

# EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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## Internationalisation and the academic developer

David Killick, Leeds Beckett University

### Introduction

There are many facets to internationalisation in higher education, some of which lie well beyond the purview of the academic developer, though their consequences will have significant implications for our role. Academic developers, like academics and like students, work in diverse contexts, with diverse objectives, resources, and drivers. Where academic developers are responsible for a taught programme such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice or a Master's in Education, the process of curriculum internationalisation should apply as much, or more, to that provision as to any other.

This article presents some ideas on what the internationalisation of higher education might mean with regard to the work of the academic developer by drawing these out in relation to suggested principles for internationalisation of the curriculum (IOC), and a suggested process for it. While I hope the ideas will be adaptable to a wide range of contexts, it is likely that some of my assumptions are somewhat UK-centric; any feedback on this would be really welcome, and part of the kind of critical dialogue needed in the process of building a global community of practice.

Academic practice and academic development can sometimes be driven by the exigencies of non-academic concerns – compliance with national policy, responses to 'satisfaction' surveys, the economics of increasing marketisation, institutional strategies to boost reputation, and the like. These can also be the drivers for many of the processes which fall under the umbrella of 'internationalisation'. They are not, though, the drivers which I would wish to associate with the main focus of this article – the internationalisation of the curriculum. The consequences of some of those processes – perhaps most obviously, the process of recruiting international students and the process of developing trans-national education (TNE) provision – may have very significant consequences which require the support and guidance of educational developers. They also offer opportunities to enhance IOC, and I note some of these in the discussion.

### Principles

Embarking on significant institutional change should, I suggest, require consideration of the principles to shape the change. Successful internationalisation of the curriculum is a significant change process, and I see at least five principles which apply, regardless of context.

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Internationalisation of the curriculum should be:

- 1) underpinned by explicit values
- 2) embarked upon on the basis of explicit objectives
- 3) driven by identified and appropriately resourced functional areas
- 4) evaluated against explicit and measurable targets
- 5) owned by the whole institution.

These, it will be noted, might apply to any other significant change process, though how they emerge in practice is specific to IOC, and of profound relevance to the work of educational developers.

### Underpinned by explicit values

Educational development is dedicated to the improvement of the student learning experience through the support and guidance we offer to the academic community.

For example:

- i) *recruiting international students* requires that we have a learning environment which is as suited to their needs, strengths and aspirations as it is to those of our domestic students
- ii) *opening TNE partnerships* for the delivery of some or all of our awards requires that we have a curriculum which is relevant and responsive to their contexts and their cohorts.

In different ways, these both reflect the *value* of academic equity; providing a level playing field by respecting (indeed, welcoming) diverse perspectives on disciplinary knowledge, by critically reviewing our learning activities to ensure they are not excluding or diminishing the prospects for equal participation from some students, by interrogating assessment outcomes to be confident that we are not unwittingly discriminating through task design or marking conventions, for example. This is/ should be the territory of the educational developer with regard to supporting the design and delivery of any course. The two scenarios above, though, add to the complexity of our task.

Ideally, and in line with the value of academic equity, as academic developers, we should be looking (i) to our international students, and (ii) to our international partners to guide and inform our own critical understandings of their experiences, their needs, and the strengths they can bring to enhance the learning experience. Academic development needs to engage with these voices.

### Embarked upon on the basis of explicit objectives

Why an institution wishes to engage in internationalisation needs to be made explicit. If we again consider the recruitment of international students, there may be many objectives for this, for example:

- to increase/diversify institutional revenues and surpluses
- to make viable some valued but under-recruiting provision
- to gain future regional influence through returned alumni
- to strengthen the reputation of research (in field x) at a university
- to make a programme among the 'best' in the world by attracting the most talented students globally
- to enhance cross-cultural learning on campus
- to add international dimensions to disciplinary knowledge and enrich the learning experience.

While these may not all be mutually exclusive, they do suggest rather different sets of priorities will emerge in terms of how they are driven forward. With enhancement, the drivers may be diverse, but the fundamental objective, surely, is to enhance the student learning experience. When it comes to IOC, I suggest, the key objective is to enhance the learning experience to *better enable the student-as-graduate to engage in a globalising world*. I personally couch this objective as

‘enabling our students to lead lives they have reason to value in a globalising world’. Some readers will recognise the objective as deriving from the capability work of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (1999). I am not suggesting that this would necessarily be how every institution or any particular discipline or course might frame their objective, but an objective or objectives concerning the attributes or capabilities of graduating students needs to be at the root of IOC work.

