

# Assessment insights from the Margins: Garnering the Views of Learners with Disabilities Through Lesson Study

Gareth Dart and Dr Seán Bracken, University of Worcester &  
Professor Jáima Pinheiro de Olivera, Universidade Federal de Minas Geras

Presentation given at Advance HE's virtual

**Assessment and Feedback Symposium 2020: Assessment and feedback  
in the pandemic era: A time for learning and inclusion**

28 October 2020.

# Overview

- Conceptual framework
- Methodology, research actors and data analysis
- Findings and insights from learning voice
- Emergence of a new concept to inform future work
- Application of findings to the COVID-19 era
- References.

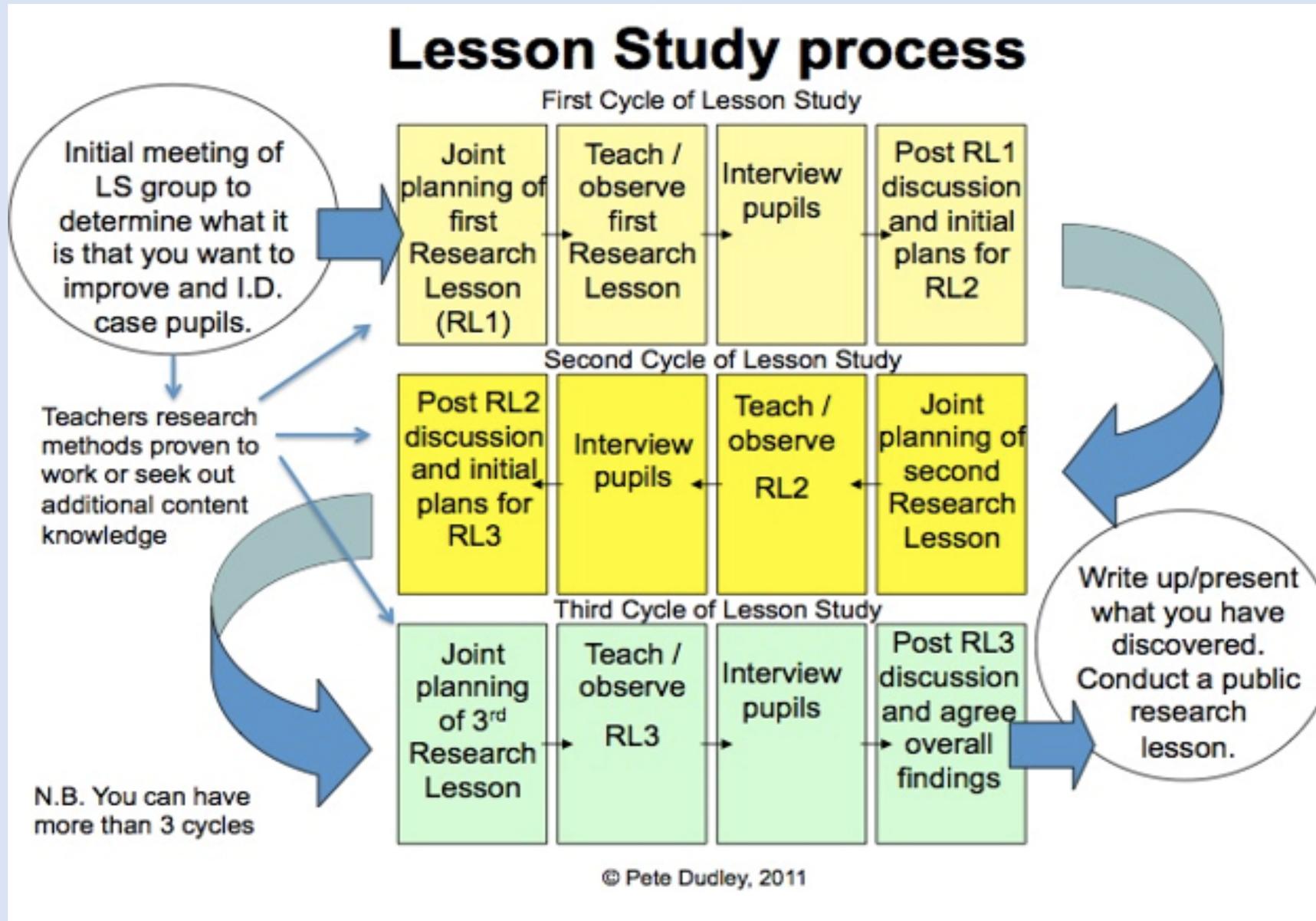
# Conceptual Framework(s)

- Informed by:

