

Transcript

31 October 2025, 05:06pm

● **Paul Bench** started transcription

PB **Paul Bench** 0:04

So Yep, let me just check that I can. I wonder if I can see the transcription I was able to view it last time as we were doing it so we could make sure.

Show transcript.

Yes, that seems to be working excellent. Thank you. So my first, excuse me, my first formal question is you are part of the LGBTQ plus staff network and agreed to participate in this study about how?

BTQ plus slash queer subjectivity teaching. Sorry in this study of LGBTQ plus or queer subjectivity, teaching and learning. If you feel comfortable to do so, could you describe how you identify and what your role is at UAL?

Participant B 0:58

Yeah, sure. I am a non binary trans person and sometimes they use the word queer or by I guess, but yeah, and I teach. So I was I have been working as a technician in the costume department at CSM.

The last three years last year I'm also been since last year. I've also been working as the sample room tutor for the sportswear course LCF.

PB **Paul Bench** 1:29

OK, I was just with sportswear students today, so that's interesting.

Participant B 1:33

Oh, nice.

Which year group were you?

PB **Paul Bench** 1:38

Sorry, when I say with it was actually online tutorials so I'm helping them with their contextualising practise essays, yeah.

Participant B 1:43

Hmm.

Nice. Yeah. So I've been doing that and last year and this year and I'm sort of freelance. So I also work in costume at the Royal Opera and Ballet, mostly at the moment. And I. Yeah. So that's the main the main thing but.

PB Paul Bench 2:04

How are you?

Participant B 2:09

Yeah, I had more student. I had quite a lot of student contact as the costume technician and the performance, design and practise courses are also quite queer. So yeah.

PB Paul Bench 2:20

Well, that's interesting. So I mean, I guess because the way that I engage with students is very different. Maybe it's just helpful to sort of add on to that. Just what sort of what is the nature of your engagement with the students? Like what, what do you do with them, how how is it managed? What? What does it look like in the classroom?

Participant B 2:40

Yeah.

So it's sort of two, I'm sort of not working there this year because I've had an ongoing pay dispute and issues with transphobia. So, but in respect to my, so I'm not teaching with with this current cohort, but what I was doing before is basically it was two parts. So teaching like practical skills workshops.

And like helping them on the machines, helping them with construction for their project. So sort of costumes, property, bits, alterations and also just like helping them individually. And then also manning the room to just sort of be there for questions, especially when the shows are being staged in the theatre.

So because it was a lot of sort of collaborative shows, but small groups of students working together, a lot of them explored queer themes and identity, and especially

students who are sort of interested in going and directing often did, like autobiographical work. So.

PB Paul Bench 3:38

Yeah.

Participant B 3:41

Even though I wasn't teaching on the sort of conceptual part of the course like trying to translate those ideas into physical, like theatre, realities meant discussing a lot of that kind of in depth to sort of help them reflect that. So.

PB Paul Bench 3:57

OK, so so it's a lot of practise, but you do have some quite sort of in-depth discussions about the nature of their projects and things like that. Yeah. OK. So my next formal question I guess is, do you have any thoughts about how your identity relates?

Participant B 3:57

Yeah.

Yeah.

PB Paul Bench 4:17

Your teaching practise, and perhaps that builds on what what you were just describing.

Participant B 4:23

Yeah, I think there's in relation to my practise, there's sort of a slightly separate bit as well, which is that I'm when I was at CSM specifically, I was trying to like DE gender, a lot of items in the workroom or like ideas about clothing and costume.

PB Paul Bench 4:39

Umm.

Participant B 4:40

And that kind of, yeah, came from my identity as a trans person and a non binary

person. But um.

As there were several students in that year doing like drag performance, it also kind of fit in quite well with that happening in the workroom. So we were sort of talking about tailoring clothing, you know, switching genders of clothing and how to alter things to make it fit different bodies. And then also I was trying to like work on our Pan Library.

And make sure we have like a diverse range of sizes and body types and to try and take out as much of the gendered language as possible. So and I think that's something I sort of brought over into sportswear as well to sort of try and.

Yeah, make sure people are not not excluding like groups from their customer research or like when they think about things trying to like make their idea of. Who they're designing for a bit broader.

