VISTAS is the University of West London journal. It provides an opportunity for contributors from all areas of UWL to publish academic, scholarly and contemporary writing to a wider audience. It is playing a part in the wider transfer of knowledge to the community and business in the region. At the same time it invites its audience to reflect their interests and concerns and so engage in debate (through writing and other media) about the leading and significant issues within their perspective. It offers an opportunity for formal scholarly publication by way of applications to practice, reflection and critical perspective, and attracts expert and authoritative contributions as a way of stimulating exchange of ideas in a critical and policy-related spectrum.

Its range of themes supports the current strategic mission of UWL. These can be broadly based, for example, focusing on media, communications, arts and creative endeavour as well as on a core of business, management, health, technology and enterprise. A strong regional dimension serves to encourage contributors from outside the institution. The three themes of ‘education, economy and community’ will enable the net to be cast widely.

Its purpose is to attract, interest and stimulate writers and readers alike and assist the University to communicate with the public at large, and with specific stakeholders, about mutually engaging themes and issues. It is designed to engage the public, communicate and promote the purposes of UWL, and make a tangible contribution to the identity, image and reputation of the university community and its corporate and public life.

VISTAS: Education, Economy and Community is published in both paper and digital format twice a year (www.uwl.ac.uk/vistas). The paper version is distributed widely and is a tangible symbol of University activity and presence.

Members of UWL and other university stakeholders are invited to submit papers for the consideration of the editorial board. Papers are subject to refereeing by peer reviewers, so that VISTAS can be a publication channel comparable to major journals in fields of study and research. In addition, and subject to the editors, VISTAS publishes other suitable matter which represents university and stakeholder interests. Contributions will normally be between 4,000 and 8,000 words length. Full details are provided in ‘Author Guidelines for Submitting Papers’.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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This fourth issue completes the second volume of VISTAS. The university continues its strategic evolution as it has now concentrated its development on two major campus sites in Ealing and Brentford. A major campus refurbishment at St Mary’s Road in Ealing has started, which will run on to the end of 2014. This is also a moment when much of the university strategy for research development is taking shape, both within the Schools but also strategically through the work of INSPIRE. The research degree activity is growing in volume and a number of reader and professorial appointments have been made at INSPIRE. We expect that these developments will bear fruit in ‘research culture’ and in publication output, not only in respective academic domains but also in VISTAS. In this way VISTAS can provide a nursery for student and staff practitioner publication.

The university is increasing its investment in VISTAS by providing the means to move design and production to an external source, and thereby help to maintain the publication schedule on a more assured basis.

Roger Brown is both an education academic and prolific author as well as now serving on the UWL Governing Body. His paper on the myth of student choice is based on a public lecture he gave to the university, which was timely in content and well received. In summary he deconstructs many of the arguments behind the much vaunted idea of ‘student choice’. Read the paper and prepare for stimulation!

Joelle Fanghanel is the head of INSTIL at UWL and a contributor to contemporary discussions on higher education and pedagogy. The paper reflects her interests in international and cross cultural issues in higher education. She is the author of a recently published monograph entitled ‘Being an academic’ (Joelle Fanghanel. Being an academic. London: Routledge, 2012).

The emerging digital economy is bringing many benefits which are widely appreciated in terms of communication, access to information, speed, convenience and providing great opportunities to mix media and content. However, the digital economy has also brought new challenges and problems which were once less anticipated. Computer security, matters of surveillance as well as trust and confidence have to be tackled. Trolling, nuisance, cyber stalking and cyber bullying have emerged as threats in the use of new technologies and social media. These challenges are addressed by Ori Igwe in an international law context in a paper that demonstrates the need for new responses within the global community.

These themes of misuse of cyberspace are also challenging higher education. Dimitrios Zaferiou and Anne Manyande take up this discussion. It appears to be that the incidence between secondary and tertiary education is similar. In both cases up to a quarter of students might be cyber victims and around 15% cyber perpetrators.

The final paper in the issue comes from researchers in the School of Computing and Technology: Nasrullah Khilji and Stephen A. Roberts.

Nasrullah is in the final cycle of his project investigating knowledge management in the local authority planning system, including a case study of five services in the south Midlands and some exploratory modeling. Planning offices have gone quite some way in taking up and applying new technologies, but this alone will not bring about a ‘knowledge revolution’ in local government.

Dr Stephen A. Roberts and Dr Tony Olden
Managing Editors
The UK Coalition Government believes that the key to raising educational quality is to empower students in various ways, especially by providing them with substantially increased amounts of information about provision and quality. The Myth of Student Choice examines the thinking behind this policy in the light of the available evidence about higher education as a process and about the nature of student decision making. It argues that, so far from raising quality, the present push on student information will actually damage quality, not least by reinforcing the reconstitution of the identity of the student from apprentice learner to that of novice consumer.

Keywords
choice | consumerisation | information for students | Key Information Set | National Student Survey | private for-profit universities | private not-for-profit universities

‘The more information students have on courses and their outcomes, the more their choices will drive universities to improve’.
(Lord Mandelson, CBI Higher Education Summit, 20 October 2009)

‘Better informed students will take their custom to the places offering good value for money. In this way, excellent teaching will be placed back at the heart of every student’s university experience’.
(Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011b, paragraph 2.24)

‘Markets cannot discipline price without meaningful information about quality’.
(Massy, 2004, p.31)

‘People investing in human capital through a purchase of higher education don’t know what they are buying – and wouldn’t and can’t know what they have bought until it is far too late to do anything about it’.
(Winston, 1999, p.15)

‘Education is a process pretending to be an outcome’.
(Trow, 1992, p.9)
**Introduction**

One of the central planks of the UK Coalition Government’s higher education reforms is the empowerment of students through the enhancement of student choice. This is on the basis that both quality and efficiency will be improved as institutions respond to students’ decisions and ‘raise their game’ so as to attract or retain students and revenue. In this article I want to ask whether empowering students and strengthening student choice will actually deliver these benefits, or whether it will simply trigger a further set of costs, distortions and detriments.

I shall first describe the various ways in which the Government is seeking to achieve this objective, before considering the beliefs and assumptions on which it is based. Drawing on evidence from higher education and other scholarship, I shall then consider how far these beliefs and assumptions, derived essentially from the economic theory of markets, are appropriate to higher education. Finally, I shall look at the potential consequences. My conclusion is that, so far from improving the quality of student education, strengthening student choice is actually much more likely to damage it.

Before coming to the main argument, let me just say, for the avoidance of doubt, that I am certainly not opposed to students having and exercising choices about what, where and how to study. Nor am I against them having as much information as is feasible on which to base their decisions. My concerns arise from the weight being placed on this process as a driver of quality and efficiency, and from the very clear danger that, so far from improving the quality of student education, strengthening student choice is actually much more likely to damage it.

**Enhancing student choice**

Let us look first at how the Government is seeking to empower students as consumers of higher education. There are six main ways.

First, from this autumn (2012), the cost of teaching most subjects will be met entirely from the student fee, with institutions competing on price (within an overall cap) as well as on course quality and availability. This is in effect a voucher system. By mimicking as closely as possible a ‘real’ market where consumers choose with their own resources, voucher systems are seen by some economists as the best means of giving consumers leverage over publicly funded services (Friedman, 1962). However, so far the evidence about improved quality and efficiency is at best inconclusive (Belfield and Levin, 2005; Bekhradnia and Massy, 2009).

Second, the Government has removed the controls on the number of places for highly qualified students (those with AAB+ at A level and equivalent). This is intended both to increase competition and to strengthen student choice. Whether it will expand supply will depend on the universities’ reactions: past experience in both Britain and America suggests that many prestigious institutions prefer to keep their numbers down in order to preserve their exclusivity. In any case, whilst this partial lifting of numbers controls may increase choice, it will of course only do so for applicants with those qualifications.

Third, to widen the choice of supplier, the Government is encouraging more Further Education (FE) colleges to enter the higher education market. More than half the marginal places created under the new ‘core-and-margin’ funding methodology for 2012 entry have been allocated to FE colleges, although these may be offset by places being withdrawn by universities under existing agreements (Matthews, 2012a).

The core-and-margin methodology is essentially a device for keeping fees down although it has been presented by the Government as a means of increasing competition. As a result, 65 FE colleges now have direct funding agreements with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for the first time (Lee, 2012). The Government is also lowering the rules for provider entry. To be eligible for a university
title, a college with degree awarding powers now needs only 1,000 full-time equivalent higher education students compared with 4,000 previously; only 750 of these have to be studying at degree level. At the same time, students on over 400 courses at non-HEFCE-funded colleges are now designated as eligible to receive state subsidised loans compared with 157 only a couple of years ago (Morgan, 2012).

Fourth, to improve the quality of student decision making, the Government is further expanding the amount of information that institutions are required to publish about their provision. It is also encouraging private companies to use this information to provide fuller information and guidance. The Consumers Association Which? has recently announced its intention to provide such a service (Which? 2012). The centrepiece of this enhanced information drive is the so called Key Information Set (KIS), setting out no fewer than seventeen items of information that will be available at course level for each institution from this autumn. These include the proportion of time spent in various learning and teaching activities (by year/stage of study, with a link to further detail); the mix of summative assessment methods used (by year/stage of study); the destinations of graduates six months after graduation; of those employed, the proportion in managerial/professional jobs six months after graduation; and salary data (upper quartile, median, lower quartile) six months after graduation from the course concerned and for all courses in the subject across all institutions, six and 40 months after graduation (the final version of the KIS is at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/publicinfo/kis). Universities are also being ‘encouraged’ to publish anonymised information about the teaching qualifications, fellowships and qualifications of their teaching staff (HEFCE guidance is expected shortly).

Fifth, the Government is increasing the ways in which institutions are required or encouraged to consider student interests, strengthening the student ‘voice’. Now in its eighth year, the National Student Survey (NSS) – a survey of third-year students’ views on their institutional experience – is seen as a key indicator of educational quality by students, institutions and the media (in spite of its many limitations for this purpose: Brown, in press, Chapter 6). Students are now full members of the review teams that periodically assess institutions’ quality assurance arrangements. They may also have the power in future to trigger institutional reviews where there are serious concerns about quality.

Finally, the Government is strengthening the ways in which students can obtain attention, action or redress for what is perceived to be inadequate service. For example, all institutions are being required to publish student charters covering: diversity, respect and communication; teaching, learning, research and assessment; finance; complaints, appeals, discipline; personal development and employment; student services (non-academic); and community, sports and social activities (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011a). In fact, charters will play a dual role: internally, they will frame the expectations of existing students; externally, they will play a promotional role in presenting an image of the institution to potential students. Following the lead given in the White Paper, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator on Student Complaints (OIA) has consulted the sector on a number of ideas that could promote and deliver early resolution of complaints. These include the creation of campus ombudsmen and associated support networks; the creation of a good practice framework for complaints and appeals processes, including possible timeframes; the development of an OIA ‘kite-mark’ accreditation scheme; and a revised funding scheme that contains a case-fee element (OIA, 2011).

Of these various steps, the one on which I wish to concentrate here is the fourth: the enhancement of information (for a more general review of the reforms, see Brown, in press). This is central and crucial because, as everyone agrees, student choice is only meaningful if students are able to make well informed decisions about their future studies. Let us start by looking at the Government’s rationale.
The rationale

The rationale was indicated in the earlier quotes from recent Government statements. It can be broken down into three propositions: (a) markets are the most efficient way of allocating resources; (b) higher education is basically a private good; therefore (c) a market-based system – or one as close to it as is politically and economically attainable – is the best means of providing higher education.

If these propositions are accepted then the reform programme set out in the White Paper makes perfect sense. But if there are difficulties with them, markets may not be of the best and most efficient way of organising provision. As the formulation implies, the argument turns on the answers to two questions: (a) what sort of good or service is higher education? (b) who are the main beneficiaries?

What kind of good or service is higher education?

I propose to refer here to the work of a number of writers who have considered how far higher education can be seen as a good or service (see also, Dunnett et al., 2012).

Zeitaml et al. (1985, p.36) identified eight features that distinguish services from goods for marketing purposes: services cannot be stored; services cannot be transported; services cannot be mass produced; services cannot be protected by patents; service quality is difficult to control; service costs are difficult to calculate; demand for services fluctuates; consumers themselves are involved in the production process. Elsewhere (p.43) the authors speak of four unique features of services: intangibility; inseparability; heterogeneity; and perishability (duration of benefits to the consumer is also identified).

Because of these characteristics, service quality cannot be measured objectively; instead the focus has to be on ‘perceived quality’, which results from a comparison of customer expectations with their perceptions of actual performance (Voss and Gruber, 2006, p.219).

Lovelock (1983) classified services, inter alia, by the scope for the exercise of customisation and judgement in delivery. Where, as in higher education, the service is created as it is consumed, and the customer is involved in the production process, there is far more room for tailoring the service to meet the needs of individual customers or clients. But by the same token it can never be clear, either to the customer or to the professional provider, what the outcome will be. Many writers (for example, Rothschild and White, 1995; Marginson, 2004; McCulloch, 2009) in fact emphasise the role of students as inputs into, and joint producers of, their higher education.

How do purchasers judge the quality of a good or service? Economists make a distinction between ‘search’ and ‘experience’ goods. ‘Search’ goods are those where product characteristics such as quality can be established prior to purchase: most ordinary consumer goods fall into this category. ‘Experience’ goods are those where quality can only be assessed through consumption: restaurant meals, theatrical performances, holidays all fall into this category. However Weimer and Vining (1992) categorised higher education as a ‘post-experience’ good, the quality of which can only be established well after it has been ‘consumed’, and perhaps not even then (see also, Nelson, 1970 and Hamlin, 1994). In the same spirit, Kay and Vickers (1998, p.308) used the term ‘trust’ goods, the quality of which is not apparent even after consumption. Similarly, Lovelock et al. (1998, p.219) speak of ‘credence qualities’, characteristics that customers find it difficult to evaluate even after purchase and consumption.

Cave et al. (1992) drew attention to imperfect observability and infrequent purchasing as major difficulties in applying market theories to higher education, together with the difficulty of changing course or institution. As regards quality, they distinguished between the provenance of the degree awarded, the quality of tuition received, and differentiation in course content. Neither of the first two can be observed in advance. The third aspect – the construction of the course – is more readily observable before purchase. But even here the relative merits of the course for a particular individual are less easily evaluated and there may be high search costs.

Rowley (1995) identified three features that distinguish higher education from other services:

- Exclusivity of access: most customers must meet stringent academic and sometimes personal criteria.
- The customer is an agent in not only their
own education but that of others: the notion of ‘exchange’, what the customer gives to the service experience, which includes but goes beyond price.

- The longitudinal nature of the service: in measuring or assessing quality we need to consider not only the cumulative effect of the transactions but also the changes in students as learners, which may lead to developing or changing approaches to learning, learning styles and/or perceptions of the learning process (see also, Bolton and Drew, 1991).

Who are the beneficiaries?

Clearly, the student is not the only beneficiary of higher education:

‘Perhaps the most important way in which education differs from simple consumer products is that it is not just the primary customer who benefits. The strangest aspect of the idea that the market can ensure quality is that it implies that there is only one customer, or type of customer... Schooling is unlike a consumer product because there are multiple stakeholders – multiple customers – who make multiple demands on schooling and also benefit from particular forms of schooling. Schooling and, more important, education, is not an individual benefit where quality can be judged solely in terms of the individual preferences of the person who is educated. Education is essentially a social and a moral affair. It is an activity in which the society within which an individual lives is actively involved’ (Walford, 2006, p.60-61).

In passing, one could say that perhaps the most fundamental difficulty with the current reforms is that, like the Browne Committee Report on which they are based (Independent Review, 2010), higher education is essentially seen as a private good and, moreover, one where those private benefits are seen overwhelmingly in economic terms (earnings, employment, benefits). Per contra, the public interest is mainly seen in terms of ensuring that taxpayers’ money is properly spent, as Dodds (2011) and others have pointed out.

To sum up this stage of the argument, we have a situation where (a) it is impossible for an individual to know in advance what quality of education they will receive if they enrol on X course at Y institution in Z mode, not least because they will be inputs to, and co-producers of, that process and (b) the range of potential beneficiaries goes far wider than the individual student. A number of corollaries flow from this, and it is with these corollaries that the rest of this article will be concerned. Before we come to this, however, there are one or two further points that may be worth noting at this stage.

First, even if these problems could be overcome, there are many other reasons why market-based approaches have severe limitations when applied to higher education. These include (a) the need to protect the supply of public goods such as a skilled labour force, an active citizenry, etc (hence state subsidies, regulation and, sometimes, supply), and (b) the fact that universities cannot easily be left to close if there is insufficient demand for their courses (in spite of the rhetoric about failing institutions, not a single major, multidisciplinary, institution has so far been allowed to close by any administration) (for a full review, see Brown, 2011).

Second, there is an enormous amount of – mostly American – literature that attempts to specify the conditions in which effective student learning is most likely to occur. I will not attempt to summarise this here. But in view of what is said in a moment, it may be worth noting that it does not generally support the view that students will receive a better educational experience in a more selective institution. To quote Pascarella (2001, p.20):

‘Within-college experiences tend to count substantially more than between-college characteristics. The quality of teaching, the extent and nature of interaction with faculty and peers, the effectiveness of student affairs programming, the focus and intensity of academic experiences, and the overall level of student engagement, to name several important dimensions, are much more important in defining excellence in undergraduate education than the reputation, selectivity or resources of the institution attended. This is not to say that such factors as student body selectivity or resources have no role in shaping institutional impact. In some situations they do, at least indirectly. However, the weight of evidence indicates that their impact is substantially less than what a college does with the students and resources that it has’ (original author’s emphasis).
In other words, it is exposure to effective educational practices that is the key to high quality student education (see also, Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, 2005; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2001; Pike, 2003; Kuh and Pascarella, 2004; Pascarella et al., 2006; Ewell, 2008; Strauss and Volkwein, 2008; Lipka, 2008; Ro et al., submitted for review). The same message can be taken from two recent UK studies (Teaching and Learning Research Programme, 2008; Ashwin et al., 2011; see also, Brennan and Patel, 2011).

Next, even if we had valid, reliable and accessible indicators of educational quality, in every part of every institution, that could be economically customised in advance for every individual student or potential student (and the challenges of conveying such indicators in an accessible way that avoids distortion and does not mislead the user should not be underestimated – see Baldwin and James, 2000), there is little evidence either from the literature on consumer decision making generally or from what we know of student decision making in higher education that students would necessarily make use of them (Naidoo et al., 2011). On the contrary, we know that in reaching decisions about which product to buy, consumers generally, and students certainly, are influenced by a whole series of factors, of which perceived quality is only one. To quote one of the most authoritative surveys:

‘Our research found little of the calculative, individualistic consumer rationalism that predominates in official texts (Ball, Macrae and Maguire, 1999)’. (Reay et al., 2005, p.58).

Like many other consumers, student behaviour tends to be ‘adaptive’: students act in accordance with how they are normally expected to in the circumstances in which they find themselves (Hutchings, 2003; Jongbloed, 2003; Kay, 2003; Vossensteyn, 2005; Stothart, 2007; Cremonini et al., 2008).

Let us now turn to the corollaries of this fundamental problem with information about quality in higher education.

The difficulties with information for students: the consequences for educational quality

If information about product quality is not available and students would not use it rationally even if it were, should higher education be provided on market lines in the first place? As Jongbloed (2006, p.25) has written:

‘If individuals are fundamentally rational and the problems are [uncertainty, imperfect information], the potential role for policy would be to try to address these market imperfections by helping students make the decisions they want. If, on the other hand, students are fundamentally irrational, then giving them more information or eliminating market imperfections will not necessarily improve outcomes. In the latter case there may not be a need to strengthen consumer choice in higher education, as it might be better to, for example, let educational authorities offer the programmes they deem best for students rather than let student preference drive programme selection.’

Following the Browne Committee, the Government has in fact accepted that student choices should not be the sole determinants of what is offered by continuing direct subsidies for some ‘strategically important and vulnerable subjects’ and certain other priority areas. This reflects the desirability of not simply leaving the choice of what subjects should be taught to students. As Williams (1999, p.149) wrote:

‘Higher education provision determined solely by the wishes of large numbers of individual students would be unlikely to meet their real long-term needs, or those of society as a whole, as effectively as a system in which significant resource allocation authority is held by a democratic government, advised by expert agencies that can interpret the economic and social processes with which tertiary education interacts’.

