Flipping Failure: A case study on building resilience and confidence through 'Failureship Strategies' in theory and practice at the University of Salford

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Abstract

This paper presents the Flipping Failure project, which aims to challenge the negative perception of failure and promote its benefits for building resilience, insight, and action. The project involved students and staff who participated in failure-focused events that explored different aspects of failure in various contexts. We discuss the theory and practice of flipping failure to present it more positively and provide a practical toolkit with resources to help others adopt failure as a transferable skill-set. In sharing the outcomes and insights of the project, and its further development at The Festival of Learning and Teaching, we suggest ways to enhance and extend this work in the future.

Keywords: failure, confidence, resilience, reflection, transferable skills.

Introduction

Failure is often initially experienced as a negative and undesirable outcome that should be avoided or concealed. However, failure can also be a valuable source of learning, resilience, and innovation. In this paper, we present the Flipping Failure Project; an initiative which challenges the stigma of failure and promotes its positive and constructive aspects. The project was supported by the Salford Advantage Fund

(Salford Giving, 2022), and involved a series of events, activities, and resources that explored the experience of failure in different contexts and domains. This paper will describe the design and implementation of the project and discuss its impact on the students, staff and communities involved. We will reflect on the theoretical foundations of failure as a concept and assess its implications for education and research as a transferable skill. In doing so, we will bring together the theory behind the concept and its practical features through the evaluation of the failure intervention and present recommendations in light of its impact for future practice and research.

Exploring the theory of failure and its impact on learning

Through the Flipping Failure Project, we have explored strategies for 'flipping failure' in a practice-based setting. We worked closely with UK and International Doctoral Student communities as a group that can provide insight into both student and staff perspectives, is multicultural and diverse. Through this practice we identified a transferable and wider skill set that we argue is applicable to adult learning more generally. Changing the way we perceive and approach failure can transform learners' confidence, it can increase and promote resilience, and it can enhance wellbeing.

The failure fallacy

The failure fallacy is commonly known as: "Achievement means you were right. You set an expectation, and then you met it. Failure means you were wrong. You set an expectation and you didn't measure up" (Cole, 2020). This is a common view of failure. The problem with failure is that we associate it with human fallibility. This 'person' or 'human' approach focuses on the errors of individuals or often a personal attribute such as moral weakness (Reason, 2000). Failure is often reported as something to be feared at all costs and is often underpinned by feelings of shame. Further research into the fear of failure revealed that individuals with a high fear of failure reported greater shame upon experiencing a perceived failure than those with

a low fear of failure (McGregor and Elliot, 2005). This high fear perspective of failure is often ingrained and can be a very difficult perspective to overcome.

Elliot and Thrash argue, that for many young people fear of failure becomes "a Jusdispositional burden that they must carry with them into each new achievement situation and that affects the goals they choose to pursue" (Elliot and Thrash, 2004). Often, by the time students reach University, their fear of failure has become strongly developed and this can lead to anxiety, as well as a risk-averse approach to learning and low levels of confidence. Hearing from individuals whom they consider to be role models and from high-profile speakers about their failures can help to normalise failing as simply part of life experiences. The intervention of flipping failure through changing the perspective of failure seeks not only to address causes of anxiety but to empower students to fail safely, to seek feedback, and to identify learning opportunities that can ultimately support their success. 'Role-modelling' and 'normalising failure' is connected to motivation; believing that one might be unsuccessful in achieving a certain outcome decreases their pursuit of that outcome (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). Attribution theory, which concerns how individuals process information and causality of behaviour and events, plays a major part in how we view failure (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). This social cognition and how we make sense of our environment is important to explore as it reveals how individuals view themselves. As well as self-perception, there are other physiological reasons behind human responses to failure. Biologically, our brain stores highly emotional and negative memories much longer than neutral memories (Science ABC, 2020). Negative memories are remembered longer because those memories corresponded to high-stress situations. From an evolutionary standpoint, it is important for us to remember highly stressful situations in order to avoid them in the future. This may have been helpful for evolutionary purposes, but it explains how the experience of failure can create additional barriers for students learning today. Learners may be struggling to overcome a natural and human response.