PB **Paul Bench** 5:39

Mm-hmm.

So it's it's sort of about doing quite again quite practical things in in terms of like you were saying about the patterns and the language that is used, but also in you know in discussions when it relates to the kind of projects that the student is doing and sort of expanding their horizons and things like that.

OK, so in what this maybe this is similar. In what ways do you think your identity does or doesn't relate to the style and content of your teaching? Perhaps that's slightly more angled to.

I guess I was thinking about my own teaching, which is sort of lecture based but but and so maybe you've covered that, but you know, if you want to expand so your identity and the style and content of your teaching.

Participant B 6:34

Umm.

I'm trying to think, I guess there's not a lot of like, there's not a lot of times when I have to provide examples of people to discuss or like work to discuss, because that's not so much the type of teaching that I do. So in the small opportunities I have for that, it's to try and like, portray a diverse range of people.

PB **Paul Bench** 6:46

Mm-hmm.

Participant B 6:56

But I I I mean I think that's sort of somewhat separate from my identity, right? Like that's just a good teaching practise.

I think I don't. I mean, I don't know how my identity relates to my style of teaching, I think.

I do a lot of one-on-one teaching and I like that and I find that a really good way to communicate with the students and sort of help address their specific concerns and any specific needs they might have, right?

PB **Paul Bench** 7:32

Mm-hmm.

Participant B 7:34

But I don't feel like my identity impact that in any great way that I can think of.

PB **Paul Bench** 7:39

OK, OK. And so to what extent and in what ways do you think your identity impacts on your relationship to students in diverse circumstances? And can you think of any examples?

Participant B 7:57

None.

One. Well, I guess one side effect of having like a large cohort of international students is that sometimes they haven't really they have a language trouble and also then trouble with non binary pronouns or like how to address me.

So I think that has come up.

Like more frequently year on year, but that hasn't been a problem. You know, you like, have a conversation and it's fine, but.

PB **Paul Bench** 8:28

Mm-hmm.

Participant B 8:33

Yeah, I think I had like a first class where we you get the students to like write what

we want them to address them as and then sort of name pronouns and like a sport, they like or something. But then there were quite a lot of students who didn't, who didn't understand what the pronouns column was for. And so that we had a conversation about that and then they were having a language sort of conversation about the language in Chinese.

Is, as we were talking about it, so.

I think that's sort of I didn't really expect to be having that conversation in work, but it went much better than I could have expected. So yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 9:06

That's good in. In what way did you do you mean like, it's not something that you expected to a conversation you expected to be having?

Participant B 9:16

I think.

I guess when I imagine having, I think yeah, sometimes quite people tend to well, I tend to catastrophize slightly. So if I'm imagining having an unpleasant interaction with someone about being trans in at work, in my what I'm worried about is my like manager or my Co workers.

Right. But I think I just didn't really consider having to have that conversation with students also.

PB **Paul Bench** 9:46

I see. OK. So it it was less about like the language barrier and just a sort of general, you know, language thing of not really understand what was going on maybe.

Participant B 10:00

Yeah.

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 10:06

So you mentioned this is not in my official questions and you absolutely don't have to answer anything that I that I ask you and obviously you might want to keep some things confidential or they might be personal. But you've mentioned a couple of times things to do with colleagues and I'm also interested.

Is in your experience as an LGBTQ plus slash queer non binary trans person at UAL, so that part of that is we discussed like the students in the classroom, but part of it is also colleagues. So is there anything that you you'd like to say about how you feel? Feel in the institution.

Participant B 10:48

Yeah, I.

I had, I found it quite frustrating because I had various issues with paperwork that I didn't feel was inclusive and because I was a temporary employee, I had to fill in a lot of regular paperwork in order to get paid.

And I feel like a problem I've had with UAL on a couple of different topics is you sort of get in touch about an issue, and then you send a few emails back and forth, and then you get transferred to a new person, and then you do that again and it feels like you do that five or six times and then actually nothing really happens.

PB **Paul Bench** 11:26

No.

Participant B 11:27

And I think I was frustrated that.

The university was using a lot of trans people in its imagery and like on its Instagram and sort of saying a lot of things about, like, allyship and how to be good trans allies. And then there just wasn't really any money or resources or time actually put into accomplishing that.

