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Learning at the heart of the system: communities, values and social processes

SEDA 20th Anniversary Celebratory Lecture

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This lecture was given as a celebration of what SEDA has achieved and a reminder of what has changed as educational development has evolved over the past 20 years or so. It may also point to where educational development might be headed next.

My early career was hugely influenced by the existence of SCEDSIP (the Standing Conference for Educational Development Services in Polytechnics), and then SCED (the Standing Conference for Educational Development), and that metamorphosed into the SEDA we know today. In those days, educational developers, and there were painfully few of us, were isolated inside our institutions and needed all the peer support we could find. There was almost no literature about what educational development should consist of or how it should be conducted and we made it up as we went along and shared the little we knew with each other. The sheer scale of the teaching development enterprise today would have been impossible to contemplate. Instead of one tiny network there are now dozens of specialist networks and a huge, lively and well-connected community that SEDA helps to link up.

Globally, there were perhaps half a dozen national networks doing something similar in those days, and though some, like HERDSA, were large and sophisticated, some of them were little more than email lists. When I received the first Honorary Life Membership of SEDA at its annual conference in Birmingham, I said that I hoped the next stage would involve an international network to join these isolated national networks together. ICED (the International Consortium for Educational Development) was formed, and it now has 23 national members. At that time, there was scepticism about whether 'educational development' and 'scholarship' were mutually incompatible terms, but IJAD (the International Journal for Academic Development) was founded and has flourished, and the whole enterprise has become much more sophisticated.

Scholarship involves standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before and there is now a substantial literature new educational developers can draw on, and in the UK, SEDA's *Educational Developments* has become an invaluable record of evolving practices and ideas. I was sent a paper to review this morning, from a

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former part of Yugoslavia, that reported a sophisticated evaluation of the impact of initial training of university teachers on the quality of student experience. Twenty years ago there was no educational development in universities at all in that part of the world, and the level of sophistication it has now reached demonstrates much faster evolution than we have managed in the UK, or that could have been managed without ICED. SEDA has played a real leadership role in the expansion of educational development internationally.

The Dearing Report could not have contemplated recommending accreditation of teachers in higher education and the establishment of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in HE (and later the Higher Education Academy or HEA), if SEDA had not proved that the concept was both practically viable and popular. Contrast this with the USA, where credentials are king, but where there simply has not been enough bottom-up development of anything resembling standards for training or for teachers on which any national initiative could be built. Meanwhile SEDA has helped entire countries, such as Sri Lanka, to develop rapidly the scale and sophistication of their initial training for university teachers.

All this, and much more, has been achieved without external funding. Who today remembers the Co-ordinating Committee for the Training of University Teachers, funded as a national agency for staff development? Quangos and lavishly funded national initiatives come and go (and at the moment there is more going than coming). The American Association for Higher Education was probably the largest and best-funded educational development agency anywhere in the world, and was very good at what it did – and it lost its funding and is no more. In contrast SEDA is a community, relying on the voluntary efforts of its members, and ploughing any income back into its community-run efforts, driven by shared values rather than money. This is a strategy for longevity it would be dangerous to abandon.

So what has changed in what SEDA members focus their attention on and how they go about their activities?

In the 1980s at Oxford Polytechnic I, like most others running programmes for new teachers, spent a lot of time observing teachers as they taught and talking with them afterwards. The focus was on the teachers and their classrooms. Thirty years later I taught on Oxford University's programme and the focus was on teachers' thinking – and we never once saw them teach. Accreditation today might be seen as emphasising the ability of the teacher to document what they know, rather than demonstrate what they know how to do.

Teachers' motivation is now addressed through teaching awards, promotion criteria and career structures in a way that was largely absent 20 years ago. The universities round the world, such as Utrecht, that can demonstrate significant improvements in the quality of their teaching, have played the 'teacher motivation' card very forcefully. And there has been an increasing emphasis on developing teachers' ability, and desire, to 'self-improve' once they stop spending time with educational developers.

This focus on individual teachers, however, has not been very successful in developing degree programmes and the overall quality of student experience. Those English institutions with the longest-established training and reward mechanisms, and with the largest numbers of National Teaching Fellows, are not prominent at the top of national rankings as judged by the NSS, which focuses on programmes, not classrooms or modules or teachers.

Leadership of teaching is crucial to creating the kinds of community of practice necessary for educational effectiveness at programme level. One of the few features that has been found to be consistently associated with higher than predicted levels of student engagement in the USA, has been that teachers within a programme talk to each other and share values about teaching and learning. Someone has to organise that talking and lead the move towards shared values, within each community, and the development of 'leadership of teaching' is a key role for educational developers.

The biggest impacts you can have on improving student learning involve not improving teachers, but improving students as learners. In some universities, both in the UK (e.g. Brunel) and internationally (e.g. Stanford), the teaching development and student development initiatives are housed in the same unit. However, developing students has tended either to be a low priority for educational development or undertaken by a separate agency such as Student Services, operating in isolation from teaching development. While teaching development has become more context-sensitive and dispersed, student development has often remained generic and centralised.

As educational development has become bigger business, it has specialised, and in particular it has become discipline-specific. The people actually undertaking educational development have changed and the enterprise has become devolved and dispersed within institutions. The 'Preparing for Academic Practice' CETL at Oxford resulted in every Faculty or Department having its own locally run set of programmes, and it survived the end of CETL funding largely intact as a consequence. Developing the capacity of teachers to also be developers and internal consultants has become a focus of SEDA's professional development framework as well as the higher levels of the HEA's new standards framework. While standards and accreditation help, what seems less well evolved is how these dispersed educational developers learn how to perform their roles effectively.

And finally, communities of practice may also need to include students, if local developments are to be relevant,

and if students are to perceive and experience the benefits of educational developments. The institutions that are currently displaying the fastest improvements in NSS scores (up to three times more rapidly than the average) all have quite well-developed mechanisms for student engagement. The rationales for student engagement vary – for example at Exeter students are trained to act as developers within their own departments; at Bath it is about academic democracy; at some institutions it is about more effective quality assurance and at some it is that if students perceive themselves as 'on the inside' collaborating to make their education better, then they will tend to rate that education better, rather than only see themselves as consumers and complain. The engagement of students in the educational development process has started with a sudden and substantial lurch and we will see rapid and extensive developments in this domain in the coming years, driven by NSS scores and the market.

So my prediction for the future is that professional educational developers will increasingly be focusing their efforts on developing others – teachers, leaders and students – to perform development roles within their local communities of practice, driven by local values and concerns.

And SEDA will continue to be there to help this happen effectively.

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Am I qualified yet? Exploring institutions' accredited prior experience and learning provision and probationary requirements for HE teaching

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Having been Academic Developers for some time, we noticed over the last couple of years that being 'qualified' to teach in higher education meant different things depending on who you spoke to. This issue was thrust into the limelight with the publication of the Browne Report (2010) recommending that all new academics with teaching responsibilities should undertake a Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredited teaching training qualification, shortly followed by the

white paper 'Students at the Heart of the System' (BIS, 2011), and the announcement that as from 2012/13 institutions would be required to send data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to indicate the teaching qualifications and expertise of teaching staff.

In the spring of 2011, we thought it was time to look at what was happening in institutions and to make some comparisons. We

were particularly interested in how institutions were mapping their initial professional development programmes and provision to the descriptors 1 and 2 for Associate Fellow and Fellow of the HEA, following the introduction of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education (HEA, 2006). In particular, we wanted to explore how these descriptors were being employed in probationary training requirements

and whether accreditation provision for prior experience and learning was available, as there appeared to be inconsistencies in how other institutions applied the mapping. These inconsistencies, we found, were causing problems with the portability and recognition of experience and achievements, leading to a lack of clarity for the new academics we were working with and for us, as developers and programme leaders.

We were successful in attaining a SEDA Research and Development small grant to explore and ascertain the range of professional development courses for staff who have teaching responsibilities, and the type of qualifications and experience recognised for Accredited Prior Learning, including the extent of exemption for Fellowship of the HEA from probationary requirements. We collected the data over the following year. Our different locations and contacts enabled us to collect data through a survey instrument from two regional academic practice network groups: the Midlands Academic Practice Network and the South-West Educational Developers Forum. Eighteen universities participated in the survey from the following groups: Russell, 1994, Million+, University Alliance, and Guild HE. The results were analysed to identify the commonalities and differences across the dataset.

All the institutions we surveyed had a variety of professional development programmes to support new lecturing and teaching staff but not all the programmes were compulsory for staff. None of the institutions surveyed had compulsory training for service providers such as technicians and librarians, and there were variations with regards to training for staff who had limited teaching and/or learning support responsibilities, which would map to Descriptor 1 of the UKPSF for Associate Fellow of the HEA.

However, not surprising since the government proposed that all new teaching staff should receive accredited training by 2006 (DfES, 2003), lecturing staff who had limited experienced were expected

to undertake some form of training/development. This varied from non-credit-bearing courses to engagement with a Postgraduate Certificate for Teaching in Higher Education. All of these training requirements had been accredited to Descriptor 2 of the UKPSF for Fellow of the HEA (HEA, 2011).

All the institutions had some process in place to recognise and incorporate Accredited Prior Learning for certificated learning (APCL) within their provision. Without exception (at the time the data were collected), full APCL exemption was granted for completed Postgraduate Certificates for teaching in the sector achieved at other institutions. Accreditation was accorded for partial completion through exercises mapping the number of credits and intended learning outcomes achieved to an institution's own programme. Some institutions said they would consider accrediting Postgraduate Certificates for teaching in other sectors, but teaching qualifications achieved outside of the UK were not normally recognised against a probationary requirement.

For APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) routes, we had anticipated that holding Fellowship with the HEA would be a common standard that could be easily portable between institutions. However, provision varied considerably from full or partial exemption from probationary requirements. Four institutions did not consider this as indicative of sufficient experience for full exemption due to probationary requirements extending beyond that for teaching and learning to include areas such as research management. Another reason for the inconsistency appeared to relate to perceptions of 'being experienced'. Many of the Post '92 institutions considered 5 years or more of teaching in the higher education sector as being appropriate, whereas 3 years or more was deemed sufficient for the Pre '92s surveyed.

In addition to these perceptions of 'being experienced' inconsistencies, which appeared to reflect a Pre and Post '92 divide, was the issue of the type and level of provision required

to be deemed 'qualified'. This was confused further by the variation in the job titles and grades used for staff who have a teaching role. In addition, institutional policies outlining which members of staff were required to undertake training varied and often reflected how institutions describe themselves: research intensive or ones with a teaching and learning focus.

So, do we all share the same understanding of what it means to be qualified? The findings from our small project would suggest that this is not the case, as interpretations of being qualified to teach can vary from holding an appropriate teaching qualification, partial teaching qualification or a non-credit-bearing award to having teaching experience from 3 to 5 years depending on the type of university employing you. Liam Burns, the president of the National Union of Students, argued that 'the law should require academics to be qualified' (Burns, 2012), but what exactly does that mean? The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) provides very little advice on what is an appropriate teaching qualification, as those of you who have looked at the guidance for the data collection exercise will know. According to HESA, 'there is no implied hierarchy in the valid entries, neither is there any implied equivalence' and indeed, 'being qualified' appears to be denoted through a range of teaching qualifications, including those from overseas, and through accredited and/or recognised expertise.

Since we undertook the project, the revised UKPSF was introduced (HEA, 2011) and offers the possibility of more flexibility and opportunity for continuing professional development activities to be recognised. The Higher Education Academy is strongly encouraging higher education institutions to utilise the UKPSF to encompass and recognise both initial professional development (IPD) and continued professional development (CPD) through their own institutional development frameworks. The development of such frameworks may see an increase in institutional provision that fosters and provides a continuum of professional development activities with less emphasis on discrete credit-

bearing elements such as Postgraduate Certificates. Already, some higher education institutions have made this transition (see Shrives, 2012). If being qualified to teach includes both experience and training (and in our opinion, it should be), then the UKPSF provides a structure for comprehensively recognising and benchmarking teaching and learning support roles within higher education. It may take some time for institutions to recognise how these can be used to accredit the training and experience of staff joining the teaching workforce, but eventually, as these CPD frameworks become more prevalent and the wider academic community more familiar with the UKPSF, portability might be achieved.