The second corollary, if higher education is to be organised on market lines, is that consumers will seek information substitutes. This happens in other situations where market forces are intended to operate but where direct information about product quality is hard to find (McPherson and Winston, 1993; see also, Kay and Vickers, 1998). In higher education,
it has been well established that it is prestige that typically acts as the substitute (Brewer et al., 2002; Eckel, 2008; van Vught, 2008). Hence price is a key indicator of (perceived) quality: with all the experience of what happens when institutions are allowed to set their own prices in education markets, the Coalition Government really had no excuse for being taken aback when so many institutions went for the upper end of the fee possibilities for 2012.

As well as charging the maximum the market will bear, the leading US institutions invest in improving admissions selectivity, lowering acceptance/yield rates and student consumption benefits: dormitories, eating facilities, fibre-optic networks, etc. (Dill, 2003). Other strategies to enhance prestige include renaming the institution and creating ‘honors colleges’ to attract higher scoring students (Newman et al., 2004). There is of course a very strong correspondence between institutional prestige, longevity and worth. In both the US and Britain there are huge differences in levels of institutional wealth: even after allowing for subject differences, Cambridge has over four times the income per student of Edge Hill (the differences in net assets are even greater). Calhoun (2006, p.25) has observed that the availability of elite status actually depends on huge inequalities of funding for different categories of institution. Current Government policies will of course increase these disparities (Thompson and Bekhradnia, 2011; Brown, in press). If input factors like resourcing levels or student qualifications matter, then equity suggests that any differentials should be reduced, especially as the more expensive and better funded institutions tend to attract students who have already had more spent on them than their less fortunate contemporaries.


‘What the faculty and staff of both private and public institutions have learned is that in the end there is really no market advantage accorded to institutions that provide extra-quality education...What happens in this market is not quality but rather competitive advantage’.

Hansmann (1999) argued that much in higher education can be explained by the notion of student education as an ‘associative good’, one where a major consideration for purchasers is/are the personal characteristics of the other customers. What a university or college is selling is therefore, in large part, the ‘quality’ of its students. This is still another consequence of the difficulty of obtaining direct information about product quality. Markets in such goods do not function like other markets. In particular, when not-for-profit firms produce such goods, there is a strong tendency for customers to become stratified across firms according to their personal characteristics. The incentive to sell by choosing only the best customers is especially strong for such organisations because they are effectively constrained to charge their customers, on average, no more than (and, often, much less than) the cost of producing the service. A private for-profit college would have a stronger incentive to use price as a basis for rationing admissions. At the same time, competition is dampened, partly because of larger gaps between the market segments and partly because of the high degree of inertia in the student body, over centuries in many cases.

The whole situation has been well summarised by Dill:

‘Because the new competitive market is characterized by inadequate and inappropriate information, an ambiguous conception – “academic prestige” – comes to represent academic quality in the public mind, which can lead to a price-quality association that undermines productive efficiency. The distorting influence of prestige in both the US and UK markets means that the educational costs of elite universities provide a “price umbrella” for the rest of the system and present spending targets for less elite institutions that wish to compete by raising their prices (Massy, 2004). Competitive markets thereby encourage an academic “arms race” for prestige amongst all institutions, which rapidly increases the costs of higher education and devalues the improvement of student learning. As noted in both the US and UK, an unregulated academic market can lead to a situation in which no university constituency – students, faculty members or administrators – has a compelling incentive to assure academic standards. This is a recipe for a classic and
significant market failure in which the rising social costs of higher education are not matched by equivalent social benefits (Teixeira et al., 2004)‘(Dill, 2007, p.67).

The third corollary, as both Jongbloed and Dill have noted, is the need for effective regulation. There is a paradox here. The 2011 White Paper and associated official statements speak of the need to reduce regulation if market competition is to flourish, hence fewer controls on funded student places, greater price competition, lower market entry barriers, etc. There is also to be a ‘risk-based’ approach to quality assurance, so that some institutions receive less frequent or intensive assurance visits than others. But what if the resource squeeze on the sector as a whole (with a 40 per cent planned reduction in current spending to 2014-15) or on individual institutions (increasing disparities again) leads to more cutting of corners and risks to quality either generally or on the part of the most hard pressed universities? It certainly seems ironic that at the very time when institutions are, by Government decision, facing an even more risky environment, that same Government should be introducing ‘risk-based’ regulation.

There is a further difficulty. The regulation of quality in most higher education systems is a mixture of state, academic and market mechanisms (Clark, 1983; Dill and Beerkens, 2011, and in press). In reality, most experts agree that in developed systems the key mechanism is academic self-regulation within, usually, a state legislative envelope (Kells, 1992). But market competition shifts the balance of power away from the academic community as the primary custodians and judges of quality and standards. To quote Marks (2007, p.173), judgements shift from being ‘authority-based’ (merit judged by ‘the authorities’) to being ‘market-based’. Moreover, quality is increasingly seen in terms of economic criteria such as fitness for the labour market. At the same time the focus of institutional quality assurance shifts from quality enhancement to reputation management (for the full argument, see Brown, 2009).

The final corollary is the amount of waste involved. Institutions put huge amounts of effort into producing, checking, manipulating, publishing and ‘spinning’ vast amounts of data, yet not one of the various moves to increase student information has been subject to a proper cost-benefit analysis. So for example, the projected autumn 2012 HEFCE evaluation of the Key Information Set (HEFCE, 2012, pp.14-15) envisages looking at:

- The user experience of the KIS widget, the KIS and the new Unistats website
- Whether the process from HE providers’ perspectives can be improved on
- An audit of the data provided by institutions.

No reference here to an analysis of institutions’ costs in producing this information let alone the wider costs and distortions, or whether these are or could be offset by quantified or quantifiable benefits.

Similarly, universities and colleges invest increasing amounts of money in activities – marketing, branding, student recruitment – which have little to do with educational quality but are thought to be attractive to students and their sponsors. Hearn (2008, p.209) refers to Luettger’s (2008) estimate that the amount of money spent on marketing and communications by colleges and universities in the US has risen by over 50 per cent since 2000; this is the average: the recent Senate report on for profit colleges (Stone, 2012) found that such institutions spend an average of 23 per cent on marketing compared to 17 per cent on instruction. This may be why many American students pay far more in tuition than their colleges spend on educating them, something we shall increasingly see here as tuition fees take off after 2012. Much of this expenditure is of course in response to what students, as consumers, need or say they need.

In the UK, a number of writers (e.g. Rolfe, 2003) have drawn attention to increased expenditure on marketing and branding as universities seek to maintain and improve their position in the market, even though much of this is ineffective (see also, Matthews, 2012b). There has so far been less comment about dysfunctional expenditure on the US pattern but this can surely be only a matter of time. Most serious of all, however, is the waste involved where institutions invest resources in seeking prestige – for example, through increasing student selectivity or investing in expensive research ‘stars’ – when only a small number of institutions can ever be truly prestigious: a zero-sum game with
a vengeance. These are of course resources that could and should have been invested in improving educational practices and facilities.

Finally, we should note the contradiction between the idea of offering every student and potential student the widest possible choice, so that every student has the best chance of fulfilling their potential by studying on a course and in a manner that best meets their particular needs, and the clearly homogenising tendencies of having a single set of (mostly input-based) data to indicate institutional ‘quality’. There are in fact several sets of paradoxes here.

First, partly because of the informational problems described, and in spite of government rhetoric about the beauties of competition as each institution finds its distinctive niche, a greater degree of marketisation in higher education actually leads to a lower level of institutional diversity, as many students, institutions, employers and national agencies ‘migrate’ to a single preferred model of a well-resourced, highly selective, research-based university (see Brown, 2011, chapter 3 for the full argument); the ‘league tables’ of course reinforce this. At precisely the same time as Ministers are preaching diversity and choice their policies are actually reducing it. Second, the governments that have been advocating greater student choice are the very ones that have been cutting public expenditure on universities, so that institutions’ ability to offer a ‘personalised’ curriculum – for example, by increasing the amount of face to face contact between students and lecturers/tutors, reducing the size of teaching groups and/or improving the speed and quality of feedback (all things that surveys consistently put at the top of students’ wishes) – has been significantly reduced (student/staff ratios in the universities are now, at 17.1, nearly two points above those in the state secondary schools, 15.3; in the private schools they are about half the state school figure). This is both a local management problem and a major strategic issue.

It is in fact strongly arguable that if the Government was really serious about student choice and empowerment, it would increase the resources for teaching in all institutions, something already desirable on economic grounds alone (McMahon, 2009). It would also require those institutions that obtain large amounts of public money for research to say how they are using that money to improve student learning and so justify the £9,000 fee: I think we can guess the answer from the reported comments of Sir Stephen Wall, Chair of the Council of University College London, in December 2010, that the institution would be using the increased teaching revenue to ‘fund the shortfall in government support for science and other research’ (Baker, 2010). The Government would also commit more of its own resources to develop information tools and dissemination: Thompson and Bekhradnia (2011, paragraph 84) pointed out that the Government proposes to spend £150,000 on information provision yet the running costs of the Student Loans Company and Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs will increase by £10m per annum with the introduction of the new fee and repayment schemes.

Finally, and again contrary to the claims of market advocates, instead of empowering consumers’ choices and potentialities, market methods of coordination actually reproduce the inequalities that consumers bring to the market place. As Ranson (1993, p.337) wrote:

‘Within the market place all are free and equal, only differentiated by their capacity to calculate their self-interest. Yet, of course, the market masks its social bias. It elides, but reproduces, the inequalities that consumers bring to the market place. Under the guise of neutrality, the institution of the market actively confirms and reinforces the pre-existing social class order of wealth and privilege’. (see also, Hemsley-Brown, 2011).

Whatever else markets may produce it is not social justice.
Conclusion

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that, at the very least, the current push on student information will increase stratification, both of the institutions and of the constituencies they serve (to the detriment of the notion of a diverse system where differences in resourcing and status between institutions are kept within a certain range); it will weaken self-regulation (the chief reason for our generally well-deserved reputation for educational quality); and will lead to a lot of nugatory effort on the part of institutions and students and their families, at a time of almost unprecedented economic pressures, without any corresponding benefits.

Even worse, though, is the reinforcement that it provides for the notion of higher education as a consumer product just like any other (Williams, in press). This is completely contrary to the vision which many of us still have of higher education as essentially a process of intellectual and moral transformation, where the end product, if there is one, is a more enlightened individual better able to stand on their own feet intellectually through participation in a community which is devoted to searching out and understanding what is believed to be the truth through established scholarly means. Instead of a vision of higher education in which students are essentially consumers of a pre-specified product, we should be talking about an engaged partnership, where the key information is not what students can obtain before entering but what all parties learn in the course of the process about educational aims and how students may best achieve them. This is what is at stake in the enhancement of student choice and information.

Finally, there is a moral dimension. Is it fair to load upon students, at the age of 17 or 18, the main responsibility for making a choice of subject, course and institution, and for correcting it if it turns out to be wrong? Surely it should be the responsibility of the academic community to protect students by ensuring that, whatever, wherever and however they study, they receive a worthwhile learning experience leading to a suitable qualification?

The very worst aspect of the renewed push on student choice and information is that it weakens our ability to provide those reassurances without putting anything worthwhile in its place.

You may now be able to see why, on the basis of what we know about higher education markets, student choice is a myth, and a dangerous myth at that.
References


Ro, H.K., Terenzini, P.T. and Yin, A.C. (Submitted for review, 2012) Between-college effects on students reconsidered.


The findings of a small-scale study are discussed which examined (with a co-researcher) a programme where Palestinian and Israeli students were studying together in the UK for a period of three years. The study revealed the elements of a teaching approach that inflected the way students understood, discussed and related to a conflict that was deeply influencing their learning experience in the UK. The relevance of these findings to the more general theme of global citizenship is discussed.

Keywords

global citizenship | ‘worldly’ pedagogies | plurality of experience | Gaza | Palestinian students | Israel | empowerment | higher education experiences
Introduction

I examine the challenges for universities of preparing students to live and work in today’s globalised context – whether they decide to live and work close to home in the UK or in remote regions of the world. I start with a discussion of the phrase ‘global citizenship’ as a concept that has been adopted by a number of universities in the West to articulate their approach to educating for a globalised world, and providing students with attributes that will help them face the technical, social, cultural, environmental or ethical challenges brought about by globalisation. While there is a sense that this is underpinned by a multicultural and civic agenda – a form of education that raises awareness of political, social and economic stakes in the world – in practice visions and conceptions abound of what this means. I will show that it can serve to disguise the real agenda of educational providers and promotes reductive understandings of diversity. I will offer an alternative that focuses on the pedagogies which universities can adopt to face the daunting task of preparing students to live and work in today’s world. I do this through discussing a small-scale study in which I examined (with a co-researcher) a programme where Palestinian and Israeli students were studying together in the UK for a period of three years. Based on this analysis, I present a framework for what I have called ‘worldly pedagogies’, a term inspired by the work of Hannah Arendt in The Human Condition where she associates the sustainability of a common world to a defence of plurality (Arendt, 1958). The worldly pedagogies I discuss here aim to enable students to develop strategies to reflect on ways to live and work in a complex world.

Defining global citizenship

I will start with a discussion of the concept of global citizenship. Whilst there is quite a tightly defined agenda of global citizenship in schools – in the UK particularly – the issue of what it is in the context of universities, is much less clear.

I have shown in another publication on this topic that, from a high level of analysis focused on its aims, there are two polarized ways of thinking about global citizenship education (Fanghanel & Cousin, 2012). First, global citizenship has been presented as a multicultural endeavour that emphasises the value of local cultures and local knowledge (practical or ethnically specific types of knowledge as opposed to abstract or expert knowledge). Broadly, this is a view that praises the celebration of diversity. The second way of envisaging the global citizenship agenda is more political, and it critiques this concept by pointing to the ‘post-colonial’ nature of the global citizenship enterprise. In this view, global citizenship is seen as an attempt to ‘westernize’ the rest of the world. There are in fact a number of elements in the term global citizenship which I summarise below.

1) Going back to the Greek philosophers, Diogenes claimed to be a ‘citizen of the world’ (kosmopolitēs) and Seneca is known for his ‘cultivation of humanity’ (Nussbaum, 1997). Global citizenship is related to the broader notion of ‘cosmopolitanism’ which emphasises mutual interdependencies in a globalised world (Fine, 2007). In the cosmopolitan perspective, global citizenship rejects ‘provenance-based theories of identity’ (Hill, 2009). This means that diversity amongst individuals cannot simply be determined by their geographical or cultural origins. For the German philosopher Beck emphasising such geographical or cultural determination – what he calls ‘the territorial prison theory of identity’ – leads to narrow definitions of global citizenship (Beck, 2006, p.7). Cosmopolitan views of citizenship therefore endorse non-deterministic views of diversity. For a cosmopolitan thinker, people, as agents, chose to engage in the world as individuals who are freed from belonging to a nation.
2) The notion of global citizenship can be interpreted as an agenda addressing the failings of neoliberalism where neoliberalism is defined as an approach to governance which relies on rational economic models, and promotes the view that competition and market principles are the best drivers of performance. This model emerged – in the West – in the early eighties (associated with Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the United States), although it may be more exact to trace it back to Pinochet’s economic reforms in Chile in the early seventies. In the context of globalisation and global citizenship, applying free market principles to most aspects of social life generates a reflection on the distinction Richard Falk (Falk, 1994) has made between ‘globalisation from above’ which focuses on broad globalizing trends, power structures, global flow and enterprise; and ‘globalisation from below’ which focuses on the local outcomes of globalisation, the impact on peoples and individuals. In this sense global citizenship education focuses the educational endeavour on the social, geopolitical or human right aspects of social life in a globalised world.

3) For many universities, global citizenship is about the global market, and the need to recruit worldwide and integrate students in a multi-cultural community of learners. What is referred to as the ‘internationalizing’ agenda in universities reflects this understanding of global citizenship. It focuses on the economic advantage of ‘going global’ and sometimes too on the need for opportunities of a global education for all students through a ‘multi-cultural’ campus. Within the internationalizing agenda, understandings of multi-culturalism (or diversity) are more or less sophisticated. ‘Universalist multiculturalism’ for example represents the post-colonial perspective described earlier in which the bridging of difference is seen as an export of Western values to the rest of the world (e.g. Andreotti et al. 2010). Relativistic understandings of multi-culturalism, on the other hand, may lead universities to display a relatively unproblematised approach to cultural differences by focusing on ‘respect of differences’ (e.g. see a review of this literature by Caruana and Spurling (Caruana and Spurling, 2006).

4) For a number of universities in the UK, the US and Australia, in particular, the necessity of preparing students for work has provided an opportunity to reflect on university curricula for a global world, and on the kinds of attributes universities want to promote in graduates (Barrie, 2004, Jones, 2009) – the ‘graduate attributes’ agenda. In this perspective, some universities offer ‘global citizenship projects’ that engage students in transformative projects to raise awareness of global stakes, and to engage actively with global issues (see for example the Elon Global Scholars’ experience. http://org.elon.edu/pericleanscholars2010/cp.html or http://www.ewb-uk.org/)

5) For others still, global citizenship necessarily brings about questions about privilege, mobility and access to education globally – examining who has access to global educational fluxes and who is excluded (Luke, 2006). The focus on a possibly elitist subtext in the notion of global citizenship also leads to a reflection on the related question of the emancipatory dimension of higher education (Nussbaum, 2000; Walker and Nixon, 2004) and the opportunities it brings to individuals, enabling them to change their lives and to impact on the societies in which they live.

6) Finally, beyond the global focus, the term global citizenship encapsulates a reflection on citizenship. Citizenship implies both ‘rights’ and ‘duties’ for individual and groups; and it is necessarily related to the value systems that are underpinning the elaboration of those ‘rights’ and ‘duties’.

Worldly pedagogies

The complex issues encapsulated in the notion of global citizenship call for questions about the university curriculum – should universities provide opportunities for students to reflect in this way on the world’s stakes? Can they? What kind of knowledge and pedagogical approaches are then likely to foster this kind of understanding?

In order to show what this could mean in practice, and – to an extent – to justify the introduction of this dimension of learning in a university curriculum, I want to make reference to a small-scale research project
carried out with a co-researcher in the UK which involved the co-education of Israeli and Palestinian students over a period time in a British university (Fanghanel and Cousin, 2012). This project examined the way these students on a three-year programme of study developed their understandings of their own situation with reference to the global stakes that framed it, and the way in which their worldview evolved through their programme of study. The study identified what we have called a ‘worldly pedagogy’ – i.e. a teaching approach that promotes complex understandings of difference in the context of living and working in a shared global world. This educational environment was investigated through a series of eight long semi-structured interviews (out of a cohort of sixteen). Through this study, we identified the ingredients of a worldly pedagogy and suggested that it is an approach that encourages deliberation and reflection and promotes plurality of views and positions (rather than cohesion or integration). This pedagogy is underpinned by a complex theory of knowledge which combines experiential knowledge (both affective and practical), critique and what Michael Young has called ‘powerful knowledge’ (Young, 2008). Powerful knowledge empowers the learner with access to knowledge that is independent of context (abstract or theoretical). The theory of gravitation is a good example of what might be seen as ‘context-independent’ knowledge. Context-independent knowledge has been validated through peer-review, cross-generational critique and/or put to the test of subsequent theoretical developments (as in the case of gravitation theory). We called this a ‘worldly’ pedagogy with reference to Hannah Arendt’s own philosophical reflection on the ‘worldly’ experience of humans sharing a ‘common world’ (Arendt, 1958) – a reflection which was significantly influenced by her experience of the holocaust. She talks of the necessity to envisage the world as ‘common’ good which can only be sustained through working actively to maintain differences within it:

‘Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear. Under the conditions of a common world, reality is not guaranteed primarily by the ‘common nature’ of all men who constitute it, but rather by the fact that, differences of position and the resulting variety of perspectives notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object’. (Arendt 1958, p.57)

My interpretation of Arendt’s common world invites a focus on the public and the political. Political in its broad sense of an interest in the governance and organisation of the polis (the city in ancient Greece; the world in today’s context) which transcends the lifespan of individuals, and whose survival can only be guaranteed by the differences of positions resulting from a variety of perspectives. In this Arendtian perspective, the common world can only be sustained through plurality. Sameness on the other hand – like totalitarianism – would destroy it (Arendt, 1958). In this sense, higher education must be about understanding and promoting difference whilst focusing on commonalities; and achieving this through pedagogies that are underpinned by complex theories of knowledge that include practical, work-related, experiential and affective dimensions, as well as the abstract dimension Young refers to when he talks of ‘powerful knowledge’.

