

Title: Values, emotions, and professionalism: an educational humanities approach to supporting staff in challenging times

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- critically engage with the potential for an “educational humanities” (Quinlan 2017), analogous to the medical humanities (e.g. Shapiro and Rucker 2003)
- discuss ways in which poems can be used to draw out staff’s emotional experiences, values and ethical issues in teaching practice
- critically evaluate the potential of discussions of poems in professional development workshops for “attuning” (Fenwick 2016) staff emotional and moral sensitivity
- compare and contrast an “educational humanities” approach to other ways of teaching about ethical issues and professional values in teaching and learning in FE and HE

Session Outline

Values are central to the professional development of staff in HE and FE, as reflected in value statements by both SEDA and the UKPSF. This session will explore challenges of teaching values in educational development.

We will consider literature that suggests that professionalism involves more than just behaving consistently with a set of externally, pre-determined values or applying them like simple rules. Instead, professionalism is context-sensitive and relative, requiring judgments that integrate external and internal values to make decisions in particular situations about the impacts of different courses of action. Fenwick (2016) used the term “attunement” to describe the kind of critical sensitivity and awareness that professionals need in order to work effectively within the messy world of contemporary professional practice. Attunement means using the whole range of senses (including emotional) to read, reframe and respond to the dynamics of practice as they unfold, sometimes in unexpected ways.

The field of medical humanities (e.g. Shapiro and Rucker 2003; Jones and Verghese 2003; Grant 2002; Bleakley, Marshall and Bromer 2006) has been established to support

doctors' growth. Doctors, like FE and HE staff, also must juggle multiple responsibilities, sometimes contradictory external accountabilities, and time pressure.

We will consider the potential for an analogous "educational humanities" as an approach to attuning staff members' emotional and ethical sensitivity. Discussions of poems, for example, can provide rare spaces for staff to critically reflect on their profession, its demands, and the kind of professional they want to be in this context. Poems are particularly useful because, like real life ethical dilemmas, they are emotionally evocative and open to different interpretations. As examples, we will discuss several poems that represent a dilemma in teaching, using various theoretical frameworks (Graham et al. 2011; Quinlan 2018; Shapira-Lishchinsky 2011) to draw out different ethical dimensions.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- 1) Introduction and overview (10 minutes)
- 2) Warm-up discussion in groups of three (10 minutes): What challenges do you face in teaching the SEDA or UKPSF values? How do you approach those?
- 3) Presentation (15 minutes): Theoretical frameworks for analysing ethical dilemmas based on teachers' ethical dilemmas (Shapira-Lishchinsky 2011) and my own analysis of higher education teachers' moral concerns (Quinlan 2018) based on (Graham et al. 2011)
- 4) Discussions of sample poems (representing examples of dilemmas) in groups of six, with each group taking the lead on one poem (up to 1 page), while also looking quickly at two other poems (20 minutes): What are the feelings the poems evoke? What are the values or moral concerns underpinning the examples in the poems? What is it a case "of"? What are some options open to the narrator of the poem? What options seem to be closed – and why?
- 5) Report out from discussions of poems, allowing 5 minutes for each of three poems (15 minutes)
- 6) Plenary debrief (20 minutes): what are the strengths and weaknesses of using poems (an educational humanities approach) to teach about ethical issues and professional values in teaching and learning in FE/HE? How might they be used to "attune" staff emotional and moral sensitivity? How does this approach compare with other approaches? What does it suggest for your own practice?

References

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