

Humanising higher education through a multi angle approach can be transformational for students and staff, can inspire learning, advance knowledge, and enrich society. During this thematic forum we will introduce our approach to embedding a culture of kindness, a positive mindset and a caring approach, all areas included as part of our university's implementation plan as a route to humanise our practice.

We will begin by exploring the notion of humanising which according to Galvin and Todres (2013, p. 10/11) is to “uphold a particular view or value of what it means to be human, and furthermore to find ways to act on this concern. Such concern also needs to be practically translated into the more experiential issues of what practices can make people feel more human”.

Traditionally humanising practice has been explored within health and social care, we felt that its essence and the humanising framework developed by Todres et al. (2009) could be applied within the context of higher education. Todres et al. (2009), explain that there are two main foundations to base the strategies to humanise practice. The first one is that the vocabulary used must be simple and continuously focus on humanising issues. The second one is to make sure that this humanising focus is championed at all levels of an organisation. Within the higher education environment, these encompass the language, values, attitudes, and behaviours that can be shared, and role modelled within every level of the organisation.

We will relate it to our own experiences in various roles within the university and how taking on a humanising approach has shaped the way in which we practice (Devis-Rozental and Clarke 2020). Looking at humanising from a positive organisational culture point of view, we will then explore some of the challenges we have faced as culture leaders introducing this new way of being. We will then discuss the ways in which we have overcome these challenges and reflect on our experiences. We will draw on our previous work to present the research evidenced practice we are embedding and how this has already influenced some of our university wide responses.

During the thematic forum we will then foster dialogue and interaction by posing to the audience the following themes which have informed our work on humanising higher education:

- We are much more than a font of knowledge, our role as educators to inspire learning
- Disrupting the them and us culture prevalent in some higher education institutions when referring to academics and professional members of staff
- Values based practice as a tool to humanise environments, it is all about our people
- Embedding socio-emotional intelligence in the curriculum to enhance the student experience (Devis-Rozental 2018)
- Applying an appreciative inquiry lens to improve our practice
- Working collaboratively through embedding ubuntu as a philosophy of working to strengthen the heart of our teams
- Practicing with our head, hand and heart to deliver excellence in higher education
- Leading with kindness to develop a sense of belonging
- Spotlighting out relational energy to embed a positive organisational culture
- Positive educational strategies to inspire learning in higher education
- Creating working environment where individuals feel are able to bring their unique selves and find their purpose to enrich society
- The place of passion in higher education as an engine for positive change

Sources:

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