Reaching Out and Shouting Loud: Capturing best practice in learning and teaching scholarly practice at The University of Salford

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Abstract

This paper presents a panoramic view of the Institution's engagement with learning, teaching, and scholarly activities, shedding light on the critical mass of knowledge and initiatives that define contributions to the field of pedagogy. Findings reveal a focus on practice-based learning, predominantly within Health and Society disciplines, reflecting Salford University's commitment to enhancing student outcomes/experiences. The thematic analysis identifies primary themes, including L&T (Learning and Teaching) Practice, Learning Technologies, and Student Experience, aligned with the scholarship of L&T. Additionally, themes such as Inclusive Practice, Non-traditional/Alternative Teaching Approaches, and Knowledge Transfer signify the institution's dedication to collaboration and broader perspectives. A holistic approach to growth within pedagogical innovation and contribution to knowledge within higher education related to digitally enabled, societally focused, and inclusive learning communities is presented. While acknowledging limitations, we emphasise the significance of sharing and celebrating L&T outputs. As higher education evolves, collective efforts to transform pedagogy remain essential.

Keywords: pedagogical research, scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), practice-based learning, inclusive practice, digital age, pedagogical development.

Introduction, Aim and Objectives

In the dynamic arena of higher education (HE), universities find themselves at a crossroads, tasked with advancing pedagogical practices and shaping the future of education. This paper captures how the newly established Learning and Teaching Enhancement Centre (LTEC) and the learning and teaching scholarly group at the University of Salford embarked on a journey to capture best practice in learning and teaching (L&T) through an exploration of external dissemination. This evidence-informed research led to structured enhancement of L&T advancement within the university with a view to promoting our excellence in L&T beyond the institution to advance knowledge within the sector. Initially, we explored the University research repository (from January 2020 to April 2023) to determine the institution's contributions to learning, teaching and scholarly activities. As we engaged in this exploration, it was essential to acknowledge the pivotal role of scholarly inquiry within the L&T with specific reference to HE. It was also key to recognise the importance of treating teaching as a scholarly activity and conducting research to enhance educational practices (Hutchings, Taylor Huber and Ciccone, 2011). The concept of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) has far-reaching implications for our understanding of pedagogical research within higher education institutions (Hutchings, Taylor Huber and Ciccone, 2011). Additional works by Manarin et al. (2021) and Felten and Geertsema (2023) shed light on the evolving nature of the scholarship of L&T, advocating for a broader, more world-oriented perspective in pedagogical research. These scholarly works shape our theoretical framework and invite us to explore how Salford's is emerging as a sector leader in L&T, aligning with these developing goals and the pressing societal needs in addition to advancing and innovating L&T. Furthermore, our research aligns with broader discussions about the changing role of academic libraries in the digital age, in particular resonating with the need for innovative solutions and the sharing of internal resources (Pinfield, Cox, and Rutter, 2017).

The University of Salford's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Centre (LTEC) led this project with the view of exploring and expanding the sharing of best practice and sector leading innovation in L&T. LTEC is led by a senior academic and

supported by a nucleus of individuals with a well-documented history of excellence in learning, teaching, and assessment. LTEC's focal point is to disseminate and embed best practices, actively engaging with academic, professional service and technical staff across the institution. Its core mission is facilitating, inspiring, and driving change through practical initiatives. Working collaboratively with Academic Schools, LTEC aims to embed positive transformations in teaching practices, positioning the University as a sector leader in advancing pedagogic innovation.

This project focused on conducting a comprehensive gap analysis of L&T publications deposited within the University's repository system (University of Salford Institutional Repository - USIR). It involves close collaboration between University Teams, specifically LTEC and the Library. The project was comprised of five key stages:

1. **Identification of Approach and Methods**: Develop an approach in collaboration with key stakeholders from LTEC and the Library Teams.

2. **Formulation of Methods and Project Milestones**: Define the project's methodology and key milestones.

3. **Gap Analysis and Data Audit**: Execute the gap analysis and audit of L&T publications.

4. **Analysis of Data Outcomes**: Conduct a thematic evaluation to establish a critical mass in L&T research and scholarly activity.

5. **Report and Presentation**: Write a report and present the data to key stakeholders, including the recently established scholarly working group.

The primary aim of this project was to establish criteria for identifying best practices, conduct an audit of the university repository, and ascertain prevalent themes within the institution's dissemination of L&T practice. The approach was intended to facilitate a deeper understanding of L&T approaches to foster future communities of practice to support and enhance L&T across the university.

The audit, spanning 14 weeks, primarily entailed a thematic review and gap analysis of L&T publications within the USIR. The outcome of the audit enables us to define

critical mass within L&T materials and publications and better support academic researchers within and across Schools. The project was developed in consultation with the University of Salford's Learning and Teaching Scholarly Activity Group with representatives from our four Academic Schools and professional services. Prior to undertaking the audit, ethical approval was sought and gained through Ref: 11767. A pilot audit was initiated to determine project scope and sampling before a full-scale audit, comprising quantitative and qualitative analyses, was conducted. The findings informed recommendations presented to the University of Salford's Learning and Teaching Scholarly Activity Group and formed the basis for an internal funding call during 2023 for L&T enhancement projects.

