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## **Biography**

Hanya is a Senior Lecturer within Lincoln International Business School (LIBS) and has experience of Programme Leadership with both the BSc (Hons) Events Management degree, and currently the BA (Hons) Sports Business Management Programme. Furthermore, Hanya is the Digital Lead for LIBS and the Strand Lead for Digital Leadership and Governance as part of the university-wide Digital Education Transformation Programme. Hanya's research interests relate to gender, sport and family, which in turn impact her pedagogical approach connecting to equality, inclusivity, and representation.

# Student As Digital Producer: Learning New(Old) Skills Through An Agency-Led Project

Students have agency to share and develop their own educational landscape, but academic guidance is crucial in formulating this learning pathway. Digital tools, know-how, and capabilities are at the forefront of cultural, educational shifts, and this paper ascertains how students can engage as *digital producers* in their own form of edutainment. A case study of the Digital Student Ambassador Group (DSAG) is presented and reflected upon from both 2015/16 and 2017/18. Findings indicated that students felt a sense of belonging to the group and enjoyed being in control of their own learning as well as delivering digital messages to the wider community. Despite the digital focus of this paper, it was the traditional skills of debating, researching, networking, presenting, and public speaking that were highly valued by students. This has implications for future careers, and students were optimistic about their involvement with DSAG in preparation for life beyond university. This paper encourages colleagues to utilise the DSAG model as a pedagogical platform to nurture student engagement, collaboration, and confidence.

**Key words:** digital producer, edutainment, collaboration, student as producer, engagement, pedagogy.

## Combating 'Academic Boredom' In A World of Edutainment

Sharpe et al. discuss the emergence of 'academic boredom' (Sharp et al., 2017) within higher education vis-à-vis the changing cultural landscape in which our students are immersed. Academic boredom can be understood as a disconnect between student engagement and achievement, its 'complexity arises because of its cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural dimensions' (Sharpe et al., 2017, 657). Arguably, academic boredom is not a new phenomenon but perhaps one that is now more widely discussed due to cultural changes such as a proliferation in digital technologies, a need for entertainment, and increasingly high expectations. Changes in technologies and buyer behaviour connect to the search for instant gratification and impulsive consumption (Farah and Ramadan, 2017). It is important to contextualise the concept of academic boredom in this current paper in order to provide insight and best practice in relation to tackling some of the issues it creates. So how does this changing consumer landscape affect university practices and academic boredom? This paper seeks to address this by reflecting upon and

collating qualitative feedback around innovative teaching and learning activities focusing on student-led learning.

The concept of *edutainment* has been born out of these cultural changes and blurs the lines between education and entertainment. Edutainment is referred to as:

a hybrid mix of education and entertainment that relies heavily on visual material, on narrative or game-like formats, and on more informal, less didactic styles of address. The sales pitches for such material rely on an obsessive insistence that learning is inevitably 'fun' (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2005, 46).

The implementation of edutainment sources have been debated across many sectors and platforms, including but not limited to: changes in education, the use of gamification as a pedagogical tool, creating toys and resources, and software development. It is reported that 'edutainment materials are bringing about a change in the definition of the learning process' (Okan, 2003, 255); however, the foundation upon which edutainment is built actually has very traditional values. Educational practitioners have always sought to create learning environments and methods that incorporate knowledge transfer alongside enjoyment. As Makarius (2017, 17) notes:

Edutainment, while seemingly a new and trending idea, is quite simply the combination of education and entertainment, or improving learning by making it more engaging.

Therefore, edutainment may seem like a new concept, but is in fact the fundamental piece of the pedagogical puzzle: namely, learning should be interesting. However, a departure from this more traditional slant is edutainment's inextricable connection with digital technologies, 'a transition to more interactive, engaging, experiential learning methods in many countries' (Anikina and Yakimenko, 2015, 476). This connection to digital technologies has reportedly been successful for developing new methods of teaching with social networking (Labus et al., 2015), showcasing informal learning environments (Isacsson and Gretzel, 2011), and being 'interesting and innovative' (Makarius, 2017, 22).

We can conclude that the application of new technologies to the experience of edutainment enriches and transforms it, as these applications emphasize flexibility and interactivity and create previously unexplored opportunities (Addis, 2005, 731).

