

**Title:** **Being a Professional Lecturer in Higher Education: Professional Learning within and beyond accredited programmes and the role of the educational developer to support this as fellow professionals**

**Presenter:** **Orla Hanratty**  
Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Explore the implications of 'professionalising' the role of teaching in higher education;
- Define evidence in terms of professional learning and scholarship;
- Analyse the context of supporting professional learning in relation to teaching within higher education with reference to their own contexts.

### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are: The central theme of this session is professionalism with the sub-themes of professionalising the role of a lecturer in higher education and the associated role of educational developers. Building on research on the emergence of professionalising the role of lecturers (e.g. Locke, 2014), this session will outline an institutional case study researching the professional learning experiences of lecturers who participated in accredited programmes in teaching in an Irish higher education institute. This institute has accredited programmes since 2001 and a requirement that all new lecturers complete the postgraduate diploma programme within their first two years of employment. This institutional policy preceded the national recommendation from 'The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030' that all lecturers should be 'qualified and competent' (Hunt, 2011, p.62).

As Knight, Tait and Yorke (2006) asserted, there is a challenge to support and embed learning from experiences within workshops and programmes back into the day to day work environment of lecturers. There will be a particular emphasis on how lecturers reported continuing to engage in informal, non-accredited learning to support their teaching development.

The issue of evidencing professional learning will be explored. The underlying concept of being a professional will be discussed with reference to Barnett's definition of a 'critical being' (1997) and Walker's articulation of this as 'incorporating self (development, knowledge), knowledge (about the subject and its pedagogy) and action (to improve practice and its contexts)' (2001, p.198). This notion of being a professional will also be applied to the role of the educational developer, working in a site of contestation and power relations (Rowland, 2007). Issues such as professional autonomy and agency will be explored in relation to working and learning in a collegial environment with a potential emphasis on evidence over engagement and scholarship.

## Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

8 mins: Overview of emerging policies and practices associated with professionalising the role of the lecturer in terms of qualifications and evidencing commitment to the enhancement of teaching quality.

7 mins: Activity 'position yourself' – participants stand in a line to demonstrate their level of agreement with a statement e.g. 'It is more important to evidence a professional approach to teaching and learning with students than to others'.

5 mins: Outline of institutional research project based on questionnaires and interviews with lecturers who participated in accredited teaching and learning programmes since 2001. Insights will be noted on their approaches to continuing their professional learning.

15 mins: Group discussions based on prompt questions: Discussion on the key issues of enhancing quality and the associated theories of change with participants divided into groups to address questions on the three main areas: programmes, departments and institutional with approx. 5mins for each question:

- How do we (as educational developers) support professional learning within accredited programmes and do we continue to support professional learning beyond the programmes?
- If the locus of control is the academic department, do we as educational developers have a role in supporting professional learning here?
- Do professional development frameworks support continuing professional learning? If so, how?

10 mins: Discussion on comments and responses from each group, and identification of potential implications for practice at each of the three levels.

## References

- Barnett, R. (1997) *Higher Education: A critical business*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Barnett, R. (2009) 'Willing to be a Professional' Presentation at the University of Surrey: 'Learning to be a Professional' conference. March 2009.
- Hunt, C. (2011) *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. Dublin: DES
- Knight, P., Tait, J. & Yorke, M. (2006) 'The professional learning of teachers in higher education', *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(4) 319-339.
- Locke, W. (2014) *Shifting Academic Careers: Implications for enhancing professionalism in teaching and supporting learning*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- McAleese, M. (2013) *Modernisation of Higher Education: Report to the European Commission on Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions*.
- Rowland, S. (2007) A Site for Creative Doubt and Contestation. *International Journal for Academic Development*. 12(1), 9-14.
- Walker, M. (2001) *Reconstructing Professionalism in University teaching*