The pilot commenced with preliminary repository searches, culminating in an audit to gauge document volumes relative to the project's scope and capacity. This was the first L&T practice audit conducted by the university. Experimental test searches revealed the need to refine search strategies. A keyword search within abstracts, conducted from January 2020 to April 2023, yielded a dataset of 344 entries, later refined to 153 publications for detailed analysis. The keywords used in this initial search were the same as detailed in Table 1: Teaching, Education Practice, Higher Education, Learning, HE/Higher Education, Pedagogy and Pedagogical. The initial search included the 'all documents' function, searching for the keywords in any part of the document. This initial sweep included documents with no relevance to the project. Therefore, the search was refined to abstracts with a date range of January 2020 to April 2023; once repeats and non-relevant materials were removed, this left the final sample of 153 publications.

This dataset encompassed various publication types, with a majority comprising articles (54%), followed by conference items (17%) and book sections (13%). Additionally, the analysis revealed the distribution of publications across schools and publishers. The data was subjected to a three-stage thematic analysis and mapping exercise to generate three key thematic sets, highlighting outcome-based learning practices, collaborative learning practices, and institutional and educational growth as central themes.

The project sought to contextualise our inquiry within the framework of critical pedagogy from Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2021). This lens invites us to examine what is taught and learned through the audit and to consider how education can catalyse social change, critical thinking, and empowerment. By exploring Freire's ideas alongside our findings, we can better understand the role of pedagogy in shaping the scholarly domain and fostering a learning environment that innovates beyond the boundaries of conventional education.

Methods

The research methodology employed in this study aimed to assess the landscape of L&T scholarly practices within the University of Salford repository from January 2020 to April 2023. This systematic examination of academic materials was conducted to determine a critical mass of L&T publications and to identify prevailing themes, strengths, and gaps. The research process involved a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches with a focus on thematic inquiry. Following the pilot audit and development of the final project scope, a search was conducted through the keyword search function of all abstracts of any publication submitted to the University of Salford repository between January 2020 and April 2023. The date range for the project was defined as January 2020 to April 2023 for the full thematic review and gap analysis; this was judged to be a realistic data set to work through in the timescales that provided a wide enough range of materials to provide the analysis with depth.

The final list of keywords and terms used to draw the sample set are detailed in the following table:

Table 1: Table with purposive sampling keywords and terms

Purposive Sampling Keywords	
1	Teaching
2	Education Practice
3	Higher Education

4	Learning
5	HE and Higher Education
6	Pedagogy
7	Pedagogical

The keywords used for search purposes were used in both an 'and/or' search but with a focus on the keyword combinations detailed in the above table. All publications were then reviewed and audited, and any articles not relating to the project scope were removed. These inclusion criteria ensured that the publications were related to HE teaching or learning. This enabled the project to focus on learning, teaching and scholarly activity within a HE context. This resulted in a final data set of 153 publications for the gap analysis and thematic review stage.

Our research methodology aligns with broader trends in HE and library services, which emphasise the evolving role of academic libraries in the digital age and the importance of innovative solutions (Pinfield, Cox and Rutter, 2017). The methodology is supported by previous research (Hutchings, Taylor Huber and Ciccone, 2011; Manarin et al., 2021). The project's inception involved preliminary exploratory searches of the university's repository and a pilot audit to gauge resource requirements and project feasibility. A fundamental objective of this engagement was to identify and recognise the cultural narrative embedded within the repository's academic content, and the In-Vivo coding technique allowed the analysis to focus on the language used within the publications (Stringer, 2013).

Subsequently, the research process was guided by a multi-stage coding framework. Pattern coding assisted in identifying themes within the data and, therefore, began to form a more workable understanding of the publications (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the final coding stage, the thematic analysis provided a complete but reasonably concise understanding of the entire body of data. This approach summarises the in-depth coding process to discuss the findings appropriately and concisely (Guest et al. 2011). The research report also incorporated code landscaping techniques, such as word clouds, to visually represent word frequency within the data.

The research findings were systematically presented to enable a comprehensive discussion combining qualitative and quantitative data. This facilitated the identification of critical mass, key strengths, and areas of improvement within the realm of learning and teaching scholarly practices. The data derived from the analysis were subsequently mapped against the 'Pillars' defined by the LTEC strategic framework (enabling student success, celebrating best practice, recognising talent, transforming pedagogy, building sustainable networks, enabling LTEC), encapsulating the mission of LTEC: to lead the University community in innovative, digitally enabled, and societally focused, inclusive pedagogic practice and scholarship of education.

The research process encompassed several key phases, commencing with the initial review of publications to facilitate preliminary data familiarisation with key categories. This foundational phase enabled the research team to gain insights into the diverse array of academic materials present in the repository. The subsequent phase involved a comprehensive three-stage coding process, leveraging the qualitative data analysis (QDA) software package NVivo. The first stage focused on extracting key language and terms within each publication's abstract. This phase was instrumental in creating an initial categorisation of the dataset.

