# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Magazine of the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA)

**SEDA**
**STAFF AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION**

## Contents

# SEDA values – The jewels in the crown?

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SEDA's underpinning values have a longstanding history as an integral aspect of the organisation's identity and work. The mission and values statement on SEDA's website asserts that 'All SEDA activities are underpinned by the SEDA values.'

The current SEDA values are:
• An understanding of how people learn
• Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice
• Working in and developing learning communities
• Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity
• Continuing reflection on professional practice
• Developing people and processes.

The guidance information on the SEDA website explains that the SEDA underpinning values:

> 'are not an attempt to prescribe what we think or believe or feel. They are rather about our actions as teacher, supporter of learning, developer. They are sometimes about what we do; sometimes about why and how we do it; sometimes about what our actions are intended to achieve.'

It is stated that the values are illustrative rather than prescriptive, 'we all need to interpret these values for our own particular learners and educational settings.'

## Reviewing the values

We can probably claim that the current values are well known to those already working within the SEDA community. There is an expectation that the values will inform, and be demonstrated within, the practice of anyone undertaking a SEDA-accredited programme or making a claim for SEDA Fellowship.

Is it too much to claim, though, that the values are so much part of our collective DNA that we can take them as read? And is it really the case that the current values actually do underpin all of SEDA's activity? How do we know that the values continue to reflect what we hope to convey, now and in the future, to our members, to our stakeholders in HE and to the general public? Are the values still relevant? Is it time to think about re-defining the values? Do they need clarifying, developing and revising? Do the values still work for us as a community? Are any of them problematic in the context of their underpinning of professional practice?

## What are the values for?

In May 2013 a SEDA Symposium organised as part of the SEDA@20 celebrations held a workshop where the relevance of the SEDA values was discussed and

# SEDA Supporting and Leading Educational Change

explored. As part of the ongoing process of updating the SEDA Strategic Plan, the SEDA Executive Committee felt that it would be timely to review the SEDA underpinning values. A number of sources were drawn on in framing the consultation questions that were put to the SEDA community. An international perspective on the SEDA values, shared at the SEDA Symposium and subsequently with the SEDA Executive Committee, was provided by Alan Wright, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. A piece written for *Educational Developments* by Debby McVitty, Head of Higher Education Research and Policy at the National Union of Students (McVitty, 2013) provided a student perspective, alongside an earlier critique of the SEDA values (Brand, 2009) and a theoretical consideration of values in an educational development context (Gosling, 2010).

Feedback was sought through the Jiscmail SEDA listserve and all SEDA committees. The SEDA community was asked to consider:

- the extent to which the current SEDA values continue to reflect what SEDA hopes to convey to its members/stakeholders in HE and to the general public
- whether the current values are all expressed as values
- whether any of the values need redefining, clarifying, developing or revising
- whether any of the values are problematic in the context of their underpinning of professional practice

The responses received, from individuals and teams, reflected the range of institutions and mission groups represented within the SEDA community and included international perspectives. A report summarising the feedback and suggesting some initial recommendations was considered by the SEDA Executive Committee at its meeting in February, 2014. A small working group was then tasked to produce a final version of the revised values, with supporting guidance information, for agreement and ratification at the Executive's Strategic Planning event in June 2014. The intention of this article is to provide a commentary on the discussion and debate about the values engendered by the review.

## What are the values for?

Why does SEDA need values? What is specific about our values as educational developers?

A number of the responses explored the notion of values, with some key points being:

- The importance of asking what the statement of values is for, 'is it merely to summarise our professional role or is it to say what we value in how we work and what we believe universities are (valuable) for', that is, whether the values serve to summarise what educational developers *do* rather than what we *value* (e.g. collaborations, care, social justice, integrity, personal fulfilment, collegiality, tolerance, dignity, friendship)?

- That there is a paradox in 'conforming' to an externally mandated value set (such as the UK Professional Standards Framework) and values as the 'identity-laden reference points for ethical professional practice'. Asking what do SEDA members value, rather than what SEDA values, 'allows for the possibility that values may differ between members, whilst still recognizing a community connected by something shared'.

- The importance of shared development/understanding/community involvement so that values are not just statements with which people are expected to align themselves '…we discussed the value of "understanding how people learn" for quite a while to comprehend this as a value. While dealing with the SEDA values we realised the effort of comprehending the values was important… intensive engagement with the descriptions helped us to understand them as a value…'

- That values have a pragmatic function, they are to guide our practice. 'For me, as with others the values are really important. In my role I often have to make difficult decisions and the values help the process as well as guiding where my effort is best placed.'

- Values should be presented as actions, or as a commitment to action: 'by your deeds shall you be judged *i.e.* not by the eloquent words you find to demonstrate that your practice is being informed by a particular set of eloquent words.'

  '…it's all very well having values but how do they inform our day-to-day practice?'

  'Values are actions. Values have to be presented as action, or at any rate as a commitment to action, and then used as a basis on which we can both plan and later evaluate the worth of our actions.'

- Value statements can sometimes be 'convoluted and inconsistent in form and focus'. It helps to simplify value sets into something that can be remembered and articulated to others without sounding confused, '…if our values are to be genuinely shared, they need to be simple statements in each case, to the effect that "this thing, we value".'

- That 'more universally articulated values would embrace a student perspective as readily as a staff one'.

## Have we got the values right?

We asked the SEDA community for feedback on whether the current values are all expressed as values.

The key points that respondents made are summarised below:

- 'Some of the values come across more as skills/attributes e.g. working effectively with diversity – this doesn't encompass the professional and/or personal ethos that underpins such 'effective working.'

- 'I'm not convinced that developing people and processes is a value…I'd rather see a value which underpinned the enabling of such a development…'

- Values and principles can become conflated: 'principles are often shaped by values, but they are not quite the same thing. The SEDA values are a bit of a mixture of these things, sometimes conflating several ideas into a single sentence.'

- Some overlap was noted, e.g. in scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice and continuing reflection on professional practice; some responses suggested that 'ethical practice' was too important to be subsumed within other values and that it needs greater prominence; it was pointed out that the statement about scholarship is not really written as a value.

- While perhaps not most effectively expressed as values 'they are simple and people can engage with them from a number of perspectives…they work as underpinning principles for a community of professional educational developers to engage with and actively apply'.

- Wording of the values 'working in and developing learning communities' and 'working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity' 'sound more like objectives than values'.

- While some of the values are not really expressed as values, this was not considered so important. What was considered to be important was to make sure that the focus on the student/student learning was clear and fundamental to the SEDA values.

## Redefining, clarifying, developing, revising the values?

- There was strong support for the values to be prefaced by the words 'a commitment to', emphasising the importance of the values as a commitment to action.

- A number of respondents wanted the values to be prefixed with a verb so that it is clearer what we wish to 'do' in respect of the values; interestingly, an international response noted that 'we think we wouldn't have reached the same inspiring result if we would have started the process using values being operationalised in this way. (Maybe the verbal phrasing evokes a normative understanding of the values while the phrasing with nouns opens up a broad understanding of the values).'

- There were a number of references to the possibility of aligning the SEDA values with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).

- One respondent observed that students as partners is an idea that is not very explicit in the values and suggested that, in the current era of student engagement, students as partners could benefit from a stronger positioning and more explicit statement. A suggestion from another respondent was for 'a commitment to partnerships between students and staff in creating transformative learning experiences'. As one respondent observed, however, 'more universally articulated values would embrace a student perspective as readily as a staff one'.

- Some people were not comfortable with the language of 'learning communities', feeling it could be viewed as jargonistic and not relevant to all in their roles; an emphasis on collaboration, dialogue and discourse was preferred.

- There was support for targeting something that is 'simple and direct with which the community can engage; they may not be the best expressed values, but they work as underpinning principles for a community of professional educational developers to engage with and to actively apply'…'simplicity and breadth is important because it

| Current SEDA Value | Possible action/revision | Commentary (comments/observations on suggested wording) |
|---|---|---|
| The SEDA values are listed after the SEDA Mission statement on the SEDA website, with a link to explanatory guidance information. There is currently no policy statement or stated rationale for the values on the website | Include policy statement/ rationale to explain values. A prefacing statement along the lines of: 'Practitioners who are part of the SEDA community of learning share values around learning and teaching in higher education. In particular we commit to:' | Values as having a pragmatic function to guide action; preface should state a *commitment to action.* Preface should include a verb (contested). Share values 'around HE pedagogies' rather than 'around L&T in HE'? Is this needed? |
| An understanding of how people learn | **Developing our understanding of how people learn,** in different ways, in different local and global contexts and through different media | Or: Recognise that, Respect that people learn in different ways Or: a commitment to developing and interrogating our understanding |
| Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice | **Practising in ways that are scholarly, professional and ethical** | Some views expressed that existing value is conflated and needs separating. Commitment to engage with scholarship *etc…* To guide, rather than underpin? Add creative? Critical? |
| Working in and developing learning communities | **Working in and fostering our learning communities,** within and across subjects, institutions, nations and internationally | 'Learning communities' terminology an issue for some; the important emphasis should be on collaboration and dialogue. Insert 'and professional' before communities? To promote and foster…? |
| Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity | **Promoting inclusivity, recognising the diversity of both students and staff,** celebrating difference and working to redress disadvantage | Important to make distinction between the value about valuing diversity and the first one about understanding how people learn. Add equality after diversity? Celebrating diversity through inclusive learning environments? |
| Continuing reflection on professional practice | **Promoting personal and professional development,** of ourselves and those with whom we work, aiming to ensure processes and practices are developmental and supportive | Has the emphasis on reflection on practice been lost here? A commitment to critical self-reflection on our practice and values? (or is this understood in 'scholarly, professional ethical' above?) Do we need the word 'promoting'? Commitment to engagement in..? Something about informing future practice/action? Add 'and appropriate to contexts and capabilities'? or is this slightly restrictive? Add 'engaging'? |
| Developing people and processes | Subsumed in above – so omit | Arguably we don't develop people. People develop, sometimes with our help. Developing people and *effective* processes? Is *'effective processes'* redundant since they are the consequence of a professional and scholarly approach? |

*Table 1  SEDA Values*

creates a broad backcloth against which a wide variety of educational development activity can be framed and structured'.

- Values need to reflect diverse contexts and people who form the SEDA community and those who it wishes to reach/work with. There was a suggestion that the relevance of 'inclusivity' be extended to address the funding needs of educationalists employed within disciplines other than education.

- There is no mention of innovation/creativity in the values. Is this an important omission?

- There was strong support for values including a commitment to educational development internationally; the two respondents from the international SEDA community provided compelling testimonies of how important the SEDA values have been for developing, promoting and sustaining their work.

## Feedback on whether any of the values are problematic in the context of their underpinning of professional practice

- 'An understanding of how people learn' generated a number of responses. It was the only value seen as problematic in the context of SEDA's Professional Development Framework (PDF) awards. One respondent suggested that if the value here is seen as 'learning', any person regardless of role could be motivated by such a value because it has been interpreted as something of universal worth, rather than a context-specific learning outcome which values a particular piece of knowledge. By the same token, it was argued, more universally articulated values would embrace a student perspective as readily as a staff one. Another respondent pointed out that 'an understanding of how people learn' is about the value of evidence and pedagogic research in informing educational development activity. It was suggested that revising the wording to 'a commitment to developing our understanding of how people learn' would make this clearer.

- It is worth noting the observation in one response that the original SEDA values were not problematic in that they were easy to 'assess' and 'that is probably because they were not expressed as values'. In any reworking of the values, consideration should be given to how revised values might be evidenced in SEDA-accredited programmes.

## Commentary on values

Suggestions for revising the values were made by respondents in the Jiscmail discussion, with people responding to these suggestions with comments and further suggestions. Table 1, opposite, summarises the debate around the values expressed in the consultation feedback responses.

## Summary: where next?

This article has attempted to provide a summary and a commentary on the review of the SEDA values and the responses received from the consultation exercise. There is more work to be done on agreeing a final set of revised values. In summary, key outcomes from the review exercise are that:

- The underpinning values are seen as important to the SEDA community; there was strong support for the values expressed in responses to the consultation. There appeared to be little appetite expressed for wholesale change.

- The values have a pragmatic function: the SEDA community needs to be able to use the values to plan, act and review actions and to inform all aspects of SEDA's work.

- The values need to be inclusive of all stakeholders.