Despite these positive accounts, edutainment has been criticised by some for seeking to provide *services* to learners rather than encouraging active engagement

(Resnick, 2004), and for having no thorough evaluative process to assess cultural change (Okan, 2003). Furthermore, Okan argues that if students only value learning that is deemed fun and entertaining, they may unfairly discredit certain formats of education that are not intrinsically entertaining (Okan, 2003). This draws out wider philosophical questions about the purpose and meaning of learning and whether learning needs to be 'fun' and 'entertaining' in order to be of value. The rhetoric surrounding edutainment seems to be driven by teacher/software-engineer directed processes to steer and lead student learning, albeit in an engaged manner. This discredits important developments in higher education teaching which prioritises a 'co-operative', shared approach to learning (Neary and Winn, 2017). Edutainment, nonetheless, is an important place to begin this examination due to its inextricable connection within contemporary higher education and the 'market' appetite for offering 'entertaining' education.

### **Student As Digital Producer**

Many assumptions are made about university students' digital capabilities and skills upon entering higher education. These students have been referred to as the Net Generation, Digital Natives and Millennials (Jones et al., 2010) but being born after 1980 does not mean all students should be categorised in this manner. As Jones and others warn, 'the generation is not homogenous nor is it articulating a single clear set of demands' (Jones et al., 2010, 732) and therefore careful management of student learning needs to be considered. Despite teaching innovations using digital technologies, reports have shown that not all students are equally engaged and lack experience with using selected technologies (Isacsson and Gretzel, 2011). As well as student limitations with engagement, staff digital confidence is also a challenge (Greener and Wakefield, 2015).

Notwithstanding challenges around digital learning integration there is a wide-spread educational remit around 'digital literacy' (Butcher, 2015, 85). The concept of 'blended learning', viewed as 'the thoughtful fusion of face to face and online learning experiences' (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008, 5) is now ubiquitous with discussions around university provision. Digital technology usage has not only impacted upon the operations within online, virtual spaces, but also physical spaces or 'learning landscapes' (Neary and Saunders, 2011) within universities:

These transformations are the result of, among other things, the possibilities offered by new technologies, the demands of students for more collaborative and immersive experiences and the requirements of academic staff for interdisciplinary research (Neary and Saunders, 2011, 334).

The ethos of collaboration within university teaching is highlighted in Neary's earlier work around *Student as Producer* (Neary, 2010). Student as Producer seeks to readdress power imbalances in teaching and learning and engage students in their own educational journey through careful realignment of curriculum design and 'ownership'. To consolidate this further, Neary and Winn (2017) discuss the usefulness of co-operatives within education focused on 'the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity' (Neary and Winn, 2017, 87). This contextualises the importance of the current article which seeks to address how academic boredom can be challenged using digital technologies in a collaborative and shared capacity.

### **Digital Student Ambassador Group (DSAG)**

This paper is positioned as a collection of narratives taken from evaluative practices of the 2017/18 academic year, and attendance data were provided from across 2015/16 and 2017/18. It is being offered as an insight paper for pedagogical engagement and development in higher education. In order to tackle the previous question the DSAG case study will be presented and framed in a manner which positions students as *Digital Producers*. It is these students who have created and negotiated their own way of connecting to the concept of edutainment. Edutainment, within this case study has been utilised as a means for creating entertaining, co-creational educational opportunities for student learning. Firstly, the background to the case study will be provided before explaining the design for its development and implementation. In order to do this effectively, I will be utilising my own academic 'voice' in first person narrative to situate the pedagogical challenge. Standpoint epistemology argues that all knowledge is constructed from a specific position and that what a knower can see is shaped by the location from which that knower's inquiry begins (Sprague, 2016). Therefore, my own standpoint of Senior Lecturer, Programme Leader and Digital Lead is important to note.

In 2015 I became the Digital Lead for Lincoln International Business School (LIBS) at a time when the digital agenda was still being shaped and regulated. This role was

relatively new to the university which allowed me flexibility and scope to mould the role appropriately for my own school. The Student as Producer ethos has been well established across the institution and aligns to my own personal pedagogical approach around student engagement and representation. Due to this I knew that if we were to lead a digital agenda for the school, student collaboration had to be a priority. From this I established the DSAG and encouraged students from the BSc (Hons) Events Management degree to join. At the time I was the Programme Leader for this degree and therefore it was straightforward to gain student buy-in. All students had an initial passion and enjoyment for using social media and digital platforms. In total seven students actively took part in DSAG in this first year. I applied for two internal funding grants to encourage teaching innovation. The first project I called *Student as Digital Producer* which paid for students to attend a national digital conference to learn, be inspired, and be up skilled. The second project was to fund the Digital Talk Series: a guest lecture and workshop series which would involve speakers from industry and DSAG-led sessions.

