

# Reflections on teaching and the wider educational role: should lecturers be prepared to offer a listening ear?

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# Presentation Outline

1. Introduce my scientific background but illustrate my growing appreciation of *Reflective Practice* in pedagogy
2. Present some reflections from my early teaching experience related to the wider educational role
3. Pose a series of questions related to educational training programmes and institutional support systems

# My background...



**2000-2003:** BSc Hons Sports Science

**2003-2006:** PhD Molecular Biology of Muscle Adaptation to Exercise

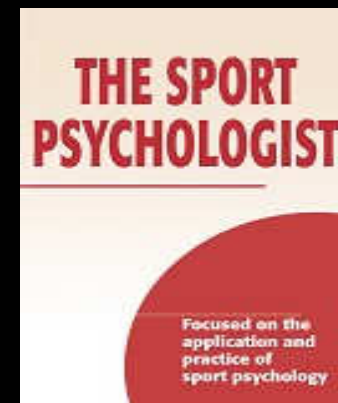


**2006-:** Lecturer in Exercise Metabolism

**2007:** Post-graduate Certificate in Learning & Teaching in Higher Education

# Writing reflective accounts

'If we are to encourage practitioners to reflect on their experience, it is vital to stress that it is their experiences that matter more (in the first instance) than any associated theory that may or may not be illustrative through the narrative' (p.111)



Knowles et al. (2007). *The Sport Psychologist*, 21, 109-122.

*Reflective Practice*

Vol. 10, No. 2, April 2009, 233–243

 **Routledge**  
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## **Critical reflections from a neophyte lecturer in higher education: a self-narrative from an exercise ‘physiologist’!**

‘I now appreciate that skilled teaching is not just about teacher focused activities, rather I believe that we should strive to create an active learning environment where students look forward to participate in their own learning. Furthermore, I stand by my reflections that a practitioner approach which incorporates a humanistic element (and an open door approach) will go a long way in facilitating this environment’



# My growing interest for student support

*Quality in Higher Education* Vol. 6, No. 1, 2000

61

The Quality of the Student Experience: what can institutions learn from data relating to non-completion?

*Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*  
Vol. 25, No. 1, May 2003

*Improving the Retention of Students from Lower Socio-economic Groups*

*Higher Education Research & Development*  
Vol. 25, No. 4, November 2006, pp. 371–386

**Enhancing the early student experience**

Eileen Trotter\* and Carole A. Roberts  
Formerly University of Salford, UK

**'Sometimes you feel you're in niche time'**

The personal tutor system, a case study  
*Open Learning*, Vol. 19, No. 1, February 2004

 Carfax Publishing  
Taylor & Francis Group

**active learning in higher education**  
Copyright © 2002 The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi)  
Vol 3 (1): 7–23 [1469-7874 (200203) 3:1;7–23;021782]  
ARTICLE

Retention, persistence and success in on-campus higher education, and their enhancement in open and distance learning

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(Tinto, 1993; Owen, 2001; Yorke 2000, 2004; Yorke and Thomas, 2003; Trotter and Roberts, 2006; Yorke and Longden, 2008)

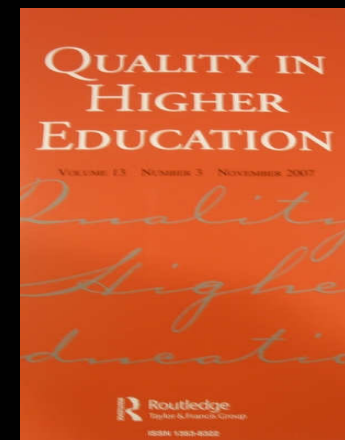
# Factors related to 'social integration' can influence student completion

- Lack of personal support from staff / students
- Emotional difficulties with others
- Homesickness
- Difficulty making friends
- Dislike of city
- No sense of belonging

Yorke. 2000. *Quality in Higher Education*, 6, 61-75

- Increased student perception of staff weakness in terms of the level of support provided

Yorke and Longden. 2008. *HEA Report on first year experience*, Jan 2008



‘I felt quite isolated, lecturers would speak during lectures then leave the room, during my entire first year I never once met my personal tutor’

‘Lecture sizes were extremely large which made it difficult to make friends’

‘Lecturers were far too impersonal for my liking’

‘My personal tutor was intimidating , uncaring and cold. I felt that sort of experience for the next 3 years was not worth the debt when I left’

‘I did not enjoy the experience whatsoever, due to the lack of staff support. I was never introduced to my personal tutor and felt like a number –not a person in a new overwhelming environment. Not one of my tutors spoke to me as an individual’





# Institutions with highest retention levels...

- Emphasise a supportive institutional climate perceived as *friendly*
- Emphasise support prior to and during the first year of study
- Emphasis on formative assessment early on
- Recognise social dimension in learning
- Recognise that higher education is changing but have a readiness to respond positively

**HUMAN INTERACTION**



## Further reflections from LJMU

A Muslim level one female student,  
a high academic achiever,  
communicated her personal  
problems to me (despite not being  
her personal tutor) related to  
feelings of *isolation* through the  
medium of writing

# Both stories have challenged me professionally and emotionally...

Student 2 did not feel comfortable in sharing information with counselling services

Why had the student chosen me to confide in?

Am I qualified to deal with such sensitive issues?

Did I compromise ethical practice by sharing student's experiences with other staff?

How can we be better trained or should we even be given formal training for these circumstances?

Should all staff have personal tutoring roles given our differing academic roles, commitments, time-constraints, age and personalities?

How can UK institutions implement better student support systems to deal with the ever changing face of higher education?

# **The LJMU Sports Science Model**

- Emphasis on pre-entry i.e. open days, information sharing etc**
- Induction week i.e. initial meetings with staff / tutors / social activities etc**
- Personal tutor meetings with academic link (e.g. study skills, PDP, self-reflection etc) integrated into timetable**
- Personal tutors assess oral presentation skills of tutees at level 1**
- Attendance monitoring at level 1**
- Active learning strategies and use of both formative and summative assessment**

# Concluding Remarks...

**Should lecturers be prepared to offer a listening ear?**

**If supporting student learning is our goal, then I believe the answer is YES**