

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL EVENTS IN PERSONALISING HIGHER EDUCATION IN BUSINESS

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Abstract

Personalisation of education is high on the political agenda within the United Kingdom (UK), having entered the educational policy debate at the turn of the millennium through the inception of the Children's Plan (DfES, 2004). The principles of this early vision being to give, "*every single child the chance to be the best they can be, whatever their talent or background*" (Miliband, 2006). However, to date, there remains a lack of insight into how personalisation is interpreted and practiced within a higher education setting (Becket and Brookes, 2012), resulting in a definitional fuzziness (Hartley, 2008) and multiple manifestations of the application of personalisation.

Existing knowledge of how higher education in business is personalised is particularly sparse. Notably the role that initiatives such as alumni mentoring and special events can play in the personalisation of business students' education. Within Nottingham Business School, personalisation covers a broad remit from the use of diagnostics in understanding learning styles to many targeted skills and employability events to help our students explore and reach their full potential.

This research draws upon current practice within the Personalisation project of Nottingham Business School, with the aim of proposing an effective model of what personalisation of undergraduate international business curriculum might look like "on the ground" from an academic and student perspective. The research also assesses the potential of several specific initiatives, such as, an alumni language mentoring scheme and bespoke special events, upon building the aspirations of students and helping them to reach their potential.

Keywords: Personalisation, Special Events, Higher-Education, Business

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Personalisation of education is currently high on the political agenda within the UK, having entered the educational policy debate at the turn of the millennium through the inception of the Children's Plan (DfES, 2004). The principles of this early vision being to give, "*every single child the chance to be the best they can be, whatever their talent or background*" (Miliband, 2006). However, to date, there remains a lack of insight into how personalisation is interpreted and practiced within a higher education setting (Becket and Brookes, 2012), resulting in a definitional fuzziness (Hartley, 2008) and multiple manifestations of the application of personalisation.

Existing knowledge of how higher education in business is personalised is limited, with the exception being targeted studies focussing upon specific aspects of personalisation, for example the role of learning analytics (JISC, 2016), and the use of ePortfolios to guide reflection on learning (Peacock *et al*, 2012). There is seemingly more emphasis on the role technology can play within personalisation of learning, whilst discussion of holistic models of personalisation remain sparse. Notably, the role initiatives such as alumni mentoring and special events can play in the personalisation of business students' education needs attention. Within the Nottingham Business School (NBS) of Nottingham Trent University (NTU), the model of NBS personalisation covers a broad remit from the use of diagnostics in understanding learning styles to many targeted and employability events to help our students explore and reach their full potential.

This research draws upon current practice within the Personalisation project of Nottingham Business School (NBS), with the aim of proposing an effective model of what personalisation of undergraduate international business curriculum might look like "on the ground" from an academic and student perspective. The research

also begins to assess the potential of several specific initiatives, such as, an alumni language mentoring scheme and bespoke special events, upon building the aspirations of students and helping them to reach their potential.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualising personalisation within Higher Education

The concept of personalisation entered UK higher educational and political discourse later than in the USA, building on constructivist theories of learning, whose methods lead learners to actively explore and develop their thinking independently (Schunk, 1996). Generally, personalisation in the UK is seen as part of a vision for public sector reform that aims to tailor services to the needs of individuals (Merton, 2006).

As Hartley (2008) asserts, recently, a complementary phase of “marketization” has emerged. Its organising concept is ‘personalisation’, with its roots resting in marketing theory. Its central concept is personalisation, which refines the previous conceptualisation of the ‘consumer’: as one who had expressed a preference for, or choice from, what was on offer. (Hartley, 2008). As the *White paper: Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* urges, higher education should be more responsive to student choice, enabling a better student experience (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011). Personalisation implies that there is something for everyone: every individual matters. It now has the status of a pedagogy: the ‘pedagogy of personalisation’ (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007a, p. 64).

The development of personalisation has not only been driven through educational policy, but also through the student voice. As a National Student Forum annual report (2009) stated; students expect to be an “active partner” in the design and delivery of their educational experience, having it personalised to their needs, rather than being treated as a homogenous group (NUS, 2006; Becket and Brookes, 2012).

