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Pedagogical renewal: promoting a dialogic pedagogy in the internationalised 21st century higher education

Abstract

The main purpose of an internationalised higher education in the 21st century is to develop students' personal, academic and intellectual growth and to provide them with the necessary transferable and employability skills for studying, living and working in a globalised world. However, research into higher education pedagogy suggests that teaching is mostly one-dimensional, through knowledge transmission and recitation, and that dialogue-rich collaborative learning is limited in use. This chapter calls for a dialogic pedagogy to be at the heart of teaching and learning reform in higher education. This in turn will lead to a safe and inclusive space for collaborative learning through discussion and dialogue, resulting in improved educational outcomes and the development of a range of transferable skills needed in the 21st century. The chapter discusses the essential features of a dialogic pedagogy and the mechanisms for implementing it in the higher education classroom. It concludes with a call for more research into the benefits of a dialogic pedagogy in higher education so as to build a more extensive evidence base to inform policy and practice with regard to teaching and learning.

Introduction

Higher education in the 21st century has become a fully global entity linked internationally through teaching, research, and impact activity. UK universities place a high premium on internationalisation as it drives recruitments of international staff and students, study-abroad programmes, and cross-border research and impact collaborations. The main goals of higher education are to provide students from diverse backgrounds with a holistic experience at the personal, academic, and social level and to prepare them for studying, living and working in the globalised world. There is, therefore, a need to rethink the pedagogy of higher education to align it with these goals. This chapter calls for a paradigm shift in the way teaching and learning is delivered in higher education and argues that a dialogic pedagogy needs to be central in transforming teaching and learning in higher education.

 The chapter begins with a discussion of the globalised landscape of higher education in the 21st century. It goes on to explain what a dialogic pedagogy is and to discuss the benefits and challenges of implementing such a pedagogy in the classroom. It also offers a critically-reflective professional development scheme to help lecturers adopt a dialogic pedagogy in their lectures and seminars. It concludes with a call for more research into the implementation of a dialogic pedagogy in higher education.

Internationalised higher education

The remit of higher education has broadened extensively to not only develop students' personal, academic, and intellectual growth but also to prepare them well for living and

working in the globalised world. Its mission is to provide students with an excellent learning environment in which they are taught to develop a range of transferable and employability skills needed by employers such as communication, problem-solving, collaborative teamwork, and enterprise (Shapiro, 2006; Nixon, 2011; Teo, 2019). However, it can be argued that the economic purpose of higher education cannot be fulfilled without addressing the growth of students at the personal, intellectual and academic levels. Students need to develop a sense of self, curiosity, criticality, agency, and active citizenship, and to be well-informed in their academic subjects if they are to become well-rounded individuals and members of an internationalised workforce in the 21st century.

The internationalisation agenda of UK universities has attracted large numbers of students from different countries who bring with them diverse identities, experiences, dispositions, expectations, and perspectives. The diversity of ideas and perspectives offers a rich source of learning for all students and needs to be maximised in the classroom through dialogue and discussion that are central to a dialogic pedagogy (Alexander, 2016; 2020).

However, it has to be acknowledged that learning through dialogue and discussion can present a challenge to students enrolling in higher education if they have not had much exposure to a co-constructive approach to learning in school. For international students, the challenges could be even greater if they have experienced teacher-centred approaches where students are often passive recipients of knowledge (Chen 2014; Engin, 2017). International students need to adapt to a new way of learning and negotiate the unspoken rules of engagements and discourse norms of the UK culture of learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006). A dialogic pedagogy offers a way of addressing these types of challenges as it makes explicit the agreed ground rules for collaboration in whole-class and group-based learning through discussion and dialogue.

Another challenge for non-western international students revolves around the English language. Second language acquisition research suggests that it may take between five and seven years for learners to develop a good level of academic language competence in a foreign language (Cummins & Swain, 1986). International students are not only required to learn English as a foreign/second language, but also to learn the subject content through the medium of English. Furthermore, having acquired the academic content, they then need to be able to display the learning and knowledge visibly in appropriate academic discourse forms. However, it is important to stress that the challenges described here are not a reflection of deficiency in intellectual ability on the part of international students (Trenkic and Warmington, 2019).

