



Developing resilient graduates to be future workplace leaders

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Title

Developing resilient graduates to be future workplace leaders

Abstract

Vocational Higher Education and skills are recognised as key factors in shaping an economy to adapt to fast emerging business models that disrupt workplace behaviours. Employers require graduates to be 'work ready', emphasising the need to demonstrate resilience, as a critical desired behaviour (CBI, 2019). This aspires to the new UK Graduate Outcomes Survey aiming to measure the future value of the Higher Education sector.

Purpose

This case study shares the integrated curriculum design, co-creation and operationalisation of 'Graduate Transitions' workshops that were piloted in a compulsory final year module across a number of programmes in an institutions business faculty to enhance graduates 'work readiness'. The purpose of the workshop is to deepen the transitioning student understanding of employer expectation, enhance their self-understanding as professionals, and their role as emerging leaders in the future global workplace.

Design/Methodology

The collaboration and leadership thinking of industry professionals, academics and career consultants designed and co-created a workshop that enhances transitioning student resilience and prepares them for their future of work. Action research gathered data using a mixed methods approach to evaluate student and stakeholder feedback.

Findings

Evidence indicates that the workshops actively embed practical coping strategies for resilience and mindful leaders in transitioning graduates. It assures employers that employability and professional practice competencies are experienced by transitioning graduates entering the future workplace.

Research Limitations

Limitations to this research are clearly in the methodology and concentrating on the co-creation of an innovative curriculum design project instead of the tools to accurately evaluate the impact in a systematic manner. There was also limited time and resource to design a more sophisticated platform to collect data and analyse it with the imperative academic rigour required. Emphasis on piloting and operationalisation of the intervention, due to time and resource restrictions also challenged the methodological design.

Practical Implications

The positive feedback from these workshops facilitated integration into the curriculum at an institution-wide level. This paper shares with our academic community of practice, the pedagogy and active learning design that could be customised within their own institution as an intervention to positively influence the new metrics underpinning Graduate Outcomes.

Introduction

It is recognised worldwide, that education and skills are key factors in shaping an economy to adapt to fast emerging business models that can disrupt workplace behaviours. Furthermore, global employers expect graduates to be 'work ready', focusing on resilience as one of the top three desired skills (CBI, 2019). This concurs with the aspirations of the newly established Graduate Outcomes Survey (HESA) which aims to understand graduate success, the future value of Higher Education, and to measure efficiencies across the Higher Education sector. According to Barnett and Coate (2005), employers need graduates who are workplace aware (know), have practical competences (do) and have confidence to participate and grow (be).

Crocket (2015) argues that new graduates should be confident in their entrepreneurial endeavour; be resilient and responsive to change; exhibit professionalism and become global citizens that meaningfully contribute to professional communities and wider society. This is underpinned by the incessant demand from employers for graduates of *any* discipline, to be 'work ready' and resilient in order to contribute positively to business and organisations. Furthermore, government is requesting that Higher Education Institutions be more accountable in developing graduate skills for their future of work. This was endorsed by Chris Skidmore (Minister for Higher Education) on assuring successful Graduate Outcomes (2019) stating, "if our students are to go out into the wider world and make a positive difference to society with their professionalism and leadership, then we need to be displaying those values to them now".

Arvanitakis and Hornsby (2016) stress the need for innovative pedagogies, not only to bring about a shift in focus but also to develop transitioning students who are better equipped to work through real-world global issues. However, innovative pedagogies must also be integrated into impactful curriculum design. McIntosh and Shaw (2017) argue that in developing the resilient graduate, the learning environment cannot be separated from the real-world context in which the student will eventually find themselves. Consequently, the issues related to resilience are also highly relevant to graduate employers seeking to recruit emerging future leaders who can competently contribute positively to their professional communities and wider society.

The Graduate Transition Project aimed to integrate two final year workshops into the curriculum that could be transferable across faculties and operationalised university wide. This case study will firstly review the pedagogic and behavioural literature and context underpinning the project and explain the workshop content. Secondly the article will evaluate student and stakeholder feedback providing insights into the learning impact and in doing so demonstrate a pathway for our academic community to customise and operationalise in their own institutions.

Literature Review

Cornbleth (1990) argues, 'how we conceive and create curriculum is important because our conceptions and ways of reasoning about curriculum reflect and shape how we see, think, discuss, study and act on the education made available to our students' (Cornbleth, 1990, p12). The subjective view of an academic and the many 'misunderstandings' of what exactly curriculum means, challenges the academic to accept that use of the word curriculum refers to a 'complex phenomenon' (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). Bridging the gap between academic views on the curriculum can be problematic and therefore opportunities to examine and critique epistemological assumptions are essential to commit to a community of practice that has a sense of 'struggle' to improve education (Kemmis & Fitzclarence, 1986). The process becomes even more complex as we start to expand the concept and integrate other aspects including business relevance and vocational skills development.