PB **Paul Bench** 11:51

Mm-hmm.

Participant B 11:53

So I found that really frustrating and I had quite a lot of. I had colleagues and my manager specifically just sort of continued to misgender me all the way through the three years. And when I was leaving the job, but not intentionally, you know, he would always apologise if I corrected. He wouldn't correct himself.

PB **Paul Bench** 12:05

I know.

OK.

Participant B 12:11

But if I apologise if you know, I corrected him, he would apologise. But then in my sort of final, you know, month of term, I sent him an e-mail and then he sort of forwarded it on to payroll, talking about me and like CC D me in. And he'd misgendered me all the way through the e-mail, like 15 times.

PB **Paul Bench** 12:31

Right.

Participant B 12:33

And I was, yeah, I was sort of done at that point.

PB **Paul Bench** 12:37

And.

Participant B 12:40

But I also felt frustrated that there wasn't any specific training right. There's no training for like, inclusive, managing for managers at UAL to do, to my knowledge, and.

Yeah, I had a couple of e-mail exchanges with Polly McKenzie before she left, which were not great. So I was, yeah, I was not very happy and I know that other trans colleagues have not.

Been having a good experience specifically in the last year and having said that, I've been much more comfortable at LCF and.

PB **Paul Bench** 13:22

That's interesting.

Participant B 13:23

Yeah, there's still, like, you know, misgendering, that happens. And that's kind of to be expected, right. But All in all, I found it like, more welcoming and just also better, much better kind of.

Organised in the sort of bureaucracy I've had a lot less issues and so that's been like really nice and I feel like I can enjoy my teaching much more when I'm not, you know, worrying about that. So yeah. Yeah, it's good.

PB Paul Bench 13:50

That's brilliant.

That's really nice to hear. I I I mean it's it's not part of this interview really. But I I sort of have a similar experience. There's quite a lot of bureaucracy in, in my department, but it it kind of seems to largely work.

And there's a lot of energy and support, and like the attitude between staff is generally for me, like being pretty positive. I know that's not the case, but everybody of course it never, it never will be, but that's really nice to hear and it's nice that to know that we're working with the same students perhaps.

Participant B 14:30

Yeah.

PB Paul Bench 14:31

So, OK, OK. So that's covered kind of some administrative and institutional barriers perhaps and well not perhaps that that is what you've described and also some person to person.

Umm.

Encounters with actual staff that that haven't made it a pleasant experience for you.

Do you feel like this is an again? An additional question and thought, do you feel like that there was any barrier to you getting the position in the first place?

Or do you think it was afterwards that you encountered some problems?

Participant B 15:17

I think it wasn't a barrier to me getting the position. I was sort of recommended by a friend who sort of had done some work there and I already had sort of quite a bit of teaching experience, so.

But I think also because I'm well because I'm non binary, right? It's like my I haven't changed my gender or my passport or anything. So as much as like when I started there it's sort of dead named me on the forms until I fixed it but.

I don't think there was a sort of barrier in that sense and the same way I think with

the job at LCFI was sort of recommended and I think with technical skills jobs, right, there's more of a like show your examples of work and sort of do some.

Demo teaching um, and I don't think.

That was a barrier. It maybe also helps that sportswear is not split into gendered sections, right? It's not like menswear, women's wear, so.

Yeah, and that also helps, I guess.

PB Paul Bench 16:29

That's interesting as well, because and perhaps we don't need to go into this here because it's more about the the, the the actual topic and I'm thinking about my students, but sportswear, obviously historically is like hugely gendered in some quite and sports. And the way that sports are done is is.

Participant B 16:46

Yeah.

PB Paul Bench 16:47

Yeah, and sometimes that's the thing that the students write about as well.

OK, So what observations have you made regarding LGBTQ? Plus? Or we might say queer students in classes, and I'm aware that sort of built into that is an asset, you know, a kind of.

Perhaps an ethical assumption, but you know, some kind of personal observation that relates to how you read identity in students unless they are formally telling you about their, you know, sexual and gender identity.

But have you got any observations of of queer students and how they behave and interact and and learn?

Participant B 17:41

Yeah. I mean, there's a couple of like specific examples where.