Furthermore, the 'feeling of success' may encourage individuals to ignore or dismiss experiences that resulted in a perceived failure as the brain looks for evidence of success to support ongoing effort. "Success often leads to a surge in the

neurotransmitter dopamine, which signals brain cells to continue the behaviour that led to success (Psychology Today, 2017). Dopamine is often referred to as the 'feel good' chemical and success 'feels' better than failure, thereby giving us grounds to prioritise effort in respect to experiences that we know will make us feel good… or successful. These behavioural and biological factors are contributory factors in shaping our perspectives of failure and subsequent fear of it. By beginning to 'un-pack' the Failure Fallacy from the physiological perspective of the individual learner we can better understand the barriers that are not always visible.

Student motivation and changing mindsets in HE

Blackwell et, al, in 2007 conducted a large-scale study of student performance over two years, concluding that students with a 'growth' mindset (those who believed that they could develop their intelligence) outperformed their peers with a 'fixed' mindset (those who believed that they could not change the level of their intelligence). Blackwell's study focused on pre-university students but draws a link between mindset and performance, that the mindset is changeable and that a change in thinking has sustained benefits over a longer period. This connects to the Mindset work by Carol Dweck which outlines that the way you think determines your course of your life and that this develops very early on (Dweck, 2012). These insights, that some students may have developed a 'fixed' mindset early on in their learning and it can be changed helps us to appreciate that; by the time students reach university a fixed mindset could have a negative impact on their performance and influence their response to perceived 'failure'. A more recent study with a substantial sample size focused on an undergraduate student setting (see Limeri, et, al, 2020), explored the extent to which students view their intelligence as improvable. The study tracked students over a semester and interviewed a subset about their mindsets and academic experiences. The study concluded that students attribute their beliefs about intelligence to five factors: academic experiences, observing peers, deducing logically, taking societal cues, and formal learning. This implies that mindset and academic performance constitute a positive feedback loop and effective mindset interventions could thereby promote student success. Encouraging a growth mindset early on in the student journey could help prepare

and support learners through experiences of failure and help them to utilise failing positively to increase their chances of success. This approach may have positive implications for progression and completion in academic learning environments and is an area that could be explored further. Motivation is essential for successful learning and performance, but crucially related to motivation is how one allows space for potential successes and failures. If we can challenge and re-frame failure, this could support and enhance a student's academic journey. In recognising that it's possible to change mindset and motivation and in doing this early on, flipping failure can provide a key transferable skill for learners onward development.

Storytelling to 'flip' failure

As discussed earlier, role models provide powerful examples of success and can exert a profound influence on the way people learn (Lin-Siegler, et al, 2016). The challenge is presenting role models in such a way that it prompts engagement from students and grants them access to important learning. The method of using role models in story-based instruction was utilised in the Lin-Siegler, et al, study (see Lin-Siegler, et al, 2016). It demonstrated that using the stories of famous scientists to model struggles and failures increased motivation and learning from the students taking part in the experiment. Using stories in educational settings is not a new practice but each of the stories used contained three main components: 'Achievement Story' (AS condition), 'Intellectual Struggle Story' (ISS condition), and 'Life Struggle Story' (LSS condition). These three components provided multiple points of engagement for the students and appealed to multiple aspects of their own life journey. The message that even successful scientists experience failures before their achievements can help students interpret their own difficulties in science classes as 'typical' occurrences rather than a reflection of their lack of intelligence or talent for science. Through the Flipping Failure Project we built on these ideas to develop interventions that could work in the University of Salford setting across different student communities and levels.