Fraser and Bosanquet (2006) completed a phenomenographic study which explored the variation in understanding and experiences individuals have about curriculum and what it means to them. Analysing the opinions drawn from interviews with 25 academics from a variety of disciplines and with teaching experience ranging from 3 to 30 years, they identified different categories of description, referred to as 'conceptions of curriculum'. Four categories of description emerge as illustrated in the following Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1: Conceptions of the Curriculum

Category A is where the responsibility of the design and implementation of the curriculum lies with the teacher providing the learning and the student passively consuming the curriculum content learning. In category B, learners are the curriculum receptors and lecturers have no active role in curriculum design. Therefore, colleague resistance is more prevalent around curriculum change. Category C shifts considerably to a process that facilitates and enables learning. This category is student-centred around the curriculum process and the lecturer designs the process around theoretical frameworks. Lecturers in this category are more prepared to engage in personal critical reflection on their practice and take informed risks in teaching and assessment methods toward continuous improvement of the student learning experience. Category D poses the curriculum as an interactive, collaborative and dynamic process of learning. According to Fraser and Bosanquet (2006, p 271), it 'empowers the student to

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3 challenge their own assumptions, transforming their view of the world and enabling them to become
4 more effective members of society’.

5
6 Theorists in curriculum purport it is a cultural and social construction. Habermas (1972) theory of
7 fundamental human interests claims there are three fundamental human interests; the technical
8 interest, the communicative interest and emancipatory interest, all of which guide our students’ search
9 for knowledge and have implications for how we think about ourselves, others and the wider world.

10 The concept of emancipatory curriculum design for learning strives for the empowerment of students,
11 developing independent learners and thinkers, rational autonomy and the opportunity to free students
12 from ‘false ideas, distorted forms of communication and coercive forms of social relationships which
13 constrain human action’ (Kemmis and Fitzclarence, 1986, p72). Such a learning environment
14 challenges common understandings and practices and facilitates students’ and lecturers’ constraints in
15 the learning process. The outcomes of an emancipatory interest are ‘a transformation of consciousness
16 in the way one perceives and acts in the world’ (Grundy, 1987, p99). The learner’s curriculum ‘emerges
17 from the systematic reflection of those engaged in the pedagogical act’ (Grundy, 1987, p103).
18 Emancipatory curriculum design and learning develops through a dynamic relationship between action
19 and reflection, in which the process of critically reflective practice is seamlessly fused. As McTaggart
20 and Garbutcheon (1986, p44) state, ‘critical reflection involves more than knowledge of one’s own
21 values and understanding of one’s practice. It involves a dialectical criticism of one’s own values in a
22 social and historical context in which the values of others are also crucial’.

23 As Barnett and Coate (2005) claim students develop a capacity for ‘being in the world’ and becoming
24 independent thinkers within a dynamic world of ‘fake news’ and failure, which attracts feelings of
25 rejection for them to ‘recover’ from. Higher Education Institutions should be committed to providing
26 students with learning opportunities aligned to this concept of ‘being’ thus developing a clearer sense
27 of themselves and their capabilities, how they gain self-confidence and how to become the best version
28 of themselves on (and beyond) graduation.

29
30 Recent work by Magowan (2018) on the future of work is in accord with the concept of emancipatory
31 pedagogy. She claims that the future of work is learning and adapting ‘in a dynamic flux’ and that
32 learning is not exclusively about technology and critically, learning must have a focus on identity,
33 mindset and enable students to adapt continuously (Magowan, 2018). This concurs with the ubiquitous
34 quest from employers, for universities to produce graduates of any discipline that are ‘work ready’ and
35 can confidently demonstrate 21st Century Skills in their endeavours to contribute to business or
36 organisational performance. This is underpinned by Arvanitakis and Hornsby (2016) who advocate that
37 the citizen scholar should possess four key attributes namely, creativity, resilience, design thinking and
38 cross-team working.

39
40 Resilience has become a much used word in the Higher Education sector within the media and
41 academic literature and research conducted by Public Health Wales revealed that children and adults
42 displaying high levels of resilience are reported to be half as likely to have a diagnosable mental health
43 condition ([Public Health Wales, 2018](#)). Furthermore, a large-scale study by Unite Students (2016) in
44 the UK, reported that students are increasingly experiencing mental health problems and mental
45 distress. This has resulted in a plethora of requests for global policy makers and educationalists to
46 address the issues facing students in the Higher Education sector and to make provision to support and
47 develop their resilience both whilst studying and in preparation for the complex and ever-changing world
48 of work. Indeed, Universities UK supports the Mental Health Policy Commissions report (2010, p2) and
49 argues that ‘with almost 50% of young adults going to university, the student population offers a
50 significant opportunity to respond to this generational challenge and the Commission’s approach is
51 welcomed’.