Institutions could ultimately identify for their academic staff what set of skills, values, qualities and body of knowledge, in terms of both teaching and research practice, is appropriate and relevant to meet the different needs of their staff and students and consider how this aligns to not only the UKPSF to enhance pedagogic practice, but also to other national frameworks such as Vitae's Researcher Development Framework (Vitae, 2013) to enhance research skills. An individual who requires support in achieving that base level could then be offered the appropriate support within any developed CPD scheme. As more CPD schemes come into place, we will be interested to explore this further.

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Evaluation of a university teaching fellowship scheme as a tool to promote pedagogic research and development

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Introduction

Small-scale project-funding schemes are an established mechanism to engender change and promote innovation in teaching and learning in higher education. Although they are used at different levels (institutionally to nationally) research into these schemes has identified broadly similar aims and outcomes (Arlett, Smith and Tolley, 2007; Jones, 2010; McAlpine and Gandell, 2003). They can be organised into some form of 'teaching fellowship scheme', associated with individuals or teams making an application for a proposed project or programme of work that is anticipated to benefit teaching and learning (Warren and Plumb, 1999). They are also connected to the notion of 'rewarding' teaching and learning – a complex agenda, which although beyond the scope of this article, is noteworthy in that successful funding earns titles such as 'Teaching Fellow', signalling applicants' interest in or commitment to teaching and learning (Warren and Plumb, 1999). In many cases (e.g. Jones, 2010) they are claimed to create forums for in-depth inquiries into practice and stimulating discussion around teaching and learning. However, others (e.g. D'Andrea, 2007; Murphy, 2003) criticise them for having limited longer-term impact, being context-specific or poorly theorised and executed. Despite these diverse opinions, they remain a popular tool to promote pedagogic research and development work, particularly at the grassroots level of individuals' practice.

One example: Plymouth University Teaching Fellowship Scheme

Plymouth University's Teaching Fellowship Scheme is administered and supported by the central Educational Development (ED) team. Those with a remit for supporting teaching and learning are eligible to apply; therefore applicants regularly include academics, learning technologists and librarians. Up to £5000 is available to support a proposed project, with applications invited from individuals and project teams. Although projects often originate from observations of daily practice/student feedback, or seek to experiment with recent technological innovations, applicants are expected to ground their proposals in relevant pedagogical literature, and incorporate an evaluative stage, to ensure that they result in evidence-based recommendations.

They are also expected to frame their work in relation to their faculty's and the University's teaching and learning strategies and occasionally applicants are recommended to align their proposals around particular themes (e.g. assessment). Applicants must highlight plans for their own continuing professional development (CPD) through the project, and consider internal/external dissemination of their work. So the perceived impact-related limitations of these schemes are addressed at the application stage, and are anticipated to be overcome prior to the funding and implementation of projects.

In 2011, we made a successful application to SEDA to evaluate the contribution this Scheme has made to the promotion of pedagogic research and development at the University. In particular, we examined the impact of the Scheme on individuals' personal/professional development, its contribution to their own and their colleagues' teaching practices, and how Teaching Fellows had advanced their pedagogic research/development activities following the end of their project. This article reports the outcomes of this evaluation and reflects on our experiences of managing this Scheme. Based on these findings and our reflections we provide recommendations for Educational Developers having a remit for implementing or supporting similar schemes.

Methodology

By 2011, 61 projects undertaken by 134 Teaching Fellows from across the University had been supported by the Scheme. From this potential sample we purposefully selected 12 participants to represent a cross-section of the disciplines and project types. We focused on those still working at the University, and sought to make initial contact with project leads. All those invited agreed to participate; although in several cases the project lead suggested we invite another team member perceived to have made a more significant contribution to the work.

Two data collection modes were employed. Initially, asynchronous email interviews were used, as we believed they would provide participants with a reflective space in which to examine their experience as a Teaching Fellow and undertaking their work. We were mindful of the advice of advocates of email interviewing (e.g. limiting questions and allowing time for participants to formulate responses) (James, 2007). But the overall success of these early interviews was limited, as the pressures of everyday life encroached; the remaining interviews were therefore conducted face-to-face. Following each interview an initial analysis was undertaken to identify emerging themes, informing subsequent interviews (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The benefits and challenges of being a Teaching Fellow

A number of studies have documented the challenges and benefits to recipients of project funding to develop teaching and learning (e.g. Abbas and McLean, 2003; Dexter and Seden, 2012; Jones, 2010). Whilst reluctant to repeat these studies, we feel it is important to highlight issues identified by our participants, to demonstrate parallels with our experiences in Plymouth to other institutional/national schemes.

At Plymouth, some of the benefits were time for reflection, increased self-confidence, networking and future collaborations and funding. Time and financial constraints, long-term sustainability, technological issues and recruiting relevant expertise (e.g. research assistants) were the challenges recounted by participants. None of these findings were unanticipated and although many have been the basis of past support strategies (e.g. FAQ documents, guidance sessions and progress meetings), their persistence suggests that closer examination and reassessment of our current approaches were necessary, particular with regards the timing at which this support is provided.

At an induction meeting we ensure we discuss recruitment of research assistants, giving practical suggestions for achieving this (e.g. working with research or undergraduate students). The pre-application guidance workshops are more formally organised and widely advertised. Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend these workshops, where they discuss ideas, and we recommend contacts with whom they collaborate on a bid. This is particularly important for those proposing technological developments – connecting with relevant expertise such as the Technology Enhanced Learning team is essential in applicants becoming aware of potential collaborators, limitations and/or challenges, and to plan for these at the bidding stage. Interestingly, we have recently become aware of similar approaches by other Educational Developers (e.g. Admudsen and Hum, 2012). Anecdotally, their reasoning in implementing such support echoed our own, *i.e.* to promote collaboration and the quality of the proposal with respect to their impact on teaching and learning.

Time – a challenge and a benefit

For all participants time represented a major concern both at the time of undertaking the work and also sustaining their engagement after the funding had ended:

> *'Finding time to do it […] that's a challenge for everybody isn't it in the current way in which we work […].'* (Participant 4: Teaching Fellow 2005-06)

> *'Because the project was completed, so the justifications [of giving time to the project] went with the completion, but now I still need to allocate some time to work it up from the final report into the journal article.'* (Participant 12: Teaching Fellow 2010-11)

Yet, interestingly, rather than seeing time as a challenge others embraced positively the time they needed to commit to the project as a justification to prioritise their commitment to it:

> *'My view is that the [Teaching Fellowship] allowed us to achieve more than we otherwise would have, and more quickly. Reasons: (1) the award allowed us to employ a research assistant – given that we are highly time constrained due to heavy workloads, this helped to drive the project forward; (2) the award gave some internal face validity which encouraged a good response to the survey and request for interviews; (3) the award brought with it deadlines to keep on track.'* (Participant 7: Teaching Fellow, 2003-04)

These extracts demonstrate the different perceptions of time as both a challenge and a commodity created by the funding. In operating the Scheme we have implemented a series of milestones (e.g. project induction and interim meetings, interim and final reporting deadlines and a dissemination commitment at the University's annual teaching and learning conference) – these have been recognised as providing a framework for Teaching Fellows' work and therefore ensures their work on their project is prioritised.

A possibly unique feature of the Plymouth Scheme is the emphasis placed on collaboration. It appears that in several published examples (e.g. Arlett *et al.,* 2007; McAlpine and Gandell, 2003) individuals are often the sole recipients of funding. This may result from the connection between project funding and recognising individuals' commitment to teaching and learning through the grant funding (Warren and Plumb, 1999). At Plymouth a benefit acknowledged by participants was the opportunity created for dialogue and collective working around teaching and learning. This does not mean that prior to receiving project funding participants were not discussing teaching and learning, rather that they prioritised these conversations as a consequence of the funding. Likewise, rather than focusing on the more practical elements of teaching, through their projects they began to focus on more theoretical aspects of their teaching:

> *'I think it was the dialogue, it was the fact that you knew you had a project to undertake, there was a job to be done and if a job's worth doing, it's worth doing properly. So we made time to have critical conversations about the work, which perhaps we may not have had before.'* (Participant 4: Teaching Fellow 2005-06)

Equally, whilst many of them were used to working collaboratively on their research, with respect to their teaching this became a newly productive way of working, leading to long-term working relationships being established:

> *'It demonstrated to us that we could actually work together, and the papers that we produced subsequently have allowed us to work together and become a bit of a research pairing. So, I think that was probably instrumental in us talking about and then eventually getting the book.'* (Participant 5: Teaching Fellow 2007-08)

Dedicating time and working collaboratively on issues relating to teaching and learning were identified across the sample as a significant but unanticipated consequence of the funding participants received. Indeed there was a sense that through these discussions and new working relationships, participants were critically reflecting on their teaching – as the four elements of being a critically reflective practitioner described by Brookefield (1995) were evident in discussions of the experiences they had as Teaching Fellows. Consequently for some, this led to a fundamental shift in how they thought about and approached their teaching:

> *'This had made us think that being proactive and embedded would be a better approach than being reactive and available for a sub-set of students only.'* (Participant 1: Teaching Fellow 2003-04) (Underlined text indicates participant's own emphasis)

Lasting impacts?

So far we have concentrated on the recognised challenges and benefits at the time Teaching Fellows were undertaking their work. In interviewing participants since the introduction of the Scheme, we have been able to identify how they have built on their projects, their ongoing engagement with pedagogic research/development work, and how the success of early Teaching Fellows served as a catalyst for their colleagues' applications.

At Plymouth it appears that alongside our wider programme of Educational Development activities, the Teaching Fellowship Scheme contributes to the emergence of a body of critically reflective, research-engaged teachers. This is a widely cited but rarely corroborated aim of these funding schemes (e.g. Jones, 2010). Yet across our sample, findings indicate that Teaching Fellows make substantial changes to their teaching practice as a consequence of the project work undertaken. These changes were based on the successes and challenges of the participants' experience, as demonstrated by one Teaching Fellow's reflections on why his project 'failed' to achieve what was originally envisaged:

> *'The [names student group] didn't take part, they were going into the blog and reading the information and visiting the Facebook page, but they weren't making any contributions. So, I kind of picked that apart a little with their tutors. And at first I thought it might be a language problem, but it subsequently emerges that it's more a confidence thing. And also, they're taught in very didactic ways, so they're not used to, sort of, critically engaging with ideas and concepts.'* (Participant 5: Teaching Fellow 2007-08)

Impacts were also documented beyond Teaching Fellows' own practice. The research process and outputs were often useful to both staff and students, influencing their colleagues' practice and students' learning needs. In some cases, the research projects led to significant, ongoing change within Schools, as evidenced by this example. As a consequence of work carried out as a Teaching Fellow in 2003-04, this lecturer implemented a new approach to teaching involving all students at all levels that is still having an impact today:

> *'This year for the first time staff new to the school have been invited to attend these seminars. Not only have new staff accepted this invitation, but also long-standing staff. Together they have brought a welcome perspective to add to the students' own dialogue [they] all commented that they are gaining so much through it, perhaps most notably in terms of helping to define for them the school's collective approach to pedagogy and thus serving as a framework with which to consider their own pedagogic approach.'* (Participant 11: Teaching Fellow 2003-04)

Teaching Fellows in a support role also articulated wider impacts on the working practices of their immediate colleagues, connected to the wider sharing of the outcomes of their work, and demonstrating the contribution those in a support role could make to developing teaching and learning, something which in the early days of the Scheme was perhaps considered beyond their remit:

'I think I was probably the first one but I think that has led to other members of the team then wanting to do stuff because we've had a couple of members of the team go on to have their own teaching fellowships or to be part of other teaching fellowships. So, I think, yeah maybe there was a realisation then that, hey, this actually is quite important.' (Participant 3: Teaching Fellow 2003-04)

For most participants the Teaching Fellowship project frequently deepened their interest in, and understanding of, certain areas of pedagogy. The experience often sparked an interest that continued after the funding had finished, leading people to making future funding applications building on the foundations laid in their initial project:

'I would say that […] having had the fellowships, has encouraged me to look at getting funding elsewhere and taking ideas and thoughts forward and actually saying, yes, this is a valuable area of study that should be looked at and then going and looking for funding for it.' (Participant 4, Teaching Fellow 2005-2006)

For those new to pedagogic research and development work, in addition to enhanced pedagogical knowledge, participants identified experience gained in managing a project as a grounding on which they were able to draw in future work. In other cases sustained research collaborations emerged which continue to operate. Therefore the impact of Teaching Fellows, work can be recognised as far-reaching and long-lasting. It seems to provide a forum bringing together an interest in teaching and learning with research, creating productive spaces in which to engage with both activities.