A dialogic pedagogy can address the language-based challenges in two main ways: firstly, it can provide a safe and supportive classroom environment where students are not made to feel embarrassed when making a mistake, and secondly, it makes explicit the discourse moves that facilitate respectful, productive discussion and dialogue (Alexander, 2016, 2020). Therefore, a dialogic pedagogy is well-placed for dealing with such barriers to learning and for enhancing the student experience through exposure to a diverse range of ideas and perspectives.

Classroom research in higher education

Classroom research in higher education (De Klerk, 1995; Boyle, 2010; Engin, 2015, 2017; Hardman, 2016a, 2016b; Simpson, 2016; Teo, 2016) points to three main findings: a limited range of teaching methods being used; the dominance of lecturer-centred knowledge transmission and recitation; and, a lack of dialogue-rich collaborative group work. For example, Hardman (2016a) carried out a case study of seminar teaching with British, third-year undergraduate and post-graduate students on an engineering management course. The

findings showed that, despite the small-group teaching, the discourse was predominantly lecturer-led, with little room being provided for extended student contributions, as the lecturer rarely probed, built on or challenged student responses. The recitation is illustrated in Extract 1 below (taken from Hardman, 2016a:67).

T = university tutor; S = student

Extract 1
1	T:	got a balance sheet? so first thing to do is try and find the balance sheet
2	S1:	[gives positive response]
3	T:	OK, great, good
4	T:	So can you see tangible fixed assets, yep?
5	S1:	Yeah
6	T:	OK, is it called anything different?
7	S2:	Group balance sheet
8	T:	OK

As can be seen in Extract 1, the discourse exchange is short, led by the lecturer asking closed questions (lines 1, 4, and 6). In response, the students provide brief (expected) answers. The interaction is mainly to check students' knowledge of the already presented teaching content. Such orchestration of the classroom talk by the lecturer closes down students' authentic contributions and thinking, resulting in stilted and fragmented discourse exchanges.

Hardman's study also showed that little opportunity was provided for students to work in small groups or pairs, and when they did occur, the length of discussions was brief (5 minutes on average). The student group discussions were largely focused on the exchanging of ideas without any real attempts to build on or critically evaluate the ideas being presented.

De Klerk's analysis of postgraduate seminars in a Faculty of Arts (1995) revealed that the teaching was dominated by long lecturer monologues interspersed with short question-answer sequences. There was a distinct lack of substantive feedback on student responses and also

feedforward to propel conceptual understanding and cognitive development. Boyle's (2010) study of 15 seminars covering ten subjects - architecture, chemistry, computer science, education, engineering, English, management, music, pharmacy, politics – showed that lecturers asked far more questions than students and that student turns were significantly shorter than those of the lecturers. Similarly, Theo's study (2016) in the context of pre-university language classrooms showed that tutors closed down student talk through excessive use of display questions. These findings suggest that lecturers, regardless of subject disciplines, do most of the talking in class and that students are provided with few opportunities to share their thinking, offer alternative ideas and perspectives, and talk with other students. This situation exacerbates the issue of (deadly) silence in the classroom, particularly on the part of international students who, as discussed above, may have problems with language and/or acculturation into the UK culture of learning (Engin, 2017).

Overall, classroom research in higher education suggests that there are missed opportunities for enhancing the student learning experience. The heavy reliance on traditional knowledge transmission and recitation methods denies students the opportunity for deepening their understanding of the academic content as they encounter it in class. It also hinders lecturers being able to diagnose students' misconceptions of the curriculum content. Furthermore, the lack of group work restricts students from building relationships with the lecturer and peers, which are necessary for creating students' sense of belonging and community. This leads to a widespread reporting of problems with poor participation and engagement in learning in higher education (Rocca, 2010). A lack of collaborative discussions as part of the classroom experience also denies students the opportunity for developing a sense of confidence, agency, critical thinking, curiosity, communication, and teamwork skills. In light of these

shortcomings, there is a need to place a dialogic pedagogy at the centre of teaching and learning in higher education.