The Study

Before going into the details of the study, I must state that of course the environment examined was extreme. I do not know of any similar educational cross-conflict initiatives, involving young adults studying over a prolonged period, and away from their respective regions. There exists of course many recreational or service-based reconciliation programmes for children and young adults which include an educational dimension. ‘Corrymeela’ in Northern Ireland for example is a community-based programme of inter-faith work. But this was different. Respondents were staying in the UK for a period of three years. The regular academic programme was complemented by a cultural programme which included lectures, seminars, visits and cultural entertainment that explored the culture and history of the region. Our research sought to establish through in-depth interviews (lasting up to two hours) the meanings participants had made of their experiences, a year after graduation. We therefore focused on their recall of ‘lived’ experience, their descriptions of
specific strategies used on the programme, with systematic reference to the context of their life at the university, as well as through their distant/real link to the region of conflict. This example is particularly suited to reflect on the notion of global citizenship as it focuses on respondents who were embroiled in global stakes through their personal and national histories and identities. It provides an opportunity to examine how their views moved from one way of seeing the world to multiple ways of seeing it, without falling into the trap of relativism.

Extreme examples can inform ordinary practices in that they shed a vivid light on the issue examined. In order to illustrate how extreme this example was, and how much progress needed to be made over this period of three years, let us remind ourselves that these students had never found themselves in a similar position at any time in their lives. Palestinian students brought with them a strong sense of the precariousness of their previous existence, shedding a light on the unsteadiness they were bringing to the educational experience:

“When you live in Gaza, all that you think about is how to pass your day, how to manage to think about your evening, the maximum you will do is think about tomorrow. You will never think about the future. So life in Gaza makes your ambitions very limited. So the fact that I came here, I managed to do many things that I would never have been able to do in Gaza, it opened my eyes on the world”.

They had never seen an Israeli person, other than as an enemy. There was a strong sense of that ‘provenance’ inflection in the respondents’ narratives:

“If you are educated in the Jewish narrative, you are born in it, and that’s what they teach you, you don’t have a choice”. (Israeli student)

“When you come here (in London) you can’t throw away twenty years of your life and start a new history. So I learnt about history from the Israeli point of view, but I stick with mine because I am from there”. (Palestinian student)

The programme was aimed at ‘gifted’ individuals who had been through a selection process that takes place in the region, and it aimed to develop participants’ leadership skills in anticipation of their future careers. It also emphasized the aim to promote dialogue across the two communities and foster mutual respect and cooperation in the pursuit of peace. We explored significant learning moments, events and experiences and participants’ narratives about their own motivations, their perspectives of the conflict, and changes experienced during their period of study. Two important characteristics of this experience, and the two main findings therefore, were that these students learned to understand the complexity of the questions they were dealing with (their perspective had become more nuanced) and they had decided to live with the plural perspective they had learned to appreciate (they were not seeking to convert or integrate those who thought differently). The third important finding was that this maturation was facilitated through the interplay of a complex theory of knowledge. I turn to those findings now.

Learning to live with plurality in a common world

The study concluded that contributing to the programme did not bring the participants closer to a median position in respect of their views of each ‘side’. What it did instead was to provide them with a form of empowerment resulting from exposure to difference and to ways of conceptualizing and arguing about these differences (through access to powerful knowledge) and an acute awareness of what they had in common (Arendt’s ‘common world’). This was expressed through their desire to envisage a common future; their acknowledgement of the ‘partial’ (both incomplete and bias) understanding of the world they had at the beginning of their studies; and their awareness that their singular cultural roots could not be dismissed. Here are a couple of examples of the apparent paradox between their sense of commonality, and participants’ appreciation of the plurality of the experiences and views they were bringing with them, not simply across the two groups, but within them:

“I didn’t expect to make a change in their mindset but at least to learn that there are people in Gaza who are willing to make peace with them. This is the only thing that I think I achieved. [. . .] [I have learned] that when we deal with people about the conflict, we should not deal with the Israeli community as one whole body”. (R3)
“When I see things, when I hear about things I have lost the ability to think about it only from the Israeli point of view”. (R4)

What had been happening during their period of study was a transformation that enabled students to understand the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the conflict, of the cultures and histories they brought with them, and of the reasons why divergent interpretations of the conflict existed. This was not always the case and this ability to understand with more richness was significantly challenged by students’ experience of the everyday context in the ‘region’. Sometimes, especially as they returned home during the summer holidays, respondents returned with altered understandings that forced them to take sides, as the case of this Palestinian respondent:

“When you return, even for one week, you will never hear of one day without any killing. So in this kind of situation, what can you tell your friends? What can you tell people? Do you say ‘I was with some Israelis who want to make peace’? If they are educated, they will laugh. Or it can be a little bit more dangerous. Some people would have no problem of accusing me or any other Palestinians to be working for the Israeli. So these experiences are hidden in myself”. (R3)

We have suggested that in this context of warfare, the experiences of which this respondent is speaking cannot be erased. We have compared this to the concept of ‘troublesome knowledge’ (Perkins, 1999) – a concept that is difficult to grasp but the understanding of which cannot disappear once it has been acquired. We have suggested that celebrating diversity without any analysis of difference, as I have indicated earlier is sometimes done in universities, seems to dismiss troublesome knowledge and the empowerment that is gained from exposure to plurality. We have suggested that universities could be a space described by Arendt as ‘where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness’ (Arendt 1958, p.180). We also found that this was done through pedagogies that favour dialogue, debate and exposure to complex theories of knowledge.

The sense of complexity and multidimensionality of the positions taken by respondents in these dialogues and debates during their studies, makes them epistemologically more sophisticated (they gain an understanding of the complexity of knowledge). Some respondents indicated that they were challenged when they were exposed to narratives that competed with their beliefs and knowledge:

“If you are educated in the Jewish narrative, you are born in it, and that’s what they teach you, you don’t have a choice. The programme allows that there are different narratives, and then make up your mind about those different narratives”. (R2)

The empowerment that was achieved was also linked to a sense that they needed to work on their own personal narratives to progress in their viewpoints:

“Every time I had to go back, I felt a lot of frustration and to some extent I didn’t want to be part of the programme anymore. It is really hard because you go there and you see things, then you come back here and you hear people speaking about different things”. (R5)

Empowering theories of knowledge

The form of pedagogy I am discussing here encourages deliberation and reflection. In the case of the students in the study, this was facilitated through a pedagogical approach that combined experiential (affective and practical) knowledge, through access to narratives about each other’s lives, and abstract, content-based knowledge. In the context of today’s modern universities, developing employability attributes should also figure prominently – and for a number of operational reasons this had been insufficiently explored in this educational programme. This combination is crucial. One should however be aware of a ‘conservative’ return to views of education that only focus on abstract knowledge. Acknowledging the social, practical and the cognitive dimensions of learning, and acknowledging the legitimacy of specialist communities goes hand in hand with the assurance that critical thinking is encouraged, and access to abstract knowledge is facilitated. I suggest that such post-constructivist views of knowledge can provide
a powerful alternative to pedagogies where students fall into patterns of self-promotion, self-publication, and experiential reporting, with little sense of authorship, values, sourcing or understanding of boundaries.

In the study I have reported on here, it was clear that the multi-dimensional theory of knowledge that underpinned the learning experience of students played a significant role. The students attended lectures given by specialists in the field on issues covering social, political and historical aspects. The respondents we spoke to all indicated that these lectures and the discussions that followed played a significant role in shaping their understandings. Students indicated that it had given them the tools for developing and sustaining an argument, making a point, actively listening to other perspectives, reflecting on the meaning of what was said and coming to informed judgments about the issues discussed. They said that they were better able to describe and analyse the conflict ‘using vocabulary that was less emotional’ (R2). They reported being able to articulate their own points of view; developing listening and argumentation skills, and more importantly, it would seem, the ability to engage in discussions and dialogue. This was empowering:

“I never had the confidence to express my views because they were not based on knowledge of the history of the conflict and of the region; and also because of my own my cultural heritage, the things I was born into, that I grew up with but never really analysed academically and spiritually as well”. (R7)

Equally important to frame their understanding, was access to what one respondent called ‘history’ (i.e. the narratives of other students on the programme concerning their life’s experience). Access to the emotional and practical dimensions of others’ experience was critical – giving a human face, and at the same time contextualizing the abstract knowledge acquired about the conflict:

“I learned a lot more about Israeli society and I learned how I can connect to the other side better... I started to understand how they think... The history part of it was very important too, not kind of lecturing... it wasn’t really information I was looking for but more for the narratives. It was a very good experience to understand these narratives in terms of how you think about me, and how I think about you, these kinds of things”. (R8)

This kind of knowledge gave the experience its physicality. Through this, respondents enhanced their emotional capital and their appreciation of internal variation (within what might have thought of as a homogenous group) and complexity. I propose that these are essential attributes to function and work responsibly in today’s globalised world.

Conclusion

To engage students with the world’s complexity, we need knowledge frames that enable exposure to abstract knowledge, critique, and experience (emotive, practical, work-related). In sum, this worldly pedagogy has the following characteristics:

- It links to the real world (political, social and work-related) and the real experience and practice of students. But it does this with reference to context-independent knowledge. This combination of different types of knowledge is crucial, so that experience and practice are related to research and the abstract subject-specific body of knowledge that underpins the evolution of their chosen subject
- It provides spaces where it is safe to explore and disagree basing one’s argumentation on a body of abstract /verified knowledge rather than mere opinion
- It conveys a sense that explanations are rarely simple and monolithic
- It enables students to acquire intellectual sophistication as they gain nuanced appreciations of their own beliefs and experiences in the encounter with others and with real life situations (socially or at work)
- It preserves and defends plurality whilst maintaining a focus on commonalities within groups. Plurality is not washed out in the notion of ‘diversity’
- Practically, this pedagogy privileges dialogue, openness and critical exploration of diverse perspectives. It promotes learning as a lifelong concept – always in the making, never quite achieved.
References


The current state of knowledge on cyber stalking in the United Kingdom is reviewed. Cyber stalking connotes stalking activities which are carried out by perpetrators in the virtual world via any aspects of information technology or electronic means resulting in a victim or victims suffering emotional and arguably mental and psychological harm. Building on this knowledge, the methods used by cyber stalkers to harass victims are identified. The effects of cyber stalking on victims are then analysed taking into account recent research findings. Following from this, the prevalence of cyber stalking is examined and the effectiveness of existing legislation is evaluated taking into account the recently introduced laws on face-to-face stalking and cyber stalking. The paper concludes by giving an overview of the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in the cross jurisdictional prosecution of cyber stalkers.

Keywords

- online harassment
- cyber stalking
- cyber bullying
- trolling
- legislation on cyber stalking
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
Introduction

The worldwide advancement of digital technology has led to recent public concerns regarding various forms of online harassment such as cyber stalking, cyber bullying and trolling which unsuspecting online subscribers are subjected to. To this effect, Ellison and Akdeniz (1998) note that recent years have seen a series of ‘moral panics’ regarding information that is accessible on the internet and its use for criminal activity. This paper will focus specifically on cyber stalking as an aspect of online harassment.

The UK has not escaped the wave of public concern regarding online harassment in general and cyber stalking in particular. Grimley (2012) highlights the public concerns that have been championed by members of parliament, stalking charities, victims of cyber stalking and probation officials who have all questioned the effectiveness of the existing legislation as tools for protecting victims.

These public concerns reached a climax in February 2012 when the Hon. Elfyn Lwyd who chaired an independent parliamentary inquiry into the stalking law reform published the findings of the inquiry. One of the many findings of the inquiry reiterated the public concern that a specific offence of stalking and cyber stalking should be introduced into the legislation of England and Wales.

This article examines the current state of knowledge on cyber stalking in the United Kingdom. It begins with an overview of the definition of cyber stalking. Building on this knowledge, the methods used by cyber stalkers to harass victims are identified. The effects of cyber stalking on victims are then analysed taking into account recent research findings. Following from this, the prevalence of cyber stalking is examined and the effectiveness of existing legislation is evaluated taking into account the recently introduced laws on face to face stalking and cyber stalking. The paper concludes by giving an overview of the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in the cross jurisdictional prosecution of cyber stalkers.

The internet: a 21st century tool for cyber stalking

According to Ross (2010, p.74), one of the many benefits of the internet is that it has undoubtably improved people’s ability and speed to communicate with one another. Bayer (2007, p.1) acknowledges that the internet allows users to store and publish content. These technological advancements have inevitably enhanced worldwide communications by enabling individuals to publish messages through weblogs, emails, websites, social networking sites such as Facebook, Myspace and YouTube. It can be argued that the communication advancements have encouraged global developments in the commercial, health, educational and communication sectors among others.

Despite the above societal benefits, the internet has opened windows for previously unknown criminal activities that not only challenge but also transcend physical boundaries, borders and indicates the existence of limitations to detect, punish and diminish what appears to be a growing social problem of global proportions. To this effect, Pittaro (2008, p.180-197) argues that the internet has become a fertile ground for an entirely new and unique type of offender known as the cyber stalker. Although Ross (2010, p.74) suggests that the internet has facilitated the harassment of individuals and organizations, it should be borne in mind that the internet is only one of the various communication technological means that cyber stalkers use to harass victims.
Definition of cyber stalking

There is presently, no universally accepted definition for cyber stalking. Nevertheless, two have been chosen from the various available definitions which cover the essence of the offence.

The first definition was postulated by Bocij and Macfarlane (2002). They defined cyber stalking as ‘a group of behaviours in which an individual, group of individuals or organization uses information technology to harass one or more individuals. Harassment is defined as a course of action that a reasonable person in possession of the same information, would think causes another reasonable person to suffer emotional distress’. This definition is unique from the rest as it acknowledges the fact that cyber stalking can be committed via any aspect of information technology as opposed to particular aspects of information technology.

In July 2011 academics at the UK National Centre for Cyber Stalking Research postulated the second definition chosen. They defined cyber stalking as ‘a course of action that involves more than one incident perpetrated through or utilising electronic means that causes distress, fear or alarm’.

The deduction to be made from the above definitions is that cyber stalking connotes stalking activities which are carried out by perpetrators in the virtual world via any aspects of information technology or electronic means thereby resulting in a victim or victims suffering emotional, and arguably mental and psychological harm.

An overview of the methods used by cyber stalkers to harass victims

Ellison and Akdeniz (1998) suggest that that cyber stalking may entail the following: the sending of unwanted emails which are threatening, abusive, or obscene, electronic sabotage by sending a victim hundreds of thousands of junk mail messages, the sending of computer viruses, the subscription of victims to unwanted mailing lists without their permission resulting in them receiving hundreds and thousands of unwanted emails and the impersonation of victims online.

Pettinari (2002) notes that the three main areas online where cyber stalkers are able to target victims are live chats where users can talk ‘live’ or type messages to one another in real time, Usenet newsgroups where people exchange messages in a group, and emails which are an outgrowth and a continuation of initial contact in chat servers or the Usenet newsgroups. Following from this, Ovidio and Doyle (2003) conducted a study of New York Police Department’s method of investigating cyber stalking cases and found that the most commonly used methods were email at 79%, and instant messaging at 13%. Having established the means which cyber stalkers use to harass victims, the question that now needs to be addressed is what effects if any does cyber stalking have on victims.

Effects of cyber stalking on victims

Cohen (2011) suggests that very often victims of online harassment, online intimidation and online defamation feel hopeless and powerless to act: simply scared and paralysed, with a growing number of victims considering suicide as they feel they have no one to turn to for help.

In the United Kingdom, the first study of its kind to look at the extent and effect of cyber stalking (taking in social networking sites, email and mobile phones) was conducted in April 2011 by the National Centre for Cyber Stalking Research. The study was conducted over a twelve months period revealed that most victims suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, lived in fear of physical violence to themselves or to their families and children and were afraid of damage to their reputation. According to the research, the fears created by cyber harassment behaviours are varied and extreme for the individuals affected. The report further indicated that ‘cyber stalking damages multiple aspects of victims lives from study, to professional activity, to their relationships with others. Survey respondents reported changing jobs, isolating themselves by giving up social activities and having important relationship break up. It was further revealed that male victims are more likely to fear damage to reputation, whereas female victims are more likely to focus on fear of physical harm’.
The deduction to be made from the above data is that victims of cyber stalking experience fear and distress as result of their ordeal at the hands of cyber stalkers. The limitation of the data is that it is not a national representation.

Kelly (2011) reports that a victim who was cyber stalked for approximately 3 years by her boyfriend became so ill that she was prescribed antidepressants, developed symptoms of obsessive compulsive disorder, stopped eating at times and had to retake her university exams because the abuse affected her so badly. Mr Shane Webber sent explicit photos of Ruth Jeffrey to her family and friends and adult websites and secretly posted twelve graphic photos of her to four social networking sites. Dolan (2011) reports that the same victim also became suicidal and subsequently aborted her unborn baby as a result of stress. Shanahan (2012) noted that the victims of a cyber stalker were left scarred by their ordeal after he made 17,000 random calls to targeted female strangers. The married Mr Poulter made a staggering 16,690 obscene telephone calls to the victims between January 2010 and February 2011, 13, 346 of which were dialled between 11pm and 6am.

Cupach and Spitzberg (2004) have identified five levels of stalking effects which are arguably experienced by the victims of cyber stalking. According to them, the first level is attributable to the impact on victims which leads to victims experiencing fear, anxiety, shame, loss, suicidal ideation, depression, sleep disturbance and impaired psychological well being. The second level is attributable to the impact on the social health of victims which results in decreased trust, increased alienation, isolation and restricted social activities. The
third level of the effect of stalking on victims is attributable to the health of the victim which leads to victims taking additional security measures and often involves absenteeism from work. The fourth and fifth effects of stalking on victims according to the academics are damage to the cognitive and physical health of victims which leads to maladaptive beliefs, attribution of self blame and personality adaptation among others.

Despite the above adverse effects on the general health of victims, Hellen and Summers (2012) recently observed that not everyone fully appreciates the seriousness of cyber stalking or understands the impact that the conduct has on victims. They recently reported that celebrities such as Ricky Gervais, Simon Pegg and Noel Fielding incited their fans to unleash trolling attacks on members of the public who dared to criticize them on the Twitter social networking site. Trolling which is synonymous to cyber stalking entails the abuse of targeted victims by online communities. The report went on to suggest that some of the victims of the trolls were so badly affected by the abuse that their health was impaired after having details of their private lives exposed to public ridicule. Others it would appear were forced to shut down their accounts because of the online abuse. It is arguable that the recent decisions of the comedians Ricky Gervais and Noel Fielding to incite fans to unleash ‘trolling attacks’ on members of the public demonstrates that to date, some individuals are still ignorant of the devastating effect that online harassment and cyber stalking in particular have on victims.

Prevalence of cyber stalking in the UK

Roberts (2008, p.272) notes that most research into stalking has been done on clinical samples of victims or forensic samples of offenders and suggests that even prevalent estimates from community studies may be impacted by the definitions of stalking and thresholds used. Although McVeigh (2011) points out that the UK British Crime Survey of 2006 estimated that up to 5 million people experience stalking each year, it should be borne in mind that there is no official statistics on the numbers who are cyber stalked. According to the survey, up to one in five people will experience stalking in the UK in their lifetime.

On 30th March 2011, the BBC reported that the latest crime survey for England, Wales and Scotland, found that some 1.4 million people were stalked or harassed in 2009-10. Following from this, data released by the National Probation Service show that there were 53,000 stalking allegations recorded in 2009 which led to 6,581 convictions. The data revealed that 18.5% of the 6,581 convictions led to a jail term. Mr Harry Fletcher the assistant general secretary of the National Association for Chief Probation Officers has since suggested that the actual number of incidents was probably 10 times the number reported to police, but many people were not coming forward.

Fenwick (2011) observes that prosecutions under the Malicious Communications Act soared to an all time high and increased almost 300% in five years to 899 in the year 2011. Fenwick (2011) also states that separate figures from the Crown Prosecution Service showed that in 2011, 33% of the stalking incidents were by e-mail, 32% by text message and another 8.4% through social networking sites. It is argued that this data provides an insight into the technological means used by cyber stalkers to harass victims.

On 20th June 2010 and 27th September 2012 respectively a spokeswoman for, the National Stalking Helpline provided the following breakdown of the number of people who had contacted the organization for assistance since the organization was set up to date. According to the spokeswoman, the stalking helpline dealt with 1,590 requests from victims in the first year that the helpline was launched between 26th April 2010 to 20th June 2011. The spokeswoman further confirmed that a total of 4,687 victims had contacted the helpline between 26th April 2010 to 26th September 2012.
The following breakdowns were provided:

**Victim Gender breakdown for the period between 26th April 2010 to 20th June 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,271</td>
<td>79.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one victim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (Email correspondence from Ms Kristina, spokeswoman for National Stalking Helpline)*

**Victim Gender for the period between 26th April 2010 to 26th September 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one victim</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (Email correspondence from Ms Kristina, spokeswoman for National Stalking Helpline)*

The breakdowns suggest that women are more likely to be victims of stalking. It should be noted that one of the unique aspects of cyber stalking is that it can result from or occur in conjunction with face-to-face stalking and vice versa. The breakdowns are limited in scope because they provide a statistical aggregate on stalking in general as opposed to a specific statistical aggregate on the aspect of the data that relates to cyber stalking. This is arguably due to the fact that up until late 2012, cyber stalking was not regarded as a specific criminal offence in the UK.