Whilst there may be many manifestations of how education is personalised, there seems to be a general consensus of the benefits to personalisation. The overarching theme being to create opportunity (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2005) and stretch ambitions (NUS, 2006) by responding to the needs of the whole learner (NUS, 2006), which will offer a better student experience (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011). The outcome of this, it is stated by many commentators, is that retention and achievement will improve (Dfes, 2006). Widely accepted elements of personalisation include the promotion of self-realisation, enhancement and development (Leadbeater, 2004). Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning (Ward and Richardson, 2007) and are empowered to do so with a heightened sense of motivation and thirst for learning (ibid. 2007; Keppell, 2014). Tailoring educational provision and support to better meet the needs of learners is a dominant theme (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2005; Scottish CfE briefing, 2012), the key to which is knowing students well and equipping them with the tools to know themselves (Scottish CfE briefing, 2012).

Whilst there is an increasing amount of research focused upon personalisation within schools (Beckett and Brookes, 2012), empirical research within the HE sector is sparse, despite it becoming an increasingly important part of the higher education agenda (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011). Those that have researched this area (within HE) can be seemingly grouped into two themes; studies of personalisation benefit (for example Becket and Brookes, 2012 and Knox and Wyper, 2008) and studies which focus upon specific personalisation initiatives (for example Ody and Carey, 2009; Kurilovas, 2014).

2.2 The practice of Personalisation within Higher Education

As discussed above, there are multiple dimensions of personalisation that emerge when exploring the literature, which then lead to the approaches adopted in order to offer personalisation. The study of learning styles, for example, offers that the extent of an individual’s learning will be influenced by the extent to which their experience is tailored (or personalised) towards their preferred learning style (Kurilovas, 2014). In fact, within the practice of personalisation within Higher Education, there seems to be much focus on e-learning and web tools to personalise learning. Other studies, maintain this theme, such as a JISC (2016) review, which considered the role of learning analytics within Higher Education as a tool to manage student retention and flag “at risk” students.

Knox and Wyper (2008) have elaborated on the approaches of five different case studies of personalisation within Higher Education; the Open University, The University of Dundee, Napier, Anglia Ruskin and Oxford Brookes. Each takes a different approach to personalisation but each appears to focus upon selected aspects of personalisation, as with the work of Ody and Carey (2009), who assess the potential of peer assisted study

sessions and Peacock *et al* (2012) who advocate the use of ePortfolios as a tool for critical self-reflection and personal development planning.

What is common throughout the existing studies is a lack of a holistic model of personalisation within Higher Education, and specific consideration of the role of special events. This is something this research seeks to address. This exploratory study undertook two lines of enquiry:

- 1) To investigate the relationship between special events and personalisation at NBS within the BA (Hons) International Business suite of degrees
- 2) To generate ideas of metrics that enable learning from the special events to inform a revised conceptual model of personalisation within NBS

3.0 NOTTINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL

Nottingham Business School (NBS) is one of nine Schools within Nottingham Trent University (NTU) providing research and education in Business and 'FAME' subjects of Finance, Accounting, Management and Economics. In the academic year of 2015/16, NBS has 4500 students, 185 continuing Faculty (by FTE). This makes it the largest of NTU's nine schools and one of the larger of the UK's business schools.

The School has been a business-focused institution since its formal inception in 1979 and has a reputation for strong business linkages, applied business, management and economics learning and research. NBS is nationally known as an innovator and a market leader for the integration of work-based and experiential learning into its programmes. The latest Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) figures reveal NBS to be the largest provider of work-based learning and corporate degrees in the UK and number one for degrees with professional qualifications. NBS is also in the top ten of UK Business Schools providing year-long placements.

