



Vol.6 No.1 (2023)

# Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching

ISSN : 2591-801X

Content Available at : <http://journals.sfu.ca/jalt/index.php/jalt/index>

---

## Using teaching and learning regimes in the international classroom to encourage student re-subjectification

---

Elin Bommenel<sup>A</sup>

A

*Senior Lecturer, Lund University, Sweden*

Richard Ek<sup>B</sup>

B

*Professor in Human Geography, Karlstad University, Sweden*

Stuart Reid<sup>C</sup>

C

*Guest Researcher, Karlstad University; Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Dalarna University, Sweden*

---

### Keywords

---

Foucault;  
multinational classroom;  
neoliberal university;  
power;  
student subjectification;  
teaching and learning regime.

### Abstract

---

This paper addresses one of the pedagogical challenges that followed the presence of increasingly multinational student groups, particularly the increased diversity of academic backgrounds among students. Theoretically, this challenge can be understood as an encounter between different teaching and learning regimes (TLRs). TLR, coined by Trowler and Cooper (2002), implies a constellation of assumptions, rules, relationships, and practices regarding the conduct of higher education that colours academic staff members' performance in their profession. It has become a widely used heuristic tool in the reflection process among university staff. It is shown in this paper that TLRs are not only a heuristic tool that can be applied in teacher reflection but may also be fruitfully applied in the classroom in student-teacher interaction. Consequently, we decided to bring the TLR into the classroom. The written student reflections constitute the empirical material that this analysis is based on. We approach these reflections as expressions of confessions of the Self, as laid out by Michel Foucault. We conclude that it is useful for the students to reflect upon TLR's, but simultaneously, such an approach runs the risk of enhancing pedagogical and epistemological conformism at the neoliberal university.

---

### Correspondence

Richard.Ek@kau.se <sup>B</sup>

---

### Article Info

Received 27 December 2022

Received in revised form 5 March 2023

Accepted 8 March 2023

Available online 10 March 2023

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2023.6.1.14>

## Introduction

The higher education industry is increasingly global, and high-ranked universities receive students from all parts of the world. This global student mobility has rapidly accelerated in scale. In 2018, about 5.6 million tertiary students crossed a national border for higher education in an OECD member state, compared to 2.2 million in 1998 (OECD, 2020). X University in Scandinavia (anonymised) is no exception due to the last decades of institutional transformations (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Frølich et al., 2013), particularly since the Bologna process streamlined higher education within the European Union and increased the inflow to Scandinavian universities of students from both within and outside the EU. These developments have increased the diversity of students in classes, bringing pedagogical challenges for teachers and teaching institutions. This is particularly the case since two-thirds of the inflow of students to the OECD countries comes from developing countries (OECD, 2020).

This paper addresses one of the pedagogical challenges that followed the presence of increasingly multinational and multicultural student groups, particularly the increased diversity of academic backgrounds among students. We would like to stress that this diversity is not a problem but a possibility, an opportunity, even if also a challenge. The multitude of individual backgrounds among the students contains a pedagogical and epistemological richness that can be invoked and applied. This multitude of individual backgrounds also creates a need and a possibility for teachers to reflect on their habitual teaching and how it corresponds to increased student diversity while attempting to support and increase students' awareness of the contextualised nature of teaching and learning.

Teachers thus need to adjust to the international classroom. At the same time, these international students must adjust to the teaching practices and requirements of a, in this case, northern European university to manage educational (and institutional) demands. The pedagogical challenge arises: how to help the students adjust to the ways of 'doing' university studies in a new educational and institutional context to optimise student retention while keeping a high standard on educational and academic demands on the students? And a further practical challenge is achieving this without invoking reductive stereotypes among teachers and students alike. This was the challenge that confronted us as we were offering a master's programme for students from over thirty countries from all around the world.

Theoretically, this challenge can be conceptualised and understood as an encounter between different teaching and learning regimes (TLRs). To be more precise, students with prior experience of different TLRs are gathered at a specific university with its own TLR, which the students need to adjust to and master to manage the educational (and institutional) demands of a new programme in a new university. TLR, a concept coined by Trowler and Cooper (2002), implies a constellation of assumptions, rules, relationships, and practices regarding the conduct of higher education that colours academic staff members' performance in their profession. In Trowler and Cooper (2002), TLRs become a heuristic tool in a reflection process among university

staff to be aware of their situated knowledge and a tool for unpacking institutional norms and tacit professional knowledge and considering its implications for conducting teaching (see also Papier, 2008; Trowler, 2020).

The use of TLR in teaching and learning is extended in a novel way in this paper. This is the paper's contribution to the research on teaching and learning in higher education. The idea presented and discussed in this paper is that TLRs are not only a heuristic tool that can be applied in teacher reflection but may also be fruitfully applied in the classroom in student-teacher interaction. We argue that such an application can help students reflect upon the TLR they have experienced in earlier education and see and adapt to the new TLR they confront when attending a new university. Consequently, we decided to bring the TLR into the classroom to initiate a dialogue about learning conditions and contexts. Metaphorically speaking, we took the students 'backstage' and revealed our TLR (as we understand it): talking about how we perceive knowledge, learning and teaching and asking the students to talk about how they understood knowledge, learning and teaching. In sum, we spent an introductory week of meta-reflection before letting the students continue with the master's programme's introductory course, expanding the applicability of TLR in the process.

We let the students write down their reflections on learning the past week at the new university programme. The following year we repeated this process. The written student reflections constitute the empirical material that this paper is based on. Methodologically, we approach these reflections as expressions of confessions of the Self, i.e., a technology of the Self as laid out by Michel Foucault (1985, 1986, 1997). Analytically, this process takes shape as dialectics of de-subjectification and re-subjectification. Consequently, the students' reflections indicate how they apprehended and understood themselves as learning subjects and core aspects of their own TLR in relation to the TLR of the new university.