The deduction to be made from the above data is that face to face stalking and arguably cyber stalking are widely prevalent in the UK. Given that McVeigh (2011) acknowledges that cyber stalking is now more common than face to face stalking, the question that now needs to be addressed is how effective has the existing legislation in the United Kingdom up to 2012 been?

**Protection from Harassment Act 1997**

Depending on the school of thought that one identifies with it is arguable that victims of cyber stalking have been afforded some legal protection under sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the PHA 1997. Section 7 (2) of the Protection from Harassment Act defines harassment as including ‘alarming a person or causing a person distress’ and as such victims of cyber stalking can rely on the PHA 1997 for both criminal and civil remedies.

**Section 1: Provides a three stage process to establish harassment:** Section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 contains the prohibition of harassment, which forms the basis of the criminal offence of harassment and the statutory tort of harassment. It provides a distinct three stage process to establish harassment: (i) there must be a course of conduct by the defendant; (ii) this must cause
Section 2: Creates the offence of harassment: Section 2 of the PHA created the offence of harassment which potentially afforded cyber stalking victims access to legal redress. The section creates a crime of harassment and this covers much the same ground as the civil tort. The PHA offers victims extensive legal protection by making harassment unlawful regardless of the means by which it was caused and by focusing on the harm that results rather than the way in which it was inflicted.

Addison (2001) notes that section 2 makes it too easy to get a conviction and suggests that the criteria for the summary offence under the section are far too vague. It is therefore arguable that prosecutors will be more willing to rely on section 2 since it does not require proof that the victim was put in fear of violence and because the summary offence does not require intent on the behalf of the stalker it is easier to establish.

Section 3: PHA An additional tool for victims – the creation of a higher level criminal offence: Section 3(1) of the PHA offers victims of harassment and arguably cyber stalking further legal protection by imposing criminal liability for the breach of civil injunctions as an alternative to the more usual contempt of court. In this way, the PHA removes the onus from the victim of bringing the matter to the attention of the court. Finch (2001) argues that it establishes the breach as it enables the police to act promptly and decisively on behalf of the victim and to arrest a defendant who breaches an injunction and to investigate the circumstances of the breach and collect the necessary evidence.

Section 4: The creation of a lower level criminal offence: Section 4 created a crime of putting people in fear of violence. This section of the PHA did not effectively protect cyber stalking victims due to the fact that it is narrow in scope and requires victims to be the direct recipient of the conduct. In R v Henley (2000, Crim LR 582), Lord Steyn observed that s4 requires the victim to fear that violence ‘will’ be used and that often, victims of stalking will only be in fear that violence ‘may’ be used, which will not suffice to establish liability. Thus, causing a victim to be seriously frightened cannot be equated to causing the fear of violence required under section 4. Neither will a generalised sense of fear, or a fear for the safety of others. Such a narrow interpretation severely limited the scope of s4 for victims of cyber stalking.

It can thus be argued that the offence of causing fear of violence was both narrower in scope and harder to establish. It would be more beneficial to victims of cyber stalking if defendants pleaded guilty to the offence of harassment as an alternative to the offence of causing fear of violence.

Section 5: The provision of restraining orders: Section 5(1) of the PHA provides victims with further legal protection by giving the criminal courts power to attach a restraining order to any sentence imposed upon the defendant under sections 2 or 4. The restraining order is arguably beneficial to victims as it places restrictions upon the future conduct of the defendant, and contains no limitations as to the nature of the restrictions that can be included in the restraining order other than it must be aimed at protecting victims from further harassment or fear of violence.

Pinals (2007, p.95) points out that restraining orders are not always effective on face to face stalkers and arguably cyber stalkers who have major mental disorder or those whom are prone to violence. Chapman (2012) arguably noted that this was evident in the highly publicised case of Clare Bernall who was stalked for 6 months by her embittered ex-boyfriend Michael Pech and then murdered by him whilst at work in Harvey Nichols. The murder occurred despite the fact that Ms Bernall had taken out a restraining order against Mr Pech.

Despite some of the above level of protection which could arguably be afforded to victims who were being harassed by cyber stalkers, McVeigh (2011) criticises the PHA and suggests that the law needs to be changed because the act does not specifically make cyber stalking a criminal offence, has not been updated since the explosion of social media and does not legally define cyber stalking.
Malicious Communications Act 2003

In addition to telephone calls, victims of cyber stalking may also use the MCA to seek legal redress from cyber stalkers. §1 of the MCA provides that: ‘a person who sends a letter or article which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat or information which is false or known or believed to be false by the sender or any other article which is in whole or part, of an indecent or grossly offensive nature is guilty of an offence if the purpose in sending it is to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient’.

Finch (2011) argues that this offers little protection to victims as it is a summary offence only punishable with a fine. Allen (1996, p.11), highlights that the offence requires proof of purpose which will fail to catch some stalkers. It has thus been suggested that the common law offence of criminal libel will offer a more enhanced protection to victims given that the offence is triable only on indictment and there is no restriction to the maximum penalty.

The Telecommunications Act 1984 (TEA 1984)

Making obscene, threatening, silent or general nuisance telephone calls is a frequently utilised means resorted to by cyber stalkers. Victims may use Section 43 of the TEA which gives victims a legal tool to potentially hold cyber stalkers criminally liable for such calls. The TEA creates two offences; section 43 (a) relates to the contents of the calls and prohibits those which are offensive, indecent, obscene or of a menacing character, whilst, section 43(b) concentrates on the purpose behind the calls, prohibiting repeated calls, and those containing false information that are made for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience, and anxiety.  

Computer Misuse Act 1990

Victims of cyber stalking may rely on the sections 1 to 3 of the CMA which created three criminal offences relating to unauthorised access to computer material, unauthorised access with intent to commit or facilitate the commission of further offences and the unauthorised modification of a computer. Cyber stalkers convicted for unauthorized access to a computer may be sentenced to a maximum of six months imprisonment or a maximum fine or both. Unauthorized modification of a computer material is punishable with imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or a fine or both.

The act can therefore be used a weapon by victims of cyber stalking where the cyber stalker has hacked into their computers, used a victim’s username and password without proper authority, accessed confidential information about the victim held on the computer or impersonated the victim by using e-mail or social network sites. The legislation provides protection of confidential documents and information held on computer and makes illegal certain activities such as hacking into other people’s systems, misusing software, or helping a person to gain access to protected files of someone else’s computer.

Computers Act 2003

Victims of cyber stalking may rely on section 127(1) of the CA which makes it a criminal offence to transmit messages through a public electronic communications network which are grossly offensive, indecent, obscene or menacing. This applies to emails and text messages. Additionally, under section 127(2) of the Act, a person is guilty of an offence if, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, he sends by means of a public electronic communications network, a message that he knows to be false. So, under this section, a cyber stalker will be guilty of an offence if he or she sends just one false message, knowing that it is false, for one of the purposes mentioned, such as causing annoyance. An offence is also committed if a person makes persistent use of a public electronic communications network for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another.
It includes somebody who persistently makes silent telephone calls.

A cyber stalker guilty of an offence under section 127 of the CA 2003 shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to a fine or both.

An overview of the recently introduced stalking law: the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Due to the above mentioned criticism of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, and following the findings of the independent parliamentary inquiry into the stalking law reform, on 8 March 2012 the Prime Minister David Cameron announced that stalking was to be made a specific criminal offence. Subsequently, the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 was unveiled as the new legislation.

Section 111 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 which came into force on 1 May 2012, amends the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 by the insertion of two new offences relating to stalking.

Creation of the offence of stalking: Section 111(1) 2A of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 creates the specific offence of stalking and also covers cyber stalking acts such as contacting or attempting to contact a person by any means, publishing any statement or material purporting to relate or originate from a person, monitoring the use by a person of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication and so on. The section will be inserted after section 2 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 for the new stalking laws to take effect. Accordingly, the newly created section 2A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 will henceforth cover the above identified activities carried out by cyber stalkers. A cyber stalker found guilty under this section will be liable to a maximum sentence of six months imprisonment.

Creation of the offence of stalking involving fear of violence: Section 111 (1) 4A of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 also creates the specific offence of stalking involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress. The section will be inserted after section 4 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. Accordingly, the newly created section 4A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 will relate to the offence of stalking, involving fear of violence or serious alarm or distress. A cyber stalker found guilty under this section will be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment not exceeding five years or a fine or both. A cyber stalker convicted on summary conviction will be liable to a term not exceeding twelve months or a fine or both.

Despite the fact that as from 25 November 2012, perpetrators will be guilty of cyber stalking activities under section 2A and 4A of the PHA, Huffingtonpost (2012) suggests that critics have argued that the new legislation will make little difference to victims as the new offence of stalking can only be tried by magistrates who can only sentence victims for a maximum sentence of 6 months. Huffingtonpost (2012) notes that critics have suggested that the second offence of stalking involving fear of violence or serious harm would be difficult to prove as the prosecution will need to show that the victim suffered ‘fear of violence’.

On 8th March 2012, a source on the ITV news website (itv.com, 2012) noted that the shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper has postulated that the new laws do not go far enough. She states “We have been campaigning on a new law for stalking for sometime so it is welcome that the government has accepted that change is needed. However, I am worried that their plans do not go far enough, and are not strong enough. Their proposals risk being half hearted and over complicated, so victims will not get the protection that they need.”
Huffingtonpost (2012) further describes Laura Richards’s reaction to the new laws. According to the online source, Ms Richardson from the charity Protection Against Stalking comments “We welcome the creation of a new offence of stalking, however stalking being named is the only thing new. It has been tacked onto the current Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and is a rehash of what we know does not work”. Huffingtonpost (2012) also confirms that officials of the probation office and victim charities have also recently voiced their concerns about the inadequacy of the new legislation to protect victims of cyber stalking.

Based on the above criticisms, it is therefore arguable that the new stalking legislation has been viewed by some as an inadequate piece of legislation to protect victims of face to face stalking and cyber stalking despite the fact that the legislation recognizes stalking as a separate criminal offence and has made some changes to the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

Cross jurisdictional criminal investigation

The above concerns have been compounded by the fact that, cyber stalking as a 21st century international crime is unique in that the offence is not limited by national and jurisdictional boundaries. The unique aspect of the crime manifests itself when the offence occurs despite the fact that the perpetrator and the victim are separated by physical or geographical borders. This uniqueness thus poses a problem for international law enforcement agencies involved in the cross jurisdictional prosecution of cyber stalkers. Given that cyber stalking is a crime that transcends national and international boundaries and that the victims and the perpetrators may be geographically separated by the physical borders when the offence occurs, Roberts (2008, p.271) has noted that this aspect of the conduct is problematic for investigating the conduct and determining where the actual offence has taken place and which charges may be filed.

UK MEP Liz Lynne called for the European Parliament to implement tougher punishment for cyber stalkers. According to the source, Ms Lynne highlighted that the conduct has exploded across Europe with the growth of the internet and the social networking sites. In doing so Ms Lynne emphasised that it was not just celebrities who were victims but also ordinary members of the public and therefore called for tougher legislation on the matter to ensure European wide standards on tackling the issue (Lynne, 2012).

Roberts (2008, p.280) identifies some of the difficulties faced by the police in the cross jurisdictional investigation of cyber stalkers as: the anonymity of cyber stalkers which makes it difficult to identify perpetrators, the unwillingness of the internet service providers to release data on the perpetrators and the absence of relevant legislation in some foreign jurisdictions. According to Roberts (2008, p.281), further difficulties faced by the police in the cross jurisdictional investigation of cyber stalkers include jurisdictional differences in the statutory definition of cyber stalking, the denying or ignoring by foreign countries of extradition requests and finally, a lack of clarity on what constitutes jurisdiction in cyber space. Pettinari (2002, p2) identifies the anonymity of cyber stalkers, jurisdictional limitations and the lack of adequate statutory authority as some of the challenges that hamper the cross-jurisdictional investigation of cyber stalkers.
Conclusions

This paper has highlighted cyber stalking as one of the many cyber crimes which victims are subjected in this twenty first century digital age. It has defined cyber stalking, identified the effects of cyber stalking, established the prevalence of cyber stalking in the United Kingdom and then analysed the effectiveness of the existing and recently introduced legislation as tools for protecting victims. It concludes by identifying some of the difficulties faced by police in the cross jurisdictional investigation of cyber stalkers.

Davis (2012) notes that in February 2011, Clifford Mills was jailed in the United Kingdom for life for stabbing his former girlfriend to death after stalking her for a year on Facebook. This case illustrates one of the fatal consequences of cyber stalking and as such it is arguable that the earlier identified public panic in the United Kingdom is justified. Cases such as this beg the question as to whether the internet as a 21st century communication technology is a blessing or a curse to the victims who fall prey to cyber stalking in particular and online harassment in general.

Ellison and Akdeniz (1998) argued many years ago that the beneficial use of the internet far outweighs its abuses. They suggest that the abuse and the few problems created by a small proportion of the internet community should be dealt with through self regulatory solutions at both private and public levels together with the improvement of good practices for internet usage.

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The prevalence of cyber bullying in higher education in the UK

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Empirical findings have demonstrated that cyber bullying in schools is a growing problem, but it is not clear whether the phenomenon exists in the higher education context in UK. An explorative study of two hundred and nineteen undergraduate and postgraduate students was conducted to examine cyber bullying in UK universities. It was found that close to 25% of students were cyber victims, while about 15% were cyber perpetrators during their studies. When sex was taken into account, no differences in victimization and/or perpetration were identified. Furthermore, possible associations between past experiences of school bullying and current higher education cyber bullying were investigated. The relationship between traditional school bullying and cyber bullying at university was found with cyber bullying or cyber victimization behaviour continuing in the higher education context. This concurs with current perpetrator/victim research findings within the school context (Smith et al., 2003). Data of students’ internet usage and online behaviour are also presented and implications for interventions in higher education are discussed.

Keywords
bullying | cyber bullying | cyber perpetrators | cyber victims | higher education | school bullying | perpetrators | victimization
Introduction

Over the past two decades there has been a shift in the ways people interact and communicate. The availability of low cost mobile devices was the first step in adopting a new communication paradigm, which was developed due to the wide spread use of the internet and the growing access people have to it (Beran and Li, 2005). Research suggests that in general, electronic tools are viewed as the preferred means of communication by internet users (Schrock and Boyd, 2008). In addition, one strong feature is that internet users between the ages of 12 and 30 years tend to use internet and mobile communication tools as their primary means of communication (Patching and Hinduja, 2006; Mishna, Saini and Solomon, 2009). Paradoxically, these new ways of communication and interaction have resulted in the use of electronic communication to bully others, a pernicious behaviour referred to as cyber bullying.

It is generally accepted that whether individuals ‘label’ themselves as victims or perpetrators of bullying, the negative effects are devastating (Boulton and Underwood, 1992). These can range from insecurity, anxiety, loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, to more serious cases, which may ultimately result in suicide. Besides, what is more deplorable is that overall global estimates suggest that at least 5% of those in the primary and secondary schools aged between 6 and 16 years are bullied daily (Smith and Shu, 2000).

This paper seeks to examine the prevalence of cyber bullying in higher education. Research into cyber bullying in schools has accelerated in last ten years and has been established to be a global phenomenon (Mishna, Pepler, Cook and Wiener, 2010). This research will therefore, try to ascertain the scale of the problem in the higher education context in the UK.
Cyber bullying in schools

An early definition of cyber bullying was given by Nelson (2003) who described it as a deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others who are defenseless, through the use of information and communication technologies such as emails, mobile phones, text messages, instant messaging, social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and web pages. Even though direct physical violence is not considered cyber bullying, it is still a serious hostile behaviour not unlike traditional bullying, with acts such as internet stalking, threats of physical violence, sexual intimidation and threats to the victim’s well-being (Spitzberg and Hoobler, 2002).

A study examining the nature and extent of cyber bullying and how it is experienced by adolescents, was conducted by Li (2007). The study’s participants were 177 seventh grade students from two urban Canadian schools. An important feature which led to the selection of these schools was that both were involved at the time in a large educational technology project which encouraged students to utilize information technologies within the schools premises and at home in order to enhance their studying strategies and social interactions. The study employed a 26-item questionnaire, which assessed students’ cyber bullying related experiences.

The reported results showed that 14.5% of the students had used an electronic device to bully someone else while 25% had been victims of cyber bullying. Furthermore, it was reported that 31.8% of victims were cyber bullied by their peers, 11.4% by individuals not linked to the school and 15.9% faced cyber bullying via multiple sources. With regards to the frequency to which cyber bullying occurred, 43% of the perpetrators indicated that they had cyber bullied others less than 4 times, 30% reported four to ten times and 26% more than ten times. Remarkably, 60% indicated that they were cyber bullied less than 4 times, 18% about 4 to 10 times and 22.7% faced cyber bullying more than ten times. Females were particularly more likely to be victims (59%) than perpetrators (43.5%), while males were less likely to be victims (38.6%) but perpetrators (52.2%). The methods by which victims were cyber bullied were emails (22.7%), chat rooms (36.4%) and at times a combination of both plus cell phones (40.9%). On some occasions, perpetrators used multiple sources (55%) and less frequently emails (9%) or chat rooms (36.4%). (Li, 2007).

A very significant observation made by Li (2007), was that almost half of the victims had no knowledge of who was cyber bullying them. This highlights the problem of anonymity when dealing with cyber bullying. It is not only that anonymity allows perpetrators to be more hurtful and scathing but there is also the deficit of direct legislation against bullying online (Mishna, Saini and Solomon, 2009). The authors of the study in addition concede that there could be a perpetrator-victim cycle, which implies that cyber bullying perpetrators are more likely to be themselves victims of cyber bullying (Mishna et al., 2010).

The acknowledgment of cyber bullying as a pervasive phenomenon in schools has led researchers to investigate the possible psychological consequences for victims and perpetrators. Although studies on traditional bullying have shown that there are no major differences between victims and aggressors in their reported levels of depression, this has however, not been the case with cyber bullying. Cyber victims reported significantly higher levels of depression compared to traditional bullying victims (Wang, Nansel and Iannoti, 2011). Anonymity could however, account for the differences found.

A victim of cyber bullying may be faced with anonymous online harassment from a variety of sources, such as blogs containing false or real personal pictures/details, or the publishing of an untrue rumour on a micro-blogging page (e.g. Twitter) which can spread very quickly and be accessed or read by a great number of people. The defenseless victim of such an attack may feel isolated, helpless and experience depressive symptoms (Smith et al., 2008). There have been a few high profile apparent suicides linked to cyber bullying in the media recently. The Irish Examiner, on October 29th 2012 reported on the suicide of Erin Gallagher as a direct result of being bullied. ‘She was only 13 years old and was found dead after telling friends on a controversial website that she was considering killing herself after being subjected to a vicious bullying campaign’ (O’Cionnaith, 2012 p.4).
While there is a plethora of research that has examined the prevalence of school cyber bullying and how it affects students’ social life, psychological well-being and academic performance, the methods used have been mainly quantitative. This means that most of the studies are limited through overreliance on self-reports and perhaps use of inadequate measures to capture cyber bullying behaviour. Nonetheless, bullying is very individualistic and subjective, and can mean different things to different people. A different approach was therefore needed. A study that gave such a different perspective, was the one conducted by Mishna, Saini and Solomon (2009). They explored the students’ own experiences of cyber bullying by employing grounded theory. Seven focus groups involving 38 students were used to collect the data. Some of the themes that emerged from the analysis were characterized as unique to cyber bullying. Bullying was deemed to have occurred if a student had experienced the perpetration on a particular site, during a predefined time and the cyber bullying was anonymous.

The subjective approach epitomized by Mishna et al., (2009) also found that cyber bullying can take place at any time even outside the school as long as a student had internet connection or access to a mobile device. Students considered such experience as unnerving and invasive. The authors concluded that by its nature, anonymity is what gives cyber bullying its power. Victims could therefore become trapped in a reinforcing cycle where the anonymity of the perpetrator leads to insecurity, low-esteem, feelings of anger and frustration, which in turn leads to further victimization (Mishna, Saini and Solomon, 2009).