- Universal Design & Universal Design for Learning and its interface with assessment (Bracken and Novak, 2019)
- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (Hanesworth, Bracken and Elkington, 2018)
- Socially just approaches to assessment development (McArthur, 2020 ; 2018)

A golden thread? The centrality of learner voice and experience (Seale, 2015; 2016)

# Research Methodology: [Lesson Study](#) (Wood, and Cajkler, 2018)



# Research Actors

<b>Students at Case University Brazil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1 Undergraduate Course</b></li><li>• <b>4 Undergraduate students</b></li><li>• <b>Diversity (Socio-economic, linguistic disability)</b></li></ul>
<b>Researchers at Case University Brazil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>3 Academics - Novice and experienced</b></li></ul>
<b>Students at Case University, UK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>2 Undergraduate Courses</b></li><li>• <b>6 Focus Students</b></li><li>• <b>Diversity ('1st Gen', BAME, Disability).</b></li></ul>
<b>Researchers at Case University, UK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>3 Academics - Novice &amp; Experienced</b></li><li>• <b>1 from Library and Information Services</b></li><li>• <b>1 from Student Support Services</b></li></ul>

# Regarding this presentation

- Research setting – three consecutive sessions of a Level 5 Research Methods module for EDST/SEND students, towards the end of semester one.

<b>Session one</b>	Quick Kahoot quiz on module content to date / Analysis of responses to formative assessment activities / Introduction to the summative assignment / Input from library staff on searching for government policy and associated research.
<b>Session two</b>	Quick quiz on previous week's session / Presentation on the move academisation: what is the policy; what influenced the policy; what does research say about its impact? / Discussion on how the presentation might help the students think about their own assignment response.
<b>Session three</b>	Writing workshop – students bring their draft ideas to the session / staff discuss and comment on ideas and writing / librarian in support.

- Research actors –

3 students who self-identified for the research: Catrina, Callum, Linda (anonymised). (Characteristics include: mature student / single parent / identified disability (all) / '1<sup>st</sup> gen' / SES / school refuser / 2 had been to other universities and dropped out)

4 members of staff: Gareth (module lead), Sean (research lead), Sarah (Head of ILS), Patrick (Student Services, Disability Support).

# Data generated through

- One planning meeting between all staff (4)
- 3 rounds of post-lecture interviews /discussions with students
- 3 rounds of post-lecture review and planning discussions between staff

All recorded and transcribed.

- in-session observation notes from observers.

## Data analysed through

- Thematic analysis (reading and re-reading the transcripts)
- The multiple rounds of LS allowed for an element of constant comparative analysis
- Individually done by GD / SB, then shared.

# Findings

Initially...

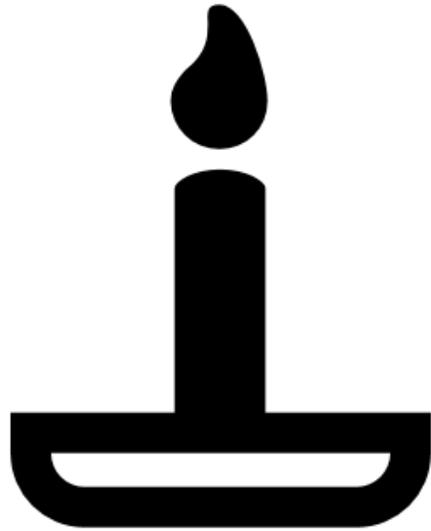
- Nothing we wouldn't have expected.....
- And actually, very difficult to identify any unifying themes (after all, only three research participants). They all had different approaches / needs / preferences etc.

Less of



more of a

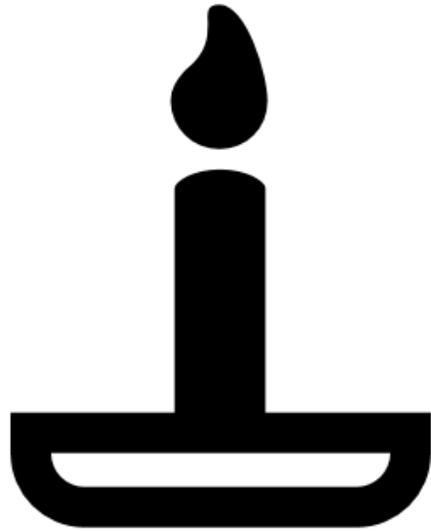




## Findings – the expected, Students appreciated;

- Short, checking in informal quizzes.
- Assessment exemplars from previous years.
- Modelling of the sort of research and analysis process needed for the assignment from the lecturer.
- Having links draw consistently between content coverage and learning objectives / assessments.
- Opportunities to sit in a room with staff and have a go at finding and exploring literature suitable for their assignment and make a start on writing draft material. This opportunity was enhanced by having a librarian present.