At this early stage I did not know how the projects would be received and whether the student group would enjoy being involved. The projects were designed to be fully partnership driven and students were active in contacting guest speakers, creating topics for their workshops and delivering uniquely developed content. At first the sessions were open to colleagues and students from the school, but towards the end of the 2015/16 academic year we also opened the sessions up to local business members. It was particularly important to me that students would 'own' this group and be fully integrated in their own learning journey as advised here:

The curriculum should be open and enquiring, based on outcomes that are not predetermined. At the same time there should be a sense of progress and structure. The curriculum should be embedded in the real lives of the members as well as the communities within which the co-operative is situated (Neary and Winn, 2017, 92/93).

DSAG was a supplementary offering to the teaching curriculum within LIBS and sought to bridge academia and employment through digital enhancement opportunities. The 2015/16 projects happened organically and DSAG guided its own work and sessions based on enjoyment and engagement levels. Students attended the Camp Digital Conference in Manchester in 2015 and we organised seven sessions as part of the Digital Talk Series:

- DSAG-led workshop: Establishing a digital narrative with blogging.
- Making a splash: Can social media change your world? - PR Consultant talk.
- DSAG-led workshop: Digital identity and social media.
- The business of blogging: The rise of the 21<sup>st</sup> century influencers - Lifestyle Editor and Influencer talk.
- Technology, content and live experiences: Three trends to embrace that won't be going away anytime soon – Head of Content Marketing talk.
- DSAG-led workshop: How to succeed in a digital world.
- How to grow your event business with blogging – Professional Blogger talk.

In 2017/18 DSAG ran again, and this year more students joined the group from a wider collection of programmes, including: BSc (Hons) Computer Science; BA (Hons) Marketing Management; BA (Hons) Business and Management; BSc (Hons) Events Management, and BA (Hons) International Tourism Management. Due to the valuable previous experience of the group, the aims for DSAG were easier to quantify in 2017/18 and were as follows: firstly, to facilitate and provide opportunities for staff, students and members of the public to engage with; develop and implement digital technologies within the teaching, learning and business environment, and secondly, to encourage, develop, and nurture the passion and skillset of the DSAG members to advance their own digital capabilities, and in-turn guide other students, staff and members of the public to do the same. In its second year DSAG also sought to engage with members of the public to collaborate with the local community and share their learning with others.

In total 12 students were active members of DSAG in 2017/18 and six of them attended the Digital Transformations Conference in London to network with people from industry and learn about the latest technologies. The first session of the 2017/18 Digital Talk Series happened serendipitously through a contact with Threshold Studios, the organisers of Frequency Festival, who wanted to host a public event during the time of their digital arts festival. As part of this a panel discussion took place that was chaired by the Arts and Culture Editor of i-D magazine and involved two members of DSAG debating topical issues on digital technologies and youth culture. The Digital Talk Series in 2017/18 was opened up to the entire university body as well as businesses and members of the public. The sessions DSAG coordinated and managed in 2017/18 included:

- The Digital Generation: Where do we belong? – Panel Discussion.
- DSAG-led workshop: Your digital narrative vlogging and blogging.
- DSAG-led workshop: Global identities in a digital world.
- The rise of esports: The billion-dollar year - British Association for Esports Advisory Board Member Talk.
- Succeeding in a fragmented digital world – Marketing Director Talk.
- DSAG-led workshop: Digital circuit training with four ‘mini’ workshops: Making the most of LinkedIn, social media for business, blogging for beginners and how-to Instagram.

I viewed my position as Digital Lead as a facilitator and ‘logistics operator’, making sure that the organisation of such activities did not stifle student-creativity or enjoyment. I took on a role of ‘care’ as discussed by Barnacle and Dall’Alba (2017), who found student engagement levels and ownership of their own learning was impacted upon by care. I wanted to ensure the project was student-centred, involved ‘blended learning’, and was not static but constantly evolved with the students’ ideas. In between the events and sessions I ensured meeting time was created for students and also brought in specialists from the realms of photography and social media marketing to help develop the students’ skills further. It was also especially important for me that students were rewarded and recognised for their engagement, and so certificates were given to students at the end of the year and all volunteer hours collected through the projects contributed to the Lincoln Award.