Cyber bullying in higher education

While the phenomenon of cyber bullying in schools has been identified by numerous previous studies, the research of this pernicious behaviour in higher education has been extremely limited. One of the most comprehensive recent studies that has examined this behaviour in a higher education setting originated in the USA and was conducted by MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman (2010). They surveyed 439 college students with an average age of 22.97 years (SD = 6.62), 71.9% were females while 28.1% were males, some were undergraduate students (87%) and others were postgraduates (13%). The study demonstrated that 21.9% of the participants were cyber victims, 8.6% were cyber bullies while 38% had known someone who had been a victim of cyber bullying in their college. Gender seems to be relatively immaterial with regards to cyber victimization (males (21.9%) vs. females (22%)) however males appeared to be more at risk of cyber perpetration (7.6% females vs. 11.4 males).

This report further highlighted that social networking services were the most prevalent methods used by cyber bullies since 25% of the victims reported being at the receiving end of cyber bullying through such methods. More than a fifth of those targeted (21.2%) reported that they had been cyber bullied through text messaging and/or voicemails communicated via their mobile phones. Instant messaging services (13.2%) and chat rooms (9.9%) were also identified as means of cyber victimization. A smaller proportion (6.8%) of victims was cyber bullied through posting on websites and blogs.

MacDonald’s and Roberts-Pittman (2010) have reported other findings from their study based on correlation analysis. They revealed that traditional bullying was linked to all three cyber bullying experiences (victimization, perpetration, witnessing). This study indeed championed the notion that cyber bullying in the higher education context truly exists to the same extent as it does in schools.

Another recent study exploring the prevalence and characteristics of cyber bullying among university students was carried out by Turan, Polat, Karapili, Uysal and Turan (2011). In their study the researchers wanted to establish whether the behaviour existed in Turkish higher education institutions.

They recruited 579 undergraduate and postgraduate students (329 females and 250 males) to take part in their study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 30 years (mean age – 21.9 years; SD: 1.73). Participants were asked whether they had knowledge of a friend or acquaintance that had been harassed through electronic means and whether they too had been victims. A positive response led to a further question about identifying where the harassment took place (emails, mobile phones, etc.) and its frequency.
Turan et al. (2011) found that 74.8% knew someone who had been cyber bullied, while 56.1% reported being targeted by cyber bullies. A fifth (20.7%) identified the internet as the source of harassment, for 27.7% it was mobile phones and for 51.7% it was both the internet and mobile phones. With regards to the frequency of harassment, 14% responded that it happened once, 30% twice and 56% more than twice. As to whether victims knew the gender of their perpetrator, 54.5% answered that it was a male, 18% a female, 7% both male and female and 20.5% didn't know the gender of the bully. In this study there were significant gender differences in cyber victimization with more incidences reported by females (64.7%) than by males (45.4%).

Even though the study conducted by Turan et al. (2011) produced additional information regarding university students’ experiences of harassment perpetrated through electronic means, it is not very clear whether the researchers managed to identify cyber bullying behaviour through their methodology. Self reporting of cyber bullying can easily distort bullying figures whether by over or under reporting. With this research, limitations lie within the scoring system used in the cyber bullying questionnaire. The researchers considered that a participant was a cyber victim even when they responded that it happened once and/or twice, when in fact one of the defining characteristics of cyber bullying is its repeated and frequent nature (Li, 2007; Nelson, 2003; Barkoukis and Panagiotou 2012). If a time frame (e.g. during the past month) had been given by the researchers, it would have been clearer whether the participants were reporting cyber victimization rather than just instances of online aggression or harassment.

In summary, the research on the phenomenon of cyber bullying in higher education is very new and already reported findings are not very extensive. Moreover, to date, there is no study exploring the behaviour of cyber bullying in higher education in the United Kingdom. There are indications of the phenomenon’s existence as reported from media outlets. For example the very recent exposure of cyber bullying behaviour in the chat services of the Cambridge university’s online library, which led the university authorities to shut them down (Smith, 2012) or the case of an 18-year old girl who was convicted and jailed for cyber bullying another university student through Facebook (Salked, 2009). Prior to committing suicide, the victim had received numerous death threats and continuous online bullying.

Previous studies examining school online bullying established that there are gender differences in victimization and perpetration. However, these results have not been borne out by studies examining these differences in higher education. It would also be interesting to investigate the claim that victims can become trapped in a vicious cycle where victimization leads to anger and the need to retaliate which in turn leads to perpetration and then to further victimization.

The overall aims of the present study were:

- to establish whether cyber bullying is an existing phenomenon in higher education in the UK
- to explore students’ behaviour in relation to current communication methods offered by information technologies (email, social media, internet etc.).
- to examine if there are gender differences in relation with cyber bullying victimization and perpetration.
- the examination of possible associations between past school bullying experiences and cyber bullying in higher education.
Method

Design: This was a cross-sectional study which examined variables related to past (school) and present (higher education) cyber bullying and victimization experiences. Frequency of bullying and victimization was also considered.

Participants: Two hundred and seventy-three undergraduate and postgraduate students were recruited online to participate in the study. Data from 54 participants was eliminated from the final analysis due to either being erroneously completed or showing missing values. The age range for the final sample (N = 219) was 18 to 36 years (Mean= 22.12, SD= 4.34). There were 121 males (55.3%) and 98 females (44.7%).

Materials: Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire, which assessed the following:

Socio-demographic factors. A questionnaire was constructed to gather the following demographic details and information: age, gender, year of study, use of electronic devices particularly access to a personal computer, internet usage and internet enabled mobile devices. Participants were also asked about their use of internet enabling communication techniques such as emails, social media profiles and whether they value the people they meet online and reveal their identity to them.

Cyber bullying and past bullying experiences questionnaire. A description of cyber bullying was available to the participants before they completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire followed the structure developed by MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman (2010). There were two parts to the questionnaire. Firstly, they completed two questions examining their experience of bullying at school: ‘How often were you bullied in school?’ and ‘How often did you take part in bullying another student at school?’ Secondly, cyber bullying experiences during higher education were assessed by answering the following questions: ‘How often were you cyber bullied at university?’ and ‘How often did you cyber bully others at university?’ Scoring was on a 4-point Likert scale (1, 2, 3, 4) with possible scores ranging from one (no/never) to four (several times) and higher scores indicating greater levels of perpetration or victimization.

Procedure: Ethical clearance was obtained from the university’s ethics committee before conducting the study. The online questionnaire was posted in forums and sent in emailing lists. Participants entering the webpage of the survey were presented with a briefing form giving them information about the study as well as some information about the research and researchers. The second page, which was the consent form, was designed to obtain consent before the participants could proceed to the actual questionnaire battery. Therefore, if participants wanted to proceed and agreed to take part in the study, they could click an accept link and proceed, otherwise they could click a decline link, thus not have any access to the questionnaires.

It was made clear both in the briefing form and consent form that participation was voluntary, that no personal identification details were required and that even if they accepted and completed the questionnaire, they could withdraw at any time from the procedure by simply closing the survey page in their browser. Participants were also assured that they could not be identified from the data they provided and that the data would only be used for statistical purposes and be kept safely by the researchers.

Participants who agreed to take part in the survey and completed the questionnaires, were presented with a final page containing a debriefing form, information on how to contact the researchers as well as links to websites with information on cyber bullying and cyber bullying victims support services.

Statistical analysis: Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient was used to examine the possible associations between past school bullying experiences and higher education cyber bullying. Between subjects independent t-tests were used to analyze sex differences.
Results

The main aim of this study was to examine whether cyber bullying exists in higher education. Besides identifying associations between previous school bullying and experiences of cyber bullying in higher education, the study also focused on investigating gender differences. Analysis was carried out using SPSS for Windows version 19.

Participants’ socio-demographic characteristics: The first stage of the analysis yielded descriptive statistics which are presented in various tables. Table 1 shows the participants’ level of study at university and that most of the students were studying at undergraduate level in year 2.

Table 1 – Participants’ year of university attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (N=219)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st year student</td>
<td>62 (28.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year student</td>
<td>89 (40.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year student</td>
<td>43 (19.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate student</td>
<td>25 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 reports the online communication services mainly used by students in higher education. The vast majority stated that they accessed the internet daily through personal computers and internet enabled mobile devices.

Table 2 – Internet access through personal computers and mobile devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet Access</th>
<th>Participants (N=219)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal computer (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>204 (93.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15 (6.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When students were given the opportunity to describe their behaviour online, most responded that they did not use an alias and posted pictures of themselves in order to meet new people online. Table 3 gives the frequency data regarding students’ online behaviour with regards to social media.

Table 3 – Participants’ online behaviour in social media services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online behaviour</th>
<th>N=219</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online profile</td>
<td>219 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real identity use</td>
<td>186 (84.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures of themselves</td>
<td>198 (90.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting people online</td>
<td>174 (79.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The prevalence of cyber bullying in higher education in the UK

Cyber bullying prevalence in UK Higher Education: Table 4 indicates the frequency distribution of bullying victimization in higher education. It can be seen that at least a third (33.8%) of the students were subjected to bullying during their studies although 8.2% (once or twice) were due to occasional exposure. Data at this stage does not distinguish between genders in bullying victimization. Figure 1 illustrates the prevalence rates.

Table 4 – Cyber victimization experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=219</th>
<th>Participants (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>145 (66.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
<td>18 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few times</td>
<td>10 (4.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times</td>
<td>46 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 – Frequency distribution of cyber bullying in Higher Education in UK
Evidence from table 5 below shows the percentages of those students who confessed to having cyber bullied someone. This indicates that only a fifth (20.1%) had exposed others to bullying behaviour. This figure of perpetrators is much lower than that of those who had been at the receiving end of bullying behaviours.

Table 5 – Cyber bullying aggressive behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Participants (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>175 (79.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
<td>13 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few times</td>
<td>12 (5.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times</td>
<td>19 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sex differences in cyber bullying behaviour: A series of independent t-tests were used to examine possible differences between males and females in being bullied or being a bully. The results show that there were no statistically significant sex differences with regards to cyber victimization ($t(217) = -1.77, p > .05$). Female students scored higher on the victimization scale (mean = 1.97, SD = 1.33) in comparison to their male counterparts (mean = 1.67, SD = 1.14). There were also no statistically significant sex differences in terms of cyber perpetration ($t(217) = .154, p > .05$). Male students scores were slightly higher (mean = 1.44, SD = 0.93) than those of female students (mean = 1.42, SD = 0.95).

Pairwise correlations between past school bullying and higher education cyber bullying behaviour: The data was analyzed by Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficients to examine possible intercorrelations between previous school bullying behaviour and cyber bullying experiences in higher education. Results showed that being bullied at school (victimization) was positively correlated with being bullied in higher education (cyber bullying victimization) ($r = .754, p < .001$). This indicates that a strong link exists between victimization in school and in higher education. Not surprisingly we identified a modest positive association between bullying at school and cyber bullying in higher education ($r = .573, p < .001$). Indicating that a person who was a school bully was likely to perpetuate this behaviour and act as a cyber bully later on in higher education (see table 6).

Table 6 – Correlation matrix for school bullying and higher education cyber bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Cyber bullying victim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Cyber bully</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 School bullying victim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.753*</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 School bully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .001 (2-tailed)
Discussion

The main aim of the present study was to establish whether cyber bullying existed in UK universities. It was found that indeed cyber bullying was prevalent, with almost a quarter of the students confessing to being victimized while a significant proportion admitted to acting as cyber bullies. The results of this study also provide support for the view of a significant relationship between bullying at school and cyber bullying in higher education and similarly victimization at school and cyber victimization at university. In addition, no significant differences were found between male and female students in both roles of victimization and bullying. The lack of significant sex differences in this study can, however, be viewed as an important finding in itself. The results of this study do add to, and concur with previous research on cyber bullying and a more detailed discussion follows.

The rates of cyber bullying victimization found in the present study are comparable with previous research particularly that of MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman (2010), who explored prevalence rates among US college students. They showed that 21.9% of students faced cyber bullying, which is similar to the 25.6% rate reported in our study. However, MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman’s (2010) study noted significantly lower rates (8.6%) of perpetration when compared to our figure (14.2%). A possible explanation for the differences found could be due to the differences in sex ratio of the studies. Our study employed a fairly balanced sex ratio (55.3% vs 44.7%) in comparison to MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman (2010) (e.g. 72% vs 28%). This therefore, could be a plausible explanation for the higher rates found in our study as males tend to be more aggressive than females.

The Turkish research (Turan et al. 2011) has also reported significantly higher rates (56.1%) of victimization. However, a study like this highlights the inconsistency of an individual’s conception of bullying which could be compounded further by different cultural and societal structures. The responses to questions on bullying behaviour, in terms of being bullied or doing the bullying might be interpreted differently in some cultures. It is also worth noting that there were important methodological differences in the conduct of the studies. Turan et al. (2011) included single instances of cyber aggression in their total prevalence rate; whereas this was not the case with the present study as it included only repeated cyber bullying aggression.

Furthermore, it was hypothesized that due to women being characterized stereotypically (by some) as ‘the weaker sex’, there might be sex differences in relation with cyber bullying aggression and victimization. However, no such differences were found. Even though female students scored higher on the victimization scale and males higher on the aggression scale, these differences were not statistically significant. Could it be that victimization or perpetration does not depend on gender but rather on the personality of the individual? We discussed in the introduction that a typical victim had distinguishable personality traits such as more anxious, insecure, sensitive and quiet while a perpetrator was aggressive and domineering. Could personality lie at the heart of our lack of sex differences in our study? Nonetheless, these findings were not in accordance with empirical findings of school cyber bullying research, which maintain that females are significantly victimized more than males and vice versa for aggression (Li, 2007). Although research concerning prevalence of cyber bullying in higher education is still in its infancy, our failure to find sex differences in victimization and perpetration is supported by the results of MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman (2010).

Probably the most surprising outcome of this study was that there was a significant association between past school bullying behaviour and higher education cyber bullying experiences. Students who acted as bullies at school were more likely to repeat the behaviour at university. Unfortunately the phenomenon of victimization and perpetration is more widely researched in schools than in higher education. Research, particularly within schools, has identified bullying as being on a continuum (Solberg and Olweus, 2003). Our results however, resonate with those of others (such as; Li, 2007; Mishna, Saini and Solomon, 2009; MacDonald and Roberts-Pittman, 2010).
Suggested further research:

This paper did not seek to address the causes of cyber bullying but rather the prevalence of the phenomenon in the higher education context in UK. The study had several limitations which should be addressed if the research is to be advanced. The method used could have been greatly improved. Even though data regarding students' online behaviour was obtained, this was not examined as a result of cyber bullying. All participants had an online profile in a social media service like Facebook and 85% had associated this profile with their real identity. Furthermore, 90% of participants had posted pictures of themselves and approximately 80% were utilizing such services to meet other people online. This type of data, however, offers valuable information in particular when taking into consideration the relationship between social media and cyber bullying. It would be advantageous for our understanding of the phenomenon to explore how and where it occurs.

Another significant limitation of the study was the employment of a cyber bullying questionnaire. Self-report questions are frequently criticized in research due to the chances of false statements. Some students might not have wanted to admit to being a bully or victim. Therefore, bullying is highly subjective. The development of a psychometric tool capable of assessing online bullying and taking into consideration factors which have been raised by previous research, such as social intelligence, academic performance, perceived satisfaction of studies and anonymity among others, is strongly suggested. A note must be made at this point regarding anonymity. Even though it has been considered a defining characteristic of cyber bullying, it is not clear if that is still the case, since social media and in general our online life sees us stripped of it.

Individual and cultural differences should also be important aspects of future higher education cyber bullying research. Factors such as age, sex, intelligence, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and nationality are extremely important if we want to understand how students in the UK, which has a diverse student population, are affected by cyber bullying, but it will also help us to put cyber bullying into context.

Further research could also investigate students' perception of cyber bullying and the impact of personality traits and social support as a coping strategy. Lastly we need to establish what cyber bullying is in today's terms and whether there is global acknowledgment of what behaviours constitute cyber bullying. Without obtaining this information it would be difficult to understand this pernicious behaviour and in consequence it will be futile to try and impose or propose policies to stop it.

Conclusion

Despite the problems encountered when conducting research into cyber bullying, it remains a very important area of investigation. From our results, it can therefore be argued that cyber bullying exists in UK universities. Furthermore, it was found that both male and female students were equally victims and/or perpetrators. The results also showed that past school bullying experiences are strongly related to higher education cyber bullying behaviour. Research on this topic is still in its infancy but it is a very significant aspect of students' perceived satisfaction with their studies, as well as emotional, even physical well-being. As such, further research is needed in order for us to understand the phenomenon and implement successful approaches to addressing cyber bullying in higher education.
References


Society and technology diffusion theories and frameworks: the case of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption in hotels and associated business in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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The School of Computing and Technology
University of West London

This paper reports on the current discussion of the use of theory in research. A number of existing theories are explored and discussed in the context of a study of the adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by hoteliers and tour operators in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It explores the existing theoretical frameworks that explain the relationship between society and technology; it identifies a selection criterion to find a theoretical framework that explains the main factors for the adoption of ICT. Furthermore, it reports how Rogers’ theory of diffusion was assessed and selected to be used as a basis for formulating a new theoretical framework. The paper aims to share experience on how the selection and development of a modified theoretical framework for the particular research context was achieved. The modified theoretical framework, which may be used in a similar context in developing countries, is presented.

Keywords

ICT | theoretical frameworks | diffusion of ICT | Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory
Introduction

Many international organisations advocate the role of ICT as a catalyst for development and poverty reduction. The United Nations (UN) recognise this and passed resolution 56/258. The core of this resolution is as follows:

“Recognising that information and communication technologies are among the critical determinants for creating a global knowledge-based economy, accelerating growth, raising competitiveness, promoting sustainable development, eradicating poverty and facilitating the effective integration of all countries into the global economy”,

UN general assembly resolution 56/258, 2001

There is no clear way in which ICT can be utilised to bring about development and reduce poverty. The current research discourse on ICT indicates that at least four different emphases are expressed. The first focuses on Gross Domestic Product growth (GDP). Easterly (2006) and Sachs (2005) put the emphases on ICT to increase GDP and as a result reduce poverty and increase development. The second emphasis is on ICT to create empowerment for the poor and the disadvantaged to pull themselves out of poverty (Unwin, 2007). The third discourse emphasises the capacity of ICT to create a networked society (Castells, 2010) to influence the political and social sphere of society and thus reduce poverty. The fourth emphasis focuses on ICT to create a Gross National Happiness (GNH) (Heeks, 2012). According to Heeks, ICT can create a condition, for example by creating job opportunities for the jobless, to create happiness for the individual. It is important to focus effort on aligning ICT to the particular emphasis so as to realise the potential of ICT. It is wise to note that there may not be one dominant effect. For example the emphasis on GDP can also bring about GNH by creating jobs and work satisfaction.

However, ICT has to be diffused in society to have the desired effects such as generating development, reducing poverty, empowering the poor and the disadvantaged, creating a networked society or to generate a high level of GNH. The diffusion of ICT is increasing in developing countries but the diffusion in Ethiopia is low compared to even the sub-Saharan region.

Ethiopia and current ICT diffusion

Ethiopia is located in north eastern Africa with a population of approximately 90 million. It is a developing country with a high level of poverty: 38 % of the population live below the poverty line. The ICT subscription levels for mobile, internet and other ICT services are very low. The data from ITU below, in table 1, indicate that Ethiopia in 2008 ranked 146 out of 151 countries; this trend continued in 2010 and the rank dropped to 148 out of 152 countries indicating that the ICT diffusion is further lagging behind compared to other countries.
### Table 1: ICT Development Index
(Source: ITU, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Rank 2010</th>
<th>IDI 2010</th>
<th>Rank 2008</th>
<th>IDI 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao P.D.R.</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.87</td>
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<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Fason</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethiopia</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.53</strong></td>
<td><strong>146</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.23</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo (Dem. Rep.)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Telecommunication service is growing (table 1). At the end of 2011 there were 6 billion mobile phone subscribers worldwide, 1 billion mobile internet users, 590 million fixed (wired) broadband subscribers, and 2.3 billion people were on line. The growth of mobile phone subscriptions has been driven by the developing countries, which account for 80% of the 660 million new mobile subscribers (ITU, 2012).

The disparities remain high between the developed and the developing countries on mobile broadband subscription: it was 51% and 8% respectively at the end of 2011. Fixed (wired) broadband subscription is slowing in the developed world (5%), whereas it is growing at higher level in the developing countries (18%). In developing countries internet growth doubled between 2007 and 2011, but only a quarter of the population have access at the end of 2011.