What is a dialogic pedagogy?

Dialogic pedagogy is influenced by a sociocultural theory of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1962) that highlights the role of social interaction and language as crucial mediators of the learning process. Five principles underpin the dialogic teaching framework (Alexander, 2016). A dialogic pedagogy is:

- collective - the lecturer and students work together as a team through whole-class, small-group and one-to-one discussions

- reciprocal – participants listen actively and respect different viewpoints

- supportive - a safe, positive classroom climate is created

- cumulative - knowledge is co-constructed to develop shared understanding

- purposeful - classroom tasks are planned with specific educational goals in mind

The first three principles – collective, reciprocal, and supportive – help to create a safe, open and inclusive space for students to learn comfortably, which is vital for their sense of confidence, agency, and wellbeing, and for promoting social and academic integration in multicultural classrooms (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). A positive classroom climate can also be reinforced by ground rules that are negotiated and agreed upon by both the lecturer and students, such as 'giving people time to talk', 'listening carefully to each other, 'asking questions', 'giving evidence or reasoning for ideas', 'building on own and other's contribution', and `respectfully challenging ideas'. The explicit ground rules are beneficial to students who are new to the higher education classroom as it helps them to negotiate the implicit rules of engagement, discourse norms, and expectations. They are particularly helpful to non-western international students whose former cultures of learning may be very

different from the ethnocentric concept of classroom participation (Murray & McConachy, 2018)

The fourth principle – cumulative – focuses on discourse moves (questioning, feedback and follow-up talk moves) that make up a productive classroom dialogue. These discourse moves are, in effect, the pedagogical and cognitive tools of dialogic teaching. They are responsible for improving the quality of interactions through the use of open (and authentic) questions and substantive feedback and feedforward that deepens students' conceptual understandings and thinking. They transform a discussion, where ideas are simply exchanged and accumulated, into dialogue, where the merits of ideas and evidence are deliberated on and a case is argued (Alexander, 2020).

Finally, the fifth principle of dialogic teaching, that it is purposeful, whereby the lecturer carefully designs talk-rich activities (for example, whole-class discussions, collaborative group work, and think-pair-share activities) to meet specific learning objectives. These different activities generate different talk patterns and also ideas and perspectives that suit different learning styles and preferences. Research into multilingual classrooms suggests that UK and European students prefer to interact with the lecturer in whole-class teaching more than in small groups. In contrast, Asian students feel more comfortable in small group situations than speaking publicly in front of the class (Spencer-Oatey and Dauber, 2021).

As discussed above, a dialogic pedagogy places discussion and dialogue at the centre of the learning process. However, it is also acknowledged that traditional rote, lecture, and recitation also have a key role to play in the classroom, for example, when introducing new facts and concepts, reviewing previously taught content, and checking memorisation and comprehension. In other words, a dialogic pedagogy widens the repertoire of teaching methods and enriches the student learning experience.

Dialogic talk moves

Using classroom dialogue as a cognitive and pedagogical tool requires a good understanding

and knowledge of a range of talk moves (corresponding with the dialogic principle of

cumulation). For example, lecturers can create a mutual space for dialogue by making use of

a balance of closed/test questions and open/authentic questions and a mixture of talk-

extending moves that feedback, build on, probe, and challenge student contributions.

Examples of dialogic talk moves are provided in Table 1 below (adapted from Hardman,

2019:13).

Table 1: Lecturer question and follow-up talk moves

LECTURER TALK MOVES	DESCRIPTIONS
Initiation questions	
Closed L question	Lecturer asks a closed/test question – allows one possible response
Open L question	Lecturer asks an open or authentic question – allows various (expected or original) responses
Follow-up talk moves	
L expand question	Lecturer stays with the same student and asks to say more
L add on question	Lecturer asks a student to add on to other's contribution
L rephrase question	Lecturer asks a student to repeat or reformulate own or other's contribution
L revoice question	Lecturer verifies his/her understanding of a student contribution, which requires a student response
L agree/disagree question	Lecturer asks if a student or students agree or disagree with other's contribution
L why question	Lecturer asks for evidence or reasoning
L challenge question	Lecturer provides a challenge or a counter-example