In the next section of the paper, the theoretical and methodological framework is outlined in more detail. The literature on TLR is reviewed, and the methodological approach, based on Foucault's work on de-subjectification and re-subjectification, confession and avowal, is presented. In the third section, the case is introduced. In the fourth section, the students' reflections on TLR are presented, thematised, analysed and discussed. The paper concludes by discussing the moral implications of applying the TLR in the classroom and outlining some practical recommendations.

## Teaching and learning regimes and didactic technologies of the self

Studies in higher education have dealt with learning from a developmental perspective (students go through several predestined stages) to a reflexive learning approach, in which learning is a social activity intertwined with identity building. They have studied teaching in similar ways, from seeing teachers go through developmental stages to seeing teaching as an identity-building social activity. Teaching

and learning regimes (TLRs) have become an established umbrella concept within the more recent strands of higher education research. TLR, defined by Trowler and Cooper (2002, p. 24) as a “constellation of rules, assumptions, practices and relationships related to teaching and learning issues in higher education”, has for two decades been widely applied and developed. It is an analytical framework that works through a sociocultural lens, emphasising teaching and learning as co-created practices (Mathieson, 2012; Bager-Elsborg, 2018). It aims to untangle and systematise university teachers’ different teaching and learning philosophies, imaginations, practices and performativities as defined by their academic biography and direct attention to how these regimes affect teachers’ approach to new approaches to teaching and learning (Fanghanel, 2009a). Agency becomes a key concept here, even if teachers’ agencies are always entangled in larger institutional contexts, communities of practice, and significant networks of trusted colleagues (Mathieson, 2012; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2013).

A TLR is inherent in the everyday practices of teaching and learning that are corporally and symbolically expressed or performed in different moments of social interaction (Hannon et al., 2017). For Trowler (2009, 2020), the eight moments are: power relations, implicit theories of learning and teaching, conventions of appropriateness, recurrent practices, tacit assumptions, codes of signification, discursive repertoires, and subjectivities in interaction. Further, Trowler and Cooper (2002) argue that incompatibilities between different TLRs often do not surface until critical incidents occur, revealing the apparently incommensurable nature of the different approaches to teaching and learning. Here, the TLR framework has been considered useful for addressing the teacher as a professional subject/agent in a specific sociocultural institutional context. From a change management perspective, TLR has also been considered a useful tool to facilitate change in pedagogical epistemologies and inspire innovative approaches to teaching (Fanghanel, 2009a; Bager-Elsborg, 2018).

A scholarly discussion on the limitations and future possibilities of the TLR framework for sure exists (see Ashwin, 2009; Fanghanel, 2009b; and for a summary Trowler, 2020, chapter two), though this is not of direct concern in terms of how TLR is applied in this study. Of primary interest here is the eighth moment: subjectivities in interaction. For Roxå and Mårtensson (2009), awareness of the TLR offers possibilities for the knowledgeable agent to transform their teaching over time. In a similar vein, Trowler (2020, p. 13) states that “individual subjectivities are very significant in change processes”, further adding that “[u]nderstanding the nature of the subjectivities in interaction and the likely patterns of how they will play out is a really important element in the change process”. But in this scholarly discussion, the focus has been on the teachers and their conduct or practice of teaching (but see Lisewski, 2020). The students have, meanwhile, been somewhat invisible in the discussion.

Recently, Hussein and Schifflbein (2020) remarked that students who travel abroad will encounter an environment with different classroom culture (besides possible language difficulties). But this is not all to consider, and in practice, an international student may also encounter a completely

new TLR. The question that follows is how this challenge might be fruitfully addressed. Thus, we have been provoked to ask/wonder about/consider/contemplate the question: what if the existence of TLR also were communicated to and discussed with international students? Because if the heterogeneity of previous learning experiences is not taken into consideration in an international class of students, can it not make learning unnecessarily difficult for some and result in positive discrimination of others? So, we decided to try to bring the concept of TLR into the classroom to create a discursive space and vocabulary for discussing imaginations and experiences of regimes of knowledge, teaching and learning with the students. By doing so, we wanted to find out if students could develop their academic competence through an awareness of the existence of different TLRs.

In respect to the eighth moment of Trowler (2020: 13), the interactions between teachers and students, as well as interactions between students, are also situations of subjectivities in interaction. To Trowler and Cooper (2002), a university teacher’s identity will change in a move to a new university even if underlying values and beliefs may more or less remain the same. Still, readjustments in working practices and sense of self are usually conducted to adjust to the new TLR. But to not feel like a ‘novice’, the teacher subject may resist some practices of the new TLR. This might perhaps be seen as a discomforted habitus responding and adapting to a novel field following the practice logic of Pierre Bourdieu (1990). The same goes for the students, who will also experience pangs of adjustment in confronting novel demands in the new learning context. The shift to learning cultures shifts us beyond views of international students as deficit learners to reframe the challenge as one rooted in embedded cultures of teaching and learning (Tange, 2021). Tange captures the cultural and institutional challenges facing students thus:

Most students internalise tacit disciplinary practices as undergraduates, which makes the transition from BA to MA relatively smooth as long as it happens within the same institution and discipline. In contrast, Masters students transferring to a new institution, subject area, and department are challenged because they are supposed to perform the role of a postgraduate expert learner, but lack tacit knowledge about local rules and routines. (Tange, 2021, p. 95)

Moreover, the diversity of the student body presupposes the presence of many different learning experiences linked to variations in previous TLR. Thus, an awareness that moving to a new university, with new peers and teachers, implies a confrontation with an unfamiliar TLR should be beneficial for the student (and teachers) and not be apprehended as a threat to identity. Feeling insecure due to a lack of familiarity with a new TLR easily feels like having your identity threatened, and this may trigger critical incidents in the classroom (Trowler & Cooper, 2002), potentially eroding class climate and student learning (for discussion, see Ambrose et al., 2010, Chapter 6). But an understanding of the TLR of previous studies as something formative of the student’s identity, as well as for other students, may disarm or reduce the feeling of insufficiency in the current moment. That, in turn, makes it easier to relate to and adapt

to the new university's TLR, simultaneously facilitating movement in students' subject positions. The latter point brings us to Foucault's notion of the subject of the Self, de-subjectification and re-subjectification in focus here.

