

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Investigating educational developers' perceptions of assessment literacy

John Dermo, University of Bradford

Introduction

'Higher education is, in general, thinly populated with academics who are experts in assessment (there are probably rather more who consider themselves experts).' (Yorke, 2011, p. 267)

Assessment literacy has been a common topic of discussion in UK Higher Education in recent years, largely as a result of the work emerging from the Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, which focused primarily on developing student assessment literacy (Price *et al.*, 2012; Sambell *et al.*, 2013). Prior to that, discussion around assessment literacy (mostly in the USA) had concentrated on staff assessment literacy in the school sector (Stiggins, 1995).

In 2015-16, a SEDA-funded small research project explored the concept of assessment literacy from the perspective of the educational developer, who has been largely overlooked in the literature of assessment literacy to date. The project set out to answer the following questions:

- What does assessment literacy mean to educational developers in higher education?
- How do educational developers engage with the concept in theory and in practice?
- What are the implications for provision of initial and continuing professional development in higher education?

The research project

The study consisted of three stages, each providing different perspectives on the research questions: an initial online questionnaire to educational developers was followed up by more detailed discussion in a workshop session with SEDA conference delegates; then finally a longer in-depth discussion took place with an expert focus group. All three data collection activities were structured around the three research questions, and the data analysis used thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in search of common themes. Ethical approval for this project was granted by the Humanities, Social and Health Sciences Research Ethics Panel at the University of Bradford on 2 October 2015.

Online questionnaire

The initial online questionnaire was published in autumn 2015 via the SEDA mailing list and further publicised at the SEDA 2015 annual conference. There

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were 30 respondents from 23 universities in England, Scotland and Ireland, covering a range of types of institution (Russell group, post-1992 and others). The respondents were based mainly (83%) in central academic or educational development units and represented a broad range of experience levels, from relative newcomers with less than two years' experience to highly experienced practitioners with more than 15 years in post. Respondents were typically engaged in roles related to taught provision (e.g. PG Cert, MA), curriculum development, continuous professional development, technology enhanced learning, supporting programme teams and consultancy.

Participants were asked to comment on their understanding of the term 'assessment literacy', self-report on their own knowledge of various aspects of assessment, describe how assessment themes are covered in educational development opportunities, as well as examine the main assessment challenges faced by educational developers today. The key findings are discussed in the section below 'what we have learned'.

Conference workshop discussion

As a follow-up to the online questionnaire, a data collection workshop was held in November 2015 with delegates at the 20th SEDA Annual Conference at St David's Hotel and Spa, Cardiff. After a brief summary of interim findings, a facilitated group data collection activity took place: eleven participants (working in educational development, learning and teaching and/or quality assurance) were divided into two groups to discuss an assessment literacy-related prompt question, and to capture their group thoughts on a flip-chart poster.

One group was posed this question: *'Assessment literacy is a slowly learned gateway or threshold skill which, once mastered, allows access, not only to further learning and knowledge, but also to academic communities, their practice and standards' (Price, 2015). As Educational Developers, how can we deal with the fact that these skills are developed slowly over time?*

The other group was given the prompt question: *'Assessment literate teachers would be sufficiently experienced, alert to the vagaries of professional judgement and conscious of developments in good assessment practice' (Bloxham and Boyd, 2012). As Educational Developers, how can we develop this judgement and good practice in teaching staff?*

Expert focus group

As a direct result of discussions and networking at the SEDA annual conference in November 2015, a special expert focus group was arranged with the kind support of Professor Sally Brown. This took place with participation from a panel of four eminent experts from the field of educational development and assessment in higher education, with a wealth of experience and publications. There was a wide-ranging 90-minute semi-structured group discussion of the project research questions, which was recorded and analysed for key themes. The wide-ranging discussion covered the following areas:

- Defining assessment literacy
- How to develop assessment literacy among staff
- Stakeholder groups in assessment literacy.

What we have learned

The meaning of assessment literacy

Educational developers have a wide range of perspectives on the theme of assessment literacy. These are not at all contradictory positions, but rather reflect the different functions and roles which educational developers play, usually within central educational development units, or occasionally as faculty-based educational developers.

For some educational developers, assessment literacy primarily concerns the student, is about promoting Assessment for Learning (or Assessment as Learning), is using assessment to engage learners and developing lifelong learning skills and is involving students as partners in assessment: this tallies very much with the position as found in the literature, for example in Price *et al.* (2012).

Other educational developers, however, focus more on a technical-rational position: assessment literacy is perceived as understanding institutional processes, about complying with quality assurance requirements, as well as grasping the technical aspects of aligning assessment with learning activities and outcomes. Alternatively, some focus primarily on digital literacy and technology-enhanced assessment, seeing assessment literacy as a search for technical solutions.

Another group of educational developers take a more pedagogic view, focusing on educational issues around evidence-informed practice, reflection, transformation, experiential and community-based learning, as well as linguistic and discourse-based issues, and even moral imperatives. Along with all these groups, another thread running through all of this is the importance of judgement in assessment, reflecting the importance of reliability in high-stakes assessment and the challenges faced in trying to achieve this.

What is clear is that assessment literacy is very difficult to define: 'It is like trying to nail jelly to a wall' (expert focus group participant). This is partly because it exists on several levels, ranging from the micro level (learning specific tips, or examples of good practice which might be addressed via training sessions) to a highly complex macro level of cognitively demanding challenges (e.g. trying to design an authentic programme assessment strategy, which requires deeper transformation and a longer-term reflective, community-based and dialogic approach). It is also partly because assessment literacy is impossible to measure – 'you know when you have it' (expert focus group participant) – and is tacit, and ever-developing. There is also a fundamental philosophical element to assessment literacy: your view of assessment will depend on your view of the world, and these epistemological differences are situated in academic disciplines. Consequently, interdisciplinary discussion about assessment can be immensely fruitful and challenging.

As well as the cognitive aspects of assessment literacy, there is also an affective domain within it: it is related to building confidence as well as competence, and there is a suggestion that it is accompanied by an underpinning disposition of open-mindedness, reflexivity and even humility. There is also a linguistic turn to assessment literacy: it is about being able to decode the terminology of assessment, but the very term 'literacy' also carries connotational meaning which varies from individual to individual.

Through all of this, however, it is clear that assessment literacy should not be based on a deficit model: it must never be perceived as a patronising term, but is rather 'a

baseline foundation on which to build...moving from a combination of basic skills into an expert domain' (expert focus group participant).

Developing staff assessment literacy in theory and in practice

In terms of how to develop assessment literacy among staff, several clear themes can be identified. The findings from this study suggest that dialogue is at the heart of developing assessment literacy, along with the need for constant reflective practice among university teachers. Because assessment practice is situated within the context of academics' teaching situation and its challenges, this necessitates sharing within a community of practice and learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991); communication and collaboration within the programme team, as well as module teams, are crucial to this.

A key part of developing assessment literacy is providing opportunities for universities to 'articulate the tacit' (workshop participant), to be able to talk about their assessment practice, to put it into words. This enables them to reflect on practice and self-evaluate. By doing this within teams and groups (both within their discipline and across disciplines) peer feedback, discussion and evaluation also becomes possible. In this way, individuals and teams are given a chance to question their existing assessment practice and challenge the existing assessment culture of 'that's how we do it round here' (workshop group comment).

Developing assessment literacy through experience is also key. A common theme was that little is to be gained from merely talking about how complex assessment is, or from discussing the theory in abstract terms. University teachers must be able to see the real-life benefits of a variety of assessment practices, and be able to apply the theory in their own situation, combining theoretical principles and practice in a meaningful authentic way.

In addition, it is important that the role of the educational developer is not to tell the academics 'how to do it' in a didactic manner. Assessment literacy cannot be imparted, it must be developed within individuals and teams. This is not so much a matter of 'knowledge transfer', but is rather 'conceptual change' (Trigwell and Prosser, 2004). This is only possible if the academics take ownership of the application of the concepts. As such the role of the educational developer needs to be largely facilitative.

Moreover, assessment literacy is developed incrementally and is continuous: it cannot be imparted in a one-off session: 'induction in academic practice needs to be an immersive process for students and staff – not [an] event' (workshop group comment), and 'we shouldn't expect to impart this on a PgCert, that would be impossible – you can start it' (focus group comment).

It is recognised that traditionally much of this development used to be led by a department mentor, who would guide, advise and support new academics through assessment practice over a number of years. However, with new

pressures on teaching academics to 'hit the ground running' (expert focus group participant) and at the same time with limited resources within the department to provide this crucial support, some of the responsibility now falls to central educational development teams to fill the gap.

Implications for initial and continuing professional development in assessment literacy

When asked to identify barriers to assessment literacy from the educational developer's perspective, questionnaire respondents identified these main five key challenging areas:

- Engaging in dialogue around assessment themes
- Resource issues (e.g. time, workload, cohort size)
- Departmental and institutional culture
- Embedding systems and processes
- Issues around marking criteria and judgement.

There are several lessons to be learned from this study in terms of how we can design development opportunities on the theme of assessment literacy to attempt to overcome these challenges.

It is acknowledged that there is certain practical guidance which can be given and shared via one-off induction sessions: for example, awareness-raising of institutional processes and regulations (e.g. around quality assurance), and established evidence-based good practice (such as group moderation sessions, sharing marking criteria with students and principles for effective feedback). Clearly this must be built into academic induction sessions for all staff engaged in the assessment process. However, what must be stressed is that this is only the start: this initial training needs to be integrated with an ongoing programme of assessment literacy development.

Subsequent development should consist of practical workshops designed to accompany the academics' involvement in assessment in practice. These sessions must move beyond discussing the theory of assessment at an abstract level but instead involve participants in authentic tasks, where experiential learning can take place. Because reflection, dialogue and self- and peer assessment play an important role in this process, these activities should contain a group discussion element where participants are able to share their experiences and reflections, and provide feedback to peers. Such workshops can take place within programme teams to help build assessment literacy across the taught programme, but also in cross-disciplinary sessions where practice can be shared and new possibilities may be explored.

For example, activities should be developed around authentic assessment dilemmas, constructed to address real assessment challenges faced by academics in their day-to-day practice. The sessions are facilitated so that participants can apply the theory to find evidence-based solutions to their own issues. In this way, the academics will own the solutions, and are far more likely to develop literacy than if they are told what to do.

The role of the educational developer is therefore about making the theory of assessment accessible to academics, avoiding rhetorical 'educational development speak' (workshop participant), instead providing relevant examples and facilitating the sharing of further examples between participants. This would be helped by the inclusion of digestible, accessible, authentic and evidence-based resources, such as the Higher Education Academy toolkits, or online institutional resources, for example the ASKe 123 leaflets (www.brookes.ac.uk/aske).

Educational developers should avoid one-size-fits-all solutions, but rather encourage participants to apply the theory to develop specific solutions to their own real life-situated assessment challenges. Throughout these activities, educational developers should seek to demystify the language of assessment, and 'bust the myths of assessment' (focus group participant).

It is also important to consider different stakeholder groups: whilst the fundamental principles apply, the different perspectives on key issues will vary. Assessment literacy extends to all involved parties, including managers, quality assurance staff, administrators, graduate teaching assistants, support staff (and the list goes on) – these groups need to be addressed via targeted and tailored development opportunities. There are also groups external to the institution, such as professional accrediting bodies and employers, who may be more difficult to reach, but whose perspectives are also important to consider.

The role of the programme leader and the programme team is central to developing assessment literacy. It is understood that collaboration and communication are crucial, but it is also recognised that departmental culture and tradition can be a barrier here. Educational developers can play a key role in facilitating this communication, where possible using department-based champions to encourage the sharing and moving towards a situated community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

This piece will close with reference to an analogy which was referred to both in the findings from the conference workshop and the expert focus group: both compared the development of staff assessment literacy to what is involved in learning to drive a car. Learning to drive and developing assessment literacy both involve growing confidence and competence, gradually moving from a set of basic skills to a level of advanced mastery which remains largely tacit. To pursue this analogy one step further, would we consider developing an 'assessment driving licence', by which staff can demonstrate their good standing, for example? This is certainly an interesting idea which can be taken forward in future work.

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Take Two – UK and Canada: SEDA – A personal perspective from an overseas member

Alan Wright, University of Windsor, Canada

SEDA 'came onto my radar screen', as it were, more than twenty years ago as I developed my thinking and practice in my early times as an educational developer in a fledgling centre for teaching and learning in Atlantic Canada. Since then I have had the opportunity to observe the Association, mostly from afar, as I sought information regarding effective practices, delved into the scholarship of educational development, and struggled to establish and support initiatives and projects to further the 'cause' of academic development at the institutional, regional, national, and international levels.

For over two decades, then, SEDA has provided me with a privileged window on thought and practice in higher education in the UK.