NTU has also enjoyed significant rankings progress and positive accolades for the quality of its student services and experience. NTU's Global Week (March 2014) won second place for International Student Experience in the NUS-UKCISA Internationalisation Awards 2014 and a centrepiece was NBS's International Professors Week. The 2014 Times Higher Education Awards saw NTU win the Outstanding Support for Students Award for its work on developing the Student Dashboard. Since its inception, the School has enjoyed a reputation for comprehensive engagement with business and this is reflected strongly in its positioning as 'the business school for business'.

3.1 Nottingham Business School strategy

NBS has outlined its strategy, mission and vision in a single Strategic Plan (2016-2021). The mission of NBS is: "to deliver education and research that combines academic excellence with impact upon business and society". The aim and impact of this work is to "enhance business and organisations through knowledge and people". In service of this mission, the School has five key strategic aims:

1. To provide education that promotes the highest academic **and** business standards
2. To develop graduates that can lead and succeed in business with a strong sense of social responsibility and sustainability
3. To develop ideas and research that impact on business, management and public policy
4. To develop partnerships and collaborations that provide added value to our stakeholders
5. To be a leading provider of executive talent and leadership development

NBS's strategy hinges on the use of experiential learning and personalisation at an individual level to every student, which is a challenge with large student numbers. In order to achieve this, NBS believes that theory and practice should be combined with actual experience and observation as well as reflection. It also recognises that every individual student needs a different combination of experiences and study to reach their potential. Therefore the School aims to ensure that all its programmes contain experiential learning to further personalise student academic and professional development.

3.2 The Nottingham Business School approach to Personalisation

In 2014 to support the fulfilment of the strategy, NBS wrote and submitted a business case to the University's Investment Fund for investment to deliver an integrated and personalised student experience framework for implementation, commencing in academic year 2015/16 and reaching full scale in 2016/17. The framework focuses on four related areas of development, underpinned by the University's strategic goals of "creating opportunity" and "empowering people": (1) generation and application of personal data, (2) development of

student knowledge and experience (3) enhancement and personalisation of learning and (4) career preparation and placement.

Together, it was hoped that these elements would provide a uniquely personalised student journey that will enable improved student experience and satisfaction. It was anticipated that delivering personalisation of learning in this form would lead to improved progression and attainment and higher levels of graduate employability. The proposed platforms for the delivery of this initiative include:

1. A set of diagnostic/pedagogic tools linked to the seven School learning goals, utilised with every NBS student to support personal progress and development.
2. Comprehensive use and application of analytics through the student Dashboard.
3. Employment of new (digital) learning tools to support personal learning (e.g. MyLab, FT.com).
4. An enhanced and scaled Alumni Fellowship scheme delivering industrial mentoring and work-based experience tailored to student need.
5. An enhanced and authentic Academic Mentor scheme that utilises diagnostics, analytics and mentoring to guide every student through a truly personalised NTU journey.

In essence, the goal of the project is to support all students to achieve their full potential, through understanding their experiences, exploring their aspirations and supporting them to develop and implement their own personalised development plan. In this initial iteration of the conceptualisation of personalisation, it is interesting to note that despite the recognition of the personal experience profile, this did not identify the role that special events can play within developing ambition in the individual learner.