The identification of the talk moves in Table 1 draws heavily on the framework of

accountable talk by Michaels and O'Connor's (2012). Open initiation questions invite

students to think and provide non-specified information, as opposed to recalling known

information. Follow-up talk moves also referred to by Alexander as 'ingredient x'

(2020:150), play a particularly critical role in that they sustain, deepen, and enrich the

unfolding discourse. They represent high-order questions to frame students' elaborated contributions, requiring them to deeply engage in learning by providing explanation, expansion, evaluation, justification, argumentation, speculation, and so on. Using this repertoire of dialogic talk moves, lecturers create space in the classroom discourse for students to take responsibility for and stretch their curiosity and learning and, at the same time, show appreciation for their contributions. This process, in turn, facilitates student voice and their sense of identity and agency contributing to their personal growth and active citizenship.

An example of how dialogic talk moves can be used in a university classroom is presented in Extract 2 below (taken from Hardman, 2016b:11). It is taken from a seminar on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages course, mainly consists of Chinese students, and taught by a lecturer who has undergone training in dialogic teaching.

Extract 2

1	T:	OK, I think we've had plenty of time to talk about it, so let's just see if we can get some kind of ideas about what is the value of the coursebook for students from your own experience as students?
2	S1:	I think they made the knowledge part more visible. You can look at the words… (inaudible 00:20:46) …pictures.
3	T:	What do you think? This is what you think: it makes the knowledge point more visible.
4	T:	Any comments on that? Can you see what Wendy is trying to say there?
5	SS:	[silence]
6	T:	Tell us more about this making it visible now, Wendy. In what way is it more visible?
7	S1:	Maybe when they listen to the part they don't quite know, maybe the material can make it more visible.
8	T:	Yes, Lin, go on….
9	S2:	Just like, you give us a handout; it helps us follow what you are saying.
10	T:	So that's the support; that's kind of what you are saying. It's good support to the teaching point.
11	T:	Any others? Good. Any more?

Extract 2 illustrates the use of dialogic talk moves in a whole-class interaction. The lecturer encourages students to draw on their own experiences in the discussion, and he starts the interaction with an open question '*what is the value of the coursebook?*' (line 1), thus allowing for various responses from the students. A reasonably extended response, containing an explanation, is provided by Wendy (S1 in line 2). Rather than moving on immediately to another student, the lecturer stays with Wendy and probes her answer further (line 3). At the same time, he revoices Wendy's response to verify his understanding and to ensure that other students can hear and that they contribute to the discussion. The lecturer is mindful of engaging the whole group in the discussion, and this is evident in his question to the rest of the class (line 4). However, there is no student response (silence) to that question. Instead of closing the discussion prematurely, the lecturer returns to Wendy by asking her to expand her previous contribution (line 6). Wendy says more about her earlier contribution (line 7), and this, in turn, is picked up by Lin (S2 in line 9) who builds on Wendy's contribution. The lecturer keeps the discussion going by inviting other students to contribute '*Any others, good, anymore*?' (line 11).

The lecturer-student interaction illustrated above extends and, to a degree, deepens the discussion. The lecturer creates space for students to participate by scaffolding their contributions with open questions, revoicing, probing, and asking questions that build on student answers. This leads to greater reciprocity in the exchanges, whereby students provide elaborated responses, make their reasoning explicit, and build on their own and other's contribution.

By incorporating the use and modelling of dialogic talk moves (in Table 1) into their teaching, lecturers can provide more space for students to participate in and practise the

academic discourse. Hardman has identified student talk moves that mostly correspond with lecturer talk moves (2019, pp.16-17). Student talk moves are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Student talk moves

STUDENT TALK MOVES	DESCRIPTIONS
S connect	Student makes an intertextual reference to something else, e.g. a previous discussion, another text, event, experience or resource
S explain/analyse	Student explains something in some detail or examines own or other's contribution (not to convince or persuade)
S rephrase	Student repeats, reformulates or summarises own or other's contribution
S recount	Student gives an account of an event or experience
S evaluate	Student makes a judgement
S argue	Student states a position/opinion/argument (to convince or persuade)
S justify	Student provides reasoning/evidence
S speculate	Student predicts/hypothesises an idea or situation
S imagine	Student creates an analogy, mental image or scenario
S challenge	Student provides a challenge or counter-example
S shift position	Student indicates a change of mind or perspective