All reflecting current perceived good practice for assessment in HE; e.g. Biggs (2012), Carless & Boud (2018), Winstone et al (2018).



# Findings – the more specific

- The students used their disability support effectively (this varied in nature from student to student).
- The students used peers in chat groups (online and in person) effectively and were able to regulate their use of these if they perceived them to be less effective (e.g. turned into an echo chamber of panic).
- All three students were highly organised in advance in their approach to the module with a specific focus on the lead up to assignments.
- All three realised that there would be module content relevant to their future academic and professional lives that might not be relevant to the assignment specifically. Two were happy with this, one a little reluctant to admit!

## Examples of student comments -

- *... So yeah, it was, I think it [the mini quiz] is good because it is interactive, if you have got people engaged and interactive they are going to absorb a lot more but if it is chalk and talk...*
- ... because I'm slightly older sometimes I'll think more and like because I have worked, I have done a lot of work on different workplaces, so different experience, so sometimes I will think, hang on a minute, how is this useful and how would I apply it, or whatever, but I think the younger students who have had a different experience, I hear a lot of them saying , 'why are we doing this? It is not even relevant, why we doing it?' you know what I mean?
- *... it depends on life just because, it happens, now if I am being organised and the kids are all healthy and whatever else, you know...*
- It was helpful [to have a librarian] because I had a question about page numbers because I tend to, because I am doing a joint honours computing as well...
- *No, they are mainly on Facebook on the group chat, I kind of don't reply because my attitude is, well if you came to the lecture you would know wouldn't you but that's just me.*



# Findings – a light bulb moment

- The theme of occlusion (that which is in the shadow).
- Everything noted previously was either in plain sight or could be reasonably second guessed (though it is important that 'common sense' views are tested by research).
- But each of the sample students provided at least one insight that would not have been revealed if the research (or something equivalent) had not occurred – for example:
  - 'Mr IT' had no IT (and actively chose not to take advantage of possible UW support for this).
  - One student had had very negative experiences regarding assessment at her school.
  - One student deliberately did not engage with materials prior to lectures.

# Examples of student comments

- ... because I was put on the spot a lot in school and if I got the answer wrong like my classmates would laugh at me and then I would feel really humiliated and stuff and so now I don't tend to ask for help...
- *When I was at school, I was a menace [laughter] I was always excluded from school before my exams, so I left school with no qualifications.*
- Interviewer: And if you could [afford your own IT] would you...? Respondee: Yeah, I would have the laptop and I would have a smart phone as well.
- *Because I think if I look at it and it is something that doesn't interest me then I will not turn up to the lecture...*
- ... because I've got fibromyalgia, I get foggy moments, so like I said when I was at school, I could remember stuff, you know what I mean? If I had a history lesson, I was interested in I could remember it all but now sometimes because I get foggy, those notes are my God send, you know what I mean? So I have to have those notes because the health condition ... can make me foggy that I will forget.

Suggesting a heuristic framework to explore issues impacting on assessment practice / outcomes for students from marginalised backgrounds

<b>Proximity</b> <b>Perceptibility</b>	<b>Close (more amenable to staff action)</b>	<b>Distant (less easily...)</b>
<b>Easily discernible</b>	<i>Quadrant 1 –</i> Structure of module / of sessions Quality of teaching Support on offer Disability – classification	<i>Q3 –</i> Disability – impact SES
<b>More occluded</b>	<i>Q2 –</i> Feedback – instant / long term (impact of) Access to IT (inc. skills) Influence of peer groups	<i>Q4 –</i> IT guy with no IT Previous school / uni experience (fear of feedback) Choice of learning activity (don't read materials in advance – deliberately) Impact of home life (+ and -)

# Application and relevance to ‘pandemic times’?

- In ‘normal’ time, in face to face settings, Lesson Study appeared to provide a useful means to explore factors that impact on assessment experiences for marginalised students both from students’ and staff (academic and support) point of view.
- Its iterative nature allowed for a deep exploration of the issues involved.
- The ‘pandemic era’ produces extra sets of pressures (academic, social and emotional) on students (Kidd and Murray, 2020; NHS Digital, 2020.).
- Related to this, much delivery has switched to a blended or distance mode.