- In re-framing the values it is important to revisit the things that SEDA values, that is at the heart of each current value, such as Learning, Scholarship, Professionalism, Ethical Practice, Learning Communities, Diversity and Inclusivity, Reflection, Development of People, Development of Processes.

- Values need to be simple statements ('this we value') which can be remembered and articulated.

- When re-launched, the values should be accompanied by a policy statement/rationale.

A follow-up *Educational Developments* article will report on the progress of revising the values and explain the practical implications for all SEDA activity, particularly with respect to accredited programmes and applications for SEDA fellowships.

## References

Brand, T. (2009) 'SEDA values – the jewel in the crown', *Educational Developments,* 10.1, February 2009, pp. 5-7 (http://tinyurl.com/kvxzgjq).

Gosling, D. (2010) 'Value commitments and ambivalence in educational development', Chapter 8 in *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* No. 22, summer 2010, Wiley Periodicals (http://tinyurl.com/lns2o5r).

McVitty, D. (2013) 'How relevant are SEDA's values to students?', *Educational Developments,* 14.3, September 2013, pp. 18-19.

SEDA website link to values: http://www.seda.ac.uk/about.html?p=2_1

## Acknowledgements

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# SEDA and HEA Fellowships – What's the difference?

**Sally Bradley,** Higher Education Academy, and **Stephen Bostock,** Staff and Educational Development Association

SEDA and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) share a goal to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and the student experience, but they are very different organisations. The HEA supports teachers and those supporting student learning, individually and institutionally, nationally and through the disciplines. SEDA primarily supports educational and staff developers, and through them the teachers and learners they help to develop, although there is a growing population of 'part-time' developers (teachers who do some educational development), so the two audiences overlap. SEDA is a voluntary body run by its members while the Academy is owned by Universities UK (UUK) and GuildHE. Both organisations award 'fellowships' but they are aimed at different audiences and do different things. Currently there are in excess of 50,000 holders of HEA fellowships and over 100 with SEDA fellowships.

Within the HE sector the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning (UKPSF) has become increasingly important (Turner, 2013), as has the visibility of HEA Fellowship as recognition for a commitment to professionalism in teaching and learning in higher education. On the other hand, SEDA fellowships are professional qualifications in academic (staff/educational) development, available to individual members of the professional association. SEDA fellowships are deliberately not aligned to the UKPSF. (This is not to be confused with the two SEDA professional development framework named awards which *are* aligned to UKPSF.)

So whilst the aims of the two organisations are similar, the approach to Fellowship and the processes are different. To confuse matters further, both have different levels of Fellowship, but these levels are not equivalent.

HEA fellowships are aligned to the UKPSF. The range of HEA fellowships, from Associate Fellow to Principal Fellow, align to the Descriptors 1 through 4 within the UKPSF and enable staff from a wide range of backgrounds to gain recognition for their contribution to student learning. For example, Fellow (FHEA) is available to those who can demonstrate all the elements of UKPSF as a teacher while AFHEA offers recognition for staff who support student learning but do not undertake the full range of activities. While HEA fellowships are not credit-bearing qualifications, some higher education qualifications are aligned with UKPSF and accredited by the HEA: for instance, many Postgraduate Certificates in learning and teaching in higher education or in academic practice are accredited to award FHEA.

It is recognised that teaching and learning occurs in many different ways and requires support from a variety of different roles with different skill sets within higher education. This diversity is captured and recognised within the range of HEA Fellowships and within the UKPSF: for example, 'Successful engagement in appropriate teaching practices related to the Areas of Activity' and 'Successful incorporation of subject and pedagogic research and/ or scholarship within the above activities, as part of an integrated approach to academic practice' (UKPSF, 2011, p. 5). The UKPSF is not prescriptive in how learning and teaching should be achieved or delivered; rather through the process of gaining HEA Fellowship colleagues are able to demonstrate their understanding of, reflection on and evaluation of their own practice within their discipline or profession.

The SEDA fellowships scheme began soon after the organisation was formed, in 1993, once its teacher accreditation scheme (now replaced with the professional development framework) was in place, to provide a qualification for the 'teachers of teachers'. The revised scheme was launched in November 2010, with three levels: Associate Fellow (AFSEDA), Fellow (FSEDA), and Senior Fellow (SFSEDA). The original fellowship became the Senior Fellow level. While not based on the UKPSF, FSEDA and SFSEDA are based on demonstrating a set of level-specific outcomes plus the SEDA professional values. The FSEDA qualification is currently gained through an online course. The Associate Fellowship is designed as an 'escalator' to full Fellowship. SEDA fellowships are managed and awarded directly by the organisation, through an appointed part-time fellowships coordinator. Marita Grimwood was appointed from the start of 2014 and reports to SEDA's Services and Enterprise Committee.

SEDA Fellowships have always required annual reporting, reflecting on and planning our professional development. For many years, these reports have been peer-reviewed, in triads of critical friends, whose discussions (face-to-face or virtual) are reported overwhelmingly as positive and supportive. Failure to report professional development causes a withdrawal of good standing. At the moment, HEA fellowships do not have a requirement for reporting for good standing, but at the sector's request the Academy intends to introduce

a good-standing element, and this is work in progress.

The structure of UKPSF and SEDA fellowships is different. UKPSF has five areas of activity, six core knowledge areas, and four professional values. SEDA fellowships have specialist (learning) outcomes, generic outcomes of reflecting on practice, and six values. The two sets of values overlap, as do the SEDA values and the UKPSF areas of activity. SEDA's outcomes incorporate knowledge rather than specify it separately. So the structures of what fellows must demonstrate are different, but much of the content is similar. This is to be expected, as professionalism as a developer shares much with professionalism as a teacher: for example, continuing reflection on practice, scholarship and a concern for learners as individuals and communities.

For clarity it is worth adding that SEDA does provide two national awards which are validated against the UKPSF. These are the professional development framework awards, Learning, Teaching and Assessing; and Supporting Learning. Like HEA accreditation of institutional programmes, programmes accredited by SEDA for these awards provide certificates naming the level of the UKPSF. Like HEA fellowships, HESA collects data on them as a recognition of teaching expertise. They are quite separate from SEDA fellowships, which data HESA does not collect.

So is there any overlap between SEDA fellowships and HEA fellowships? If we compare the levels of FSEDA and FHEA, both require individuals to demonstrate the professional values of SEDA or the UKPSF respectively. Whereas UKPSF, including the values, was reviewed and re-formed in 2011, SEDA is currently reviewing the wording of its professional values. Table 1 demonstrates some of the similarities. It is hardly accidental that the two schemes share values and an emphasis on professional development, as they underpin the higher education enterprise.

The current UKPSF and HEA Fellowships have four descriptors,

| SEDA Values | UK Professional Standards Framework |
|---|---|
| 1. An understanding of how people learn. | Core Knowledge 3 – How students learn, both generally and within their subject/disciplinary area(s). |
| 2. Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice. | Core Knowledge 6 – The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching. Professional Values 3 – Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development. |
| 3. Working in and developing learning communities. | Professional Values 2 – Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners. |
| 4. Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity. | Professional Values 1 – Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities. |
| 5. Continuing reflection on professional practice. | Area of Activity 5 – Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices. |
| 6. Developing people and processes. | Descriptor 2, item VII – Successful co-ordination, support, supervision, management and/or mentoring of others (whether individuals and/or teams) in relation to teaching and learning. |

Table 1  A simple mapping of the SEDA Values and the UKPSF

and the higher levels of Senior and Principal Fellow overlap more with FSEDA and SFSEDA. For example, the SFHEA Descriptor 3 includes, 'Successful co-ordination, support, supervision, management and/or mentoring of others (whether individuals and/or teams) in relation to teaching and learning'. Support and mentoring might be part of a staff developer's role, too. Even more so, at the Principal Fellow level, UKPSF Descriptor 4 includes strategic and policy activity that would be part of the typical job description of a senior academic developer.

The two organisations have different histories, approaches and processes. But they share a common mission to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and the student experience, and their fellowships in different ways support the professional development and recognition that is essential to that mission.

## References

Turner, N. *et al.* (2013) 'Measuring the impact of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning (UKPSF)', Staff and Educational Development Association, Higher Education Academy Funded Project (http://tinyurl.com/mp64znw).

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# It's all about 'us': Lessons learned from running an accredited CPD framework

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Running an accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme in higher education is complex. Such schemes are designed, in simple terms, to develop the practices, knowledge and values of staff who teach and/or support learning, and to confer nationally recognised awards upon individuals for their professionalism in those fields. Many institutions are now awarding Associate Fellowships, Fellowships, Senior Fellowships and Principal Fellowships to their own staff, in line with the four 'Descriptors' of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), through schemes accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

It is no simple undertaking, however. The target groups for institutional schemes are typically wide and diverse: an inclusive scheme should be for everyone who teaches, supports learning and/or demonstrates leadership in education, regardless of job title or status. However, professional awards can have implications for promotions and career progression; both the awards themselves and the authority to make them can affect power relations within and between groups and departments. With such wide potential impact, schemes are likely to come up against a spectrum of institutional politics, resourcing issues and policy challenges, all of which need to be managed carefully.

How can we ensure that schemes are developed and led effectively? What's the key to making sure that they are genuinely engaging and inclusive, yet sustainable and agile in the rapidly changing context of higher education? In recent months there have been numerous advertisements in the job vacancies column for leaders of institutional CPD schemes. In theory, each institutional scheme needs a good leader: a high profile individual with experience and charisma, with excellent people skills, with powers of persuasion and imagination, with patience and resilience. Or does it?

My experiences of introducing and running the HEA-accredited ASPIRE scheme at the University of Exeter, of developing the UCL ARENA scheme at my current institution, and of acting as an External for a number of universities, suggest that success, when it comes, is rarely a product of individual leadership attributes. It is much more frequently about the extent to which the scheme itself is conceived, developed, introduced, delivered, assessed and evaluated by an 'us' which genuinely represents all of the key stakeholders in the institution.

Drawing on my own experience to date, I would characterise the following as some key principles for success.

## 1) Successful schemes are genuinely owned and steered by the institution

They are not the property or domain of one particular group or department. It is helpful if right from the start there is a steering group which comprises representatives of different groups – for example, very senior, middle and early career teaching staff; academics and professionals; union and student representatives. These colleagues can bring together their particular perspectives, conceptualise and propose a scheme which is right for *their* institution and its communities.

It can be genuinely informative, even exhilarating, to share perspectives in a steering group meeting on what would make such a developmental scheme rich, inclusive and exciting for a wide spectrum of colleagues. In addition, if a scheme becomes too closely identified with one department – for example, education development, human resources or a particular academic department – colleagues across the institution who teach or support students' learning find it hard to feel that 'this scheme is of us and for us'. But it is never too late – even if the scheme has been conceived by an individual or group at the start, bringing in a steering group of representatives (including an External Adviser) at the earliest opportunity can help to take it on from strength to strength by leading evaluation strategies and future enhancements.

## 2) Institutions and scheme leaders all need to share the same understanding of the status of authority in relation to such schemes

Higher Education CPD schemes underpinned by the UK Professional Standards Framework are not competency-based vocational qualifications. Those of us who have taught in the compulsory education sector know what it's like to be delivering programmes which are essentially owned by an external awarding body: in that context, external 'experts' have the final say. This is not so in the HE sector, where each institution takes ownership of its own decisions in relation to its own awards. We *are* the experts.

The UKPSF itself is not a syllabus, but rather a series of blocks for an institution to build upon. The Dimensions characterised within the Framework (Areas of Activity, Core Knowledge and Professional Values) and the four Descriptors, relating to the four categories of Fellowship, are like a series of flagstones and pillars upon which an institution builds a learning palace which has its own form and style. This palace may comprise many rooms. It may be populated with a wide menu of developmental opportunities, formal or informal, leading to a range of ways of making a claim for an award. The design of the palace might include a number of adjoining developmental rooms which make space for, say, learning about how to build a research career. Or it may comprise a smaller number of spaces, with set developmental programmes and forms of assessment. The design of the palace should suit the landscape of the institution within which it's located – ideally, both the organisation's needs overall *and* those of its individual members of staff, in all their diversity.