Student contributions to Teaching Fellowship projects

Given that students are commonly the prime beneficiaries of small-scale teaching and learning projects, the extent to which published studies have examined student engagement has been surprisingly limited. This is an interesting oversight, which – given the increased prominence of the 'students as partners' agenda – might be considered more widely. Through this evaluation we have become aware of the relatively narrow ways in which Teaching Fellows engage with students. This is not to criticise these projects; rather it may indicate the quite traditional views of Teaching Fellows regarding the contribution students can make to developing teaching and learning.

Generally, students trialled new technologies providing participants with feedback on their efficacy and usefulness. In other projects, students participated in new pedagogical activities, their experiences being explored within the research project. Only where Teaching Fellows were familiar with more participatory forms of research from their own backgrounds did students appear to make a more active contribution, resulting in innovative and productive working relationships emerging between the Fellows and their students. Whilst we recognise the importance of students responding to and informing the implementation of new pedagogical approaches that may be involved in proposed

projects, we are now encouraging future Teaching Fellows to integrate 'students as partners' in their work. We feel doing this will further enhance the contribution Teaching Fellows are able to make to teaching and learning.

Conclusions

At Plymouth the Teaching Fellowship Scheme has become a popular and established feature of the support available to University staff to engage with pedagogic research and development work. A strength of the Scheme is the extent to which it allows lecturing and support staff to examine their own practice and focus on areas of relevance to their individual teaching. This has resulted in a scheme that is perceived as being responsive to individuals' own reflections on practice, and leads to evidence-informed change.

Although challenges were documented, the structure of support and guidance offered by the Educational Development team means these can be negotiated, and in relation to the longer-term benefits for practice and individual professional development, their impact is limited. Based on our work, we feel promoting an ethos of sustained collaboration is central to ensuring the longer-term impacts of the research and development work undertaken by Teaching Fellows. Furthermore, we will re-align the timeliness and appropriateness of support provided, more strongly promote the involvement of students as partners, and therefore, identify suitable measures to determine the impact of such projects on the student experience. The recent formation of the Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory at Plymouth has further enhanced the opportunities for research into HE pedagogy, and to contribute to the culture of research-informed and reflective teaching which the institution strives to promote.

Further details of the Plymouth University Teaching Fellowship Scheme, including full details of funding projects, can be found at: tinyurl.com/bfndb9p

Project reports can also be accessed via www.pedres.net.

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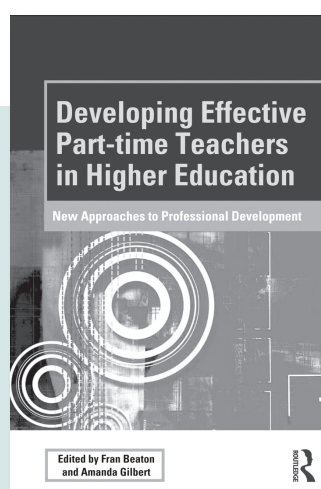
Book Review

Developing Effective Part-Time Teachers in Higher Education

Editors:
F. Beaton and A. Gilbert

2013, London: Routledge

I wanted to resist the cliché that this book is timely, but there are good reasons for sticking with it. One of those reasons is the often-expressed concern in the United States (although it could equally be said about higher education more generally) that undergraduates are rarely taught by the high-flying professors who are paraded in the university's promotional literature, but have to make do with graduate teaching assistants. My use of pejorative language is deliberate because there is an inbuilt assumption that this can't be a good thing, even though – in reality – the enthusiasm of an untenured adjunct may well be more than a match for a more aloof, research-focused, senior colleague.

This book offers an insight into – indeed, shines a bright torch on – the invisible world of that untenured adjunct. I say 'invisible' to repeat the term that is used in the book, but, clearly, if students are being taught by adjuncts then they are not invisible in that sense. What we quickly discover though is that they are often invisible to the institution that employs them, and even to the staff developer, who is much more likely to be working with full-time academics. Here then is the challenge, and the main reason why the book should be read.

The book is edited by an Australia-based academic – Amanda Gilbert – and a UK-based academic – Fran Beaton – who, respectively, top and tail with their own perspectives, leaving the bulk of the book to chapter inputs from other academics based in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. I was a little disappointed not to hear from anyone based in the United States or Canada, but I had no reason to doubt that the insight I was getting could not be generalised. Naturally, different nations use different descriptive terms for part-time staff, but the much more significant point is that part-time staff – whatever they are called – come in many shapes and sizes, including (but not exclusively) the PhD student who is aspiring to a full-time academic post; the person who wants the flexibility offered by part-time hours; the person who wants to bridge other professional practice with academia; and the retired academic who just wants to keep their hand in.

So far, so good, but there are problems on the horizon. First, do our part-timers all have the same development needs – the 'one-size does not fit all' problem? Second, to what extent is part-time work an active career choice – the agent *versus* the victim problem, if you will? And third, into what kind of academic life are we inducting people? For me, the torch shone brighter on the first of these problems, but the batteries started to fade a little after that.

On the first problem, the book contains some excellent empirical data, not just on the numbers of part-timers who fit into the various definitional categories assigned to them, but also more qualitative data on how they – themselves – see their needs being met, including qualitative data on women in part-time roles, and students who teach. The book also lays out the challenges set by developments in technology-enhanced learning. Surprisingly perhaps, some of those needs turn out to be very practical, for example, where do I put my stuff when no office is

provided; and how do I stop students emailing me at all hours? And some of the contributors offer very practical answers to these questions, as well as offering broader suggestions on how to build a supportive ethos and sense of community for everyone in a departmental team.

On the second problem, I would have liked to read more on confronting the 'casualisation' problem, which the chapter by Durer and Gilmore opened up. Reports in the United States indicate that many adjuncts hold numerous part-time positions in various universities over extended periods, often on low pay with none of the employment benefits available to full-time staff. While this must be very much an active choice for their employers, it must be anything but an active choice for the individuals. There are also fears that this may become more prevalent as 'for-profit' and 'online' providers increasingly compete

for students. Whereas it might be a little too inflammatory for such a book to suggest that the rest of the world might be looking at its own future here, one more chapter, perhaps from a trade union perspective, might have been really useful.

On the third problem, the book flagged up two dilemmas for me. First, how much should I really be guided by the different needs of part-time staff working in higher education? Yes, different categories of part-timers may have different immediate needs, but beyond that I often found myself marking in the margin that the identified need was actually a need of all staff – for example, who doesn't worry about the burden of assessment? But the main thought I took away from this book is to caution, in responding positively to the part-timer's need to feel more integrated into their institutions, that we don't at the same time, inadvertently, then

take them further away from the means by which they might become successful academics. For, if there's one thing which still rings true in academia, it's allegiance to discipline and scholarship which brings rewards, not allegiance to institution. Or, in developing effective part-time teachers in higher education might we not also be helping them to become poorer academics? Integrating them more into the scholarship of teaching and learning is a step in the right direction, but getting that scholarship on the same footing as Boyer's scholarship of discovery is another thing altogether. And we all still have a lot of work to do on that front.

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Disciplinary thinking: Resources for discipline-orientated academic development

Helen King, University of Bath

Discipline-based academic development has had a high profile over the last couple of decades, particularly within the UK. This has included departmental- or faculty-based provision within higher education institutions and sector-wide support via project programmes (such as the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning) and initiatives and organisations (e.g. the Computers in Teaching Initiative, Learning and Teaching Support Network, and the Higher Education Academy). In addition, subject-based professional bodies are playing an increasing role in academic development here in the UK and internationally, and discipline-based pedagogic research is continuing to develop its profile.

Academic development within a disciplinary context is no doubt popular and it has been argued that it is essential in order to relate to the academics' community of practice (Jenkins, 1996; Parker, 2002; Knight, 1998). Indeed, the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in higher education identifies the need for knowledge of 'Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject' and 'How students learn…within their subject'

(Higher Education Academy *et al.,* 2011). There has been some argument, however, that this emphasis is misplaced as the nature of learning is discipline-independent and, hence, pedagogic principles are the same across higher education (e.g. Gibbs, 2000; Wareing, 2009).

From a pragmatic perspective, academic developers within higher education institutions are often required to design and deliver generic or multi-disciplinary programmes and events. So is there a way to tap into the discipline context that academics are working in, in order to gain their interest and buy-in?

To address this question, this article outlines the concept of discipline-orientated academic development, whereby the discipline background of workshop and course participants is acknowledged and utilised to enhance development activities within generic or multidisciplinary contexts. In addition, a set of open educational resources (OERs) are introduced which offer flexible and adaptable learning materials for use in this context.

Disciplinary ways of thinking and practising

The first 15 years of my career were focused around academic development within the geosciences. This introduced me to a field of research pioneered in the US and coined 'Geocognition' (Libarkin, 2006). In the last decade, pedagogic research in the geosciences has moved on from exploring classroom (or field or lab) practice to considering how people think and learn about the Earth and how geoscientists integrate these different types of learning to better understand Earth processes and systems (Kastens *et al.* 2009; Kastens and Manduca, 2012). The concept of Geocognition, therefore, arose from an interest in the ways experts think and practise, and resulted in a new interdisciplinary field involving geoscientists, cognitive scientists, and psychologists – to name but a few.

Other recent movements in higher education have also taken an interest in the ways in which experts think and practise. For example, Threshold Concepts explores the conceptual building blocks in the disciplines with an emphasis on those key concepts that are often troublesome due to their tacit nature (Meyer and Land, 2003). The expert approach has become automated and implicit through years of experience, and it can be difficult to unpack the expertise in order to explain it to the novice learner (be they a student or the general public). Pace and Middendorf (2004) have introduced an interesting methodology called 'Decoding the Disciplines', which entails academics from different disciplines questioning each other on their approaches to problem solving: a powerful and innovative tool for professional development.

For new lecturers in particular, teaching is often seen as a way of delivering large volumes of content to their students. However, for effective learning, in addition to acquiring factual knowledge, students must understand how this fits within the conceptual framework(s) of their discipline and organise it for retrieval and application (Bransford *et al.,* 2000). This approach thus requires staff (experts) to make explicit, unpack and explain their disciplinary ways of thinking and practising in order to support the students' learning of concepts, frameworks and discipline cultures as well as subject content. To do this they may also have to re-orientate their thinking back to when they were a novice in the discipline and remember what they struggled with or where there might have been particular ('aha') moments of understanding.

The idea of decoding the disciplines provides an excellent focus for pedagogic research or intensive one-to-one/small group development activities. But again, looking pragmatically at the issue, what might academic developers do when faced with a multidisciplinary cohort of staff within a workshop setting?

The concept of discipline-orientated academic development enables different disciplinary contexts to be acknowledged and exploited to help individuals better understand their own ways of practising. It takes the decoding the disciplines approach of getting academics from different disciplines to work together in order to elucidate their own way of doing things. When you have grown in your career within a certain field you take for granted the processes, language and methodologies; that's the way things are done. These ways of thinking and practising have become subconscious, so lecturers often do not think to articulate them to their students. However, hearing how others' practice differs from one's own is often a useful key to unlocking the details of our ways of doing things. A workshop provides an ideal scenario for this type of activity, where academics have the opportunity to hear about many different approaches and ways of thinking, as well as articulating their own to colleagues from different disciplines.

