**SEDA Grant Report**

**December 2009**

**Aims**

Like a number of others in the educational development community (Studies in Higher Education 34.4.June 2009 Special IJAD) I have been keen to promote a critical dialogue in educational development about the professional development of academic staff in the UK with a specific focus on the UK Professional Standards Framework. The SEDA grant allowed me to:

* build upon the action research I conducted in 2007 into academic

staff perspectives on teaching standards

* take up the challenge of Haggis et al in the IJAD special referenced above to go beyond the epistemological frameworks which have been traditionally privileged in educational development research.

to move beyond the *application* of the UKPSF to explore the social processes inherent in academics’ engagement or more precisely lack of engagement with the standards and it has been my feeling that that such theorization has been rather weak. This is important if our community is to move beyond sharing difficulties and possible solutions to implementation of the standards and respond to criticism that we work in opposition to the academic community, ‘othering’ them and that we work in an ‘under theorised’ way.

My research questions were:

1. How have those researching CPD in schools, universities and in adult education conceptualised notions of engagement and of becoming professional?
2. Are there particular theoretical perspectives around professional learning, community and the structuring of work in this period which might help us in understanding the reluctance of some academics to engage with the UKPSF?

**Outcomes**

The SEDA grant provided an opportunity to spend two days on a desk based literature search. The grant resulted in:

1. a chapter provided for SEDA Paper Embedding CPD in Higher Education Laycock, M. and Shrives ,L. 2009
2. A positively evaluated workshop at the November 2009 SEDA conference on ideology, epistemology and educational development

**Ideas and issues raised by the literature search and explored in the November 2009 workshop**

In trying to understand reluctance to engage with the standards, it could be argued that the educational development community has tended to reify certain theoretical perspectives (such as ‘communities of practice’), constraining our collective activity and limiting our reflexivity. The SEDA grant has allowed me to go beyond my traditional research base to explore how other academic and professional communities conceptualise notions of professional development and engagement with ’standards’ and the social processes which underpin such engagement. It has led me in particular to return to my discipline origins in educational sociology and explore the school sector and the work of Ball, Habermas, Fullan, Deleuze and Bourdieu. May I add at this stage that in my former life as a sociology lecturer, it was common to describe oneself in relation to one’s preferred theoretical perspective – the feminist sociologist, the Marxist and so on. In doing this, one was specifically highlighting that the world was viewed through a particular theoretical lens. It has struck me, over the years that we do not do this overtly in educational development and this work may perhaps be seen as an attempt to prompt others within our community to ‘come out’ and explain through which particular theoretical lens we conceptualise our work as Professor Glynis Cousin exhorted us to do at the SEDA conference in Liverpool in 2007.

In examining engagement with the standards, I have explored the following:

* notions of dialogue
* ‘becoming’ a lecturer in higher education
* power, privilege and control in higher education
* engagement and sustainability

**Literature search results**

1. Dialogic approaches

A number of colleagues have suggested the importance of dialogue in aiding academic staff in reflecting upon their professional development.

There are, I have discovered, a number of contemporary artists and art collectives that have defined their practice precisely around the facilitation of dialogue among diverse communities in a similar way to the practice of some educational developers like myself. Parting from the traditions of object-making, these artists have adopted a performative, process-based approach. They are “context providers” rather than “content providers,” in the words of British artist Peter Dunn, whose work involves the creative orchestration of collaborative encounters and conversations well beyond the institutional boundaries of the gallery or museum. As I will discuss below, these exchanges can catalyze surprisingly powerful transformations in the consciousness of their participants. The questions that are raised by these projects clearly have a broader cultural and political resonance and provide an interesting perspective for educational developers. How do we form collective or communal identities without scapegoating those who are excluded from them? Is it possible to develop a cross-cultural dialogue without sacrificing the unique identities of individual speakers?

What unites this disparate network of artists and arts collectives are a series of provocative assumptions about the relationship between art and the broader social and political world, and about the kinds of knowledge that aesthetic experience is capable of producing. UK-based artists/organizers Ian Hunter and Celia Larner employ the term “Littoral” art, to evoke the hybrid or in-between nature of these practices. French critic Nicolas Bourriaud has coined the term “relational aesthetic” to describe works based around communication and exchange. Homi K. Bhabha writes of “conversational art,” and Tom Finkelpearl refers to “dialogue-based public art.”(Kester, G. 2004). As Kester explains,the concept of a dialogical art practice is derived from the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin who argued that the work of art can be viewed as a kind of conversation; a locus of differing meanings, interpretations and points of view. He goes on to add, ‘If, as I am suggesting, the evaluative framework for these projects is no longer centered on the physical object, then what is the new locus of judgment? I would contend that it resides in the condition and character of dialogical exchange itself.’

