Teaching Excellence Case Study

Legitimate peripheral participation: Exploring the role of situated learning environments as complimentary to formal assessment in an undergraduate photography degree.
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Course: BA Photography **Student Level:** Levels 4-7

LINKS TO EDUCATION STRATEGY PILLARS

- Creativity and enterprise
- Intercultural and international engagement
- Community contribution and responsibility

AIMS

This case study is part of the course team's on-going exploration of **situated learning** as complimentary to the Arts and Media curriculum. The team are interested in enabling students to become **active participants** in their own learning, rather than assessment and grading being their sole motivation. In seeking to identify the importance of **learning beyond overt assessment activities,** the team have been looking at the impact of situated- and **peer mediated learning** in relation to motivation, initiative and engagement. Thus, the focus is on how learning environments can support **legitimate peripheral participation.**

ACTIONS

As part of a spectrum of activities outside of the classroom, the course team organised a **pop-up exhibition** in a community darkroom in Brooklyn, New York. An **open call for submissions** was put in place and circulated by the students via an online learning platform. Selections were made by the students, and printing of the work to be displayed was carried out **both in Coventry and NY.** Whilst those students travelling to NY organised and curated the exhibition in Brooklyn, others organised a second event at the print manufactory at Coventry's Fargo Village. Students working at the two sites sent each other digitised images, enabling **live streams** to be projected at each others' events on either side of the Atlantic.

IMPACT AND STUDENT FEEDBACK

The initiative had positive impacts at many different levels. It helped students to form **more of a community,** both within and across year groups:

- "I think that when we came back we socialized a lot more with people, **you become a lot closer...** because you don't have the pressure of work and your just in a totally new environment."

- "Just a quick 5 minutes in the corridor in the mornings and chatting about what they had done made me think that maybe I should check that out, it **opened a conversation** that is outside of uni work but still with that shared interest."

Students could see how engaging with extracurricular activities would enhance their learning:

- "It's the **extra little bits** that keep us enthusiastic because it can become monotonous... I can see why people kind of lose their passion but having these extra things reminds us of why we got into this, these are the exciting bits."

- "If we all come out of here with [...] with good degrees they want to see **what else you've done outside of university**, not just doing a degree, they're not going to chose someone who has just got a degree and nothing else."

Students who went to NY also recognized the benefits for their **personal development:**

- "Splitting up and going on the subway and stuff, I'd **never done anything like that** before."

- "It was good for **personal growth.**"

Students at the exhibition in Brooklyn.

TOP TIPS

- **Extracurricular activities**– which are not necessarily assessed– can engage different students in different ways, whilst enabling them to gain relevant practical experience in their field.

- **Get students involved** in the organisation of the trip (e.g. suggesting locations to visit; curating the event). This helps them to take ownership of the activities, as well as being useful for their CVs, beyond just the degree itself.

- Consider the value of activities which involve students from all year groups as this can help to create a **sense of community** across the course.

Images: Top: @michaelhenry; unsplash.com. Main: D.Bosworth