Open educational resources for discipline-orientated academic development

This interest in disciplinary ways of thinking and practising led me to apply for funding from the HEA/JISC to produce a set of resources to support academic developers in taking forward a discipline-orientated approach. Now completed, the project has produced a set of open educational resources (OERs) designed to elicit dialogue and reflection on disciplinary ways of thinking and practising. These OERs are for free use under a Creative Commons licence. The 42 resources feature the equivalent of 300 hours' worth of Masters Level study, intended for use by academic developers in the design and delivery of courses and professional development workshops in higher education.

Presented mainly as Microsoft Word documents and PowerPoint files, the materials are flexible and adaptable. They were produced by experienced educational developers and put together with input and feedback from colleagues nationally and internationally. The materials are categorised under 8 themes, listed below, and are mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning (UKPSF) for ease of use by aligned programmes such as those accredited by the Higher Education Academy:
• Academic identity and disciplinarity
• Evaluating e-Learning
• Feedback
• Learning Spaces
• Student experiences of e-Learning
• Textual practices
• Threshold Concepts
• Values in higher education.

The resources are hosted by the University of Bath and can be accessed via the project blog http://disciplinarythinking. wordpress.com, at JORUM, http://www.jorum.ac.uk with the keyword 'discthink', or directly from the University at http://www.bath.ac.uk/lmf/group/27305.

A number of other OER projects have been funded by the HEA/JISC to support UKPSF-aligned programmes and links to these are provided on the Disciplinary Thinking blog by adding /oers-for-educational-development.

These ideas around Disciplinary Thinking and Discipline-Orientated Academic Development continue to fascinate me and I will endeavour to share my further thoughts and ideas through the project blog. I would also very much welcome

comments or opportunities for collaboration with colleagues also interested in this approach.

Acknowledgements

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Rewarding and recognising teaching at a research intensive university

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Introduction

In 2012, a survey of promotions applicants at Newcastle University was conducted in order to help establish staff motivations for choosing to apply for promotion wholly or partly on the basis of teaching. The context of this survey was a Newcastle University project, begun in 2010, that was set up in response to the concerns of promotions committees and applicants. Both of these groups felt that the nature of evidence for teaching achievements in a promotions context was much less clear than for achievements in research.

Newcastle is a research-intensive university which is distinctive in its strategic commitment to parity of esteem for teaching and research. Key to this is a multi-stranded programme to align policies, systems and support for staff to promote a culture in which teaching, research supervision and teaching-related activities are valued, and where excellence is recognised and rewarded. In the context of this vision and commitment, the project aimed to facilitate parity of esteem by establishing a shared understanding of teaching excellence within the institution, and setting in motion a cultural shift towards more effective and consistent reward of teaching achievements.

The three key objectives were to:
• Establish an evidence base document as a consistent reference point for staff at all levels in the institution – notably promotions applicants and committees, but also all teaching staff and managers undertaking the annual performance review process

• Communicate the existence of this document and embed its use throughout the institution
• Establish electronic capacity for capturing data on teaching achievements, mirroring that which already existed for research.

The external context for this project included research by Cashmore and Ramsden (2009) into reward and recognition of teaching in universities.

Existing research on academics' perceptions of the rewards available for achievements in the area of teaching and learning has shown that academic staff feel that the status accorded to teaching and the rewards available through promotion are far less than those for research, and far less than they should be, despite national and institutional initiatives.

Our own initial, and extensive, staff consultation showed that there was much consensus on certain key problems in defining and rewarding teaching excellence, but a much weaker sense of how to evaluate teaching achievements for pragmatic purposes such as promotion.

The biggest challenge was thus to translate the parity of esteem agenda into credible and practical measures. Discussion with colleagues at Wollongong University, where a similar project has been undertaken, indicated that two years from the project's inception was very early to demonstrate meaningful evidence of impact. However, we felt that it would be helpful to carry out a survey of promotion applicants as a snapshot of progress. This article describes that survey and summarises its key findings.

The survey

The survey was undertaken at an early stage, just over a year into the project, and after an initial round of consultation and awareness-raising. It served two purposes. Firstly, we sought to identify key issues that might help us to refocus our work for the future; and secondly, we wanted to design an instrument which could be used again in future years to measure progress. Earlier conversations with academic staff revealed that, although some showed considerable insight into the issue, the question of how to measure or evaluate teaching performance was something to which only few had given detailed thought.

We therefore surveyed promotions applicants after they had submitted their applications and when the vast majority had received their results. We had a good response to an online survey, with 70 out of 130 staff responding. This was typical of the project more generally, in that a majority of academic staff felt it was worthwhile and were very willing to engage with it. Most of the respondents (74%) also knew they had been successful in their promotions applications.

The limited space available on the promotion forms in Newcastle, with no additional opportunity to present evidence in the form of a teaching portfolio, means that applicants need to make careful decisions about

which achievements to present or give greater space to, and which to leave out. We hoped to gain insight into these decisions, the beliefs behind them, and to learn what shaped these beliefs. The survey therefore asked recent promotions applicants to specify the combination of criteria they applied for promotion (at Newcastle currently these are Research, Teaching and Learning, Engagement, and Management and Leadership); which of these they believed recent promotions in their School to have been based on; which they believed future promotions in their School would be based on; what factors influenced their decision to apply on their chosen criteria; and whether there were any achievements they found hard to evidence.

The survey also asked staff for their view of the planned electronic data capture and its relevance to the application process. More than half of the 70 respondents indicated that data captured electronically would have been useful during the preparation of promotion applications, highlighting the following data fields as important: modules taught, teaching responsibilities held, number of projects supervised, and self-recording of key achievements in learning and teaching.

Outcomes

Beliefs about reward

The survey showed that there is a very wide range of perceptions of the reward available for Learning and Teaching at Newcastle, of which the following examples provide a sense. Some academics were already very confident in reward for Learning and Teaching, in line with the project's aims:

> 'I feel that there is now growing parity of esteem for all sections mentioned in the promotions round and that teaching and learning is becoming more of a grounds for recognition and reward.'

Others were more moderate:

> 'I've included Teaching and Learning as we have a teaching-only staff member who has been promoted so Teaching and Learning does lead to promotion.

> On the whole, however, I think Research drives promotions in my School, as I have anecdotal evidence of staff being promoted, or not being promoted on the basis of their research profile.'

The issue of 'hard' versus 'anecdotal' evidence reflected in the quotation above is critical. As a further respondent commented:

> 'This is a very subjective impression – as the question concerns information that is confidential to colleagues.'

More disappointingly, some of the individual beliefs expressed about the perceived primacy of research were powerful, if (like the following) demonstrably untrue:

> 'Despite statements by the VC, it is the firm belief of academic staff in [my Faculty] that promotions are made on the basis of excellence in research. I have talked to staff starting their careers, in the middle of their careers and those about to retire and they ALL think this.'

Another respondent agreed that Research still held primacy, but saw the situation as both less extreme and – perhaps given the nature of the institution – less problematic:

> 'Research has a higher weighting than teaching, but in general this is how it should be.'

Impact of beliefs on promotions applications

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the extent to which candidates believed that promotion for teaching achievement was not only theoretically possible but a current reality in their School correlated strongly to the grounds on which they based their own applications. Thus 50% of those who said recent promotions in their school had been based on achievements in Teaching had themselves included Teaching as part of their applications. By contrast, only 31% of those with this perception had included Research as one of their grounds for promotion.

Of those who believed future promotions in their School would be made on the basis of teaching, but that it did not yet happen, only 21% based

their application wholly or partly on teaching, while 67% of them included Research as one of their grounds for promotion. These people also gave marginally less weight to the other two categories – Engagement, and Management and Leadership – than those who believed recent applications had been based on teaching and learning.

The tables below show the reasons given by promotions applicants for their decision to make their promotion case 50% or more on research, and 50% or more on teaching.

Reasons given by participants placing 50% or higher weighting on contribution to research:

	No.	%
Quantity/Quality of publications and reputation in the field	16	42%
Grant income/ acquisition, previous research funding	11	29%
Encouragement and backing from other staff/advice from head of department	9	24%
Felt it was their strongest point/best chance of promotion/ most evidence	8	21%

Reasons given by participants placing 50% or higher weighting on contribution to teaching and learning:

	No.	%
Felt it was their strongest point/spent most time doing it/ best source of evidence	10	56%
Achievements in the teaching area/previous responsibilities in teaching	6	33%
Not sufficient evidence to apply on other grounds	4	22%
Encouragement and backing from other staff/advice from head of department	3	17%

It is very notable that the top reasons for self-evaluating research achievements – publication quality, grants and funding – are tied to external recognition. 'Strong' was a word commonly used by applicants to describe their publication or grant record. On the other hand, there was a greater tendency to express teaching achievements in terms of quantity of work (e.g. being 'heavily involved') rather than its quality. They also relied more on self-evaluation when considering their teaching.

Respondents' reluctance to mention student evaluation data was very striking. However, the two applicants out of seventy who did mention it raised the issue of the problem of evaluation on team-taught courses. This pointed to a practical difficulty that Newcastle is currently addressing with the introduction of a few questions which focus on the individual teachers, rather than satisfaction with the course overall.

Twenty-four respondents agreed that they had found some achievements hard to evidence, and 9 of these cited teaching as a problem area. They gave a range of reasons and examples, including the following, which express recurrent concerns heard throughout the project:

> *'In some ways the impact of teaching is often not felt until after a student leaves university – so it is hard to evidence.'*

> *'A record of consistent high quality teaching and a high teaching load does not seem to get you anywhere unless you can also tick a number of other boxes related to much more trivial goals that might actually hamper your ability to concentrate on teaching and research (boxes include: external examiner role, contribution to national curriculum [?enhancement and development], pedagogic research, etc.).'*

> *'Seemingly it is very difficult to evidence external impact in teaching to the satisfaction of the committee.'*

These 24 compared to 3 who specifically cited Management and Leadership as a problem area; and 6 who found aspects of research hard to evidence. Members of this latter group cited the perception that research was only valued if it had been 'achieved on the basis of external grant income'; 'the fact that not one piece of research is read' as part of the promotions process; and an academic who had moved to Newcastle from abroad found it 'hard to evidence the significance and weight' of grants awarded outside the UK, and also their 'impacts'. Seven respondents also expressed more generalised frustrations about the limitations of the required format. These included lack of space on the form and having achievements that didn't fit the criteria.

Finally, there was a glimmer of changing perceptions. A handful of more junior academics expressed the belief that there would be more promotions based on teaching in the future. There was also a slight tendency for female staff to be more optimistic about reward for teaching than male ones, who were much more focused on Research as the viable route to progression. Staff from one Faculty also showed more confidence in the fairness of future promotions than either of the other two faculties – though numbers of respondents were small. This difference in perception may be because this Faculty has seen several promotions to Chair on the grounds of achievements in teaching and learning. These professors can now be found in a variety of leadership positions in the university.

Conclusion and new directions

This early-stage evaluation has provided a useful picture of staff attitudes, and shown that, even where substantial reward for teaching is available, there can be considerable work involved in changing perceptions to match reality. This is especially evident in the language that staff frequently use to express their relative achievements in teaching versus research.

The lack of the kind of external validation for teaching excellence which gives lecturers such confidence

in the quality of their research seems to be critical to promotions applicants' decisions. It is hoped that gathering some student evaluation data on individual staff, and collecting it electronically for individuals to use in their applications, will be one step towards building confidence in the data available. External peer review of teaching and course materials would be a further route to explore.

In terms of helping applicants to evidence their achievements, case studies of successfully promoted individuals are useful, and were often requested in the course of the project. The university already has some of these on its Human Resources website, as part of the guidance materials for promotion applicants. However, adding to these on an annual basis, particularly where they give clear examples of external impacts that have helped the promotion case, will probably be needed if staff confidence in reward mechanisms is to be maintained and augmented. Gaining individuals' consent for the sharing of such case studies also

helps to overcome the problem of confidentiality which leads to reliance on 'anecdotal evidence', giving rise in turn to inaccurate beliefs.