The UKPSF Dimensions and Descriptors provide a useful shared underpinning for all such schemes, but once the scheme has been accredited it is the institution itself which has the ultimate authority to make judgements against them in making awards to its own staff. The input of an External is needed, of course, as with academic awards; this helps to keep schemes across the sector reasonably comparable in terms of standards, and can be both stimulating and reassuring. But the question, in the end, of whether this applicant should be awarded, for example, a Fellowship or a Senior Fellowship needs to be decided by assessors *who represent the institution.* The first assessments in the scheme may be tentative, but with early reassurance from an External and experience comes confidence – particularly if assessment processes build in opportunities for moderating and developing shared perspectives through dialogue. If colleagues in different kinds of teaching-related role and from different subject and professional specialisms make up the pool of assessors, it really is a scheme owned by 'us' and not by an imagined 'them'.

### 3) Assessors on institutional schemes need a shared understanding of assessment criteria for each category of fellowship

The Fellowship awards are not academic qualifications. They do not of themselves confer any academic credit at any particular level of curriculum. It can be hard for those of us familiar with marking academic assignments to adjust to this, but it's necessary and it can even be liberating.

It is true that a number of institutions choose to embed the Fellowship awards within a taught academic programme, such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education or Academic Practice; these programmes can certainly be rich learning experiences, bringing together an academic approach to the subject with analytical reflection on what it means to be 'professional'. Such programmes are typically aimed at early career staff, and are great for building a sense of shared community within the institution's culture. Where an academic programme is in place, appropriate academic criteria need, of course, to be applied to the overall award.

But for the Fellowship awards themselves, there are no academic criteria. Awards which are not embedded within an academic programme, but rather where experienced staff are applying directly for professional recognition, are based upon an *account of professional practice,* which is a *claim* for recognition made by a member of staff on the basis of their experience and successful track record as a practitioner. The claim may be made via a written submission, an oral presentation, a video or any other mode of communication: the options when designing a scheme are endless. But whatever the mode of expression, a member of staff making the claim for a particular category of Fellowship through an institutional scheme needs to persuade the colleagues assessing that claim that she or he is demonstrating effective professional practice in relation to teaching and/or supporting students' learning. And the applicants need to do this in line with the fifteen Dimensions of the UKPSF and the specific criteria given for the relevant Descriptor.

So, for example, an applicant claiming Senior Fellowship against Descriptor 3 of the UK Professional Standards Framework needs to demonstrate that she or he has a 'thorough understanding of effective approaches to teaching and learning support as a key contribution to high quality student learning', and can 'provide evidence of a sustained record of *effectiveness* in relation to teaching and learning, incorporating for example, the *organisation, leadership and/or management* of specific aspects of teaching and learning provision' (UKPSF, p. 6, my italics). Here, assessors need to agree amongst themselves – through such 'quality assured' means as a shared assessment panel, double marking and/or moderation – that *the case has been made to the institution* that this colleague has indeed shown sustained contribution. Have they organised, led or managed in relation to education? Is there reference to 'evidence' that this contribution has been effective? The existence of such evidence will be indicated in the claim itself and, very importantly, supported by the References or Advocacy Statements which accompany it.

These are the key assessment criteria. We need to beware the tendency to reject an application because it does not contain an extensive critical analysis of literature, or because it does not cite the assessor's favourite author or concept. If an institution wants to add these additional criteria to their awards of Fellowships for its own purposes, it can, of course – but they are not built into the UKPSF. Looking for *awareness* of research-informed literature as a source of evidence for developing practice is important, particularly in relation to Dimensions A5, K3 and V3 (UKPSF, p. 3), but an elaborated analysis of such literature takes the claim into academic territory; we are assessing effective practice here, and assessors take on the shared role of doing so on behalf of the institution, so we need to keep our eyes on the key elements. If we ensure that our assessors for the scheme comprise a range of colleagues with different subject and professional specialisms, and that they themselves engage in appropriate developmental activities so that shared understandings emerge, we will stay on track.

### 4) Claims for Fellowship should, in principle, be acceptable whatever their style and form

We need to ensure that the scheme really is about 'us' – the whole collective of diverse academic and professional groups and individuals across our institution who contribute to students' learning – and not about the 'us' who may already be steeped in education language, literature and related cultural practices. For me, it is really important that we do not impose a particular kind of education discourse upon colleagues who are experts in other subject fields and steeped in their own particular set of cultural practices in relation to thinking, analysing and communicating.

In one assessment panel I was chairing, a group of us discussed at length a written application for Fellowship from a colleague (let us call him Ciaran) from a specialist science subject. Ciaran's written submission broadly covered the required ground, describing his practice succinctly, even abruptly. It was written in a very particular

and unusual style, which paid no lip service at all to the 'reflective writing' discourse beloved of many. Yet it was clear from both the application and the attached References that Ciaran, in his lived practice, was going to great lengths to engage students in a demanding subject area, developing innovative online support and regularly improving and refreshing his approaches to his role. We had a lengthy debate: would this 'do'? Did it matter that the applicant made no direct reference to the currently popular literary canon, and constructed his sentences differently from the way we typically did? Fortunately the assessment panel included representatives from diverse subject specialisms, and we were ultimately confident enough to award the Fellowship. This was a pivotal moment in the scheme and, I believe, for the institution. We knew we did not want the discourse to rule in deciding to award professional recognition to a colleague, but rather the practice itself and the heart behind it.

## 5) CPD schemes need to be strategically situated but focused on enabling both individuals and communities to flourish

Senior Management Teams in our complex higher education institutions have their gaze upon strategic imperatives – how can we improve our standing in the HE league tables? How can we maximise capacity and respond with agility to both short- and longer-term business priorities? A really flexible, inclusive CPD scheme can bring into its spaces new areas of need, such as a major emphasis on assessment and feedback in response to National Student Survey data. It can incorporate particular characteristics of the institution's mission and education strategy: for example, an emphasis upon internationalism, research-based learning or distance learning. Keeping connected with institutional priorities makes it a great deal easier to argue for substantial resources to be allocated to the scheme – and CPD schemes do need to be appropriately funded to make them truly fit for purpose.

However, CPD schemes are, for me, about more than this. They are about creating spaces for individuals and teams to flourish where they may otherwise have been overlooked. They are about building a culturally rich community of people who care about learning and learners, who are passionately committed to inspiring students and colleagues to love the subject, to contribute to its landscape, to step out across subject boundaries – and perhaps even to go out and change the world. They are also about promoting critical analysis, informed by our professional values, of current policies and practices and helping the higher education sector to change for the better.

If we want to promote not just strategic improvement but also a cultural richness within which inclusive learning communities can grow, then our CPD schemes should model certain principles and practices:

- Those who already have expertise in and a passion for education, whatever their status and job title, should become key partners in and contributors to the scheme, and should be rewarded appropriately through remuneration and career advancement so that in due course they become inspirational leaders
- Colleagues newer to a teaching-related role but who want to excel should have clear and engaging progression routes provided
- Staff who have a teaching and/or student support role but who are reluctant to engage in developmental activities need to be nurtured and encouraged to do so within appropriate contexts, for example through appraisal, peer mentoring and peer observation
- Spaces should be created in developmental programmes for critical thinking with respect to the policies and practices of the current higher education sector and the institution itself, with a view to finding better ways forward
- Student representatives should be actively engaged as partners as we develop and deliver the schemes
- All applicants for awards should be given detailed and encouraging feedback which 'feeds forward'; this builds motivation and also models the excellent feedback we want our students to receive
- Success should be celebrated and publicised to inspire others, and teaching or student support *teams* whose members engage collectively should particularly be recognised by the institution – the students' learning experiences will be enhanced by the development of the 'us' who make up teaching teams and professional teams which impact upon the full range of students' experiences, and not just by excellent individuals.

So what have I learned so far? I have learned that if institutions make vital resources available so that a representative range of motivated colleagues can collaborate on the design and delivery of a developmental scheme, we are off to a good start. If individuals and groups feel empowered by the scheme and know that applications for professional recognition are fairly and consistently made by supportive colleagues, we are doing well. If the effect of the scheme is to enable colleagues to provide greatly enhanced educational opportunities for students, we have success. If it acts as a catalyst for them to contribute to constructive institutional change through critical, values-driven thinking and leadership, for example by influencing promotion policies, we can have great hopes for the future. And if we can achieve a situation whereby everyone in the institution who teaches and supports students' learning knows that the scheme is 'of us and for us', we know we'll stay on the right track.

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The UK Professional Standards Framework is at http://tinyurl.com/nhv5e4q.

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# Developing criteria and guidance for assessing teaching excellence

**Pam Parker,** City University London

This article arose from a workshop provided at the 18th annual SEDA conference in November 2013 and the interest I and others at my institution have in teaching excellence. We will outline a project that has been undertaken, some of the findings we shared with participants in the workshop, and the criteria and guidance for assessing teaching excellence that have been developed as a result of drawing all the findings together. The article concludes with reference to future plans to continue the work now the initial project has finished.

There are many approaches to gathering data about the quality of teaching which are used for departments, schools and institutions to evaluate students' satisfaction with teaching, monitor teaching performance and recognise those who are excellent teachers. However, despite these approaches and discussions that have taken place in the literature over a number of years, common agreement around a set of criteria that can be universally used has still not been reached. In fact as both Gibbs (2008) and Skelton (2004) have found previously, there is often a lack of clear and transparent criteria in schemes and where they do exist they are not well publicised.

A scheme of learning and teaching awards has been running at City University London for more than a decade, but on occasion staff have commented upon the lack of transparent criteria in the scheme and that the evidence used when judging who should gain awards is not well publicised. The institution published a new strategy in 2012 which included in the education theme the following statement as one of the key activities: 'recognising excellent staff performance in education and capturing and sharing

models of good practice'. It seemed timely to undertake a project focused on teaching excellence in the institution and coincidently in the summer of 2012 the Higher Education Academy advertised their latest Change Academy projects focused on Recognising Teaching Excellence.

## Teaching excellence project

I led the project with a team of four colleagues from across the institution (listed in the acknowledgments) and we developed a project plan which was accepted for the Change Academy, and so from December 2012 until December 2013 we undertook a range of activities to meet the aims of the project. These, shown in Table 1, were on reflection too ambitious for one year; we have started some work around the third and fourth aim but have not been able to complete this, whilst the others were achieved.

1. Explore the current recognition and award processes and analyse the criteria used within this scheme for teaching excellence

2. Examine individual discipline criteria for teaching excellence and draw out core teaching excellence principles for the whole university

3. Define a development and recognition process that is aligned to the UKPSF for Teaching Excellence

4. Facilitate the individual's development and progression through the scheme to National Teaching Fellow or equivalent

5. Outline and enhance the student voice within the scheme

6. Enhance our current process for disseminating good practice

*Table 1  Aims of the project*

In order to progress the aims we needed to use a range of approaches which would enable data from various sources to be collected and engage a broader range of students and staff. Through the approaches listed in Table 2 we were able to collect data from our own scheme, and those beyond the institution, from our undergraduate, postgraduate and research students as well as internal and external teaching staff and educational developers. Ethical approval was sought for the project through the university processes, which was important given the diverse range of data we were able to draw on but also so that those participating consented to their data being used and the findings being disseminated across the sector.

Opportunistic data collection at a promotional stand

Workshops that used rich pictures and world café approaches

Online surveys

Analysis of nomination data for the Student Voice Award

Analysis of criteria used in the various award schemes

Literature review

*Table 2  Data collection tools*

The data collected was predominantly qualitative because rich descriptions of teaching excellence were needed to explore views and criteria that might already be used. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) naturalistic inquiry approach was the methodology chosen, which enables the context to be acknowledged as well as emphasising the need to use a range of data collection tools. The data was analysed thematically and iteratively so each stage informed the next.

# Findings from the project

The project generated a wide range of data including quotes, visual descriptions and pictures. Through the iterative nature of the project we have been able to share the findings with participants as it developed, thus enabling us to refine some data at each stage. Outlined here are examples of the data that was gathered from staff and students and which was shared in the conference workshop. However, included as part of the findings are the criteria that were developed as a result of the analysis and some guidance that was produced for assessing nominations and applications for awards.

We had hoped that it would be possible to develop a definition of teaching excellence for the institution. However as Devlin and Samarawickrema (2010) found, despite the prevalence of teaching award schemes, gaining agreement on one definition is problematic. This was illustrated at the conference workshop where there was some debate about whether we should define teaching excellence or good teaching which others such as Lilly *et al.* (2013) have explored in projects to share good practice. Throughout the project a similar debate took place and this remains unresolved in terms of a definition for either good teaching or teaching excellence but further work on this will continue.

