

Selection and editorial content © Pauline E. Kneale 2015

Individual chapters © Respective authors 2015

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2015 by  
PALGRAVE

Palgrave in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of 4 Crinan Street, London, N1 9XW.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC,  
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave is a global imprint of the above companies and is represented throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978–1–137–39936–6

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Masters level teaching, learning and assessment : issues in design and delivery / edited by Pauline Kneale.

pages cm. — (Palgrave teaching and learning)

Summary: "This comprehensive book provides advice and guidance to those seeking to develop and enhance Masters level programmes. Based on practice, experience and research, it covers issues in design and delivery, helping to ensure that programmes are fit for purpose and meet contemporary needs in a rapidly changing and highly-competitive global market"— Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978–1–137–39936–6 (paperback)

1. Education—Study and teaching (Graduate) I. Kneale, Pauline E. (Pauline Estner), 1954— editor.

LB2372.E3M37 2015

370.71'1—dc23

2015023489

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.

# Contents

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Series editor's preface</i>	xii
<i>List of contributors</i>	xiv
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xxi
<b>Part 1 The Master's experience</b>	
<b>1 Master's perspectives</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Being a student and teacher, <i>Bill Lindquist</i>	5
1.2 My Master's experience as student and teacher, <i>Valerie Huggins</i>	7
1.3 Researching the Master's student experience, <i>Louise Winfield</i>	10
1.4 Understanding students' needs in theatre practice, <i>Sue Mayo and Katharine Low</i>	14
1.5 Defining issues for mastery, <i>Pauline Kneale</i>	17
<b>2 The diversity of Master's provision, <i>Pauline Kneale</i></b>	<b>22</b>
The Master's market	22
Quality frameworks	28
<b>3 Aspects of mastership</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1 Master's education in China, <i>Danqing Liu and Jinghua Liu</i>	36
3.2 The Master's experience in Canada, <i>Celia Popovic</i>	38
3.3 The influence of Bologna on the student experience: a case study from Portugal, <i>Ana Baptista and Ana Cabral</i>	40
3.4 Exploring the experience of and support needs of part-time Master's students, <i>Julie Anderson, Valerie Huggins and Louise Winfield</i>	43
Conclusion	53

**Part 2 Transition matters**

<b>4</b>	<b>Transition issues for course designers</b>	<b>57</b>
4.1	Transition to postgraduate study: overlooked and underestimated, <i>Jane Tobbell and Victoria L. O'Donnell</i>	57
4.2	Principles for reviewing the taught postgraduate induction curricula, <i>Julie Rattray and Jan Smith</i>	61
4.3	Effective interventions for maintaining Master's student motivation, <i>Michelle Reid, Sonia Hood and Kim Shahabudin</i>	64
4.4	Issues and resources for transition: a personal reflection, <i>Pauline Deutz</i>	71
<b>5</b>	<b>Effective induction activities</b>	<b>76</b>
5.1	The Belonging Cube: an induction activity to recognise and celebrate diversity, <i>Mark Sutcliffe and Ruth Matheson</i>	76
5.2	Using formative assessment during induction, <i>Ruth Cross</i>	79
5.3	Exploring critical thinking with Chinese students during induction, <i>Rong Huang</i>	87
5.4	Study skills for Master's level, 'through the looking glass' of Chinese students, <i>Marina Orsini-Jones, Ying Zhao and Xuemei Wang</i>	97
	Conclusion	100

**Part 3 Effective experiential learning**

<b>6</b>	<b>Supporting international postgraduate learners across a business school, <i>Gillian Byrne and Halina Harvey</i></b>	<b>105</b>
	Contextualisation of academic skills within subject specialisms	105
	Putting theory into practice	108
	Assessment	111
	Conclusion	115
<b>7</b>	<b>Writing matters</b>	<b>117</b>
7.1	Supporting students to develop Master's level writing skills, <i>Clare Furneaux</i>	117
7.2	Reflective writing with students on an LLM for practising lawyers, <i>Jane Ching</i>	123
7.3	Teacher-student experiences of collaborative writing at Master's level, <i>Emily Beaumont and Ken Gale</i>	126
	Conclusion	134

<b>8</b>	<b>Integrating university-wide support</b>	<b>135</b>
8.1	Central support for Master's student dissertation work, <i>Tina Ramkalawan and Emily Danvers</i>	135
8.2	Employability skills for Master's students, <i>Debbi Marais</i>	139
	Conclusion	143
<b>9</b>	<b>Problem-based learning in practice</b>	<b>144</b>
9.1	Using problem-based learning in a Master's level computing module, <i>Chris Beaumont</i>	145
9.2	'Real-world' student experience at Master's level in Art and Design: case studies from Glass and Ceramics, <i>Kevin Petrie, Andrew Livingstone, Jeffery Sarmiento and Cate Watkinson</i>	149
9.3	Issues for professional Master's: bringing the real world into the classroom, <i>Joanna Drugan</i>	158
	Conclusion	169
<b>Part 4 Assessment</b>		
<b>10</b>	<b>Assessing well at Master's level, <i>Sally Brown</i></b>	<b>173</b>
	Introduction	173
	Distinguishing Master's and undergraduate level expectations	174
	Assessment methods and approaches in use at Master's level	176
	Good practice in assessment at M-level	177
	Conclusion	182
<b>11</b>	<b>Creative assessments</b>	<b>183</b>
11.1	Using blogs when assessing Master's level Childhood and Youth Studies students to foster skills and confidence, <i>Emma Bond and Stuart Agnew</i>	183
11.2	Using portfolios to assess M-level Music Performance students, <i>Laura Ritchie</i>	185
11.3	Authentic assessment in an MEd Psychology of Education, <i>Sue Palmer-Conn</i>	186
11.4	A group work assessment for distance learners on an MSc Facilities Management programme, <i>Chris Garbett</i>	188
11.5	Patchwork portfolio assessment, <i>Mark Sutcliffe and Ruth Matheson</i>	189
11.6	Managing student diversity and learning through group formative assessment, <i>Adam John Ritchie and Emma Plugge</i>	192
	Mastering Master's level assessment: beyond the dissertation	200