The growth of mobile phone and internet in the developing countries was remarkable, but if one looks at the data for countries like Ethiopia in the sub-Saharan area the result is disappointing (table 2). At the end of 2011, the proportion of the population of mobile phone users in Kenya was 64.8%, and in Tanzania, it was 55.5%, whereas in Ethiopia it was 16.7%. A high proportion of individuals living in Kenya (28%) and Tanzania (12%) had access to internet, but in Ethiopia, it was only 1.1%. The telecommunication sector was liberalised in most of the African countries including Kenya and Tanzania, but the Ethiopian telecommunication authority is the only telecommunication operator providing services in the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of individuals using the internet</th>
<th>Fixed telephone subscribers per hundred inhabitants</th>
<th>Mobile phone subscription per hundred inhabitants</th>
<th>Percentage of household with computer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Comparison ICT indicators for selected Sub Saharan countries
(Source: ITU World telecommunication / ICT indicators database)
The Ethiopian telecommunication authority has been struggling to meet the demand for telephone lines for many years. Many thousands of users are still on the waiting list for their first telephone landline service. The data shown below in figure 1 indicate that in 2004 the waiting list was at its maximum (156,963) but was reduced to 13,579 by 2007. It was going up again and reached 18,548 in 2009. The ITU country report of 2002 indicates that the average waiting time for securing a landline was 8 years (ITU, 2002). However, at the same time, the switching capacity, or the number of total telephone lines were 550,000 of which only 340,000 lines (61%) were used. At the same time, 220,000 lines were idle and many potential customers were waiting for 8 years.

Figure 1: Number of consumers in Ethiopia waiting for a landline
(Source: Ethiopian Telecommunication Authority statistical bulletin 2008/2009)
ICT cost and affordability

The ICT Price Basket (IPB) provides the cost and affordability of ICT services across countries and regions. It is the benchmark comparison measure of the cost of fixed line telephone, mobile phone, and fixed broadband. The comparison prices are given as a the percentage of the average monthly Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

The IPB data given below in table 3 show that in Ethiopia there was a big reduction of prices for fixed broadband from 906 % to 85 % of the average monthly GNI per capita. However, it is still the most expensive compared with Kenya (57.4 %) and Tanzania (70.8 %). The cost for using mobile phone decreases in both Kenya (from 17.8% to 6.8%) and Tanzania (from 37.1 % to 22.9%) whereas it increases in Ethiopia from 12.6 % to 13% of the average monthly GNI per capita.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>IPB 2011</th>
<th>IPB 2010</th>
<th>Fixed telephone sub-basket as a % of GNI per capita 2011</th>
<th>Fixed telephone sub-basket as a % of GNI per capita 2010</th>
<th>Mobile phone sub-basket as a % of GNI per capita 2011</th>
<th>Mobile phone sub-basket as a % of GNI per capita 2010</th>
<th>Fixed broadband sub-basket as a % of GNI per capita 2011</th>
<th>Fixed broadband sub-basket as a % of GNI per capita 2010</th>
<th>GNI per capita, USD, 2010 or latest available year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: ICT Prices comparisons table for Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania
(Source: ITU. GNI and PPP USD ($) values are based on World Bank Data)

Methodology

A series of field visits to Addis Ababa were conducted to collect data from hoteliers and tour operators. In the first phase, detailed interviews were conducted with 17 hoteliers. In the second phase, a survey was conducted with 128 hoteliers and 57 tour operators. This paper is based on a doctoral research, which is not yet published. It is focused on how the choice of an appropriate theory was selected and adopted to support the research context. A series of difficulties were encountered before and during data collection. Lessons learned from this show the need to be sensitive to the local context and ethical issues (Demeke and Olden, 2012).

An exploratory design methodology is used to inform the research process. The research design uses Berg’s Spiralling Research Approach (figure 2) using a forward and backward movement of processes in each research stage: for example, from idea, to theory, and back again; from theory to modify the idea; or from design, to data collection or vice-versa, from analysis to dissemination and so forth (Berg, 2007). The process, in its formulation provides a refining of ideas, theories, method, data collection, analysis, and dissemination. In this particular research, the method enables the proposal of the theoretical framework that guides the data collection, analysis, and dissemination of the research.
Do we need a theory?

Some researchers argued against using a theory for a number of reasons. For example, John Van Maanen has argued that more descriptive narratives based on intensive ethnographic study are appropriate to build knowledge, where later a theory can be developed (Van Maanen, 1995); he suggested a ten-year moratorium on theoretical papers. The implication of this argument is that theory should not be injected into a research for the sake of it.

Again, Baker and Thyer disagreed on PhD programmes that are requiring students to use a theoretical framework for their study, even when the study, has not been guided by any explicit theory or tested in the outcome of the research (Baker and Thyer 2000). Other researchers emphasise the importance of accumulation of empirical findings as more important than trying to generalise in a theoretical framework. For example, Flyvberg takes this further by arguing that social science cannot produce universal context independent theory, but it offers concrete context-dependent knowledge (Flyvberg, 2006). Similarly, Casley and Lury argued that a case study is applicable to initiate change of development policy in developing countries rather than a generalisation of science (Casley and Lury, 1987).

This paper is not aiming to put forward an argument on the importance of theory against the accumulation of case study knowledge, particularly in the case of diffusion studies in the developing countries. But it does report on how existing theories can be selected and adopted to fit in this particular research context and it tries to formulate a theoretical framework based on the existing Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory. It emphasises that the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal (PESTEL) factors affect the diffusion of ICT in the hotels and tour operators businesses.

Figure 2: The Spiralling Research Approach adopted from Berg
The role of theory in research: why does it matter?

Strauss argued that the role of a theory is to provide the key variables of the phenomena under study with underlying assumptions; it provides the research method (Strauss, 1995). In addition, Strauss explains that a theory is a model that tries to replicate the real world. The real world is far more complicated and theories make sense of it by simplifying and reducing it to the most important factors.

The advantages of explicitly stating the theoretical foundation used in a research is to contribute to the verification of the theory from the particular angle of the investigation. Alternatively, if not verification it generates falsification of the theory as argued by Popper (1963). In addition, the theory can be used by different disciplines to investigate a phenomenon which the theory was not developed for. However, researchers do not necessarily specify the theory that guided their research; it may be implicit in the work. Furthermore, Weick argues against unstated or an implicit use of theory, it deters understanding, and he compares it to blind spots (Weick, 1985).

A theory is described by Brunswik’s ‘Lens Model’ as adopted by Amundson and Cummings as shown below in figure 3. The model indicates that the ‘lens’ consists of Xs selected by the observer, taken to be the independent variables (Amundson and Cummings, 1997). The phenomenon is indicated as Y, and it is the Xs which determine its value. The selection of Xs affect the result of the study. The ‘lens’ is acting as a filter, to select what is considered to be the significant factor or factors that explain and predict about the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. The ‘lens’ metaphor can also be taken to reflect the context in which the investigation is conducted where there are for different contexts, different variables appearing to the observer to investigate the object under investigation.

The advantage of a theory is that it answers the queries of why, it explains and predicts a phenomenon. Furthermore, theory matters greatly as it lends itself to be used in a variety of conditions and its use in a variety of disciplines. For example, Rogers’ theory of innovation has been used to study diffusion in health, education, information systems, and marketing to name a few.

![Brunswik’s Lens Model](image-url)
In conclusion, using theory in research is beneficial when it is appropriate and fitting for the particular research context. It contributes to knowledge and also tests the existing theories or generates a new theory that fits the context and the phenomenon under consideration.

Theories on society, science, and technology

One of the primary bodies of literature that examines the mutual interaction of society and science is the sociology of science. This is the study of science and its effects on the social structures and processes of scientific activity (Ben-David, 1975). It focuses on how science as an institution looks into the practices and ways of the career paths and rewards for the practitioners in the field (Pinch and Bijker, 1984).

According to Pinch and Bijker one of the main developments of the sociology of science is the extension of the sociology of knowledge into ‘hard science’. One of main characteristics of sociology of knowledge is that scientific knowledge is socially constructed: this by its very nature provides multiple interpretations for the same phenomenon. Sociology of science investigates the cause of beliefs in society irrespective of the scientific claims of truth. The central tenets are: different explanations are not sought for what is known to be a scientific ‘truth’ and also it is indifferent to the truth or falsity of the belief. This is an issue of socially constructed beliefs, not an epistemological issue.

Social history of technology

The social history of technology is part of the study of the sociology of science. It investigates the interaction of technology and society based on the historical accounts. These technological systems include electricity generation/transmission and telecommunications infrastructures. According to Hughes (1987) these systems are the result of the integration of technical, social, economic, and political elements in a society. Furthermore, Hughes argues that these technological infrastructures require physical artefacts, organisations, scientific components, and legislative artefacts to evolve. Here Hughes, clearly shows that in the adoption of large infrastructures the context, the politics, social, law, technology and organisations all have to come together for the realisation of these infrastructures. This implies that the PESTEL factors play a pivotal role in the realisation of these projects. However, this theoretical framework is not completely applicable to what is happening at the moment regarding the diffusion of ICT. Even so, the PESTEL factors which have impacted on past diffusion continue to influence on the diffusion of large technological infrastructures.

The social history of technology tends to delineate the technology system apart from the environment in which it exists. The central tenet of the social history of technology lies in the fact that it deals with how the technology is reconstructed by society and how the society is changed because of technology, focusing the relationship between the technology and the society. However, other major factors such as the political, economic, environmental, and legal factors also shape the relationship between the society and technology.
Society and technology

Technology is taken to be a force of change especially in the area of the social, cultural, and economical situation in a society. The impact of technology, particularly in the industrial revolution has been extensively documented. Technology has three layers of meanings (MacKenzie, 1985). The first is the artefact itself, for example, cars or planes. Second, it also includes the human activity or process such as driving or flying, without this activity the car is a collection of metal, plastic and wire. Third, technology also refers to what people know and do with it, the knowledge to make a car is a technology. As technology is artefact, knowledge and activity, then it can be argued that the artefact is developed by knowledge, human activity and non human agents. In the final analysis, technology is a result of interaction of human actors and material substance.

The effects of the introduction of technology on productivity and competitiveness are well documented. Introduction of new motor driven technology or fully automated systems on the factory floor means fewer workers. This increases unemployment and changes other social, economic and cultural parameters. The worker’s salary may be reduced and poverty may be on the increase followed by other social ills. On the positive note, increase of productivity allows the worker to have spare time to pursue other activities and also give them leisure time.

In other words technical changes bring about social changes. Moreover, as Peter Large points out the social change that comes because of the microchip amounts to changes in the social configuration of the society, and it changes the cultural, economic, and social states of the society (Large 1980). It increases the productivity of the workforce, accordingly workers have ample leisure time.

The development and progress of technology can be self perpetuating, irrespective of the social elements. It can be assumed that technology follows a path determined by its physical nature. Equally it is affected by social, cultural, and economic factors. The engineers and technologists, who design these artefacts, are part of a certain social group; hence, the implication is that there is in its creation, at least, the prospect of the artefact being influenced by the social group. Furthermore, as MacKenzie (1985) defines technology as a social activity of the society that uses tacit knowledge or the creation process of knowledge to enable the creation of the artefact itself. Overall technology diffusion is the result of multiple factors, such as the social, economic, and cultural.

Mumford argues that technology not only shapes the society but it is also shaped by the society (Mumford, 1967). In addition, there are socio cultural conditions that precede the development of new technologies. He further argues that technology has an impact on society. Furthermore, it is found that the technology was directed. Winner coined the phrase ‘Do Artefacts have politics?’ He shows, on one of his examples, that the bridge which crosses over a park enables the upper and middle class car owner to use the park, but it creates a barrier to lower class people non-car owners who travel by bus. Because of the height limitation of the bridge, buses are not allowed to pass under the bridge, creating a physical barrier to exclude lower class sections of the society (Winner, 1986).

The above argument demonstrates that artefacts do have a political dimension. Furthermore, technology is also socially shaped as shown by Mumford. In addition, MacKenzie (1985) argues that technology does not develop exclusively following its own way or momentum, but is shaped by social factors, what Mackenzie call ‘sociotechnical ensembles’.
Social Construction of Technology (SCOT)

The central tenets of SCOT are: first, it advocates the mutual shaping of society and technology, the social construction of artefacts by relevant social groups and the technological shaping of society. Second, different social groups can provide different meanings and attributes to the same artefact. Third, artefacts do not have inherent identity or attribute (Pinch and Bijker, 1984).

SCOT shares its interpretive flexibility with the sociology of science; it focuses on the problem, real or assumed, generated by artefacts for selected social groups, the social influence and input in the design of the artefacts. This influence is non-linear in its nature. The artefact shapes the selected social groups. Hence, the relationship between the society and technology is multidimensional. In addition, it focuses on a problem that arises because an artefact is created for a selected social group. The main assumption is that all members of the selected social group share common meanings in respect of the same artefacts. The underpinning methodological and empirical studies for SCOT focus on the discovery, naming, understanding and describing of the relationship between the selected social group and the artefact. Furthermore, different social groups provide many interpretive ideas for the same artefact as opposing interpretations are tolerated.

The closure and stabilization of an artefact occurs when there is certain degree of consensus achieved among the selected social groups about the artefact’s meaning, understanding, naming and when a solution is found for the initial problem identified. In reality, the problem may not need to be solved. However, if the selected social groups see the problem as being solved then the artefact is stabilized. Furthermore, the perception or assumption by the selected social group, induced by external agents may indicate or assume the problem is solved, then the artefact is stabilised. Advertisement plays a significant role in shaping the meaning of the artefact for the selected social group, shaping, and influencing the selected social group to accept the solution that has been found for the problem. This consensus may not be achieved for all social groups in the society. Bijker and Law propose the concept of ‘technological frame’ to explain this gradient of consensus for different social group for the same artefacts and this forms the development of heterogeneous socio-technical ensembles (Bijker and Law, 1992). This enables SCOT to generalise beyond a single case study to form a theory of sociotechnical ensembles. On the other hand, this closure forms part of the future norms and values of the society.

There are inherent problematic issues with SCOT; it requires defining a social group for its study. Furthermore, there is an assumption that the selected social group share similar meanings and understandings for the same artefact. In these ideal settings, two different individuals in the selected social group have the same idea and give the same meanings to an artefact. But can there be an absolute closure for an artefact in the sense that closure brings consensus about the meaning of the artefact by certain social groups? Consensus reduces interpretive flexibility, but this is not necessarily true for all social groups. Closure may seem to bring stabilisation to the artefact, which describes the continuity of the artefact. At the same time, technological change in the artefact brings new interpretations. This shows how SCOT defines the dynamic nature of change and continuity.

Technological frames form the basis for analysing sociotechnical ensembles. It is the method of how technology facilitates interaction and shapes specific cultures. It is a two way process, which looks at how new technology is constructed by allowing and restricting interactions within specific social groups in certain channels.

This theory considers the effects of the interaction of culture and technology in isolation, though there are other factors that influence this interaction. For example, the political, economic, environmental, and legal factors play a significant role in shaping the interaction between the socio-culture and the technology. The data gathered for the research on which this paper is based indicates that the political decision to run a monopolistic system for telecommunication services has resulted in unsatisfied high demand for telephone lines with very poor services for the customers. Furthermore, with no consumer protection law
and no choices to switch to other suppliers, customers are left with no option but to accept substandard services. This in turn tends to influence the culture to accept substandard services.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The behaviour of users in accepting and using a new technology is measured using the technology acceptance model (TAM). This is an information systems theory which is an extension of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Bagozzi and Davis argue that users accept and use new technology based on two measures: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Bagozzi et al. 1992). The advantage of this measure is its simplicity. The technology can have a multitude of capabilities, but this is useful only if the users perceive that it is useful for their job. However, the major criticisms are that the theory offers limited explanatory and predictive power to give it practical value.

Actor-Network Theory (ANT)

Actor-network theory was formulated on the basis of the work of Callon (1986), Latour (1980, 1987), and Law and Hassard (1999) and appears to share a number of attributes with SCOT particularly on the mutual interaction and construction of society, technology, and science. However, ANT is very different in its fundamental approaches, especially in its human and non-human entities relationship.

SCOT takes a constructivist approach, where nature and reality are constructed through the mutual interaction of technology, science and society. In comparison, Actor Network Theory recognizes the existence of reality outside and independent of society and humans, which cannot be changed. However, much cannot be said about nature without the participation and activities of humans. In this relationship, humans and non-human entities are defined on the relationship they form in the network.

When the interaction between humans and nature takes place, a relationship forms among, humans and things, and humans and other humans: this forms a network. Each network, has its configuration and relationship to other networks. It also defines the meaning, role and identity of the elements within it. It is in this setting that truth, meaning and understanding is defined for that particular network. This truth, meaning and understanding can be different for different networks; it is a version of reality for that network. In this setting no one can claim to have an independent reference point outside any network. The assertion, ‘Water boils at 100°C’, has a dual character of natural characteristics and the human formation of concepts, measurements, tools and so on. It is not possible to say anything about this phenomenon without the human interaction, the technology and the science. The statement ‘water boils at 212°F’, even though this statement and the above assertion are similar, the last statement has a different configuration of tools and network. This also shows that the construction of reality can be different for different networks.

The notion of object and subject is not separated in Actor Network Theory: objects are defined by their relationships with other objects. In this myriad of relationships, the role, value and attributes of the elements are determined based on the position they assume in the network. The object without its connection and association to other objects has no role, value or attribute. This extends to humans and non-human entities. As Law points out (Law and Hassard, 1999 p.3):

‘Actor Network Theory is a ruthless application of semiotics. It tells that entities take their form and acquire their attributes as result of their relations with other entities. In this scheme of things entities have no inherent qualities: essentialist divisions are thrown on the bonfire of the dualisms: truth and falsehood, large and small, agency and structure, human and non-human, before and after, knowledge and power, context and content, materiality and sociality, activity and passivity, in one way or another.’

ANT studies how science and technology integrates into society, how these intricate interactions of technology and society stabilise, and how these interactions create networks of human and non-human agents and waves of relationships among entities. ANT is a social theory and a study of science and technology (SST). Its fundamental tenets are that reality exists outside the human: it is firmly based on its philosophical and epistemological foundation on the concept of networks and
actors. It particularly focuses on the processes through which humans and technology form heterogeneous networks. It is also different to other SST approaches especially for its material-semiotic stance. ANT explores how networks of human and non-human entities are created, sustained or disintegrated. It does not investigate why networks are generated but it explores how the network is sustained or disintegrated.

The conceptual framework provides the foundations to select models and tools to enable systematic ways of gathering data and to choose appropriate tools that are required to transform these data into information and knowledge. Furthermore, Latour summed this up in the following passage (Latour, 1987 p.277):

‘The history of science is that of the many clever means to transform what ever people do, sell and buy into something that can be modified gathered, archived, coded, recalculated, and displayed’.

ANT argues that all actors are of equal importance, human or nonhuman, powerful or powerless. It is true that all actors contribute to the network in some level but actors that have significant power in the network play a critical role compared to those with less power. As Walsham points out, ANT has a disregard for the existing social order (Walsham, 1997).

Rogers’ theory of diffusion of innovation

The availability of ICT has increased and the price of these tools decreases all the time. In spite of the potential advantages and use of ICT, the adoption is not encouraging particularly in a case like Ethiopia. Opposition to the adoption of ICT may come from different levels. At the organisational level, opponents to the adoption of ICT perceive the advantage and use of ICT differently to the adopters. Other opponents include users who use rival technology, or individuals who reject ICT on grounds such as health or safety issues who in general consider it not fit for purpose other than at the personal level.

Diffusion of innovation is influenced by the innovation, and the means by which the idea is communicated, channels of communication, time, and the social system (Rogers, 2003). The ICT diffusion in the hotel sector influenced by these four factors progresses through the five stages, as shown below: Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation, and Confirmation.

At the beginning of the diffusion processes, Rogers explains that when the potential adopter is introduced to an innovation and gains some level of understanding, it can be termed the knowledge stage. The second stage occurs when an individual received

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**Figure 4: Rogers’ innovation-decision process**

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Society and technology diffusion theories and frameworks: the case of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption in hotels and associated business in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
an opinion for or against to adopt or reject the innovation. This is the persuasion stage where the knowledge and understanding combined with the opinion of others convince the adoption or rejection of the innovation. Once an individual has decided to adopt an innovation and put the innovation into use, it signals the implementation levels. The confirmation stage is the continuation of the adoption or rejection of the innovation.

The speed at which individuals adopt an innovation varies, some adopt at first, while some lag behind. The adoption of an innovation follows an S curve when plotted over a length of time. Rogers recommends five categories of adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Rogers also identified five factors that influence the adoption of innovation by individuals: relative advantages of the innovation, compatibility, complexity or simplicity, trialability and observability.

Selection of theoretical framework
In the study of the diffusion of innovation researchers have many theories at their disposal, but there are difficulties in choosing the appropriate theory for the proposed research. The properly selected theory enables the formulation of the research constructs. Although the selection of research method depends on the nature of the problem under investigation, the selected theory has an impact on the research method.