Students had provided data in various ways but most of this data provided rich quotes about things that they feel characterise teaching excellence. Some examples of these are indicated below:

*'Makes the subject more exciting instead of just reading through the slides.'*

*'Creates a stable and truthful relationship.'*

*'Makes herself available beyond set learning times to assist in module work as well as a career advice.'*

*'Keeps us engaged by using contemporary examples that relate to us!'*

*'Maintains engagement with students easily and uses innovative teaching methods.'*

*'Her enthusiasm and warmth about her subjects of interest and her role as a teacher are always obvious.'*

Much of the data was focused on what could be considered personal attributes, as others have found, but students also felt that investing time in them and getting to know them were important. From a teaching perspective students cited examples of teachers who used examples from the real world that they could relate to and which engaged them in the session. Much of this has been found by others but with the change in teaching approaches and the increased use of technology, there was a view that students would cite as excellent teachers those who used more innovative approaches in classes whereas the findings indicate that it is the communication and relationship issues that students value most.

Data collected from staff reflected many of these views, but often the staff cited a more holistic view of teaching excellence which took account of the varied roles teachers undertake. This was particularly noticeable in workshops where staff were asked to provide a picture of what teaching excellence would look like. There was a range of drawings as well as descriptions which conjured up a picture. Some of the drawings included gardeners sowing seeds and nurturing growth, a person wearing a belt with lots of pockets of tools all needed at different times for the range of issues teachers encounter, a beautiful woven tapestry of knowledge, skills, behaviours and ideas, and a picture which showed a range of environments from the office, class and then a field/professional workplace site. Some of the descriptions enabled pictures to be built up, including:

*'It looks like a tool belt, adapted to the task/material to be learned, makes the task simple when you use it properly, leads to a successful conclusion – useable product, builds a framework.'*

*'It looks like a completed jigsaw involving interaction, effective teamwork and empowered people.'*

*'It looks like an opal ring, expensive, glittering, fascinating, colourful, deep. Iterative, clear and owned.'*

This difference between the students and staff can in part be explained by students being aware of their teachers' responsibilities for their classes, online learning, assessment activity and personal tutor role, whereas staff have the broader insight into the whole academic role and expect someone who is excellent at teaching to also excel in other areas of their role. This did lead to some debate in workshops about teaching and research and how these complement each other, but exploring this in further detail was beyond the scope of this project. However, whilst students did mention teachers having up-to-date knowledge and sharing research, staff focused on a range of areas around scholarly activity which were seen as important. These included teachers undertaking professional development, examining their teaching practice, disseminating practice within the institution and beyond through conferences and publishing and being recognised with awards or through undertaking leadership roles.

As the end of the project drew near and at the start of the new academic year, we felt there was a need to develop something from the data which could be used across the institution for the learning and teaching awards for this year. Two key actions resulted from this:

1. Some of the categories of teaching awards were changed to reflect the themes from the data, and
2. The criteria for the awards were developed around four key themes (see Table 3).

Both these actions were discussed and approved by the Learning Development Advisory Board which oversees the award scheme and has amongst its membership senior staff from LEaD, Associate Deans of

Education from all Schools, all National Teaching Fellows from across the University and other key staff from areas such as Information Services and Student and Academic Services.

A further area that had arisen in the many sessions with staff was the issue of what sorts of evidence could be used to demonstrate teaching excellence and to assess nominations and applications. Clearly there is the range of student feedback collected throughout the year that can be used, but in line with Brown's (2003) view this is only one part of the evaluation and other sources should be used such as peer reviews and

personal reflection, which are also cited by Hammer *et al.* (2010). The staff involved in workshops believed that there were additional forms of evidence such as documents produced for education purposes like curricula, assessment tasks and student guidance, that could be used alongside evidence of professional development and dissemination of practice such as conference presentations. One of the key issues about the evidence was that staff wanted the evidence to be seen as robust and rigorous. The team took account of all the comments and developed some types of evidence that could be used this year to support panels making decisions about awards.

The guidance overleaf in Table 4 does not mean that staff have to provide evidence in all types but they should have evidence of at least three. This again was approved by the Learning Advisory Board.

## Conclusion

Whilst the one-year project has finished the work in many ways is just beginning. This year's award scheme will use the new categories for the Student Voice Award and the themes, criteria and guidance for evidence. It is intended to evaluate the use of all these this year and to revise and refine, particularly the criteria following this year's awards. Those leading

| Personal attributes | Promoting learning success |
|---|---|
| Students cite this person as inspiring and motivating them to learn and achieve | Uses innovative and creative approaches to teaching, assessing and/or supporting learning |
| Passion and enthusiasm for their discipline/role and support of learning is obvious to all | Provides up-to-date knowledge and relates this to the 'real world' recognising the need for relevance to the students |
| Good communications skills with all students, demonstrating knowledge of student individual needs and how these can be met for individuals | Consistently uses activities to promote student engagement and challenges them to develop their knowledge |
| Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability to support students' needs and learning recognising individual differences | Individual excellence: evidence of enhancing and transforming the student learning experience (NTFS) |
| *Relationship with student* | *Scholarship and professional development* |
| Provides a supportive, challenging but non-threatening environment for students to learn | Raising the profile of excellence: evidence of supporting colleagues and influencing support for student learning; demonstrating impact and engagement (NTFS) |
| Engages with students to provide effective feedback and advice to encourage growth | Ability to influence positively the wider community in higher education through dissemination of activities |
| Demonstrates interest in students as individuals and promotes their confidence as learners | Demonstrates a critical reflective approach to own professional practice and the use of scholarship to support practice |
| Is approachable and responsive to communication from students in a timely and appropriate manner ensuring students feel valued as individuals | Demonstrates leadership within department, school, university or nationally |
| Is student-centred in their role listening to their feedback and acting upon where appropriate | Developing excellence: evidence of commitment to ongoing professional development with regard to teaching and learning and/or learning support (NTFS) |
| | Has gained recognition for excellence through awards and funds where able to do this |

*Table 3 Themes and criteria*

panels have been asked to keep all documentation around decisions and they have agreed to be interviewed following the panels. We recognise that each year there may be some nuances in the approach taken to both the criteria and the evidence but the aim is to be able to provide clear, transparent guidance to staff about the criteria and evidence used to judge excellence. We hope that during this next year the two aims that we were unable to complete will also be met through the continued work in this area.

**Peer review and esteem**
Peer review and feedback, mentoring others, membership of University Committees/working groups, nominations for awards, invitations to give key notes/plenaries, external examiner role, reviewer for programmes externally, peer reviewer/editorial role with a journal/feedback from presentation

**Student feedback**
Student staff liaison committees, module evaluations, NSS, PTES, PRES, Student Voice Award nominations

**Education documentation**
Student information leaflets and guidance, session plans, curriculum documents, assessment tasks, teaching portfolio, teaching philosophy

**Evidence of impact**
Student feedback from above, students' results, employer feedback, implementation of processes or systems that enhance student activities, dissemination of innovative practice at conferences, journal articles and case studies

**Evidence-based practice**
Changes in process linked to evidence of good practice and enhancement, use of techniques linked to research/theory, evidence of CPD

*Table 4  Guidance of types of evidence*

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# When students won't be partners: The problem of discipline in the higher education classroom

**Debbie McVitty,** National Union of Students

Higher education is awash with normative narratives about students, about learning and about teaching. Many of these narratives are intensely positive, like those of students as partners in learning, those about the value of engendering a sense of belonging in a learning community and those about teaching as creating an environment for students to develop rather than the transmission of content. Narrative forms a core part of the ongoing political battle over what education is for and what it should do for individuals and for the wider world.

But for lecturers and students in classrooms and lecture theatres normative narratives, whatever educational ideologies may motivate them, can disguise the lived experience of participating in education and only serve to emphasise the distance between the aspirations of educators and the humdrum realities of lecturing on a wet Wednesday morning.

It is an inconvenient truth that students often behave in ways that lecturers find problematic: talking during lectures, coming

in late, failing to prepare for seminars or being rude to staff. Technology has led to all kinds of problems with the distractions of laptops and smartphones tugging at students' attention as well as the enhanced potential for cliquish behaviours, inappropriate comments and even harassment over social media.

Students' unions are increasingly conscious of the challenge to lecturers of classroom management. In some cases, for example, lecturers have sought the help of student reps in enforcing classroom rules and in other cases students have spontaneously offered support to lecturers in challenging disruptive students. For an organisation whose purpose is to represent and defend students, addressing the challenge of poor behaviour can be uncomfortable. But negative and disruptive behaviour is bad for students – it creates an exclusionary culture and hampers effective learning.

Many a canny and experienced lecturer can share a trick or two to head off potential disruption. For example, simply arriving early and standing at the back of the room when students enter pushes those who would otherwise sprawl at the back to fill in from the front. Actively assigning people to discussion groups so that cliques are broken up, and learning students' names and addressing them directly as individuals rather than as an amorphous source of disruption can be effective.

The less experienced lecturer faced with a group of students sending each other comedy selfies rather than paying attention would be forgiven for wanting to confiscate their smartphones, sit them in the naughty corner or kick them out. Such behaviour feels like an overt challenge to the authority of the lecturer, and authority, when challenged, tends to want to assert itself. But when disrespect is met with disrespect then mutual antipathy is the only possible outcome. Part of the frustration for the lecturer is being put in a position where s/he feels forced to treat grown adults as if they were children. Is it possible to create a learning environment in which people who would otherwise behave disruptively are motivated to self-regulate?

There is a school of thought that argues that misbehaving students are presenting a challenge to the predominant higher education cultures with which they may struggle to identify and expressing a feeling of impotence and an inability to connect positively to their learning environment. Part of a strategic approach to classroom management would involve defining the behaviours that are ruled out by institutional fiat and have serious consequences (harassment, bullying, and sexist or racist comments in person or on social media), and the irritating but benign behaviours that signal disaffection or a struggle to connect to the learning material. It is the latter that should come under the purview of individual lecturers (unless, perhaps, any of the former are up for discussion as an object of intellectual inquiry).

In the case of chatting, use of laptops and smartphones and adequate preparation for class discussion, the development of a shared set of expectations between the students and a lecturer in a class can be effective, depending on the approaches taken to generate such 'ground rules'. Part of the process of setting such rules is helping all students reflect on their shared responsibility for creating an environment in which all can learn and confront the impact their behaviour has on others. It may even be possible to agree appropriate consequences for students who do not comply. Case studies of how to take such an approach effectively could be a useful resource.

But there may be a wider point here about teaching the students you have and not those you wish you had. Sometimes the most motivated, interested student will struggle to pay attention to a two-hour lecture, even if it involves a break for questions. Seminars structured as open and unstructured discussion are incredibly frustrating for students who cannot always see the underlying logic of the topic or what they are supposed to be learning. Pedagogical approaches that demand that students engage in active learning, specific consideration of what kinds of preparation will best support active participation in the classroom and opportunities for students to connect their own experience to the subject might also have a role in effective classroom management.

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# Book Review

## Learning Patterns in Higher Education: Dimensions and research perspectives

Routledge, 2014

Edited by David Gijbels, Vincent Donche, John T. E. Richardson and Jan D. Vermunt

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION

Learning Patterns in Higher Education
Dimensions and research perspectives

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Routledge
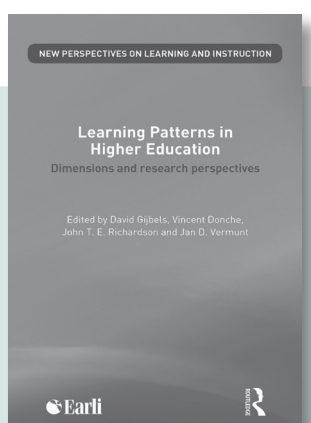
This book weighs in at 309 pages of quite dense text and has challenged me, for the last month, on my work commute. It examines and discusses the concept of learning patterns which the first chapter notes are '[broadly] students' habitual ways of learning described in terms of how students cognitively process information and/or the metacognitive, motivational and affective strategies they use' (p. 1). Originally Vermunt called the model, which integrates 'four different learning components,

namely: cognitive processing strategies, regulation strategies, conceptions of learning and orientations to learning' (p. 14) a learning style but revised this to learning patterns in 2003. The editors group the contributions to the debate around patterns into two parts, chapters 2-6, which review dimensions, and chapters 7-15, which report the ways the concept is measured. I did think that chapter 6, with its section 'measuring student teachers' learning patterns' in fact belonged in part two.

