

**Title:** Explorations in how learning, teaching and curriculum knowledge practices permeate the academic workgroup

**Presenter:** Jan Smith, with Tai Peseta (project lead), John Hannon, Graham Hendry, Giedre Kligyte, Brenda Leibowitz, Jan Maclean and Gina Wisker  
Durham University, with University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, La Trobe University, Johannesburg University and Brighton University

### Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Critique a new international collaborative project and its aims;
- Consider the suitability of different theoretical lenses for examining workgroup practices;
- Discuss 'issues' and utility of approach in local context.

### Session Outline

Educational Developers take evaluation of their offerings seriously as they seek to model good practice. Many evaluation activities focus on 'the course' (Donnelly, 2006), individuals' experiences (Warnes, 2008) or institutional learning (Bamber, 2009). A new international collaborative project seeks to use the academic workgroup as its focus. We aim to explore whether and how workgroups use the learning from a taught programme in L&T to effect change in their teaching contexts. It is also hoped that involvement with the research project will further encourage staff engagement with teaching development activities and scholarship.

We will apply three theoretical lenses to data gathered from workgroups (Trowler, 2008), to see which approach is more productive in making sense of how formal learning from (post-) graduate certificates ((P)GCerts)) is deployed in departmental contexts: critical realism (Archer, 1995; Sayer, 2000), sociomaterial perspectives (Fenwick, 2010) and teaching and learning regimes (Trowler and Cooper, 2002). We hope that this mix of theories will enable productive analysis across three very different national and cultural contexts: Australia, with its long focus on taught courses, South Africa with less developed formal provision but a serious focus on equity/teaching issues, and the UK, with its emerging politically-driven agenda.

This workshop presents an opportunity for the educational development community to comment on whether and how the theoretical lenses that inform the initial project brief seem to be working 'in action'. Taking the academic workgroup as the focus of analysis enables an

exploration of whether/how knowledge and know-how (individually and collectively) is deployed in local contexts. Issues can then be discussed from a variety of perspectives which will inform further work.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

Please provide an indication of how the session will be structured and how activities and discussion will be facilitated. For discussion papers please include a few indicative questions which will focus the discussion element.

This will be an interactive session beginning with an outline of project aims and research questions followed by pairwork to critique these; feedback to group.

A brief outline of three theoretical lenses will be given, followed by small group work to discuss these. Feedback from each perspective will be elicited.

A final activity will be based around 'issues' encountered, with a plenary Q&A: could you use this?

### **References**

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Sayer, A. (2000). *Realism and Social Science*. London: Sage.

Trowler, P. (2008). *Cultures and change in higher education: theories and practices*. England & NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

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