**Part 5 Curriculum design**

<b>12 Curriculum design to provide learning as a social practice,</b> <i>Andrew Cramp</i>	<b>205</b>
Pedagogical design	206
Reflections and lessons learnt	207
<b>13 Lessons learned from distance learning,</b> <i>Helen Durham and Linda See</i>	<b>209</b>
The MSc in GIS distance learning programme	210
Lessons learned	211
Are distance learning degrees as ‘good’ as face-to-face courses?	216
Conclusion	216
<b>14 Curriculum opportunities</b>	<b>218</b>
14.1 Many amongst equals: the challenge of teaching and working in partnership with tutor-practitioners, <i>Bernard Lisewski</i>	218
14.2 Embedding reflective practice and creativity to link a modular curriculum, <i>Muireann O’Keeffe and         Roisin Donnelly</i>	225
14.3 Designing a Master’s programme in GIST to meet professional expectations in the workplace, <i>Chris Lukinbeal, Janice Monk and Iris Patten</i>	229
14.4 Cross-crediting a Master’s programme in the UK and Pakistan, <i>Janet Strivens and Ian Willis</i>	232
<b>15 Rethinking Master’s level design and support,</b> <i>Pauline Kneale, Sally Brown and Phil Race</i>	<b>238</b>
Pre-course design considerations	238
Designing M-level programmes	241
Advising Master’s students	244
Conclusion	246
<b>16 Afterword, <i>Pauline Kneale and Sally Brown</i></b>	<b>248</b>
<i>References</i>	252
<i>Index</i>	276

## Part 1

# The Master's experience

Working with academics exploring issues in taught Master's degree provision consistently indicates gaps in our pedagogic thinking and writing about higher education (HE) practices at this level. At the same time the nature of work is changing, problems that provide challenges in the workplace are becoming more complex, and our technologies are changing in ways that mean students starting a Master's degree are likely to find themselves in three to five years working on issues that are currently unknown and with technologies that are not yet invented (Knight and Page, 2007; NMC, 2015). Our graduates need to be flexible, motivated and resilient.

Policy makers in the UK are increasingly focusing on Master's and higher degrees. Earlier policy reports highlighted skills, employability and market issues (BIS, 2010; HEPI, 2004; Park, 2008). More recently, accessibility and widening participation issues have been raised (HEC, 2012). The HEC report encapsulates aspects of the market that are equally true internationally:

For many students, postgraduate education is a worthwhile investment. There is still a clear postgraduate wage premium relative to those possessing only undergraduate degrees. Postgraduate education also facilitates access to competitive parts of the labour market. There are a number of areas where it appears a postgraduate degree is becoming a de facto requirement for entry.

HEC, 2012, p. 12

The evolving UK postgraduate picture is signalled by the report's statement:

Coasting on our past successes is not an option. Postgraduate capacity must be at the heart of our national plans for long-term competitiveness and growth. Failure to do so puts at risk our future prosperity.

HEC, 2012, p. 18

The ambition in this text is to draw together a diverse collection of ideas, practice and student provision, with the aim of inspiring colleagues involved with taught Master's degrees. Sitting between the Bachelor's and Research degrees, Master's level (M-level) learning is a perfect space for developing research, professional and workplace expertise, and developing greater independence and confidence as a learner and creator of knowledge. The book excludes Research Master's degrees, MPhil or PhD matters, which are considered elsewhere (Marshall and Green, 2010; Petre and Rugg, 2010; Phillips and Pugh, 2010). The intended audience is anyone teaching or supporting M-level learners, new lecturers and those creating or revising programmes or modules. Contributions vary widely in style and length with overview and reflective pieces on discipline and generic issues, and many practical examples of classroom practice. The contributions have been themed, but a number of chapters overlap theme areas, addressing for example curriculum design as well as assessment. While some readers may find this disjointed, it reflects the nature of pedagogic work in this area internationally at this time. Many contributions are deliberately short to enable us to capture a range of experiences, and enable colleagues to consider the different ways in which Master's teaching can be approached, with some insights into the way students experience their programmes.

The learning experience of any student is diverse and individual. The opening chapter aims to capture a snapshot of experiences through the authors' reflections on their own experiences, as staff and as students. The unique narratives from Bill Lindquist and Valerie Huggins provide insights into working with and being taught as postgraduates in different contexts, and provide context for later chapters. The work of Winfield, and of Mayo and Low show how they have used different research approaches to tease out the evidence of student needs in Health and in Theatre Studies programmes. Their methodologies are widely applicable, and they also show how the student voice resonating through the findings can be used to provoke and lever further curriculum developments. The last section scopes the range of challenges that this book addresses.

The Diversity of Master's Provision, Chapter 2, surveys the frameworks in which M-level is situated internationally. The array of qualifications, markets, and marketing potentially presents a confused picture to the student, while quality is assured through national frameworks that have some commonalities, and distinctive features.

Master's programmes attract large numbers of international, part-time and professional participants. Chapter 3 aims to capture a flavour of the breadth of provision, and related issues. A short case study from Liu and

Liu reflects on their experience of M-level teaching and assessment in China and the USA, and gives an excellent insight into the growing market in China. Clearly, as Popovic reflects, the experience of Canadian students is very different, and from Portugal we get a flavour of the evolving curriculum as policy interventions drive curriculum change. Drawing on extensive experience from Education, Nursing and Midwifery, and amplified by research with academic colleagues and discussions with current students, the authors of Chapter 3.4 make suggestions for practice, challenging some of the taken-for-granted support structures for students' professional development, questioning whether they may undermine rather than enhance a student's progress. Their thinking, while drawn from first-hand experience with part-time, mature professionals, is readily applicable to many Master's students.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# 1 Master's perspectives

*Keywords: flexibility, motivation, part-time study, student experience, student-centred.*