The second coding stage delved deeper into the data, specifically emphasising understanding patterns that emerged within the academic materials. This stage aided in the recognition of recurrent themes, ultimately contributing to the formation of a more comprehensive and structured understanding of the dataset. The final analysis phase entailed reviewing the codes and patterns identified in the previous stages to determine strategic sets of similar themes. This comprehensive coding process facilitated the organisation of the dataset into three primary thematic sets.

Throughout the research journey, a meticulous approach was taken to ensure the robustness and integrity of the data. For each year covered in the dataset, a separate NVivo project file was maintained. Within these files, abstracts and titles of academic materials were systematically coded, with relevant words, sentences, or sections categorised into 'codes.' This coding process created 49 unique codes and

25 overall themes across the dataset, with 1730 coded references extracted from the 153 publications.

Results and Discussion

The study examined a sample of 153 publications deposited in the USIR between January 2020 and April 2023. This dataset encompassed 40 publications in 2020, 38 in 2021, 58 in 2022, and 17 in 2023. This sample was derived from initial pilot searches and is detailed in the following PRISMA flow chart.

Figure 1 Prisma Flow Chart of Pilot and Full Audit Search Process
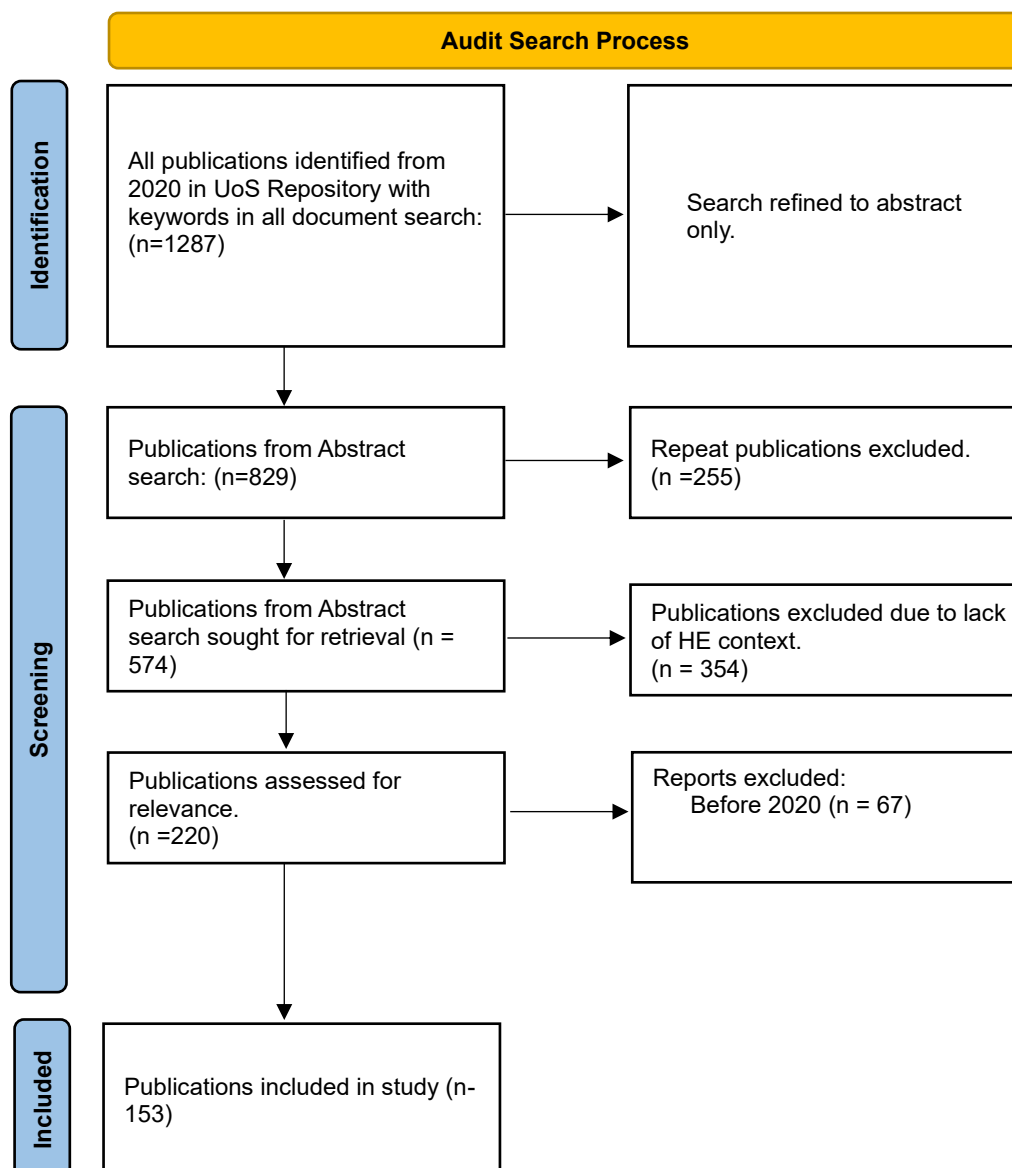
The publications originated from various publishers, with 64 distinct publishing outlets identified. Notably, Taylor & Francis emerged as the most frequent publisher, accounting for just over 20% of the publications (15), followed by Elsevier at 13% (10) and the University of Salford itself at 12% (9).