As early as 1995, when I published a book on *Teaching Improvement Practices* (publisher: Anker) I included respondents from the UK, many of them members of SEDA, in a survey of faculty developers designed to determine what practices had the most potential to improve teaching in their institutional settings. The results allowed me to get a glimpse of similarities and differences in thinking between developers in the UK and Canada. The survey indicated, for instance, that the developers were

of a mind internationally regarding the importance of fully recognising teaching achievement in such matters as tenure and promotion, but that UK developers were much more convinced of the potential benefits of deans and heads 'creating a climate of trust for classroom observation'. This exercise, along with my considerable efforts to involve British authors – in addition to Canadians, Americans, and Australians – to contribute chapters to the book, enabled me, once again, to bring a broader perspective to my work as a Canadian educational developer.

SEDA publications are one of the organisation's strengths. As a Canadian working for three different universities, over the years, in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario, I have had relatively little opportunity to interact directly and 'face-to-face' with SEDA's published authors. The SEDA publications, however, have provided international members such as me with a relatively comprehensive view of emerging issues and developing practices in the UK. The 'reach' of the excellent SEDA publication program allows the organisation a high level of credibility on an international scale.

In the 1990s I was able to host British educational developers such as Graham Gibbs, Alan Jenkins,

and the late Peter Knight at my home institution in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My guests enjoyed a high level of credibility because of their smart publications, their energetic contributions to the higher education community, and their ability to reach out to academic staff in workshops designed to bridge the gap between educational theory and classroom practice. On a personal level, I also enjoyed a morning on a bay of the Atlantic Ocean with Graham in my canoe, an evening in my home with Alan as he impressed my kids when he informed them that 'Mr. Bean' lived 'just down the road' from him, and a day excursion with Peter along the coast in our family car – collegial relationships are forged on campus and beyond.

Despite the excellent work of the professionals – prolific writers and effective communicators – such as those I have just mentioned, I believe that higher education in both Canada and the UK has long suffered from an unfortunate lag between what research on teaching and learning has provided to us over the last three decades and the implementation of research findings at the institutional and classroom levels. In 2010, Canadian colleagues Julia Christensen Hughes and Joy Mighty edited a book on the state of research

on teaching and learning in higher education titled *Taking Stock* (McGill-Queen's University Press). The book was meant to provide, essentially, a Canadian perspective on research in higher education, but the editors wisely included contributions from British, US, and Australian authors. My chapter, with the title 'Mind the Gap' – a tongue-in-cheek reference to the London tube station caution – bemoaned the ongoing issues of 1) ignoring what the research has found to be effective in higher education and/or 2) being incapable of the organisational change, both small and large scale, necessary to implement the findings of research in our institutional settings.

SEDA is gaining prominence, however, as an organisation committed to the monumental task of taking hold of the research findings and providing an avenue for their dissemination and practical implementation. In the last few years I have finally been able to attend SEDA conferences, and the recent Edinburgh residential conference on the theme of 'Assessment and Feedback' is an excellent example of a determined and fairly comprehensive, coherent approach to introducing deep-rooted change in the way we regard and conduct assessment and feedback for learning in higher education. The keynote presentations and the individual sessions all provided excellent examples of thoughtful practices in the field in an in-depth review of current research and practice.

In the early years of my long-distance affair with SEDA, I found the recognition and award programs to be among the most attractive of SEDA activities. I admired the fact that over 100 universities in the UK offered university teaching certificates as part of an effort to encourage early career academic staff to hone their craft and become scholarly teachers in higher education. I attempted to attract the interest of my colleagues from across Canada with a view to proposing such a program through our national educational developers' organisation, working at times with George Gordon of Strathclyde, but there was little interest at the national level. When I was appointed as Vice-

Provost, Teaching and Learning, at the University of Windsor in Ontario, however, I seized the opportunity to mount the first University Teaching Certificate to be recognised by SEDA outside of the UK. Thanks to SEDA and to the painstaking mentoring and on-site visits of Stephen Bostock, UWindsor was able to proclaim pioneering status in North America when it comes to the certification of university academic staff.

SEDA is, essentially, a community of practice. It is an organisation of academic staff and academic developers committed to the advancement of teaching and learning in higher education. To attend a SEDA event, and I have had the privilege of participating in conferences in Leeds, Birmingham, and Edinburgh in recent years, is to enter into a world of collegiality, exchange, and positive peer review. Largely absent are the interventions, during post-presentation question periods, designed to 'pull the speaker down a peg or two', to demonstrate the superior knowledge of the audience member, to challenge the very essence of the talk in an aggressive manner. It is not a matter of an absence of a critical perspective nor is it a matter of 'glossing over' or excusing shoddy research and practice: SEDA members are thoughtful. But their disposition is to provide support and constructive feedback, as well as to promote additional or alternate ways of viewing an issue.

SEDA is not, of course, alone in the world as a functioning group of academic staff and educational developers dedicated to an ongoing search for enhanced approaches to teaching and learning in higher education. The United States has a well-established and functional Professional and Organizational Development Network (the POD Network) which hosts excellent annual conferences, runs an active electronic list, produces very good publications, and generally provides a US-based network for academics tied together by interests similar to those of the SEDA membership. I personally found that POD provided me with a tremendous entrée into the world of academic development in the USA. For me, conferences were more accessible geographically than were the SEDA

conferences, I was honoured to act as a member of the board of directors for several years, and I even tempted POD to hold its annual conference in Canada – in my 'home town' of Montréal.

Many SEDA members will be aware of the activities of HERDSA, the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, a sister organisation and part of the ICED (International Consortium for Educational Development). Once again, HERDSA shares many of the goals and values of SEDA, and ICED brings together the worldwide academic development community to conferences it holds in such cities as Ottawa and Barcelona.

My 'home' academic development organisation in Canada is the STLHE (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education). Once again, the STLHE shares many features – goals and activities – with SEDA and sister organisations around the world. The STLHE holds a major annual conference in the month of June (when winter weather cannot disrupt travel plans) on a fixed four-year rotational pattern of East, Centre, West, Centre, to accommodate the major issue of internal travel in the Canadian context. I was pleased to host the first STLHE Conference to be held in Atlantic Canada in 1991, perhaps a landmark in the Society's aspirations of growing from an organisation based in central Canada (chiefly Ontario) to become a national organisation.

One major organisational development in Canada's STLHE since the turn of the century has been the creation of the Educational Developers' Caucus (EDC) as a sub-group of the Society. It grew from the need, expressed by directors of centres for teaching and learning, to have a 'winter meeting' to supplement the annual June conference. As the 'winter meeting' expanded to include additional educational developers a decision to create a new professional group was made. The EDC annual conference, co-hosted by UWindsor and St. Clair College in February of 2016, attracted 150 educational developers for a three-day residential conference. The STLHE Conference in June

attracts several hundred participants, the majority of whom are faculty members with a keen interest in teaching and learning advancement, whereas the EDC group's conference concentrates on the preoccupations of the professional academic developer. I believe this Canadian development to be somewhat unique in character among like organisations in other jurisdictions.

STLHE, like SEDA, aspired to expand its reach through publications. As Chair of the Publications Committee in the 1990s, and in tandem with Chris Knapper, perhaps the most 'international' of Canada's developers, we founded the Green Guide series of publications – practical and accessible yet research-based – to promote effective practices in such areas as large class teaching, feedback, and case studies across the disciplines. STLHE also began to publish a bulletin, the *Collected Essays on Teaching and Learning (CELT)* and the *Canadian Journal of SoTL*. The Society also sponsors a very successful national award for teaching excellence and leadership. The prestigious award, called the '3M Fellowship' (for the corporate sponsor) goes to 10 Canadian professors per year.

To this point I have discussed SEDA and its sister organisations in the Anglo-Saxon world. But I have also benefited, over the years, from my participation in a similar francophone organisation called the AIPU. This international organisation, the Association Internationale de Pédagogie Universitaire is at work in French Canada (largely Québec), Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Although the STLHE has a bilingual (English and French) mandate in Canada, the reality of the two cultural solitudes is rather evident in the fact that most French language educational developers in Québec seek contacts in the international francophone environment rather than participate in the activities of the STLHE because it operates mainly in the English language. The AIPU has definite benefits in terms of professional development for francophone professionals, to be sure, and I recently witnessed presentations describing the excellent

work on comparative impacts of early-career faculty programs in Canada and France. The AIPU holds a conference every two years, the most recent having promoted the theme of 'Values' held in Lausanne in June, and the next (2018) to be held in Bénin, thus providing an exciting opportunity for academic development in that African nation.

I have touched upon some of the characteristics of a SEDA conference. Many of the conferences on university pedagogy throughout the world have, once again, much in common. My observations over an extended period of time would be, first of all, that members of the educational development organisations are expanding the scope of their research and that the results of formal research activity are taking a greater place in the conferences.

When the University of Windsor (situated on the Canada-US border) partnered in a cross-border collaboration with Oakland University in Michigan to host a teaching learning conference in alternate years, it was with the express goal of 'capacity-building', affording novice scholars in teaching and learning the opportunity to disseminate their 'effective practices' and findings from their 'classroom assessment techniques' to a predominantly regional, if international, audience. Many of our faculty have been introduced to new forms of scholarship in this manner and have been 'eased-in' to the world of SoTL through this conference participation.

The major conferences organised by SEDA, the POD Network, and the STLHE have an increasingly high standard regarding what constitutes a legitimate proposal for a conference session. This is a common trait in our national organisations. The North American conferences have insisted to a greater degree, however, than have SEDA and the AIPU, on the participant engagement and active learning components in virtually every session. Whereas a SEDA or AIPU session could typically involve twenty minutes of presentation followed by ten minutes of questions and discussion, the North American organisations actually require the

session proposals to describe how they will engage the participants early and often in the session. Conference pedagogy as adopted and promoted by POD and STLHE mirrors to a greater degree the practices we tend to preach for our university classrooms: it is very difficult to avoid direct involvement and participation in a POD or an STLHE conference session. Organisers strive to book rooms to facilitate interaction in that regard.

SEDA, like its sister organisations, has limited funding to engage administrative staff and depends heavily on the voluntary work of its members to organise and conduct many of its activities. Thus the organisation depends greatly on the good will, dedication, and good faith of large numbers of academic staff and developers to develop and to flourish.

All of the associations described above – from SEDA to the STLHE to the French-language AIPU – have much in common: what binds them is much more significant than what sets them apart. One does not have to be an expert researcher in the field of communities of practice to observe that associations like SEDA are held together by the main characteristics of communities of practice, including the building of collaborative relationships, a common enterprise, and the sharing of communal resources.

The SEDA membership can be justly proud of its local, national, and international accomplishments and reputation, even as we remind ourselves that there are many colleagues in higher education settings around the world who are equally committed to innovation, progress, and positive pedagogical and organisational change in colleges and universities.

W. Alan Wright has been an overseas member of SEDA for many years. He is currently completing a second term as Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, at the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada. In 2013 Dr. Wright was awarded the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by SEDA's sister organisation in Canada, the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE).

The pedagogy of partnership: Six principles for action

John Peters, Newman University

The language of ‘students as partners’ seems all-pervasive in UK HE at present; ‘engaging students and staff effectively as partners in learning and teaching is arguably one of the most important issues facing HE in the 21st century’ (Healey *et al.*, 2014, p. 7). The appeal of student partnership is twofold. It is presented as the natural culmination and purest form of work to promote student engagement and, as the National Union of Students have stated, ‘students as partners offers a valuable alternative to the rhetoric of consumerism’ (NUS, 2012, p. 6). Student partnership is now embedded in the QAA’s Quality Code (QAA, 2012) and the ‘pedagogies of partnership’ are the subject of ongoing funded project evaluation by the HE Academy. However, while there has been no shortage of case study material and examples of practice, for example in a special issue of the *International Journal for Academic Development* (Bovill and Felten, 2016), there has been little discussion of the theory or principles that might underpin or drive a pedagogy of partnership.

Partnership can mean many things and some ideas and characterisations of student partnership may be unhelpful and problematic. Partnership may, for example, follow a business model; a joint agreement for services rendered leading to mutually beneficial outcomes. It may entail signing up to certain conventions and limitations; a purely technical and impersonal contract to avoid any misunderstandings and to restrict the claims those signing up can make on each other. However, even the QAA explicitly reject this model:

‘Partnership working is based on the values of: openness; trust and honesty; agreed shared goals and values; and regular communication between partners. It is not based on the legal concept of equal responsibility and liability; rather partnership working recognises that all members in a partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned.’ (QAA, 2012, p. 5)

An equally insidious threat is that student partnership goes the way of much work on student engagement and focuses, not on creative and collaborative potential, but on deficit models to be addressed by technocratic means. Instead of recognising the complexity and potential of situated, growing human relationships, work on student engagement or partnership can quickly be reduced to a means of addressing problems with student retention or the latest disappointing NSS returns. HE institutions are urged to acknowledge that ‘engaging students through partnership casts students as active participants in their learning’ (HEA, 2015) – as though they could ever be otherwise – and student engagement and partnership work becomes a means of tying students into HE

so that they complete their award, pay their fees and provide good feedback. So partnership working is domesticated into a marketised form of HE (Molesworth, *et al.*, 2010).