Truex et al. (2006) formulated some criteria how to choose the appropriate theory for research which includes:
1. best fit between the selected theory and the research phenomenon of interest
2. the theory’s historical context
3. the impact of the selected theory on the choice of research method
4. considering the theorising process and the cumulative theory.

Reasons for the adoption of Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory
Rogers’s diffusion of innovation theory explains how an innovation is diffused in a society. It focuses on the individual adopter and the influence of the culture on the adopter to accept or reject an innovation. Looking closely at Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory and the problem under investigation, which this paper is based on, shows that the theory is a good fit for the research phenomenon under investigation in two ways. Firstly, the theory explains how the individual adopter goes through the five stages of adoption processes to adopt ICT in their hotels and tour operators businesses. Secondly, the five factors of innovation adoption identified by the theory at least partially affect the diffusion processes. In addition, the theory is widely used in diffusion studies in various academic fields such as politics, economics, and information systems. Furthermore, recently its use in diffusion studies in Africa (Kiplang’at and Ocholla, 2005; Minishi-Majanja and Kiplang’at, 2005) indicates its appropriateness for this research.

However, the theory does not explain the macro PESTEL factors that affect the diffusion of ICT. The main factor for this shortcoming of the theory lies in its historical context; it was developed in a different socio-economic context compared to the research that this paper is based on. The theory was developed in the free market economy where market forces determine the availability and price of an innovation. Whereas, for example in developing countries like Ethiopia, where political decisions are taken to run the telecommunication services by a monopoly government owned company, this affects the availability and pricing of telecommunication services. This in turn affects the diffusion of ICT in hotels and tour operators businesses. At least in the case of this research, political decision affects the diffusion of ICT.
Proposed new theoretical framework

Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory focuses on the user, and the influence of the culture on the adoption of an innovation. However, the data collected from Addis Ababa and from secondary data analysis leads to the conclusion that there are resistance diffusion agents caused by the PESTEL factors. Hence, individuals or organisations overall face diffusion resistance agents and diffusion facilitator agents. To include the main factors that affect diffusion, both resistance and facilitator agents caused by the PESTEL factors should be included in the theoretical framework. The researcher proposes to add two elements to Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory, namely, diffusion facilitator and diffusion resistance agents caused by the PESTEL factors. This will shed light on how the macro factors in PESTEL act as facilitators or resistance agents, which go on to influence adopters and non-adopters.

The resultant of the balance of power between the facilitator and resistance agents creates the condition in the social system for the acceptance or rejection of the innovation for the particular social group. Diffusion facilitator and resistance agents affect different social groups differently. This shows that diffusion is a complex process. Furthermore, change in socio-economic conditions can result in change of the role of facilitators and resistance agents, which may result in resistance agents becoming facilitators or vice versa. Diffusion of innovation is a dynamic phenomenon: the diffused or rejected innovation also has an influence to change the facilitator and resistance agents.

The findings from the research indicate that the Ethiopian government’s decision not to liberalise the telecommunication sector is a political decision that has resulted in the dominance of a single, government owned telecommunication operator. The operator is unable to satisfy the demand for telephone services resulting in low-levels of adoption rate. This policy is a diffusion resistance agent affecting organisations and individuals and hindering the adoption of ICT.

Furthermore, the economic policy of a 40% import tax on ICT equipment in addition to the 35% inflation rate has resulted in a very high level of ICT price. This policy has created another resistance agent for the diffusion of ICT for almost all social groups except a few rich individuals. These two resistance agents have created very expensive ICT services, for example, wired broadband services at the end of 2011 costs 85% of the monthly GNI per capita. This indicates that the two main policy factors arising from the political and economic conditions are the two main factors for non-adoption of ICT.

Other diffusion resistance agents include a lack of legal protection for small hotels renting properties from the government-housing agency. The agency has the power to evict the tenants in two weeks without any notice. All minor technical modifications including installing a socket require permission from the housing agency. Furthermore, there is no guarantee on the length of tenancy that a hotel can operate in the premises. Many hoteliers stated that this is very restrictive condition for the adoption of ICT system. The lack of legal protection is another resistance agent for certain social groups.
In addition, other resistance agents affect adoption of ICT for different social groups such as gender, age, education and those arising from underlying social issues. The proposed theoretical framework shown in figure 5 below includes the PESTEL factors as a source of diffusion resistance and facilitator agents in the diffusion processes for this particular study. In this particular study the Political, Economic, Social, Technological and Legal factors generate diffusion resistance and diffusion facilitator agents. But, no evidence has been found for Environmental factors for that generate resistance and diffusion agents. Further research requires us to look if the theoretical framework is appropriate for the study of diffusion study in the developing countries.

The proposed model will guide future researches to identify resistance and diffusion agents and the degree and power of influence they impose on the adoption processes. Furthermore, identifying these agents may indicate the PESTEL factors that influence the policies and further adjustment or change of these policies may result in the desired adoption or rejection of innovation.

Conclusion

In this paper various theoretical frameworks have been discussed and theories on the adoption of innovation in a particular society for technology in general are explored. The importance of theory was discussed, and the argument for research in discovering knowledge without a theoretical framework was also presented. Using theory to ground research helps to understand the underlying assumption of the theory but also checks if the underlying context is fit and appropriate to the chosen theoretical assumption. Furthermore, it focuses the research to investigate what are considered as the important or detrimental factors stated by the theory.

In this particular research Rogers’ diffusion of innovation theory was selected to be appropriate but it is limited in the underlying assumptions in which the context of diffusion is happening. To enable the theory to describe the underlying assumption Rogers’ theory was modified to include the PESTEL factors that influence the diffusion of ICT in Addis Ababa. The findings of the study also confirm the role of PESTEL factors for the diffusion of innovation of ICT in the hotel and tour operators sector in Addis Ababa. The proposed modified Rogers’ diffusion theory will help other researchers to use the method to explore how the theory is adopted to the research context and so help other researchers to use it for the study of diffusion.

Figure 5: Proposed theoretical framework for diffusion study
References


Auditing the impact of knowledge management on human and technological resources in the UK local government planning process

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An exploratory study of five UK local planning authorities (Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council, Milton Keynes Council, Luton Borough Council and Northampton Borough Council) is providing the basis for a review of the scope for developing knowledge management in this organizational sector. There has been substantial investment in the ICTs at this level of government and there is now evidence that collateral changes in the organizational and social environment are taking place in the agencies themselves and within the wider public which will enhance the capability of the planning system. These collateral changes can help to add value to the infrastructural investment. Such changes and reforms can help make the planning process efficient, effective and sustainable. An understanding of these processes is the key to developing a sustainable planning system which is not only technically efficient but better able to be effective through improved communication processes and knowledge management.

Initial field studies have inspired the development of a number of models which will then be further tested. A selection of the model structures are introduced in this paper in the content of a number of key research objectives

Keywords
planning authorities in the UK | knowledge management | sustainable planning | socio-technical systems
Background: conditions and challenges

The requirement placed on UK central and local government bodies to be efficient and effective has always been present but perhaps never greater than it is today. The combined pressures of administrative quality, service to citizens and democratic accountability are relentless, and all the more so, when social and economic goals remain ambitious at a time when resources are constrained. The UK planning system is no exception to these trends as equally they are felt in the education sector, the health service and in all manner of institutional social provision.

The planning system (more precisely the physical and spatial planning system) in the UK is well established and all pervasive. It forms part of the institutional infrastructure and its processes impact systematically at many levels across the nation. It is an essential element in economic growth and is part of the move to develop sustainable communities. Sustainability in planning is one of the key aspects of the programme of research discussed in this paper. Fitness for purpose, fitness of process, efficiency and effectiveness in resource usage, contributing to a carbon neutral economy, and optimizing social and economic benefits are all aspects of sustainability which can be facilitated through the planning system. There is no alternative to sustainable development and for this reason sustainability is now the key driver of innovation (Nidumolu et al, 2009). The main hypothesis explored through investigation is one in which technology is used to facilitate knowledge management, but it is clear that the organizations themselves will also need to change and adapt in both structure and behaviour so that the full benefits can be achieved.

Its foci include the management of existing knowledge resources through sharing, leveraging, collaborating and learning in order to create new knowledge to provide a basis for innovation and progress and increases in economic, social and cultural welfare (Definition developed by Roberts (2004) and Roberts (2008)).

The organization and behaviour of the planning system reflects the prevailing characteristics of large public bureaucracies. These include a strong sense of hierarchy, conservatism in process arrangements, inertia resulting from their size and complexity, an aversion to risk, ambiguities of ‘ownership’ of process and a culture in which the wider sharing of information and expertise may be impeded. It is clear that these systems have been put under pressure to change over the last three decades but reforms have taken place in response. Organizational reform and technology together provide a potent combination in which the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and new forms of organization can create conditions which favour not only efficiency and effectiveness in organizational settings but which also lead to higher levels of service and value (Brooke, 2000; Dewett and Jones, 2001; Rodrigo and Pachon, 2009). The business world has identified the field of KM (Knowledge Management) as a form of organizational behaviour and process which uses ICTs and social process to obtain positive outcomes. But in order to do this, the organizations themselves often need to be reconfigured. Organizational reform implies not just attention to structures and processes but also a new interpretation and recognition of the value of information and communication themselves as essential ingredients in the process.

The ICTs have provided new scope in the last twenty years for a fundamental reorientation of information and communication processes. A number of writers perceiving the value of measuring intellectual assets recognized the growing importance of organizational knowledge as a competitive asset (Norton and Kaplan, 1996; Edvinsson and Malone, 1997). Management Information Systems provide a comprehensive and integrated coverage of essential new technologies, information system applications and impact on business models and managerial decision making in an exciting and interactive manner (Laudon and Laudon, 2009).
Auditing the impact of knowledge management on human and technological resources in the UK local government planning process

Compared to the private business sector, the local government system has been a relatively slow adopter of the ICTs: following rather than leading. In the last decade, the rate of change has accelerated as the impact of the WWW, Web 2.0 and the social web has grown. The public appetite to use technology sometimes outpaces the institutional capacity to respond and the public has high expectations of the level of service delivered through such technology.

There are signs that a number of key factors are beginning to converge that can provide a catalyst for a phase of development that can be called ‘sustainable planning using ICT and knowledge management’. The external factors include new edge technologies, the restructuring of the public sector, the political drive of the ‘Big Society’, ongoing policy debates and the need for more democratic forms of organization. The internal factors include cost efficiency, cost saving, greater accountability and transparency.

The main purpose of this paper is to open up and explore this evolving dynamic and to propose a way to combine IM (Information Management) and KM with a more sustainable and democratic planning process. Empirical research and modelling by the authors is suggestive of how new configurations of resources and structures could be evolved to assist in such renovation and re-profiling.

The discussion fits neatly into the wider debate about public policy and economic strategy in the UK at the moment. The centre (centrally or locally) wishes to provide better quality service, at lower cost, more responsibly, with a stronger connection to the client and citizen. The citizen (the consensus suggests) wants efficiency, accountability, convenience, flexibility, a sense of justice and citizen satisfaction. Citizens desire a feeling of belonging and involvement in their communities that has much to do with access to information, knowledge, communication and process. The planning system really does impact on the life of the citizen personally (as a householder with a building or development proposal), in the local context (as a resident), and more widely in terms of the physical and built environment (experienced in town and country) and in terms of spatial movement by private and public means. In other words citizens pay their taxes and opt in to the ‘system’ but in return want fair treatment and fair results. This has always been the ideal of relations between government and citizen, but has (truthfully) rarely been achieved or at best only achieved in parts. This is not to suggest that changes to systems will deliver a total result, but there is a good chance that the planning system can use technology to improve its information and knowledge management capability in order to produce a tangible change.

In the light of the preceding general analysis there is potential to be developed and applied. This paper sets out to define the main problems and to present a number of models which a subsequent programme of investigation is actively exploring. The discussion elaborates the main features of a number of models and identifies ways in which the existing system can adapt to the prevailing situation.

The planning system

Local authorities in the UK are powerful bodies that plan the environment of the area they are directly responsible for as well as being accountable to it. The local authorities have a crucial role to ensure that regulations deliver realistic advantages for the local communities. They implement government plans under the statutory framework while recognising various approaches to make these plans workable for sustainable development. Chandler (2001) stated that the local authorities have the capability to co-ordinate many independent functions in accordance with the needs and demands of the public.

These local authorities are not competing with each other but are expected to benchmark themselves in a way which adds to their individuality and independence. There are four levels of government; national, regional, local and community within the United Kingdom’s representative democracy. Generally the national government develops new legislation, guides lower levels of government and provides national services, such as defence, foreign policy and social security. The UK devolved authorities (in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the English regions to a lesser degree) work regionally and with local responsible bodies to deliver key economic, social and cultural services.
UK local government derives its power from a variety of Acts of Parliament. Local authorities are required under law to deliver the functions and services to local communities as prescribed in legislation within the local area of control. Local government is therefore the key player in the regional planning process both as decision maker and also as a planning service provider.

Provision for local government is underpinned by Local Government Acts (Great Britain, 2011). The decision making process takes place in a succession of committees and sub-committees ranging from full council meetings attended by all elected members down to subject or area based committees attended by representative elected members. However, the executive (cabinet) model has become more dominant as dependence on professionals and specialists has grown. The local authorities differ in the size of their workforce and the way they are structured.

The main areas of responsibility for the local authorities include: planning and environment, social services, local economy, education, housing, roads, sports and culture. The local government is also involved in a range of initiatives that are normally delivered in partnership, which are aimed at addressing disadvantage and rebuilding communities as well as issues related to community safety, crime reduction and health promotion.

Partnerships and joint working includes areas such as:

- Public health
- Children’s services
- Community care
- Economic development forums
- Social housing (supporting people)
- Environmental protection and improvement
- Transport
- Arts and leisure

Local governmental bodies are organised into a mixture of one-tier and two-tier systems. Some local authorities share services covering a wider area, like police, fire services and public transport. This may be done to avoid splitting up services when Council structures are changed or because Councils are too small to run an effective service on their own (Joint Services, 2011).

The local authority is indeed the government agency closest to the public. Its responsibility not only accommodates the public with a variety of services and basic facilities but it also acts as a development control body in the urban (and rural) development process. The Town and Country Planning Act, has given powers to the local government to act as the local planning authority for sustainable development of the local area.

The role of technology

Since the mid-1990s, UK local government has encouraged the wider use of ICT and these technologies are often considered as the fundamental essence of transformation in the better delivery of public services. ICTs are used to respond to citizens’ needs speedily by decentralising public administration and to enhance local governments’ ability to oversee key projects (Prybutok et al., 2008).

The rapid growth of awareness in performance improvement has led to the much clearer definition of planning service standards and to the setting of much clearer communication measures across most local authorities’ service domains. Planning professionals are coming under increasing pressure. Cuts to their budgets are impacting at a time when management is increasing the demand for ICT to support services as a way to take cost out of other parts of the organisation (SOCITM, 2010).

Angela Smith says, ‘nearly 60% of all planning applications in England and Wales are now submitted electronically via the Planning Portal, bringing greater efficiency to the planning process for councils who assess and determine applications, and applicants. Cutting down the number of paper applications has also made a major contribution to reducing the carbon footprint of the planning process by cutting out more than 8,000 tonnes of CO₂, from the 32 million pieces of paper that have been saved’ (Smith, 2005). These developments have been given an added edge by being associated with market viability, compulsory competitiveness, best value, time efficiency and outsourcing initiatives where local authorities have been pressurized to reduce the costs of services while at the same time improving service quality and effectiveness (Worrall et al., 2004).
The use of ICT for sustainable development in UK local government is now a huge business that is rapidly becoming central to the delivery of better services. Time and time again central government has placed pressure on local authorities to enhance the proportion of public services delivered electronically (Raynsford, 2005). There is a clear demand to develop better planning frameworks, which can help the planning teams improve service quality and concurrently to become capable to get effectiveness and efficiency in planning services as well as good value for investment.

Many UK local authority ICT teams belong to the Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM) founded in 1986. SOCITM provides a widely respected forum for the promotion, use and development of ICT best practice in UK, which is also playing a leading role in the local government ICT transformation. The data analysis and benchmarking discussed in this paper have been developed during field studies conducted in five regional planning departments associated with SOCITM, using the standard planning framework for planning services. The findings are leading to a developing field of pragmatic research about the use of ICT tools in the local government planning system. This is reflected in the literature showing a move from a financial and legal focus towards socio-technological perspectives and is manifest in the emerging models of e-government, e-democracy, e-citizenship and e-administration.

According to Bannister et al. (2001) research has indicated that the existing approaches to managing ICT in local government have not always produced satisfactory results. One of the most striking statistics in public sector ICT is to look at the number of failed ICT projects. Over 70 per cent, according to some sources, of ICT projects fail (Rainey, 2007). The IT systems generally take too long to apply and time and again end users voice their dissatisfaction with the quality and support they receive. Frequently local government IT projects run over budget. These issues are not new but they have continued to be a central challenge for the past two decades. Despite more than twenty years experience local government ICT still needs further improvements and reforms.

Building on practice in five authorities and developing models for knowledge management

A field survey in five South East Midlands local authorities provided data to explore the level of understanding about applications of knowledge management in the planning process. The research participants comprise Bedford Borough Council (BBC), Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), Luton Borough Council (LBC), Milton Keynes Council (MKC) and Northampton Borough Council (NBC). The survey has been applied within the four areas of the PKOT research model (Model-C) to examine: planning process, knowledge application, organisational culture and technological exploitation. What kind of picture emerges from these? In general they show that there is a clear requirement for better strategies to standardise, simplify and integrate processes and to move to a more open and knowledge sharing system to deliver better planning services. There is a desire for the development of a functionally rich planning processing solution that will help the planning department to become proactive. This has been already identified in the general headline of ‘smartness and sustainability’.

The outcome of these studies has produced results at two stages for the participating local authorities. At the first stage the study has produced a detailed set of planning frameworks (exploratory models) that provide a comprehensive analysis of data for internal communication channels in the planning department. At the second stage this study produces a comparison and benchmarking analysis to let the participating authorities see how they are responding and performing in relation to their regional counterparts. The five local planning departments’ studies are providing the empirical basis to test and verify the research models (Figure 1 (Model-A) and Figure 2 (Model-B)). The discussion that follows is built around the five main research questions (RQs) reviewed below.
Research CMT Model

Figure 1: Model-A (CMT Model of Coordination, Motivation and Training)

- Coordination
- Motivation
- Training

Human Resources (Efficiency)

Planning System

Technological Resources (Effectiveness)

Responsiveness

Innovation

Sophistication

Innovative Communication Channels
- Internet and Mobile Tech
- Social Media

Strong Coordination Strategy
- Collaboration
- Team Support

Knowledge Management
- Tacit Knowledge
- Explicit Knowledge

Figure 2: Model-B (2-Es Model for Planning Efficiency and Effectiveness)
To investigate information systems and information management practices of a UK local authority planning department (RQ1)

A conventional study of the project process brings an opportunity to evaluate planning processes on the basis of past experience of planning teams for sharing and managing their expertise. The elements of knowledge management are identified to articulate the ways in which planning team members can be more effective with the integration of technological tools. These planning information management systems play a crucial role to share different kinds of expertise at different levels and they are linking emerging technologies with innovation and integration in local planning authorities.

The research survey participants are planning staff members, who are engaged in the planning application process and playing a support services role. The team members interviewed are experienced planners from all five participating planning authorities. Staff interviews were carried out typically between 60-90 minutes long. In these sessions a structured interview with open ended questions was used to allow the participants to record their own experiences about ICTs in the planning process.

All five participating authorities have broadly similar systems. The planning process in these authorities is basically divided into five major phases. Phase one includes the initial inquiry and submission stage where the planning application is submitted to be dealt with by development control in the planning authority. Applications can be submitted by hand, post, email or through the planning portal links on the Council’s website. Their preferred method of receiving applications is electronically via the planning portal (www.planningportal.gov.uk). These applications can be processed more readily and easily and may therefore be registered more promptly.

During the second phase of the planning process a submitted application has to go through a process of validation. At this stage various documents submitted are checked to see that they are of an appropriate quality to be forwarded to a planning officer. Application forms are checked to ensure they are filled out correctly, drawings and plans are checked to ensure that the applicant has provided enough information and that everything is accurate and scaled. If the application goes through the checks and is acceptable, it will be validated and passed to an officer and a letter will be sent informing the applicant about this. If this process finds discrepancies or gaps, the application will be made invalid and a letter will be issued to ask for the changes to be made or for additional documentation to be provided. The planning application cannot proceed until it is validated. During this phase, an ‘atmosphere’ needs to be created which encourages the implementation of new thoughts and ideas into the sustainability of planning and development.