This is an area that I would argue has huge potential for exploration by educational developers keen to examine the condition and character of the kind of dialogical exchange which can be effective in educational development. Others such as the critical pedagogy special interest group of CSAP (<http://www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk/about_us/sigs/critical_pedagogy.htm>) are also exploring these ideas. I found the pod casts from Coventry for helpful in this regard <http://podcasting.services.coventry.ac.uk/podcasting/index.php?cat=HLS>

2.Theorising our perspectives

My search took me beyond traditional educational development theory to that which is beginning to gain currency. For Deleuze and Guattari for example the term "rhizome" is helpful to describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. In A Thousand Plateaus they explain that a rhizome works with horizontal and trans-species connections, while an arborescent model works with vertical and linear connections. Rhizome theory has gained currency in the educational field (Cousin 2005) where it is has been used to critique the idea of the expert in pedagogic planning and the loss of the canon. The rhizomatic conception of learning involves negotiation; it is a social and personal creative act and can have multiple goals. It could be argued that the rhizome metaphor is particular apt for educational development knowledge because it reaches out to and has its roots in a number of different disciplines and the knowledge we create is itself a moving target.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, working with various colleagues, developed the concept of cultural capital in the early 1960s in order to help address a particular empirical problem—namely, the fact that “[e]conomic obstacles are not sufficient to explain” disparities in the educational attainment of children from different social classes (Bourdieu & Passeron 1979 [1964], 8). Bourdieu argued that, above and beyond economic factors, “cultural habits and…dispositions inherited from” the family are fundamentally important to school success (Bourdieu & Passeron 1979 [1964],14). In doing so, he broke sharply with traditional sociological conceptions of culture, which tended to view it primarily as a source of shared norms and values, or as a vehicle of collective expression. Instead, Bourdieu maintained that culture shares many of the properties that are characteristic of economic capital. In particular, he asserted that cultural “habits and dispositions” comprise a *resource* capable of generating “profits”; they are potentially subject to *monopolization* by individuals and groups; and, under appropriate conditions, they can be *transmitted* from one generation to the next.

Bourdieu further argued that cultural capital exists in three distinct forms.In its “embodied” form, cultural capital is a “competence” or skill that cannot be separated from its “bearer” (that is, the person who “holds” it). As such, the acquisition of cultural capital necessarily presupposes the investment of time devoted to learning and/or training. For example, a college student who studies art history has gained a competence which, because it is highly valued in some institutional settings, becomes an embodied form of cultural capital. Additionally, Bourdieu suggests that the objects themselves may function as a form of cultural capital, insofar as their use or consumption presupposes a certain amount of embodied cultural capital. For example, a philosophy text is an “objectified” form of cultural capital since it requires prior training in philosophy to understand. Finally, in societies with a system of formal education, cultural capital exists in an “institutionalized” form. This is to say that when the school certifies individuals’ competencies and skills by issuing credentials, their embodied cultural capital takes on an objective value. Thus, for example, since persons with the same credentials have a roughly equivalent worth on the labour market, educational degrees can be seen to be a distinct form of cultural capital. Because they render individuals interchangeable in this fashion, Bourdieu suggests that institutionalization performs a function for cultural capital analogous to that performed by money in the case of economic capital. I have found these ideas very interesting in relation to further understanding the cultural capital associated with gaining recognition through UKPSF or of rejecting UKPSF as irrelevant.

It was these ideas that I particularly explored in my November 2009 SEDA workshop.

Bourdieu, P. Passeron,J.C. 1979 The inheritors: french students and their relation to culture University of Chicago Press

Bourdieu, P. 1996 The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power Cambridge

Cousin, G. 2005. Learning in Cyberspace in Land, R. and Bayne, S. (eds.), *Education in Cyberspace* (London: RoutledgeFalmer), pp. 117-129.

[Deleuze, Gilles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilles_Deleuze) and [Guattari](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A9lix_Guattari). 1980. [A Thousand Plateaus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Thousand_Plateaus). Trans. [Brian Massumi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Massumi). London and New York: Continuum, 2004.

Kester, G.2004 Conversation Pieces Community and Communication in Modern Art University of California Press

Haggis et al 2008 Studies in Higher Education 34.4.

Laycock, M. Shrives, L. 2008 Embedding CPD in Higher Education SEDA

Web links accessed November 2009

<http://podcasting.services.coventry.ac.uk/podcasting/index.php?cat=HLS>

<http://www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk/about_us/sigs/critical_pedagogy.htm>