

Title: **The Technical or the Reflective PG Cert: do you get what you pay for ?**

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Abstract:

Session Outline

As staff developers we are concerned with the quality of teaching, and many of us are involved in the development of PGCerts. We believe that we are providing a valuable service with these programmes, with the objective that the participants become better teachers, thus benefiting themselves, their students and their institution. But are these objectives really met? Before we can understand the impact of our programmes we need to consider the twin issues of 'Who is the consumer?' and 'Whom are we trying to satisfy?'

Segal (2003:129-30) rightly argues that we need to know whom our courses are for. However, this is a complex issue. A range of groups, organisations and individuals have a vested interest in the development and outcomes of PGCerts, such as the staff developers, consumers, the institution, teaching and learning bodies, and funding and professional bodies. Furthermore, many influencing bodies have potentially conflicting agendas, for example, in HE institutions the tension between commitments to teaching & learning and an aggressive research orientation. For staff and staff developers this may mean having to balance the institution's official position on teaching & learning with an unwritten and more powerful agenda emphasising research output at the expense of teaching.

Additionally, the consumers are not empty value neutral vessels waiting for us to fill them with our expertise. What do they want from the course? What influences do their job requirements, academic discipline, and personal needs have?

Rowland (2003:21) suggests PGCert courses are developed around the philosophies of their designers. Often, this means a focus on reflective practice. However, is this what the consumer, institution and other influencing bodies want? Would they prefer a more technical "how to do it" style course? Even if consumers are interested in reflective practice, is their understanding of it the same as the course team's? In both cases, what are the implications for consumers, course teams and other relevant bodies?

Session Learning Outcomes

In this session we would like to discuss the implications of the above as we re-evaluate the intended (and unintended) outcomes of our PGCerts.

Session Activities

The session will start with a short introduction to the general arguments discussed above, followed by a discussion on the implications of those arguments and potential solutions that may arise.

References

Rowland, S. 2003. 'Academic development: A practical or theoretical business?' in Eggins, H., & MacDonald, R. 2003. *The Scholarship of Academic Development*. Buckingham: SRHE & Open University Press.

Segal, R. 2003. 'Working on educational development projects.' in Kahn, P., & Baume, D. 2003. *A Guide to Staff & Educational Development*. London: Kogan Page.