There is much of value contained within the pages but the repetition of concepts by each chapter's authors (I think I read definitions of deep and surface learning about six times and what a learning pattern is even more frequently) tended to irritate. Stronger editing would have resolved this issue. For example the table on p. 15 and the one on p. 38 could have readily been combined, and then referred back to, thus avoiding the repetition.

A further point is that many chapters, in the second part, tend towards a kind of statistical technical ecstasy, which whilst explaining the methods applied and the reasons for their selection did not, for me, illuminate the actual concept. However, the debate they contained does illustrate issues that arise around statistical test selection and data manipulation.

Both of the above serve to emphasise the collected nature of this book,

which resembles a bound collection of journal articles and because of this it is perhaps more useful to read chapters of interest rather than the whole volume. Chapter 4, by Linda Price from the OU, I found to be particularly well written and useful with its review of intellectual development/ epistemology models (although where is King and Kitchener?).

In many ways, the book details what we know about successful students:

> *'Although associating study process with academic attainment is not simple, better academic attainment "tends to be positively related to desirable forms of study behaviour and negatively related to less desirable forms".'* (Richardson, 2006, p. 869) (p. 67)

The majority of part two is given over to demonstrating to the reader that it really is far from simple. A big teacher/ academic and academic development question arises from this work. As the reader progresses through part two it becomes increasingly clear (see the quote above) that it is possible to cluster students according to learning pattern. These patterns are ever more sophisticated in their conception and construction and have progressed beyond Vermunt to develop an outline of an achiever who: has a deep approach, is focused on meaning-making, has self-management skills, can evaluate their own performance objectively (perspective), notices

(context), has resilience, manages their response to feedback, proactively seeks feedback, is adaptable and forward thinking (see particularly chapter 10). The question then is, if we know this and we know therefore that there are also disadvantaged learners (who have other profiles), how ought we as teachers to be seeking to assist them? What is the institutional and personal responsibility to these disadvantaged learners? The supplementary question is what ought academic developers to be doing to aid others in their work in this respect?

> *'It seems important for educational practice that, in particular for those learners [disadvantaged] specific feedback interventions regarding their own study drive and learning strategies might be fruitful.'* (p. 228)

Who knows, we might even get around to discussing learning with the learners rather than just content – apparently it helps! The times they are a-changin'.

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# UKPSF: A vehicle for development or hierarchical ladder?

**Jo Peat,** University of Roehampton

Higher education is again in a time of flux, a result of ever-changing national policy and priorities; student demographics; a greater sector awareness of what this means for teaching and the support of learning in higher education; and a conception

of students as consumers or customers in a marketised system. This neo-liberal conception of higher education led to the government including a chapter on enhancing teaching in the White Paper, *Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS,

2011), arguing that this marketisation of higher education would drive up teaching quality as students chose to spend money on those institutions with the best reputation for teaching, research and employability.

The HE market has resulted in new measures of accountability, and success and data, previously safeguarded by the academy, are now firmly in the public domain, available for scrutiny by a range of potential stakeholders: prospective students, parents, schools, the state and other institutions. As a result, universities now find themselves more directly answerable to these stakeholders and are now cast as competitors. Along with this access to information have come new expectations, including that those with responsibility for teaching and/or supporting learning should be able to evidence competence in these domains.

Of course, many universities still rely largely on their research excellence; however, particularly in newer institutions, the number of staff perceived as 'qualified to teach' in HE is now considered a potential marketing tool. The term 'qualified to teach' is, of course, contested and contestable, but, for the purposes of Higher Education Statistics Agency returns and data accessible to the public, one proof of competence in the HE classroom is Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Until HESA returns began to incorporate these data on the number of staff qualified to teach, only those colleagues with a real focus on and passion for teaching engaged actively with the HEA to gain recognition for their experience and expertise in teaching and supporting learning; now, because of this new directive, colleagues from across the whole of the academic spectrum are following suit.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. As noted in the HEA Impact Study Report (Turner *et al.,* 2013), there are real reasons to value the framework, including asserting one's identity as a teaching-focused academic and using it as a means to recognise teaching in more varied academic roles. The framework also allows for recognition valued nationally and is a means of demonstrating parity between HEIs. It opens the opportunity for a conversation around teaching and the support of learning, which hitherto could be difficult to enable. The

increase in the status of teaching in HE and the demand for formal recognition both bring challenges.

The majority of those wishing to seek recognition do this as a result of successful participation in accredited provision and subsequent institutional recommendation to the HEA. The accreditation process for such provision itself is rigorous, and rightly so: those working with such provision need some evidence that the provision is of a high standard, commensurate with its status as a vehicle for the award of fellowship to internal colleagues. The HEA then relies on those administering the schemes locally to maintain the rigour, consistency and integrity of the accredited provision. The HEA is far from being the guardian of academic integrity, so this would seem a democratic and logical approach. The issue then becomes that of safeguarding this promised rigour and objectivity and of ensuring that individual schemes do not become impoverished versions of their accredited selves, through slackened practices or internal politics or pressures.

Internal politics are a rich source of potential friction and problems for the conveners of such schemes. The UKPSF descriptors and, consequently the HEA Fellowships, are rightly criterion-based, awarded to those who have provided evidence that they have fulfilled the criteria necessary for recognition at a certain level, not to those who apply merely on the basis of an elevated role or position. Internal hierarchies must be eschewed when decisions about recognition are made in favour of impartial, evidence-based judgements; however, are there sufficient safeguards in place to ensure that decisions remain consistently based on these, rather than on political expediency? And are we able to reassure colleagues that this is the case? A colleague recently asked whether her application for Fellowship had been unsuccessful as a result of threatened redundancies: if she were not awarded Fellowship, would this make it easier to make her redundant? At the other end of the

spectrum it can take a brave soul to tell a VC, a DVC or a line manager that they have not achieved the level of fellowship for which they have applied. Indeed, one high-placed academic was overheard recently at a conference commenting that he was not prepared to submit an application without a guarantee that he would be awarded the level of Fellowship he perceived as commensurate with his status. The maintaining of rigour, objectivity and reliance solely on the application itself are indubitable necessities for all provision but remain perhaps one of the more challenging elements to apply consistently.

Many accredited schemes are designed and run by institutional educational development units and the colleagues within these units often act as mentors or guides to those applying for recognition. This is a difficult combination to balance: if an application is unsuccessful, it can put the mentors in an invidious position. They are seen internally as the 'experts' on the UKPSF. They have devised the provision, perhaps led guidance workshops to explain the criteria and the steps needed to proceed towards recognition as a fellow of the HEA, read drafts, given feedback, all in the light of their knowledge and expertise. Should a colleague who has followed this route fail, however, the expert is then relegated to deficient mentor, who has been unable to offer the advice and guidance needed for success. Of course, this is the role of the lecturer vis-à-vis his/her students each day; however, for some reason this is not seen as transferable to the professional development context: if advice is sought by those 'in the know' then success should be the inevitable outcome.

The issue of the credibility and the value of the UKPSF and an HEA Fellowship in the eyes of many colleagues can also be problematic, particularly when a Key Performance Indicator of 100% recognition is set and the educational developers are then tasked with operationalising this strategic initiative. As stated in the HEA Impact Study Report (2010):

*'[Unfortunately, the change I am aware of is that] the UKPSF has become a benchmark for compulsory box-ticking exercises which do not actually enhance teaching and learning but take staff time away from directly supporting students. The specific language of the UKPSF has become fetishized, and changes to come into line with it are largely cosmetic.'*

Thus recognition against the UKPSF runs the very real risk of becoming a tokenistic exercise, engaged in purely as a result of institutional pressure and league table priorities or because of internal criteria, linking probation, progression and promotion to formal HEA recognition. Academics are well versed in writing and presenting to task. It is, therefore, relatively unproblematic for them to fulfil the criteria of most accredited schemes by writing or presenting focused applications about how their work in teaching and supporting learning is underpinned by a fervent commitment to the UKPSF. Reality and measures of student satisfaction may tell a very different story, however.

A further area of concern with the UKPSF and the awarding of the different levels of fellowship arises when considering who can realistically aim for the highest levels. Although the HEA has been at pains to point out that the different levels of fellowship should not be seen as linked to specific job titles or considered as hierarchical, it is difficult to see how this could not be the case. Is it possible for a lecturer, who spends all his/her time designing, preparing and leading inspiring and engaging sessions to groups of students, whilst keeping abreast of all the concomitant 'administrivia' and maintaining an acceptable research profile, to have the capacity to be involved in initiatives which will allow him/her to demonstrate 'successful strategic leadership'? Indeed, in some smaller faculties, there is only room for one or two colleagues to have real engagement with strategy beyond that of their own programme. Of itself, this level of commitment would not provide the evidence required for recognition beyond that of Fellow. Equally, a colleague with the remit of leading a faculty or school may

not be involved in sufficient outward-facing strategic work to be eligible for the highest level of recognition, despite exemplary practice in his/her role. A faculty head is necessarily charged with a focus on his/her faculty and facilitating the implementation of strategic initiatives at local level. Is this sufficient to meet the criteria of Descriptor 4? This then raises the question of whether the highest levels of fellowship are attainable to those most deserving of recognition.

My final reservation is in terms of the hierarchy implicit in the HEA Fellowships. The UKPSF is a developmental framework and, of course, not everyone should be able to aim immediately (or perhaps, ever) for the higher levels of recognition. To label the levels as Descriptors 1, 2, 3, 4 and give the fellowships the titles of Associate, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow, however, imbues the framework with an inherent sense of hierarchy: a Principal Fellow is clearly several rungs 'higher' than a mere Fellow. This nomenclature suggests, perhaps particularly to those engaging with the UKPSF and associated discourse for the first time, that those attaining D3 and a Senior Fellowship must be far more effective practitioners than those at D2, rather than the correct message which is that Senior Fellowship has merely been awarded as it is appropriate for that particular role and level of experience. Perhaps it would be more helpful – and more positive in terms of being a developmental process

– to re-name the fellowships as 'Fellow: Teaching and supporting learning; Fellow: Leadership of teaching and supporting learning; Fellow: Strategic development and leadership of teaching and supporting learning.' This way, each category would be seen for what it actually is, rather than just a rung on a hierarchical ladder.

In conclusion, the current emphasis on the quality of teaching and support of learning in higher education must surely be hailed as a move in the right direction. Students deserve to be taught by academics who have some knowledge of, competence in and, hopefully, interest in, pedagogy. Formal recognition of this is, therefore, to be encouraged, as, in our credentialist society, this gives teaching in higher education a kudos it has not necessarily previously held. Whether the UKPSF and the associated fellowships are the best vehicle for this, is still, I suggest, open to vigorous debate.

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# 'Not a means to an end but a genuinely rewarding process' – A personal response to 'UKPSF: A vehicle for development or hierarchical ladder?'

**Sally Bradley,** Higher Education Academy

The title is a quote from an unsolicited email from an, initially, unsuccessful applicant for HEA Fellowship. An unexpected response, maybe? But a demonstration of the value of the experienced route to professional recognition, if approached in the appropriate spirit and with appropriate support.

The introduction of the UK Professional Standards Framework in 2006 was part of the journey of change in higher education. The National Enquiry into Higher Education, or the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997), stated the need to establish teaching in higher education as a profession and provide a balance between research and the value of the support for student learning in a mass HE system. This mass market has grown and the demands of its 'customers' have changed with the introduction of fees and an economic climate where graduate jobs are at a premium.

HE is no longer privileged with privacy or protected by a focus on research but requires transparency, value for money and quality. But what measures quality: Research Excellence Framework outputs or teaching? The UKPSF offers a framework, not a set of competencies or behaviours, which were recognised through the 2010 consultation as representative of what an academic member of staff and someone supporting student learning is involved with, to a greater or lesser extent.

SEDA were the early adopters of accredited HE teacher education, and have been doing this for the last 21 years through their Professional Development Framework (PDF). But this is a one-off qualification, often seen as an introduction to academic practice. Surely, the students of today have the right to be taught and supervised by staff who are developing or at least maintaining their knowledge and understanding within their discipline and practice. Times change and practice moves on, one only needs to look at the development of eLearning over the last 20 years. A new pedagogy has emerged, and without staff development the gap would widen. Shouldn't students, parents and employers have the confidence that their investment is worth it? Would any of us go to a solicitor or surgeon if we thought they were not up to date in their field? What measures do our stakeholders have? A static teaching qualification gained a number of years ago or evidence of continuing professional development?