*The graduate students come with a wealth of experience that they contribute to the class. It is heartening to teach them.*

Madgerie Jameson-Charles, Lecturer, *University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago*

The theme that most often emerges from research with those teaching at Master's level is the pleasure and challenge that these students bring to the classroom experience; with students the research often surfaces tensions and concerns that they seek to hide. In this chapter, two authors reflect on their experiences as teachers and students. It is vital to remember that at M-level student diversity is huge (McEwen et al., 2008; Waller, 2006) and there is no 'right' approach to student support. While many students are content with their courses and experience, in 2014 the UK Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) of taught Master's students studying in 100 UK higher education institutions (HEIs) found that 'almost 25% were not happy with the support they have received for their learning from staff members on their particular course', and concerns around assessment and feedback, indicating there is opportunity for reflection and sharing of M-level practice (Soilemetzidis, Bennett and Leman, 2014, p. 29).

Hearing the student voice and feeding it into course design considerations is essential. In the later parts of the chapter, Winfield and then Mayo and Low present short case examples of their research with their students and with employers. Their results reinforce the need for better understanding of the taught postgraduate student experience, and how it differs from the undergraduate story.

## ► 1.1 Being a student and teacher

Bill Lindquist, *Hamline University, USA*

Disheveled with bushy grey hair and in a misbuttoned, brown cardigan sweater, the keynote speaker spoke of the power of rich dynamic

learning environments to ignite the creative minds of students in our schools. For me it was a life changing moment as I sat spellbound listening to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Professor Seymour Papert, the developer of the Logo computer language. Seldom has one speaker had such profound influence on my professional career. That next week, I attended an info-session at the University of St. Thomas, applied, and began my Master's program with a focus in learning technology the following fall. I began to look forward to Wednesday evenings when I had the pleasure of stepping away from the management of 28 ten-year-olds in my fifth grade school classroom to gather with like-minded peers, who were excited to vision, discuss, and debate the grand ideas of learning. As an adult, graduate student, I had a profound appreciation for the opportunity to dedicate time and energy to advance my understanding of the foundations of my teaching profession.

That spark ignited a path that brought me through my Master's programme and directly into my doctoral studies. Today, I teach in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) programme at Hamline University, a private, liberal arts university in Saint Paul, Minnesota. I have the privilege of working with graduate level, pre-service teacher candidates that have chosen to return to school to pursue a second career or further their undergraduate work. Our students come from the ranks of Business, Law, Science and Engineering that speak to an awakened desire to serve in the human service sector with the potential to touch the lives of children and adolescents at a pivotal time in their development and maturation.

These Master's level students have made a conscious decision to commit vast amounts of time, energy, and financial resources to return to school. Like me, they have a deep-felt call and passion for the work ahead. I know that during my own undergraduate time I faced the competition between my studies and breaking away from my parents, experimentation with being an independent adult, and finding the ability to follow through with the expectations of a college education. I was a different person making a different student journey by the time I entered my graduate studies. I see many similarities in my current Master's students, who not unlike me then, join together with me once a week to vision, discuss, and debate the grand ideas of educating children.

Hamline is committed to a student-centred, constructivist approach to learning. We teach this commitment as powerful pedagogy for our candidates to utilise in their own classrooms. More importantly, we teach this approach through modelling within our classes on campus. This is built around a trust in our students' commitment to learning, a grading practice that honours that trust, a responsiveness to student ideas, and integration of a language that promotes students at the centre.

Approaching my teaching from a stance of trust in our students' commitment and effort allows me to step away from the myriad ways we try to build in accountability to make sure they complete readings, consider ideas, etc. I am able to set out a schedule of readings and assignments with the knowledge my students will use them to advance their understanding. I post a due date for assignments to be submitted and my definition of what a due date means. The date offers an orderly time to submit work. I am prepared to respond with feedback and students remain on a sustainable pace. I work over the next week to offer feedback. Any submission during that week is respectful to my workflow and honours a differentiation of theirs. I accept the assignment for full credit. With rare exceptions, this policy has worked well. My students have appreciated the flexibility it allows as they manage full lives of work, family, and school.

We discuss language supportive of maintaining students at the centre. I stay away from 'directing' them in what to do and 'correcting' their work. I describe a task with a focus on 'we' and 'provide feedback' to their submissions. The pursuit of M-level work carries a focus on the student as a scholar. My job is to provide a learning environment to help them to be successful.

I have found great pleasure and satisfaction in working with Master's level students. They carry the motivation and desire to excel borne out of an intentional commitment and sacrifice of their time, energy, and financial resources. They come to class prepared to fully engage, positioning themselves to gain as much as they can from the learning community surrounding them.

## ► 1.2 My Master's experience as student and teacher

Valerie Huggins, *Plymouth University, UK*

I had several motivations for undertaking a Master's degree. I was a mature entrant into the teaching profession, having gained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Open University over six years while raising a family of four children, followed by a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). I perceived my degree as not being as valid or high status as one from a 'proper' university. External pressures had led to my strategy of deliberately doing just enough to scrape through each module. My Master's degree was a way to prove to myself that I could study at a higher level and to 'top-up' my degree. I sensed that in my career I was in competition with younger and perhaps better qualified colleagues, and this was a way to improve my prospects for promotion.

The PGCE had been my first experience of being at a university. I had really enjoyed being a student, part of a learning community, but it went by so fast. I wanted more. The PGCE is a one-year course and we only touched on many topics briefly, with no time to consider issues in depth, so I was left unsure about many of the educational issues I subsequently encountered in the classroom. After a few years teaching children aged five to seven, I was appointed Foundation Stage leader with responsibility for teaching in the Nursery. At the same time, a Master's in Education with modules on Early Years education was introduced at a local UK university. The degree consisted of five modules and a dissertation to be completed within five years. I was able to choose modules to fit my learning needs. These were delivered in ten weekly sessions from six to nine pm, after a day's teaching. This offered me the validation I was seeking, the opportunity to study again and the promise of relevant subject knowledge for my new role.