The project team have been presenting at promotions workshops each year, and have devised a suite of workshops and online resources to support applicants with the issue of evidencing their achievements for promotion, internal teaching awards, and National Teaching Fellowship applications. This activity will need to continue on an annual cycle for meaningful impact to be felt.

The initial two-year phase of internal project work has been completed. However, Newcastle is one of four partners, along with the University of Leicester and the Universities of Wollongong and Tasmania in Australia, collaborating on an international HEA-funded project. This project builds upon internal and external work undertaken in the partner Universities. It aims to produce resources to guide and improve academic promotion policy and practice to reflect the

recognition of teaching as core to the assurance of standards in higher education. One part of the HEA project has involved surveys of the perceptions of staff. The results of the Newcastle promotion applicants' survey will be used and the survey itself adapted as part of a process to gather information from a wider range of institutions over a longer period of time.

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Embedding employability: Does it work?

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Generic or transferable skills have long been included in our curricula, though we may not always have recognised them as such. However, Government pressure has led to a need to focus on 'employability' and the skills necessary to secure and retain a job. In some instances this has been through a 'bolt-on' course, though possibly as little as a single talk by a careers adviser. More usually, attempts have been made either to add in course units that specifically relate to issues of professionalism and employability, or to embed the identified skills within the whole course or selected units.

This study relates to a course unit which was designed to promote skills rather than knowledge and was initially devised without specific concern for 'employability'. The unit on 'Managing Humanitarian Aid projects' is an optional one in a Management of Projects Masters programme and is based on principles of problem-based learning (PBL). Although for many 'employability' is a bandwagon to which to hitch one's star, the idea that graduates should possess at least some skills that would be useful in the workplace has been around for quite a long time.

Will Archer and Jess Davidson (2008) report that employers' top ten graduate attributes sought are:
- Communication skills
- Team-working skills
- Integrity
- Intellectual ability
- Confidence
- Character/personality
- Planning and organisational skills
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Analysis and decision-making skills.

Attributes such as 'qualifications' and 'relevant course of study' are not only lower down the preference list but also much more likely to be met by the graduates they interview. The largest gaps between what employers want and what they get are in the areas of 'Commercial awareness', 'Analysis and decision-making skills', 'Communication skills' and 'Literacy'. The first of these might be an unwarranted hope, but the others could be seen as a reasonable expectation of a university graduate.

The rationale behind the present course unit stems from the ideas of Charles Engel (2004), who regards the development of skills to help resolve the 'wicked' problems of global societal responsibility, and participating in the management of change to facilitate that resolution, as the ultimate challenge for universities. The initial application of this rationale was to a unit on sustainable development for scientists and engineers, which has been widely reported (see, for example, Tomkinson *et al.,* 2008). But Engel's basic idea was far more wide-ranging than sustainable development, and the same ideas apply to issues of disaster relief and post-disaster reconstruction, as well as more broadly to humanitarian aid projects. Peter Knight and Anna Page (2007) suggest nine 'wicked' competencies, though these vary from professional context to professional context. This is a slightly different use of the concept of 'wickedness' but based on the same original idea of Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber (1973). They suggest that 'wicked' competencies include 'soft skills' and other attitudes, skills and dispositions that are highly valued by employers. Their nine competencies are:

- Developing supportive relationships
- Emotional intelligence
- Group work
- Listening and assimilating
- Oral communication
- Professional subject knowledge
- Relating to clients
- Self-management (confidence and effectiveness)
- 'Taking it onwards' – acting on diagnoses.

The course unit on project managing humanitarian aid sets out to 'develop professional skills in students and introduce them to the main concepts of, and barriers to, humanitarian aid projects in a complex world'. The intention here is not to provide training for disaster relief fieldworkers, rather to broadly educate students to enable them to take their place in an increasingly complex world and to do so through the medium of case studies in global societal responsibility (see Table 2). The unit also forms part of an NTFS-funded project, led by the University of Keele, looking at ways of undertaking PBL with large groups of students. The unit has been the subject of much student feedback, including issues relating to employability, but this has tended to be concerned with immediate satisfaction rather than longer-term usefulness. However, the unit poses an additional challenge, and opportunity, in that the vast majority of students undertaking the course come from overseas. In this context the concept of 'employability' is a more complex one.

Studies of issues related to global teams within multi-national organisations have highlighted the issue of cross-cultural working. Those heading towards employment in multi-national corporations may well find that the expectations correspond to those elicited by Archer and Davidson (2008) but we have insufficient information on the challenges facing those heading for more local employers in, for example, China, India or South America. Conversely, the attribute of being able to work across national (or, indeed, disciplinary) cultural boundaries has not featured in employers' consciousness but may yet emerge.

Throughout the unit, students work in active, contextual, collaborative, interdisciplinary learning groups. Initially with the guidance of a facilitator, they tackle a series of 'scenarios', taking the role of members of an inter-professional team; postdoctoral researchers and PhD students are given training to act as facilitators. The scenarios are designed to familiarise students with different aspects of the challenges of enabling change in the context of natural and man-made disasters and how to manage these in a professional context. Some of these have been devised with the help of international charities, others with the support of specialist members of academic staff. In each of the short structured projects, students investigate a problem by carrying out research and critical analysis of literature sources and then produce a written report or other form of group deliverable.

Earlier projects are designed to be developmental, with formative feedback provided about the reports. In the final project, students are summatively assessed on their team submission. Students' development throughout the unit is demonstrated in an individual reflective report, where they review, reflect on and then develop action points for themselves in an iterative cycle. Students must reflect on the development of their team-working, their own performance in each project and their individual learning about social responsibility, humanitarian aid and the management of change. The individual reflective report comprises a major part of the final assessment. The other element is the final group project mark, which is modified by peer assessment of individual contributions. The unit is unusual in using PBL. Although other units in this programme may employ some student-centred aspects, this is the only one to be entirely PBL oriented.

This present study was designed to assess whether the adoption of a novel pedagogic approach, namely problem-based learning, has been effective in strengthening the employability skills of students. To do this a survey was constructed and alumni of the course were invited to participate. The survey was piloted with a small group of alumni and modifications made before it went live. We were able to establish valid email addresses for 40 alumni, of whom 8 responded. This represents a reasonable response rate for a survey of this nature, but the absolute number means that the results must be taken as indicative rather than definitive.

The survey looked primarily at 12 skills areas; these were consistent with the ones used in the NTFS study, namely:

- Communicating and working with others using online technology
- Communicating own point of view to a wider audience
- Critical analysis of data
- Decision making
- Effective discussion and negotiation within a team
- Identifying and solving problems when presented with a task
- Listening to others' opinions and respecting people's differences during group work
- People management

- Reflecting on lessons learnt and applying new knowledge and skills to other directions
- Report writing
- Researching around a topic or issue
- Working in a team on a group task.

Respondents were asked to say whether their skills in each of these areas had changed as a result of the course unit. All 8 felt their skills had improved – with an average across all 12 skills areas of 'improved slightly'. Alumni averaged 2.5 areas in which they felt their skills had 'improved greatly' and this covered all skills areas except that of 'reflecting on what you have learnt and applying new knowledge and skills to other directions', in which 75% felt their skills had 'improved slightly'. The greatest numbers (3 out of 8) felt that their skills had 'improved greatly' in 'working in a team on a group task', 'researching around a topic or issue', and 'effective discussion and negotiation within a team'.

The responses were then analysed to give 'added value' scores. This was the sum of two sub-scores, the first of which was found by multiplying their perceived improvement in a skill by the importance of this in their current occupation, where they consider the skill 'slightly important', 'important' or 'essential'. The second sub-score was found by multiplying their perceived improvement in a skill by the importance of this to their employer, where the skill was considered 'desirable' or 'essential' (possibly in the person specification of the advertisement for the job).

Of the 7 in employment, added value scores ranged from 15-42 (average, 31) with regard to the importance in their current occupation, and 4-30 (average, 15) with regard to the importance to their employer.

Skills which showed the highest added value for importance in their role were as follows:
- Working in a team on a group task (24)
- Listening to others opinions and respecting differences during group work (23)
- Negotiation (20)
- Identifying and solving problems when presented with a task (19), and
- Effective discussion (19).

Skills which showed the highest added value for importance to their employer were:
- Working in a team on a group task (17)
- Identifying and solving problems when presented with a task (15), and
- Effective discussion (12).

In an interim report on the NTFS project, Sophie Bessant (2012) pulled out some of the attitudes of students at the end of their course unit towards study skills. For a number of listed skills, respondents were invited to suggest whether their skills had worsened, stayed the same, increased slightly or increased greatly. The percentage of respondents suggesting a great, or slight increase, are shown in Table 1.

Skill area	Skills increased
Communicating and working with others using online technology	79%
Communicating your point of view to a wider audience, e.g. oral presentations	90%
Effective discussion and negotiation within a team	94%
Listening to others' opinions and respecting people's differences during group work	80%
Problem solving when presented with a task	97%
Reflecting on what you have learnt and applying new knowledge and skills to other situations	100%
Researching around a topic or issue	97%
Working in a team on a group task	100%

Table 1 Perceived increase in skills

These figures tend to support the idea that this particular module (Project Managing Humanitarian Aid) has had significant impact on the employability skills of the students, though it is worth noting that the perceived increase in skills of reflection does not feature so strongly in the survey of alumni.

The NTFS study also asked the question 'Do you feel that you have gained any skills as a result of this module that will improve your chances of getting a job or enhance your performance at work, now or in the future?', to which 93% of respondents answered in the affirmative.

Category of outcome	Students will be able to:
Knowledge and understanding	A1 Demonstrate understanding of key aspects of humanitarian aid, including stakeholder engagement and analysing social, environmental, economic and ethical considerations. A2 Demonstrate knowledge of major aspects of change management and means of overcoming barriers to change. A3 Demonstrate understanding of how professional activities interact with society and the environment, locally and globally, in order to identify challenges, potential risks, impacts and possible solutions to problems.
Intellectual skills	B1 Apply a holistic and systemic approach to investigating complex, 'messy' problems. B2 Work across discipline boundaries in order to pursue goals. B3 Use problem-solving skills in examining complex, multi-criteria issues that incorporate uncertainty and conflicts of interest.
Practical skills	C1 Carry out and utilise Primary Research.
Transferable skills and personal qualities	D1 Apply reflective practice to enable continuing self-improvement in a professional context. D2 Work collaboratively as a member of a multidisciplinary team, contributing to the development of effective team processes and effective team dynamics. D3 Develop strategies to work more effectively with those from different disciplinary, national or cultural backgrounds. D4 Demonstrate the ability to practise self-directed learning including: defining a problem, formulating questions to be explored, identifying relevant sources of information, critically appraising information, applying new knowledge and understanding, referencing accurately, justifying approaches and decisions, reflecting on their application and analysing what has been learned through the experience. D5 Develop, debate, structure and communicate ideas and proposals in writing, verbally in meetings and in presentation format.

Table 2 Learning outcomes for the Humanitarian Aid unit

Conclusions

This study set out to develop an approach to testing the assumptions made about embedding employability skills. A survey approach has been devised that can be applied to individual course units or to whole courses of study and the evidence from this small study is that this is an appropriate way of tackling issues about the validity of measures to increase employability skills. In so doing, the study suggests that the PBL approach and rationale behind the Project Managing Humanitarian Aid course unit has indeed improved the employability of those students, although the small number of respondents to the alumni survey means that this has to be treated with some caution.

But perhaps the last word should belong to an unsolicited statement from a student, fresh from a job interview:

> *'I am more confident (than before taking the module) to work in a team, to co-operate, to try making compromises and negotiations in order to prevent conflicts. Overall, the scheme on working as a team in various projects is very helpful for my future career in the companies I pursue to work, so I am really happy and satisfied with this module which is totally different learning procedure than others.'*

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Supporting academic development in the digital university

Daniel Clark, University of Kent

Background – learning technologies and academic development

In July 2012, I attended the SEDA Residential Summer School 'Academic Development for the Digital University'. I am a learning technologist. Several people have asked me why I chose the Summer School over a more technology-focused event. Here are my answers, and here's how it turned out.