52 McIntosh and Shaw (2017, p8), define resilience as, ‘the ability to recove and bounce back from
53 misfortune and adjust to change’. Stallman (2011, p122) claims that ‘resilience in the context of a
54 learning environment, enables students to sustain motivation and focus when faced with difficult tasks’.
55 Resilience provides students with capacity to deal with difficult emotions, including stress and anxiety,
56 that can impact negatively on their performance (Claxton, 2002). Stallman (2011) further states that
57 resilience is not an innate trait but rather, encompasses ways of thinking and action that can be learned
58 and developed in all students. Aligned to this, Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar & Curran (2015) proclaim
59 that resilience training can improve personal resilience and is a useful means of developing mental
60 health and subjective well-being in employees. Arvanitakis and Hornsby (2016) develop the concept

of resilience to consider two key competencies, firstly 'mistakability' or the ability to make mistakes and learn from these and secondly, 'adaptability' or the flexibility to adapt and learn effectively. The capability to be resilient, to adapt and learn are fundamental characteristics of emerging future leaders. Central to the development of the resilient graduate, and in order to nurture 'mistakability' and 'adaptability', emancipatory pedagogical innovations must therefore be deployed in Higher Education Institutions (McIntosh and Shaw, 2017). The ability to make and learn from mistakes needs to be articulated and indeed, normalised both within and outside the curriculum to prepare students on graduation for work (Bowden and Marton, 1998). McIntosh and Shaw (2017) further claim that the HE sector must develop 'resilience toolkits' to create a supportive environment that facilitates the development of student resilience. They go on to emphasise that a proactive approach is essential and that in developing the resilient graduate, the curriculum and more broadly, the learning environment, cannot be separated from the real-world context in which the student will eventually go to work (McIntosh and Shaw, 2017). This means that such issues of resilience are also of relevance to graduate employers recruiting future leaders as these issues will impact on the employee's ability to cope and to contribute positively to the social economic fabric of a nation.

In further exploring the importance of a graduate's socio-economic contribution, McIntosh and Shaw (2017) report on there being two critical internal influencing factors related to student resilience: self-management, including goal setting and persistence, and emotional control, the ability to not dwell on negative experiences or to over-react in certain situations. Self-management is noted as being related to the term 'grit' which has increasingly featured in HE educational literature and is often used interchangeably with the term resilience. However, where resilience is viewed as the capacity and optimism to 'bounce back' from challenging situations, 'grit' is more focused on the motivational drive to persevere and is defined by Duckworth (2016, p8) as 'the combination of perseverance and passion for especially long-term and meaningful goals'. The importance of 'grit' and the relationship to student retention, success, and most importantly, graduate outcomes, have been well documented with an emphasis on the need for Higher Education Institutions to develop student traits such as perseverance, persistence and the ability to set goals (Duckworth, 2016).

Emotional control is related to the concept of 'grit' as it involves developing emotional intelligence, having a growth mindset and learned optimism. Molten and Dweck's (2006) research on motivation identified two mindsets; one that is 'fixed' whereby the student believes their abilities are set and fixed at birth, or a 'growth mindset' whereby the student believes their abilities and success can be learned and developed over time. McIntosh and Shaw (2017, p12) claim that 'a growth mindset is critical to the development and maintenance of student resilience and can help a student make the most of the conditions and the environment in which they are situated'. It is about having a positive outlook rather than seeing the world negatively; it is about recognising that failure and associated emotions are not necessarily bad experiences but are momentary ones that can lead to personal growth, positive learning and development (Seligman, 2006). In addition to this Cooper, Flint-Taylor and Pearn (2013) refer to the notion of purposefulness when establishing a sustainable growth mindset. Having clear values, drive, direction and purpose in the face of adversity supports a growth mindset mentality, where the glass is considered half full, rather than half empty. Dweck et al., (2014, p8) reinforce this point stating that, 'for some people, failure is the end of the world—but for others, it's this exciting new opportunity...people with a 'growth mindset', enjoy challenges, strive to learn, and consistently see potential to develop new skills'. Dweck (2006) points out that through pedagogic curriculum designs, students can develop a 'growth mindset' that will result in higher levels of achievement and performance in their academic studies. Sharples et al., (2016), develop this perspective claiming that through innovative pedagogies, there is a need to incorporate 'productive failure' and complex problem solving into the curriculum as this leads to an increased understanding and personal awareness of the traits and competencies associated with being a resilient student and ultimately, a more successful graduate and future leader.

Mindful leadership is the concept of being aware of the needs of oneself, the organisation and those of the people they lead. Research by Langer (2010) over the last 30 years claims that increasing mindfulness in leaders and their followers increases charisma, productivity, decreases burnout and accidents, and increases creativity, memory, attention, optimism, health, and even longevity. Those leaders that lead from a position of knowing the unknowable promote mindlessness in their followers and in doing so limits their ability to exploit the power of uncertainty and be agile in a disruptive workplace that can initiate stress and anxiety. Furthermore, Marturano (2014) claims that a leader who behaves mindlessly in a globally interconnected workplace fails to lead with excellence and does not

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3 embody the compassion followers need to uphold their wellbeing and work productivity. Consequently,
4 emerging future leaders are required to be aware of the positive behaviours that mindful leadership can
5 deliver. Following Langers (2010) research, mindful leadership combined with mindful followers can
6 deliver required business outcomes and reciprocal positive social impact on communities and wider
7 society.