Harcourt (2020) characterises Foucault's work as an attempt to write a history of truth-production, focusing on its legal forms, historical forms, political and economic forms, and in his final works during his twilight years, on truth and subjectivity, particularly on truthful speech as a practice of taking care of the self. These practices were meant to not only change the views of others but also to change the self. This interest in the art of living is developed in the second, third, and recently published fourth volumes of *The history of sexuality* (Foucault, 1985, 1986, 2021). The care of the self relates to the very process by which the self comes to exist as a distinct subject to be recognised by others, while the art of existence relates to intentional transformations of the self/subject (Foucault, 1985; Myers, 2008). He analysed modes of subjectivity in classical Athens, imperial Rome, and in the fourth volume, early Christian doctrines, to understand the contextual conditions of subject formation or subjectification (Macmillan, 2011; Elden, 2016; Foucault, 2021). There is, however, a lack of consistency in how Foucault defines confession and which dimensions it consists of (for instance, a distinction between the confession of sin and a confession of faith) due to that he considered the confessional practice in different cultural settings and temporal epochs (Büttgen, 2021). This may be seen as a philosophical inconsistency but does not have consequences in this paper as it is Foucault's reasoning rather than the precise meanings of concepts applied here.

More precisely, in Foucault's line of thinking, confession becomes a technology of the self to bring about change in the subject position. Individuals ransack their behaviour, ways of thinking, and emotions by comparing them with societally established discursive sets of norms and moralities. They then decide if they need and want to change to come closer to 'normal' behaviour (Foucault, 1985). Subjective change is thus manifested through speech or avowal as confessional speech becomes a device of control and simultaneously signals whom the individual wants to become (Dean, 1995). How these confessional practices work then differs depending on the historiographical context. As an example, the confession in Christianity aimed to create conformity to religious sets of moral conduct, while differing ethics were at work in classical Greek society (Foucault, 1985, 1986). An active attitude in self-making demands a constant pending or dialectics between having a conscious attitude towards potential dimensions of the subject and reorienting the self – a subjectification that contains simultaneous de-subjectification and re-subjectification. In other words, Foucault (1985) at least implicitly postulated a constant oscillation between de- and re-subjectification as an art of existence. In the context of this paper, the technology of confession becomes a processual tool to make tangible and confront the TLR and consider how subjective change in relation to different TLRs could be initiated.

The framework through which the empirical material is approached thus contains a theoretical part and a methodological part. The theoretical part is an application

of TLR in an extraordinary context – a dialogue among students and teachers during an introductory week on a Master's programme at a university in Scandinavia. The methodological part is based on Foucault's notion that change in subject positions, or alterations in identities, requires practices of confessions and avowal and is thus an active, reflective identity work. The two parts of the framework are connected through the notion by Trowler and Cooper (2002), among others, that TLRs are, in practice, much about subjectivities in interaction and that teaching and learning generally are identity constitutive.

### Practicing TLR in the classroom – an introduction week

With the epistemological and pedagogical guidelines discussed above, we welcomed a group of almost 60 new students from all continents except Australia. We did the same with almost 100 students again in the year after. For a week, we worked through the TLR fundamentals together with them. The schedule for the introduction week is shown in Figure 1:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09	L: Course Introduction	IW: Read three journal articles, and write an individual paper, summary of the three papers		L: Academic integrity	L: Group work, techniques for inclusion, critical thinking
10			10.00 Upload paper on digital platform WS: Design exams		
11	WS: When did you learn something? What is learning? Knowledge?		WS: Try student-designed exams	WS: Academic integrity	WS: Critical dialogues
12					
13				IW: Read a master's thesis	WS: Instructions for seminars
14					WS: On master's thesis
15				WS: Feedback on paper on three journal articles	
16					WS: Results from seminars and individual reflection

L=Lecture, WS= Workshop, IW= Individual work

Figure 1: Introduction week on international master's programme.

The stipulated knowledge aims of the programme were that the students should:

- Be aware of and reflect upon present learning regimes in the student's prior academic studies.
- Be familiar with the theoretical foundations of the learning regimes present in the Master's programme, paying particular attention to views on knowledge, cognitive dissonance, conceptual change, motivation, and the distinction between surface learning and deep learning.
- Be familiar with the practice-based foundations of the learning regimes present in the Master's programme with a particular focus on seminar culture, critical comments, active listening, rule techniques and confirmation techniques.
- Be able to operationalise the learning regime by trying out different examination forms used in the particular Master's programme.
- Be knowledgeable regarding the demands on academic honesty in the Master's programme.
- Be able to show valuation capability relating to academic honesty in different evaluation situations.

The students were informed about how we, the teachers, understand the TLR at the department. Four main points were stressed. Firstly, cognitive dissonance is a way to learning development, and teachers, therefore, will not offer simple solutions to complex issues. Secondly, each student is their own meaning-maker, and most interactions thus require student independence. Thirdly, learning is a collective endeavour, and active oral participation in seminars and workshops is therefore expected. Fourthly, deep learning is prioritised over surface learning, which is generally unproductive.

The work tasks each student was expected to do were the following:

- Read three journal articles with particular relevance for the first course.
- Write a reflective text on the three journal articles that indicates deep learning.
- Design an exam for the three journal articles showing deep learning.
- Perform peer review of an examination.
- Try out an oral exam (about research on learning).
- Read and understand the structure of a Master's thesis.
- Practice seminar culture (discussing the aforementioned Master's thesis).