### *Methods and Data Collection*

The case study design of this paper has been interlinked with other qualitative methods of research to investigate the impact of DSAG within an educational setting. Due to the compartmentalised nature of DSAG within the school it seemed fitting to examine its impact using a case study analysis. Case studies do ‘involve an intense study of a focused scope and can apply multiple methods of data collection in the process’ (Fox et al., 2014, 68), therefore, the findings presented in this paper are drawn from a tapestry of post-hoc narratives and reflections of engagement with DSAG and the Digital Talk Series. Narratives provide a vehicle ‘for our very sense of selfhood and identity’, which is created and recreated through the stories we tell about ourselves to others (Sparkes and Smith, 2014, 46). Although this study was not formulated through a formal research design, it was still important that a space for ‘voice’ and narratives was created. This paper, therefore, brings together many sources of feedback and reflections to provide an insight into the usefulness of the



*Student as Digital Producer* model. As such, anecdotal and qualitative feedback from stakeholders of the DSAG were utilised to provide an insight into the value and implications of this case study. Feedback was collected from the following sources:

- A 2017/18 vignette created for the university's Public Engagement for All with Research at Lincoln (PEARL) Report.
- Evaluative feedback sought from stakeholders, including informal verbal feedback at the end of workshops from attendees which was later requested to be consolidated in email format.
- A short email of open-ended questions to DSAG members from 2017/18.
- My own personal reflections on running the 2015/16 and 2017/18 group and projects.
- Attendance figures across 2015/16 and 2017/18.

The attendance figures should be treated as estimates due to inconsistencies with the registration processes for the Digital Talk Series, however, a more robust data collection method in 2017/18 does mean we can make reasonable calculations based on attendee figures. In line with standpoint epistemology (Sprague, 2016), my own reflections from the two-year project will be interlaced with the qualitative, anecdotal evidence of others. Purposive sampling was endorsed, and in total three students, one member of staff, one industry speaker, and one member of the public contributed to the research findings. The culmination of these six viewpoints were actively sought, and this was coupled with personal reflections and attendance data across a two-year period.

The open-ended questions sent to students via email were designed to allow for student expression and revolved around six questions: connecting to enjoyment; skills development; belonging; learning freedom; confidence, and career prospects. These questions were purposefully chosen to map the current trends in education as raised earlier in the paper. For example, academic boredom (Sharp et al., 2017) and edutainment (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2005) link to the questions on enjoyment and freedom; Student as Producer (Neary, 2010) and 'digital literacy' (Butcher, 2015) relate to skills development and confidence, and finally the notion of gradueness (Coetzee, 2014) connects to future prospects. The structure of these questions is reflected in the presentation of the impact findings which will be discussed in relation to personal enjoyment, digital skills and future aspirations. It is noted that data collection of this type could have suffered from social desirability bias and the expectation to respond positively to questions asked. This was alleviated somewhat

with my own personal reflections over the two academic years and my own experiences of those involved. The feedback provided did correlate to my own reflections and perceptions of the projects over the duration.

A great deal of academic care and sensitivity was taken to collect and represent the narratives collected. Permission was obtained from all six informants to use their reflections and narratives for the relevant evaluative purpose, and I ensured that their answers are quoted in full within the paper to guarantee that their views were represented in full. Pseudonyms have been utilised to ensure anonymity of informants. It is acknowledged that this research approach has its limitations due to its anecdotal and organic set-up, and therefore further investigation around this topic using more formal methods would further complement this academic starting point.

### **The DSAG Effect**

In total, 285 people attended Digital Talk Series events across the two years, these included: staff members, students, business colleagues, and members of the public. The 2015/16 Series engaged in attendance 115 students, 21 members of staff, and nine business members, whereas the 2017/18 series engaged in attendance 95 students, 18 staff members, seven business members, and 20 members of the public. The numbers indicate that there is an appetite to learn and understand more about digital technologies and their application in both education and business. Attendees of the workshops expressed their enjoyment of learning from students and being able to 'see' the world through student eyes. The concept of *student as digital producer* was impactful within this study and students very much engaged with the 'co-operative' (Neary and Winn, 2017) side of the projects, as Rita (DSAG Member, 2018) reflects:

I felt control of my own learning in the way that I was given a brief overview of what our DSAG events would [be] but then left to explore and develop the ideas in my own way. I could discover which methods suited me best and then execute them in a way that I could best articulate my ideas and opinions.