Yeah, that projects were explicitly about their transness, or queerness, and one specifically, that was about not so much sort of identity, but exploring like a more feminine presentation, but how that related to his masculinity. Right. So that's.

Sort of involves quite a lot of in-depth conversation about that, but I think.

I'd never saw any negative sort of interactions with other students about queerness or transness. That was just sort of like a non issue which was great to see that I think

maybe also performances.

Yeah, it'll be sad if theatre wasn't accepting so.

PB Paul Bench 18:36

Yeah.

Participant B 18:39

Yeah, I think.

In terms of how they were learning.

I think maybe specifically because they were performance students, they were very open about, like quite a lot of personal issues, right, that were related to the content of their work. And we're very happy to sort of share and discuss in depth with each other. And so I think.

The type of work everyone was making meant that the students learnt a lot about each other and had a very kind of intense relationship. Sometimes in those sort of small groups when they're working together.

PB Paul Bench 19:15

Mm-hmm.

Participant B 19:17

So I think if you were not willing to be as open or to share as much, it would be harder to bring that into your work.

PB Paul Bench 19:27

Yeah.

Participant B 19:28

In that space.

PB Paul Bench 19:29

And you sort of referenced that there are sort of many queer students or students making work that relates to, I guess we might say, queer sexual or gender identity in performance.

Umm.

Is there any?

Observation about interaction with any cisgendered air quotes straight students in that space that that you've noted or.

No.

OK.

Participant B 20:09

More in depth together in groups, so I think if those had happened, it would probably be in that space rather than where I was.

PB

Paul Bench 20:17

Do do you think?

We I mentioned before, I asked a question about your relationship to the students and you mentioned that you sometimes have like quite their, you know these discussions between the students themselves can become quite intense about because they're making work that's about their how they feel about themselves and their identities.

Yeah.

Does that in do you? Does that intensity crossover to you or do they do you feel like they do come to you because of your identity or is it just such a queer space that nobody kind of it doesn't really it it's sort of an equaliser or?

Or is it not an effect at all?

Participant B 21:04

It's hard to tell because in this space I was predominantly working with one colleague who is also queer, so as to whether they wanted to specifically come to one of us. I feel like either both of us were there.

PB

Paul Bench 21:14

Right.

Yeah.

Participant B 21:18

Umm.

I think there were some students who, specifically the students who are interested in

drag, who were more likely to kind of set up camp in the costume room and stay there and do a lot of their work there. And then the students who were sort of regularly in there together.

PB **Paul Bench** 21:37

Hmm.

Participant B 21:40

Would spend more time together and like play music in the evening and you know, kind of hang out while they do their work. But I think I was quite conscious about keeping boundaries around sharing about my own experience like I was open about my identity, but.

PB **Paul Bench** 21:42

Hmm.

Yeah.

Participant B 22:00

Wanted to like keep that boundary clear so.

PB **Paul Bench** 22:03

Yeah, yeah.

So final question, I think, yeah. So we've talked about you and your teaching practises and colleagues and the institution and relationship to the students and your observation of the students.

But what memories do you have that relate to your identity and your own experience of higher education?

Participant B 22:38

What question, let me remember.

PB **Paul Bench** 22:41

You don't have to answer and I know it's like a difficult to sort of dredge up.

Participant B 22:45

No, you're fine. I'm just, you know, like, suddenly struck by the mental image of myself at 19. Yeah. So this. Well, at the time, I was in higher education, I identified as a this woman, like bisexual, this woman. So I guess that also.

PB **Paul Bench** 22:51

Yeah.

Participant B 23:04

Is relevant to that experience, but because the course that I did was costume construction, it was 85% women and that, you know, maybe like.

The other 15% very for the most part, like openly gay man so.

There were some queer women, but not that many. I think I was definitely like in the minority by quite a long way in that. But so I think that that's sort of all relevant.

And I don't think any like none of my tutors were queer or like opening queer at work. I should say, I guess so.

I don't think I would have felt comfortable doing work that explored my gender or sexuality in that space, but also it was quite a practical sort of technical course, so it also wasn't it wasn't a design course, so it also wasn't really the space for that.

PB **Paul Bench** 24:10

Mm-hmm.

Participant B 24:14

Yeah. I think also that you know.

Like demographic of of the other students on my course has been reflected in most of the work rooms that I've worked in so.