These talk moves enable students to share ideas, discuss alternative viewpoints, deliberate on reasoning, and argue their case. Using an extensive repertoire of student talk moves is not only essential for maximising learning, but also for practising and refining communication, negotiation, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Students will also become well-rounded individuals and be able to function effectively and creatively in the global context of the 21st century.

Impact of a dialogic pedagogy on learning

Most of the research into a dialogic pedagogy has mainly been carried out in school contexts. However, the five principles of dialogic pedagogy – collective, reciprocal, supportive,

cumulative, and purposeful – have a universal appeal and resonate strongly with the goals of 21st century higher education (Teo, 2019).

In the school context, a growing body of international research shows positive relationships between classroom dialogue, participation and educational outcomes (Abedin & Howe, 2013; Hattie 2009; Resnick, Asterhan & Clarke, 2015). For example, in secondary education in Finland, the quality of classroom dialogue has been associated with student academic attainment in physics, chemistry, and language arts (Muhonen, Pakarinen, Poikkeus, Lerkkanen & Rasku-Puttonen, 2017). In the Czech Republic, research shows that middle school students who participate more in classroom talk perform better in reading literacy in language arts (Sedova, Sedlacek, Evarichek, Majcik, Navralitova, Drexlerova, Kychler & Salamounova, 2019).

In the UK, a large-scale observational study of 72 Year 6 (aged 10-11) primary English, mathematics and science classes shows that classroom dialogue is positively correlated with higher learning outcomes and with positive attitudes to schooling (Howe, Hennessey, Mercer, Vrikki & Wheatley, 2019). Another large-scale study – a randomised controlled trial of a 20-week dialogic teaching intervention with Year 5 primary English, mathematics and science classes in 78 primary schools serving socio-economically deprived areas of England - also showed significant gains in learning engagement and test scores (Alexander, Hardman & Hardman, 2017; Hardman, 2019). An independent evaluation of the RCT study showed that the disadvantaged student attainment in the intervention schools was on average two months ahead of their control peers in all three subjects (Jay, Willis, Thomas, Taylor, Moore, Burnett, Merchant, Stevens, 2017).

Research into a dialogic pedagogy in the higher education sector is somewhat limited as it is relatively new to this context. Simpson (2016) carried out a study in dialogic pedagogy in the

context of BA in Education (Primary) and showed a positive impact in terms of the student teachers' conceptual change about learning and changes to their pedagogical practices. From a different perspective, the study by Engin and Dananci (2015) looked at the relationship between iPad use and opportunities for dialogic teaching in the context of English for Academic Purposes and found that iPads served as a catalyst for lively group discussions. Poore (2021) carried out a year-long case study in a BA in Theatre: Writing, Directing and Performance to address the theme of effective seminar teaching. The results showed profound changes in the lecturer's pedagogical practices, leading to increased levels of student participation, learning engagement, creativity and autonomy, positive student feedback, and improved assessment outcomes. While these studies show positive results in the higher education context, more research is needed in different subject disciplines at all levels of degree programmes.

Implementing a dialogic pedagogy

Dialogic pedagogy is a broad and versatile approach and so is predisposed to the different interpretations and enactments of the dialogic teaching principles, influenced by such factors as class size, teaching experience, mastery of subject knowledge, and disciplinary content. For example, a case study of two UK secondary school teachers' understanding of dialogic teaching and classroom practice (Van de Pol, Brindley & Higham, 2017) shows that the history teacher pays special attention to becoming a co-learner and engaging in a symmetrical relationship with students, as historical discussions have no clear right or wrong answers. On the other hand, the mathematics teacher emphasises democratising the learning process to accommodate the students' different ways of arriving at the correct answer. Similarly, a study in the Czech Republic lower secondary school context (Sedova, Salamounova & Svariceck, 2014) shows that attempts to promote real dialogue in the literacy classrooms can be

challenging due to a lack of rational argumentation and frequent misunderstandings of the (English) words used by students. Lefstein (2010) also argues that it is difficult to realise Alexander's five principles of dialogic teaching all at the same time in everyday classroom practice as it is constrained by teachers' own interactional practices and lesson objectives. However, Hardman (2019) argues that, over time, with practice and professional development support, teachers can become more skilful and confident in embedding the dialogic talk moves into their practice.