8
9 The literature reviewed in this section has discussed and analysed the sources of pedagogy and the
10 concepts related to resilience and mindful leadership that have informed and directed the curriculum
11 design thinking and rationale for the two Graduate Transition workshops.

14 **Methodology**

16 The final outline content for the two workshop pilots are illustrated in Table 1 and Table 2.

18 Insert Table 1: Curriculum Content – The Resilient Graduate (Pilot)

20 Insert Table 2: Curriculum Content – The Mindful Leader (Pilot)

22
23 The content for the two workshops was co-created by a curriculum design team. This included two
24 Business School academics, a career consultant and three external professional experts; a media
25 trainer, leadership coach and mindfulness therapist. The media trainer specialises in journalist trauma
26 support and wellbeing, and the leadership coach provides coaching and mentoring services
27 professionally for local and international businesses. The mindfulness therapist is a specialist in
28 mindfulness and well-being, creating action plans to maintain mental health. A five-month three stage
29 design thinking process enabled the co-creation and production of the workshop materials for pilot
30 delivery.

31
32 The first stage involved a ‘blue sky thinking day’ with the design team to craft workshops that would be
33 a unique learning experience for the students. The workshops incorporated an emancipatory pedagogic
34 approach, evading the ‘traditional’ format and information was collected from employer stakeholders,
35 past graduates and the design team’s own experience and research. This informed the workshop
36 design and content aimed at embedding the competencies identified that bring the best versions of
37 graduates to the workplace.

38
39 The second design stage involved the team deliberating and shaping the activities scheduled for the
40 two three-hour workshops. The key outcome of this approach was to ensure that the participatory
41 activities generated meaningful personal reflections on existing behaviours, as research shows
42 developing student awareness of these behaviours and emotions can help generate more resilient and
43 mindful leadership competencies that are in turn more likely to result in action and behavioural change.
44 The two workshops, titled The Resilient Graduate and The Mindful Leader, were designed and delivered
45 around the 3 hours typically allocated on the weekly timetable for a final year core module

46
47 Planning, design and development of the curriculum for the Graduate transitions project took 9 months
48 in total from May 2018-Feb 2019, and the pilot workshops were operationalised and evaluated between
49 March – June 2019. Norton (2009) asserts that action research for teaching and learning needs to be
50 reflective in nature with the aim of improving some aspect of the student learning experience. To this
51 end the project fits within an action research approach which “is fundamentally about the transformation
52 of practice” (McIntosh, 2010, p35) and an enhancement to the student learning experience.

53 Evaluation of the two pilot workshops in terms of materials, content and delivery style, incorporated
54 elements of diagnostic tools, evaluation surveys and focus groups with the student participants/past
55 graduates and observing academic colleagues. The evaluation of the workshops used a simple mixed
56 method approach of digital free text surveys and focus groups. Using mixed methods (Robson, 2014)
57 will increase the validity and credibility of findings, providing a more complete picture of the case study
58 findings, and will help to develop analysis (Denscombe, 2014; Robson, 2014). Additionally, this
59 approach can be useful to avoid biases which can be a potential problem with single method
60 approaches (Denscombe, 2008).

At the beginning of each workshop a 'diagnostic' tool was employed, using the student's digital devices or smart phones to poll and answer questions, and the data collected was analysed and compared across the two student cohorts. In addition, a qualitative open 'free text' style question was asked post workshops to obtain insights into potential 'key learns' for each individual student. As part of the evaluation process this information was analysed and utilised to inform future iterations of the workshops

Observers were also engaged to evaluate the pilot workshops. The observers included past graduates and colleagues from academia and employability. Past graduates were asked to complete pre-set questions from the curriculum design team to evaluate each activity through the lens of their employment experience after university. Employability colleagues were asked to feed back after each workshop they attended and to do so on a reflective basis.

Thirty-minute student focus groups were also facilitated by the curriculum design and delivery team. These were recorded and transcribed, highlighting the key learns and challenges experienced by the students having just completed the workshops. The focus group from pilot 1 consisted of 10 students and the focus group from pilot 2 included 8 students.

Limitations to the methodology were the shortage of similar interventions or benchmarks that could have informed a clearer approach to the design, development and operationalisation of the graduate transitions workshop. There was also limited time and resource to design a more sophisticated platform to collect data and analyse it with the imperative academic rigour required. Emphasis on piloting and operationalisation of the intervention, due to time and resource restrictions also challenged the methodological design.

