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From dialogue to engagement
to well-being: action research
insights into teacher education
seminars

My Context

- return to face-to-face study in 2021/22 after the period of online teaching
- majority of students from ethnic minority backgrounds

Dialogic teaching in HE context

- a growing body of research situating **dialogue** at the centre of the classrooms and HE seminars
- well-scaffolded dialogue can support students of all abilities and linguistic backgrounds to engage in learning (Schleppegrell, 2013; Hammond and Gibbons, 2005)
- dialogic pedagogy allows tutors to model critical thinking and academic discourse - critical lecturing (Shor and Freire, 1987)

Essential principles of dialogic pedagogy

**Alexander
(2017)**

collective (lecturers and students address the learning task together through whole-class, group and one-to-to discussions)

reciprocal (participants listen to each other and respect alternative viewpoints)

supportive (students share their ideas freely without fear of embarrassment over 'wrong' answers)

cumulative (knowledge is co-constructed with lecturers and students building on their own and others' ideas to develop shared understanding)

purposeful (lecturers plan and facilitate dialogue with specific educational goals in mind)

From dialogue to engagement

- challenging others might be culturally unacceptable (Engin, 2017; Karas, 2017)
- discussion can be perceived as a form of assessment and can trigger anxiety (Jackson, 2018)
- Alexander's (2017) first three principles (collective, reciprocal, and supportive) emphasise building learning relationships with the aim to foster an inclusive learning community

 opportunities

 expectations

Methodology and intervention design

The central research question:

What effects, if any, does the application of dialogic approaches in seminars have on student engagement with their learning?

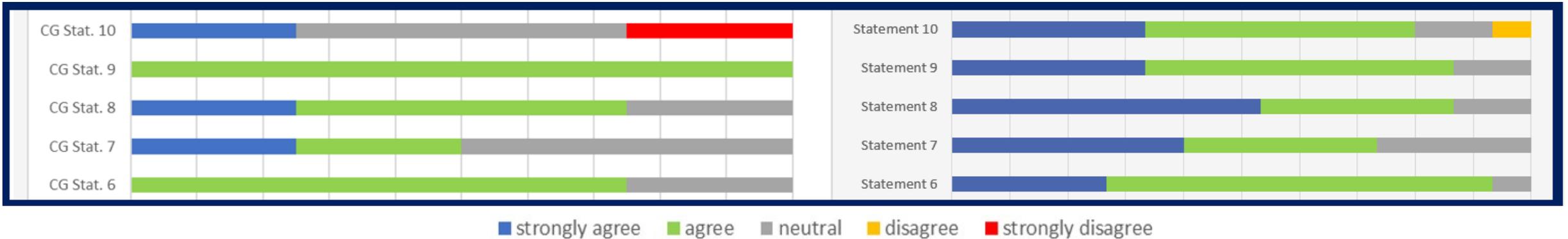
- action research
- anonymous online survey
- reflective research diary
- compared with students' summative data, and the standard module evaluations to provide additional insights.

- case studies, statements and questions
- follow-up questions
 - Talk moves
 - The third turn
- exploratory talk (Barnes, 1976; Mercer and Hodgkinson, 2008)

Data: Impact on student engagement with their learning

Control Group

Intervention Group



Statement 6: The case studies, role-plays, discussions and debates help me to develop my thinking and **make links** with other things I already know.

Statement 7: The case studies, role-plays, discussions and debates help me to **engage** with my learning in a meaningful way.

Statement 8: When I am in class, **I participate in** activities during the seminars/lectures.

Statement 9: The case studies, role-plays, discussions and debates help me to **reflect on** my learning.

Statement 10: **I enjoy taking part in** case studies, role-plays, discussions and debates.

Data: Impact on student engagement with their learning

Statement 3: Students are free to articulate their ideas without the fear of embarrassment and they help each other to reach common understandings.



Statement 5: I feel comfortable to contribute to discussions and debates.