There are more positive ways of thinking about student partnership. The term ‘pedagogy of partnership’ itself consciously echoes titles by Paulo Freire and his exhortation, as expressed most succinctly by Richard Schull, that:

‘There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the “practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.’ (Freire, 1996, p. 16)

The idea of partnership should entail rejecting what Freire calls the banking model of learning and teaching in favour of education as a transformational experience in which all grow. Alongside Freire the pedagogy of partnership should therefore draw on theories of change, transformation and development which emphasise hope, authenticity and growth. Combining the ambition of critical pedagogy with the positive collective growth of appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) and the reflexive authenticity of living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989), we might articulate the pedagogy of partnership as:

- 1) *Building from a shared hope and believing in our transformative potential.* The first step has to be a shared belief that together we can make a positive difference. This hope-full approach – assuming that we care, that we want to make the world a better place and that we can do so, even if that may be in certain small or focused ways at first – should be axiomatic to HE. Too often it is overwhelmed by criticality and cynicism. It is a position that sees academia as a vocation and a calling, across Boyer’s four scholarships (2015), and attendance in HE as not just an act of personal self-improvement but of collective social action.
- 2) *Asking how we can collectively ‘be more’ and establishing a shared dream of transformation.* ‘Being more’ is preferred here to the competitive ‘being the best’ or feeling ‘empowered’ because it indicates human growth and presence without competitive edge or necessarily giving power to, or taking power from, others (Freire, 2007). It means creating opportunities and space to explore what we hope

to gain from HE. Whether this is about helping each other to achieve our academic and professional goals or setting ourselves more challenging missions to contribute to human knowledge or make a difference in our communities, this is not about fitting with the way things are but about making a better future.

- 3) *Promoting respectful dialogue.* Such approaches cannot avoid discussion of our values and intentions. Space has to be created to hear under-represented voices and share our lived experiences. A strength of partnership working is the recognition that our diversity is a strength because it brings together a vast range of experience, knowledge and understanding from which we can learn and on which we can build. To do this we need to listen with humility, before leaping to debate and critique. This applies as much across a humanities seminar group as it does across major international science collaborations.
- 4) *Engaging in co-investigation, shared reflection, problem posing, curiosity, rational exploration and creativity.* The range of specific learning and teaching methods that could form part of the pedagogy of partnership is vast. Their uniting features are that they should be authentic, meaningful to those involved, active and collaborative. Students and tutors do not have to be working together in groups all the time but there has to be a sense of collective purpose and of pooling our ideas. Critical curiosity can take many forms but it starts by questioning what is, asking why it is so and questioning whether it must be. It is generative of new ideas, explanations and possibilities.
- 5) *Seeking the co-construction of solutions aimed at a better way of being together.* Addressing authentic issues will mean producing meaningful changes that promote social justice and improve our collective lives. The pedagogy of partnership will not just deliver particular outcomes or improvements in understanding but should also be of social benefit, promoting a greater understanding of how we can work together to take on greater challenges. It is about caring about, and for, each other and should increase our capacity to collaborate effectively.
- 6) *An ongoing transformative and collaborative process of being and becoming.* By its nature the pedagogy of partnership cannot be contained in formal programmes and sessions. It will spill out into other aspects of study and life. For example, working in partnership with students on Appreciative Inquiries changed the tone of many of the student engagements for one institute (Kadi-Hanifi *et al.*, 2014) and made a profound difference to how the students involved saw HE (Tutton and Snell, 2013). Partnership is enduring and unconfined and, once experienced, there is no going back.

The implications of this for our role as academics are immense. This is not about adopting a few new tricks,

techniques or approaches but entails a personal and philosophical commitment. We have to follow Freire's exhortation to stay romantically attached to our ideals that education is a profoundly subversive and transformative act of renewing our 'unfinished selves' as we teach and learn with students – together becoming more active, democratic citizens, capable and confident of transforming our world.

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Diversity and inclusion: A challenge to university leadership

Lorraine Stefani, University of Auckland

The article in *Educational Developments* 17.2 on Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education by colleagues from the LSE and King's College gives an excellent summary of the one-day event on this topic. Clearly there are some fantastic initiatives designed to support staff in providing an inclusive student experience.

However, it does seem that although much of the work described shows a high level of commitment from some members of staff and some students from a few UK universities, the concept of 'inclusion' might not be embedded in the institutional psyche across the sector. In fact, given the shift in focus of the Widening Participation agenda, it may appear to be primarily a matter of compliance. We need to ask the question, is compliance enough of a driver to effect meaningful sustainable commitment to the design, development and delivery of an inclusive learning experience and environment?

The recent and ongoing troubles in universities in South Africa and the USA should give us food for thought. In South Africa the issues may well stem from the history of colonialism and apartheid resulting in the current outbreaks of violence over tuition fees, shortages of affordable student accommodation, low paid staff and the language of instruction. In the USA many university campuses appear to be riven with racial tensions, discrimination and a curriculum seen as narrow and unreformed.

While these issues might seem to be far removed from the issues at play in UK universities, the 'micro-aggressions' at UCL described by Gordon and Mountford-Zimdars' *Why is my Curriculum White?* and the *NUS Liberate your Curriculum*, would seem to suggest, if not racism in the ivory towers, then at least unconscious bias.

The initiatives described in the article are all great examples of significant efforts to provide an inclusive student experience, and are no doubt mirrored by examples from many other institutions. But my questions are – are such activities short-term initiatives led in the main by committed academic developers? Will they dwindle away when these same staff move away to other roles in other institutions? Do these initiatives necessarily reach all staff, academic, professional – and those on the increasing number of casual contracts?

On reading the article I was reminded of an initiative funded between 1999 and 2006 by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council called Teachability (<http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/>), led by the University of Strathclyde and involving several Scottish HEIs. This project came in response to the Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice: Students with Disabilities (http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4500/4/COP_disab.pdf) and the requirements of the Disability Rights in Education legislation. There were many great initiatives, primarily led by the Academic Development units within the participating universities working with academic staff within their respective discipline base. But were these initiatives sufficient to shift the institutional mindsets? When the funding dried up, did the attention to the issue dissipate?

I am also reminded of a case which arose in a prestigious university in Australia a few years ago. The scandal involved a university professor who was a government advisor on school level education, sending emails which were racist in content and tone and highly insulting towards the indigenous population of Australia and about ethnic minority students

(New Matilda, 2014). On the one hand regarding this well publicised scandal, we may put forward the notion of 'one bad apple' not being representative of behavioural norms across the institution. However, the emails were apparently read by many staff across the university including by some in senior management positions. Presumably this behaviour would have continued had the emails not been leaked to an Australian online magazine. We need to ask why it is that most of the recipients considered such behaviour to be acceptable.

And herein lies an important issue. The authors of the article on Inclusion write that the workshop audience of 20 included an Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning, a Head of Academic Development, experienced educational developers and some staff from their disciplines and project officers. Obviously this was only one event and an important one at that but, at any of these events, where are the senior managers, the policy makers, those with the 'authority', the seniority and the responsibility to ensure that their institution is the best that it can be with respect to being an inclusive learning environment for its students?

We need to also address the issue of what inclusion means. Is there a shared understanding of these complex concepts of inclusion and diversity? We might say, well of course there is, but when Partick Blessinger and I recently wrote a proposal for a book on Inclusive Leadership in Higher Education, it proved a challenge to satisfy the reviewers of the proposal that we actually understood the concept about which we would invite chapter authors. After a number of iterations we wrote the following 'definitions' relating to diversity and inclusion:

At the most basic level diversity is grounded in the idea that it is unlawful to discriminate based on race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, beliefs, disability, and age, among other factors. These and other legal requirements seek to ensure that no student is disadvantaged with regards to access to higher education. As such, diversity agendas seek to protect basic human rights and, more specifically, seek to create, for example, a student body that is more socially representative by increasing access opportunities to all segments of society.

However, an institution may be highly diverse in terms of student and employee demographics but it may not be actively engaged in creating and sustaining inclusive practices that include those different identities in its teaching, learning, curricula, etc. Thus, diversity and inclusion are complementary but they are not the same. Without inclusion, one can be part of the student or faculty body but she/he may still feel marginalized. So, inclusion moves beyond what the law requires in order to create a more humane approach to education.

To address this issue many higher education institutions now seek to move beyond widening access agendas and move towards integrating an ethos of inclusivity into all aspects of the educational experience. This involves creating a more inclusive teaching and learning environment that better enables all students and faculty to more fully develop, not just cognitively but also socially, emotionally, and professionally, while at the same time respecting their individual and group identities.

Others may well address these issues in different terms but some important points that Higher Education Institutions might take note of are that we surely have some responsibility not just to work to the letter of the law but

also to the spirit of the law. Also there is the matter of ‘integrating an ethos of inclusivity into all aspects of the educational experience’.

Achieving an ethos of inclusivity in our universities requires institution-wide commitment and understanding of the complexities of the issue. The project examples in the Gordon and Mountford-Zimdars article are all excellent – the development of multi-media resources, the workshops and materials on unconscious bias, the modules within PGCAP programmes will all contribute to the development of an ‘inclusive ethos’. However, there does appear to be an onus on the academic and educational developers to deliver.

Academic Development centres and units make a fantastic contribution to curriculum design and delivery, development of resources, providing effective programmes and projects, but academic developers don’t always have the influence required to shift the mindsets at the top. To achieve ‘an ethos of inclusiveness’ embedded in the psyche of an institution requires leadership not just at the top but across the whole of an institution.

There are multiple opportunities for exercising effective leadership given the distributed nature of leadership in higher education but much of that leadership is ‘silent’, invisible, assumed. By its nature a university operates within a highly distributed leadership framework but it is often a flawed model because little or no attention is paid to developing the leadership capabilities of individuals with responsibilities to lead, be a leader and show leadership. Leaders and leadership can be accidental in some cases, with individuals chosen not necessarily for their leadership capabilities (Stefani, 2015). Given what appears to be the weight that academic developers carry to attend to initiatives such as this, promoting inclusive learning experiences and environments, could academic and educational developers place an emphasis on what it means to be a leader of a Faculty, a department, a project, an initiative etc., to further promote an inclusive ethos?

Often the trouble with *new initiatives* is that they are seen as just that, something new to deal with rather than part of a holistic approach to how a university wants to be and to be seen and understood to be.

Many universities will have leadership programmes – often not facilitated by academic developers but by Human Resource units or Professional and Organisational Development units. I am not suggesting there is anything wrong with who ‘owns’ or has responsibility for facilitating different programmes, but in some instances we may ourselves be guilty of patch protection or living in a silo when what we need to create is an ethos of inclusion and inclusive practices that are ‘fully integrated throughout universities’ in a spirit of partnership, sharing of knowledge, understanding and skills. This may well be happening in many institutions but it is still not the norm. As Academic Developers we may need to see ourselves as leaders within our institutions and be more assertive about our leadership, albeit that is not necessarily how we are seen by senior managers! Can we work more in partnership with student groups for example? The micro-aggressions described would appear to present an opportunity for partnership. What do our students understand by ‘inclusion’?

I am currently involved in a project designed to articulate Graduate Profiles. It is not quite clear to the working group whether we are engaged in a branding and marketing exercise or on something which will have meaning for our students. I suggested that we might ask a group of recent graduates to engage with the materials we have produced so far. A lot was learned from this exercise including the fact that the graduates did not recognise their learning experience in the profiles we had written!

This is just one example of the ‘elephant traps’ we inadvertently fall into. We produce materials, we design the curriculum, we determine how students will be assessed, we declare the skills students will develop – but do we really know that what we do

aligns with the diverse needs of our students? The multiple evaluations and surveys that are carried out to determine student satisfaction, student engagement and so on are blunt instruments and often when we receive the 'results' of our various surveys we cherry pick. We laud and applaud the good outcomes and set up an initiative to 'sort' the bad parts. (Of course this is a caricature of what we actually do, a blunt description, as blunt as the instruments we use to determine our students' views.)

Are all academic and educational developers necessarily aware of the issues relating to the diverse nature of our students and of the complex nature of an inclusive learning environment and experience?