Findings

Figure 2 illustrates 102 final year students attended the pilot Resilient Graduate workshop and were surveyed pre- and post- the workshop. Figure 2 analysis of the feedback reveals that before the workshop only 25% of students said they understood what personal resilience was whereas post-survey responses rose to 94%, indicating an increased awareness of 69%. Raising awareness of personal resilience is important but pragmatically it is the practice of building resilience where the actual learning will take place and changes behaviour. Figure 2 shows Pre-survey results with only 10% of students understanding how to build resilience whereas post-survey this had risen to 73%, raising awareness by 63%. Again, the learning relates to the 'how' using tactics and tools to build resilience and must not be confused with actual levels of resilience as these would need to be context based and use more sophisticated research methods. Furthermore, 84% of the students said the workshop helped and 76% said they would recommend the workshop to other final year students. These results show that the students were engaged in the workshop and had, on self-reflection, acknowledged learning and enhanced awareness of concepts in resilience for the workplace.

Insert Figure 2 Student Feedback on Resilient Graduate Workshop learning gain

Figure 3 below illustrates that 115 final year students attended the second, Mindful Leader workshop using the digital devices to poll the students. Pre-survey only 35% of students said they understood what mindful leadership was whereas post-survey this had risen to 81%, demonstrating a raised awareness of 46% across the cohort. Pre-survey, only 15% said they knew how to lead mindfully whereas post-survey this had risen to 83%. Raising awareness of mindfulness and well-being is important for the future of work but more importantly it is about understanding the tools and tactics available to practice and gain confidence in leading mindfully. Furthermore, 78% found the workshop valuable and 77% said they would recommend the workshop to other final year students.

Insert Figure 3 Student Feedback on Mindful Leader Workshop learning gain

Qualitative feedback from the workshops was captured through an open-ended question which asked the students to report on their 'key learns'. Through these comments, several themes emerged from both workshops as summarised below in Table 3 and Table 4 alongside some specific qualitative comments.

Insert Table 3: Resilient Graduate – thematic analysis qualitative feedback

Insert Table 4: Mindful Leader - thematic analysis qualitative feedback

A summary analysis of the findings clearly indicates that the students found the learning experience of the workshops valuable toward understanding their own personal and professional behaviours. This is demonstrated by recommendations to their peers to engage in the workshops as an opportunity to understand the professional behaviours expected by employers.

Discussion

Resilient Graduate - Analysis of the Student Evaluations Post Pilot Workshop

The common themes recurring from the students 'free text' evaluations after the Resilient Graduate (n=102) workshop indicated that understanding the value of emotional intelligence, resilience and self-belief were their perceived key learns. Comments about understanding and managing personal emotions were numerous and this correlates with the workshop goal to heighten their awareness of emotional control when dealing with, for example, the removal of their mobile devices. The experience of loss of mobile device led to an understanding on "how social media really affects us". This concurs with the development of authentic knowledge as opposed to relying on 'fake news' to distort their value judgements and subsequent behaviour. This analysis aligns with Barnett and Coate (2005) and the transitioning graduate capacity to develop 'being in the world' and confident in their use of authentic knowledge to enable sound decision making. Magowan (2018) confirms this further claiming that learning must have a focus on the individual's emotional strength around identity, mindset and enablers to learn and adapt continuously to workplace disruption.

In order for transitioning graduates to understand resilience and the mechanisms to develop resilience, they must build their capacity to deal with difficult emotions, including, stress and anxiety that can impact on their workplace performance. Cooper et al., (2013) refers to a remedy called purposefulness toward developing a growth mindset to overcome stress and anxiety through building resilience, ensuring a key focus both on purpose and wellbeing. Numerous students noted a key learn as, "I now know how to control stress, think positively and move forward" and "mindful breathing exercises can help me cope with stress".

Mindful Leader - Analysis of the Student Evaluations Post Pilot Workshop

The common themes recurring from the students 'free text' evaluations after the Mindful Leader workshop (n=115) showed that the students had built self-reflective skills on dealing with conflict and understood the importance of mindfulness in the workplace to promote increased productivity (Langer, 2010). Students commented as a perceived key learn "considering the differing perspectives of individuals in the workplace" and "learning to actively listen". Furthermore, regarding leadership, a key learning theme was summarised by a student who noted, "teamwork is essential, and leaders set the tone for how successful a business is". Mindless leadership is fraught with complexity and ignores the importance of remaining calm in 'real time' to encourage increased productivity in those being led and promoting well-being and mindfulness in the workplace. This concurs with the view of Martuarano (2014) that a mindful leader is good for business and the community and that includes their employee teams.

Focus Group Analysis

It was evident from the focus groups that the workshops enhanced levels of student understanding of the concepts related to resilience and mindfulness along with enhanced self-awareness, with one student stating, "I now know what resilience and mindfulness means and the connections between my emotions, behaviours and attitudes to various situations that I encounter". Another student acknowledged how, "it is easy to blame others and so challenging ... but it is about understanding what other people are thinking and how they are behaving". The following student's self-awareness is evident in the comment, "makes you realise that as a leader you don't think about how your actions can affect other people in an organisation". Self-awareness and increased understanding, which is in accord with Matuarano (2014), were apparent as the following student claimed, "I have developed an understanding of team resilience, particularly how teams manage workload, develop collaborative strategies, and recover from collective errors"

All the students in the focus group reported that their thinking had been transformed (Grundy, 1987; Cooper et al., 2013) and had ignited the positive thinking and outcomes associated a sustainable growth mindset. Interestingly one student stated, “my mindset has completely changed from last week because of the millennials video and the workshop. I now think that when I am stressed it is only, in the moment, and it will pass”. In addition, the workshops appeared to have developed the students’ sense of positivity and optimism with one student quoting, “the workshops have made me feel really different and I am waking up much more positive now which is good”.