The intervention of storytelling aimed to embed cultural change which re-framed experiences of failure as positive opportunities that are part of a self-efficacy approach to anticipate success (Pajares, 2001). Flipping one's inner monologue from

"I failed my assessment" to "I learned how to improve my work" can have transformative effects on students' self-esteem, confidence and healthy working practices (see Developing adult learners: strategies for teachers and trainers, 2001). Through facilitated interventions, our students reflected on current challenges and gained new perspectives which supported their well-being in a beneficial way, they also exchanged conversations whereby they connected with others. The "Flipping Failure" concept enables individuals to develop their confidence despite barriers and to use their experiences positively to inform their future and remain open to new possibilities. It encourages creative thinking and transferable skills that benefit the individual, their wider community and the workforce alike. The intervention has an industry-facing element aligned to the University of Salford's focus on employability (The University of Salford, 2020). It draws in "fail fast" processes often found in creative industries and entrepreneurial contexts; modelling them so that students may safely experience the "real-world" imperative to manage failure (Naray-Davey & Hurley, 2014; Babineaux and Krumboltz 2013, Hall 2007). The Flipping Failure initiative is particularly important as we progress in the post-covid landscape, to support wellbeing, confidence and attitudes to risk. We are keen to explore the transferability to other communities and to assess the benefits of this approach for the wider adult learning community.

The postgraduate community and the 'fail better' lens

Working closely with the University of Salford's postgraduate researcher (PGR) community, common questions and support requirements centre around: concerns about the research development cycle, building resilience to manage the ever-changing research environment, and discovering coping strategies to enhance wellbeing. The concept of failure for this group, is a complex and challenging one as there are cultural barriers, worries about stigma and a deep sense of jeopardy attached to failing at PGR level. The need to develop resilience around failure and to learn to "fail better" was identified as a key development need; we believed that embedding a culture of "failing better" would help build researcher resilience. This meant encouraging activities that foster habits and behaviours designed to embed and nurture the researcher's desire to learn from the "creative mess" of the research

process; an approach that could eventually lead the researcher to motivate themselves and constructively self-evaluate. We proposed engaging with failure as a positive process, focusing on perseverance and an emphasis on not giving up when things get "messy" and difficult but having the confidence to experiment, to fail and to try again. We encouraged PGRs to think about failure as that which:

1. Encourages deep learning.
2. Offers tools for PGRs to learn safely how to consciously manage and successfully reproduce processes leading to creative products.
3. Reflects the process-led nature of research.
4. Accommodates the 'unfinished' nature of the discovery environment.
5. Mirrors real-world experience where dialogue with the funder or industry partner is required.

The research process can generate a wide range of experiences and emotions, including the unexpected, mysterious, organic, exploratory, frustrating and difficult. These lesser positive narratives are often not shared frequently or honestly enough.

> *'mkaing mtsiakes cna be a pwoerful tolo for maknig dicosveries adn ganiing incites tht maye ohterwsie hvae reminaed hidedn.'*

This is a playful illustration of an important point that making mistakes can be part of a positive process that reveals new learning. "Trial and error should be part of an organic and experiential learning process" (Naray-Davey and Hurley 2014). Much emphasis is put on research replicability and not preparation for the research process of trial and error. "Educational paradigms will tend to encourage and reinforce replication and formulation rather than innovation and origination" Kleiman, 2005).

In the space of experimentation, new discoveries and opportunities may arise and it is these aspects of the failure process we wanted to emphasise. "Criteria that focus on what is known, which do not recognize the process of learning and how people come to know, or recognize emergent unanticipated outcomes, inhibit creativity" (Jackson, 2005). To address these issues a "failure manifesto" was developed. The "fail better" manifesto stated aspirational aims:

- To situate failure within the academic research environment

- To address the fear of failing

- To tolerate mess and to see it as productive

- To support the acquisition of processes that will support life-long learning

- To understand that the process of failing is a productive outcome in its own right

The manifesto provided guiding principles for both learning and teaching, it provided criteria that could be embedded into the design of researcher development support and a 'take away' checklist for research students.

'Flipping Failure' in Practice - Outcomes, Outputs and Impact

We offer an account of our initiative, the Flipping Failure Project as a case study to share the learning and innovations from our practice. In developing the project interventions, we explored the different ways to 'flip' failure from the learner's perspective. The challenge was primarily: how to engage PGRs with failure and promote failure as a positive learning experience rather than a negative one. Flipping failure into learning and teaching meant reviewing current practices and identifying opportunities for structuring and scaffolding failure. We did this by splitting our approach into two key areas:

1. We used storytelling around failure as a pathway to success to embed the lived experience of failure and as a core methodology to frame failure in the interventions.