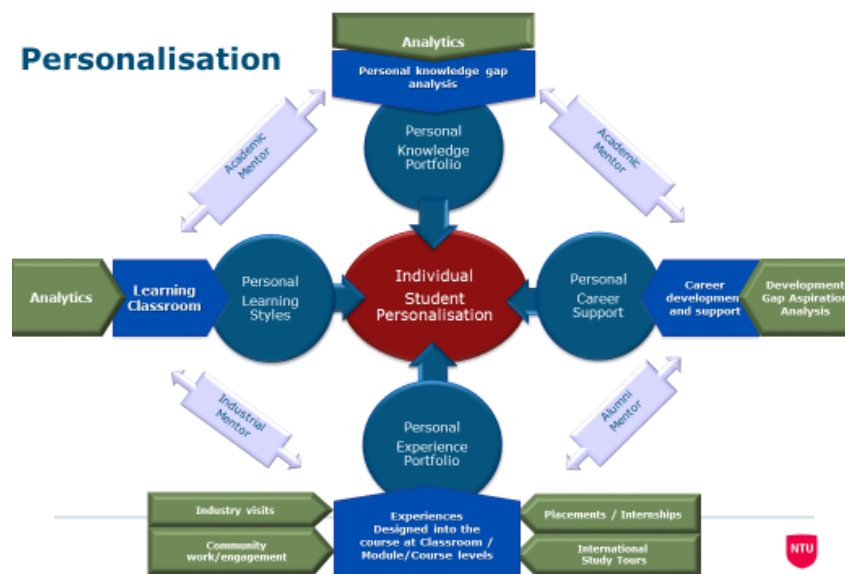


Figure 1: The NBS Model of Personalisation

The project commenced in the 2015-2016 academic session in pilot phase. This involved the delivery of two, personal and professional development modules, targeted at first and second year students, a series of bespoke events, offering targeted support to specific groups, and a programme of academic and alumni mentoring. The decision was made to include special events into the holistic model of personalisation on account of the need to target specific learner groups with distinct sets of needs, e.g. widening participation and international students. Special events enable the sharing of key standardised messages to scale, enabling the academic mentor to customise it for the individual learner. The project is delivered in close collaboration with a range of cross University teams, particularly the Employability team, who are able to offer specialised support as required.

4.0 THE CASE STUDY – BA (HONS) INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS (BAIB)

This research is focused upon the suite of BA (Hons) International Business (BAIB) programmes: BA (Hons) International Business; BA (Hons) International Business with French; BA (Hons) International Business with Spanish; BA (Hons) International Business with German.

All BAIB students gain practical experience or work and/or study in an international context to complement their academic studies. In the second semester of year two full time students either study abroad or secure an

internship, whilst dual award and sandwich students work abroad and/or study abroad for a significant period of the degree. School wide investments such as the Personalisation project and the Student Dashboard enhance the academic and personal and professional development of students, enabling them to gain maximum benefit from both academic study and practice. Drawing upon the NBS Approach to Teaching, Academic Mentors work with individual students to help them to apply theory to practice and reflect upon their experiences in the workplace, they also encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities relevant to their individual career aspirations.

NBS has seen some of the strongest application increase in the sector with prospective students attracted to the business focus, international opportunities and personalised approach of its programmes (+15.8% in the 2014-2016 cycle). Since 2013 demand for the BAIB suite of programmes has continued to thrive. Student attainment on the programme remains strong with the BA (hons) International Business students achieving 88% good honours (2:1 and above) in 2015-2016. The mission, strategy and key developments in NBS align to its programmes, teaching and learning and ambitions to deliver a more personalised approach to the academic learning journey.

BAIB students regularly enter international and national business competitions, such as The United Nations Academic Impact Global Youth Forum and The University Business Challenge. These events enable NBS students to interact with international business students from other UK and overseas institutions, whilst simultaneously gaining valuable business skills and experience. Notably, in spring 2016 a final year BAIB student reached the finals of the Peak Time competition organised by the Stockholm School of Economics, where she has gained a place in the finals combining her theoretical knowledge and commercial skills.

4.1 BA (Hons) International Business Alumni

The BAIB programme draws upon the NBS Alumni Fellowship Scheme and in parallel continues to formalise programme specific alumni relations. The programme team has embedded a formal system for collecting information regarding graduating students and maintains contact with them. The bi-annual networking event continues to be held at the British Library in London with around thirty alumni attending the latest event in May 2015. The event was also used to promote the different ways in which alumni can engage at both programme level and NBS level activities, including the Alumni Fellowship Scheme.

4.2 Events as a feature of the BA (Hons) International Business curriculum

Events are seen as an effective conduit to supporting the personalisation of the BAIB student journey, as such an important part of their programme is their international experience. These events are staggered throughout their BAIB journey in order to provide timely support.