Students were provided with opportunities to practice breathing, calming and meditation exercises that helped to relieve stress, commenting that, “the breathing exercises were really useful with regard to managing stressful situations” and another student commenting, “I have to learn how to deal with my anger. I was so stressed and so angry with the rest of the team, when it was me that was the problem”. This concurs with Langer (2010) differentiating the behaviours of a ‘mindful’ instead of a ‘mindless’ leader. This growing awareness of the expectation to handle stress more effectively is noted in the comment, “it is good to know that it is normal to be stressed at our age with work, part-time jobs and study and we need mechanisms to help us deal with these workplace stresses”. Students acknowledged the emancipatory design (Habermas 1972) of the workshops and how they were enabled to make connections between the theory and the practice, with one student stating, “helps to remember the theory and linking the practices to the theory”. Another student summed up the workshops as being, “completely different, something I have never experienced before at Uni”.

A powerful statement from a past graduate captures the essence of the learning gained from the Resilient Graduate workshop stating, “experiencing this workshop in action, through the lens of a past graduate, made me most envious of those final year students who were participating! I just wish the final year students knew what I know now about the challenges of being a past graduate, sculpting my career, when the scaffolding support of University falls away after graduation. The Resilient Graduate workshop creates a powerful lens and awareness for final year students to build their own personal resilience for the workplace and just the stress of life generally” (Past Graduate, Year of 2016).

Furthermore, another past graduate highlighted the learning impact of the Mindful Leader workshop and reported, “I found the content of the Mindful Leader workshop to be current, appropriate and impactful with regard to preparing emerging leaders, like undergraduates, for the workplace ... I know that The Mindful Leader workshop would have significantly enhanced my preparation for the workplace and the stressful challenges I currently have to deal with” (Past Graduate, Year of 2018).

Representatives from three employability colleagues were reflective in their comments, noting that, “It was a very well organised and delivered workshop with a good pace and activities to ensure maximum student engagement.” This evidence highlights the acceptance of the emancipatory pedagogy informing the curriculum design around the graduate transition workshops where the learner’s curriculum is learning centred and reflective in real time (Grundy, 1987).

Challenges

It is fully recognised that there are numerous challenges in delivering such workshops within an higher education context. Firstly, the emancipatory learning style may force some academic staff too far out of their comfort zone, particularly for those who prefer a more directed and content-led learning and teaching approach. The emphasis in the underpinning pedagogy acts to convince resistant academics to the benefits of the workshop design and encourage adoption and transferability across disciplines. Secondly, students ‘don’t know what they don’t know’ in terms of the resilience required for the ‘real world of work’ until *after* graduation, so this challenges delivery to under graduates albeit in their final year. Therefore, student engagement in interventions can be problematic and attempts to resolve these are challenging. Nevertheless, as Higher Education professional academics it is crucial that we tirelessly make every effort to design curricula that provide transitioning students with valuable, real life opportunities to develop themselves vocationally for the world of work. Finally, resistant academics teaching final year students may resist to contact time being used to develop professional skills instead of critical academic thinking, particularly in final year when degree classification is utmost in students’ minds.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Barnett and Coate (2005), assert that Higher Education Institutions should be committed to providing students with learning opportunities aligned to the concept of 'being' in developing a sense of themselves and their capabilities, how they gain self-confidence and become the best version of themselves on graduation. It is important therefore for academics to be innovative and collaborative in their curriculum design to allow this learning to occur in transitioning graduates to prepare them professionally as emerging leaders for their future workplace.

McIntosh and Shaw (2017) conclude that there are many natural opportunities to nurture resilience throughout the student experience, depending on the approach of Higher Education Institutions teaching, learning and assessment strategy. The pedagogic approach used in the Graduate Transitions project was emancipatory and unique in comparison to the more traditional approach identified by Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) and many students continue to experience in Higher Education. Unique and innovative pedagogic interventions such as Graduate Transitions workshops challenge the traditional academic approach. However, transforming transitioning student's perceptions of expected 'work ready' skills does require to be embedded in unique and innovative emancipatory pedagogy. This approach accords with (Grundy, 1987, p99) who argues that the result of an emancipatory pedagogical approach is 'a transformation of consciousness in the way one perceives and acts in the world'

Limitations to this research are clearly in the methodology and concentrating on the co-creation of an innovative curriculum design project instead of the tools to accurately evaluate the impact in a systematic manner. The budget was also limited as was the resource time of the academic team who were also course directors. The workshops required the 'buy in' from academic colleagues across the university and therefore a convincing pedagogy was fundamental to the project success.