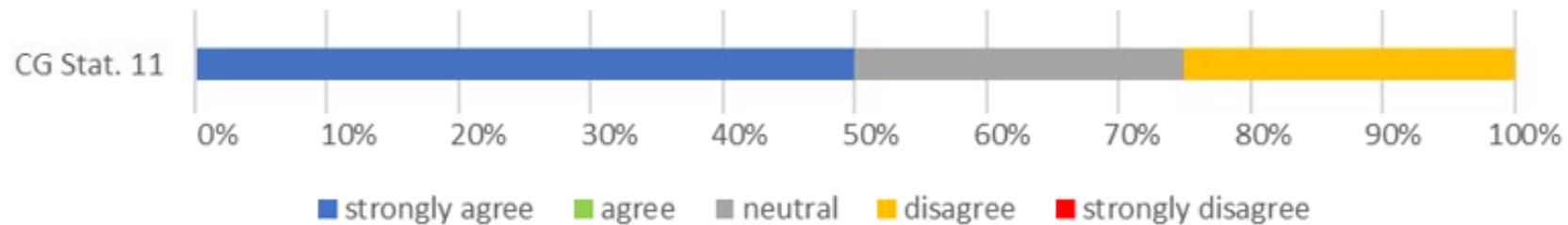


■ strongly agree ■ agree ■ neutral ■ disagree ■ strongly disagree

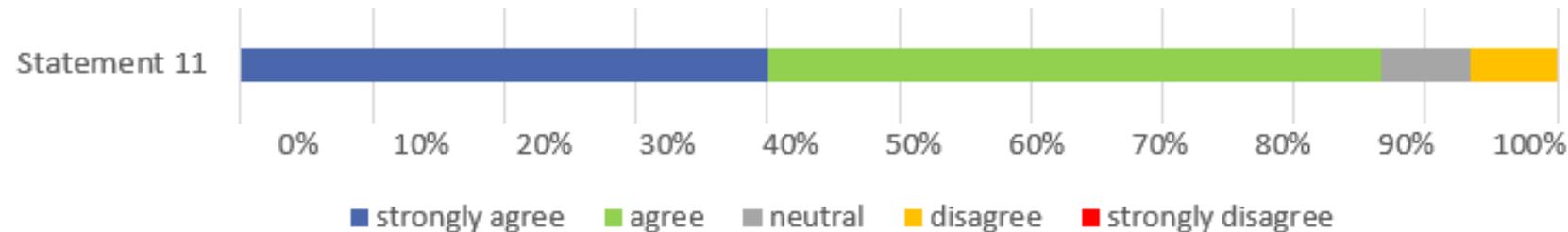
Importance of relationships

- **Statement 11:** I believe that I need to form professional relationships with my peers and the lecturer first to be confident to freely and fully contribute during class activities.