I was by no means happy with a number of aspects of the Master's programme. On reflection, I was very much influenced at that time by ideas about teaching and learning based upon my own experience as a pupil at school and upon how I perceived the role of the teacher, and these were often challenged. I found myself frustrated in several sessions by the amount of group discussion and experience sharing. I did not value this sufficiently, seeing the tutor as the 'expert' there to impart her knowledge. I wanted to be 'taught'.

Having completed two modules successfully, I withdrew from the next one on inclusion, even though I knew it would set my progress back by at least six months, because of the tutor's stance. He was a passionate advocate for a totally inclusive education system, with no special units or special schools. I was working at a school with a very successful language unit, and had also experienced working at a residential special school. At the time I fundamentally disagreed with his stance. However, I did not vocalise this in the sessions, just becoming increasingly passive, uncomfortable and resentful. I went so far as to decide that there was no point in submitting the assignment, as I would fail if I expressed my opinions, and so I withdrew. Looking back on it now, I recognise that my perspectives were equally valid but my refusal to listen to alternatives restricted my learning considerably.

During the next module I again found myself in an uncomfortable place with a tutor whose favourite word was 'paradigm', and try as I might, I could not grasp the meaning of this. She clearly assumed that it was obvious, and together with other academic language examples this became a real barrier to my engagement and learning on the module, putting me back into the position of 'my degree is not good enough, that

is why I do not understand'. Once more I withdrew from challenging or asking questions.

I found the thesis stage particularly hard, but I made it difficult for myself. I did not seek sufficient support, not wanting to be seen either as inadequate or as a bother. I had a lack of confidence in my own ideas and I was reluctant to share my writing with the tutor in draft form. As a result I had very few tutorials and so had to battle through very much on my own. I scraped a pass, but clearly opportunities were lost for much deeper involvement and understanding.

The immediate impact of the degree upon my practice in school was limited. During the time I was studying I received mixed responses from my colleagues. Many were supportive but some were resentful. This meant that some of the benefits that could have been obtained by cascading and sharing my learning through explicitly drawing on it were lost, as well as the chance for me to strengthen and develop it by explaining and discussing it with others. Reading and the use of theoretical ideas were not valued, not part of the community of practice in the staff room, and I censored what I talked about.

The outcomes of getting the degree were, however, positive for my career. It helped me to get promotion into advisory work and subsequently to enter HE as a Teacher Educator. It provided me with the status I needed to secure a year's Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) secondment to work with Ethiopian Teacher Educators, who had issues with my gender, but huge respect for educational awards. It also developed my taste for and understanding of the benefits of underpinning my work with appropriate theory and research findings and so led directly to me undertaking a Doctorate in Education (EdD).

Returning to study for the EdD has broadened and deepened my knowledge, and returning to the classroom for its taught modules has given me further insights into the experience of our students, as well as improving my understanding of the role of the tutor in facilitating and enabling learning at this higher level of study. My own experience as a Master's student had made clear to me that many of the barriers to successful M-level study are personal, psychological and concern issues of identity, and I recognise this very clearly in many of the mature students that I encounter as a tutor.

Often I am teaching a group of experienced professionals, who have considerable power in their working environments and are accustomed to having their views and opinions accepted. As a tutor in such a context one needs to be secure in one's own ability to take risks in one's teaching, to provoke discomfort and then to support the students in resolving their dilemmas. The benefits of engaging in an EdD is that not only have I

experienced exactly this process and acknowledged the huge benefits for learning that emerge, but I now also have the theoretical frameworks that underpin and justify such an approach.

Another aspect in which the EdD can be beneficial to a Master's tutor's professional development is that during the modular stage of the EdD, one has to submit work for assessment, not a common experience in PhD study. This can enhance understanding of the process and the difficulties around, for example, assessment criteria and deadlines, often a stumbling block for students. Moreover, during the thesis stage, I was engaged in an intense student–tutor relationship with my supervisors. This has made me keenly aware of a whole further range of issues, including the nature of the perceived power imbalance, the vulnerability of exposing one's fledgling ideas for feedback and the potential difficulties and misunderstandings that inevitably arise during such a process. Engagement in a programme such as an EdD has shown me that, as well as the important dimension of developing a student's content knowledge, considerable consideration needs to be given to the personal and psychological dynamics of learning and to the building of effective working relationships in order to effectively support a student through taught Master's study.

These personal accounts of the student and teacher experience raise a range of fascinating points, particularly about the need for student support to learn effectively. The next two short studies outline the research process used with Healthcare and with Theatre Studies students to better understand student needs.

### ► 1.3 Researching the Master's student experience

Louise Winfield, *Plymouth University, UK*

This example provides an insight into students' experience, elicited through a longitudinal study with part-time MSc Advanced Healthcare Practice students who are managing their studies around their workplace commitments. Exploring the personal and professional development of these students had the specific objectives of:

1. identifying the impact of M-level studies on:
  - a. personal and professional development;
  - b. improvements in knowledge, skills and enhanced clinical practice;
2. determining the perceived influence of these changes on the graduate's working environment.

The research design could be used to gain insights into the effectiveness of any programme.

## **Research process**

Data were collected via a longitudinal study following one cohort throughout their three-year course, and a cross-sectional study collecting data from students in their second and third years via semi-structured interviews.

In the longitudinal study, where all students were involved, data were gathered at the end of each year via focus groups, chaired by a neutral researcher, where students were encouraged to contemplate, discuss and scrutinise their practice. A semi-structured schedule of questions guided the discussion. This methodology encouraged participants' interaction, including interaction with the researcher, to further explore and clarify their knowledge, experiences and perceptions. This is something that may be difficult to extract from a one-to-one interview.

In the cross-sectional study, where students were off-campus, telephone interviews were used (Barriball et al., 1996; Cassani et al., 1992). While this study primarily captured the views of one cohort, the results were sense checked with succeeding cohorts.