2. We looked at curriculum design principles of failure and opportunities for co-creation around this.

Storytelling as a pathway to success

The storytelling approach took the form of sharing lived experiences and promoting real stories of failure. Participants explored their own experience of failure in a safe space through a series of exercises and tasks to raise the profile of failure through

the use of positive role models. These three routes helped to normalise failure in different settings to various communities of students and staff:

1. Sharing and promoting existing stories of failure

We can share our own stories of failure as well as promote those that are already available in the public domain. To provide space and opportunity to share stories, an online community of practice was established (as a Teams Sharepoint space) and a wide range of stories were posted that connected to one or more of the following conditions: Achievement story, Intellectual struggle story, and Life struggle story. Examples of the titles of the stories shared include: 'Trusting the Process - How to Enjoy the Journey'(see Psychology Today, 2018),'Best Advice I Ever Got: Trust in the Process of Failure and Learning' (see Young Entrepreneur Council, 2014), and 'First Attempt in Learning: Why Failure is Key to Innovation' (see Twentyonetoys, n.d.). The open nature of sharing and discussing failure helped to 'flip' the failure by moving it out of a hidden and shameful space into a focussed discussion whereby through sharing, support and learning were positively received.

2. Series of exercises in safe spaces

The safe spaces were training and development sessions for both student and staff audiences. How the spaces were safe, confidential and respectful was set out at the start of each session. Both online and face-to-face sessions were developed and these varied in length from 30 minutes to longer 2 hour sessions. Here, we will explore three of the most popular (and positively received) interventions based on session feedback: The Hero's Journey, Flipped Failure Visualisation and Wall of Failure.

The Hero's Journey:

The Hero's Journey or the monomyth, is the common template of stories that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, is victorious in a decisive crisis, and

comes home changed or transformed. The hero myth pattern studies were popularized by Joseph Campbell, who was influenced by Carl Jung's analytical psychology (see Campbell, 1949). Campbell used the monomyth to analyse and compare religions in his book The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Campbell, 1949 & 1972). The hero's journey replicates many well-known films and stories and is most popularised through epic stories such as Lord of the Rings (J R R Tolkien, 1954). This familiar tale acts as a vehicle to construct the story and help to map out a way forward. Often presented in three acts or stages: the call to adventure, the initiation, and the return. The format tracks the journey of transformation for the hero who acts as the main protagonist in the adventure.
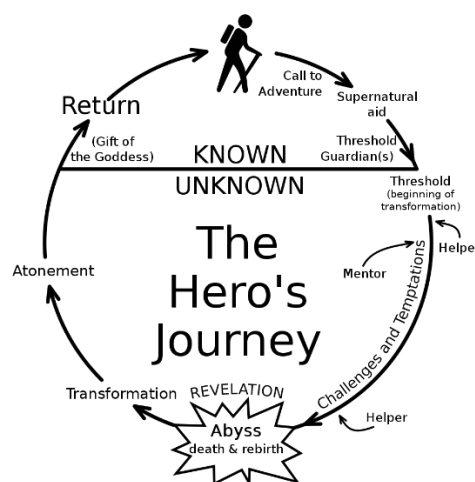

Figure 1: Illustration of the hero's journey

The exercise asks participants to develop their own story using the three distinct acts and they can choose to be the protagonist, narrator, supporting character or part of the environment. We begin by thinking about the ordinary world, reflecting on current feelings and thoughts, and taking time to recognise where we are now on our personal learning journeys. The initiation is the next step and this involves exploring the 'call to adventure' or 'ask' in more detail by mapping out the challenges, barriers and alternatives that exist. During this step, participants are asked to 'step over' the threshold into the unknown, consider failure and challenging situations as well as possible resolutions and ways forward. The final act is very much a reflective one; looking back on the distance travelled to assess how far one has come in terms of measuring success not

merely by the distance travelled, but by the obstacles (and failures) overcome. The final phase is the return whereupon any transformation is recognised and the next steps are taken.