In 2012, McInnis, Ramsden and Maconachie published *A Handbook for Executive Leadership of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*. In it, the authors affirm that robust leadership is required to inspire, influence and enable colleagues including deans, associate deans and heads of school who have operational responsibility for providing an excellent student experience. In turn we require these leaders to inspire and influence faculty to remember their role as role models to their students. McInnis *et al.* put forward five principles for action for building a culture of leadership in learning and teaching:

- 1) Shape the Strategic Vision – ensuring it makes sense to everyone, faculty, students, administrators and support staff
- 2) Inspire and Enable Excellence – promoting institution-wide

commitment to excellence in student learning outcomes and learning experience

- 3) Devolve Leadership of Learning and Teaching – encouraging and supporting wide ownership and comprehensive engagement of staff and students with the vision and its implementation
- 4) Reward, Recognise and Develop Teaching – explicitly reward teaching – and outstanding teaching in particular – as a core component of academic work
- 5) Involve Students – increasing the involvement of students to enhance engagement and acknowledging students as active partners and change agents in the learning experience.

Perhaps this excellent handbook could be donated to all Executive Leaders with responsibility for learning and teaching – with a new section that provides definitions and descriptions of the terms inclusion and diversity and what it means to engender an ethos of inclusion fully integrated throughout our universities.

We must commend the authors of the article on Diversity and Inclusion for raising our awareness of the projects and initiatives already under way in a range of different universities. They should be doubly commended for the organisation and facilitation of the workshop. However, as they say in the article, there has been commitment from key individuals, '...though creating islands of good policy and practice stopped short of being fully integrated throughout UK universities...' It has to be understood

that to achieve this full integration will be a long journey and without the full commitment of senior managers and a commitment to changing recruitment, promotion and reward policies, attitudes across and throughout universities will not necessarily change. Perhaps for the League Tables so beloved of university administrators and Government Ministers there should be an assessment and evaluation of the inclusive ethos of institutions.

I am not in any doubt that Academic and Educational Developers can play a significant role in this challenging task – but during this journey, new partnerships need to be forged, new approaches to developing the developers may need to be considered and we may need to work towards reinventing ourselves as Leaders with a capital L and engage in a holistic project that has 'inclusion' at its very heart!

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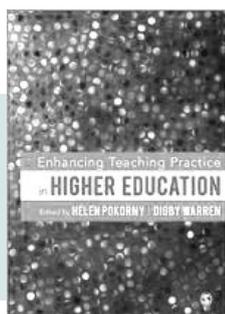
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Book Review

Enhancing Teaching Practice in Higher Education

by H. Pokorny and D. Warren

London: Sage (2016)



This insightful book is a welcome addition to the educational practice library. It should be of value to PG Certificate

students and individuals preparing for HEA Fellowship. But it is capable of wider use too. I imagine chapters, or sub-sections thereof, forming the focus for debate amongst staff, and with students, to facilitate reflection on practice, enabling its enhancement. And although it is the case that the publication's cross-cutting themes were sometimes quieter than they might have been throughout each of the chapters, the privileging of resilience and care, in respect of students, colleagues and ourselves, is inspiring. Citing Smith (2010), the editors identify 'care as a resilient value that, despite the pressures, remains fundamental to many in academic life' (p. 4). It is an orientation which presents as

an antidote to the context within which higher education locates currently and which they overview effectively in their introductory chapter. Indeed, so comprehensive is this chapter, individuals who are unsure how to understand V4 in the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) could be guided to it. Other interweaving themes are identified in these early pages and are equally welcome – diversity, relationships, dialogue and enquiry.

A small, but important point to note is that whilst the book has much to offer individuals who practise within HE in the UK, there is more than one reference to tuition fees in the introduction and subsequent chapters, which is misleading. At present, some students in the UK do not pay them.

Whilst each chapter fits within the totality of the book and its intended purpose, a number stand out. Chapter 2, centred on course and learning design and evaluation, is illustrative of the book's potential. It is both philosophical and practical. It is also provocative, for example, by inviting the reader to view the construct of the curriculum critically with an emphasis on its lack of neutrality. It also offers guidance for early career academics and those who are more experienced as they enact the curriculum and it is why I imagine this book stimulating debate because academics can and do make choices in their practice

which shape what students experience. It leads seamlessly into Chapter 3 and an exploration of learning environments. It too is challenging, pressing the reader to reflect on their conceptions of the learning environment, and how they intervene within it. This raises the question of expectations – those of students and those held by the individual academic. The risk of mismatch is suggested. At heart, this is a very practical chapter with ideas offered making it a rich resource. Chapter 6 focuses on student engagement and encourages reflection from the outset. It recognises that the primary vehicle for engaging students is the relationship with the educator. As such, it values the role and suggests the need to invest in it.

Overall, the book's potential rests in the fact that it does not offer solutions without first engaging the reader in reviewing their practice. Each chapter is a rich resource with direction to useful websites and further reading. I recommend it.

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Lessons learnt: Blended approaches to academic writing

Sylvie Lomer, University of Manchester, and **Elizabeth Palmer**, University of Northampton

Introduction

In 2018, the University of Northampton (UoN) will move to a new campus, which will be allied to a new pedagogical model. The new Learning and Teaching Plan emphasises blended, active learning through practical application, real-world tasks and scenarios, collaboration and independent learning, rather than more traditional formats, such as lectures. This shift in teaching and learning methods is changing educational development strategies, staff development and teaching methods at the chalk face. The innovations introduced as part of this plan offer educational developers interested in incorporating active and blended approaches into curricula a range of different options and reflections.

Learning Development, a central team at the UoN, was an early adopter of this approach. The team offers a range of transferable cognitive and academic skills development opportunities for students through online resources and face-to-face workshops, which are embedded into modules on the request of the subject lecturers. We began adopting blended learning approaches to workshop delivery, especially for academic writing, working closely with subject academics to develop e-tivities that could be repurposed and reused. This proved also to be an effective way for subject lecturers to trial blended approaches, in a slightly lower-stakes environment than their week-to-week subject lecture and seminar model. Reworking one full session with the support of a Learning Developer,

and then (in some cases) team-teaching the session, proved to be a successful staff development strategy, demonstrating the value of the new approach. For the students, adopting a blended model was intended to provide the opportunity for low-stakes writing practice with scaffolded tasks. Blended learning also offers extension and enrichment beyond the limited allocation of face-to-face workshops with Learning Development, often only an hour or so a term.

The case studies in this article exemplify some of Learning Development's approaches to designing blended learning activities. Despite following guidance available in the literature, the activities have generated fluctuating levels of student engagement, which we are trying

to understand both for the sake of our own team and to support subject staff in their development of blended learning. At this stage, our primary concern is to address student engagement in blended learning in order to ensure the success of the new pedagogical model. In this article, we are not attempting to evaluate the efficacy of blended learning interventions, as this has been demonstrated in other research. Rather, we critically examine what we have learnt within our context. For other institutions, following similar approaches, we hope that this might prove helpful in terms of ideas for approaches to educational development.

What we did

Since 2014, we have been experimenting with different models of blended delivery and with different online tasks for academic writing across a range of programmes and subject areas. The creation of skills development e-tivities was informed by a number of principles including: clear instructions and design, explicit purpose, perceived relevance, practice opportunities, interactive, structured pathways and sequencing, effective feedback and interactions with the tutor (Swan, 2001; Sims *et al.*, 2002; Lim *et al.*, 2007; Salmon, 2013; Clark and Mayer, 2012; University of Leicester, no date). This approach also enables students to develop digital literacy skills, particularly with regard to effectively participating, reviewing and providing feedback through forums and blogs.

Case studies

We offer four examples of the types of activities we have undertaken with various cohorts. These represent some of our approaches to teaching academic writing. We have endeavoured to select examples that best represent some of the challenges of engagement we have faced. The authors are happy to provide further details upon request. For confidentiality, no examples of student work have been included.

It is worth noting that the University of Northampton's VLE (virtual learning environment) is a Blackboard platform.

The tasks designed are influenced by the affordances and constraints of this platform in terms of both the visual design and the type of online activity.

Case study 1: Initial Teacher Training, second year undergraduates, Professional Studies Module, 171 students

Pre-session activities

Please note: These tasks were introduced in the last face-to-face session of first year undergraduate studies and the students had the summer to complete the tasks.

1) Discussion board with three threads, each a question about transition from first to second year academic writing. Students could use these boards to highlight their key concerns and their current understanding of what this transition would involve, outlining what they felt the 'level up' would be. Students were informed that this would determine the content of the face-to-face sessions.

2) Structured writing task directly linked to first second year assessment. Students were provided with:

- Starting point ideas through a PDF from the subject tutor
- Library resource links for research (see <http://tinyurl.com/jxb5f54>)
- A brief, which included a writing structure and model of writing (see <http://tinyurl.com/z9cn5ny>).

Students were required to bring their resulting 500 words to class.

Session

Peer-to-peer structured feedback activities on their writing and tasks to answer the responses to the pre-session discussion board questions. Course tutors led the session using LD designed materials. LD tutors revolved throughout and also provided feedback.

Post-session

Students amended their 500 words using guidance and feedback from the session. Formative feedback on their revised writing given by both subject tutors and LD tutor through an online discussion board.

Engagement

Fourteen students used the discussion board in order to raise questions or comments prior to the session. 90-95% of students who attended the face-to-face session had completed the writing task and brought it with them. 80 students used the opportunity for formative feedback following the session.

Reflection

This was probably the most successful of the interventions in terms of student participation. The length of time during the summer holiday to complete the task may have played a role, combined with the opportunity to shape the response for the tutors in the face-to-face sessions. The direct link to the first written assignment and the opportunity for formative feedback were clearly valued by the students.

Task 2 - Developing your academic writing style

Build Content ▾ Assessments ▾ Tools ▾ Discover Content 11

The Task

To assist in developing your academic writing style to Level 5 ahead of next year, use the summer holidays to write 500 words using the guidelines below.

- **Subject matter:** 'Inclusion' in the classroom plus **one** of these five strands - environment, planning, resources, delivery or assessment. Take a look at the document [Strategies for inclusive teaching](#) for further information about each strand.
- **Evidence:** Consider using the following journals and at least one other academic journal that you have found yourself to inform your writing:
 - Focus on Inclusive Education
 - International Journal of Inclusive Education
 - Journal of Social Inclusion
 - Social Inclusion
 - Equality Diversity and Inclusion – An international journal
- Refer to the [Library support pages for Education students](#) for guidance about locating academic journal articles. Remember that your module reading list is always a good starting point for an assignment!
- **Structure:** Use the paragraph structure and example detailed in the section below to help you write at the correct level.

Please note that you need to complete this task before the first Professional Studies lecture in Year 2 as your writing will form the basis of the lecture given by Elizabeth Palmer and Hannah Rose around academic skills. You will also get a chance to receive some feedback through a peer critique workshop in the seminar slot.

Screenshot of guidance for the structured writing task (Case study 1)

Case Study 2: Paramedic Science, second year undergraduates, 15 students

Pre-session activities

1) An interactive tutorial in Xerte software introduced the basics of academic writing (see <http://tinyurl.com/zoahbpz>)

2) Discussion board: students posted their 3 key lessons from 1-3 questions/ areas of confusion they still had, to inform the face-to-face input.

Session

In preparation for their first assignment in second year, each student was given an exemplar from previous years and asked to resolve the concerns raised on the discussion board. Students were then paired up where each had read a different assignment to compare responses. A plenary discussion resolved main concerns.

Engagement

Out of 12 students who attended the workshop, 8 students had participated in the discussion board and the session was much more focused as a result.

Reflection

Some completed the discussion board less than 24 hours before the session was timetabled, making planning difficult. A flexible 'just-in-time' approach to teaching is needed to implement this.

Case Study 3: Photography, first year undergraduates, Photographic Practice Module, 40 students

Sessions

The series of 2 sessions introduced Bloom's taxonomy for critical thinking. They used a single photograph (a politically motivated self-portrait). Bloom's taxonomy was implemented using the image.

Session 1

Session 1 focused on comprehension – application. Students used information provided (handout including historical background and artist's statement) to interpret the key elements of the image (implementing Bloom's taxonomy, 'comprehension').

Post session activity 1

Photography assignment designed in cooperation with subject staff to take their own self-portrait with a message (implementing Bloom's 'application'). These were submitted via 500px, a photo-sharing website in regular use by subject staff.

Session 2

Students shared self-portraits for peer interpretation. The session tasks moved on to latter stages of Bloom: synthesising (i.e. linking example photograph with other images) and evaluating (developing criteria for judgement) on original image.

Post session activity 2

A short writing task, critically analysing a photograph of their choice using the approaches introduced across both workshops.

Engagement

Engagement with the first post-session activity was very good, with about 80% of those who attended session 2 bringing a self-portrait. However, only 2 students completed the second task.