In this project, NVivo created word clouds based on abstracts and titles, as evidenced in Figure 2. Notably, 'student' or 'students' emerged as the most frequently occurring term, appearing 2559 times across the entire dataset. Other prominent terms included 'learning' (2107 occurrences), 'education' (1544 occurrences), and 'research' (1028 occurrences).

Figure 2: Full Data Set Word Cloud
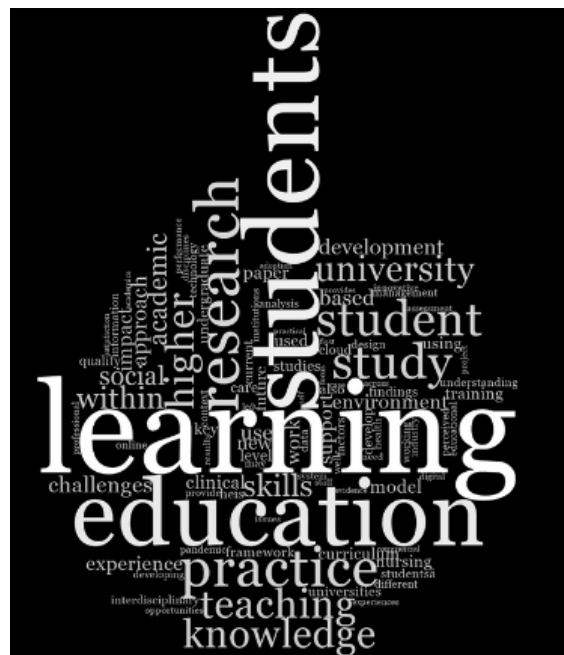
This corpus of publications comprised seven distinct types, with journal articles representing the most common type, covering 54% (83) of the total deposits. Conference items accounted for 17% (26), followed by book sections at 13% (20); this breakdown is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Publication classification by type (%)
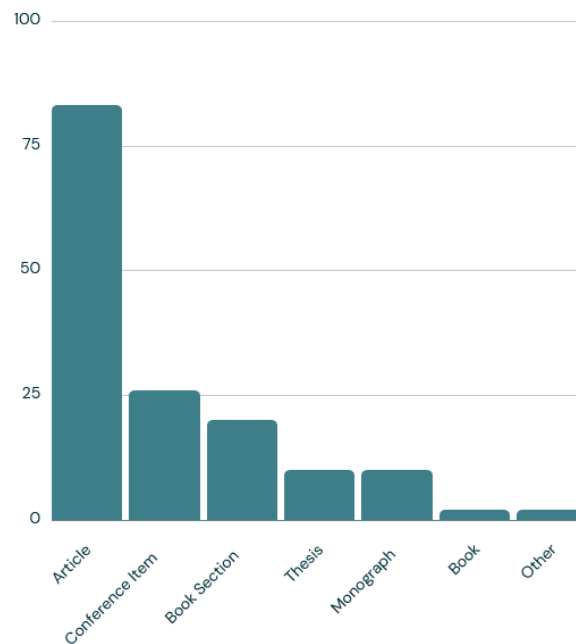
To facilitate a comprehensive discussion of both qualitative and quantitative data and identify critical mass, strengths and gaps, the findings were systematically mapped against the aforementioned 'LTEC Strategic Pillars.'

When examining the publications in the context of the University of Salford, a clear cluster of publications from the 'Health and Society' disciplines emerged, primarily focusing on L&T practice or professional education, often presented as journal articles. The broader dataset, including institutions beyond the University of Salford and those with no attributable institution, reveals a similar pattern in categorisation. The cluster persists around Health and Society journal articles exploring L&T practice from a professional or practice-based educational perspective. At the University of Salford, the School of Health and Society delivers undergraduate, postgraduate, and CPD programmes across a range of subject areas in applied health, social policy, psychology, and public health disciplines.

A secondary cluster of journal articles and conference items from professional services is evident in the University of Salford sample and the larger dataset. While many of these publications focus on L&T practice, some also emphasise student experience or incorporate the student voice within their methodology.

These clusters illustrate that the critical mass of learning, teaching, and scholarly publications within the University of Salford repository predominantly focuses on delivering learning and teaching in practice-based settings, primarily in Health and Society disciplines. Moreover, these publications exhibit a strong emphasis on student outcomes and experiences.

Thematic Analysis

The findings are presented in three strategic thematic sets. The first are the primary themes, those with the most references and, therefore, the most commonalities across the whole data set with a focus on outcome-based learning practice. The secondary themes, which is a set focusing on collaborative learning practices and the final set which is around institutional and educational growth.

The following visual represents the thematic findings regarding the proportion of coded references and the final themes in the three sets.