This format of examining failure through the medium of storytelling enables participants to adopt different roles, and perspectives and imagine different outcomes in the 'safety' of a virtual environment. The reflection and lessons learnt can then be considered in relation to real-life situations and thus the stories provide a basis for discussion and further onward exploration.

Flipped Failure Visualisation:

'Our entire experience on this planet is determined by how we choose to perceive our reality' (Sincero, 2013). This activity is based on visualisation; participants are taken through a guided visualisation technique to develop a clear pathway to success. The activity asks participants to imagine a particular challenge or to focus on a scenario of failure. The process begins with sitting comfortably, being relaxed and focusing on the challenge or scenario. Here we ask participants to fully visualise this in as much detail as possible; taking in the setting, environment, people around them, clothes they are wearing, what they are saying, what others are saying, sights, sounds, smells, touches and feelings. The information and details contribute to bringing the challenge or scenario to life. We then move away from this level of detail, almost replicating an out-of-body or astral experience and ask participants to switch their view and see things from a third-person perspective as if they had been dropped into a movie set. Then we ask them to imagine moving even further away to view things from a 'bird's eye' perspective, still looking closely and taking note of the detail that they can see. Moving further away again into the sky and then past the clouds into the upper atmosphere, on into space, we ask participants to keep going to the edge of the universe.

We then stop and pause, to consider what we can see, what's around us, how what we see relates to our challenge or scenario, and how we feel about that challenge and scenario as we reflect on the edge of the universe. We then gradually return, taking in everything around us and moving back eventually into the 'movie set' and then back into ourselves looking out at our environment and the situation around us. The activity concludes with a moment to reflect, pause and consider our journey. What did we experience? How did we experience it? We reflect on the experience as a 'virtual walk through' to prompt participants to ask: what should I continue to do? What should I change?

The visualisation task enables the participants to 'embody' the story they are telling and establish an understanding of its narrative such as the components that they see most clearly and those that remain unclear. What steps and actions feel comfortable and other possibilities that individuals may not have previously been able to access - the process of visualisation helps to enable participants to see action as being real. This approach can be a powerful tool to flip failure and support seeing beyond the failure to better grasp and appreciate the context and the lessons learnt. This 'virtual walk through' approach has been successful in supporting the development of confidence in early career researchers (see Whitnall, 2015) and the combination of flipping failure and feeling more confident can be a powerful positive narrative to support onward learning journeys.

The 'Wall of Failure':

The 'Wall of Failure' approach can be applied to a virtual or physical board whereby participants can add their experiences of failure. The stimulus for the exercise is three questions about failure. The questions can change according to the audience's requirements or the stage they have reached in their developmental journey, but the aim is to progress individual or group thinking on failure. There's the opportunity provided to explain their experiences and share reflections. The question prompts are intended to normalise failure and to challenge participants to consider how they can bring the learning from their

experience of navigating failure into their everyday activities as a skill set. Figure 2 below shows a sample virtual board from an online session using Google Jamboard. The three questions asked are: How can we fail more? What does the future of failure look like? Ways you will incorporate failure? The collective and visual board enables participants to 'see' how others respond and provides space for their individual reflections. Typically, an image of the board will be shared with the participants of the group shortly after the session and an invitation to keep reflecting and sharing stories of failure after the activity is also encouraged. This storytelling approach builds on the failure narrative by considering the past, present or future or the now, next and embedding possibilities. Being able to 'see' what others are thinking, how they are dealing with failure and reflecting on this builds a community and in turn builds individual and collective confidence. Aspects of confidence and embracing failure become visible through the responses on the post-it notes along with other emergent ideas such as risk-taking or bravery, recognising current approaches to failure such as perfectionism and using humour as well as other strategies through using more positive language and vocabulary.

Figure 2: Extract from The Wall of Failure

A variant of the Wall of Failure was produced as a poster for The University of Salford's Festival of Learning and Teaching, 2023. It encouraged delegates to contribute and to take away a Zine. Of the 30 Zines produced, only two.

remained and two comments on the poster were volunteered, further disseminating key messages around flipping failure.

In the first two exercises: 'The Hero's Journey' and 'Flipped Failure Visualisation', the development of the personal narrative is emphasised, whereas the 'Wall of Failure' exercise promotes the group or collective narrative.