Reflection

Although photography students are required to write in their associated theory module, this module was seen as more practice oriented. Students therefore engaged more with what they saw as more relevant to the module i.e. activity 1 rather than 2.

Also, session 2 did not cover writing, so perhaps students were unprepared for the mode of delivery of activity 2. In future, a template or table to complete could be used rather than a free-form writing task.

Case study 4: Midwifery, first year undergraduates, 45 students

Session

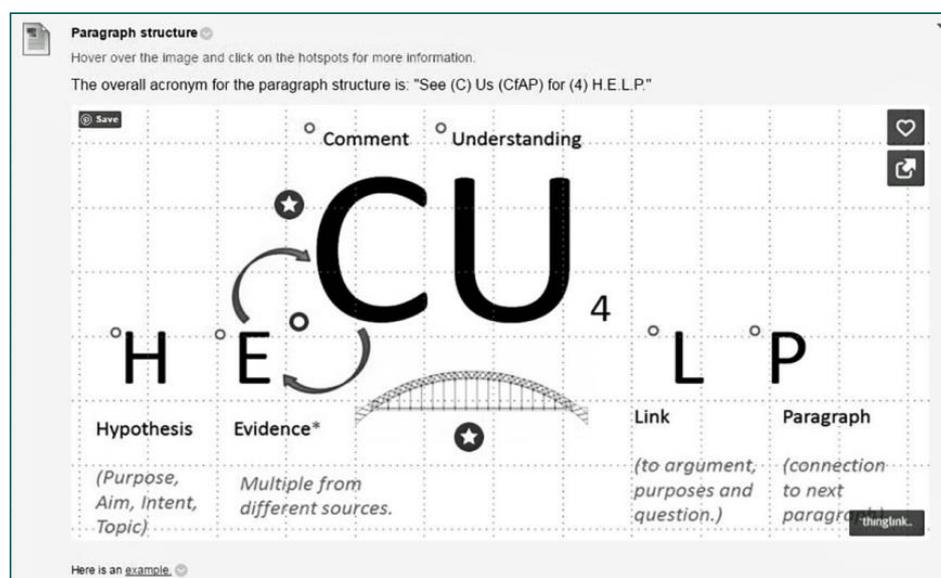
This was the last in a series of 4 workshops on academic writing. It used a scaffolded writing task modelled on an upcoming assessment. First, the session reviewed the key features of academic writing conventions introduced in sessions 1-3. Students were then provided with a table of abbreviated evidence and references for key maternal health conditions, which they used to write a short paragraph. Immediate face-to-face feedback from tutor and peers was provided.

Post session activity

Students submitted a typed, improved paragraph (based on feedback received in the session) to a private blog via Blackboard for personal feedback.

Engagement

All students present completed a handwritten paragraph in this time. Approximately 6 students completed the post-session activity, with clear improvements from in-class to online writing.



Screenshot of guidance for paragraph structure (Case study 4)

Reflection

The pattern of engagement suggested that writing in-class with immediate face-to-face feedback, however brief, was seen as more valuable (or less optional) than online asynchronous, albeit more detailed feedback. Had subject lecturers been involved in the administration and feedback of this task, more could have been done with the post-session task. Alternatively, rather than having this as the final session, it could have taken place earlier with a follow-up.

What have we learnt?**Keep it simple**

The online task needs to be easy to find, in a place that students access regularly and preferably signposted from multiple locations. It needs to be embedded in regular course materials, not stand-alone. Tasks need to be transparent in purpose; benefits and instruction need to be simple and direct. The task itself can be cognitively challenging but understanding what they need to do needs to be straightforward. Tasks need to be staged but should not have too many elements; two or three is usually sufficient.

Consider the particular needs of the student group

Tasks need to be relevant to the subject, explicitly linked and resourced for the course. Providing generic tasks for skills development, on topics unrelated to the course, alienates students from the materials. Consider the time tasks will take actual students (not how long they would take us as a member of staff), especially during term time when they have multiple tasks from multiple modules, other assessments coming in or other things going on in the programme e.g. placements. During term, if the task can't be completed in under an hour, it probably won't be completed. More complex tasks can be developed by breaking them down into discrete units which build over several weeks. Across the summer, tasks can be more complex and time-consuming (see Case study 1). Indeed students may appreciate online tasks to complete during 'empty' periods.

Flip or sandwich online tasks, don't assign as homework without follow-up

Sandwiched tasks (face-to-face, online, face-to-face) can work especially well when short, relevant to subject and practical. Flipping either task or content and following up in the session encourage engagement and expedite face-to-face sessions. Pre-session tasks can help tailor the content of face-to-face (see Case study 1).

Scaffolding the task, showing students' models and examples encourages completion of tasks. Building up the complexity of tasks over time or in different task components is more effective than assigning a complex open-ended task (e.g. paramedics, photography), particularly post-session. Doing activities in the session, although time-consuming, enables the complexity of tasks to be built up faster with more depth and immediate feedback from the tutor, as well as peer learning. Following up on tasks encourages subsequent engagement in future tasks.

Consider the mode of e-tivity carefully

Consider the culture of the module and programme which you are designing or developing. How is it currently using blended learning? If students are met with a completely new way of working by comparison to their normal mode of study, they are unlikely to engage. The more familiar the mode of the e-tivity, the better.

Structured tasks need to be interactive, not just button-pressing. Student content generation is the ideal, but their content must be visibly, explicitly used. Online tools for the submission of writing practice need careful consideration (e.g. Turnitin, discussion board, journal/blog), particularly whether this tool allows for public or private submission. Public submission can encourage or inhibit engagement, depending on students' confidence, familiarity with each other and the novelty of the task. Levels of digital literacy with a wide range of tools are often highly variable. It is better to use a small selection well and consistently than to use lots of exciting but bewildering tools. Demonstration

of the tool live in the face-to-face session encourages engagement.

Who sets the assignment (i.e. lecturer vs learning developer) impacts engagement

Students say they don't perceive Learning Development staff separately from subject staff, but engagement says differently. Relationships with tutors appear to be key, and tasks are more likely to be completed for a tutor seen on a regular basis than for a guest lecturer or workshop delivered by a central team. Presenting tasks as 'optional extras' does not encourage engagement. Engagement is higher when subject lecturers visibly endorse and encourage engagement with the activities, ideally through team-teaching. Non-compulsory tasks can still generate anxiety for students, so clear support strategies must be provided e.g. online forums to ask questions.

Manage feedback expectations and volume

Explicit links to assessment work are key for students to see the relationship between weekly tasks and learning outcomes. Purpose and pedagogical underpinnings need to be transparent. Feedback opportunities must be built into the task. Involvement of subject lecturers is essential as a joint feedback effort appears to better encourage student participation. Students need to be clear about who will feedback to them, on what, by when, by what means and why. Individual feedback dramatically helps improve writing but takes time and the volume can be problematic. Peer-to-peer feedback needs to be well structured and scaffolded. Students need training in how to deliver and receive effective feedback – these are key academic and transferable skills. Peer feedback must be purposeful and it needs to be made clear to students why peer feedback is better suited in this context than feedback from staff.

Conclusion

Across the interventions that we have undertaken in this last academic year we have had very different levels of engagement between different

cohorts and students (Salmon, 2013, p. 180). In summary, our explanations for varied engagement include:

- Cultures of engagement with blended learning within the school and subject
- The perceived relationship between CfAP and the subject staff
- The time of year and student workload
- The perceived value of the task
- Characteristics of particular cohorts
- The design of the task itself.

All of these factors are underpinned by the relationship between Learning Developers, subject academics and the students. Unlike a subject lecturer who has regular face-to-face contact with students, sometimes a Learning Development tutor might only see a particular cohort once or twice. As a result, gaining the trust of the students is vital with regards to impacting their motivation to engage. As such, formative feedback mechanisms, whether online or in the session, become intrinsic to successfully engaging students in the task. In addition, successful explanation,

implementation and feedback strategies for the online activities involve a high level of negotiation and teamwork between academic subject staff and Learning Development staff. Students need to see coherence between tasks assigned by all members of staff involved. They need to see that transferable skills are valued by the subject staff. We also have to acknowledge that non-engagement is a valid exercise of students' agency and that we cannot, nor would want to, enforce compliance. A student-led research project is under way to explore these hypotheses and to uncover any additional reasons behind student engagement with blended activities.

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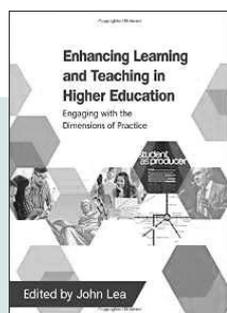
Book Review

Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

Edited by John Lea

Open University Press, 2015

ISBN: 13: 978 0 33 526416 2



As we start this new semester many more people will be involved in delivering – and receiving – courses on how to teach. This book, edited by John Lea, will doubtless be indispensable in this context.

The text contains six main chapters, including an Introduction and a Conclusion. The content is very much UK oriented, although highly dependent on research from the US and elsewhere.

In Chapter 1, John Lea and Nigel Purcell provide a brief literature review of what they call – following Boyer – the scholarship of teaching and learning. This is then followed by an outline of the work and role of the current Higher Education Academy (HEA) and, in particular, the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). The introduction is dense and hard to follow. It is replete with acronyms (with

no explanations of what they mean – although there is a useful glossary at the end of the book).

Chapter 2, by Cordelia Bryan, is called Enhancing Student Learning. This is a 30-page summary of key research and ideas. Although in some ways this chapter is a tour de force it inevitably oversimplifies issues, and doubtless few readers will follow up the references given (unless they are producing a portfolio for the HEA).

In Chapter 3, The Nature of Academic Time, John Lea shows how teaching, learning, research, leadership and management all overlap. As he notes, at the time when he wrote this chapter, there was the REF but not the TEF. The chapter concludes by considering whether or not academics should see themselves as working at or working for their institution. A provocative question.

Chapter 4 takes us into different territory – The Nature of Academic Space. In the first half Mike Neary discusses the effects of university buildings and campuses – both ancient and modern – on the branding and selling of universities – without, unfortunately, any illustrations. Helen Beetham's 'Inhabiting digital space', in the second half, is rather different. New technology provides a different kind

of architecture in which colleagues and students are forced to be involved. Three students provide contrasting accounts of their experiences of face-to-face and online learning, but sadly these already seem outdated.

In Chapter 5, John Lea discusses: i) the knowledge and purpose of higher education; ii) the validity of higher education knowledge; and iii) the ontological dimension in higher education knowledge. These erudite discussions are brought to life by extracts from successful HEA Fellowship applications.

In Chapter 6, Mick Healey, Catherine Bovill and Alan Jenkins discuss students as partners in teaching and learning. Here, among 16 brief international case-histories, there are discussions of final-year students teaching statistics to second-years; second-year students re-designing materials for courses to be re-delivered the following year; and third-year students working with programme co-ordinators to produce online materials for a first-year geography course.

John Lea starts Chapter 7, The Landscape of Higher Education, by asking how many universities there were in England in 1335 and in 1835? And then in the UK in 1860,

1962, 1963 and 2010? And, after that, what percentage of UK 18-year-olds went to university in 1975 and how many were expected to go in 2010? I will leave you to find out the answers. They are much less than in 2016. Higher education in the UK – its purposes and its ideals – is now massively different from when most of us went to university (which is why we need a text such as this for aspiring lecturers).

Finally, in Chapter 8, Nigel Purcell and John Lea provide a conclusion which focuses mainly on how the reader might become both more reflective and more scholarly as well as apply to be a Fellow of the HEA.

So, although this book is a tour de force, I think it tries to do too much. It might have been better to think of a series of 18 mini-texts, with each one available for separate purchase. The six major topics could be the same – but there would be separate versions for readers in the arts, the sciences and the social sciences. Each mini-text could have its own specific introduction and topics of relevance. Such an approach would have a greater clarity of purpose for the reader and be more useful.

James Hartley is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Keele University.

We are where we are: Learning through walking, talking and interacting with place

Fiona Smart, Edinburgh Napier University and **Fiona Campbell**, independent educational developer

Going to conferences is integral to academic life and yet the literature is quiet in respect of why we attend. Perhaps the reasons are too self-evident to warrant attention. Conferences are a place to meet up, to share, to discuss, to debate, to network, to learn; all of these and more, most likely. It is possible that conference attendance is destination-focused too, with location a consideration and international venues regarded as more prestigious than those closer to home. And yet, having experienced a raft of conferences between us, there is a sense that it is the conference theme and focus which is the primary driver for attendance while the whereabouts of the conference is peripheral. That may be too strong, but it is a thought which provokes questions about how much the location matters and the extent to which the locale and the opportunity to engage with it is part

of the experience. In posing these questions, it is important to clarify that we are not speaking here about the venue itself, for example, the hotel. Rather we refer to the geographical situation – the place, the point in space where the conference locates. Just how much, we wonder, do the place and the conference connect? Or is there a separateness between the two, maintained so as to differentiate the space for academic 'work' from the surrounding place? The question might be then: what happens when they are deliberately, purposively connected?