Figure 3: Visual of Thematic Sets

PRIMARY THEMES — 53% — 01 DRIVING OUTCOMES — 70 References or above
Learning and Teaching Practice, Placement or Vocational Learning, Building Student Skills, Subject Specific, Learning Technologies, Student Experience or Voice, Student Outcomes, Partnerships & Working with Industry

SECONDARY THEMES — 25% — 02 COLLABORATIVE LEARNING — 40 References or above
Inclusive Practice, Non-traditional/alternative teaching, Institutional Collaborations, A global HE Perspective, Course or module development, HE Models or frameworks, Student Engagement/Participation, Knowledge Transfer, Post-Pandemic HE Landscape

TERTIARY THEMES — 13% — 03 EDUCATIONAL GROWTH — 20 References or above
Pedagogy of HE, Student Support Structures, HE Management or Organisations, Institutional Development and Growth, Organisational Culture, IT Systems Management or Security, Staff Experience or Voice, Information and Communication

The first thematic set, labelled 'Driving Outcomes,' consists of primary themes with 70 references or more, accounting for 53% of the thematic analysis. This set primarily centres on outcome-based learning practice, addressing the practical aspects of teaching and learning. The themes within this set include:

1. **Learning and Teaching Practice:** This theme delves into the practical elements of delivering higher education, covering best practices, innovative approaches, and impactful teaching and learning methods.

2. **Learning Technologies:** Exploring how technology can enhance teaching and learning, this theme seeks to understand the adoption of digital, blended, and hybrid approaches post-pandemic.

3. **Placement/Vocational Learning:** Focusing on best practices and evaluations of professional, clinical, and practice-based education, often within workplace settings, driven by positive student outcomes.

4. **Student Experience or Voice:** Central to all primary themes, this theme actively involves students in understanding effective teaching and learning practices tailored to their needs.

5. **Building Student Skills:** This theme relates to practices that equip students with curriculum-based knowledge and the tools and skills necessary for their chosen careers and life paths.

6. **Student Outcomes:** A driving force behind teaching and learning practices, this theme aims to co-create practices that positively impact students' chosen goals and aspirations.

7. **Subject Specific:** Relating to discipline-driven publications, this theme often seeks to create new knowledge or advance best practices within specific subject areas of higher education.

8. **Partnerships/Working with Industry:** Given the vocational and professional focus of much learning and teaching practice, this theme explores successful engagement with key partners and organisations to enhance positive student career outcomes.

The second thematic set, 'Collaborative Learning', comprises secondary themes representing 25% of all codes. This set explores collaborative practices among HE institutions, students, industry partners, and community organisations. The nine themes within this set are:

1. **Inclusive Practice:** Recognising the increasing diversity of students and society, this theme explores more inclusive teaching and learning practices to make higher education more diverse and welcoming.

2. **Course/Module Development:** These publications delve into ways to improve, enhance, and develop teaching and learning practices and content in specific subjects or disciplines, focusing on curriculum development and growth.

3. **Non-Traditional/Alternative Teaching Approaches:** Exploring and developing best practices in innovative, creative, and diverse teaching methods, often involving new or untested practices.

4. **HE Models or Frameworks:** This theme relates to developing frameworks, models, or guidance in teaching and learning practices that can be adopted or replicated across various HE contexts.

5. **Institutional Collaborations:** These publications explore effective cross-functional and cross-institutional ways of working to improve partnership collaboration across HE institutions.

6. **Student Engagement/Participation:** Taking student experience approaches further, this theme seeks to develop improved ways to co-create solutions with and for students through more effective engagement.

7. **A Global HE Perspective:** Exploring international teaching and learning practices and perspectives, this theme includes international collaborations across HE.

8. **Knowledge Transfer:** This theme delves into how knowledge can be better co-created and shared more effectively across disciplines and institutions to enhance wider teaching and learning practices.

9. **Post-Pandemic HE Landscape:** Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning practices, focusing on how HE emerges from the pandemic and responds to the shifts and changes it has brought about.

The final thematic set, 'Educational Growth', encompasses tertiary themes, making up 13% of all codes. This set delves into the future risks and opportunities in the progressive landscape of HE, particularly regarding the management and organisation of HE institutions. The eight themes within this set are:

1. **Pedagogy of HE:** Publications from this theme explore the theory underpinning teaching and learning, seeking to define, unpack, and improve pedagogical practice and knowledge.

2. **Organisational Culture:** This theme explores the culture of HE and HE institutions, focusing on understanding the relationship between culture and teaching and learning practice.

3. **Student Support Structures:** Exploring best practices and approaches to support students throughout their HE journey, often from a broader perspective than subject-based learning.

4. **IT Systems Management of Security:** Given post-pandemic technological solutions, this theme explores the management, risks, and security of the systems needed to deliver these solutions.

5. **HE Management or Organisation:** These publications focus on HE institutions' management structures and organisational approaches, often seeking to understand their impact on learning outcomes and practices.