I saw the SEDA Summer School as an opportunity to break away from the often techno-centric and techno-deterministic discourse I had experienced at other events. Such issues are worthy of discussion and debate. But I wanted to focus on a particular problem, one that seems to transcend any debate surrounding educational technology, namely the support for academic development in the digital University.

The SEDA Summer School represented a shift in focus, away from the technologies themselves and on to the critical application of digital technologies in support of academic development in an increasingly digital University.

Across Higher Education, there is much focus on ensuring that our students are competent users of digital technologies, and ensuring that they develop the skills required to become discerning learners in an information-rich environment. The crux of the issue, and the problem that I presented to the SEDA Summer School, is that I believe insufficient attention is paid to the needs of staff in supporting this process.

As a learning technologist, one of my concerns is that university staff are being left behind. I find huge variations in the ability levels of staff. Added to this, there is institutional pressure to engage with technology-enhanced learning. This, I believe, alienates and excludes some members of staff.

I took these issues and concerns, along with a project proposal, to the SEDA Summer School. I hoped I could learn how colleagues in other institutions and in other disciplines tackled such issues.

A project

My proposed project was born out of the desire to facilitate more engaging, immersive and context-appropriate e-learning training sessions for staff, whilst acknowledging wider issues concerning digital literacy and competency. In early 2012, I had proposed the creation of an annual event to be offered by the University of Kent's Curriculum Development team, to address some of these issues. My experiences over the three days at the SEDA Summer School helped to shape and develop what eventually became the University of Kent's E-Learning Summer School project (ELSS).

In addition to the goals listed above, I also wanted to provide a practical and hands-on learning environment, and to enable staff to share good practice and engage in wider discussions about technology-enhanced learning. I felt that such an event would enable staff to explore the interplay between technology and learning, and in doing so, help to improve and develop their own digital literacies.

The SEDA Summer School

When I initially presented my project to colleagues at the SEDA Summer School, I was surprised by how much the issues rang true for so many participants. I had a number of conversations about staff development drives designed to help staff develop their own digital competencies. There was a strong sense that there is an institutional will to embrace and adapt to the digital age, but at the same time institutions are struggling to find the best way forward.

A prevailing issue was that current staff development provision lacks context, and is abstracted from the working processes of academic staff. This matches the views of colleagues in my own institution, who feel that training in the use of particular learning technologies does not reflect the realities of their academic life. Amongst colleagues at the SEDA Summer School there was a consensus that staff development in the digital age should be about why and not just how; and academic context is a major component of the why.

In the action learning set I was able to unpick this issue further, and look at how my proposed project might tackle issues of context. It was in the action learning set that I began to think about new modes of learning and not just new tools for learning. I then considered how matters such as mediated communication and 'just in time' learning could frame and contextualise my project.

Another issue that emerged during conversations at the SEDA Summer School was the notion of an 'us and them' mentality between academic staff and central support services. During these conversations a clear theme began to develop: the inclusion of guest speakers would be a vital component of my project.

Interestingly, this reflects discussions held in the past regarding the Curriculum Development team's termly E-Learning Forum, in which it was noted that the most well-received and well-attended forums were often ones in which academic staff showcased their own practice.

In part, I believe this is an issue of perception. In some respects it was reassuring to hear similar accounts at the SEDA Summer School. More importantly, however, I realised that my role in the proposed project would be facilitatory – helping to disseminate good and innovative practice. But, to succeed, my project would require tangible and demonstrable illustrations

of current academic practice. This approach enabled me to begin structuring my project accordingly, ensuring that the inclusion of academic guest presenters stimulated a peer learning-orientated environment.

I wanted my project to be inclusive, and cater to all ability levels. How to do this? An initial suggestion was that my project should span two days, offering day one as an entry-level stage and day two as both a follow-on (for those who attended day one) as well as an entry stage for more advanced/ established participants. In my action learning set I realised that, in order to have a broad thematic offering spread across the two days, it would be more appropriate to offer streaming and differentiation throughout both days. Subsequently, during my individual reflection time, I was able to sketch out a provisional programme that featured single guest presentations in the morning of both days with parallel 'breakout' sessions offered in the afternoon. The parallel breakout sessions enabled strand A to cater for beginners and strand B for more advanced users.

The SEDA Summer School helped to guide my project, and enabled me to tackle issues I might not have considered if I was working on the project in isolation. The opportunity to consult with colleagues from a range of backgrounds was invaluable. The SEDA Summer School enabled me to see the issues I faced on a broader scale.

Project implementation

On the 5 and 6 September 2012, under my supervision, the Curriculum Development team ran the E-Learning Summer School (ELSS). The ELSS was run as a two-day event offering an immersive environment for staff to experience all of the tools and technologies available to them at the University of Kent and to engage in wider discussions about Technology Enhanced Learning in Higher Education. The event operated like a mini-conference, with invited guest speakers, parallel workshop sessions and interactive discussion groups. A key underlying philosophy driving the event was peer interaction and the opportunity to share and showcase good practice.

The opening session was designed to place the event within a context. After I briefly introduced the team and the summer school, I posed a series of questions and provided some time for the attendees to work in small groups to reach a conclusion. Participants were asked to think of words to describe the concept of 'e-learning' and then to establish a definition of what 'e-learning' is. This proved to be a very useful process as the myriad of responses enabled participants to recognise the complexity of the issue.

The breakout sessions across the two days featured guest presenters from various Schools. The breakout sessions were arranged so that participants could choose their own pathways through the event, based on their own ability levels and their own interests. Importantly, I facilitated short plenary sessions at the end of both days. These enabled participants to share their thoughts and experiences with their peers, and let me gather feedback.

The ELSS proved to be a very rewarding experience for both the Curriculum Development team and myself. The feedback received from the participants was very positive. In addition to this, over the two days I was able to reflect upon my own practice and how best to support staff in future.

Continued impact of the SEDA Summer School

During my time at the SEDA Summer School, I had a number of discussions concerning the sustainability of my project. One colleague felt that if my project proved to be successful, I should think of ways for the event to become almost self-sustaining. In my action learning set I produced a project poster that outlined how I would (a) evaluate my project and (b) continue to promote it. My colleagues at the SEDA Summer School stressed that a thorough evaluation was vital, both in terms of impact and sustainability.

With this in mind, to formally evaluate the event, I issued participants with paper-based evaluation forms for completion. This provided me with a broad overview

of how well the event had been received. It also enabled me to extract valuable qualitative data that could inform future projects and events.

In addition to this, two weeks after the event, I conducted a series of interviews with ten of the participants. These interviews were designed to evaluate the on-going impact of the event – the time interval allowed participants time to reflect on their own activities and any impact on their own practice.

The follow-up interviews enabled me to reflect upon how such events could be run in future. In particular, I was able to gauge the correct pace for such an event, the necessary themes and content, and the type of support required afterwards. Seven out of the ten interviewees indicated that they intended to adopt new approaches within their own practice.

Thinking back to advice I was given at the SEDA Summer School, I chose to use the feedback that I gathered to begin producing case studies showcasing the impact my event had upon practice at the university. Importantly, these case studies not only promote good practice, they perpetuate and sustain the ELSS as an important and worthy university event. In doing so, it is hoped that such publications will raise the profile of what will become the ELSS 2013.

The SEDA Summer School continues to influence how I approach academic development. Importantly, I recognise that the continued prevalence of digital technologies in the University brings about many changes to how people learn, teach and communicate. The SEDA Summer School made me realise that the process of change needs continuing support.

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SEDA Summer School 2013 – Academic Development for the Digital University – will run from Monday 15 July to Wednesday 17 July at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park. Booking is now open. Please visit www.seda.ac.uk or contact office@ seda.ac.uk.

Why debate language?

Debbie McVitty, National Union of Students

When you work with a wide cross-section of students you get used to thinking about the words you use. Use of language that is 'politically correct' goes far beyond the mere hope to avoid offence; it is a recognition that language is 'political' insofar as it can be used to construct and reinforce, and sometimes to deconstruct, the social hierarchy of oppressor and oppressed, mainstream and marginalised.

But this basic insight into the nature of things can lead to some curious offshoots, not least the fierce debate over naming that can sometimes occur in the sphere of learning and teaching.

We have all been at the conference or development session where in the midst of an otherwise lively discussion somebody pipes up that they, personally, loathe the term everyone else had been blithely using until that point.

For reasons that it would take a trained sociologist to explain, taking against perfectly serviceable words in an academic environment seems to be the kiss of death to constructive debate. People start to qualify themselves and to defer to whoever has challenged the terms. Worse, the debate becomes about language, without ever translating the implications of that language into educational practice.

The higher education sector is, admittedly, ridden with jargon – 'constructively aligned learning outcomes to safeguard an excellent student experience' anyone? – but it can feel like a sideshow, a distraction, to discuss language when you are just trying to work out how to get people educated.

An example: are people who are working towards a doctoral qualification students? PhD or doctoral candidates? Researchers? Institutional staff? At the European level there is a lively campaign to win staff status for doctoral candidates on the basis that this would mean paid research positions rather than fees paid, but in the UK doctoral candidates have student status and pay fees, and it seems unlikely that this will change in the immediate future. So why do we haggle over language?

The origins of the debate are hardly mysterious. Doctoral study is a time of contested and conflicting personal and professional identities. The *dottorati* tend to have the reasonable belief that their forays into independent research and teaching position them in a space that is different from that occupied by the mass of undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. Many have been in the workplace for years and recoil from the idea of being demoted from professional to mere student.

The problem with defining doctoral candidates as 'other than' students is that the idea of the student is more flexible than is often recognised in these debates. It is problematic to argue that doctoral candidates are active researchers as compared to – what? Passive learners? As developments in doctoral pedagogy and professional development evolve,

the doctorate becomes more structured; meanwhile the undergraduate curriculum continues to move towards developing independence, entrepreneurialism and the co-creation of knowledge. Can we really draw such a firm line between the two modes of study?

Sometimes, ironically, the language that is available to us to challenge our perceived status is that of a debate over nomenclature. By rejecting words that we perceive to position us where we are not comfortable we are really asking to be treated differently.

Better to start, surely, with asking what is important for doctoral candidates to be able to do, what and who they need access to and how they can be assured a role in shaping their educational environment? If we are able to answer these questions, then it doesn't matter if we call them students, researchers, candidates or orang-utans, as long as they are in a position to be successful in their research and teaching and to be an active part of their academic community.

Maybe language is the area where some genuine control can be exercised, unlike much of learning and teaching practice. By ruling out certain terms and bringing in others we can at least give ourselves the happy sensation of having made change that which we hope will lead to changes in attitudes and even practice on the part of people over whose behaviours we have limited influence – like doctoral supervisors.

Perhaps one of the most valuable insights about sensitivity in the use of language is that different people will find different terms problematic and unrepresentative of the reality they either currently perceive or aspire towards, just as different doctoral candidates will have different and evolving needs of their supervisors and the wider academic community. The most important thing we can do is to be flexible on both our language and our practice, open to negotiation, effortful in seeing things from their point of view and ready to challenge that point of view when necessary. Because whether they are students, candidates or researchers, they are still human beings.

Dr Debbie McVitty is the Head of Higher Education Research and Policy at the National Union of Students.

Technology in its place

David Baume, Higher Education Consultant

What expectations should we have of technology in the work of higher education? What is the proper place of technology? What should developers do about technology?

Good technology

Good technology has at least these two related qualities. It just works. And after a while it becomes almost invisible, almost unproblematic.

With a new technology – whether it is new to the world, new to the institution or discipline, or new to the group or individual – there is an initial period of excitement and learning, sometimes accompanied by fear, during which we discover the range of things that we can do with the new technology that we couldn't previously do, or could do only with some difficulty, or less well, without it.