For this case study Higher Education Institution, these workshops are currently being implemented institutional wide, evidencing the strategic importance of 'work readiness' for all graduates regardless of industry sector/faculty. The Graduate Transition workshops are transferable and customisable to any worldwide Higher Education Institution endeavouring to develop their graduates as resilient and mindful citizen scholars who can contribute impactfully to our economy and wider society.

A longitudinal research project in the development of resilience in students is recommended, to evaluate and assess the sustained impact on work performance and career progression in preparing graduates to be leaders in the workplace of the future. It is also recommended that similar workshop interventions be designed and delivered by an international collaboration of Higher Education Institutions to research the impact across cultural boundaries.

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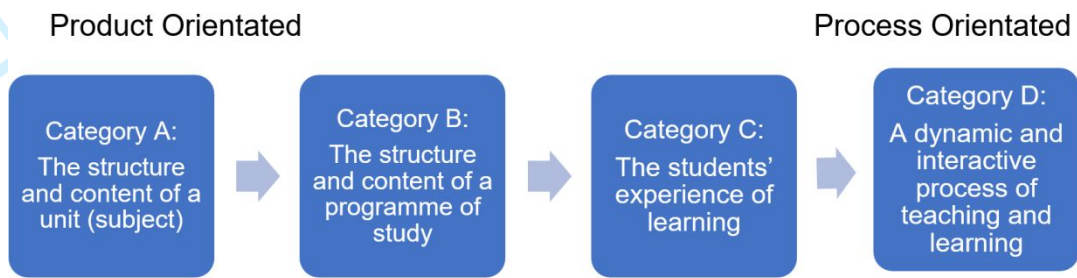
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Figure 1



Source: Adapted from Fraser and Bosanquet (2006: 272)

Figure 2

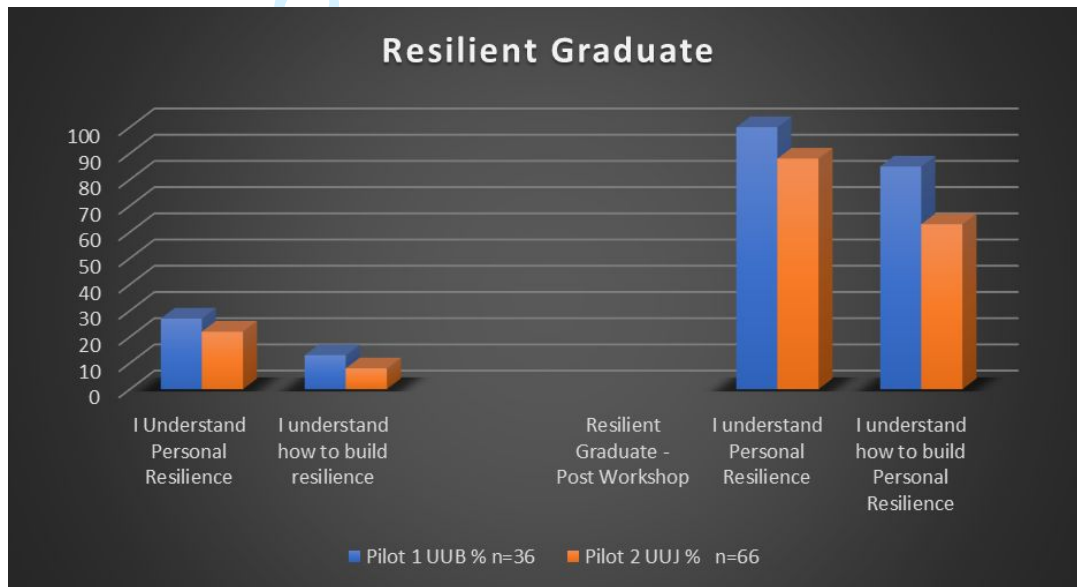
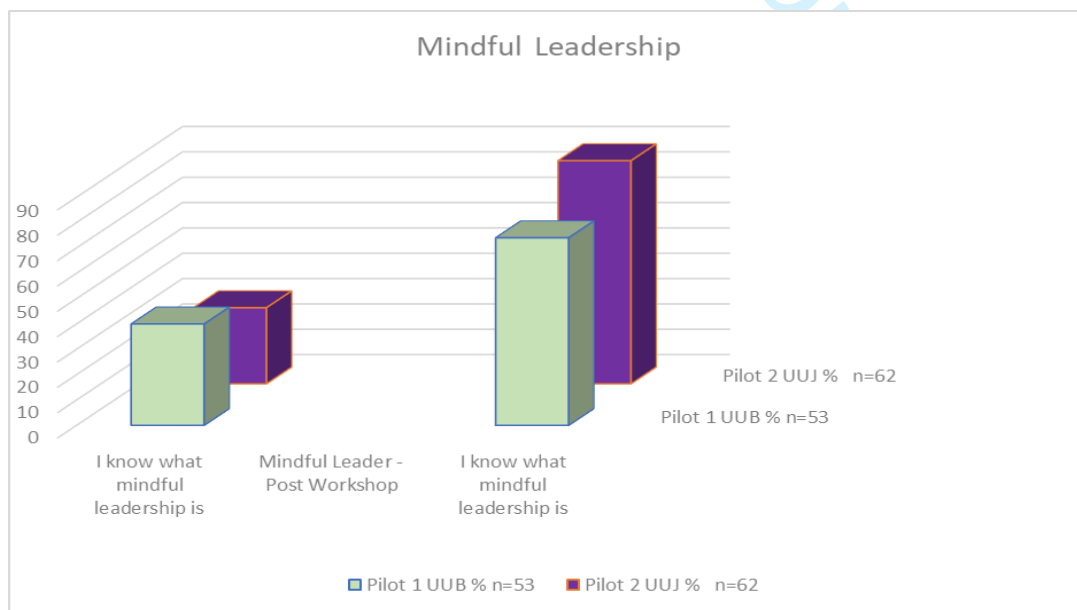


