Work submitted for publication in the JCD&MS is evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Degree to which the contribution fits within the remit of JCD&MS;
- Appropriateness of the analysis;
- Evidence of original thinking, including new ideas and insights;
- Significance of the theoretical and methodological contributions, if applicable;
- Appropriateness of the literature review, if applicable;
- Implications for practitioners, academicians and scholars;
- Quality of the discussion and interpretation of the results;
- Organisational structure;
- Coherence and clarity of text;

- Professional standard of writing (grammar, punctuation and spelling);
- Appropriate use of the Harvard referencing system.

Reviewers' Disclosure

Reviewers have the option of disclosing their identity to the authors by adding their name to the bottom of their review comments.

Appeals

Requests for appeal are normally considered only in cases where authors make the case that one or more Reviewers have clearly made a substantive mistake. They are unlikely to be considered in cases where opinions differ about the importance of the findings nor in situations where the author believes that issues initially identified by the reviewers can be resolved by providing a revised version, without going through the formal resubmission process.

It is important to bear in mind that the comments received by authors are primarily intended to help authors make revisions, either for publication in JCD&MS or submissions elsewhere. Occasionally, the decision not to publish an article will be made on grounds of priority, given the pressure on space within a particular issue of the Journal. In those cases, individuals will be informed of opportunities available to resubmit their work at a later date.

Proof-reading and Corrections

Authors are responsible for all statements made in their contributions. Therefore, it is essential that contributors ensure their work has been carefully proof-read and that spelling and grammar checks have been completed prior to submission. The JCD&MS does not accept responsibility for any statement or textual errors appearing in the published work that the author has failed to correct prior to final submission.

Copyright

Authors have permission to publish their own contributions in other sources, providing the Principal Editor is informed. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce copyright material from other sources appearing in their submissions to JCD&MS, in cases where this is required.



Dr Tommie Anderson-Jaquest, PhD (LSE, International Relations, IR), Doctor of Music (ABD, Pi Kappa Lambda); MA (IR-Dist); MA (Soc); M Mus (Music); Diploma (IR, Dist); B Mus (Music-Hons), FHEA, FISM, CertsEd (Tertiary)

Principal Editor, JCD&MS, London Churchill College

12 September 2025

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