Professional development in a dialogic pedagogy

To embed a dialogic pedagogy into higher education, there is a need to provide professional development opportunities for lecturers with a focus on peer support. Peer support involves connecting a lecturer (or two) with a peer who functions as a critical friend (or mentor). The participants need first to develop a good grasp of the dialogic teaching principles and the relevant talk moves (as presented in Tables 1 and 2 above) to support its implementation in the classroom. The lecturer being mentored is then required to video-record their seminar teaching. Video clips of critical moments from seminars (and, if possible, seminar transcripts too) can be used for critical reflections by the lecturer, supported by the mentor, on what went on in the seminar or lecture to set targets for improvement. This collaborative viewing of video footage provides the lecturer with the opportunity to monitor how the dialogic teaching principles are being realised in class through self-evaluation and peer feedback. The peer support follows a four-step process, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.
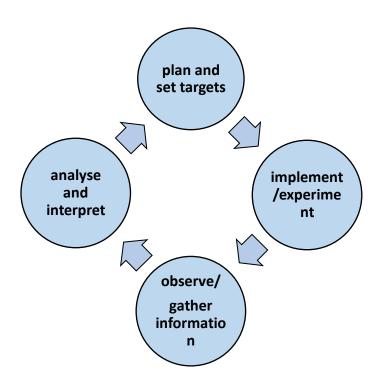
Figure 1: Peer support for dialogic teaching scheme

The four-step process makes up a learning cycle**:**

1. formulate a plan and set targets – planning what will happen during the cycle and what changes and outcomes are to be achieved

2. implement – teaching the planned seminar with the targets in mind

3. observe and gather information – collaborative viewing of video footage of selected seminar episodes by the lecturer and mentor

4. analysis and interpretation – a collaborative discussion of what happened during the selected seminar episodes

The cycle needs to be repeated several times with at least two-week intervals (depending on circumstances) to provide the lecturer with a sustained period of time to try out the dialogic teaching approaches, practise using the associated talk moves, and receive feedback on their efforts. The scheme should also include strategies for raising students' meta-talk awareness

and supporting their development of, and confidence in, using the repertoire of student talk moves.

Conclusion

The chapter presents the case for a dialogic pedagogy to be at the heart of teaching and learning in the higher education sector. It argues that a dialogic pedagogy can bring together the social, epistemological, cognitive and communicative elements that embody the transformative learning experience demanded by a globalised world in the 21st century.

A dialogic pedagogy can create a safe space and promote social inclusion which have been shown to facilitate the making of friendships and instil a sense of belonging to the university. This is crucial in helping students to settle in, remain engaged in learning and to sustaining a sense of wellbeing (Hardy & Bryson, 2016; Manuder, 2018; Masika & Jones, 2016). A dialogic pedagogy can enhance students' epistemological and cognitive development by transforming traditional knowledge transmission and recitation into productive discussion and dialogue, leading to positive educational outcomes. The mechanisms for this transformation lies in lecturers' broadening their teaching repertoire. By extension, the quality and repertoire of student talk moves also improve. It also provides a way of ensuring the oracy skills called for by many scholars are embedded into the internationalised higher education curricula (Dippold, Bridges, Eccles & Mullen, 2018; Heron, 2019).

The chapter has argued for the need for a dialogic pedagogy, delivered through professional development for lecturers involving peer support, to be central to a pedagogical renewal in higher education. Finally, it calls for more research into a dialogic pedagogy to build a strong evidence base for its impact on student learning experiences and outcomes, which can be used to inform university policy and practice with regard to teaching and learning.

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