The intention of this exploratory research is to initially identify appropriate metrics for these special events to establish their effectiveness in terms of raising ambition and enabling students to fulfil their aspirations. This will then inform a revised personalisation model for NBS. A selection of the events that took place during the academic year 2015-2016 will now be discussed in turn. These events have been specifically selected above others, as they are considered to be the hallmark events within the BAIB programme that offer the greatest support for their personal journey and to support them in achieving their full potential. This is the first stage of a research study that will commence by considering the extent to which these events fit within the NBS model of personalisation that seeks to raise student aspiration and support them in achieving their full potential. An overview of each event is provided along with the suggested indicators that will be used to assess the impact of each event within subsequent research.

4.3 The specific events

4.3.1 BAIB Alumni Language Mentoring Programme

Language is a core component of the BAIB curriculum. Students are encouraged to develop fluency in the language by choosing to take their international experience in a country where that language is the native tongue. Students enter their language at a level that is commensurate with their previous study, i.e. If they have studied A level in that language, then they will enter the University language programme at a higher level than they would if they had previously studied to GCSE level. Students often find the language component of their programme particularly challenging for a number of reasons. This often results in a disproportionate volume of referrals and failures of the language module. Therefore, it was felt necessary to offer an appropriate intervention to support each student's language progression and help develop the language skills that would enable them to

settle and thrive on their international experience. As the BAIB programme benefits from a rich mix of student nationalities, there are many non-native English speakers, whom it was felt could contribute to a peer to peer approach to language coaching whilst working in collaboration with BAIB alumni who possess fluency in their language skills. A structured system of support has been established, drawing upon academic expertise, existing BAIB students and Alumni in five language streams; French, Spanish, German, Mandarin and English. Themed language events are staged at periodic intervals throughout the academic year to coincide with pressure points that the students may face; for example when a language oral examination is approaching. The sessions are oriented more towards practical rather than theoretical language skills, themed upon areas that will be of most benefit for the students when on their international experience e.g. Business negotiations in Spanish. Both the existing students who act as mentors and the BAIB Alumni benefit from bespoke mentor training delivered by an academic consultant.

4.3.1.1 Proposed Indicators of Impact

The intended impact of the alumni language mentoring programme, is to improve student confidence within their chosen language, provide opportunities to practice and help them to develop the practical language skills that will serve them well whilst on their international experience. It is also intended that the programme will improve course attainment with specific regard to language attainment. Another potential impact of the event is the improvement of course cohesion, as all academic years' work together in the project, and they are afforded the opportunity to work (and network) with BAIB Alumni. Language mentors will benefit from the development of higher level skills associated with the design and delivery of the sessions as well as the mentoring associated with the programme.

4.3.2 BAIB Social Events and BAIB Society

Across all levels, throughout the academic year, a series of social events have been traditionally organised by the BAIB academic team. This will be facilitated in the coming academic year through the establishment of the BAIB Society, which is a student initiative designed to build course cohesion and present networking opportunities across the different years. Until the establishment of BAIB Society, these social events were previously organised by the course team and were typically assigned a theme, at different points throughout the academic year, to correlate with particular pressure points; at which it was felt that younger students would benefit from the expertise and guidance from their older peers e.g. shortly after the start of the new academic year. It was agreed that the BAIB Society would be a better medium to deliver these social events as there is student ownership of the initiative, and therefore buy in might be greater, which would boost attendance at such events, when attendance has been traditionally low.

4.3.2.1 Proposed Indicators of Impact

The intended impact of the BAIB Social events is to build course cohesiveness and present networking opportunities across all years of the programme. There are multiple benefits that may be recognised through such a society, for staff and students alike. Notably, the society is student initiated and student owned, which will hone the self-esteem, confidence and organisational skills of the society members. The academic team feel that it is a complement that the students enjoy, yet want to take ownership, of their own personalisation activities, which demonstrates their critical evaluation and entrepreneurial skills.