Interview transcript analysis was based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) inductive coding technique. The emerging themes in the data were identified initially by independent readers of the data, and then discussed, compared and refined to ensure there was agreement on the final selection of themes.

## **Discussion**

The analysis elicited five major themes: the role and promotion, time management, clinical skills, confidence and credibility. The themes as exemplified by the student quotes below provided the teaching team with evidence that could be used to refine the programme, which in this case involved discussions with the National Health Service (NHS) commissioners and other stakeholders who have oversight of the programme.

### **Role and promotion**

Promotion was cited as a motivator for undertaking the MSc, with some clinicians wanting to remain in the clinical area close to patient care. Graduates of the programme can apply for senior clinical positions and still care for patients:

*It gives me a ticket to be able to go on and do what I want to do which is eventually I would like to become a consultant nurse.*

Some students had encouragement from their employers to commence the course and others were *'told to commence'*. Being told to attend a programme is not uncommon, but the student experience is, in my experience, different when interest and enthusiasm are limited. A number of specialist clinicians wanted to broaden their skill set to help them look at a patient more holistically:

*I work in a specialist area as well and you can get quite blinkered and doing this does open your mind to a whole range of other things.*

A number of students changed their role in the second and third years, achieving posts that had more clinical autonomy and decision-making within them. Graduates can apply for specific, more senior posts that require this qualification, where they can impact on care delivery at a strategic level:

*I do a lot more strategic work, still clinically focused but using that clinical experience to really push service developments.*

### **Time management**

First-year students seemed all consumed with the amount of reading and work needed to complete the assessments. Students were almost in shock, and talked about not seeing families and feeling guilty if they went out for the day.

*It almost takes the enjoyment out of it because I think you should be able to enjoy this sort of course and the aspects of what you are learning.*

Isolation was raised as an issue and common problem for part-time students:

*You can't sit at lunchtime and mull over different thoughts that go through your mind because there is no one there who even cares really, so that is the hard bit, it's ploughing on when you feel like you are out there on your own.*

The more successful students tended to have structured and disciplined approaches to their studies. They understood that at times they had to prioritise their studies before social events; however, keeping a balance is really important to retain perspective:

*Losing your social life has been really difficult I think, just having to say no to friends when they say [they are] doing something this weekend and you have to think really hard about what is important.*

Support networks are vital to enable students to communicate when they are away from the university. The IT infrastructure of virtual networks allows effective peer-peer support.

## Clinical skills

There were many examples, particularly in the second- and third-year interviews, which illustrated development in clinical skills. There is a greater sense of mastery in the language these students used:

*I think that like when I am admitting someone and I listen to their chest I am listening to that chest differently because I am looking for different things ... I don't think I would have done that I would have just said yes that child is wheezy. I don't think I actually realise until I have find something or somebody asks me.*

*I think I have got more systematic in my approach, I think through things, causes and symptom sorting, I am much more with it.*

## Confidence

All students seemed to have gone through a confidence dip or some sort of self-doubt. This is not just related to their knowledge base but also involves the confidence to assert their opinions or feel on a level playing field with other colleagues:

*So to an extent I was intimidated by other healthcare workers and I found it hard to break into that and articulate my view point.*

Students seemed to go through a transition period which really affected their confidence and caused them to question their past practice:

*'Why am I here?' and 'Why on earth did I start this?'*

The timing of this change is different for every student but is generally around the middle to the end of the first year and can last into the second year or beyond. Students begin not only to question their knowledge base but also to question how they have done things in the past, and how they might have acted if they had possessed the knowledge that they now have:

*It is a scary thought but I would have changed my actions with that patient.*

By year three this seemed to have turned around; not only did the students notice a change in themselves, but their colleagues also commented on a change in their practice:

*I've had comments on my clinical knowledge from colleagues – especially doctors, I think they are genuinely surprised as how I assess the patient and make management plans.*

## Credibility

Students felt achieving a Master's gave them credibility in the workplace; they perceived colleagues treated them differently, with more respect.

*Have academic credibility because of the work that I have done.*

*I know there has been a large volume of work but I really felt that I have achieved something completing it and that is probably what MSc should be or that level of study should be and I did not think that it was above and beyond what I would have expected, but I just hadn't experienced it before and did not know quite what to expect at the beginning.*

Regardless of the discipline or style of the Master's programme you are running, this research methodology will elicit the information you need to understand if you are to achieve the goals you have set. The results of this study highlighted to the team where we needed to add support, and what systems and processes we needed to put in place to enable an enhanced learning environment for our students. It gave us more than the standard end-of-module comments. We gained a much deeper understanding of what it is like to study with us, which is vital for future planning, and has materially changed certain parts of our programme. The student voice provided effective and compelling evidence that enabled us to also work more effectively with our external stakeholders.

The theme of working with the wider stakeholder group is also raised in this next case where engagement with employers to understand the evolving nature of the theatre workplace and employment is essential.

### ► 1.4 Understanding students' needs in theatre practice

Sue Mayo, *Goldsmiths College, UK*

Katharine Low, *Royal Central School of Speech & Drama, UK*

Students come with different backgrounds and experience, and needed research in a variety of settings to tease out different aspects. Our aim was to explore different approaches to teaching MA Applied Theatre courses and to develop additional teaching materials that would be supportive (Low and Mayo, 2013a, 2013b). While we both teach in academic settings, we recognise our own and our students' different routes into teaching or taking the MA: the apprenticeship route (Mayo) and the academic route (Low). We were curious to observe what the differences

were between these two routes, particularly in the current context where the field of Applied Theatre is becoming increasingly taught at MA level. Applied Theatre practice builds on a broad pedagogy (Hepplewhite, 2013; Leavy, 2009; Stuart Fisher and Oman, 2011) where active and problem-based learning and reflection are the main pedagogical features.

Our research involved:

- ▶ face-to-face interviews with leading practitioners in the field of applied and socially engaged theatre who had not come through the academic route;
- ▶ an online survey of employers of freelance practitioners;
- ▶ discussions at practice-based research events with current students and graduates of MA courses and with teachers of Applied Theatre practice.