6. **Staff Experience or Voice:** Seeking insights from professionals working within HE, particularly those delivering or developing learning and teaching practices, to draw knowledge from their experience and perspective.

7. **Institutional Development and Growth:** This theme relates to understanding the current and future contexts in which HE operates,

exploring future-proofing and possibilities to ensure the effective growth of HE institutions.

8. **Information and Communication:** Exploring HE institutions' strategies and approaches to communicate effectively, especially from a learning and teaching perspective.

An in-depth analysis of the thematic results highlighted themes with over 100 consistent references across all four-year sets. This analysis echoes the clusters identified through categorisation and classification data, reaffirming that a significant critical mass of L&T publications revolves around practice-based settings, particularly in Health and Society disciplines. However, the thematic analysis also underscores the importance of learning technologies, teaching practices, and publications related to student experiences.

Exemplar Publications

To contextualise the thematic sets, exemplar publications were selected from the findings. Of the sample, 29 publications were definitively associated with L&T practice at the University of Salford. At the same time, an additional 37 were identified as closely related to HE within contexts or institutions highly relevant to the University of Salford. These exemplars offer real-world examples of University of Salford practices aligned with the audit's highlighted key themes:

Exemplar 1: Sullivan, J. (2021). 'Pioneers of professional frontiers': the experiences of autistic students and professional work-based learning.

This exemplar combines a student experience methodology to explore inclusive learning and teaching practice in professional undergraduate degree placements. It draws on the experience and voices of autistic students who have completed work-based learning placements. It explores the barriers, stigma, and prejudice that autistic students face in the placement environment. The article challenges assumptions around stereotypes of autistic students and their learning preferences and styles. It also uses the student's direct experiences to explore high attrition rates of neurodiverse students on professional courses reported by the author.

Exemplar 2: Fletcher, G., Dron, R., & Gimeno, M. (2021, October). The single silo university.

This exemplar evaluates the University of Salford's five-year institutional strategy launched in 2015. A key element of the strategy was the prioritisation of industrial collaboration and partnership. The chapter comprehensively evaluates the strategy, particularly in terms of organisational delivery. A key development from this period was the improvement of collaborations with industry and community partners that enhanced learning and teaching practice. This enabled the value and impact of such partnerships to be recognised and realised across the institution.

Exemplar 3: Namvar, S., Greensmith, D. J., & Nirmalan, N. J. (2021). Co-creation and empowerment: pathways to better student engagement.

This exemplar is an article focusing on effective approaches to student engagement and inclusivity written by a team from the University of Salford for the Times Higher Education supplement. It shares guidance on good practices concerning student engagement and participation based on experiences from the University of Salford. The article begins by outlining the importance of providing meaningful bridging experiences for students to help develop experiences and skills beyond curriculum-based knowledge.

Exemplar 4: Prokopic, P. (2021). Exploring applying practice-based research on affective cinema to teaching creative cinematographic techniques within UK higher education.

This article presents an exploratory approach to learning and teaching in a second-year undergraduate module in cinematography at the University of Salford. The case study combines research, professional practice, undergraduate learning, and teaching through an Arts & Humanities Research Council-funded project. Students could work with creative pieces composed by a professional sound designer, which enabled film theory and professional practice to be combined as part of the student's work. It also allowed students to develop their skills and tacit knowledge through practical experimentation.

Exemplar 5: Power, E. J., Whitnall, D. C., West, M. L., & Grogan, S. (2022). The lived experience: driving transformational change within higher education during and beyond the pandemic.

This paper explores a case study through an institutional lived experience perspective to provide insights into the challenges of understanding, enabling, and supporting an inclusive culture. We build on a strategic institutional priority called Enabling Student Success (ESS), which aims to drive a cultural shift in the consistency of business-as-usual operations which support the student learning journey to achieve improvement in sustainable outcomes for students and to position the university to effectively respond to the governmental agenda around value for money in HE.

Emerging Themes and Wider Context

In the analysis process, emerging themes were observed, reflecting more recent or evolving issues and themes in L&T practice. The themes focused on inclusive and non-traditional approaches, organisational culture, and IT management and security. The emerging themes include:

- Inclusive Practice
- Non-Traditional/Alternative Teaching Approaches
- Student Engagement/Participation
- Organisational Culture
- IT Systems Management/Security

As we delve into the findings and discussion, it is essential to consider the pivotal role of scholarly inquiry in teaching and learning in shaping the landscape of higher education, emphasising the transformation of teaching into a scholarly activity as set out in previous research (see Hutchings, Taylor Huber and Ciccone, 2011). This resonates with the primary thematic set identified in our analysis, 'Driving Outcomes,' which underscores the practicalities of L&T practices and their impact on positive student outcomes. The concept of SoTL highlighted in Hutchings et al.'s

work aligns with themes such as 'Learning and Teaching Practice' and 'Student Outcomes,' reflecting the essence of researching to enhance pedagogical practices and drive positive results.