- Write a short essay reflecting on their own learning experiences over the first week of the introduction programme.

As can be seen schematically in Figure 1, the international Master's students had to critically reflect on journal articles (applying a deep learning approach), orient themselves, and try out forms of examinations and grading systems commonly used at the department. The students were further introduced to group work, how to create inclusive seminars and seminar culture in general. Throughout the programme, time was reserved for discussion, reflection and feedback on work tasks, understandings, and performances. Academic honesty, including how to avoid plagiarism, was also addressed. Repeatedly, it was revealed that many students were not familiar with the different themes brought up during the introduction. Not all students had read, or even fewer had synthesised journal articles before, been encouraged to make critical remarks on academic literature, done an oral exam, etc. Afterwards, 46 students handed in one to two pages of reflection the first year, and 55 students the second year (the submission of the reflection paper was not mandatory). These reflections are of different depths and lengths and are consequently a heterogeneous material, something that may be a weakness in the material. The students were also quite tired after an intensive first week and had not perhaps fully digested their own reflections when they wrote the evaluations/reflections. We considered follow-up with focus group interviews some months later, but that idea was never followed through. In hindsight, that is regrettable as that added empirics would have given the study a richer and more contemplative material to work from. Nevertheless, most of the reflections are written in a style and in a tone that often indicates a sensation of epistemological revelation that offers enough food-for-thought on this occasion.

### **Students' reflections/confessions on the first encounter with a new university**

The students' reflections from the introduction week were thematised into three themes, to follow the framework. The first was regarding the students' reflections on their awareness of the TLR they "had brought with them" to the new university. The second theme was how they understood and related to their understanding of the TLR at a new university. As these two themes are so intertwined, they have been integrated into the following subsection. The third theme was how they understood and expressed their academic identity and their own (present and future) identity work in relation to finding themselves in a new university setting. These three themes are discussed in the following two subsections; the third theme is addressed in the second subsection. To preserve anonymity, the students are only identified with a number (Student 1 – Student 101).

#### ***Encountering a new teaching and learning regime***

For nearly all of the students, the introduction week made them realise that it is possible to identify something that can be labelled as a TLR (or, for some, a particular teaching

and learning culture) and that the new university operated according to a TLR that was more or less different from what they had encountered before, and thus more or less new for each of them. Coming from different backgrounds, each student's encounter with the presentation and exemplification of this TLR was thus unique. It could be placed on a continuum from 'completely familiar' to 'completely unfamiliar'. In sum, students familiar with a North European university were quite familiar with the TLR in use at the department. In contrast, students from outside Europe (Africa, The Middle East and Asia) were generally unfamiliar with the TLR in use at the department. Many students expressed their surprise at being made aware that the very notions of what counts as knowledge and learning could be so different. In their reflections, they expressed this as a comparison between how they understood, in hindsight, the TLR of their former universities and their understanding of the new university's TLR. One student expressed it thus:

Also, one of the most intriguing aspects of the lectures was learning that "*Knowledge is not right or wrong and the teacher is not an authority who conveys what is right and true*". This assertion I would have debated previously considering the fact that my former educational system has been structured in the opposite way. However, upon retrospection during the lectures, one thing came to mind that my former educational system somewhat hindered our level of creative thinking as we were required to think towards the expectation and requirement of "Authority" (This is not an attempt to denigrate the former educational system) (Student 1, original emphasis).

Another student wrote:

Indeed, it reflects on me in a very helpful and positive way. It made me think more about learning using my intellectual insights and being creative, which I wasn't used to in my former education. It enlightened me in a way that I can make explicit learning through using the learning regimes and aid me to pass all the challenges that I could face and obstruct my studying (Student 94).

In these reflections, the TLR of their new university always came as more empowering, which makes confessional sense (signifying that my decision to apply for this new university was a good decision). But what shines through in the reflections is the promise of being allowed to 'have a voice' and express creative agency in the classroom, as the learning interaction is designed differently, the classroom culture being of a more informal character than described previously:

Unquestionably, the study culture has hit me the hardest. I came from a country where professors literally reveal and inform students regarding important topics and which subject matter is expected to be on the exams. Most of the time, we learned by memorising and repeating... I also enjoyed the fact that I can freely express my thoughts, and ideas, or even criticise articles provided by the professors.

In my previous university, when teachers provide us with case studies to learn about particular things. They themselves have already decided on the solutions for each case, and it is a matter for us to match their solutions...This, in my opinion, acts like a force constraining us from being creative (Student 23).

In practice, many students with an academic background outside Europe were unfamiliar with more collaborative learning practices like the seminar and group work in general. One Chinese student, for instance, argued that "most forms of Chinese undergraduate classes are in the form of lectures, with few discussions and presentations. It was my first time to contact the workshops and seminars" (Student 70). Another student claimed that "The seminar ... was a new learning activity that I experienced in my education, and even though it seemed in the beginning kind of easy, I could see that all participants encountered obstacles when speaking or clarifying their point of view with each other" (Student 13). For some, the very notion of learning as a collective endeavour was a difficult idea to tackle: "The concept of using each other to approach deep learning was one of the most difficult things to learn because I always thought that learning is produced within oneself, it will be useful during the different seminars as well as motivate us to make the best of us during the Master's duration (Student 67). The new insight into the distinction between surface and deep learning helped the students to conceptualise the experienced differences between TLRs. As one student wrote:

I've also taken with me that there are different levels of learning, surface and deep learning. Using your knowledge in a deeper way is to be able to work your knowledge or material in a deeper way which helps you understand the information better, for example, by analysing, synthesising and finding meaning to it (Student 18).