Towards the end of the research we curated a round table to further interrogate the key findings. In addition to the written report (Low and Mayo, 2013a), we produced three teaching films focused on particular themes with accompanying activities (see Gallery tab in Low and Mayo, 2013b).

### ***Findings***

Our research with both those engaged in the academic study of Applied Theatre, and practitioners who had learned through experience and mentoring, revealed three priorities common to all:

- ▶ the need to experiment and to take risks in order to learn;
- ▶ the need to take time to reflect and absorb the learning;
- ▶ the need for students to form a support network with a wide range of people, both peers and influential figures, including teachers, mentors and key theorists.

We then explored how these might best be achieved in the teaching of MA courses:

#### **The need to experiment and to take risks in order to learn**

While many students felt that they had expanded their skills and horizons during their MA study, others reported high levels of anxiety, caused partly by the discovery of the sheer complexity of the field of work, and the many issues needing to be considered when working in the community and/or with vulnerable groups. The assessment culture also contributed, with students understandably keen to get good grades, and therefore made more risk averse.

*If you want to get everything right you end up in an anxiety vortex, and you can't do anything!*

Many of the teachers of Applied Theatre spoke of their own commitment to dialogic Freirian teaching approaches (Freire, 1970) which was crucial in terms of reflecting the values of the field of work itself. They underlined the need to maintain a commitment to the creation of a teaching space where students felt safe to try out alternative methodologies and approaches:

*It's being responsive to them, talking to them, listening to them, creating a safe environment, creating space.*

(Experienced teacher/practitioner)

### **The need to take time to reflect and absorb the learning**

Practitioners who had not undertaken MA study saw it as a chance to reflect, and avoid the danger of just 'tumbling on', without adequate pause for thought and evaluation. Many teachers identified the sheer breadth of the field and the need to cover as much as possible as a factor that could lead to a sense of congestion. All underlined the need for time to think and to absorb, and for the need to learn how to discuss and to develop critical thinking.

*I had picked up bits of training along the way, I hadn't had a rigorous training in applied drama and ... I didn't know the foundations of the theory behind it, and the MA really filled that gap really in my professional life actually, and it also ... gave me a network of people ... it gave me a slightly different, an academic and theoretical perspective rather than just a practical perspective and it contextualised everything I was doing and gave me much more confidence and also allowed me to reflect on my practice and hopefully allowed me to make it better and it continues to do that.*

### **The need for a support network, both of peers and of influential figures such as teachers, mentors and key theorists**

All our respondents cited the sense of a network, or a cohort, as key to their development and ongoing growth. Many students spoke of a sense of having previously been developing work alone, and finding that the course gave them a sense of a laboratory in which to build a good group with whom to learn and discover. This was clearly most possible when the numbers in a cohort of students were of a size that facilitated group identity. This also underlined the benefits of the students being aware of how

much they could learn from each other, as well as from their lecturers. As one graduate noted:

*I think there is so much sort of, sociological, artistic, community led and academic force behind the applied field that it really needs to be in an institution that supports and recognises that completely.*

Indeed, academic reading provided a context and a sense of a community of researchers, with many graduates speaking about having these significant voices with them all the time. The experienced artists interviewed could all name both significant mentors and peers as absolutely key to their learning:

*the two things that run through all the people who I have admired in their work or the three maybe are, passion, absolute passion and enthusiasm and a connection with a bigger picture, a bigger agenda somewhere behind the work and hard work, and being prepared to absolutely slog it.*

Experienced artist filmed for the research

Our recommendations include:

- ▶ finding ways of articulating success/failure differently, through forms of assessment that recognise the need to research and experiment;
- ▶ building mutually beneficial relationships with arts organisations and practitioners;
- ▶ articulating the MA courses as part of lifelong learning, rather than as a definitive training.

For students, there was sometimes a sense of hope that the course would somehow be a 'complete' training, but all those we met who had graduated had a very clear sense that the learning was ongoing:

*it's an ability to have a discussion about that what things to be looking out for in your work and to kind of develop a confidence to be open about things*

*I thought I was coming to the end, but actually it is just the beginning!*

### ▶ 1.5 Defining issues for mastery

Pauline Kneale, Plymouth University, UK

*Master's students should be drivers, not passengers.*

Quality Assurance Agency Scotland, 2013, p. 5

In the highly competitive global market for M-level learning, there is a need for distinctive innovative Master's programmes which enable students to develop to a higher level of academic learning, confidently tackling complex, 'wicked' problems (Balint et al., 2011; Conklin, 2003; Knight and Page, 2007). Pedagogic considerations to deliver this mastery agenda include students as researchers (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014); HEI-student partnership concept delegating control of learning to students where possible (May and Felsing 2010, p. 32); self-regulated learning concepts (Boekaerts et al., 2000; Zimmerman, 2000); and Rosenberg's (2012) journey from novice to mastery. Rosenberg speaks of increasing fluency, learning agility and shareable knowledge developing through the stages of mastery; moving from education and training (show me how) at the novice stage through to collaboration and problem solving where 'I create my own learning' at the Master-Expert level. In essence, M-level practice should place emphasis on students doing with limited didactic telling. Sadler (2010, p. 542), in his excellent analysis of the problems with feedback, makes the point that 'For many students, understanding the key concepts and their implications for practice are non-trivial. Simply being told, even through multiple messages, is rarely effective.'

Challenging issues raised regularly by academics who discuss Master's teaching can be encapsulated under the following ten headings:

1. Entry requirements: are they at the right level; how can early modules challenge all students?

Should there be pre-course activity for some students to 'level up', and parallel modules for those who have more background on entry? Should we provide something different for students with strong undergraduate or professional experience, avoiding any suggestion of students marking time as the class is 'levelled up'? In essence, should there be some modules that reinforce or revisit undergraduate essential knowledge or skills, while other students tackle different projects or topics to build on their prior learning? This is especially an issue where a specific discipline background is not a degree prerequisite. Chapter 11.6 addresses this issue, the authors choosing group work rather than streaming.