The broader perspective of 'Collaborative Learning,' which explores ways institutions, students, and industry can collaborate to co-create best practices and knowledge, thereby addressing larger societal challenges, corresponds to research that examines the focus of SoTL literature and the impact on L&T, as discussed in the literature (see Manarin et al., 2021). The project also urges us to inquire into L&T 'as if the world mattered', extending the scope of SoTL to encompass societal needs (Felten and Geertsema, 2023, p.1),

Our analysis identified emergent themes that align with this broader perspective, such as 'Inclusive Practice' and 'Non-traditional/Alternative Teaching Approaches.' These references provide a theoretical underpinning and a broader context for understanding our findings' thematic sets and exemplars.

As we delve into the findings and engage in a thoughtful discussion, we cannot overlook the enduring influence of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (see Freire 1940; Freire 1973; and Freire 2021). Freire's work has consistently emphasised the role of education as a force for social justice, empowerment, and transformative change. In examining the publications within the University of Salford's repository, we encounter pedagogical practices that resonate with the core principles of critical pedagogy. The thematic analysis reveals an educational landscape that seeks beyond mere knowledge dissemination, embracing the ideals of dialogue, critical thinking, and active student engagement. Themes such as Inclusive Practice, Student Engagement/Participation, and Organisational Culture echo Freire's call for an education that informs and liberates. Moreover, the critical mass identified in this repository reflects a commitment to pedagogy that acknowledges the broader societal context, aligning with Freire's vision of education as a catalyst for addressing urgent societal needs. Therefore, our findings highlight that HE is intrinsically linked to pursuing a more just and equitable society in line with the remit of SoTL.

In conclusion, this examination of the University of Salford's repository publications spanning 2020 to 2023 has provided valuable insights into the institution's L&T external profile. The critical mass, primarily centred around practice-based settings, especially in Health and Society disciplines, underscores a strong commitment to enhancing student outcomes and experiences. These findings align with the overarching mission of the University's LTEC and highlight emerging trends in L&T practices, particularly in inclusivity, non-traditional approaches, increased student participation, organisational culture, and the critical role of IT management and security. As we navigate the evolving domain of HE, these insights serve as a foundation upon which the University of Salford can continue to innovate, adapt, and lead in its pursuit of excellence in pedagogical practice and scholarly contributions to education.

Project Recommendations

The project has worked to translate its findings into actionable recommendations that can contribute to advancing L&T practices in UK HE. These recommendations emerge from exploring the critical mass of knowledge, the dynamic landscape of pedagogical research, and a commitment to fostering a culture of continuous improvement in educational scholarship. In the following section, we present a set of recommendations designed to inspire pedagogical innovation, inclusivity, and excellence. These actionable steps encompass promoting wider repository participation, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, supporting inclusive teaching, embracing technology-enhanced learning, engaging students in pedagogical research, promoting critical pedagogy, leveraging learning analytics, creating communities of practice, aligning with institutional goals, and actively disseminating and celebrating success.

1. **Promote Wider Repository Participation:** Encourage all academic colleagues to submit their teaching and learning materials to institutional repositories. Highlight the value of sharing best practices and fostering a culture of openness in educational scholarship.

2. **Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration in teaching and learning research. Promote forums and platforms for educators from diverse fields to exchange ideas, experiences, and innovative approaches.

3. **Support Inclusive Teaching:** Invest in professional development opportunities that equip educators with the skills and knowledge to create inclusive learning environments. This includes addressing diverse student needs, accessibility, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

4. **Embrace Technology-Enhanced Learning:** Emphasise the importance of technology-enhanced learning, especially in a post-pandemic context. Encourage exploring and adopting digital tools and strategies to enhance the learning experience.

5. **Engage Students in Pedagogical Research:** Actively involve students in pedagogical research and decision-making processes. Their input can provide valuable insights into effective teaching methods and the enhancement of student outcomes.

6. **Promote Critical Pedagogy:** Embrace critical pedagogy principles inspired by Paulo Freire's work. Encourage educators to critically examine and challenge traditional power structures in the classroom and engage in transformative teaching practices.

7. **Leverage Learning Analytics:** Explore learning analytics and data-driven insights to improve teaching and identify areas for pedagogical innovation. Implement evidence-based strategies to enhance student success.

8. **Create Communities of Practice:** Establish communities of practice that bring together educators, researchers, and practitioners to share experiences and collaborate on pedagogical research projects. Foster a culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

9. **Align with Institutional Goals:** Ensure teaching and learning practices align with the university's broader institutional goals and strategic priorities. Collaborate with leadership to drive pedagogical innovation and excellence.

10. **Disseminate and Celebrate Success:** Actively disseminate successful pedagogical approaches, research findings, and innovative teaching methods both within the institution and across the higher education sector. Celebrate and recognise excellence in teaching and learning.

Conclusion

This project has explored and analysed the University of Salford's repository publications from January 2020 to April 2023. We aimed to provide a panoramic view of the institution's engagement with learning, teaching, and scholarly activities, shedding light on the critical mass of knowledge and initiatives that define Salford's contributions to the field of pedagogy. Through categorisation, thematic analysis, and alignment with the University's educational strategy, our journey through this repository has revealed insights into the growing arena of higher education and its role in shaping it.