This paper outlines the construct of a conference 'walkshop' and its underpinning intentions. It also overviews other elements of the walkshop, including how technology enabled pictures of place and people to come into the conference space and how a play activity added to unfolding

conversation. Next, the outcome of the discussions focused on assessment and feedback practice and creativity as an approach to facilitating thinking is presented. Finally, the applicability of this type of location-based, outdoor activity to enhance learning is considered.

Constructing the walkshop

Intentions

There were three primary intentions underlying the walkshop:

- 1) *To bring together place and conference by rooting the session firmly in the Edinburgh context and by providing an outdoor activity for participants to experience*

This was achieved by offering an opportunity for participants to leave the conference hotel to explore

a central Edinburgh destination, Calton Hill. This space is significant in Edinburgh's history and culture. At the top, there are several iconic buildings, memorials and monuments relating to the history of the city and country, including the Scottish National Monument, an impressive partially-completed structure modelled on the Parthenon in Athens. There are also fine vistas across the city and beyond and an opportunity to see some important landmarks which are nearby including the Scottish Parliament building and the Palace of Holyrood. Calton Hill is only a short walk from the conference hotel and bears a similar name which emphasised the link between conference and activity. The link with context was also clear from the workshop's outline and learning outcomes and also references provided which included a book focused on Calton Hill (McHardy and Smith, 2014). An important aspect of the workshop was the intention for pictures of place and people, and for reflective words, to contribute to the overall experience, and for this to be effectively enabled through technology.

2) *To relate to the conference theme of Assessment and Feedback*

This was enabled through the different stages of the workshop activity, which actually began in advance of the session itself (see below). On the day, participants in pairs were asked

to engage – as they walked – in an active professional conversation about their assessment and feedback challenges, dilemmas, successes and plans. To ensure this opportunity was of most value for participants, a pre-session communication with those registered invited them to nominate an assessment and feedback topic of their choice or to choose from the topics suggested within the session plan. Participants could also choose a nominated partner for the walk, opt for a pairing based on their topic choice or request a random pairing. Most participants responded to this communication, with random pairing the most dominant option taken. In advance of the session, one of the workshop hosts organised the pairings on the basis of the information provided and prepared a list so the participants could identify who they were to walk with as they came into the conference room, before heading off to Calton Hill.

3) *To test the findings of recent research into the beneficial effects of active exercise on creativity*

By providing the opportunity to take part in an invigorating walk, the session enabled participants to test for themselves the outcomes of Stanford University's research which concluded that 'walking opens up the free flow of ideas'. Specific experiments indicated that there was a very significant

increase in creative thinking while walking rather than when seated and, there was a residual creative boost when people were seated after the walking was experienced. The research also evidenced that walking outdoors produced the most novel and highest quality creative thinking. The nature of the research was clarified in the session outline and outcomes and a reference provided (Oppezzo and Schwartz, 2014).

Planning

In order to maximise the 90 minutes available for the workshop, to best benefit those taking part, we prepared extensively.

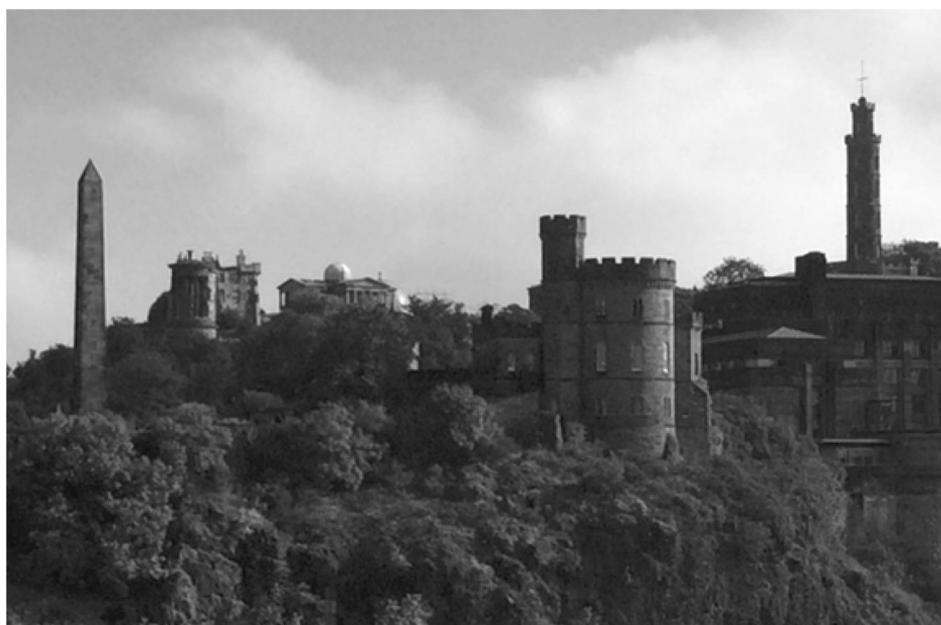
Rehearsal

We walked the walk to be sure of what could easily be achieved by those participating and to consider how they would experience it. We also looked into alternative destinations in the event of inclement weather; it was reassuring to know we had them up our sleeves and had directions to them, as well as to Calton Hill itself if need be.

Roles and responsibilities

We decided that on the day, one of us should stay back at base to help marshal the incoming Facebook posts, Tweets and photos from participants and to initiate the badge-making activity when participants began arriving back after the walk, while the other should follow participants on the walk to bring up the rear and encourage people to return in time for the final plenary element of the session and also to help if any issues arose. We also enlisted the help of a colleague with IT prowess to assist in the event that a technological gremlin disrupted the plans. This proved invaluable because of the volume of posts, Tweets and images sent through as participants were walking and talking and which he was able to assemble into a draft Storify page during the course of the workshop.

In advance of the workshop we set up a closed Facebook page and a Twitter account. Details of both were sent out in pre-session information to all of the conference delegates registered for the workshop. The same



Calton Hill, Edinburgh

communication also included the request for information enabling us to pair participants for the walkshop in advance.

Finally we developed a 'pack' for each participant detailing the walkshop intentions, the route, the timetable, and suggested assessment and feedback discussion options for the walk (if needed) and activity planned for the final plenary session when participants returned. We also included some safety advice. The information also encouraged participants to post via Facebook, to Tweet and to send photos reflecting on their experience of the walk and their conversation during it. The information made clear how the posts, Tweets and photos would be used and included guidance in the event that individuals did not want an image of themselves to be included in the Storify page.

Enacting the walkshop

The day for the walkshop dawned sunny and warm and proved to be the hottest day in Edinburgh for the year so far. We were delighted to be able to dispense with the alternative indoor destinations we had investigated in the case of adverse weather. No doubt influenced by the lovely weather, additional participants signed up on the day and the session was over-subscribed. But we took all-comers; in total 34 conference delegates participated in the walkshop. This caused us as the walkshop hosts some unanticipated activity at the start of the session because of the need to organise pairing of the new participants, but we managed to do this speedily to avoid any delay to proceedings.

We were overwhelmed by the excitement of those taking part. The conference room was buzzing; there was a distinct schools-out, demob-happy feeling in the air. Everyone seemed enthused by the prospect of the walkshop and the opportunity to leave the conference venue and to explore a part of the city nearby. After we had briefly described the intentions of the session together with the practicalities and provided each participant with a walkshop



Ready for badge making

pack, people very quickly introduced themselves to their partners and set off from the hotel with springs in their steps.

During the walk, people engaged enthusiastically in professional discussions around assessment and feedback and very, very soon were sending posts, Tweets and photos back reflecting their experience of walking in the area and discussions on assessment and feedback. Our technological expert, Laurence Patterson, formerly of Edinburgh Napier University, began their organisation into the Storify page to allow them to be viewed before the conclusion of the event.

At the summit of Carlton Hill, participants walked (and talked) around the circular path enjoying the 360 degree view and exploring the



Some of the badges

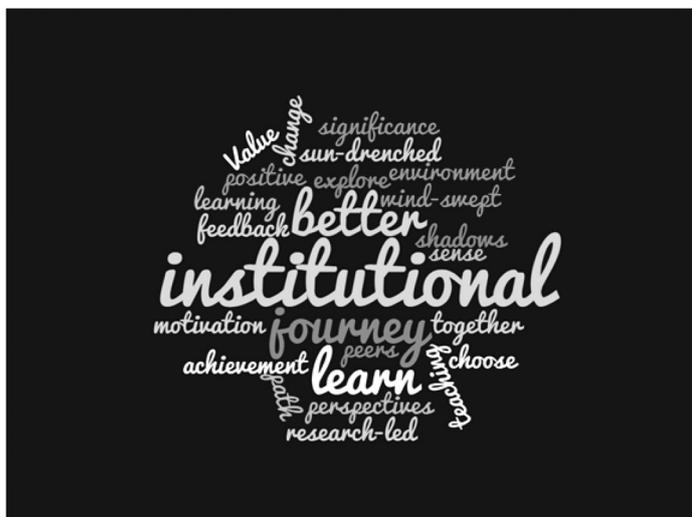
monuments. Others added to their enjoyment with an ice cream or a pint *en route* – well, it was a very hot day.

After the walk, participants returned to the conference room and engaged enthusiastically in a badge-making activity and the plenary discussion. The idea for badge-making was borrowed by one of the walkshop hosts from the Educational Caucus Developers Conference in Windsor, Ontario in February 2016. Its purpose in the walkshop session was to extend conversation about assessment and feedback, and experiences of the walk, using a different medium. And yes, it was meant to be light-hearted, fun, even silly; experiences perhaps not associated with the everyday life of the academic. Using a range of materials provided by the walkshop hosts badges were created and pinned with pride, it seemed, to chests.

With badge-making still in process and the Storify page playing on the screen, the plenary discussion session focused on four questions.

- Have you gained new insights about assessment and feedback and your practice?
- What changes do you plan when you return to your institution and your students?
- Was your creativity enhanced through walking?
- Have you experienced a creative boost following your walk and now feel reinvigorated for the conference programme ahead?

Participants engaged in the discussion with obvious enthusiasm. The discussion was lively, reflective and profound. The walkshop hosts captured the headlines on a flip chart, later converting them into two word clouds.



Thoughts about assessment and feedback



Walking and creativity

Reflecting on the walkshop intentions and the outcomes

Intention 1: To bring together place and conference by rooting the session firmly in the Edinburgh context and by providing an outdoor activity for participants to experience.

Participants undoubtedly enjoyed the Edinburgh context of the activity; this was evident as they talked on their return to the conference room and as we engaged in the plenary discussion. Tweets confirmed that just the experience of ‘getting out there’ had been enjoyable, with most people seeing the views from Calton Hill for the first time. One Tweet spoke of ‘dreamy views’, and another related ‘beautiful out here’. A third said ‘what better place for a “walkshop” than Edinburgh?’. But it was not just the views, the beauty and the novelty of the locale; participants also valued the space created by the walkshop and the opportunity to talk with someone who they did not previously know. One said ‘lovely walk, stimulating conversation’ and another ‘(v)ery engaging conversation’.

Intention 2: To relate to the conference theme of Assessment and Feedback.

There was a clear purpose for the walkshop: it was not just about leaving the conference venue on a lovely spring day with the opportunity to talk. What the participants were asked to do was to focus their discussion on assessment and feedback. One

participant Tweeted ‘creative conversations about assessment’. What surprised us was the number of metaphors shared via posts and Tweets and returned to in the plenary discussion. It was as if the very enactment of the walk brought to mind comparative images about assessment and feedback practices and student experiences which were insightful, and for us as hosts, unexpected. For example, one Tweet noted ‘improving assessment...an arduous climb’; another, ‘a pillar of HE must involve students in assessment...but how?’. Someone else, cleverly and creatively integrated the focus of the discussion with the location by referencing a sculpture seen on Calton Hill, ‘Nelson: Admiral. Assessment enhancement: Admirable’. Others spoke of the shadows, reflecting the unknowns for students of what is required and of the weather, pulling in the challenge of the elements and their potential to make something harder: the implication being, harder than it needs to be. There were also references to pathways, going in the wrong direction and the journey of assessment, alluding to the expectation that students are meant to get better during the time of their studies.

Intention 3: To test the findings of recent research into the beneficial effects of active exercise on creativity.