The research participants agreed that whenever an application is received, it is important for them to consult any other relevant departments that may be able to provide the planner with professional advice (Third stage). This includes departments such as Highways who will assess changes to parking, or the Countryside Officer who will ensure no protected species will be affected by the application going ahead. It may also be necessary to consult with external authorities such as Water or Heritage. Authorities who are consulted will have access to the plans and drawings and may also choose to visit the site to make an assessment. The ICT tools are helping them out by playing a crucial role to assist planners’ actions efficiently and effectively.

During the consultation and consideration phase the case officer may take pictures of the application site and will make notes on the area using an appropriate GIS tool. The case officer also posts letters through the doors of any properties that may be affected where the applicant seeks new development approval. This letter gives basic details of the application and a map of the proposed development site. The feedback and comments though public consultation (Fourth stage) are summarised in the final report with the recommendation for either approval or refusal (Final stage). All five participating authorities responded that it is equally important for them that any comments which are made on a planning
application will be publicly available and may be published online through their web portals.

The planning process is already available within all the participating planning authorities on a digital platform, while their key planning subsystems are already computer based. These activities of planning application process also fulfil regulatory requirements and quality standards. Planners engaged in the planning processes are confronted with a variety of challenges during the development process where a single planning document needs attention and approval from various units. It is therefore very important to create an integrated ICT environment that supports the aspiration to promote intra- as well as inter-departmental information and knowledge sharing for an effective and efficient planning process.

Assessing the nature of the process model and the parts played by constituent elements (business needs, human resources, information technology and socio-organizational communication) in a UK local authority planning department (RQ2)

To explore the dynamics of knowledge management during the planning process, data was collected from several sources including: interviews, e-mail communication, online forums, and minutes of meetings and observation in the South East Midlands’ five participating local authorities’ planning departments. The interview participants are normally planning staff engaged in the permission process for the new development or extension decision and form part of the core team responsible for the application’s progress. The research is focused on developing an overall understanding of the process of knowledge management between planning teams engaged in the planning application process.

For large organisations like UK local government one of the key activities is to share and manage the resources and expertise of different departments in relation to financial and operational efficiency. The most important focal point in this research survey is therefore to explore how the relevant knowledge is managed among the planning teams and how it is made available to cross functional teams that need it in planning process.

From an analytical perspective, the key challenge among the research participating planning authorities is to demonstrate the value creation potential from a successful technological implementation in order to achieve knowledge management for an integrated and innovative planning process. It is a challenging issue for them to understand how knowledge elements play their part during the planning process directly or indirectly so as to impact on the planners’ performance. The field studies observed that strong coordination, high motivation and relevant training are the three fundamental factors to enhancing the efficiency of planning teams and delivering effectiveness from technological tools in the UK Local Authority as illustrated in the CMT-Model (Figure 1, Model-A).

From the field studies it is possible to develop a schematized planning framework, which distinguishes between technological and human process domains for integrating the dynamics of supportive and preventive factors of knowledge management during the planning process. The research findings demonstrate the importance of knowledge sharing as a medium to combine new technologies with existing technologies, to promote and share planners’ expertise as well as to assist the local authority strategic aim of improving the planning services in a sustainable manner.

The planning teams engaged in the application process usually have a link contact to the central or core team, which is responsible for the progress monitoring. During the planning process, different team members perform various tasks relating to problems occurring in the process while participating in different behaviours of information exchange and knowledge sharing. With a contemporary study of the existing planning process, it is helpful to have the opportunity to evaluate ongoing activities of the planners’ engagement during the planning process, to explore how knowledge is managed between different planning units. To share knowledge between different levels of expertise in different planning units requires a capability
of linking emerging technologies into the innovative planning process for efficiency and effectiveness as shown in the Efficiency and Effectiveness, 2-Es Model (Figure 2, Model-B).

Some of the key benefits achievable from ICT integration for staff efficiency during the planning process are:
1. Pre-project consultation and online information access
2. Online application process and progress tracking
3. Staff coordination to avoid duplication of activities
4. Using e-documents, repositories and online processing
5. Knowledge sharing and access to data and document resources
6. Remote help, guideline, support, consultation and notification
7. Online e-consultation, discussion and an integrated appeals
8. Internet based DMS, complaints and enforcements

Some of the key advantages to attain from the ICTs for technological effectiveness during the planning process are:
1. Innovative communication channels
2. Non-stop 24/7 planning application registration
3. Strong and effective planning co-ordination strategies
4. Sharing, transfer and management of planning knowledge
5. Integrated ICTs management
6. An embedded and fully integrated GIS tool
7. Social interaction methodologies for community participation
8. Documents management system in digital format

Technological tools play an essential role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system as can be seen in the comments from various research participants:

Knowledge management in the planning process is not static: on the contrary it develops under dynamic conditions and due to this fact the planning permission process has to see a continuous improvement in management performance and planning procedures. Knowledge is embedded in planning staff. In order to share their expertise and manage this among cross-functional planning teams, innovative communication channels, strong coordination strategy and social networks are required to successfully share and exchange expertise during the planning process. During the planning consultation phase the most important focus is on sustainable development. With suitable ICT tools and web based platforms and with clearly defined models to collect all information about the development project, it will be possible to maximise the sustainability factors we have set out.

Identifying the extent to which the internal management of data and information contribute to the effective management of knowledge within the planning department (RQ3)

From the initial findings a number of questions about innovative techniques are considered. For example: how should the planners work together as a team; how do they define their resources; how to allocate and assign their work packages and responsibilities within the planning department and how to track the planning staff performance.

The major challenge to resolve this issue is tacit knowledge articulation. Planning staff need to understand each other and use a common medium of communication during the planning permission process. It is also important here to explore how knowledge is provided and shared when it is required and how hard it is to make it communicable between different planning teams. The success of knowledge management activities relies on how ICT tools are integrated to share information within planning teams who seek specific knowledge to perform their job.
The planning system is the key activity in UK local government that links emerging technologies with existing processes to develop internally improved planning process management. From new and improved processes an integrated technological advancement is generated. This is not a simple matter of integrating different ICT tools and their applications together: it requires the sharing and transfer of knowledge between different planning teams. The following statements and quotations elaborate the impact of internal information management systems within the planning department to support knowledge management in planning system (Table 2):

| Interview: BBC 1.3 | To make the planning system effective and work more efficiently, we always encourage our staff to communicate with all applicants and agents electronically, wherever possible in planning processes. |
| Interview: CBC 2.3 | Better results are achieved in the planning process with the use of web portal for online application processing and IT tools – UNIform, Plantech, e-consultation, DMS, GIS, CRM, digitised knowledge transfer source, Word, Excel, Power point, Project management tools, Component matrix Process Technical Specifications, Council Websites, Blogs, SMS, Email, Phone and Fax etc. |
| Interview: LBC 3.1 | Planning application process is strongly aligned to the department set standard through in-house processes, to secure project quality regarding technical specifications and strict budget control; this creates a constraint for intensive knowledge sharing. |
| Interview: MKC 4.1 | This is highlighted here to actively encourage e-communications for all team members as it removes unnecessary repetition and duplicate activities that helps in saving time and bring efficiencies with better effect on the planning service delivery. |

Table 1: Statements from Research Interviews

The planning system is the key activity in UK local government that links emerging technologies with existing processes to develop internally improved planning process management. From new and improved processes an integrated technological advancement is generated. This is not a simple matter of integrating different ICT tools and their applications together: it requires the sharing and transfer of knowledge between different planning teams. The following statements and quotations elaborate the impact of internal information management systems within the planning department to support knowledge management in planning system (Table 2):

The planning information management systems for sustainable local government in the South East Midlands support the key objectives to improve the management performance and service delivery. To enhance the existing planning process structure and to secure functionality in an improved process involves many resources, procedural and technological disciplines. There are two major challenges for the new fully integrated online process. The first is the new process implementation to fulfil the criteria of the successful technological integration for knowledge sharing to secure the required efficiency and effectiveness. The second one is to allocate the right resources and to identify the expertise required to create and share new knowledge during the planning process. The effective presence of the planning information system is crucial to share the knowledge management as mentioned by planning officers in their interviews.
The planning teams need each individual’s expertise to share procedural expertise versus documentation information, so the exchange of expertise is strongly based on communication of information, usually between all involved team members. It is not easy to implement the knowledge management into the planning process by itself. It is required to learn the implementation and trust in the information management and expertise sharing. Additionally, if one can read through a technical specification and as a next step it comes to the application, one immediately can also face several questions. Again it is needed here to have innovative communication to share the knowledge provided, even if it exists in explicit form.

Planners are sticking too much to their own field of expertise and for this reason others’ expertise is hardly understood during the process. Only intensive discussions help to understand the value of expertise that comes out of several planning disciplines.

During the project, planners get more used to the information management system to exchange ideas and views, which can help to improve the knowledge sharing between planning teams. Social media networks are also emerging, planners know each other even though they are located in different locations.

As soon as we have an established information link between planning teams, an organised approach to collect and transfer knowledge is easily created. People belonging to different planning units are not familiar, so it can be challenging to know who to ask during the planning process. Sometimes we even have difficulty in identifying where the expertise resides in our own planning unit. But what I really want to say is an “information management system” needs an organised process, right media and clear identification of the right person to ask is the key to managing and sharing planning specific knowledge.

Further programming for information management in IDOX Acolaid planning system to allow the display of more tasks to be completed by planning officers, i.e. internal consultation reminders. The facility to offer more email alerts to consultees, councillors and neighbours i.e. presently send automatic email alert when an application is registered to relevant councillor but alerts do not occur when decision is made.

One thing that I have tripped over is that from conversations with colleagues and planning agents, a large number of LGA departments actually have all the tools they need to do a decent streamlined cost effective service, but they are not switched on, or configured correctly for internal information systems.
Decision making in the planning process involves multiple social groups and various stakeholders within and outside the organizations. For example, despite the claims of some prominent technologies such as business process re-engineering and pervasive business intelligence these cannot simply be introduced into the local government by its top executives. These measures require both top-down and bottom-up communication as these are highly sensitive actions and depend on knowledge, skills and commitment of multiple groups and stakeholders at the same time. Planning process perspectives on innovation expand the structural prospects by examining the more cognitive, social, dynamic and political issues, through which new ideas are developed, communicated, disseminated and implemented over time in the planning system.

Studying the links between the internal information and knowledge environment with the external knowledge environments of key stakeholders (RQ4)

The planning information system in simplest form is how planning authorities plan, communicate and work with each other within the legislation and prevailing policy. It is also helping the stakeholders to know how they contribute towards sustainability development plans, as well as the important role anyone can play in the prosperity of region. This research investigates the role of technological tools for managing and sharing planning expertise within the local authorities’ planning permission process and then describes the role of ICTs (i.e. Planning Web Portal and Geographical Information System) integration for knowledge management. However, various challenges such as uncertain terminologies, lack of motivation to share expertise, lack of coordination, knowledge gap in identifying the expertise between the planners, no formal policy for managing knowledge and some planners’ lack of willingness to employ innovative tools for structuring knowledge are explored as challenges, which hamper the effective management of knowledge within the planning authorities.

The findings from this research study make it possible to develop a conceptual framework for the internal and external planning information and knowledge domains. The research hypothesis is derived from the Takeuchi and Nonaka (1995) SECI-Model about knowledge management. For the planning information system this model is about integrating the explicit and tacit planning knowledge domains to bridge the knowledge gap. The model shows why knowledge management builds on socialisation, externalization, combination and internalisation, and suggests how these activities facilitate in expanding the explicit planning domain, thus reducing the uncertainty and increasing the cohesion of planning activities. This means that the information and communication technologies involved in the planning process have to be blended with the human and social aspects. The technological and human resources combination has the potential to improve the planning process.

During the research field study it was noted that the socio-technological transformation is a challenging task to accomplish. To deal with a dynamic environment, learning new sets of capabilities becomes essential for the planning department within local government. The embedded knowledge based planning system is practically feasible in local government for both sustainability development and economical viability.

The local government planning system in the South East Midlands has introduced a healthy and friendly social interaction by establishing public-private partnerships. Social policy refers to the activities of government and their authorized agents to meet social needs and solve social problems. Hence learning, by which human knowledge evolves, is the key to the evolution of human society and so planners have to adopt this trait. Staff members interact inside the planning department to provide the right information to the public so that they can learn to work in collaboration with both the parties. From this strategy planning staff and stakeholders learn how to access and generate new knowledge using a very wide range of technological tools for social interaction in the region. Trust and trustworthiness have been identified as important factors in such human behaviour and economic performance.

With innovation in planning information
systems using ICTs, the local authorities are committing to better societies and social life in Britain. The participating councils have plans to give access to people to browse website links with the use of GIS. The new mapping services will show geographic information about their area derived directly from the main information system. Link pages will contain a growing list of information which will allow users to view, enquire and interact with the Council as the mapping system develops. Rights of way officers work with farmers, landowners and local people to make sure that public ways, footpaths, bridleways and byways are clear and properly maintained, so that everyone can enjoy using them. The power of a planning information system comes from the ability to relate different information in a spatial context and to reach a conclusion about this relationship for sustainability development.

The web planning portal is an evolution of the World Wide Web, an Internet based planning source to enable users to process planning applications online. Planning Minister Bob Neill says, ‘the one millionth planning application has been processed by the Government’s planning resource website, a site that has now delivered savings of approximately £285 million to applicants and Councils’ (2012). The internet based online planning process is now offering a crucial role in processing a planning application for the local authority planning support and control departments.

Assessing the balancing of internal and external interests in the planning system in terms of the actual and potential roles for knowledge management (RQ5)

The planning portal is the government’s official planning website. Every local authority in England and Wales accepts planning applications via the planning portal. Planning permission is a process where planners create a shared understanding of how the application should be validated and accepted. During the application submission phase, various options are evaluated for the initial enquiry to better understand, judge and interact between team members to shape new ideas because planners use a variety of ICT tools to manage planning actions. If it is taken into serious consideration that the planning process is relying more and more on information exchange techniques, the importance of knowledge management methods in planning process will further increase in future.

The most valuable asset of today’s organization is its intellectual property, which is potentially more valuable than physical resources which are a wasting asset. To manage knowledge for productive outcomes, every organization today needs to do the audit of knowledge management to assure the availability of the right information at the right time in the right place and for the right people to perform their job productively. It is also helpful to audit the existing knowledge assets and system, so as to analyze the existing infrastructure of knowledge. From Model-A and Model-B, the PKOT Model (Model-C) is emerged to illustrate the planning knowledge management system for internal and external communication and knowledge sharing. The PKOT Model is based on four key elements: planning process, knowledge application, organizational culture and technological exploitations as shown in the following graphical illustration (Figure 3 Model-C).
The complex planning system tasks are an arrangement of tacit and explicit knowledge management domains. For example, managing the electronic network of planning process data is a daily routine for planning support teams. This process contains an explicit portion of knowledge but also knowledge not implanted in the electronic online process or technical specification as the tacit portion of planning knowledge. For example, knowledge of experience tends to be tacit, metaphysical and subjective, while knowledge of rationality tends to be explicit, physical and objective.

The PKOT Model compares the general planning process information of Councils with their main ICT tools used in planning permission process against each of the research measures for staff performance. The PKOT Model clearly illustrates the technological and human factors combination that leads towards better planning service delivery. It is thus important to get the views of participating Councils regarding the importance of ICTs to achieve effective staff coordination, motivation and training requirements. The participating Councils have responded with positive feedback about the role of ICTs within their internal and external communication channels as illustrated in the Model-C.

Audits of KM in the Planning process

Underscoring the role of knowledge management in the planning process is the basis through which it is possible to control, evaluate and further improve the planning system. This research paper is auditing the impact of knowledge management on human and technological resources and their integration within local authorities. It is
generally supposed to quantify how knowledge management performs its role in the better operation of and service delivery in the planning process. It is imperative to examine what kind and level of knowledge already exists within the planning units and how to identify, share and apply such expertise. Some local authorities plan to use various performance measurements and statistical tools to scale the impact of knowledge management in the planning processes particularly in the context of explicit and tacit domains.

It has been observed during the field study that it is not easy to measure knowledge management that shows an absolute one to one correlation between a knowledge application and the performance improvement outcome. According to the process classification framework report, it is important that assessment metrics are developed for the purpose of continuous improvement in planning activities. It is essential to have a number of tools and resources available to determine the effectiveness and value of knowledge management activities (Lemons, 2011). The auditing of KM in the planning process is graphically illustrated in the following diagram (Figure 4).

The framework of the planning process contains various bundles of activities to be considered in evaluating the impact of knowledge management on human and technological resources in the planning system. One of the significant features to consider while defining the impact of knowledge management in the planning system is whether metrical values can indicate if knowledge is being applied and

Figure 4: Auditing KM in Planning Permission Process
shared. For example, a statistic for measuring improved capabilities and know-how might be the number attending training sessions internally or externally as well as the number of times a knowledge programme has been accessed by planners and particular expertise is shared, transferred or created between planning teams.

The planners’ motivation and a healthy attendance at training sessions indicate that staff members are coordinating to share their knowledge but this may not absolutely confirm that training is actually useful in improving the planning processes. Hoss and Schlusel stated, ‘before implementing any knowledge management activities, key metrics must be developed and a baseline should be established, against which performance may be easily measured during and after knowledge application’ (2009).

From the field data analysis, it is evident that the planning permission process undertaken by the local government usually employs a multifaceted method. The field data was helpful in examining the planning system, which requires various levels of assessment for auditing the impact of KM in effective decision making for sustainable development. The levels of assessment are based on three fundamental planning factors: human efficiency, technological effectiveness and process innovation. The audit of KM in the planning process is therefore classified into three levels of assessment that require effective coordination between planning teams to appropriately approve planning applications for sustainability developments as shown in the following table (Table 4).

A knowledge management initiative is an organization’s approach to share and manage knowledge in the planning process for sustainable development. The ability to share knowledge across planning staff can successfully contribute to better planning performance as shown in the above illustration (Figure 4). It can be both beneficial and supportive to the planning teams during carrying out their roles particularly in the background of delivering efficient and effective planning services.

| Levels of KM Audit (Auditing the impact of KM on Human and Technological Resources) |
| Technology Assessment | This level of assessment includes monitoring the usefulness and responsiveness of supporting technological tools. |
| Process Assessment | Measuring characteristics, for example the effectiveness of lessons learned when processing the next planning projects and how it provides expertise of the extent to which staff are motivated and trained to particularly coordinate and apply a sharing knowledge. |
| Human Assessment | This level of assessment is concerned with the impact of knowledge management on the initiatives and overall process performed by human expertise with the help of technological tools. |

Table: 4 (Levels of KM Audit in the Planning Process with Key Assessments)
Using KM and ICT in the planning system: new methods and new policies

Emerging ICT tools are observed as an appropriate solution to deliver better planning services with efficiency and effectiveness. Local authorities are usually expected to deliver enhanced services with the help of integrated technological tools. It is a debatable argument to verify in this research study whether it is technology or human resources that produce the outstanding results or most likely the combination of both. It is purposeful to explore how hybrid socio-technological systems contribute to the planning process. People are motivated by work that provides growth, recognition, meaning, and good relationships and it is important that they are not entirely constrained by system processes which stifle initiative, creativity and judgment. The researcher has observed from the fieldwork that participants are interested in a flexible and mobile access to information available anywhere in the organization so as to be able to share knowledge while using technology as a supporting tool. It is important to examine how and why people share what they know for effective coordination strategy in planning system.

Technology is not the only solution to connect people: rather it is their human relationships that connect them. Relationships and creativity are always cluttered and naturally uncontrollable because of human dynamics and deeper motivations. Yet to understand the processes at work in KM a primary objective has to be to measure and audit the human and technological features of knowledge management that have significance within the UK local government planning process.

Measuring the impact of knowledge management within local authorities is challenging and it is hard to assess every aspect of knowledge initiatives in a single scale. To track knowledge sharing deployment, activity and value generation across planning process requires applying assessment at the individual, team and organizational levels. The most important characteristic to consider when defining a knowledge management measure is whether the measuring scale indicates if knowledge is being identified, articulated, shared, transferred, managed and applied appropriately.

From data analysis and respondents’ statements in the participating authorities, it is apparent that knowledge management auditing in the planning process demands commitment from top management. Planners need to ensure that their planning authority is spending significant resources towards implementing knowledge management initiatives. The research area reviewed in this paper is continuing and will contribute to an assessment of local government management performance. This will depend upon the effective and efficient application of knowledge management initiatives with human and technological resources in the planning system.
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