2. Induction, transition and generic university support

It is generally assumed that students have completed an undergraduate degree, know what they are doing, and therefore induction is brief or unnecessary. Many academic staff are unaware of how frequently Master's students use university-wide learning development,

study skills, counselling and writing support opportunities, often with a plea '*not to tell my tutor*'. Part 2 looks at examples of support available, and at ways to research students' needs. What is clear is that course design needs to embed induction and transition practices, so that staff and students value and reinforce support.

3. Level and standards: what is the level of mastersness?

How do you know when the level is achieved? Are Master's more of, or just harder than, the feeder undergraduate scheme? How is professionalism captured and engendered? There are some general answers to this in Chapter 2 through consideration of the national quality frameworks, and from the many authors who come from education, healthcare and legal backgrounds where the professional elements are core.

4. How do we spotlight taught Master's programmes for quality enhancement, when developments more often focus on undergraduate programmes?

Peer review and team contributions at this level are generally described as 'patchy'. Comments from two staff appear to be typical:

*Everyone just assumes that you can teach MSc. You just get on with it. It is where you do your own research thing, so I suppose people are taking it for granted that what you do will be fine*

*We are all following our own specialities and it just seems to happen. I have a mentor who came to my undergraduate lectures but no one who comes to listen to the Masters class.*

Kneale, 2005, p. 13

Programmes can be slow to evolve, possibly because team teaching is rarer than at undergraduate level, it is harder to influence pedagogies with the 'solo' module teachers. Wicked and interdisciplinary problems need group inputs with experts from inside and outside the academy, which needs multi-disciplinary team teaching and support.

5. How do we manage diversity, international, home, part-time, mature or disabled students, high-flyers and others?

It is important that students take risks in learning, thinking, research and writing. How do we enable this when they also want the security of a high mark? A number of chapters look at writing, but taking risks can be harder to manage. What is helpful is making assessment more about the process of discovery, and less about an expected outcome.

Many engineering and environmental problems, for example, will have multiple future 'solutions' or 'scenarios'. What matters is explaining how the solution has been determined, its advantages and disadvantages, costs and benefits, and expecting that every student's solution will be different.

6. What do graduates really need? Is M-level genuinely transformative?

Most Master's graduates do not become PhD students. Never mind what is interesting academically; what does the workplace need in the next five to ten years? How do we balance curriculum activities for knowledge, professional and technical skills and attitudes?

Wenger (1998, p. 226) suggested we could differentiate between learning and merely being active in that 'learning – whatever form it takes – changes who we are by changing our ability to participate, to belong, to negotiate meaning'. This presents a challenging standard for staff delivering at this level, to recognise and reflect on how our students are changing through their Master's learning process, and how it changes us as teachers. We should also reflect on whether that 'change' is sustained over time, where staff and graduates are enthusiastic learners taking ownership of the future developments in their discipline or professional areas.

7. People working together

Currently there is generally an emphasis on solo work, but people in business and research need team players. Digitally literate graduates with experience of online and blended learning are needed in a globally connected workplace, where they can confidently build communities of practice. How do we know when online and blended working provides effective learning? Are our modules using the most appropriate, work relevant software and devices?

8. Assessment may, cynically, be considered to be best defined as more than final-year undergraduate

What other options are there that will enable and reinforce learning? What approaches help students to really engage with the issues? The chapters in Part 4 provide a comprehensive set of examples, and make reference to many more.

9. Is a thesis still a relevant capstone assessment?

Should a research journal article or business report, or other relevant output, replace it? Are programmes with no capstone research project, or equivalent, demonstrating mastersness? There are many texts that look at the dissertation process in detail, so we have elected not

to cover it in this book, but it is a critical question in course design (see also Hill et al., 2011; Race, 2014, pp. 107–117).

10. Finally and perhaps most challenging is the question: are we using a pre-existing form to fit a new educational demand?

Is the Master's framework delivering what people, businesses and researchers need? If not, what could it look like? There are many shapes and styles of Master's learning. M-level study can be a bridge between Bachelor's and Research degrees, an opportunity for increasing research, professional and workplace capability, and for becoming more creative, independent and confident.

The perspectives drawn together in this book do not answer all the questions above, but do cover aspects of most issues; there is clearly more to explore. Throughout this book authors recognise that effective learning at M-level needs to be at a high level, with students tackling complex problems, supported and facilitated through active learning and problem solving, and limited traditional content-delivery. Courses need to provide the right scaffolding to allow students to progress to Rosenberg's mastery or expert stage, to let students take control of their learning and to understand how to tackle wicked problems, accepting that solutions will not necessarily emerge. The authors in the first part of this chapter have raised many issues including the need for supportive induction, networking, creating self-confidence, space to take risks, and allowing students to develop autonomy amongst others. This chimes with the comment that 'You cannot expect autonomy on day 1 – but it is what you are aiming for' (Quality Assurance Agency Scotland, 2013, p. 5).

The next chapter explores the diversity of Master's provision in different countries and addresses crucial issues around curriculum marketing, design, delivery, assessment and evaluation. Academics are aware of their national quality standards, but perhaps these should be made more visible to students. Awareness of students' needs, and the impact of the classroom approach, the experience of tutors, and the vulnerability of learners, all point to the need for careful course design and active support for Master's students.

As nations move ever closer towards congruence on standards, as students' expectations rise and as employers' needs become ever more prominent in setting the agenda for Master's provision, the chapters that follow cannot answer all the associated questions but we seek to establish the main issues and provide a toolkit to enable thinking and development that will work towards resolving them.

