

Title: **Supporting Social Learning in Ghana: accommodating creativity and innovation within frameworks and standards**

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Abstract:

Session learning outcomes

Delegates will be able to assess whether potential standards and frameworks can address the role of the teacher in highly learner-driven programmes

Session outline

How can standards and frameworks accommodate those learning situations where the teacher's contribution is very much in the background? This challenge will be illustrated using a case study of supporting social learning with a team of health professionals in Ghana.

International learners in UK higher education, particularly those from developing countries, tend not to maximise learning opportunities¹ so it is important to identify novel ways of meeting their needs² that focus on the learners and what they want to learn. We have supported health professionals in Ghana to design their own innovative programme to learn research skills. The lack of local tutors and role models meant that the learners needed to utilise their strong negotiation skills to pool and utilise knowledge. This social learning^{3,4} was achieved through extensive and diverse peer-support and has enabled 30 individuals to complete project dissertations. The learners designed and refined a curriculum that met UK standards through an iterative, negotiated process involving mentorship, action research and work-based learning. An important teacher role was the use of a similar framework to promote alignment within individual research projects and the course curriculum. Constructive peer criticism was the most effective social learning experience for developing research skills.

Session activities

| Time (45m) | Activity |
|-------------------|---|
| 2 | Brief introduction: cultures in HE learning |
| 5 | Small group/pairs discussion about experiences of postgraduate learners from different cultures; summary feedback |
| 10 | Presentation: Outline of background, development and delivery of research skills training programme in Ghana |
| 4 | Delegate feedback: identification of challenges in harmonising creativity and standards |
| 4 | Presentation of results: how focus on learner and their learning communities promoted learners achievements ⁵ |
| 5 | Clarifications and questions |
| 15 | Open discussion to highlight challenges, solutions and transferable experiences |

References

1. **Asmar C.** (2005) Internationalising students: reassessing diasporic and local students' difference. *Studies in Higher Education* 30(3); 291-309
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3. **James D, Gleeson D** (2004). Learning cultures, interventions and transformations: early and emergent findings from the TLC project.
http://www.tlrp.org/dspace/retrieve/418/Cardiff+paper_James_11_04.doc
4. **Lave J and Wenger E** (1991) Situated learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
5. **SEDA (2004)** Towards a framework of professional teaching standards. The response from the Staff and Educational Development Association to the national consultation document of 16th April 2004