- Control Group



- Intervention Group



Key themes

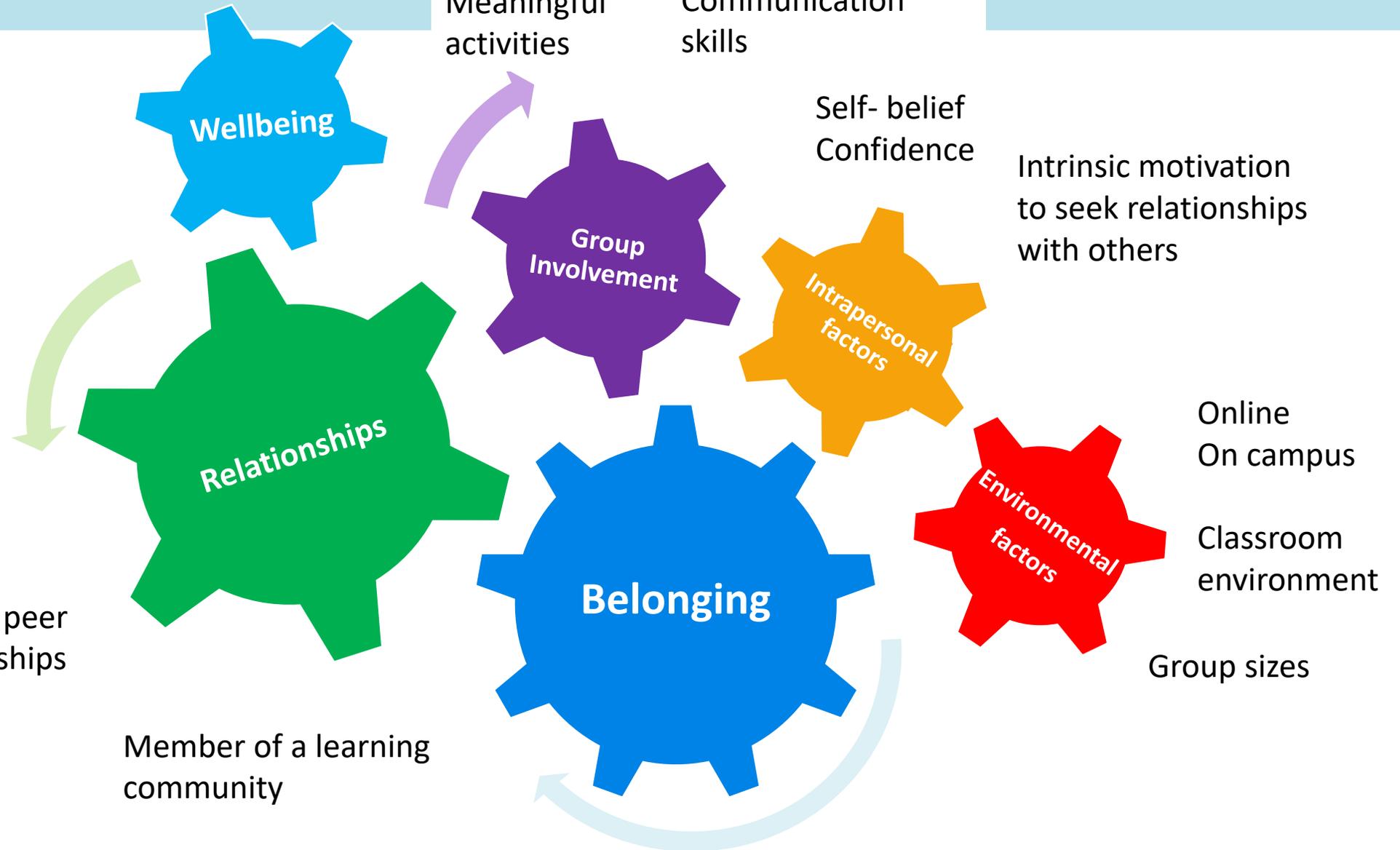
Safe learning spaces

Opportunities and expectations to engage

Positive relationships with tutors

Positive peer relationships

Member of a learning community



Some key message

- dialogic teaching impacts student experience at several levels: social, emotional, and personal
- dialogic teaching practices cultivate safe learning spaces, empowering students to take risks to contribute freely during seminars
- dialogic teaching practices positively impact student engagement but they do not fully remove all barriers to learning and engagement
- the quality of relationships and social and affective aspects of learning are often perceived as the deciding factors in student engagement and participation

The importance of holistic approaches to learning and teaching

“

... Due to the Covid pandemic, I found it difficult to fully engage in university. Due to the limited amount of time I had with my peers, I was unable to form stronger bonds and thus communicated only when absolutely necessary... This was especially noticeable during online lectures, where factors such as home situations and a lack of face-to-face socialisation contributed to increased anxiety. The entire situation has resulted in me having worsened social anxiety, which continues to affect my day-to-day interactions with people. However, as I communicated with peers on a more personal and frequent basis, I became less concerned about what others thought of what I was saying and became more confident discussing issues and adding to discussions. As a result, I can see how dialogic teaching can be beneficial not only for development but also for social and emotional well-being. I was able to reflect on my learning and identify areas for improvement due to the numerous opportunities for discussion that I was given during face-to-face lectures. This was especially useful when doing my assignments as I could refer back to discussions.

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Thank you

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