I think in my work, I'm yeah, often there hasn't been, like, there's no other like trans people or like people out at work, so I think.

PB **Paul Bench** 24:40

In terms of staff?

Participant B 24:43

Yeah. Or I think just because, like especially in the making right in other departments, yes. But I think in the the making sort of work rooms that I'm in, it's like yeah, 90%

women and like a couple of men and me so.

Yeah, that also.

PB Paul Bench 25:03

And you said you said it was relevant like you, you referred to yourself as being in, in a minority in those spaces and and you're relating that to like the the kind of balance in the rooms that you're currently in. But in what way do you think it might be relevant?

Participant B 25:23

I guess in terms of higher education, right, like a lot of people come to university and then explore their queerness and their gender, but I think.

I didn't really do that because of the demographic of my course mates and that wasn't, you know, we were sort of weren't going out. I didn't feel like I could take people from my course out to like a queer space.

PB Paul Bench 25:38

Hmm.

Participant B 25:50

So, but it's hard to know, right? Like how much of that was just in my head at the time.

PB Paul Bench 25:56

But whatever's in your head is also important. So and and I'm quite interested in this relationship between.

Participant B 25:57

We don't know, right? Yeah.

PB Paul Bench 26:08

You know, there's a sort of ambiguity, but also like an acknowledged relationship between.

The experience of young people coming to university and being away from home

and then sort of being adults, but sort of not quite and sort of being under the protection of the university, but then not at all. So and like, you know of.

Participant B 26:27

Play song.

Hmm.

PB Paul Bench 26:35

Of course, it's kind of, you know, where where you are day in, day out and who you're with and what you're doing at this sort of formative moment is important. But then and then what's happening outside of the space of the institution.

And it's quite interesting that you just you said that there's a disconnect like or on the course with the cohort that you were with. That wasn't something that you could explore, but your for your students, it is something that like it's very much a space on the type of course.

And the type of of thing that they're doing. So yeah, I'm intrigued.

You don't have to say anything more about this, but I'm intrigued about.

The nature of kind of.

You know, self becoming and you know exploring who we are and like how that relates to university basically.

Participant B 27:30

Hmm.

PB Paul Bench 27:38

I don't know if you had any.

Participant B 27:38

I think, yeah, I was just thinking about it. I mean, it's also like time passing, right? Like I know that now there's like pride flags all over URL. They do things for trans day of remembrance. It's just a lot more visible I think at the university now than it was when I studied.

But I think another difference in the courses is that I approached because it was a sort of practical training course in a lot of ways, right? I wanted to gain practical skills

and I we were told often that, you know, these are the people that you'll end up then working with and you'll, you know.

PB **Paul Bench** 28:12

Mm-hmm.

Participant B 28:12

So I think I also felt a bit of pressure to keep like the more messy parts of my life slightly away from it. Um so.

PB **Paul Bench** 28:20

It's interesting.

Participant B 28:24

Like I made friends on the course, but not in the not the sort of friends that I would like, you know, divulge my personal mess to so I.

Yeah. Whereas I think, yeah, for the theatre course, like divulging your personal mass is like a large part of what you're doing sometimes. So it's relevant, yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 28:45

OK.

Very interesting. Thank you so much. Do you have anything that you would like to add on on this subject or?

Participant B 28:57

No, I don't think so. I've just got accepted to do the PG cert next year, so I'm taking notes.

PB **Paul Bench** 28:59

You've thought about longingly.

Oh, fantastic. Well, that's. I mean, that's a really that's that's a really good thing to be doing and that's like a huge kind of vote of confidence in you from the university.

Did it come via a department at LCF or at CSM? You don't have to tell me. But just in truth.

Participant B 29:21

Yes, because I was primary, I was doing more teaching hours there at the time when I applied so, but I think it doesn't matter, sort of. I think I can keep going either way. So yeah, I'm excited.

PB **Paul Bench** 29:31

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But yeah, it's the the. It's something that they're paying for you to do. So they they're investing in you, so that's good. I'm going to just quick stop the recording now. I hope that's worked. Hasn't worked.

Participant B 29:40

Yeah.

PB **Paul Bench** 29:49

Yeah.

● **Paul Bench** stopped transcription