For some students, the distinction between TLRs that stress surface learning or deep learning became the most tangible difference between the TLR they encountered at their former university and that of the new university: "In fact, the learning regime in my country, especially in schools is depending basically on the surface approach of learning, so it is enough to read and memorise ready material without any addition or criticism from your end, and you will surely pass with high grades" (Student 79). And: "After one week of activities, I have more understanding of the learning regime of deep approach. Compared to the education system in western countries, especially in X, the learning regime in Asia tends to be more like the surface approach" (Student 29). Several students realised that the emphasis on deep learning at their new university required them to be more analytical and critical in their learning approach and not to rely on memorising content: "The most important insight for me during the first week was that Master's study would make me think, in a way more critical than before. In my former studies, I was used to learning passively and only conformed to the instructions given without thinking why" (Student 71).

This new agency initially created uncertainty and anxiety among several students: "I have been very stressed out due to confusion about what's expected of me. I have been used to surface learning and a system where there is right and wrong. I've mostly just studied for the stuff that I need to know for the exam" (Student 44). Another student confessed, "The early days of the course were full of confusion for me. The education system has many fundamental differences from my previous experiences" (Student 38). Another student admitted that:

This 1st week was very challenging. As I belong to that part of the world where no concepts like an introductory week or learning regime exist, I was very confused on the 1st day, even worried about the course and this Master's program; how can I manage this, as this is something very new (Student 57).

But as the students had also been informed about the phenomena of cognitive dissonance, they could conceptualise these feelings in a reflexive vocabulary. Student 1 again (see above): 'The aforementioned points are the subject areas that I identified with, and this, I must admit, nearly threw me into a state of cognitive dissonance as the system of studies sharply contradicts that of my home country'.

Not only were students familiar with drastically different TLRs surprised during the introduction week. Also, students, perhaps with a notion that they would experience the new university as a familiar place, expressed surprising revelations:

As I came to X, I did not expect that there would be big differences in the learning culture between X and my university in Germany ... The biggest difference is the research orientation of the programme (or of the university). After the first week and getting explained the meaning of deep approach reading and learning, my Bachelor studies seemed like surface learning with memorising, writing an exam and forgetting what you have learned, so without deep knowledge (Student 69).

It thus seems like students with a familiarity with the dominant TLR of universities in northern Europe can also gain from the very practice of pedagogical meta-reflections on teaching and learning. For sure, there are differences between Master's and Bachelors' programmes, as well as between universities with different research and teaching traditions, and perhaps also even between departments. Also, the context, in this case, a multicultural and international student class, was a new context for most of the students, many apparently having experienced relatively more culturally homogenous classrooms:

There are different ways of learning, and the previous week has been a roller coaster for me. By a roller coaster, I mean understanding different ways of learning by my professors and classmates from other backgrounds and cultures. ... As I have been studying at another Scandinavian university, there are similarities in the way of understanding the meaning of learning (Student 33).

One of the most important aspects of the regime is the positioning of a student in the studying process ... As I have been already studying here for three years now, I have a clear understanding of what the 'X' regime' includes in itself. However, I haven't looked at the study processes and the reasons for the will to become successful from the perspective of different types of motivations (Student 45).

Contrasting with this, some students evaluated the introduction week as days with no significant added knowledge for them personally, even if they could appreciate and see the need for such a week for others (something that in itself also is a valuable insight, we would argue):

All in all, the first introduction week was, for me personally, a repetition of already known approaches and methods. Having studied at universities with a similar learning environment, there was not really something completely new for me... But overall, I think that it was very helpful for students that are used to different learning approaches (maybe from outside Europe) (Student 22).

As one student asked, "All this raises a question in my head, 'Why this very important key is not given to all types of students all over the world in the first week of the study year?' It will surely make their life easier" (Student 79). In a way, this is a logic that corresponds to the increased audit and evaluation culture that saturates contemporary neoliberal higher education and possibly also, in the continuation, to an instrumental approach to knowledge and higher education. The students surely realise that mastering the courses in the programme requires deep learning and an awareness of the nature and grammar of the formal frameworks the teaching must follow.

### ***Realising the need for change in subjectivity/identity***

A combined reading of the students' reflections makes it striking how a confessional tone shines through. From a more critical perspective, the introduction week could very well be seen as a practice of the subjectification of the neoliberal university student, transforming them into a finetuned biopolitical subject (we will come back to this in the Conclusion). Many of the students made their reflections or confessions applying the vocabulary the lectures and seminars on teaching and learning in higher education had afforded them, appropriating terms and deploying concepts such as the distinction between surface and deep learning:

After the first week's lectures, I became more aware of the fact that I needed to change my previous learning style so that I can fit in better into the teaching regime and attain a more satisfying outcome from the course. I used to memorise concepts, definitions, and important facts and data. I realised that sometimes I was just trying to form a temporary impression through repetition only to pass the exams. Those knowledges were soon forgotten because I never went deep into it. They are like randomly arrayed words that don't make any sense to me. But now, I

must chew on what I have learned, make reflections, and relate to other sources as much as possible. I agree that simply memorising and repeating is the least efficient way of learning (Student 72).

Another student reasoned similarly:

It was interesting to realise during the lecture that all along, I have been comfortable with the *surface approach* to learning. However, after the various sessions, I feel more challenged to move out of my comfort zone and adapt the *Deep approach* to learning, which will not only increase my level of knowledge but enhance my thinking abilities to be able to apply the knowledge acquired and see things from different perspectives ... It will definitely take time for me to adjust to this new system of studies, but I know it's for my own self-development and enhancement (Student 1, original emphasis).