Our findings underscore a central theme that resonates through the repository's wealth of publications: a resolute commitment to practice-based learning, particularly within the spheres of Health and Society disciplines. Within these disciplines, Salford University emerges as a dynamic hub where L&T extend beyond the classroom and integrate with real-world applications. The focus on practice-based learning is the foundation for the critical mass of scholarly publications.

Thematic analysis has further illuminated this theme, revealing the university's multifaceted dimensions of pedagogical research. The primary thematic set, 'Driving Outcomes,' mirrors the institution's dedication to enhancing student outcomes and experiences. Within it, various themes, such as Learning and Teaching Practice, Learning Technologies, and Student Experience or Voice, come to the fore. They represent the 'nuts and bolts' of higher education, encompassing best practices, innovative approaches, and impactful methods for delivering education. The drive to co-create practices that positively align with students' goals and aspirations is

evident, highlighting a student-centric approach deeply ingrained in Salford's pedagogical ethos.

However, Salford's commitment to pedagogical innovation extends beyond traditional boundaries. The secondary thematic set, 'Collaborative Learning,' signifies a forward-looking perspective, emphasising collaboration among HE institutions, students, industry partners, and community organisations. Themes like 'Inclusive Practice,' 'Non-traditional/Alternative Teaching Approaches,' and 'Knowledge Transfer' underscore Salford's efforts to broaden the horizons of pedagogical research, embracing inclusivity, diversity, and global perspectives.

The final thematic set, 'Educational Growth,' encompasses the tertiary themes that reflect the institution's keen awareness of the multifaceted higher education sector. This set explores the Pedagogy of HE, Organisational Culture, Student Support Structures, and IT Systems Management and Security. These themes demonstrate Salford's commitment to holistic growth in pedagogical practices and higher education.

Drawing on insights from wider literature, particularly the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), we find resonance with the evolving goals of pedagogical research. "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Reconsidered" (Hutchings, Taylor Huber and Ciccone, 2011) emphasises the importance of teaching as a scholarly activity, aligning well with our project's focus on pedagogical research within a university repository. The progressive nature of SoTL, as discussed in the literature (see Manarin et al., 2021 and Felten and Geertsema, 2023), broadens our perspective. It suggests that pedagogical research can extend beyond traditional boundaries, addressing societal needs while enhancing teaching and learning.

In conclusion, in this evidence-based examination of an intuition's repository, the influence of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy continues to reverberate throughout our analysis (see Freire 1940; Freire 1973; and Freire 2021). Freire's profound belief in education as a means of liberation and societal transformation resonates with this repository's critical mass of pedagogical research and scholarly activities. The themes and emerging trends we have uncovered reflect a commitment to

pedagogical practices that extend beyond the mere transmission of knowledge. Freire's call for dialogue, critical consciousness, and the humanisation of education finds a living embodiment in the thematic sets like 'Inclusive Practice', 'Student Engagement/Participation' and 'Organisational Culture.' These themes encapsulate the spirit of critical pedagogy, encouraging active student participation, embracing diversity, and fostering environments where learners and educators engage as co-creators of knowledge. Furthermore, our analysis reveals an increasing awareness of HE's societal relevance, echoing Freire's conviction that education should not exist in isolation but should address pressing societal challenges.

Our comprehensive analysis reaffirms the University of Salford's commitment to pedagogical innovation and scholarly endeavours. As the institution continues its journey of innovation and excellence in pedagogical practice, these insights establish a platform to support the institution in developing digitally enabled, societally focused, and inclusive educational learning communities.

In acknowledging the scope and implications of our findings, it is essential to underscore that our analysis is exclusively based on publications deposited into the University of Salford's repository from 2020 to 2023. Not all colleagues may have chosen to submit their scholarly L&T outputs to the repository, possibly because these materials are not always regarded as conventional academic outputs. This recognition underscores a significant aspect of our findings, namely the importance of promoting the sharing of all scholarly L&T materials within our institution and across the broader landscape of HE. As a key recommendation from this project, we emphasise ensuring that all relevant materials and outputs, which can contribute to disseminating best practices in L&T, find their way into the institutional repository to ensure learning is shared more widely across the sector. Moreover, we advocate for celebrating such contributions, as they are pivotal in informing the ongoing development of scholarly pedagogical practices. As we reflect on this exploration, we recognise that our findings extend beyond the confines of a single institution. They resonate with the wider HE context; Salford's experience becomes a testament to the transformative power of pedagogical research and the potential for higher education to shape individual futures and the broader societal landscape. In the

spirit of co-creation and collaboration, we invite fellow institutions to join us in this innovation journey, where the critical mass of knowledge and initiatives fosters a brighter future for education.

In closing, this paper is a testament to the importance of pedagogical research across the HE sector. It emphasises the centrality of practice-based learning, student outcomes, and inclusivity in shaping the future of education. As institutions around the world navigate the ever-changing domain of HE, let us continue to learn, decide, co-create, and connect, working collectively to transform pedagogy and champion the mission of education in the digital age.

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