

## **Student interaction, academic anxiety and belonging: video project**

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### ***Presentation abstract***

This resource showcase session will demonstrate the output from a research project which was presented at ALDinHE conference online last year. The research looked at the experience of Chinese postgraduate students in three areas: student participation, academic anxiety and belonging. The session will briefly outline our project and how we worked with the students to produce the videos.

The project used a strengths-based approach (Rapp, Saleebey and Sullivan, 2005) whereby students shared their own strengths and resources to create a successful outcome. The only input from staff was to book rooms and source equipment. The students met and worked on the videos themselves, making editorial decisions and doing all the production. At the end of the summer, three videos were produced which focused on the three research themes.

During the session I will play the videos and get feedback from participants on how to work collaboratively with students and on the use of the videos with international students to support their transition into UK HE.

**Keywords:** chinese postgraduate students, participation, interaction belonging, academic anxiety

### ***Community response***

Louise's resource showcase presented the output from research conducted into the experience of Chinese PGT Education students in relation to student interaction, academic

anxiety and belonging. As Louise explained, there were three primary aims of the research. The first aim, based on having noticed often 'silent classrooms', was to encourage international students' participation and engagement in class discussion. The second aim was to explore how to reduce academic anxiety experienced by international students due to transitioning to a new academic context and culture. The final aim of the project was to elicit international students' understanding of 'belonging'.

The research was multi-pronged, involving online surveys, focus groups to garner Chinese PGT students' views on the three key themes of belonging, interaction and participation, and academic anxiety, with the final output being student-produced videos to reflectively explore these themes. The videos are hosted on YouTube and are open access so can be embedded into modules or slides:

- Video 1 [Interaction and participation](#): In this video, three students offer their experiences of participation and interaction in class.
- Video 2 [Academic anxiety](#): In this video, one student shares her experience of feeling very anxious while writing her assignment.
- Video 3 [Student belonging](#): In this video, three students share examples of when they felt a sense of belonging at university.

These videos were intended to illustrate the 'warts and all' of being an international student and to show how PGT Education students had navigated such challenges. The videos were used in three ways: firstly, to engage and support transition of incoming international students pre-enrolment; next, to place on the PGT Education programme course pages; and finally, to use in induction to promote discussion with new international students about why participation and interaction in the academic context are so important.

Whilst the potentially positive impact of using video in higher education is well-established (Noetel et al., 2021), studies tend to focus on the impact of videos produced by academics and teaching staff (Arruabarrena et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is little focus on how video can be used by students to explore constructs such as 'belonging', 'participation' and 'academic anxiety'; constructs which are known to impact student retention and success. Thus, it was interesting for participants to gain insight into how international PGT students took ownership of their learning and experiences by producing these videos. One participant saw the showcase as a novel way of sharing research but questioned the

limitations of student-produced videos and the applicability of these to the wider student context:

Student-produced videos are something we have tried in the past with mixed results. However, ours have been more on the lines of 'a student's guide to literature reviews' than addressing issues like participation and anxiety and I can see how a student lens on these may be more appropriate. This is a really innovative way to share the results of research and the slightly rough-and-ready video production probably makes them more authentic and meaningful than more slick corporate versions. Louise did wonder whether the fact that only Chinese students came forward may mean the videos seem less relevant to other students, and I do think this may be an issue – especially when it comes to home-students who may have different reasons for suffering the issues presented. (Jacqui Bartram, University of Hull).

### **Next steps and additional questions**

Clearly, there are challenges to consider when using video in this way – a key one being to establish the target audience for and aims of such a project. The presenter acknowledged issues such as the relevance of such videos for home students and the project's time and resource intensive nature. However, they highlighted the positive outcomes as perceived by students and staff who participated in the video project, including enhanced relationships and improvements in students' feelings of social connection and well-being. With these potential positive outcomes, it will be interesting to see how this type of project could be applied more widely to both home and international students. Given intensifying external and regulatory pressures on HE institutions, the overwhelming focus on metrics, and the growth in the number of international students (see UUK data); projects of this nature which may aid with enhancing student experience seem ripe for further investigation and research by the LD community.

Questions for the community to which to consider and respond:

- Have you incorporated student-produced videos into your practice? If so, what was the purpose of using these?
- In what other ways have you successfully incorporated video into your practice?

- What do you see as the potential benefits and pitfalls to student-produced videos of this nature?
- Do you see the applicability of adopting such an approach with the wider student body i.e., with home as well as international students?
- Can student-produced videos adequately help students and teaching staff explore 'slippery' concepts such as belonging (see Prodggers, Travis and Pownall, 2023), participation and academic anxiety or are these matters too complex?
- Are there other ways in which using student-produced video can help students explore their subjective and objective experiences of HE?

### ***Author's reflection***

It was interesting to read the community response to my resource showcase. The value of these videos was mainly in the making of them. The students who participated reported a greater sense of belonging and ownership at the end of the process. I have incorporated the videos into induction sessions with new students. The videos are now sitting on a [Padlet page](#) along with other induction resources for students enrolled in taught postgrad Politics programmes. When students enrol onto one of our programmes, they are sent a link to the Padlet page so that they can do some pre-reading and preparation for their studies at York. These resources were produced and aimed at international students because they have specific needs around transition. I think that there is probably a need for something aimed at home students, but that would have a different focus.

Slippery concepts such as 'belonging, and 'academic anxiety' are difficult to define and are also culturally bound, so I acknowledge it is hard to discuss these concepts with students. Since doing this work, I have modified my language from 'belonging at university' to 'finding my place in university'. This seems to be a concept which is easier for students to work towards, and they can identify where they feel their place is at university.

Using student-produced videos to help students explore their experiences of university is time consuming, but it is a medium which many students feel comfortable with. They can record short videos on their phones easily, so I think there is potential to use this approach to examine other student experiences such as documenting their induction week, the submission process and aspects of the dissertation.

## **Acknowledgments**

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The author did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

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