Other cognitive and epistemological models and tools like the VARK model, outlining different learning modalities (visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic sensory modalities; see Fleming & Miles, 1992) were also discussed with students, as well as concepts like intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: "For instance, our learning styles are recognised by VARK categories, and it will certainly help us to know ourselves better and to choose a specific way of learning in need to study something more efficiently or to improve some kind of studying skills especially" (Student 26). The awareness of the need to adjust to a specific TLR made the students conscious that they needed to change as persons or leave their "comfort zone" as several remarked. As one student wrote:

The lectures covering the different approaches to learning and reading academic material have been particularly important in my case as they have helped me analyse my personal flaws with an objective and critical eye. ... Hence, I will have to learn further the skill of synthesising arguments in order to cover broadly the framework and in-depth some topics within the word-counts boundaries given by the lecturer (Student 5).

Another student, writing in a more abstract style, admitted the need to embrace change, being aware that it is not an easy or painless process:

Learning regimes partly comes back to motivation and striving to make sense of things. It can be good when you're studying to be aware of cognitive dissonance and embrace it. It's in this gap where you find that there might be contradictory ideas to your understanding. But that could be what you need in order to challenge your understanding that you have of something at that moment (Student 18).

For one student, this transformation becomes even an existential process, even a new state of being:

I see this growth as being part of a concept which is very dear to me, that of convulsion – revolution – evolution, in which fundamental changes occur when one either subjects him/her-self or is subjected to specific events which uproot and shake the core of one's own value system, forcing to readdress, redesign or even create a completely new value system, evolving into a new state of being through this transformation process (Student 32).

For many students, this process of de- and re-subjectification started with confessing their weaknesses. For some, their admitted weak command of English was a starting point: "The past week has not been easy for me. This week made me realise that my English ability can't well support my Master's studies, especially my speaking and writing abilities. In the future, I will take time to practice, for example, to communicate with my classmates and imitate what Ted speakers say" (Student 68). Another student confessed similarly, admitting a weak command of English that presaged a sense of inadequacy and a need for more practice:

I feel I still need a lot of effort to keep up with my classmates. First of all, my English is lower than my classmates. In class, sometimes, I still don't understand what the teacher is saying. It also caused me to read the article very slowly, and the reaction was slower than others. I feel a sense of crisis now, so I think that the first step should be to integrate myself into the classroom, to practice more, to spend more time reading the literature, and to exercise more about speaking and listening on weekdays (Student 70).

A primal ambition among many students was to be more active, even proactive, in their interaction with peers and teachers. One student promised that: "From now on, the first step for me is to alter myself from a passive to an active learner and create my own learning experience because everything I do is for personal improvement instead of simply increasing knowledge so that I am able to maintain my thirst and being curious to learn all the time" (Student 98).

But not all students realised they wanted to be more talkative and proactive. One student professed that:

This week was helpful ... To me, it also gave me a chance to work on myself and my personal approach and tactics. I was once a very dominant and vocal young person, but with time and maturity, I have recognised my own faults and have been trying to work them over time... I grew up in an environment where I adopted a dominant and vocal approach that I have been working on to finetune and improve now that I am older and better understand myself and what is expected from me (Student 41).



In the last citation, we can see that the students' reflections not only relate to different transformations of the self in the art of living through written confessions and avowals but also can be interpreted as tentative ways to take care of the self, as the students were by now well aware that they were a multicultural group of international students who were "in it together". This awareness was expressed in different ways thus. One student, admitting her shyness, simultaneously recognised the shyness of many of her peers: "We acted with professionalism and respect as well with shyness, that we had to overcome as it was part of the activity to let everyone mention something regarding this matter" (Student 13). Another student, quite emotionally, disclosed that:

For the first time in my life, I was panicky and went through 60 pages over a night and then realised I was not alone during this journey. I am not the only one struggling with the workload, new life, new language or new relationship. Ironically, on the one hand, I screamed inside due to so many things coming. All is new and hard to digest right away. On the other hand, I tried to calm my friends down when I saw them in a panic like me (Student 80).

On the other hand, one student, almost in a dissecting way, summarised the formation of a group identity and their role in this process:

In the course of the seminar and the first week of classes, I've realised I am also going through a change as my learning experience surpasses the boundaries of what is being taught in class. All of this results in a deeper understanding of my colleagues as a group and as individuals, as well as my values and expectations in what concerns my interactions with the group. This new social integration brings to light the type of behaviours I'm expected to have as an integrant part of the class now, how I affect. I am affected by others' behaviors, partaking in the creation of the group identity, and accepting new values and routines. I find myself frequently reflecting on how my interaction needs to be fitted to the new role I am expected to perform (Student 32).

Consequently, several students realised that their change of subject position or identity, particularly but not exclusively in relation to their role as university students, was a relational process and not only an individual endeavour: "Additionally, this multicultural classroom that we have also allows me to gain different perspectives and learn new things unlike I have ever experienced before. Understanding these cultural differences will help me grow as a person and professional" (Student 23). Increased awareness and the co-creation of knowledge became tangible in the seminars and discussions: "The whole discussion was very critical, and everyone tried to be active and make a contribution. As everyone has their own methods of learning, ways of thinking and perspectives of viewing, I learned from finding out what was neglected by me before when listening to others and realised the value of sharing our various backgrounds and experience" (Student 26). For this co-creation of knowledge to work and for the individual to find an acknowledged place in the group, some subjective traits are, however, necessary:

At the same time, I realised that the respect you receive from other people depends on the degree of how much effort you put into your reading, thinking and preparing section. It means if you have sufficient resources from your summary and critical thinking, you have more capability to agree or disagree with other people's opinions on different topics (Student 88).