Creativity featured in the walkshop with the badge-making activity clearly

set up to facilitate it. And as intended, it was fun too. One Tweet said ‘... and we got to make badges’, another ‘making badges, making memories’, and a third ‘ends with badge-making, joy’. But the creativity extended beyond the obvious place for its expression. It featured during the walk where, for example, one participant took a shadow selfie of herself to illustrate assessment as a shadow practice which students do not fully understand and also in the metaphors described above. As the generation of novel analogies was the test in the Stanford research for the highest quality creative thinking resulting from exercise, these outcomes would suggest that walking outdoors did make an impact on participant creativity.



Shadow selfie

Creativity also featured in the plenary, therefore seeming to support the suggestion that there is a residual creative boost which can follow on from the act of walking itself and the free flow of ideas it can enable (Oppezzo and Schwartz, 2014). One participant got us all thinking when they likened the advantages of activity of the kind offered by the walkshop to the benefits of flânerie: the nineteenth-century practice of aimless strolling in order to better observe and experience life (Stephen, 2013). One Tweet reflected on a more formal use of the walkshop concept, saying ‘walk and talk, learning the value of meetings on the move’.

Speculative only at this point is the extent to which creativity was further enabled by the multi-tasking which was a deliberate feature of the walkshop. For example, while the pairs walked, they were asked to focus on a particular topic – assessment and feedback – and also post or Tweet. And the badge-making overlapped with the plenary, increasing activity and noise levels, but without seeming to disrupt deep thinking shared in the discussion. It is something which we are thinking further about, but note it here believing it might be useful to others contemplating the use of a walkshop. What we can say for sure is that there was an agreement amongst the participants in the plenary which reflected the view that conferences which do not interact with their location and/or provide no opportunity for participants to experience for themselves the locale in which the conference venue is based, can inhibit rather than facilitate creativity. This was also reflected in a comment in the conference evaluation which recommended that a walkshop should be included as an option in future SEDA conferences. It is these observations which invite consideration of the possibility that creativity might be enabled (or disabled) in other settings too, including university buildings. It is a thought which leads to the final section of this paper which outlines

the potential for the walkshop outside of the conference setting.

Considering wider applications

Before reflecting on the wider potential of the walkshop, it is worth emphasising that its success owed, at least in part, to the preparation. It took time to create the opportunity for a focused conversation between pairs, and the activity around this. We also know that the weather was on our side. Although we are confident that the alternative venues we researched would have been inspiring too, they would not have taken the participants outdoors and we do think this mattered. There was something beneficial it seemed about the randomness of the participant pairings. In the plenary, one pair spoke about thinking the fact of not knowing someone could have stifled conversation, but, in fact, seemed to do just the opposite. There was something important too about choice and also trust. The former was reflected in various ways including choosing a walkshop partner or not, posting/Tweeting or not, badging-making if desired, but not required. And trust – in us, as walkshop hosts, to create the opportunity for a valuable learning experience, and in participants, to stay on task and to leave the sunshine behind to come back to the conference room.

Whether a walkshop, as we have described it, has wider application may well depend on a number of factors, but we can imagine its use with staff and students in a range of academic contexts, including formal learning spaces. We think what matters is the clarity of its purpose so that it does not just present as being something different, something else for a group divided into pairs to do, without the purpose of the activity being identified. We also see that it presents as a way to use technology to enhance reflective activity. In our case, it enabled the sharing of paired thinking into the wider group so that patterns of contemplation could be

discerned, and used to stimulate further discussion both for the participants and more widely. The Storify we created exists as a legacy document – <https://storify.com/ellpee/calton-hill-walk>. We also see that it was a way to learn which takes us back to where we started. Why do academics go to conferences? We can now add to the list of possibilities – to explore the locale in which the conference venue sits, using it deliberately and purposively so as to gain different perspectives on a familiar topic. And let’s not forget, a walkshop can be fun too, providing an exciting opportunity to get outside, creating a space for laughter and silliness, as well as for creativity and for learning.

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'Social media on trial': Using technology to enhance inter-disciplinarity and practice experience in higher education

Denise Turner, University of Sussex

Teaching with technology

In his accessible book on teaching with technology, Steve Wheeler counsels against a common pedagogical mistake:

'Simply applying technology because it's new and shiny, or because "everyone else is doing it", is always a mistake.' (Wheeler, 2015).

However, despite Wheeler's caveat, higher education lecturers like myself are increasingly faced with institutional pressures to use new and emerging technologies with students who often have more digital expertise than we do, coupled with intense workloads which may not allow time for sorties into technological experimentation. Bridging the gap between these competing demands is often a Technology Enhanced Learning team whose brief may also be bewildering for lecturers without the time or expertise to integrate technology into teaching. At my own institution an annual Technology Enhanced Innovation Award acts as a means for educators to bridge this gap and work with the TEL team to animate ideas and showcase these in practice.

My own Innovation Award project, 'Making the Right Connections', utilised a range of technological methods to explore the ethical complexities of professional practice within an expanding digitally mediated landscape. As a Social Work lecturer, I am particularly interested in the ethical dilemmas that face a highly regulated profession, with a 'protected title' and strict ethical and confidentiality codes in a brave, new and digitally mediated world. The project therefore comprised different workshops and events which investigated these ethical dilemmas and culminated in a live Court simulation where social networking itself was put on trial, charged with:

'Being a conduit for the dissemination of hostile and offensive material; presenting a danger to the public good and collective wellbeing of society.'

Technology Enhanced Learning comes to Court

As befitting a Technology Enhanced Learning Innovation project, the 'Social Media on Trial' event utilised technology in multiple ways, helping to break down barriers and showcase the efficacy of different platforms and applications, as Sally the Learning Technologist explains:

'The Technology Enhanced Learning team were thrilled to support such an exciting event, it really captured

the imagination. We broadcast the event live via the Periscope app as this allowed for extending the event outside of the immediate Court room. We had over 130 external viewers on Periscope, many of them commented and indicated their approval by using the Periscope icon. For the electronic "Jury" vote we used Poll Everywhere. This is a voting app which can be used to gather information from the audience. We created a poll based on the statement and then allowed the audience to vote A (Guilty) or B (Not guilty). The Poll collects data in real time with participants able to respond via texting via their mobile phone or using a web browser. It was a great tool to use as it was exciting to see the poll whizz up and down before your eyes as the votes came in.'

Gaining confidence in Court

As Sally suggests, the electronic 'Jury' of online and real-world audience were invited to vote on the charge, having heard four students from the Department of Social Work, Wellbeing and Social Care, who took the stand as 'witnesses' for the defence and prosecution. All the students worked closely with a local barristers' Chambers and students from the Department of Law to prepare their cases, thereby enhancing their career prospects and skills development. Court can be a very daunting environment for social workers as Gema, a newly qualified practitioner, who assisted with the 'on trial' event, describes:

'I remember my first experience of being in a court setting as a student and just seeing how the room looked was not only overwhelming but also so different than I had imagined.'

In addition to experiences like Gema's which are common, as digitisation becomes endemic, Courts are increasingly becoming 'paperless', thereby placing new demands on social workers to understand the ethical complexities of interacting with electronic data. Much of the new regulatory framework for social workers emphasises this need to become confident and competent around matters of e-professionalism and the 'Social Media on Trial' event assisted with this, as evidenced by many online commentators who commented on the skill and confidence of all the students involved. Alison, one of the students for the defence shows clearly how she benefited from the event:

'I had never been in a court setting before so didn't know what to expect. Reading out the witness statement did not worry me but the idea of being cross-examined

filled me with fear. I was worried I would not know how to respond, be unable to hold my own against experienced lawyers and freeze in front of a room full of people. In fact I found the opposite. I stood in the witness box feeling nervous and apprehensive as I read out my statement but by the time I was cross-examined not only did I feel relaxed but I had started to enjoy myself...When I consider what social workers are trained to do, this is not surprising. Every day my work involves analysing situations, applying rational thinking and making informed judgements – the exact same process was involved in the witness box. This experience taught me not to fear court but to use the skills and knowledge I have to embrace it. As part of their role, social workers need to identify risks in situations, gaps in a person's story and are challenged for decisions they make. I learnt that as a social worker I am not just very capable of being in court but am in fact trained to go through the very same process every single day.'

Inter-disciplinary working

Another strength of the approach taken in staging the 'Social Media on Trial' event was its inter-disciplinarity, which also echoes the encounters students will have in practice. The Law and Social Work students all worked closely with the Barristers and the Head of Chambers acted as a resident 'Judge' for the evening itself. The role of Court Reporters was taken by students from the Department of Journalism who recorded the shock verdict of the night, when, after a preliminary vote of 'Guilty' the final verdict saw the Defence win their case with an overwhelming majority.

Rich, a student on the 'prosecution' side describes the benefit of this inter-disciplinarity for his future practice:

'It was enjoyable to do a bit of inter-agency style working, considering issues from a different perspective. Multi-agency working will be something we have to contend with, and I think sometimes the social work perspective can carry less weight than other professions that maybe have a bit more credibility/standing for whatever reason (though that wasn't my experience in this instance).'

Becky, who was involved with the winning defence team, endorses what both Rich and Alison say, pointing also to the way in which people's perceptions of social workers may have been challenged by their skill and poise under cross-examination:

'I would probably say that the court always seemed like this really big scary element of social work that we kind of ignore until we are faced with having to experience it in practice, so being involved in this was really helpful...I also would say that watching my colleagues give their witness statements and perform so well under pressure during cross-examination has given me faith in the future of social work that I will be a part of. I think a lot of the audience members were very surprised by how well-informed, confident and competent the social

work students were and it was great to be involved in something that has challenged people's perceptions of social workers too!'

Becky's observation is endorsed by Richard, the Head of the Chambers, who acted as Judge for the evening and who also demonstrates the benefit of the inter-disciplinary approach taken throughout:

'I was incredibly impressed by the standard of questioning, and equally by the answers that were given. It was a great opportunity for us, as practitioners, to participate in a meaningful debate (often legal moots can be rather arid). I think that this worked on a range of levels: as a cross-disciplinary event, as an academic-practitioner interaction, and as a chance for students to engage in the processes that will in due course form part of their working life.'

Finally, Georgia one of the three Court Reporters from the Department of Journalism also validates the efficacy of the event for upskilling students for the 'real world':

'I went to the Social Media on Trial event as one of three court reporters and was incredibly impressed by the standard of professionalism and knowledge of both the law and social work students. It was insightful to see social work students engage in lively debate and comprehensively answer the questions fired at them by both the "resident judge" and the law students. Legal professionals and social workers interact on a daily basis in the real world so this seemed to be a useful exercise for all of those involved.'

The massive swing in opinion from guilty at the outset to not guilty is testament to the knowledge that the social workers had about social media as a platform.

Beyond the new and shiny

As Georgia suggests, the event was not only useful in equipping the students for professional appearances in Court, but also showcased their knowledge, as well as educating the audience and those watching online. To return to Wheeler's caveat about using technology, the Social Media on Trial format went beyond the 'new' and 'shiny' to create an inter-disciplinary event which generated networking opportunities and enhanced the skills of all the students involved, whilst edifying the audience and engaging them in purposeful use of digital applications. The 'shock verdict' of the evening which differed so strongly from the earlier vote is, I believe, testament to the value of embedding technology in a purposeful way which overcomes technological fears and creates new opportunities.

Participants

For the Defence: Alison Wheeler; Claire Sherman; Becky Lyons.

For the Prosecution: Andrew Haughton; Richard Reid; Gema Hadridge.

(Defence and Prosecution positions do not represent the

actual views of the students involved.)
Resident Judge: Richard Barton, Head of Westgate Chambers, Lewes.
Learning technologist: Sally Burr.

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Further notes

Technology Enhanced Learning and the Department of Social Work at Sussex have produced an online 'toolkit' for those

wishing to emulate this type of event. The live broadcast and comments can be viewed on Twitter under the hashtag #smot. There is also a Podcast describing the background to the event: <http://tinyurl.com/hg6s3un>.

Padlet link for outputs from 'Making the Right Connections', a Technology Enhanced Learning Award Innovation project in the Department of Social Work and Social Care, University of Sussex: <https://padlet.com/DeniseT01/4xqhkykzzgw6>.

Dr Denise Turner (D.M.Turner@sussex.ac.uk) is a Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Sussex.

From a conversation: The what, why and how of Postgraduate Certificates in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Peter Gossman, Manchester Metropolitan University

A few weeks ago I attended a conference and whilst there I had, what at the time seemed a peripheral conversation with a fellow academic developer. However, the topic has stayed with me. What we discussed was the extent to which we had control and freedom over the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of the postgraduate higher education teaching certificates we taught. I discovered that, fortuitously, I have always been free to do what I do without too much, or even at times any, monitoring or interference. My conversation colleague, on the other hand, worked somewhere where he was closely monitored and was required to teach the specified content, within the time allowed and without deviation (and even perhaps without hesitation or repetition).

