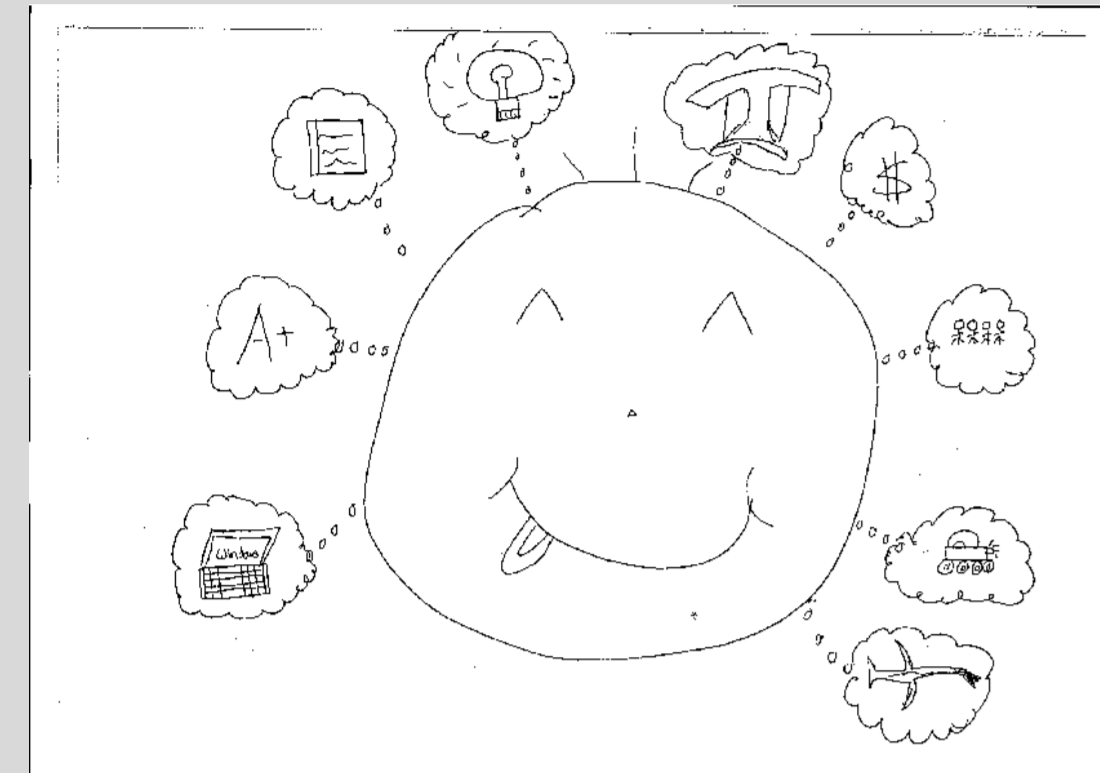# Developing a Visualisation Tool for a broader insight into the Student Experience

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Objective

To develop a rich model of the student experience by asking students to draw a "*satisfied student*", removing those barriers found in more traditional feedback methodology.

Introduction

Due to increasing international competition [1] and rising tuition fees within Higher Education, students are becoming 'increasingly instrumental and demanding' [2], leading to a student-as-customer era. This rise in student expectations requires a deeper understanding of student satisfaction.

This research aims to demystify the "student experience", while collecting data in an unorthodox method, free from traditional limitations.

Method

Participating students were asked to "draw a satisfied student", with the proviso that there was enough information for an observer to know *why* the student was satisfied. Over 5 years a total of 1277 drawings have been produced by students on a variety of degree programmes.

These drawings have been meticulously analysed, focusing on: individual features, the use of paper space, writing, time orientation and a number of other elements. The result, as shown below, is a detailed list of which elements occur most frequently, categorised for UG and PG students.

Findings

Due to the size of the dataset, only a limited number of results can be noted here. However, interesting features, due to their surprisingly high frequency include:

- Alcohol – **210 (combined UG & PG references)**
- Money – **172**
- The sun or warmth – **70**
- Bar/Club Environment – **40**
- Bed Environment – **40**
- Relaxing – **98**
- Graduating – **833**
- No Work – **91**

Other features are interesting due to the prediction of that they would feature much more frequently:

- Support For Student – **38**
- Quality Of Teaching – **55**
- Respect – **4**
- Studying – **210**
- Independence – **5**
- Interesting Course or Topic – **34**
- Social Networks – **1**

Discussion

This research was tasked with identifying whether drawing reveals anything which orthodox data collection methods do not, and thus whether the data tells us something about the student experience.

The most significant outcome is the suggestion that those factors which students consider the most important to their experience differ from those highlighted in literature. This prevalence of certain elements over others brings with it an interesting argument; whether those elements which feature so regularly are being drawn due to their relative importance to students or, more likely, due to a satisfaction gap.

Based upon this assumption, recommendations for improving the student experience can be found within elements which feature with the greatest frequency. Judgement must be made by institutions on whether these factors are important, and if so, how to employ this new knowledge.

Ongoing Research

Due to the volume of data produced, there are significant opportunities for follow-up studies. Work has begun on furthering our understanding the difference in opinions of students who have graduated, to those who are still studying, as well as looking into whether nationality impacts expectations.

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References:
[1] Elliott, K.M. & Shin, D. (2002) Student Satisfaction: An alternative approach to assessing this important concept. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management.* 24 (2), 197–209
[2] Richter, P., Wison, R. & Whiston, B. (2009) *Final Report of UTLC Innovation project : Teaching Research methods Innovation through Co-production of Knowledge with Students (TRICKS).* Centre for Knowledge, Innovation, Technology and Enterprise. Newcastle University Business School: Newcastle Upon Tyne

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