In the second year, one student from the year before visited the new year's newcomers at the introduction week to tell his experiences after one year in the university, embedded in an entirely new TLR. His performance also worked as a declaration that the students are a collective as well as individuals: "Then we got to meet (the student from the year before) and it got us thinking, because I was not alone to having these feelings, there were more in the class with those thoughts" (Student 75), becoming a sort of role model in the process:

Having the possibility to listen to his testimony motivated me even more to keep learning and maintaining my enthusiasm for the program. He made an outstanding and emotional presentation about some of the academic and personal concerns that sometimes we are unable to share with professors or colleagues openly, and that might result in low performances. I believe that he became a role model to many of us (especially international students from third world countries) who felt identity with his words and development (Student 77).

## Conclusion

In this paper, we have recapitulated and discussed the applicability of the TLR outside its original context. TLR, initially outlined by Trowler and Cooper in 2002 and applied widely in research on higher education, was meant as a model or tool that could envision and make tangible teachers' inherent pedagogical imaginations and teaching practices for themselves. In our case, we presented and discussed the existence and forms of different TLRs with Master students, making them aware that: a) different teachers and universities have different TLRs and b) that their prior university studies *de facto* inculcate them into a particular habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) with a distinct TLR. In our practice, we brought a pedagogical model and approach from the "backstage", i.e., the internal discourse and pedagogical courses for university teachers led by higher research and education scholars and pedagogues. We then took this pedagogical model (TLR) to the "frontstage", the classroom and the students. The question of whether this is a constructive approach needs to be anchored in additional research, even if our understanding of this take is a positive one. Before that, however, we need to have a more ethical discussion regarding this case, as it is no doubt that this has been not only an "experiment" in pedagogy but also an "experiment" in the conduct of power.

From a pragmatic point of view, "everyone" seems pleased with the introduction week, both students and teachers alike. In sum, the week offered students a key to use or a template to apply to be better prepared for the forthcoming Master's

programme. It gave the students insights and tools to get a good start in the Master's programme, reducing the risk of failure in the very first course of the programme. A majority of the students did not pass the first exam on the first course in both years. Still, they expressed confidence that they could manage it eventually as they could conceptualise and grasp why they had not passed (they had not yet embraced the university's TLR, but did not know what to do about it). But from the Foucauldian framework used in this paper, it is inevitable that we, the teachers, functioned as pedagogical pastors or priests, eliciting and encouraging confessions and avowals from the students. Again, we are reminded that power is never absent from the classroom, even if the education is filled with benevolent intentions (Brookfield et al., 2022).

We also need to be aware that this process of confession and avowal encourages a movement of the students' subject position that, in the end, may result in a more homogeneous and rectified body of students with similar practices and ways of reasoning regarding university knowledge, pedagogy, and proper behaviour in the classroom, imposing Foucauldian disciplinary power over the minds and the bodies of international students. At least these are conclusions or indications that can be found in critical management studies that have applied a Foucauldian take on how corporation and public sector organisations have attempted through education and internal training of employees (Skålen & Fougère, 2007; Skålen, 2010). Common ideas within service marketing include the belief that employees can improve their performance by following decided guidelines and procedures when interacting with customers, resulting in performance excellence. However, when every service worker follows the same script and procedure, the conduct becomes homogeneous and eventually regarded as standard (rather than excellent) by the customers (Skålen & Fougère, 2007). At the same time, there is a disciplinary pressure on the employees, resulting in some of them not feeling they fit into the organisation any longer (Skålen, 2010).

Consequently, there is a need to admit that pedagogical approaches like the one described in the paper might as well be a timid tool in the further neoliberalisation of the universities, as it might encourage an instrumental and streamlined behaviour among students that otherwise, as a group, would have a more heterogeneous and diverse set-up of practices and imaginations to apply in their daily work at the universities. One might be provoked to wonder if such an outcome might possibly restrict learning and constrain knowledge. Given such high stakes, the question of if this is a probable outcome of self-scrutinising pedagogical practices and performances among university students in an international context calls for further consideration.

What we can argue, thus, is that admitting and declaring these 'hidden' power effects of even a benevolent pedagogy, like the case presented above, to the students could be of benefit to them. That requires a short introduction of Foucault's ideas but helps the students to further contextualise and understand their place as learning subjects at the neoliberal university (and in the continuation of a neoliberal society). Being open with the 'hidden' role of

the benevolent university teacher is being honest about the societal ecology teachers and students are engulfed in. As we see it, it could not be something negative.

As a more practical recommendation, in order to follow up and assist students in facing the challenges of a different TLR (and not only reflect on these challenges), we suggest that teachers render the workings of the TLR visible to students in the classroom, revealing the institutional and epistemological assumptions underpinning the design of teaching and learning activities. This calls for not only a reflexive capacity on the part of both teachers and students but also a willingness to set aside traditional role relations, and their implicit power differentials, in favour of a more equal footing as mutual subjects of the TLR. One practical step is simply to openly reflect upon and invite conversations with students about how the TLR affects teaching and learning practices, including course design, lesson plans, examinations, and grading. These revelatory moments might occur in discussions of course design logics at introductory lectures at the commencement of courses and in discussions of assessment logics and grading schemes when presenting information about upcoming assessment tasks during courses. Revelatory moments may even be activated through feedback comments on assessment tasks, improving the quality of feedback by offering insight into the logic of the TLR shaping form of evaluation and its grading (Nicol et al., 2014; Orrell, 2006).

Rendering the practical workings of the TLR present in everyday teaching and learning practices not only empowers students to navigate the conditions of their learning environment better but also serves to enhance the relevance of learning by enabling students to gain insight into the underlying rationality of the TLR guiding teaching and learning activities. Both support students' learning. Revelatory moments effectively transform the learning context, practically empowering students to be more active and effective in their learning, aligning with the expression of democratic values undergirding participatory course design (Bergmark & Westman, 2016). These revelatory moments also work to de-mystify learning tasks and enhance the perceived relevance of teaching and learning activities, aligning to andragogic approaches which highlight that for adult learners, engagement in learning turns on understanding the relevance of learning activities (Knowles et al., 2015).