Taught provision, Postgraduate Certificates in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education or Academic Practice, which have been accredited through SEDA, ILTHE and latterly the HEA, have established benchmarks and expectations, such as the inclusion of pedagogy, assessment principles and models of learning and teaching. Staff delivering courses are experienced HE educators and have made judgements against academic credit which in many cases are aligned to the UKPSF. Similarly, applications made to the HEA for Fellowships are also judged through a peer review process via independent Accreditors who are trained to make judgements on behalf of the HEA. The accreditation of institutional CPD schemes has extended this trust to institutions to make rigorous decisions. Evidence of externality is a requirement of the HEA accreditation process and Accreditors ask how the reviewers within an internal scheme are trained to make judgements and how externals are used within decision-making. Panel decisions are critical to the objectivity within a subjective decision-making process. The credibility of an institutional scheme is reliant on panel members' professionalism; no institution would want to be known as having a superficial recognition scheme within a nationally recognised process. Institutional reputation is at stake, similar to PhD viva decisions.

Not every institution awards the full range of *categories,* AFHEA to PFHEA. Many stop at SFHEA because of the difficulty of turning down a senior member of staff who may be on the next promotion panel or professoriate committee. But this conflict can be addressed through panels made up solely of external panel members who are appropriately qualified and trained to make decisions at, say, PFHEA. Indeed, applications direct to the HEA are reviewed by Accreditors who hold as a minimum SFHEA and undertake mandatory training as part of their contractual requirements.

As Peat says, many accredited CPD schemes are run and managed centrally – supporting, writing guidance and providing formative feedback. In which case, it would be appropriate for individuals not to be the decision maker. But they can be the Chair of the panel. Provided the panel follows due process, an unsuccessful candidate cannot hold the provider of support and guidance to account as the decision is a peer review process, and this has to be transparent to all applicants. This assumes that those supporting and mentoring are also trained, another requirement of HEA Accreditation. The same risk applies to staff supporting experienced, direct applicants to the HEA and is similar to a member of staff on a PGCert in learning and teaching or academic practice. Because a member of staff has attended the course does not guarantee a pass, there has to be a personal intervention.

Does a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) create a conflict of interest with quality of decision-making? KPI can work to gain buy-in from institutional leaders and raise the profile of the importance of professional recognition. Will it sell Fellowship to an individual? Unlikely, but advocates who have experienced support in gaining Fellowship are more likely to influence peers:

> 'HEA Application?! It's one of those things you do unwillingly – realise it was worth it – and will others to do it!'

Creating space for staff to write their application is probably a more effective way of engaging staff. Recognising and respecting that they are busy people:

> 'I began my application for HEA accreditation longer ago than I care to recall. It just seemed like too much effort, between the teaching and research activities, to complete, edit, reflect...and find two referees. But when I completed the process, to have others acknowledge my work, made this one of my most life-enhancing experiences.'

If the language within an institution is that a Fellowship application is a hoop to be jumped through rather than a celebration of professional practice, then it will be perceived as a tick-box exercise and the rhetoric will become 'quite negative about it and [staff] see it as a form-filling exercise'. This undermines the credibility of the process and the value others have found:

> 'Going through the process of writing my HEA Fellowship application made me reflect on my journey, discipline my writing and realise how far I had come in understanding my teaching and learning.'

From a personal perspective, the value I gained from undertaking Fellowship, initially through the ILTHE, was of the recognition of the contribution I was making to the student experience. As I wrote my SFHEA in 2012, I captured the journey I had made from Associate Lecturer, Researcher and Educational Developer and the influences which had impact on my practice and how my practice had impact on others.

As previously mentioned, AFHEA and FHEA have an established pedigree and staff are familiar with FHEA status being a benchmark comparator as they frequently gain this through Postgraduate Certificates. SFHEA is a more recent category introduced at the end of 2011 and PFHEA later in 2012. The profile of both categories would indicate that there is a wide variety of staff in different roles who are able to claim leadership in learning and teaching; this is obviously dependent on the opportunity available to individuals. But isn't that where Personal Development Review should link to Fellowship, so that staff are able to gain the opportunities to develop if they wish? Not all PFHEAs are Vice-Chancellors or Pro-Vice-Chancellors for learning and teaching, but all PFHEAs are able to demonstrate successful strategic leadership in an institutional, national or international setting in relation to learning and teaching. This claim can be done through Professional Bodies or nationally funded initiatives. The introduction of the additional Fellowships came at the request of the sector. Perhaps when the UKPSF comes up

for review in the future the sector will consider change, as happened with Standard Descriptor 3.

As Peat says, the quality of teaching and support for learning is of importance to us all in the HE sector:

> 'Effective learning and teaching activities and practices are enabled through, and depend on, staff who are appropriately qualified for their role and who engage throughout their career in continuing professional development, in the evaluation of their practice, and in developing their understanding of their subject and the learning process as it relates to their subject.' (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2012, p. 5)

And this is not just a UK issue:

> 'Teaching matters as much as research matters. We must put the quality of teaching and learning centre-stage.' (High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2013)

SEDA were the early adopters of recognition of teaching through their Professional Development Framework. Staff teaching on Postgraduate Certificates in learning and teaching in higher education or academic practice make judgements on colleagues against criteria. Surely we are not saying that this model of peer review is flawed?

SEDA Fellowships are awarded against a demonstration of the SEDA values:
- An understanding of how people learn
- Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice
- Working and developing learning communities
- Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity
- Continuing reflection on professional practice
- Developing people and processes.

Is the process of awarding fellowship so different between SEDA and the HEA? SEDA Fellowships are peer reviewed and offer levels of Associate, Fellow and Senior Fellowships. The criteria may be different but the process is similar.

My right to reply? I ran an HEA Accredited CPD Scheme, I was an HEA Accreditor and I reviewed SFSEDA submissions for SEDA. I am also proud to have the post nominals of SFSEDA and SFHEA. And I aspire to demonstrate my sustained, national strategic leadership through PFHEA in the future.

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# TESTA in 2014: A way of thinking about assessment and feedback

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It would have been a stretch of the imagination in July 2009 to think that TESTA, a National Teaching Fellowship Project funded by the Higher Education Academy for three years, would still be going strong, and growing in 2014.

TESTA has become more than a project – providing evidence and opportunities for many universities to view assessment through the lens of the programme and through the eyes of students. It has reached more than 100 programme teams in some 40 universities in the UK, Australia, the USA and India. The Minister of Higher Education, David Willetts, described TESTA as 'one the best teaching and learning enhancement projects' at the 2013 Higher Education Policy Institute Conference. At a recent TESTA Summit, hosted by SEDA, and supported by the HEA, 41 lecturers from the UK, India and Australia gathered to share their use of the approach and discuss conceptual and contextual issues, and potential refinements. Two Indian universities participated in TESTA in a British Council partnership – because the rationale was strong enough to risk outsiders collecting 'insider' data. So what is it about TESTA that is proving so worthwhile for academics across the globe? This article is an attempt to explain what TESTA is, why universities are keen to use the approach to improve the student learning experience, and what improvements have resulted.

## What is TESTA?

'Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment' (TESTA) is both a research method and a change process. The central plank of TESTA is its emphasis on the programme as the fundamental organising principle. TESTA's focus on programme-level features of assessment recognises that individual teachers can solve assessment problems at module level only to a very limited extent: programme-level solutions are usually necessary. TESTA has shown that there are predictable patterns of relationships between features of programme-level assessment and patterns of student learning. The usefulness of TESTA lies in its ability as an enhancement tool to influence local practice and systems, potentially shifting quality assurance in the direction of student learning. Several universities are using TESTA in periodic review to improve assessment design in the curriculum development phase. Enhancement is leading quality assurance – for once, the dog is wagging the tail.

TESTA's research involves three methods. Programme-level data is collected from team leaders through an audit of hard data, reflecting the 'planned curriculum'. This data includes volumes of summative and formative assessment, varieties of assessment, proportions of exams, and the volume of written and oral feedback. The significance of the audit is that it answers the question of what assessment and feedback looks like over the course of a whole programme, on paper at least. It challenges academics to look beyond the module, and consider how assessment tasks across a *smorgasbord* of modules may be influencing student learning on the programme, and in the discipline. The audit raises questions about the ratio of formative to summative tasks; the sequencing, timing and mapping of assessments; student and staff workloads; progression and the relationship between modules and tasks; and how feedback works to engender reflection and learning (or not). The second research instrument is the Assessment Experience Questionnaire (AEQ), a 28 question survey based on assessment principles distilled by Graham Gibbs

(Gibbs and Simpson, 2004). The AEQ is normally distributed to final year students to elicit a collective sense about perceptions of effort, clarity about goals and standards, and the effectiveness of feedback. Finally, TESTA collects student voice data through focus groups with students, in an attempt to understand some of the phenomena that the audit and AEQ imply.

The TESTA research process culminates in a carefully crafted and compelling narrative of the triangulated data – a case study of assessment and feedback on the programme, with key features highlighted, and themes represented through clusters of student quotes. As TESTA has become more sophisticated, the case study has included interpretation of the data, with suggestions about enhancing practice. The change process is navigated through a discussion of the case study with the programme team, not as the 'final word', but as evidence which is open to discussion, revision, and contextualisation. In some cases, students or student representatives are part of the discussion, strengthening the accountability of the team to use the evidence for enhancement. A key element of the TESTA process is that the evidence has its own power and dynamic once shared and discussed, and teams decide on and design the most strategic interventions on the basis of this evidence. Educational developers guide and steer, support and give advice on the basis of the discussion, emphasising key points and asking questions to cross-check and facilitate decisions about potential enhancements. At root, TESTA is a research and enhancement process, not a management or efficiency tool. The main purpose of TESTA is to help academics design assessment in a way which enhances student learning, rather than to bump up NSS scores. At the same time many evidence-led

changes are likely to result in improved performance, greater efficiency and learning benefits for students.

## Why have universities found TESTA compelling?

When educational developers contact us to work with them on implementing TESTA, the first reason they give is that they want to understand the impact of programme assessment patterns on student learning. Years of working piecemeal at modular fixes and enhancements have yielded very little systemic change. There is a strong sense in the sector of wanting to corral the modular beasts. One beautiful Brahmin bull in the midst of a ragtag collection of animals all heading in different directions does not make a herd. Without pushing the metaphor too far, neither do a few good modules, loosely coupled, constitute a programme.

A second reason for the sector's interest in TESTA is its robust research methodology. TESTA's credibility rests on its use of qualitative and quantitative data, triangulated through rigorous analysis, and represented in a case study. Academics are in the business of research, and as a result, are compelled by an evidence-led process. Time and again, we have witnessed lecturers' scepticism and mild indifference turned around by good data and careful analysis. The case studies resonate. I led a report back to a tense staff council of slightly defensive academics recently, and as the data was revealed, heads began to nod in unison. This is 'phenomenon recognition' (Miller and Parlett, 1971) – the 'aha' moment when the evidence puts its finger on a known, but often weakly articulated or unformulated problem. We describe this as the 'intuition meets evidence' moment.

The data in TESTA is grounded in an appreciation of educational theory about how students learn best, and what conditions in the learning environment help students to learn. Well-researched assessment principles undergird the TESTA research, and keep on informing its development. This is a third important reason that TESTA is valued as an enhancement

tool. TESTA's original assessment principles arose from a study of the disciplinary literature about forms of assessment and feedback that helped students to learn (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004). Examples of these included 'time on task' – that the assessment regime needed to capture sufficient student effort, distributed across modules, to enable deep learning; internalising goals and standards – that students need to actively engage with goals and standards through peer marking, self-assessment, or smart use of exemplars to 'get' what they mean; the concept of cycles of feedback feeding forward, implying timely feedback, connection between tasks and progression over levels. The TESTA team have engaged with newer literature and statements of assessment principles in order to keep the methodology informed by up-to-date research (for example, Rust *et al.,* 2005; Nicol and McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Nicol, 2010; Boud and Associates, 2010). Assessment principles undergird TESTA, but the approach goes further in articulating these principles within a social constructivist learning framework, countering the 'teaching tips' critique of some enhancement research (Lau, 2013).

