**Evaluation of the Scottish Higher Educational Developers (SHED) inter-institutional peer observation of teaching scheme – Summary Abstract**

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The SHED inter-institutional peer observation of teaching (POT) scheme was introduced in September 2017 to encourage sharing of teaching practice and discussion of educational development practice between individuals and institutions in Scotland. To our knowledge this POT scheme is unique in its focus on educational development and its inter-institutional emphasis. Academic developers often work in isolation in their own institutions and it is therefore difficult to find the space and time to reflect on their own teaching practice. By participating in the SHED PoT scheme, both observers and observees would have the opportunity to observe and discuss others’ teaching practice and explore their own practice from a different perspective, enabling them to examine their own teaching identity and roles within their institutions. This scheme was informed by educational development research that recognizes that enhancing the informal networks where staff can discuss teaching has great benefits for learning and for successful academic departments (Roxå & Mårtensson 2009). The project also hoped to further develop the rich discussions about the complex roles and identities of the educational developer (Baume & Popovic, 2016).

We faced some challenges in engaging colleagues during the study. Despite significant support and enthusiasm for the scheme when it was launched, uptake was disappointing. We investigated reasons for the low numbers becoming involved in the scheme in the first year. “Perhaps unsurprisingly, time constraints was one of the most cited reasons why colleagues had not completed an observation…several colleagues mentioned ‘changing jobs’, ‘work-related stress, my job was made redundant’ and ‘disruption in team’ as reasons why they didn’t complete an observation. Another set of responses focused on lack of confidence or opportunity in particular roles to undertake an observation… ‘unsure how to do it’ and ‘anxious about people coming and not finding it valuable’.”(Bovill & Cunningham, 2019).

We implemented a range of initiatives to try to overcome these challenges in the second year, including: improved information about the wide range of practices that could be considered as peer observation of teaching; offers to pair up those newer in the field who might not know anyone; and a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop supporting exploration of educational developers’ own CPD. There was still a relatively low uptake in the second year, and some challenges remained. These challenges range from the practical, “Travelling far between institutions was not an option, so limits the pool significantly” as well as “I also don't have many contacts in the sector as of yet, so was hard to find alternatives.” There is also a fascinating thread that emerges around the how people perceive themselves and the danger of exposing oneself professionally through peer observation, “it is scary to be ‘observed’ especially in a small Scottish sector”. However, those who participated reported positive benefits including “how helpful it can be to share a work challenge with another academic developer who has the fresh perspective of a different institution” and the joy of another worldview, “different institutions often do things really differently and I find it good to get out of my normal setting and be challenged to see things differently.” Our work has demonstrated that establishing an inter-institutional peer observation of teaching scheme is far from straightforward even where there appears to be both evidence of benefits and support for such a scheme.