## References

- ACA (2021). OECD education at a glance 2021. *Academic Cooperation Association*. <https://aca-secretariat.be/newsletter/oecd-education-at-a-glance-2021-flows-of-international-students/?titleId=2&articleId=40&edition=2021>.
- Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. Jossey-Bass.
- Bager-Elsborg, A. (2018). How lecturers' understanding of change is embedded in disciplinary practices: A multiple

- case study. *Higher Education*, 76(2), 195–212. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0195-0>
- Bergmark, U., & Westman, S. (2016). Co-creating curriculum in higher education: Promoting democratic values and a multidimensional view on learning. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21(1), 28–40.
- Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (4th ed). McGraw Hill.
- Brookfield, S. D., Rudolph, J., & Tan, S. (2022). Powerful teaching, the paradox of empowerment and the powers of Foucault. An interview with Professor Stephen Brookfield. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching*, 5(1), 131–145. <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2022.5.1.12>
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Polity.
- Büttgen, P. (2021). Foucault's concept of confession. *Foucault Studies* 29, 6–21. <https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.vi29.6210>
- Dean, M. (1995). Governing the unemployed self in an active society. *Economy and Society*, 24(4), 559–583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085149500000025>
- Elden, S. (2016). *Foucault's last decade*. Polity Press.
- Fanghanel, J. (2009a). The role of ideology in shaping academics' conceptions of their discipline. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14(5), 565–577. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510903186790>
- Fanghanel, J. (2009b). Exploring teaching and learning regimes in higher education settings. In C. Kreber (Ed.), *The university and its disciplines. Teaching and learning within and beyond disciplinary boundaries* (pp. 196–208). Routledge.
- Fleming, N. D., & Mills, C. (1992). Not another inventory, rather a catalyst for reflection. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, 11(1), 137–155. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2334-4822.1992.tb00213.x>
- Foucault, M. (1985). *The use of pleasure: The history of sexuality* (Vol. 2). Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1986). *The care of the self: The history of sexuality* (Vol. 3). Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1997). *The politics of truth*. Semiotext(e).
- Foucault, M. (2021). *Confessions of the flesh: The history of sexuality* (Vol. 4). Penguin.
- Frølich, N., Huisman, J., Slipersæter, S., Stensaker, B., & Pimentel Bótas, P. C. (2013). A reinterpretation of institutional transformations in European higher education: Strategizing pluralistic organizations in multiplex environments. *Higher Education*, 65(1), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9582-8>
- Hannon, J., Garraway, J., Peseta, T., & Winberg, C. (2017). Putting theory to work. Comparing theoretical perspectives on academic practices in teaching and learning change. In B. Leibowitz, V. Bozalek & P. Kahn (Eds.), *Theorizing learning to teach in higher education* (pp. 207–223). Routledge.
- Harcourt, B. E. (2020). *Critique & praxis. A critical philosophy of illusions, values, and action*. Columbia University Press.
- Hussein, I., & Schiffelbein, K. (2020). University professors' perceptions of international student needs. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching*, 3(1), 65–70. <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2020.3.1.8>
- Knowles, M. S., Holton III, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2015). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Lisewski, B. (2020). How tutor-practitioners conceptualized and enacted their practice-based knowing in a higher education fashion school: A teaching and learning regime approach. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(6), 730–743. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2020.1812550>
- Macmillan, A. (2011). Michel Foucault's techniques of the self and the Christian politics of obedience. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 28(4), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411405348>
- Myers, E. (2008). Resisting Foucauldian ethics: Associative politics and the limits of the care of the self. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 7(2), 125–146. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cpt.2007.25>
- Nicol, D., Thomson, A., & Breslin, C. (2014). Rethinking feedback practices in higher education: A peer review perspective. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39(1), 102–122. doi:10.1080/02602938.2013.795518
- Orrell, J. (2006). Feedback on learning achievement: Rhetoric and reality. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(4), 441–456. doi:10.1080/13562510600874235
- Papier, J. (2008). Policy, practices and persistent traditions in teacher education: The construct of teaching and learning regimes. *Journal of Education*, 45, 7–28.
- Mathieson, S. (2012). Disciplinary cultures of teaching and learning as socially situated practice: rethinking the space between social constructivism and epistemological essentialism from the South African experience. *Higher Education*, 63(5), 549–564. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-011-9458-3>
- OECD. (2020). *OECD iLibrary. Indicator B6. What is the profile of internationally mobile students?* <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/974729f4-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/974729f4-en>
- Roxå, T., & Mårtensson, K. (2009). Significant conversations and significant networks – exploring the backstage of the teaching arena. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(5), 547–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802597200>
- Roxå, T., & Mårtensson, K. (2013). How effects from

teaching-training of academic teachers propagate into the meso level and beyond. In E. Simon & G. Pleschová (Eds.), *Teacher development in higher education. Existing programs, program impact, and future trends* (pp. 213–233). Routledge.

Skålén, P. (2010). *Managing service firms. The power of managerial marketing*. Routledge.

Skålén, P., & Fougère, M. (2007). Be(com)ing normal - not excellent: Servicemanagement, the gap model and disciplinary power. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 20(1), 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810710715315>

Tange, H. (2021). *Teaching practices in a global learning environment. An interdisciplinary take on international education*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Trowler, P. (2020). *Accomplishing change in teaching and learning regimes. Higher education and the practice sensibility*. Oxford University Press.

Trowler, P., & Cooper, A. (2002). Teaching and learning regimes: Implicit theories and recurrent practices in the enhancement of teaching and learning through development programs. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 21(3), 221–240. [doi.org/10.1080/0729436022000020742](https://doi.org/10.1080/0729436022000020742)

Copyright: © 2023. Elin Bommenel, Richard Ek and Stuart Reid. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.