# Index

- academic identity, 56, 224
- accreditation, 123, 203, 210, 233–37
- action plan, 84–86, 124, 143
- active learning, 34, 195, 196, 208,  
*See also problem-based learning*
- Art and Design, 149–58
- assessment, 171–200, *See self-assessment*
- employer engagement, 179
  - feedback, 178
  - group work, 179, 188
  - induction, 177
  - methods, 111, 176, 235
- Assimilate Project, 173
- authentic
- assessment, 173, 177, 178, 184, 187, 242
  - assignments, 103
  - experience, 149
  - tasks, 176
- autonomy, 21, 33, 57, 222, 228, 241, 248
- belonging cube, 77
- blended learning, 20, 205, 220
- blogs, 49, 177, 183
- Bloom's taxonomy, 91, 95, 97, 124
- Bologna, 23, 40, 159
- buddy schemes, 73
- career, 48, 136, 139–43, 153, 231, 243
- Ceramics, 149–58
- China, 25, 36–38, 87–94
- collaborative writing, 126–34
- communication skill, 57, 73, 80, 107, 138, 140, 146, 164, 196, 199, 214, 246
- communities of practice, 20, 46, 48, 50, 77, 99, 201, 218, 226
- confidence, 13, 34, 65, 69, 100, 151, 164, 184, 238
- CREAM, 99
- critical thinking, 65, 87–97, 184, 231
- curriculum design, 70, 105, 201, 209, 218, 248
- deep learning, 145, 196, 225, 230
- dissertation, 52–53, 68–69, 135–38, 139, 178, 200, 243
- distance learning, 188–89, 209–17
- diversity, 5, 19, 35, 45, 61, 72, 76, 192–200
- employability, 27, 73, 139–43, 144, 179, 238
- ePortfolio, 226, *See portfolio*
- ethical, 30, 45, 80, 160, 164, 165
- ethics, 62, 197
- ethnographic approach, 57, 118
- European Qualifications Framework, 30
- experiential learning, 77, 103,  
*See problem-based learning*
- feedback, 7, 33, 51, 68, 87, 94, 121, 122, 162, 178, 184, 191, 198, 215, 245
- fees, 26, 38, 72  
*funding*, 60, 158
- flexibility, 24, 144, 205, 211
- formative assessment, 79, 86, 111, 128, 167, 181, 190, 194, 195, 197, 206, 244
- formative feedback, 79, 86, 113, 191, 215
- Geographic Information Science, 209, 211–17

- Geographic Information Systems Technology, 229
- Glass, 149–58
- group work, 179, 183, 188, 193, 199, 220, *See team work*
- Healthcare, 10, 234
- ice-breaker, 76, 228
- IELTS, 73
- Individualised Self-assessment to Enhance Employability (I-SEE), 140
- induction, 18, 51, 60, 61–64, 75, 76–101, 150, 177, 214
- internationalisation, 87, 193
- internship, 40, 42, 157, 231
- Kolb learning cycle, 124
- Language, 73
- learning portfolio, 124
- marketing, 26–28
- marking criteria, 74, 83, 110, 112, 119, 195
- Master's in Education, 8  
Education programme, 23, 205
- Master's in Education, 43–53, 186
- Medicine, 24, 140, 232
- mentoring, 15, 37, 68, 73, 155, 169, 238
- motivation, 7, 44, 64, 183
- networking, 12, 16, 21, 36, 137, 166, 180, 225, 232
- online learning, 205, 221
- online module, 205
- online programme, 26, 210
- partnership, 18, 203, 213, 218, 247
- part-time study, 10, 24, 36, 43–53, 123, 211, 224
- patchwork assignments, 176
- patchwork portfolio, 190
- peer assessment, 180, 195
- peer learning, 205, 218, 224
- peer-peer assessment, 190
- peer-peer discussion, 101
- peer-peer learning, 242
- peer-peer mentoring, 73
- peer-peer network, 46
- peer-peer sharing, 138
- peer-peer support, 12
- personal tutor. *See tutorial*
- PGCAP, 126, 218, 221
- PGCE, 7, 45
- plagiarism, 62, 85, 180, 215
- portfolio, 124, 148, 185, 190–92, *See ePortfolio*
- pre-induction, 72, 77
- problem-based learning, 144–58, 169, 195, 242
- professional, 19, 22, 42, 43, 68, 126, 231
- professional degree, 27, 37
- professional programmes, 26, 29, 179, 249
- professional bodies, 123, 125, 138, 232
- professional development, 10, 208, 229, 230, 231
- professional practice, 144, 149, 159, 185, 218, 222
- professionalism, 30, 44, 55, 167, 230
- programme design, 159, 220, 238, 244
- Programme Focused Assessment Project, 181
- Psychology, 186
- quality assurance, 28, 174, 213, 216, 233, 241
- reading, 110, 114
- reflection, 41, 49, 80, 84, 105, 123, 128–30, 141, 166, 190, 222, 227
- self-reflection, 101, 117
- reflection on action, 176
- reflective writing, 123–25
- resilience, 57, 69, 144, 249
- risk, 9, 15, 19, 32, 123, 167, 201, 228, 238, 248

- scaffolding, 21, 70, 124, 146, 197, 251
- self-assessment, 76, 84, 86, 135, 140, 195, 198
- self-efficacy, 62, 65, 84, 183, 186
- self-regulated learning, 18, 62, 148
- signposting, 72, 114
- skills. *See* study skills
- taxonomy, 80
- social media, 50, 208, 215, 223
- student experience, 10–14, 22, 43, 115, 137, 149, 238, 248
- student identity, 58
- study skills, 75, 76, 97, 118, 209
- summative assessment, 79, 106, 111, 167, 181, 190, 206
- team work, 138, 146, 162, 163, 195, *See group work*
- technology enhanced learning, 34, 183, 226
- Theatre Studies, 14–17
- time management, 12, 47, 66, 108, 141, 160, 214, 231
- transition, 18, 36, 55–75, 105, 136
- Translation Studies, 158–70
- tutor practioners, 218
- tutorial, 9, 51, 52, 59, 84, 85, 111, 190
- writing, 79, 84, 103, 106, 112, 113, 117–22, 136, 190, 228