Rita uses words such as 'control', 'own', 'explore' and 'develop' to best describe her personal experiences with DSAG. These words indicate the freedom students were afforded, which in turn allowed them to investigate their own personal learning strategies. To examine this further the themes of personal enjoyment, skills, and

future prospects will be discussed further and informed by qualitative feedback and reflections.

### *Personal Enjoyment*

In a departure from the reliance on teacher-led edutainment to enhance student learning, this project positions 'fun' and 'entertainment' in the hands of the students. Enjoyment came from the personal journey that students themselves formulated and negotiated in their own independent search for discovery. The 'curriculum' was created and embedded by DSAG members to be part of their real lives (Neary and Winn, 2017) and provided specific learning opportunities for themselves and others. DSAG members discussed the importance of being part of a group for personal development which provided opportunities for socialising beyond their own degree programmes. As the below comments report:

Being part of a group has allowed me to meet people I wouldn't normally meet on my degree programme. I've learnt about different University schools and courses which have increased my interest in the digital world (Maisy, DSAG Member, 2017/2018).

Being part of this group has helped me develop friendships outside of my degree as well as become closer with those taking part in the group but on my course. I feel like I can share my views with other members of the group and with a wider community of people that share the same interests and wish to further their ideas and understanding of the digital world (Rita, DSAG Member, 2017/2018).

Yes as there were a team of people all with strong opinions that I felt I could go to, without judgement, to educate myself on if I didn't know a lot about the subject (Betty, DSAG Member, 2017/2018).

I have really enjoyed being part of something outside of my degree subject that has such a huge impact in everyone's lives and that will continue to impact lives in the future (Rita, DSAG Member, 2017/2018).

The connectedness and group identity that was fostered through the development of this group was an unexpected benefit of DSAG. The formulation of group and social identities are an important aspect of society (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and the Students reported enjoying working with students from other programmes and developing new friendships on this basis. 'Academic boredom' (Sharpe et al., 2017) was managed through group identity and socialisation, creating a positive space for students to learn and develop. This sense of personal enjoyment and learning for the love of it appeared from the wider feedback of the Digital Talk Series:

The DSAG talks approached and tackled some very current issues that young people specifically may be facing in this new digital era, as well as bringing clarification to newly emerging digital platforms, an example being the E-Sports talk. Each was fascinating in its own right, with use of interaction and audience engagement balanced correctly. I thoroughly enjoy the use of guest speakers and panels, the I-D hosted talk was especially interesting, due to the foregrounded effect that image and representation has on us; it really generated some good arguments and points that many people wouldn't even of considered before (Member of the Public, 2018).

It must be remembered that students and others will always find learning enjoyable if the subject matter is interesting and engaging to them. As well as the personal meaning of DSAG, how did the students improve their own skills as well as those of others?

### *Skills and Capabilities*

One of the main aims of DSAG was to learn and then share knowledge of digital technologies and platforms with others. Ultimately students were actively involved in aspects of digital technologies that they personally enjoyed, such as social media, blogging and vlogging. Not all DSAG members were active users of technology across all platforms, and there was a great deal of up-skilling and self-directed learning that took place. Many students noted the importance of learning about new platforms and the extent in which society engages with them:

For me DSAG has really helped me understand the wider online community and the varying ways people use it. It has developed my understanding of different platforms that individuals use both on a personal and business level which will help me in future careers to help engage digitally with the company. It has also helped me understand how we should perhaps use technology in moderation but how this is becoming increasingly difficult as the world becomes more digitally transformed (Rita, DSAG Member, 2017/2018).

DSAG has allowed me to understand different digital experiences. Coming from a computer science background, I have only ever been exposed to social media and not the variations of digital such as blogging. It's allowed me to grow in confidence as a person and expand my professional network (Maisy, DSAG Member, 2017/2018).

Ironically, many students also reported a development in traditional skills through their involvement in DSAG, such as presenting, researching, networking, debating, public speaking, and organisation. This was a surprising finding because even through students were sharing information on the digital sector it was actually the

core skills of educational development that were positively recalled. These skills were consolidated by their attendance at a national conference that provided an opportunity to network with and learn from others.