4.3.3 The Culture, Communication and Learning Mock Assessment Centre

In the first year, BAIB students study Culture, Communication and Learning. This is a skills-based module, designed to equip them with the foundational skills that they will need in order to prosper at University and also to confidently approach seeking their international experience. Throughout the module, students are introduced to skills for effective intercultural communication, they are given the tools to critically self-reflect on their own skills and competences, and are equipped with essential employability skills to assist them in seeking work. The module culminates in the students participating in a mock assessment centre event, supported by both BAIB final years and the NBS Employability team, within which they will encounter a group task, deliver a mini presentation and complete a competency based interview. The event is delivered in such a manner so as to provide students with early experience of assessment centres, in the recognition that they will likely encounter this method of recruitment early in their second year, whilst seeking placements for their international experience. Following training, final year students are used within the event to facilitate the simulated activities which hones higher level skills appropriate to seeking graduate level employment.

4.3.3.1 Proposed Indicators of Impact

The markers of success of this event as an initiative to help personalise the BAIB student journey can be understood through a number of indicators. These are all associated with enabling students to secure the international experience of their choice. Firstly, are the students able to prepare an effectively structured, appealing CV and covering letter? How effectively do they respond to feedback provided by Employers and Assessors? Do they feel confident in applying for jobs and approaching the recruitment process? Do they understand how they need to adapt their performance to shine during competency based interviews? Additionally, for the final year students who facilitate the event, they are able to develop confidence in the managerial skills associated with recruitment and selection.

4.3.4 Level 2 Preparation Events

During their second year, BAIB students are expected to plan for, apply and secure their international experience. This may involve a combination of both work and study abroad. These events take a significant amount of preparation and planning, with acknowledgement that those who manage their time effectively and apply early stand the best chance of securing the most sought after placements and overseas study locations. To enable students to achieve their potential in this respect, events are an essential part of the support that can be offered. Therefore, in the 2015/2016 academic year, over twenty preparation events were organised for BAIB sandwich students. The number of total events were greater on account of the diversity of pathways within the BAIB programme. For example, students who were on the BAIB dual award with French required a bespoke set of preparation activities appropriate to their journey. These events took the form of lectures, workshops and drop-ins, drawing upon a series of speakers to inform and guide on the essential skills and processes associated with securing the international experience of their choice. These events are supported strongly by the NBS Employability and Study Abroad teams.

4.3.4.1 Proposed Indicators of Impact

The intended impact of these preparation events is to ensure timely completion of all of the key stages associated with seeking, applying for, securing and preparing for their international experience. This is done in the recognition that those that manage their time effectively and complete early applications, stand the best chance of securing the international experience of their design. A number of quantitative and qualitative indicators of the success of these events may be cited, firstly in the number of students successfully securing work and study abroad placements, the extent to which deadlines are met. Secondly, the extent to which students actually feel prepared to embark on their international experience.

4.3.5 Living, Working and Studying Abroad Exhibition and Conference

A flagship event for the BAIB programme, and deemed essential for the support of BAIB students in designing their international experience is the Living, Working and Studying Abroad exhibition (LWSA). The final years plan and execute a destination themed exhibition which presents information upon life, work and study options in a wide variety of overseas destinations. The final years are expected to draw upon and share the expertise gained whilst they were on their own international experience. The event is designed to enlighten first and second years as to their options for international experience and to arm them with all essential information required to make an informed decision. The event was swiftly followed up with the second years having to complete a preference form, detailing their desires for their international experience along with a rationale for the choices made (part of the level 2 preparation events). In parallel to the main exhibition in the 2015-2016 academic year, the event was extended to offer an LWSA conference. BAIB Alumni support delivery through a series of themed concurrent workshops in addition to keynote address. The workshops addressed themes such as "securing your international experience", "preparing for your international experience" and "thriving in your international experience". The goal of the conference was to build aspirations regarding the international experience.

4.3.5.1 Proposed Indicators of Impact

These events serve as a form of creating awareness of the diversity of opportunity available to BAIB students for their international experience. The intended impact of these events is to catalyse student decision making and therefore action with regard to their plans for international experience. The event encourages reflexivity for final years on the journey that they have undertaken and helps inform their future direction and aspirations. The event is also regarded as a knowledge sharing and networking opportunity between all levels of BAIB student plus BAIB Alumni. Specific markers of impact for second year students include the speed and accuracy with which applications for study/ work abroad are made, the depth and quality of the personal statements supporting their preference forms in addition to post event delegate feedback.