And then the technology almost vanishes into us and our organisations. We have become in one more sense cyborgs, technology-enhanced humans and organisations, as we did when we first wore glasses or contact lenses, or rode a bicycle, or drove, or travelled by aeroplane, or built a building. The 'almost' is important. Hopefully, we are still at least a little conscious, when for example we telephone, of what we are doing: sensitive to the risk of intrusion, aware of the context of the person being called, prepared at least a little for whatever the call may bring us both. But the fact that we can often speak to someone without visiting them, through a system of vast and invisible complexity, is now, in the moment, for most people, relatively unproblematic.

How does this relate to the technologies of our work?

Everyone's answer will be a little different. Let's try for a few sweeping, hopefully not totally wrong, generalisations about some of the current technologies of work. I'll approach this through our expectations.

We expect

We expect to be able to compose and then send a written message to (very, very nearly) everyone we know professionally, and maybe also personally, and then to be confident it will be in their inbox within minutes; and we expect to do this without having to remember their contact details, just their name. No envelope or stamp required.

Building on this, we expect to be able to communicate with similar ease with defined groups and subsets of the people with whom we work.

We expect to be able to find, within seconds, contact information for someone we don't know.

We expect to find at least a half-way useful answer, or at least a starting point to an answer, to an increasing number of questions, of growing complexity, by typing the question into a search engine.

We expect ourselves, and those with whom we communicate, to write in language that is grammatically correct and correctly spelt, at least according to the views of our software provider.

We expect those with whom we work to be able to locate and make critical, intelligent, appropriate use of (a) information at which we point them and (b) information of particular interest and use to them which they find for themselves; and then we expect them to make and share connections and relationships between information from these two kinds of sources.

Beyond literacy, beyond competence, beyond capability, we might expect or hope for a degree of fluency – in working with words and numbers and images and ideas appropriate to our disciplines and our professional and personal life, and also in using the technologies through which these various elements of academic and professional work and life are

more and more often created and manipulated and communicated and read and studied and used.

We shall expect

You might find it useful to spend a few seconds noting what (else) you expect from the people and systems with whom/with which you work.

You might find it even more interesting to cast an eye 50 years and more into the future, and begin to consider what expectations are reasonable, for the current students within our universities, throughout their working and personal lives. Exciting? Scary? Both? Something else?

We won't be able to teach our students at university all the necessary skills for their next 50 or more years. All we can do is help them become able, keen and confident to learn, of course selectively and critically, whatever new technology they want to/need to learn, because the great majority of the technology will continue to become easier to learn and use. Whatever we may think about markets, the market should at least achieve this.

Note that these current and future expectations cannot neatly be separated out into expectations of the technology and expectations for individuals, although some of them may be technology-led and others more people-led. They are all expectations of individuals using the tech, or of the technology used by individuals – the same coin.

Current technology

How does the technology we use today match up to our opening two suggested qualities – it just works, and it rapidly becomes almost invisible, almost unproblematic?

This afternoon I spent 30 minutes with three generally able colleagues failing to make a 4-way video-conference work. We decided to retreat to the previous generation

of tech, automated telephone conferencing. This worked perfectly first time. With the video-conference, we were obviously doing something wrong, probably several things. (Interestingly, we were disappointed and frustrated, but not surprised, at our failure to make it work. Maybe if we'd had higher expectations, or greater confidence… And anyway, there was companionship in our collective failure.) But it would have been difficult or impossible for us to do something mission-fatally wrong if the technology had been, in the first sense used here, good. Failing which, the technology might have seen from our efforts what we were trying to do, and offered to do it for us. (Make the connections, that is, not have the conversation.) Using this high standard of judgement, not all of our technology yet just works.

You will have your own experiences, your own stories, as will all those with whom you work. Some good stories, some less good. But all helping to form our view and our expectations of technology and its uses and qualities.

Invisible? Yes, the telephone conference technology this afternoon rapidly became invisible to us. Four colleagues spoke, and did what we needed to do, and did it well, and enjoyed it.

This is not a Luddite moan. Technology improves, and we learn.

Technology in its places?

The current huge emphasis on e-Learning and learning technologies may, on balance, be doing damage. Most of the attention often goes onto the e rather than onto the learning. The technology becomes the point. It usually isn't. There has always been technology in learning. A lecture room is tech. Words written/printed/displayed on, and read from, parchment or vellum or paper or a screen, are all technology. Hopefully serving the teaching and the learning.

Of course the new technology has spectacular power. Examples: communicating across the university or across our professional communities or across the world is technically much easier than it ever was. Information is much easier to create and manipulate and manage.

Here's one way in which things can go wrong. Any new technology, especially a powerful one, should invite a critical review, sometimes at least a partial re-conceptualisation, of what we are doing. Invite but of course not require. I'm not convinced that the e-Learning movement always does this, although of course it sometimes does. The practice of higher education has mostly been under-theorised and under-problematised. I'm not laying this problem at the door of the e-Learning movement; it has been this way for a long time. But this paucity of generally accepted explicit and tested theory underpinning our educational practice has sometimes led us to use the new technology to implement the old pedagogy in new ways – to do the wrong thing better, or faster, or cheaper.

There are grounds for optimism. There is growing cooperation between what were previously considered as the teaching and learning people and the e-Learning people. Some serious re-theorising is going on, for example through the work of Diana Laurillard, Helen Beetham and Rhona Sharpe. Within the SEDA SIG on technology-enhanced practice, and in many other places, there is co-operation and sometimes convergence between these two groups. But I still meet too many academics who are scared of the new technology, made to feel bad because they are not adopting it with sufficient enthusiasm, and losing confidence in their teaching skills.

Opportunities for developers

The technology represents a massive opportunity for educational developers, principled opportunists, at the level of principle committed to improving teaching and learning in higher education, and opportunistic enough to work with any current source of energy and change.

A curious and challenging feature of much of the new technology is that it cannot be properly understood from the outside. The old model of critically evaluating any new technology before making a considered decision as to its adoption is being run over by the sheer pace of adoption of the technology by some enthusiastic lecturers and managers, and by many enthusiastic students. If we are to regain our role in leading and supporting educational change, we need to leap in, use the technology, and thereby give informed advice, support and leadership on its use. This may sound a rather uncritical, unscholarly approach. A more positive term would be experiential learning, which should also be a critical and scholarly business.

Of course, as we leap in, we must not forget what it feels like to stand shivering and scared on the bank. We won't forget; there's always another stream, another bank, another leap to take.

The place of technology is to help us both to improve current educational practice and to develop new pedagogies, in both cases with a solid base of theory and evidence. To get to this theory and evidence we shall need to experiment, indeed to play. Together.

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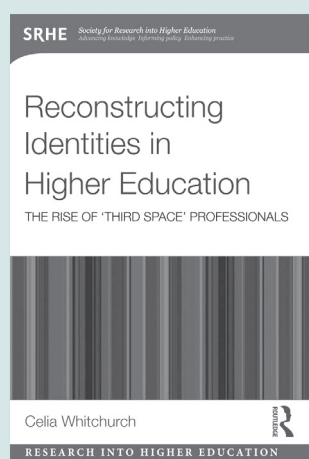
Information for Contributors

Book Review

Reconstructing Identities in Higher Education: the rise of 'third space' professionals

C. Whitchurch

2013, Abingdon: Routledge with SRHE

What's in a label?

Anyone working in large organisations knows the importance that staff attach to their job label and the significance this has in defining his or her identity. In particular, there have always been issues in higher education about labels given to staff who are an integral part of university life but are not lecturers or academics. Most of the labels are unflattering and suggest some kind of secondary existence, such as 'support staff' or 'administrators' or 'non-academics'. Celia Whitchurch chooses to use the descriptor 'professional' to delineate these staff, but more importantly she foregrounds the way in which this historical binary division is actually no longer a reflection of the institutional reality.

Whitchurch has an established reputation for writing about the 'Third Space Professional' and in this book she discusses the way in which some professional staff working in universities are acquiring academic credentials and moving into academic roles and debates, while some academic staff are moving in the opposite direction and away from traditional academic disciplinary roles into a project-orientated existence. She defines this conceptual in-between identity as a 'Third Space' and suggests that this can be both a safe place for experimentation and also a risky space open to uncertainty.

The book is divided into three main sections: a review of the current literature, the characteristics of the third space professionals, and the way in which these staff interface with their organisation, and as such it joins a growing literature on academic identities.

Whilst this is a useful book which gives us many individual testimonies of how university staff are moving beyond, behind and around traditional roles and labels, it does not produce any challenging dynamic of what this means in the current higher education context. In particular, the third section which purports to present 'more fluid understandings of identity' does not outline any of the implications of such changes. Whitchurch clearly suggests that these changing individual, personal role identities are a reflection of, and contribute to the creation of, an increasingly unstable institutional identity in a very challenged sector. There are also some very interesting conclusions about new and positive working environments and the creation of innovative discursive spaces. What there is not, is any sense of excitement about this. The whole account is very single tone and descriptive.

Overall, I feel the book is a victim of its own research worthiness. It is very data heavy. There are huge swathes of quotations providing the evidence base for forward-looking headings such as 'Realising the potential of Third Space professionals', but there are no inspirational questions to take this debate back into institutions.

Helen Gale is Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching at Wolverhampton University.

Reflections of an industrial academic developer

Laura Bateman, Atkins

The Rail Integrated Design Management Programme

The Atkins/UCL Rail Integrated Design Management (RIDM) MSc was developed to enable Atkins to meet and excel at challenges created by the rail industry's demand for truly integrated solutions. The demand for the delivery of multidisciplinary projects within the rail industry is growing and the various stakeholders need to be managed effectively and robustly. The aim of the programme is for the Atkins employees, who are already senior experienced professionals in their own right, to gain the advanced skills required to integrate multi-functional designs within a complex rail environment. The concept is unique within the industry and we believe the programme to be unique in its design.

The programme devised by the Atkins/UCL project management team (Laura Bateman (Atkins Project Manager), Bob Hutchison (Atkins Technical Advisor), Richard Simons (UCL Programme Mentor) and Taku Fujiyama (UCL Programme Director)), is innovative in its design in that all 18 modules contained within it, apart from one, are developed and taught by Atkins practising engineers and specialists.

The structure of the programme is designed to meet Atkins' specific operational needs with each module to be delivered over a five-week period. This new programme, whilst requiring the expertise of members of university learning and teaching units to help realise the intentions of the programme, relies heavily on the drive of the project manager from within the Atkins team.

Programme development

Atkins wanted to move extremely quickly on this development project, so it could start to realise benefits for the enhancement and development of its senior technical staff; therefore, I needed to gain a greater understanding of higher education in more depth. What I could not have foreseen was the level of detail and the wide range of knowledge I would need to acquire in order to deliver this innovative programme of learning. Areas such as pedagogy, frameworks, and curriculum design, which up until this point in time had little or no meaning to me, were suddenly thrust into the forefront and I had to develop the knowledge quickly if the programme was to be a success.

The RIDM MSc programme is taught by practising Atkins engineers who are expert in their chosen discipline; at this early stage, however, the only previous experience the majority of the Atkins tutors had was in preparing and delivering internal company training courses. Developing the Atkins tutors to enable them to develop curriculum and deliver learning at the required level was going to be a key challenge. My first port of call was the UCL Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT). I was hoping to access some of the courses already available for teaching staff; that, however, was not going to be as simple as first thought, as during early discussions with CALT it became apparent that more bespoke training was going to be required to bring both the tutors and me up to speed.

Working with Elizabeth Grant, the then principal teaching fellow for Built Environment, Engineering Sciences, and Maths and Physical Sciences (BEAMS), we designed a new series

Participants reflecting and discussing

of tutor workshops enabling the design and successful accreditation of programme module descriptors with the following aims:

- help tutors to design teaching activities at 'masters level'
- align teaching and learning activities within the National Qualification Framework and to Subject Benchmarks
- consider legislation and institutional policy governing learning
- teaching and assessment
- assessing for learner development and to provide effective learner feedback.

