

Emotions as a specific aspect of Higher Education

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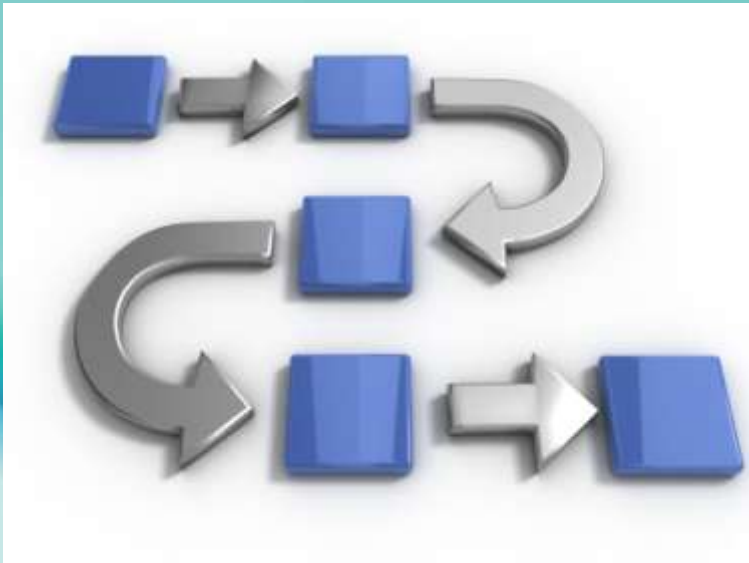
- Research Aims
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- Examine how the HE in question has dealt with students' emotional life.
- Examine the correlation between students emotion, achievement and personal life.
- Investigate and critically analyse how these emotions may have affected students learning in the HE.
- Research question :
- **How Higher Education Institutions deal with students' emotion?**

Participants:

- were 'mature students'
(between 28 and 48 years old),
- female,
- they had all graduated and they were all employed in the same sector,
- I had known them for two years in a capacity of being their lecturer.
- I have asked 33 graduates to participate.
- 29 returned their reflective account.

Research Design and Methods



The Research Project

- Was carried out between December 2011 and July 2012.
- Due to the character of the research project I have adopted a:
 - Qualitative research,
 - Using NARRATIVE INQUIRIES.

What do we gain from narrative knowing?

- **Memorable, interesting knowledge that brings together layers of understandings about a person, their culture and how they have perceived change** (Bold, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly 2000).
 - Gaining information about how people have interpreted events; how their values, beliefs may have changed; what are their intentions, hopes and plans for the future.
 - May find complex patterns, descriptions of identity construction and reconstruction.
 - May find evidence of social discourses that impact on a person's knowledge creation from specific cultural standpoints.
 - Narrative is a basic human way of making sense of the world – we lead 'storied lives' (Riessman, 1993)

NARRATIVE INQUIRIES

- Stories/lived experiences can be gathered in a variety of creative ways. To name a few (adopted from Etherington 2000; 2003):
 - unstructured interviews,
 - written stories,
 - conversations,
 - journals,
 - diaries,
 - video,
 - metaphors,
 - poems,
 - symbols,
 - photographs,
 - identity boxes,
 - drawings

WRITTEN TEXT and UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

- The length of the written task was optional and the time frame to submit the work electronically was two months.
- The interview themes were sent to each participant prior to the interview, which was videoed where possible (Skype and telephone was also used).

- 29 written task was received (750 – 3000 words) but only 8 text were analysed and only 8 participants were interviewed.
- Participants were randomly chosen.

VIDEO SAMPLE:

- <https://vimeo.com/41305974>

Data Analysis and Findings

Data analysis



COMMON BACKGROUND	
More than 15 years out of formal education	8 participants
Being employed full time since finishing NVQ Level 3 (since 16 years old)	8 participants
Motive joining the higher education was self satisfaction	7 particiapnts

Students experience of positive and negative emotions –

Classification using Parrot's framework

	Positive	no.	Negative	no.
1	enthusiastic	6	doubt about ability	5
2	pride	6	stressed	5
3	able	5	exhausted	4
4	feeling of achievement	5	frustrated	4
5	more confident	5	nervous	4
6	sense of relief	5	pressured	4
7	excitement	4	unsure	4
8	feeling knowledgeable	4	worried	4
9	been supported	3	anxious	3
10	enjoyment	3	confused	3
11	feeling skilled	3	incompetent	3
12	professional confidence	3	panicky	3
13	good feeling	2	scared	3
14	happy	2	upset	3
15	calmness	1	concerned	2
16	challenging positively	1	disappointed	2
17	comfortable	1	feeling tired	2
18	feeling strong bond	1	feeling physically sick	2
19	good to be noticed	1	guilty	2
20	like	1	not comfortable	2
21	love studying	1	terrified	2
22	pleased	1	agitated	1
23	reassurance	1	angry	1
24	relax	1	feeling totally let down	1
25	security	1	helpless	1
26	settled quickly	1	increasingly restless	1
27	valued by peers	1	isolated	1
28			jealous	1
29			less liked	1
30			lonely	1
31			no support	1
32			resentment	1
33			sense of failing	1
34			shocked	1
35			unconfident	1
36			unhappy	1
37			unrelieved	1
38			unsettled	1