TESTA is well used by educational developers in the sector because the change process is collegial and completely devoid of a 'blame game'. That's the fourth reason why TESTA has gained ground. The case studies present an external bird's-eye view of programme assessment. They are written in a descriptive rather than evaluative tone. The process is more revealing about how modular systems and even well-intentioned quality assurance regimes have subverted good practice, than about any individual teacher's practice, although it does create some fantastic opportunities for sharing good practice. TESTA data is reported carefully and thoroughly but as unfinished business, because the team meeting invites discussion, questioning, and strategy development by, from and for the programme team. The process is participatory, and open-ended, but threaded through with rich and textured generic learning,

teaching and assessment principles and theories. These generic ideas meet up with local disciplinary experience and practice in the team meeting.

A final reason for TESTA's influence in the sector is its open source website which contains the resources and tools required to conduct TESTA. Some universities have picked up the tools 'off the shelf' and conducted the research. Others have sought the TESTA team's support to run workshops, initiate change processes, conduct research and train researchers – we have trained at least 20 researchers to conduct TESTA, most recently postgraduate and undergraduate students at various universities, including our own. Over the last three years, the project leader and consultant have had freedom and institutional backing to provide support for TESTA beyond the lead institution, because of our part-time roles. As a proxy indicator of TESTA's growth and sustainability, the website has had 15,704 hits from 145 countries, each visitor spending nearly three minutes looking at four web pages. In February 2014, nearly two years after the official funding ceased, the number of visitors to the TESTA website (www.testa. ac.uk) peaked at a record 898 in one month.

## TESTA-inspired changes to assessment patterns

The main change TESTA has prompted in assessment patterns is a reconceptualisation of the balance and relationship between formative and summative assessment. In working with dozens of programmes, the pattern of high summative to low formative is prevalent. We know that formative assessment is important for shaping student learning, and for short-circuiting 'random' and 'trial and error' processes of learning (Sadler, 1989; Black and Wiliam, 1998). TESTA research shows that formative assessment is often voluntary, may lack feedback, and more often than not, is perceived as pointless by students (Jessop *et al.,* 2014). From a student perspective, formative tasks compete for time and attention with summative tasks. On many programmes, summative assessment occurs twice

per module (mid and end of module), and is the only time all students focus their attention and effort. In some cases there is so much summative assessment that it leads to fragmented and surface approaches to learning. It is common for summative assessment deadlines for several modules to be 'bunched', leading many students to give superficial treatment to some tasks. The main changes that the evidence has prompted are: a reduction in summative assessment (occasionally with more integrated programmatic assessment across more than one module), an increase in formative assessment, and more clearly defined links between formative and summative. Alongside these changes have been creative ways of engaging students in formative tasks, for example establishing and requiring weekly or fortnightly blogging, presentations with peer review elements, and portfolios, particularly when these formative elements link to a more challenging summative task.

Evidence from AEQs and focus groups has shown that students lack a clear sense of goals and standards. One reason for this is an over-reliance on written criteria and guidance to convey complicated messages about expectations and standards, many of which are held tacitly in the minds of markers. In response to TESTA evidence, programmes have set in place more activities which help students to understand the criteria, for example, self-assessing against criteria, peer marking, rewriting criteria in user-friendly language and exposing students to exemplars, which are then discussed in relation to criteria. A further reason for student confusion about standards has been the random sequence of different varieties of assessment tasks across modules, rendering students unable to transfer feedback effectively. TESTA has enabled teams to map, sequence and streamline varieties in ways which lead students to gain mastery over both process and content. Finally, the perception of variations in marking approaches and standards has contributed to students' distrust of the standards. In response, several programmes have embarked on team calibration exercises to

help markers engage with the same criteria together, discuss variations, and agree common standards. This is different from moderation or second marking because it is a team development exercise, designed to set aside preconceptions about experts and novices, and help all markers in the skill and art of marking reliably, interpreting criteria together and synchronising understandings of the disciplinary discourse. The potential for peer-marking exercises to develop students' sophistication in understanding marking processes is proven, and is a possible next step for programmes wanting to explore notions of subjectivity, standards and criteria (McConlogue, 2012).

TESTA has led to a number of programmes adapting feedback regimes to engender more student attention to feedback, and developing cycles of reflection so that feedback feeds forward to the next task. The idea of feedback as a dialogue and a conversation rather than a monologue from a lecturer to a student has been central to many enhancements (Nicol, 2010). Some programmes have invited students to suggest feedback they want on their work at the time of submission, developing reflections on their work, and opening a 'conversation' about feedback with the marker; others have created mechanisms for developmental feedback to be appended and responded to in the next submitted task; still others have embedded more structured opportunities for peer feedback so that students giving feedback develop more sophisticated evaluation capacities, and those receiving feedback from peers get more feedback, more quickly. The idea of dialogic feedback has been facilitated by technologies like audio feedback, and blogging threads which create opportunities for commenting on students' written blogs.

The findings from TESTA of students' perceived low effort levels, combined with audit data which indicates that the assessment environment has not distributed tasks sufficiently across weeks and modules, have led to programmes setting higher expectations of students. One

programme shifted its entire first year into a collaborative, problem-solving exercise involving student production of various artefacts in small groups, reducing lecture time, and increasing the time when students were researching and producing, rather than passively watching, listening and receiving 'packaged' knowledge. This assessment pattern reflected a more formative and process-driven approach than traditional courses.

## Looking ahead

It is difficult to predict the shelf life for TESTA but its expiry date is not yet, not while universities continue to find it a powerful tool in helping them to think about assessment and feedback. In 2014, there are several universities using TESTA for the first time – Roehampton, Greenwich, University of the West of Scotland, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier, Exeter, Christchurch Canterbury and Sheffield Hallam. Some of these are riding the student engagement wave, and training students to conduct the research and be active partners in the change process. This may lead to more open staff-student discussions about assessment and feedback, and has the potential to be a real game-changer in a hierarchical assessment system – overturning the traditional relationship: 'we ask the questions, you answer them, we grade them'. It is also likely to create more awareness and discussion about different kinds of assessment, and the purposes and functions of summative, formative, peer, self and tutor assessed work. The recent NUS Feedback and Assessment Benchmarking tool (NUS, 2013) suggests growing sophistication in students' articulation of assessment principles, which will only be strengthened by students partnering in TESTA research and change processes.

Of the universities which have used TESTA in the past five years, a good number are looking at smart ways of embedding the process in periodic review without endangering the generative and collegial elements of the process (for example, Winchester, Dundee and Keele – but there are others too). Using TESTA in periodic review also invites a more evidence-based and enhancement-centred

dialogue about assuring the quality of degrees. In doing this, universities are also refining the methodology to suit budgets, learning conditions, and to collect more fine-grained data about different modes of feedback, for example. For the TESTA team, the challenge is how to keep the methodology relevant and up to date, and certainly, a revision of the AEQ to reflect some of the latest research and evidence about assessment is on the cards.

The third development which has some potential to keep TESTA on the shelf for a few more years is the growth in international interest. Through a British Council grant, we ran the TESTA process in two Indian universities in 2013, and although the context and conditions of higher education are different, academics and students found the process compelling. Joelle Adams, HEA Ron Cooke International Fellow, and a member of the SEDA Executive, took a version of TESTA to three USA universities last year as part of her fellowship work. I recently conducted a webinar for 87 Canadian instructional designers in the province of Saskatchewan on programme-wide assessment and TESTA. From these small incursions, it seems that the idea of programme-level assessment as a key to enhancing coherence, progression, and student learning, is as relevant in Delhi as it is in Saskatoon. The future is hard to predict, but it would be thrilling to be writing a 'TESTA five years' article for *Educational Developments* in 2019.

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# Running a live online activity in a SEDA session: Reflections from presenters and participants

**Peter Lumsden,** University of Central Lancashire

## Background

The context of this article is a session which was delivered at the November 2013 SEDA Conference, Creativity in Education, which in turn relates to developing the pedagogy of a Post Graduate Certificate Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCert). Like in all institutions, as technology has evolved we have been bringing it into the programme. We've always been clear, though, that an important principle is that technology is used with a dual purpose, firstly to facilitate learning, and secondly, to demonstrate tools to colleagues which might inform (and enhance) their own practice (Keengwe and Kidd, 2010).

These authors also noted 'the need to fundamentally change and transform pedagogical approaches to the learning and teaching process to meet the instructional needs of online students'. Thus, for example, we have moved to having written assignments submitted through Turnitin, comments provided with Grademark, and feedback either added to the Turnitin page or given through the audio function. Of course, beside the development of educational technology there is also the push for an increased number of staff to achieve standard descriptor 2 (SD2) of the Professional Standards Framework (PSF) of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Consequently, there is an increase in demand for our

PGCert. As this demand grows, it includes more and more staff located at a distance, such as part-time staff, and staff working in overseas campuses (we have a cohort of staff in our Cyprus campus who are engaged in the PGCert), making some online provision an increasing necessity.

As PGCert course leader I am very conscious of these considerations and of the need therefore to continue to incorporate technology. This has led to close working with both learning technology colleagues, and academic colleagues who have pioneered developments. Last year, by way of a pilot, I ran part of a PGCert workshop using Adobe Connect, the online platform which we use at UCLan. The session went reasonably well (I used chat and then visual and audio) and this gave me the confidence to approach two colleagues with the idea of something more ambitious.

Erica is an internationally renowned expert in Food Safety Management and International Food Law compliance, and during her time at UCLan she developed and successfully ran a wholly online Masters in food safety. In this she worked closely with Kevan Williams, a senior developer with the digital services team, who has experience in a diverse range of learning technologies and multimedia development tools, and has coordinated and supported hundreds of online sessions.

So, our aim was to demonstrate an online approach to learning, simulating a learning activity (designing a lesson plan) which is already part of a PGCert session. At the same time we wanted participants to experience online technology first hand, as a 'student', in the hope that this might inform their own practice. SEDA seemed a good place to try this out – a group of educational developers, and a place where technology has featured as a part of previous conferences. We hoped too that there would be learning for us in trying to run something quite ambitious in an online way, in an unknown venue with unknown participants.

## Planning and running the session

I had an idea for an activity to which I had been introduced at a meeting of the Society for Experimental Biology, which involved teams creating engaging lesson plans ('making the horse thirsty'), and then voting on the 'best' one. I'd run it a couple of times since on the PGCert course, and wondered whether it could work in an online setting.

The original proposal for the session was:
a) Introduction and demonstration (20 mins.)
b) Participants review and share the learning outcomes of their CPD programmes (15 mins.)
c) A live interaction between participants and with tutor (25 mins.); 'design a lesson plan to engage first year students'
d) Action planning, with ideas for new ways to approach online provision (20-30 mins., groups of 5-6).

During our subsequent discussions, which were done through Adobe Connect, we decided to keep it as simple as possible, and instead to use Adobe Connect for the whole session:

a) Erica – background to distance learning (10 mins.)
b) Peter – introduce and explain the exercise (5 mins.)
c) Participants – carry out the exercise in groups (60 mins.)
d) All – review (10 mins.).

The conference suite at Bristol was a challenging environment and we quickly realised that we were trying to demonstrate technology in a very different setting from where we would normally use it: participants being in the same room; a limited bandwidth; some participants not having accessed information in advance (which meant that it took time for some to download the Adobe Connect mobile app).

We took five minutes to talk directly to the group and introduce ourselves. Erica then went online to give some background, accompanied by slides. It was immediately apparent that having Kevan at 'ground control' (in Preston) was crucial; indeed, through the five-minute introduction, participants were logging in, and were asking questions through the chat function, and Kevan was able to address these. This was a crucial feature throughout the session.

We did ask which interactive online programmes they were familiar with, and the response was either Blackboard Collaborate, or Adobe Connect. This led Kevan to suggest a comparison between tools. One participant raised the ethical issue of recording sessions; Kevan pointed out that students are happier to engage with the concept of content recording than staff. The participant then pointed to the applicability for peer observations.

About 12 minutes in, one chat comment was: I think it's confusing. There is too much going on at the same time. Another was: great to have discussion around concepts, but perhaps better to have it in breaks specifically for that, so that attention isn't quite so split?

At 15 minutes we brought in the team task. Participants were allocated into (virtual) groups by Kevan, with a convenor in each group who typed up the activities for the hypothetical session into a pre-created section. These could be viewed by everyone. The voting function was then displayed and individuals 'voted' on the best lesson plan.