To achieve these outcomes, I needed to gain a good working knowledge of all this information ahead of and in some cases alongside the tutors, in order to support and coach them through the ongoing programme design.

Together with the newly developed tutor training programme, it had become clear to me very early on that the student-focused, outcomes-based approach we were aiming for needed to be mapped closely. I spent time scrutinising quality assurance documents, researching organisational structures and editing specifications in order to satisfy approval committees. Navigating different systems and databases, understanding and utilising virtual learning environments, and writing handbooks for both students and tutors, as well as supporting all Atkins staff teaching or learning on the programme, became professional objectives for me that were critical if we were to achieve institutional goals.

The industrial academic developer

Reflecting back over the last year I think the biggest surprise to me during

the whole process was that the approach to designing learning was actually very similar to the industrial engineering design process, but with different terminology. For example: 'requirement's definition and capture' became *'defining learning outcomes',* and the 'process of mapping requirements' became *'constructively aligning module content'.*

Being able to understand and communicate this back to tutors who are practising engineers, enabled them to relate to what we were trying to achieve quickly by using a context that was familiar to them. In fact, this realisation that deeper learning took place by relating learning back to already known concepts and principles influenced the whole programme. With this in mind I was able to encourage tutors to move away from the historic 'exam' way of thinking to a more blended-assessment approach. Assessment formats now include self-reflection, group work, presentations, interviews, reports, and articles, all of which would be familiar to students who are practising engineers and relevant, required skills for them to have in their day-to-day working environment. This supports the view that assessment should also be part of the overall learning experience and not a bolt-on at the end. Module lesson content also evolved to 'less chalk and more talk' with students sharing and reflecting on their own experiences and learning from each other as well as from the tutor, an area on which we have already received very positive student feedback.

What was also a surprise to me was that whilst I came to the project expecting industry and academia to be two completely different worlds, I have found a lot of similarities between the two. Large universities operate in much the same way as large companies: inter-trading arrangements, departmental budgets, quality assurance, *etc.* It was good to realise that we are not so different after all and, in fact, we are all striving for the same goal: the development of knowledge and people/staff through encouraging learning and innovation.

This programme, being in itself novel and in some aspects ground-breaking, has shown what can be achieved by industry and academia working together as one team and highlights what could be achieved in the future. In this instance the industry partner identified a knowledge/skills gap relating to senior staff and, with assistance and collaboration from an academic partner, was able to design and implement the solution which they believed would be most suited to their people and the environment within which they work. I don't think either partner could have created such a dynamic and creative programme without the other's input and support.

The key, it would seem to me, was crossing the boundaries and learning how to work together as one team with a clear vision and focus on an end goal; however, achieving that is a difficult task unless there is a connection in terms of ways of thinking and practising. My personal drive and passion to understand higher educational development, I believe,

played a large role in facilitating and cementing this connection within the project team.

There are people such as myself across industry working within large companies, developing training courses and internal learning, people who are concerned about developing others and enabling and encouraging innovation, which raises the question: could these people be developed further to the benefit of both academia and industry? Being able to manage programme development and view project challenges from both an industrial and academic perspective enabled debate and discussion within the team to be managed by me towards the programme outcomes, whilst encouraging consensus-building between team members. A healthy tension, respect, and an understanding that no one body alone holds the answer to a given problem, enabled us to collaborate in a way that was ultimately beneficial for the programme and, in the longer term, our students.

Judging by the feedback and achievements of all involved, the project has been an interesting, unique and certainly successful learning experience. An MSc in Rail Integrated Design Management was successfully created, and is reaching the end of its first year, with the second student intake scheduled for September 2013. A new MSc was created, with new higher education tutors to deliver it, but so too was a particular type of Academic Developer, with an identity influenced by crossing the boundaries from a familiar industrial context into the complex world of academe. It has been a challenging and eye-opening experience and I must say that it has been and continues to be a very exciting journey.

Laura Bateman is the Project Manager for the Atkins/UCL Rail Integrated Design Management MSc. Atkins is the largest engineering consultancy in the UK, the largest multidisciplinary consultancy in Europe and the world's fourteenth-largest design firm.

Book Review

Feedback in Higher and Professional Education – understanding it and doing it well

Editors: David Boud and Elizabeth Molloy

2012, Routledge
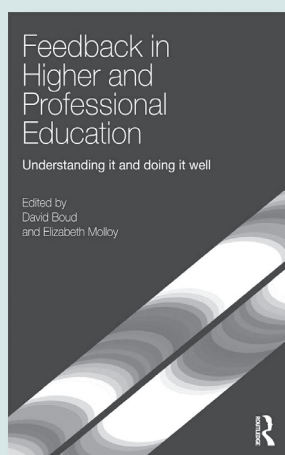
What strikes me initially about this book is that it is truly international, interdisciplinary and very topical! This immediately sets up the concept central to the book that good and bad practice in assessment feedback is a universal issue. The book also outlines early that NSS and NUS data continue to show that learners experience problems in getting feedback on their assessment assignments and the situation is only changing rather slowly. This book gets to the heart of this and is full of both challenging concepts and nuggets of good practice. Chapters are authored by academics around the world including Australia, UK, Spain,

Hong Kong, America and Canada. Subject areas giving their perspective include Medicine, Social Sciences, Education, Business, and Health Sciences. Another thing that strikes the reader on first glance is the title's assertion that the book is about feedback issues in Higher and Professional education. The latter takes us into practical 'hands-on' feedback sessions (e.g. clinical situations) where the feedback may be instantaneous and face to face – giving opportunity for dialogue and reflection in a challenging situation for staff and learners.

The editors are to be congratulated in pulling all this together and demonstrating that whilst there has been much research into the topic of effective feedback, little has been available (until this book) on practical solutions that can be applied almost anywhere. It builds on current popular views that feedback needs to be two-way, promote dialogue, be open to challenge and use clarity of purpose and language as its bedrock. It covers a wide range of topics including making feedback proactive, the impact of emotions, socio-cultural issues, digital feedback environments and the role of peers in the process. These sit alongside more usual topics such as the benefits of written feedback. There is a very interesting chapter on utilising patients (rather topically described as 'consumers'!) as part of the feedback process in clinical settings, showing the value of empowering patients to tell prospective clinical practitioners how it really is for them.

Another interesting challenge handled by the book is the effect of 'massification' of higher education on the feedback process. Basically, due to less time being available, this has had the effect of minimising the use of interactive dialogue between assessor and learner in enriching the value of feedback. Such situations manifest the importance of clarity of language and criteria and the need for relevance in feedback.

Many models of good practice are outlined and explored in a variety of settings throughout the book. In the end, the basic message from all of this seems to be to recognise that learners need to be proactive in seeking out feedback, in being themselves part of the effective generation of feedback and, most importantly, to internalise and utilise the feedback to help them become more effective in the learning process.

This book is timely and interesting and is to be recommended as a core read for all practitioners in understanding both their learners and the feedback process better.

David Ross is Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Development at the University of the West of Scotland.

New SEDA Fellowship Holders

Senior Fellowship

- **Dr Sally Bradley SFSEDA,** Principal Lecturer, Sheffield Hallam University

Fellowship

- **Catherine Bovill FSEDA,** Senior Lecturer, University of Glasgow
- **Jane Carne FSEDA,** Curriculum and Educational Development Manager, University of Kent
- **Peter Gossman FSEDA,** Senior Lecturer in Education, Glyndwr University
- **Dr James Kelly FSEDA,** Senior Tutor, Queens' College Cambridge
- **Bernadette Knewstubb FSEDA,** Lecturer, Victoria University of Wellington
- **Dr Marion Palmer FSEDA,** Head of Department of Technology and Psychology, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- **Dr Angélica Rísquez FSEDA,** Teaching Innovation and Enhancement Advisor, University of Limerick
- **Dr Assia Rolls FSEDA,** Head of Learning Technology and Pedagogic Research, Regent's College

Associate Fellowship

- **Dr Muhuntha Gnanalingham AFSEDA,** Consultant in Paediatric Intensive Care, Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Honorary Senior Lecturer, University of Manchester
- **Rob McCarthy AFSEDA,** Senior Talent and Leadership Development Manager/Head of ILM Approved Centre, AXA PPP Healthcare
- **Dr Eloise Tan AFSEDA,** Teaching and Learning Developer, Dublin City University

New Publications from SEDA

- SEDA Special 33: *Supporting Educational Change,* edited by Ranald Macdonald
- SEDA Special 34: *Evidencing the Value of Educational Development,* edited by Veronica Bamber

Both of the above can be ordered online from www.seda.ac.uk

New from the Routledge SEDA Series

Developing Effective Part-time Teachers in Higher Education: New Approaches to Professional Development, edited by Fran Beaton and Amanda Gilbert. Copies can be ordered online from www.routledge.com

SEDA Professional Development Framework

In February of this year two Canadian institutions achieved recognition through SEDA's Professional Development Framework scheme. Congratulations to the University of Guelph and York University (Ontario).

Update on Changing the Learning Landscape

www.heacademy.ac.uk/cll<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/cll> #cll1213

Changing the Learning Landscape is a HEFCE-funded initiative designed to support the adoption and strategic and effective use of learning technologies and is a unique partnership between the Leadership Foundation in HE, NUS, HEA, the Association for Learning Technology and JISC. SEDA was commissioned by CLL to design a Professional Development Programme with a focus on support for those with curriculum and teaching development and professional support roles. The programme has been co-ordinated by Liz Shrives working with Sue Thompson and the CLL team at the Higher Education Academy with CLL partners and SEDA colleagues. The programme has covered awareness raising and sharing practice, influencing strategy and change processes, to enable the embedding of learning technologies and personal and professional development. The four events held (Exeter, Leeds, London and Birmingham) are all oversubscribed and are receiving very positive feedback (see #cll1213), attracting delegates from a wide range of institutions and roles.

SEDA News

SEDA Legacy Research Grant Winners

In March, SEDA's Scholarship and Research Committee awarded two Legacy Research Grants to:

- **Dr Karen Smith,** University of Greenwich, for the project entitled: 'Higher education policy and the shaping of educational development practice'

- **Dr Colleen McKenna** and **Dr Jane Hughes,** HE Development, Evaluation and Research (HEDERA), for the project entitled: 'ExILED: Exploring Identities and Locations of Educational Developers'

Further information about each of the projects is available on the SEDA website.

SEDA@20 Legacy Awards

Winners, front row, from left: *Gina Wisker* (Individual, for contribution to scholarship); *Sally Brown* (Individual, for contribution to leadership); *Stuart Boon* (Team, on behalf of the Scottish Higher Educational Development Group, SHED); *David Baume* (Individual, for contribution to SEDA as an organisation); *Mick Healey* (Individual, for contribution to disciplinary development); not present: *Graham Gibbs* (Individual, for contribution to impact and influence).

Nominees, from left: *Bob Farmer, Diana Eastcott* and *Jenny Eland* (Team: Birmingham City University, Centre for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning); *William Locke* (Head of Learning and Teaching at HEFCE) who presented the awards; *Nancy Turner* (Team: University of the Arts London, Centre for Learning and Teaching in Art and Design); *Rhona Sharpe* (Team: Oxford Brookes University, Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development); *Lawrie Phipps* (Individual); *Liz Shrives* (Individual); *Helen King* (Hosting the ceremony); not present: *David Jaques* (Individual) and *John Doidge* (Individual).

SEDA@ 20 Gala Dinner

The dinner was organised by (clockwise from top) Carole Baume (introducing William Locke), Liz Shrives, Sally Brown, Roz Grimmitt and Ann Aitken, at the Leeds Marriot hotel.

SEDA Executive at the SEDA@20 Gala Dinner

Back row, from left: James Wisdom, Sally Bradley, Jo Peat, Jac Potter, Claire Taylor, Nancy Turner. Middle row, from left: Mike Laycock, Ann Aitken, Lynette Matthews, Julie Hall, Sue Beckingham, Clara Davies, Stephen Bostock. Front row, from left: Jenny Eland, Gina Wisker, Pam Parker, Liz Shrives, Sue Thompson, Roz Grimmitt.