Primary

Secondary

Tertiary

	First order	Second order	
Natural Order			Well-being
Practical Order			Achievement
Discursive Order			Self-worth

(adapted from Archer, 2000, p. 199).

Classification of emotions by using Archer's framework

	First order	no.	Second order	no.	
Natural order	enthusiastic	6	been supported	3	well being
	stressed	5	not comfortable	2	
	excitement	4	calmness	1	
	exhausted	4	comfortable	1	
	frustrated	4	feeling unsupported	1	
	nervous	4	relax	1	
	pressured	4	unhappy	1	
	worried	4	unsettled	1	
	anxious	3			
	enjoyment	3			
	panicky	3			
	scared	3			
	happy	2			
	feeling tired	2			
	feeling physically sick	2			
	terrified	2			
	agitated	1			
	angry	1			
	feeling strong bond	1			
	settled quickly	1			
helpless	1				
increasingly restless	1				
jealous	1				
shocked	1				
Practical order	sense of relief	5	being able	6	achievement
	upset	3	doubt about the ability	5	
	concerned	2	more confident	5	
	disappointed	2	feeling knowledgeable	4	
	challenging positively	1	professional confidence	4	
	love studying	1	feeling skilled	3	
			reassured	1	
		valued by peers	1		
		sense of failing	1		
Discursive order	pride	6	unsure	4	self worth
	incompetent	3	less liked	1	
	confused	3	unconfident	1	
	good feeling	2			
	guilty	2			
	lonely	1			
	isolated	1			
	pleased	1			
	feeling of security	1			
feeling totally let down	1				

First order emotions
 Second order emotions

Parag.	Participant 6	Topic	+ and -
1	I was a mature student returning back to my studies at University, with a young child (at the time I started he was 4 years old). I was initially nervous and concerned that I would not be able to engage my brain in the academic work I was undertaking. I was also feeling under pressure as my fiancé was not working and I was hoping that my further study would lead onto permanent employment. For so many reason I have joined the Open University. My initial though was I will gain more time to study as I don't have to attend lectures. I was very determined that I will achieve and I will get my degree I always wanted.	Joining the OU	4
2	However I soon discovered that the course expected a full time commitment and at times it left me feeling guilty that I was not paying enough attention to my family. There were a number of weekend field trips and this added to the feeling of guilt which made me overcompensate in other areas e.g. too many hugs and kisses (to quote my son!).	Personal issues – not enough time with family	2
3	My confidence grew as I completed more practical coursework so I started to feel much happier. I was more able to engage in my studies and work. However my work become more demanding, I become the deputy manager with much wider responsibilities; although I had positive relationships with my manager I started to struggle with my course work. Open University does not provide pastoral support, so I decided to change my institute and I joined to Chichester in my 2 nd year.	Feeling of achievement Work related issues Changing the institute	1 3
4	It was a real cultural shock. Discovering that support is available from teachers, and I can discuss my issues with other students too was real positive feeling. I was so relieved. The first I felt very lost and felt a little unsure that I was doing the right thing on the first day, but I discovered that the group is very supportive. Soon I felt part of the group. I also discovered very quickly that the teaching style is different – here the teachers were very strict on Harvard way of referencing and relating/reflecting academic work to practice. However, reflecting back my experience of the course and the support of my tutor coupled with my background reading helped with my confidence boost.	Group support Support from teachers Different teaching style	2 3
5	By the end of the 2 nd year one day I woke without my eyelashes. I panicked. I went to seek help from my GP who suggested reducing either my workload or my study. She suggested that	Health issue	2

Findings and Conclusions

Findings

- Evidence about the intensity of emotion in HE; strong link between emotion, achievement and personal life
- Special bond between the students
- Emotion manifested both in positive and negative way (in total 65 identified emotions were recognised; 32 were health related of which 23 were negative; in general 27 positive, 38 negative emotions)
- Fluidity of emotion (difficult to identify)

- **How Higher Education Institutions deal with students' emotion?**
- Referral/Counselling session offered (none of the participant took the opportunity to use this facility due to time)
- Extension (1 week) offered for submission

Further research:

- Longitudinal study
- Wider range of universities
- Wider industry
- To include male participants

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