

Evaluating the Learning Gain of Undergraduate Students

Dr Martyn Polkinghorne^{a,b} & Dr Gelarah Roushan^a

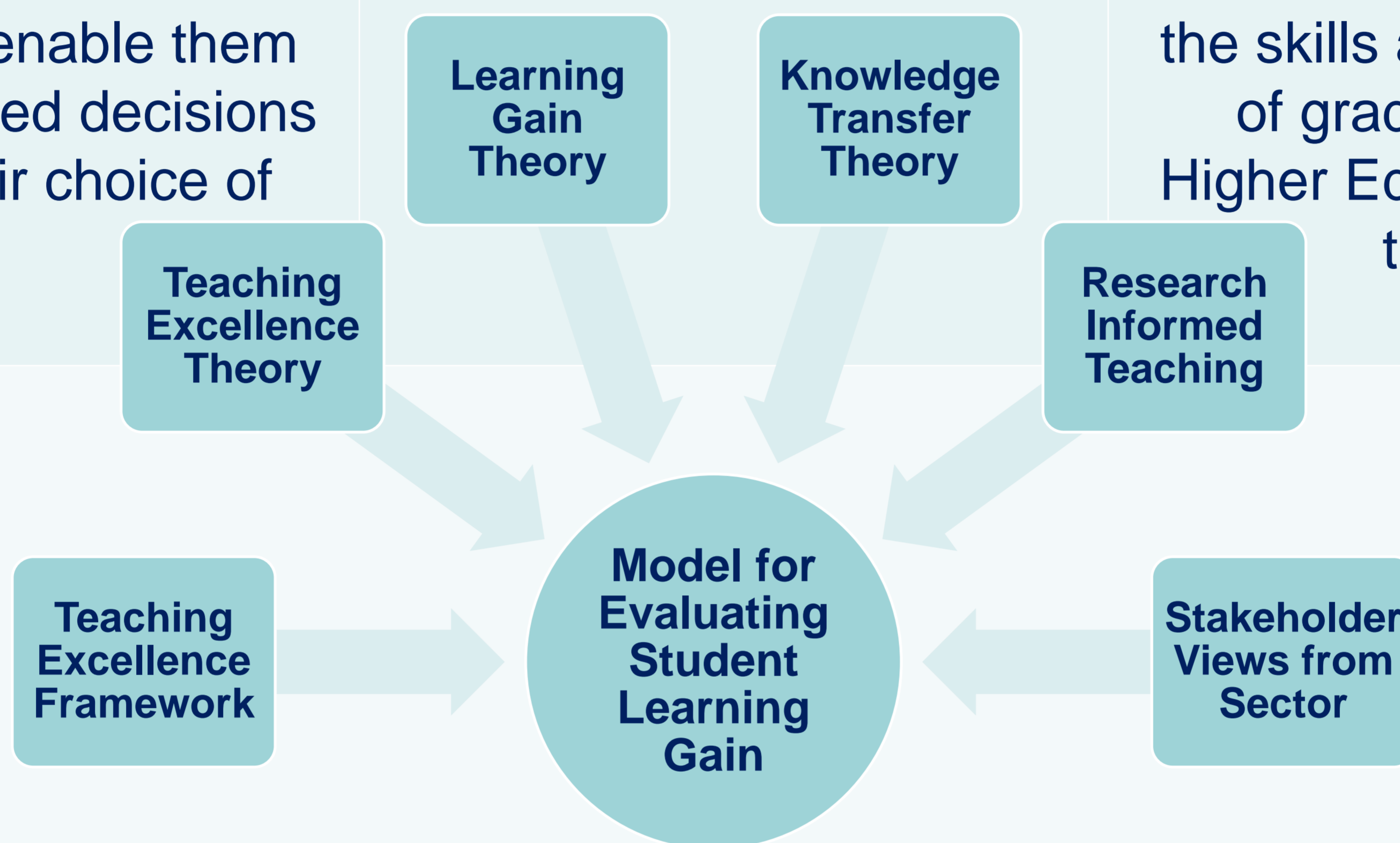
^aFaculty of Management

^bFaculty of Health & Social Sciences

WHY? This research has been undertaken as it is important to evaluate the learning gain of students at BU to identify both good teaching practice to share, and areas for development that can be supported.

As a result of the marketisation of Higher Education, **Students** need information to enable them to make informed decisions concerning their choice of university and course.

With growing demand for high level skills, **Employers** want to know more about the skills and job readiness of graduates leaving the Higher Education sector as they are the future workforce.



Developing a Model for Evaluating Student Learning Gain

WHEN? The Government has proposed the introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for which one metric for assessing teaching quality will be an understanding of the learning gain achieved by students during their studies. Timing is important as if we start to evaluate the learning gain of students now, we will have data that we can use later to support our reporting.

HOW? Representing a range of important stakeholders, sixty consultation responses to the proposed TEF were reviewed, from which ten key characteristics were identified that the sector considers should be considered when evaluating the learning gain of students.

WHERE? Based upon these findings, a novel model for evaluating student learning gain has been developed and tested at BU with a small cohort of Level 6 undergraduate Business Studies students. The results have been very interesting and a larger pilot is now being undertaken.

METHODOLOGY
This was a qualitative research study using an inductive approach and the philosophical position of interpretivism. A non-probability homogeneous sampling technique was employed with content review using the recursive abstraction process.

10 Key Characteristics Identified:

1. Requires minimal administrative effort
2. Focuses on learning gain not learning outcomes
3. Avoids existing data sources, e.g. DLHE and NSS
4. Supports development of autonomous learners
5. Must ignore external factors
6. Captures diversity of subjects
7. Accommodates teaching variations
8. Supports improvements in teaching
9. Informs continuous improvement process
10. Must be relevant to students and employers