Figure 3



Tables

Table 1: Curriculum Content – The Resilient Graduate (Pilot)

Content	Intended outcome
Hello - Activity	To push students out of their comfort zone
Millennials in the Workplace	A hard-hitting video on millennials and mental health and addiction to technologies
Submission of Mobile Phones	To ensure that students were present and focused
Grounding and Breathing Exercises	To introduce the use of mindfulness tools in times of stress
Triune Brain Theory	To demonstrate and explain the anatomical reaction to stressors
Fixed and Growth Mind-sets	To show students that they have a choice about their mindset moving forward
Helium Stick Activity	To develop students' communication, leadership and collaboration skills
Effective Listening Paired Exercise	To demonstrate the skills of active listening and using open phrases or questions for effective communication
Emotional Intelligence Exercises	To encourage self-awareness and reflection on negative emotions
Emotional Resilience Theory and Practice	Emotional resilience tips for students to identify their emotions, interpret their emotions and then manage their emotions.
Take-Away Sheet	Outline of mindfulness exercises and further videos to support workshop material

Table 2: Curriculum Content – The Mindful Leader (Pilot)

Content	Intended outcome
Hello – Activity	To push students out of their comfort zone
Tai Chi Exercises	To build on the use of mindfulness tools in times of stress
Mirror Triangle Activity	To build students' personal effectiveness as a leader: influencing, negotiating, conducting themselves in change scenarios
Different Perspectives and Conflict Styles Exercises	To examine students' own behaviours and style in conflict situations

Lego Game Activity	Collaboration, communication, leadership and enterprise skills
Failing Forward	To foster the understanding that failure is an opportunity to learn and to improve
Take-Away Sheet	Outline of mindfulness exercises, further tips and videos to support workshop material

Table 3: Resilient Graduate – Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Feedback

Most common themes (cited multiple times across 2 workshops)	Example of direct quote – in answer to “My key learns today are...”
Self- awareness and dealing with emotions	<i>“Evaluate how to react to what’s going on in my life” “How to control my emotions to ensure a healthy better lifestyle” “How your emotions affect your actions”</i>
Breathing techniques	<i>“Breathe. Bad times will pass” “Methods of breathing to calm down” “That breathing exercises can help cope with stress”</i>
Handling stress	<i>“How to calm down in a stressful situation” “How to control stress and always think positive to move forward” “Understanding and dealing with stress” “I have the tools and techniques to acknowledge when stressed and can deal with it” “How to identify stress and reduce it”</i>
Building resilience	<i>“Building resilience for work AND personal life” “What resilience is and how to fix/maintain it”</i>
Self-belief	<i>“That life is hard, but you should never fail” “To cope under rejection and stress”</i>
Overreliance on mobile phones/social media	<i>“How to cope without my phone” “Understanding how social media really affects us” “How dependent on my phone I am”</i>

Table 4: Mindful Leader – Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Feedback

Most common themes (cited multiple times across 2 workshops)	Example of direct quote – in answer to “My key learns today are...”
Breathing/mindfulness exercises	<i>“Slow breathing is really helpful”</i>
Failure	<i>“Failures are sometimes a key to success, even if conflict arises”</i>
Developing communication and team-work skills	<i>“Learning how to work effectively as a team and sticking to the roles aligned” “How to actively listen”</i>
Developing leadership skills	<i>“Teamwork is essential in the workplace and the leaders set the tone for how successful a business will be” “How to be a more effective leader by focusing on different conflict styles”</i>

	<i>"That there are many different perspectives within an organisation that need considered"</i>
Dealing with conflict	<i>"How to deal with conflict in the workplace and personal life" "Understanding my natural conflict style and how it's not always the best depending on the situation"</i>
Handling stress	<i>"Learning to de-stress as a leader in the workplace"</i>
Self-awareness	<i>"To think and spend some time thinking and considering before taking quick decisions"</i>

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