The combination of the above may well mean that more issues will appear in quadrants 3 and 4: in other words further from staff influence and possibly more hidden from view. So with this in mind:

- What strategies might be deployed between students and staff to discern and influence such, particularly with regard to potentially marginalised students?
- How might academic and support staff work effectively in tandem to address such challenges?
- How can we continue to situate learner voice at the heart of our research? (Seale, 2015)

# Tentative thoughts

- LS proved in this case to be an effective means for revealing issues pertinent to understanding assessment practice suited to marginalised students. There is some, limited, literature on the use of LS in distance education (e.g. Yursa, 2011; Sharma and Pang, 2016.)
- LS is a resource intensive approach but other processes offer at least some of its advantages – HEI's could consider more team teaching on modules. Our experience points to the advantage of including staff from support services (Parkes et al 2014, offer a framework for conceptualising such partnerships).
- There is clear evidence as to what makes for good practice in terms of online teaching (see Mintz 2020 for a brief summary, emphasising the necessity of using various means to get to know students as individuals and engaging the affective domain, and Charbonneau-Gowdy and Chavez 2019 for an analysis of the research on effective pedagogy in DL). Charbonneau-Gowdy and Chavez (2019) note the necessity of support and flexibility from HE administration for academic staff.
- O/L delivery offers certain affordances: anecdotally it appears that some marginalised students prefer online delivery as it offers a measure of anonymity; staff can use data analytics available to track engagement of students; sessions can easily be recorded for future playback; formative / summative assessment tools are a feature of the various platforms in use providing (depending on the precise assessment) in-time feedback for student and staff.

# References

- Biggs, J. (2012). What the student does: Teaching for enhanced learning. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 31(1), 39-55. doi:10.1080/07294360.2012.642839
- Bracken, S, and Novak, K (Eds). (2019) *Transforming Higher Education through Universal Design for Learning: An International Perspective*. Routledge, London.
- Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: Enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315-1325. doi:10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354
- Charbonneau-Gowdy, P., and Chavez, J. (2019) 3-M Model for Uncovering the Impact of Multi-level Identity Issues on Learners' Social Interactive Engagement Online. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 17(2), 131-143, available online at [www.ejel.org](http://www.ejel.org)
- Dudley, P. (2011) *Lesson Study: what it is, how and why it works and who is using it*, [www.teachingexpertise.com](http://www.teachingexpertise.com)
- Hanesworth, P., Bracken, S., Elkington, S. (2019). A typology for a social justice approach to assessment: learning from universal design and culturally sustaining pedagogy, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 24 (1), 98- 114, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2018.1465405
- Kidd, W. and Murray, J. (2020) The Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on teacher education in England: how teacher educators moved practicum learning online, *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43 (4), 542–558. doi: 10.1080/02619768.2020.1820480.
- McArthur, J. (2018) *Assessment for Social Justice: Perspectives and Practices within Higher Education*. London: Bloomsbury.
- [McArthur, J \(2020\), 'Student involvement in assessment: Involving the whole student in pursuit of social justice and the social good'](#), *Relieve*, 26 (1), M2. <https://ojs.uv.es/index.php/RELIEVE/article/view/17089/15638>
- NHS Digital (2020) *Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2020: Wave 1 follow up to the 2017 survey*, <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up> [Last accessed 20/10/20]

- Mintz, S. (2020) *8 Ways to Improve Your Online Course*, Higher Ed Gamma. Available online: <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/8-ways-improve-your-online-course> [Accessed 25/10/20]
- Parkes, S. *et al.* (2014) *Academics and professional services in partnership summary report and self-assessment toolkit Leading the student experience*. Higher Education Academy.
- Seale, J. (2015) How can we confidently judge the extent to which student voice in higher education has been genuinely amplified? A proposal for a new evaluation framework, *Research Papers in Education*, 31 (2), 212-233. 10.1080/02671522.2015.1027726
- Seale, J.(2016) From the voice of a ‘socratic gadfly’: a call for more academic activism in the researching of disability in postsecondary education, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32 (1), 153-169 10.1080/08856257.2016.1254967,
- Sharma, S. A. and Pang, S. (2015) ‘Creating New Opportunities for Lesson Study in an Online Reading Clinic’, *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*. SAGE Publications, 64(1), pp. 415–428. doi: 10.1177/2381336915617577.
- Vlachopoulos, D., and Makri, A. (2019). Online communication and interaction in distance higher education: A framework study of good practice. *International Review of Education* (65), 605–632. <https://doi-org.apollo.worc.ac.uk/10.1007/s11159-019-09792-3>
- Winstone, N., Bourne, J., Medland, E., Niculescu, I., & Rees, R. (2020). “Check the grade, log out”: Students’ engagement with feedback in learning management systems. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, , 1-13. doi:10.1080/02602938.2020.1787331
- Wood, P. and Cajkler, W. (2018) Lesson study: A collaborative approach to scholarship for teaching and learning in higher education, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Routledge, 42(3), pp. 313–326. doi: 10.1080/0309877X.2016.1261093.
- Yursa, H. S. J. (2011) Developing online lesson study community, *Paper presented at the NCTM regional conference, Atlantic City, NJ.*