3. Raising the profile of failure through positive role models

The Flipping Failure project flagship event was a motivational lecture from Ruby Wax OBE who gave an inspirational talk about her journey through failure and success. She described how a one-time failure ultimately saved and supported her mental health and was the catalyst for her new career. Ruby was a truly inspirational speaker and likeable person who engaged our audiences by sharing her powerful lived experience of flipping failure! The talk was deliberately situated as a keynote talk for the Salford Postgraduate Annual Researcher Conference (SPARC) to appeal to the largest numbers of researchers at Salford and to further facilitate onward discussion.

In this situation, we used an inspiring and successful role model to represent the 'possible', demonstrating that a potential goal is attainable despite the starting point. Role models are individuals who provide an example of the kind of success that one may achieve, and often also provide a template of the behaviours that are needed to achieve such success (Morgenroth, Ryan and Peters, 2015). In this particular case, those behaviours concerned responding to failure with resilience and using failure as a vehicle to develop career aspirations.

Curriculum design principles: Failure and opportunities to co-create

In the paper 'Failure is an option: an innovative engineering curriculum' (see Simpson, Bradley and O'Keeffe, 2018) the authors have actively embraced failure and embedded this into the design of the curriculum by deliberately providing spaces

and opportunities for failure and for students to reflect on this. The authors then undertook a process of analysis over ten years centred on the topics and areas that students find challenging. A two-fold strategy emerged whereby space for reflection on failure was built into the design and the topics explored reflected and were shaped by the data on failure.

The approach to failure and how readily this is accepted does seem to vary by discipline, some disciplines historically avoid failure whereas others embrace it. Take the field of engineering as an example, the authors commented on the innovation of the approach and the challenge of embedding a more unorthodox practice. Whereas in other areas or disciplines such as creative-based subjects, 'failure' can be an acceptable part of the process and even a method to encourage robustness and criticality of thinking.

In 'Failure in Design' by Bernhard Rothbucher & Katharina Rothbucher, failure is presented as an integral part of the design activity and the design artefact.

> *Design might be one of several disciplines that have cultivated failure as part of its professional routine and one that has developed a "sense of failure" because of it. In some phenomena that are presented in the main text, failure is identified as the reason for a perceived higher value of the final design artefact.* (Bernhard Rothbucher and Rothbucher, 2018).

Failure is presented as an opportunity to problem solve, explore beneath the surface of what is superficial to develop new ideas and understandings and a beneficial 'lens' through which to view the creative process. Conversely, the failure element is much embedded in the critical thinking and reflection of the discipline.

> *This attitude makes designers experts in using failure to achieve a rewarding result. We have identified different phenomena in which failure appears in design on different levels.* (Bernhard Rothbucher and Rothbucher, 2018)

The key learning which emerges from exploring the potential role of failure in the curriculum design process is:

- Recognising the differences between discipline and approaches expected and already embedded.
- Realising failure can be used as a critical reflection method and an innovative way to solve problems.
- To embed failure into the curriculum, space for reflection on failure is needed,
- Evidence of positive experiences of failure or building on specific failures further encourages and underpins the learning process.

Co-creating and embedding the lived experience of failure

This section outlines the methodology used in co-creating aspects of the Flipping Failure project, particularly ensuring that we capture the lived experience of failure to enhance and empower storytelling, normalising failure and developing authentic role models. SPICED methodology (Espinosa-Fajardo, Bustelo and Velasco, 2016) is an approach largely used in the third sector by charities and organisations where the voice of the end-user, beneficiary or client is critical to the strategy, vision and mission of the organisation. Many organisations use SMART objectives to action and measure impacts in a very targeted way, whereas SPICED focuses more on the impact of the action or measure on the end user. SPICED is Subjective, Participatory, Interpreted and communicable, Cross-checked and compared, Empowering, Diverse and disaggregated:

- **Subjective**: recognising that participants have a special position or experience that gives them unique insights. In this sense, what others see as 'anecdotal' becomes critical data because of the source's value.
- **Participatory**: Objectives and indicators should be developed together with those best placed to assess them. This means involving a project's ultimate beneficiaries, but it can also mean involving local staff and other stakeholders.