Now we all work in a neo-liberal world of measurement, metrics and impact in which the TEF and quality loom large and the purpose of PGCerts seems to need to be justified in terms of impact on a group of students – one away from the participants that we teach. That is, the students of the teachers (course participants) we have taught as students/colleagues/peers.

There has been work around this area and the linkages within it (see for example Prebble *et al.*, 2004; or Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; and Parsons *et al.*, 2012).

However, when I taught geography no one asked about the impact the learning of geography had on the people the geographers subsequently came into contact with, or perhaps it was recognised that there was no future 'client group' for these geographers. Of course, to make any such links or to have suggested any causality, would have been silly. At the time, it seemed that knowing and understanding some geography was a suitable student and course goal in and of itself. I was, however, measured on attendance (as a proxy of how engaging I was as a teacher – discuss), on pass rates, grade proportions and value-added (all, I imagine, used as proxies of how much geography was learnt – due to my teaching – at the time of measurement). What a student did with that knowledge was, as far as I can recall, never really considered. For the students, the reasons for studying the subject and what they did (with it) afterwards – if they retained or applied any of it – was largely ignored

or assumed to be worthwhile (I hope it was).

I think the distinction between teaching geography and teaching education (to teachers) lies in the reality of who pays, and for what purpose. Two examples. Firstly, when I taught education/teaching to self-funded (or central government-funded via loans) pre-service tertiary teachers, there was, again, only limited institutional anxiety over what impact the experience of the programme was having on the students of the participants, just as long as they were 'satisfied'. Secondly, now when I teach in-service teachers in a central-funded unit (mostly via central government money too, albeit by a longer route), there is more institutional concern over the PGCert's impact. This, I would suggest, stems from the external drivers that the institution is subject to (funding, quality, satisfaction, and so on) but also from a perfectly understandable concern with value for money.

The work in this area referred to already suggests that PGCerts do have a positive impact on the participants. There are research reports which

show that undertaking a PGCert moves the participants towards a more student-centred approach. In addition, the participants are more inclined and better able to underpin their practice in a theory-informed way. Gibbs and Coffey (2004) note that a teacher's greater student focus prompts their students' deep-learning which in turn improves the 'quality of student learning outcomes' (p. 98). However, the causality between A (me), B (the PGCert participants) and C (the students of the participants) is still a work in progress. In terms of 'impact' on the participants a student/colleague/peer on an HE PGCert (how should we refer to students on such programmes?) recently referred to me doing what I do as 'heavy duty' (which I assumed was a good thing – rightly?). I wonder if her teaching is now more student focused. I do hope so.

So the question that I think this leads to is, if an institution is concerned with the linkage between a 'heavy duty' PGCert and the (positive!) impact on the students of its participants, ought the institution be concerned and involved in the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of it? In the absence of an institution overtly addressing and mandating these things how would I know what I could or should be doing? It is interesting to note that this concern is with impact rather than on the 'what' that may actually be contributing to the impact.

The 'what'

Having read, and reviewed, books that relate to the business of teaching in HE, I have some views on the 'what'. However, these views have a flexibility that sometimes both troubles and alarms me. John Hattie's Visible Learning book (2011) led me to include in my teaching on the PGCert the idea of deliberate practice. However, should it be included at, say, the expense of Carol Dweck (2012) and her ideas around mindsets? Bob Seger (any singer called Bob is fine with me) says 'I've got so much more to think about/deadlines and commitments/what to leave in, what to leave out'.

Kandlbinder and Peseta (2009) researched the 'what to leave in' and

reported a popularity frequency list of 'key concepts' which included: reflective practice, constructive alignment, student approaches to learning, scholarship of teaching and assessment-driven learning in the top five. Oddly 'conceptions of teaching and learning' was quite low on the list and some of my 'favs' were not mentioned at all. However, even with the popularity of the top five the authors suggest, 'We have yet to settle on a substantive set of concepts needed by all university teachers' (p. 29, emphasis added). This in turn raises the issue of who is doing the deciding and it feels a little like Biesta's (2013) pedagogy of traditional education 'a practice in which those who do not yet know receive knowledge from those who do' (p. 92). Today, the material most *needing* to be known is presumably that which has the greatest impact on our course participants or perhaps on the students of these teachers.

The most telling problem area discovered by Kandlbinder and Peseta was that 'participants struggle to come to terms with a new discipline (Education)' (p. 25) which must be related to the 'how' of what we do and therefore too its impact.

The 'how'

There is sometimes the suggestion that participants ought to have a similar experience or at least have a similar capacity on graduation. To that end does the 'how' actually matter? In the course of an academic year, I can teach up to three cohorts the first core unit of our PGCert. Do the participants all have the same experience? Of course not, the group is different each time, as am I. Do they have a broadly similar outcome? Perhaps.

There is a distinction between the 'how' for the teacher and the 'how' for the students. As a teacher, my 'how' of teaching is aspirant. Rogers (1961) suggests core conditions for facilitative practice: empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard (see 'infed – Carl Rogers' for some introductory insight into these at <http://infed.org/mobi/carl-rogers-core-conditions-and-education/>). For PGCert students they certainly

provide a challenge and prompt much discussion. My aspiration is to be congruent, to be empathetic and to strive for unconditional positive regard. All of these are challenging, especially after a commute on a Northern train.

The key to the 'how' of learning, for the participants, seems to lie with thinking about and processing the material, constructing meaning and some engagement with reflection.

The 'why'

I have formulated, perhaps through thought, processing and reflection, a kind of mantra/philosophy in relation to the 'why' of a PGCert. It is that the successful students (those who pass?) have an ability, that hopefully has been either initiated or developed, to rationalise and justify in an informed way the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of their own teaching. The 'what' is included because, whilst a participant's disciplinary content lies outside the scope of a PGCert, the inclusion of metacognitive skills within a programme is always worthy of consideration by its teachers. The aim then is that the participants will have developed and can appropriately apply pedagogical content knowledge. In turn, this for me demands that the participants review and develop their epistemological stance in relation to education theory and practice – there are no right or wrong answers but all opinions are not equal, some are better informed, argued and constructed (discuss!). This allows scope in respect of the 'what' as this can now be responsive to the interest of the cohort. That is not to say that there is no content or syllabus, just that it is flexible and allowed to breathe. The 'how' becomes self-referential. I teach, in a way, to engender learning using an approach that I can justify in an informed way given the context. Perhaps naively, I am only concerned with the impact of my teaching and of the PGCert on the participants. I hope that the participants' changed, justifiable and improved teaching will take care of the impact on their students.

This 'why' then, like the 'what', is also an internally contested topic. Gert

Biesta (2009, pp. 38-9) proposes three interlinked functions of education:

- Qualification, the provision of knowledge, skills and understanding
- Socialisation, the ways in which, through education, we become members of and part of particular social, cultural and political 'orders'
- Subjectification, the opposite of the socialisation function, it is the ways of being that hint at independence from such 'orders'; ways of being in which the individual is not simply a 'specimen' of a more encompassing order.

My mantra seems to allow me to claim that I can encompass all three. However, I like to think I have a natural inclination towards subjectification. Over the last fifteen or so years, at irregular intervals, I have completed Pratt and Collins' (2000) teaching perspectives inventory and the results have always returned 'developmental' as my preferred, espoused (although perhaps not always enacted) style. The TPI is an operationalisation of Daniel Pratt's actions, intentions and beliefs of teaching. Pratt and Collins say of developmental teachers, that the 'primary goal is to help learners develop increasingly complex and sophisticated cognitive structures for comprehending the content' (TPI website), which seems to indicate a more qualification function. Perhaps I can claim, as Biesta notes, that my teaching 'contribute[s] to the process of subjectification that allow[s] those educated to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting' (p. 40). Now that would be a worthy impact.

Reflection

A unifying aspect of my own practice and the demand of PGCert participants is reflection: Kandlbinder and Peseta's (2009) #1. There seems to be an assumption, which illustrations of cyclic models of reflection seem to reinforce, that by going around a reflective cycle a person is changed. There also seems to be a focus on the negative, something the participant sees as needing to be changed. I have found that the work of Peter Jarvis (1992)

in this area has stayed with me and resonated strongly since I first read it. The model he proposes, in response to his research, contains nine routes that a person can take. Each route has one of two exits – 'reinforcement but relatively unchanged' or 'changed and more experienced'. Each book I read hopefully provides me with an experience that I can add into my reflection towards 'changed and more experienced'.

This returns me to the start and the place where I, in my practice, can at least offer an informed and reflected-upon justification for what I do. Long may my perceived freedom to influence the 'why', 'how' and 'what' of that practice remain. I hope it continues to result in real rather than merely recognised or credentialised development. Ultimately, I find that the reward and validation of my 'how' and 'why' comes from unsolicited student feedback. 'Heavy duty', I have subsequently discovered, means challenging in educational epistemic terms (but done in a caring way). A measured 1.618 degree 'impact' on a Likert 3-point scale – could do better and must try harder!

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SEDA News

SEDA Research and Evaluation Small Grants 2017

These grants are intended to support research and evaluation in staff and educational development with the goal of continued improvement in the quality and understanding of educational development practices. For 2017 we will be offering five grants of £1000 each for research into educational development practices.

See www.seda.ac.uk for further details including an application form. The closing date for applications is **12 noon on 30 January 2017**.

Roll of Honour

Congratulations to **Professor Julie Hall SFSEDA**, **Professor Ray Land** and **Liz Shrives SFSEDA** who have been awarded a place on SEDA's Roll of Honour.

Julie has been a tireless campaigner for educational development in general and SEDA in particular. She substantially advanced the status of SEDA through her constructive, strategic leadership and her ability to engage with all members of the community. She is an outstanding advocate for staff and educational development and truly embodies the SEDA values in all she does. Julie is a scholarly academic and holds both SFSEDA and PFHEA; first and foremost, however, she is an educational

developer who has moved the Association and the profession forward in significant ways.

The breadth and scope of Ray's influence within the educational development field is phenomenal. As a role model for scholarship which combines the highest quality research with a career grounded in the fundamental practice of educational development, Ray has set an example of the highest international standard. At the same time, he continues to provide support and advice at the local level, to many individuals and teams, wherever it is called for. Here, the value of his support far outweighs any benefit to himself, and in this way he has exemplified SEDA's values of scholarship professionalism, collegiality, inclusivity and commitment to learning.

Liz has substantially advanced the status of SEDA in relation to its mission and, throughout her career, has been an outstanding advocate for staff and educational development. She has represented SEDA on a number of high-level panels, ensuring that SEDA's voice has been heard and responded to. Liz has been instrumental in informally mentoring many colleagues into the workings of SEDA and has been a great advocate for educational development over many years; tirelessly working for SEDA for a lot of that time; and influential on many fronts.

SEDA Fellowships

Congratulations to **Charles Neame** who has recently been awarded Senior Fellowship of SEDA.

Welcome to new members of the Educational Developments Committee

Dr John Bostock is a Senior Lecturer in Teaching and Learning Development in the Centre for Learning and Teaching at Edge Hill University. He is an experienced teacher in both Further and Higher Education and has been a Head of Department in an FE College. He is or has recently been an external examiner for a variety of programmes in a range of universities, including PGCEs at Portsmouth and Teeside.

Dr Alison James is the Acting Director of Academic Quality and Development and Head of Learning and Teaching at the University of Winchester. Until recently she was the Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching, at the London College of Fashion, where she was involved in creative approaches to learning, teaching and reflection through the adoption of multimedia and multisensory approaches. With

Stephen D. Brookfield she wrote *Engaging Imagination: Helping Students Become Creative and Reflective Thinkers* (2014, Wiley) and she was recently commissioned by the HEA to write a report for their Innovative Pedagogical Practices series on Lego Serious Play in Higher Education (see <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/innovating-creative-arts-lego>).

Dr Claire Taylor FSEDA is Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Wrexham Glyndŵr University, having been Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Strategy) at St Mary's University London until earlier this year. Claire has contributed regularly to *Educational Developments* on topics such as strategic change-making, peer observations, the use of appreciative inquiry and the 'feasible utopias' consultation process. She has served on SEDA Committees (co-

chairing the Conference Committee) and has received a SEDA Grant for a work on OER Projects for Educational Development.

Dr W. Alan Wright is the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, at the University of Windsor, Canada, and leads the Centre for Teaching and Learning there. He is also Acting Dean of the Faculty of Education and Academic Development with oversight for the Office of Open Learning. He has been a long-time member of the Canadian Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and was one of the founders of its long-established Green Guides series. With support from Stephen Bostock, Alan was also the first to institute a SEDA-recognised teaching certificate course in Canada.

James Wisdom