## The experience of the participants

Below are recorded verbatim some of the chat comments posted at the end of the session, with participants identified by an initial.

T: *We can see the potential but concerns over the technology and the role of educator becoming technical support. Need to develop some strategies to cope with this.*
C: *But the tool still seems very flaky...far more so than Collaborate, which is a shame, as the functionality for group work here is much nicer.*
J2: *Perhaps most learning today is about need to be resilient and how much I prefer the F2F.*
P2: *It's still very slow and clunky, but when it grows up it could be good.*
C: *Not sure I liked it very much and we reverted to physical rather than virtual.*

KH: *that was probably the drawback in this exercise. We too started off talking and then had to make ourselves use the chat function.*

JA: *I felt very excited by the possibilities in using this technology, and totally in awe of the group facilitators keeping calm and good humoured in the face of the inevitable tweeting problems.*

KH: *It was a great hands-on experience of using a technology to create learning opportunities but I think I need much more exposure to these kinds of resources to improve my skill set and gain more confidence.*

P2: *It did, however, work virtually for me as I had no idea where the other members of the group were in the room until the end.*

C: *Learned about an alternative to Collaborate, but that I like Collaborate better I'm afraid!*

SB: *Pre activities essential to set scene for next session. Creating 'about me' videos to share and get to know each other at beginning is useful to develop.*

E2: *You do miss a lot communicating by text – in real time, people tend to be brief, and it can be very ambiguous. Also slow – a lot of waiting for connections and typing to appear. But it's good to see tools which will, in 5 years, no doubt be very slick.*

J2: *I do think a low-stakes fun activity would allow me to learn alongside my learners as I do not think they would be any more competent than me.*

JA: *Initial difficulties can be rather dispiriting but it highlighted to me how important the role of the facilitators is when this happens.*

LN: *Confirmed all my fears of technology-led learning – teacher paced, not engaging but isolating, frustrating, learnt little – pedagogy lost!*

E2: *There really is a set of skills you need to develop to make this work – digital divide!*

LN: *Technology is great where it is used to enhance learning where other options not possible.*

## Learning for the presenters

We hoped that by the end of this session, participants would be able to:
- Explain the principles of blended learning to colleagues
- Design an activity suitable for a distance learning PGCert cohort to access
- Engage in an online discussion.

We did not build in the time to explore the first of these, but the second and third were clearly met. In the event, the session was much more one of using and experiencing the technology rather than discussing the pedagogy and comparing it with other approaches, which with hindsight would have been useful to have done.

### Learning for Peter:
*Discussion happens during the online activity, and can be built into the 'plan'. However, it does strike me that this could become overwhelming, especially if there were more people 'online' than the dozen we had in this session.*

### Learning for Kevan:
*There are three common elements which must be considered:*
- *Ensure each participant has sufficient dedicated bandwidth to enable effective engagement and collaboration*
- *Ensure participants have run the Adobe Connection test check feature and installed the Connect add-in for optimum performance, or Connect mobile app if accessing via a mobile device*
- *Ensure the participants have the correct hardware – headset with integrated microphone if they are to broadcast sound.*

The planning phase must be carried out by both the facilitator and the technologist to provide mutually constructive options and ideas. Having a technical lead managing the Adobe Connect platform is essential to take pressure away from the academic delivering the session. Crucially though, it is only through such ambitious digital pilots as this one that we are able to develop institutional guidance for online collaboration.

### Learning for Erica:
*I found the face to face challenges of the technology in this environment fascinating. I have only experienced the frustration from learners using Adobe Connect for the first time at a distance, so observing this at close hand amplified this experience for me considerably. I had always believed that learners in the virtual world felt safer to challenge given the very real distance between tutor and tutees; however, I will not be so confident to assume this in future and will be more alive to any signs of virtual frustrations.*

This was my first experience of working alongside professional educators and I was intrigued by the apparently polarised responses to the benefits and/or applicability of this technology. This highlights the challenges a potentially polarising experience for learners can bring and reminds us as digital educators that achieving parity of student experience in digital learning environments is more challenging than with traditionally taught environments.

## The subsequent application of the learning

Using the learning from this session, I ran a 3-hour Adobe Connect session with our PGCert cohort, which had some slides and also used the same exercise as described here. There were 35 participants in the UK and 10 in Cyprus. Feedback came through the course blog, including the following:

### Peter (the tutor):
*Quick observation from me of today from tutor perspective, and looking at three different elements:*
*a) The chat facility – quite intense with large numbers, but does encourage lots of input. Need to be very alert to pick up individual comments and respond. I think best done in 10-minute chunks*
*b) Presentation – quite relaxing, probably because no sight of audience! Need to build in breaks e.g. YouTube clips as per today. Chat was much less during this and was manageable. Allows input from all, so some advantages here. Disadvantage is relative inflexibility to local conditions*
*c) Activity in groups – pleasantly surprised at how effective this was, in terms of engagement and in the quality of output. For me it was more effective from a facilitation angle in that I could see everything at the same time and comment too. Much more so than if in a live room.*

**Participant S, day after:**

*Hi All*
*I really enjoyed this session and it is something I would consider using for my students. I know one of my colleagues did say it may be a useful tool for supervision, you have got me thinking! It was easily accessible, I encountered no major problems getting onto the system and thought it was a clever way for students to interact. As a student on the receiving end it does have some advantages and disadvantages. The audio was clear, I like the way the system facilitates visual contact via the webcam, and it felt like fun! Another advantage is that you can choose your own environment, one where you perhaps feel more comfortable – for students who are shy speaking out this may be a more ideal environment? I particularly liked how you could read each other's feeds and thoughts. The only disadvantage for me was that I found it very tiring – I know, Peter, you commented on how intense your role was as the facilitator and I can truly believe it as you were effectively managing a large group remotely as well as co-ordinating the technology!*

**Participant A, two days after:**

*I enjoyed the online Adobe session a lot more than I thought. When I first logged on I was expecting a webcam set-up so was surprised to find the 'chat room' instead. Initially I thought – how could we possibly learn anything here? So many people just chatting. Then as the discussion got going I was really surprised. I picked up an awful lot from the session that I will definitely be able to use in future practice.*

*With positives there are always some constructive comments too! I found it difficult to keep up with a lot of the entries that were appearing on the screen. I know you can never possibly read all the entries that are put in but they kept moving around on the screen as well as new ones were added. For people who take a while to read – like myself or my husband who is dyslexic – it is a nightmare trying to keep up with even one blog at a time. The post recording does help this issue but would obviously require more time to go over the session again. I guess when you are in a classroom setting it is easier as you can absorb what is being said as you hear it and you also don't have lots of people talking all at once. Peter – I really enjoyed the time-out sections you gave us and we're strict about as well so people didn't carry on typing. It certainly gave me time to absorb and reflect on what had just been said and also to catch up with any entries I had missed beforehand.*

*I know most people are IT literate and have used Adobe Connect in their lessons before but as I am a novice I have been reading up a little on it and wanted to share this website with you as reference of a 'how to' guide: http://tinyurl.com/2d9xvmd.*

**Participant R, four days after:**

*I found that the Adobe Connect session was a fascinating learning experience – and highly stimulating in terms of generating ideas for teaching and assessment practices. As far as developing methods to engage and assess a diverse student body go, I think this might have many advantages, because it promotes a different kind of 'culture in the classroom' (Hawley et al.) to that of standard learning environments, such as flat seminar rooms or layered lecture theatres. The key point here is that there is a tendency in a classroom*

*environment to assume a particular set of pre-determined roles and procedures that often become crystallised and reinforced through repetition over time as particular courses or modules are delivered.*

*Conversely, the session via Adobe, despite being quite chaotic as far as the mode of interaction went – with multiple actors (both student and instructor) entering text simultaneously – very much encouraged redesigning of educational personas. This seemed to be accentuated because the kind of visual and oral indicators of cultural disparity (attire, accent etc.) were also removed. In addition to this removal of socio-economic indicators, I think the format could also offer students who tend to be shy or reticent an opportunity to better express their full interactive capabilities, because they too feel less inhibited when the means of communication is text entry only – as opposed to the verbal and visual. This is something that only becomes apparent upon actually using the software.*

## Conclusion

As an educational developer, I've been pleasantly surprised at some of the unexpected benefits of online sessions, in particular the enhanced level of engagement and interaction. Frederickson *et al.* (2005) found that online was better for student collaboration but was less so for teaching input; delivery of material through a 'lecture' format is my next trialling of the technology.

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# Information for Contributors

The Editorial Committee of *Educational Developments* welcomes contributions on any aspect of staff and educational development likely to be of interest to readers.

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# SEDA News

## SEDA Research and Evaluation Small Grant Winners

This year we have awarded grants to the following people for the projects named:

- **Maria Kaparou** and **Ian Abbott:** *Leading international students' communities of learning within departmental extra-curricular activities: a case study in a Russell Group university in England*
- **Alexander Masardo** and **Kyoko Murakami:** *Is group work working? Teacher intentions, student experiences and effective learning strategies within the undergraduate Childhood, Youth and Education Studies programme*
- **Catherine McConnell:** *Student collaborators in educational development*
- **Janis McIntyre, Ian Willis, Susanne Voelkel, Nick Greeves** and **Liz Crolley:** *The impact of ULTRA: academic staff as advocates for learning and teaching in a research-intensive university*
- **Jennie Winter** and **Sarah Chapman:** *Using a university arts gallery to enhance the student learning experience*

## SEDA Committees

We welcome **Yaz El Hakim** as SEDA's new Vice-Chair, **Jaki Lilly** and **Elaine Fisher** as the new Co-Chairs of our Services and Enterprise Committee and **John Peters** to the SEDA Executive Committee.

## New Publications

The latest edition in the SEDA Series to be published is *Understanding and Developing Student Engagement,* edited by Colin Bryson. It is available to buy in hard copy or as an eBook at: www.routledge.com

## IETI

SEDA members will have noticed that SEDA's journal, *Innovations in Education* and *Teaching International,* has now gone up to six issues a year. For more information about IETI, see: http://www.tandfonline.com

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The latest book in the SEDA Series – Launched at the SEDA Conference in Newcastle

**Understanding and Developing Student Engagement**
Edited by Colin Bryson

Routledge, 2014
ISBN:
978 0 415 84339 3
£24.99
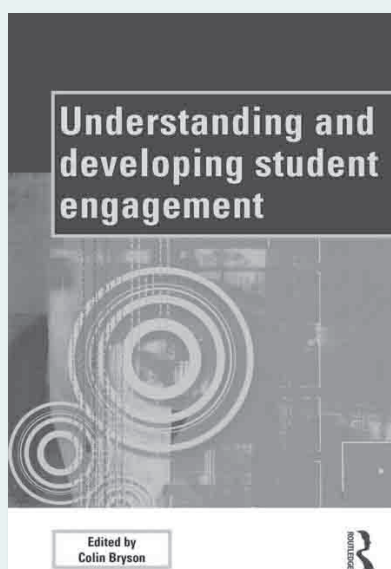
This book uncovers the multi-dimensional nature of student engagement, utilising case examples from both student and staff perspectives, and provides conceptual clarity and strong evidence about this rather elusive notion. It provides a firm foundation from which to discuss practices and policies that might best serve to foster engagement.

With 9 of the 18 chapters written by students, this book sets their experiences beside contributions from researchers and practitioners. It is essential reading for educational developers who are supporting the colleagues and their institutions in this important work.

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A SEDA Online Publication

## 53 Powerful Ideas Every Teacher Should Know About

**Professor Graham Gibbs**

Based on the rationale that 'thinking about teaching' is at least as important as teaching methods, Professor Graham Gibbs is publishing one 'powerful idea' a week through the Publications pages of the SEDA website (http://www. seda.ac.uk/publications.html?p=5_6).

These thought-provoking texts deserve consideration amongst the higher education community. They are also essential reading for educational developers and participants on PG Certificate courses. Here are the ideas which have been published in the first six weeks:

1. Students are trying to get different things out of being at university
2. Students respond to clear and high expectations
3. Transferable skills rarely transfer
4. Good student performance is achieved in different ways than learning gains
5. Much of what is learnt is forgotten
6. Learning takes effort.

Go to http://thesedablog.wordpress.com/ to comment on the ideas, or follow the discussion on Twitter #53ideas.