4.3.6 Women in Industry event

In recognition of an alleged glass ceiling in respect of female career progression within business (Glass and Cook, 2016), and that despite high potential female students often lack the confidence and esteem (Moran, 2015) to pursue their full potential, a Women in Industry event was staged. The goal of this event was to present students with a panel of high profile female role models from different business sectors; to give the students the chance to ask of the panel any questions they desired regarding the personal challenges the panel had faced and how they had overcome them. The students were also given the opportunity to network with the panel members during a networking lunch.

The event also offered the opportunity for students to gain experience as event volunteers. A team of volunteers from all degree levels took on a variety of roles from social media management, to meet and greet, to Q & A facilitator. This provided the volunteers with valuable relevant experience for their degree and the enhancement of their employability skills and development of their confidence.

4.3.6.1 Proposed Indicators of Impact

The intended impact of the event was to improve self-esteem and build aspiration specifically amongst female, undergraduate students. Other impacts may be seen in a change or reinforcement of personal work ethic, values, drive and determination.

The indicators of the effectiveness of this personalisation initiative were measured via post event evaluation conducted via questionnaire with all event participants. Data is still being analysed, however, 100% of respondents stated that the event met their expectations. 100% of respondents also stated that the event would have a positive impact upon them achieving their full potential.

5.0 SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INITIAL LEARNING

During the 2015-2016 academic year, a wide range of targeted events were delivered appropriate for each level of the BAIB programme in addition to a number of cross programme initiatives. This was undertaken with the recognition that, whilst NBS has initiated a robust programme of personalisation, the importance of bespoke events had been under emphasised. Events were staged selectively for the BAIB programme in order to raise aspiration (NUS, 2006) and heighten the chance of students fulfilling their potential.

Using personal reflection and anecdotal feedback at this stage, the course team considered the events were on the whole well received. It was felt that these particular events enabled a conduit for key messages to be transmitted about both facilitating essential processes of the student journey whilst also encouraging students to aim high and recognise their individual responsibility with the process (Ward and Richardson, 2007). The NBS model when compared to other HE practice appears to be an innovative and holistic model of personalisation, however, as consensus in interpretation indicates, it omits to reflect the role of special events. Therefore an adaptation is proposed within the experiential component of the NBS Personalisation model to include targeted bespoke student or programme specific events.

This is of paramount importance to the BAIB programme specifically. As students on BAIB for the most part will have an aspiration to work in the international arena, this requires greater levels of self-sufficiency, confidence and resilience; key competences that can be enhanced with the right mix of special events within the personalisation framework.

The challenges of delivering personalisation at scale are also recognised. It is proposed that special events offer an appropriate medium to deliver key messages, whilst the individual academic mentor plays a key role in

(Keppell, 2014) supporting the student in interpreting key meanings from the special events that resonates with their individual self-identity.

6.0 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The goal of this paper is to present our initial thoughts and critical reflections on the model of personalisation in place within NBS. The NBS model appears to offer a holistic approach to address the main dimensions of personalisation, as it is conceptualised, within UK Higher Education. However, the importance of special events as a feature of personalisation has been underestimated within the existing model. We propose that, alongside a variety of other interventions and support mechanisms, events and special events serve as an important role within the personalisation of the BA (hons) International Business programme, as they undoubtedly do with other UK HE programmes. We therefore propose an adaptation of the NBS conceptual model to more accurately reflect the role of special events in the personalisation agenda.

The next stage of this research intends to draw upon the impact indicators proposed within this paper to evaluate the events within the next academic cycle. Specifically, assessing their role within the NBS model of personalisation which seeks to heighten student aspiration and help them fulfil their individual potential. Data collection is required to test the model utilising some of the indicators suggested within this paper with specific emphasis upon the impact of these events. Research will be undertaken from both a staff and student perspective, enabling an understanding to be reached over whether the intended goals of the event from a staff perspective, correlate with the felt impact of the event from a student perspective.

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