University staff members reported that the workshops and guest talks they attended inspired them to think differently about the digital world and our connection to it. A colleague, who attended one of the workshops, commented:

I would perhaps like to highlight the usefulness of vlogging, as it was presented by your students, due to the dynamic and visual nature of a video that will normally help students remember better than written materials via blogs or otherwise. For example, in the foreign languages teaching and learning process, we can explain phonetically how to pronounce certain words depending on the region or country where the native speaker comes from, but by creating a vlog of different speakers with different regional accents, would help the students understand very quickly what we have been explaining phonetically and would also have a more lasting effect. Additionally, students could create their own vlogs speaking in the foreign language with another student in the same seminar, for example, and tutors could advise about the best way to improve their pronunciation and intonation further (Academic Colleague, 2018).

The content provided through the DSAG had a direct impact on the way in which teaching and learning can be organised within the school. Academic colleagues who attended the events reported learning about technologies and digital innovation from new perspectives, and more importantly, gained further understanding about student thinking and behaviours. Topics were covered as part of the Digital Talk Series that had a direct relevance to the school in which DSAG was operating, such as the esports talk which is an emergent, commercial phenomenon, and also the workshop on digital identities across the globe. Internationalisation within the school is vast and discussion points around global issues and business helped to create new teaching case studies and improve staff knowledge on the subject area. It must be noted however, that academic staff attendance was relatively low across the events, which could be due to timetable constraints and the concentrated area of 'digital' which may not be attractive to all colleagues.

### *Future Prospects*

Many of the students involved in DSAG and those who attended the sessions viewed their engagement as cardinal to their future career prospects, as reported in these accounts:

I will have industry connections as through DSAG I have had the opportunity to meet industry professionals. I will also be more confident in my ability to complete presentations in a group setting and express my opinions (Betty, DSAG Member 2017/2018).

DSAG will help me use to understand the way the businesses can use technology when I graduate. I hope that I can take my new understanding and implement this when I am in a professional work environment to help both myself and other colleagues understand digital transformation (Rita, DSAG Member, 2017/18).

I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in The Digital Talk Series. It's a great opportunity to meet with students and have a discussion about some of the key challenges and opportunities they'll encounter after graduation (Industry Speaker, 2018).

Students reported gaining positive experience of the networking opportunities afforded to them as part of the process; company directors, business members, and university leaders amongst others attended sessions for students to engage with. Furthermore, guest speakers and attendees from industry also relished the opportunity to learn from students and engage with them within a collaborative space. Confidence emerged from the case study as important to the student experience, and this group enabled the students to grow and develop confidence in a safe and reliable space. After the 2015/16 academic year, one member of DSAG graduated into a digital marketing job based on her involvement with DSAG. It is thought that extra-curricular projects of this type are crucial in widening the opportunities available to students upon graduation. The skills and experiences gained through DSAG go beyond the 'digital agenda', and as previously reported, actually help develop students' traditional 'study skills'. Experience in conference attendance, networking, presenting, and public speaking are all worthwhile and desirable characteristics for future employment.

### **Beyond The Digital**

Through the implementation of the *Student as Producer* (Neary, 2010) model, DSAG has evidenced that encouraging students to be *digital producers* can be effective and impactful. Edutainment was endorsed in the traditional sense of combining education and entertainment, but in a student-led and student-focused manner. Students relished the new skills they developed and opportunities to learn and grow in spaces outside of the traditional classroom. The sense of togetherness and group identity that formulated through their membership with DSAG helped to

create friendships across degree programmes and across year groups. If only one message is to be taken away from this case it should be this: engaged students will enjoy learning. Students enjoyed learning and developing their 'traditional' skills such as debating, presenting, and networking, as well as learning about new digital platforms and social connections. This paper has implications for the wider student population in terms of harnessing engagement levels and placing emphasis on the students' own agency in pedagogic development. This model could be extended to emphasise the inclusive learning agenda (Richards and Armstrong, 2016), underpinned by the principles of respect, engagement, and belonging to learn and develop skills across multiple disciplines. Although this article has focused on the subject of 'digital' it is hoped that the best practice highlighted here transcends this particular genre. Future research could analyse the transference of this framework to other areas of higher education to understand the universal value of a pedagogical model of this kind. The DSAG model is effective because of the following elements:

- Students were actively engaged in their own learning.
- There were opportunities for students to engage with others beyond the classroom.
- It was fun.
- There was a sense of togetherness fostered through the programme.

The above elements are not shocking or surprising but outline a common-sense approach to education. Amongst the complexities linked to 'blended learning' and edutainment, the core of good, valuable teaching remains the same: *engage, engage, engage.*

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