- **Interpreted and communicable**: Locally defined objectives/indicators may not mean much to other stakeholders, so they often need to be explained.

- **Cross-checked and compared**: The validity of assessment needs to be cross-checked, by comparing different objectives/indicators and progress, and by using different informants, methods, and researchers.

- **Empowering**: The process of setting and assessing objectives/indicators should be empowering in itself and allow groups and individuals to reflect critically on their changing situation.

- **Diverse and disaggregated**: There should be a deliberate effort to seek out different objectives/indicators from a range of groups, recorded in such a way that these differences can be assessed over time.

SPICED can be used to reflect on failure and is very focussed on enabling the voice of the individual to be heard which is important to help capture the lived experience of failure to consider how we may normalise approaches and role models that are authentic and relatable.

This approach was used in the development of a poster and is best illustrated in the Zine made for the Salford Festival of Learning and Teaching, 2023. Drawing on past feedback, comments and data from flipping failure workshops and discussions to identify eight to ten simple but memorable points, a zine provided a simple and instant way to discover the flipping failure approach and identify techniques to readily utilise (see Figure's 3 and 4 below).
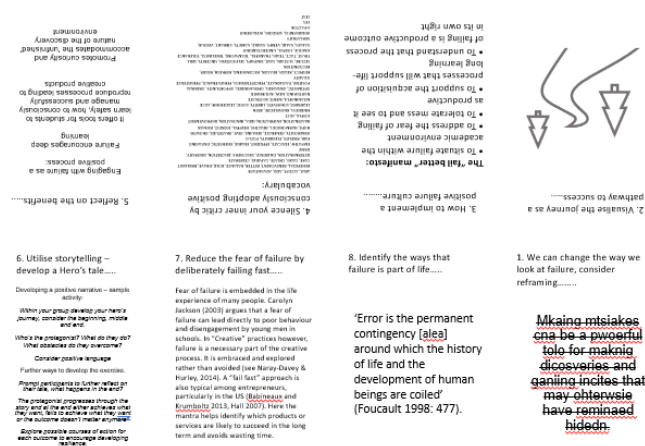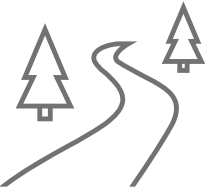

Figure 3: Zine layout – in eight steps/pages

The zine was displayed, alongside the Festival poster 'Flipping Failure as a pathway to student success – wall of failure' printed out and constructed as an A6 size booklet and positioned around the poster with an invitation for people to take away a copy if they liked. These are the pages of the zine and key messages about the flipping failure process:

1. We can change the way we look at failure, and consider reframing…….. Mkaing mtsiakes cna be a powerful tool for maknig dicosveries and ganiing incites that may ohterwsie have remained hidedn.	2. Visualise the journey as a pathway to success….. 	3. How to implement a positive failure culture…….. **The "fail better" manifesto:** • To situate failure within the academic environment • To address the fear of failing • To tolerate mess and to see it as productive • To support the acquisition of processes that will support life-long learning • To understand that the process of failing is a productive outcome in its own right	4. Silence your inner critic by consciously adopting positive vocabulary: ABLE, ACCEPT, ADD, ADVANTAGE BENEFICIAL, BENEVOLENT, BETTER, BALANCE, BOLD, BRAVE, BRILLIANT CARE, CALM, CREATE, CAPABLE, CELEBRATE DETERMINATION, DILIGENCE, DISCOVERY, DISCRETION, DIVERSITY, DRIVE EMPATHY, EDUCATE, EFFICIENCY, ENABLE, ENERGY, ENGAGING FAIR, FIDELITY, FLEXIBILITY, FOCUS GENEROSITY, GENERATE, GENUINE, GIVE, GRATITUDE, GROWTH HOPE, HARMONIOUS, HEALTHY, HELPFUL, HONEST, HUMAN IMAGINATION, INSPIRATION, IDEA, INNOVATION, IMPROVEMENT JOYFUL, JUST KINDNESS, KNOWLEDGE, KEEN LEARNING, LONGEVITY, LIBERTY, LOGIC, LEADERSHIP, LUCK MEANINGFUL, MERIT, MOTIVATE NURTURING, NEW, NOURISHED OPTIMISTIC, ONWARDS, OPEN-MINDED, OPPORTUNITY, ORIGINAL POSITIVE, PASSIONATE, PERCEPTIVENESS, PERSEVERANCE, PERSISTENCE QUALITY RESPECT, READY, REASON, RECOMMEND, REFRESH, RELIEF, RECOGNITION SECURE, SUSTAIN, SAVE, SIMPLIFY, SELF-ESTEEM, SINCERITY, SKILL TRUST, TACT, TEAM, THANKFUL, TEAMWORK, TIMELINESS, TOLERANCE UNIQUE, USEFUL, UNDERSTANDING VALUES, VALID, VERIFY, VIABLE, VARIETY, VIBRANT, VIGOUR, VERSATILITY WILLINGNESS, WISDOM, WELL-BEING X-FACTOR YES ZEST
5. Reflect on the benefits….. Engaging with failure as a positive process: Failure encourages deep learning It offers tools for students to learn safely, how to consciously manage and successfully	6. Utilise storytelling – develop a Hero's tale….. Developing a positive narrative – sample activity: *Within your group develop your hero's journey, consider the beginning, middle and end.* *Who's the protagonist? What do they do?* *What obstacles do they overcome?* *Consider positive language* Further ways to develop the exercise. *Prompt participants to further reflect on their tale, what happens in the end?*	7. Reduce the fear of failure by deliberately failing fast….. Fear of failure is embedded in the life experience of many people. Carolyn Jackson (2003) argues that a fear of failure can lead directly to poor behaviour and disengagement by young men in schools. In "Creative" practices, however, failure is a	8. Identify the ways that failure is part of life….. 'Error is the permanent contingency [alea] around which the history of life and the development of human beings are coiled' (Foucault 1998: 477).

reproduce processes leading to creative products Promotes curiosity and accommodates the 'unfinished' nature of the discovery environment	*The protagonist progresses through the story and at the end either achieves what they want, fails to achieve what they want or the outcome doesn't matter anymore Explore possible courses of action for each outcome to encourage developing resilience.*	necessary part of the creative process. It is embraced and explored rather than avoided (see Naray-Davey & Hurley, 2014). A "fail fast" approach is also typical among entrepreneurs, particularly in the US (Babineaux and Krumboltz 2013, Hall 2007). Here the mantra helps identify which products or services are likely to succeed in the long term and avoids wasting time.	

Figure 4: Sample pages of the zine, in the order of pagination and layout of the Zine.

The aim of having a poster presence at the Festival of Learning & Teaching was to engage in further discussions about the topic of flipping failure as an approach to support the wider student community at Salford. Presenting a poster on the topic of failure at a conference where people are usually encouraged to share their successes was an intentional 'flipping' of failure to further embody and demonstrate this approach. The response was really positive with lots of conversations at the Festival and afterwards. Of the 30 zines created for the event and displayed, only two remained which means that 28 people potentially were interested in this idea in some way. Discussions at the poster included further focus on confidence, post-Covid student journey impact and failure as being authentic. The experience was a great way to continue the conversation about failure and think of it differently.

Conclusion: Focusing on Failure

One of the main objectives of the Flipping Failure project was to transform the perception of failure from a negative and shameful experience to a positive and empowering one. By engaging students, and staff in various failure-themed events and activities, the project aimed to foster a culture of resilience, insight, and action that can enhance personal and professional development. The project also provided a theoretical framework and a practical toolkit for understanding and applying failure as a transferable skill in different settings and situations. In this paper, we have presented the outcomes and impacts of the Flipping Failure project and curated a

series of outputs that illustrate how failure can be flipped into a source of growth, innovation, and confidence.

Through exploring some of the tools we developed and how these can support the outcomes, outputs and impacts of the project, we hope to inspire other educators and researchers to embrace failure as a valuable and essential component of learning and discovery.

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