Educational developers have an important role to play in enabling institutions and/or individual courses to understand and articulate clearly what their *objectives* are before they embark on any IOC work. This requires holding an evidence-informed stance with regard to their graduates’ future(s).

### Driven by identified and appropriately resourced functional areas

Returning to the list of objectives for international student recruitment, it is interesting to reflect that few institutions talk in their vision and strategy statements about those drivers concerned with economic surpluses or saving otherwise non-viable areas of provision, but often do project very publicly the educational benefits. This is in sharp contrast to where most institutions allocate responsibilities and resources with regard to international students (*i.e.* to an international office with targets expressed in terms of student numbers). In the case of every institution which I am familiar with, there needs to be a serious re-think at an institutional level if those educational aspirations are to begin to be realised. We know from many years of published research that our domestic students and our international students do not easily integrate or have meaningful cross-cultural learning experiences. This should not surprise us given human social tendencies to mix with people who are similar enough not to challenge our views on ‘normal’ and ‘preferred’ behaviours and ways of thinking. Scaffolding our students through the sometimes challenging and vulnerable learning experiences needed to bring them to a point where they feel comfortable among/confident with peers who are different from themselves requires learning (and assessment) activities to be strategically built into the formal curriculum across all courses, at all levels.

Educational developers need to claim the responsibility and the resources for themselves, and for the academic community more broadly, for undertaking the work which is needed to provide internationalised curricula which builds and assesses IOC objectives as embedded components of disciplinary programmes. By implication, these same communities need to be held responsible for the achievement of those objectives.

### Evaluated against explicit and measurable targets

To measure the success of institutional internationalisation by the number of international students, international partners, or international exchange programmes is really to miss the point of internationalisation as set forth in this article. To take international exchange programmes as one example – it is of

no relevance at all how many partners or how many students are involved in international exchanges unless the *impact* of engagement upon the students concerned is evaluated in terms of the set objectives. There are attendant issues, though, with international exchanges in that (with very, very few exceptions) only a small minority of students participate, and very often those students already hold significant cultural as well as financial capital. They may, indeed, take significant benefit, but mainstreaming similar benefits into the learning experiences of all our students (academic equity) requires the effective internationalisation of their disciplinary curriculum. Only by the explicit evaluation of the outcomes of that curriculum will we know what we are doing well, and what we need to do better.

Educational developers are key to developing the culture and capacity of the academic community to critically review the outcomes of the programmes they design and deliver against their IOC objectives. Providing research-informed examples of good practice in IOC, working as critical friends to disciplinary review teams, and ensuring the institutional quality assurance measures include dimensions of IOC are all part of the educational developer’s role.

### Owned by the whole institution

Although principle 3 proposed assigning the strategic responsibilities and resources for IOC to educational developers and the academic community, work which only takes place in the formal curriculum will not succeed if it is not supported through the wider practices of the university. These wider practices are important in themselves, and important for the messages they disperse through the hidden curriculum. There is not room to expand on all aspects of this here, but by way of examples:

- Segregating international students (through separate sections for them on institutional web sites, or through having separate societies or social events for them, or through providing segregated accommodation *etc.*) may be well-intentioned but does not send messages of inclusion or equity to them or to their domestic peers
- Recruiting students who have special dietary requirements by virtue of their religion but failing to provide food choices which comply with those requirements hardly supports the notion that the institution ‘values’ them;
- Creating ‘silo’ courses which are populated by a very dominant single nationality of international student fails both to offer those students the international educational experience they were promised and to offer intercultural learning experiences to other students on campus.

Educational developers are often well placed to draw attention to the ways in which the ‘service’ areas of an institution might better support learning. A programme for IOC should sit within an institution-wide internationalisation strategy, with academic developers involved in its drafting to ensure the hidden curriculum supports rather than inhibits the objectives of the formal curriculum.

## Process

The process of IOC begins, as suggest above, with the values and objectives which are to underpin and drive the changes we make. A model of the IOC process can be represented in three phases ADE – Aspire, Develop, Evaluate, as illustrated in Figure 1.

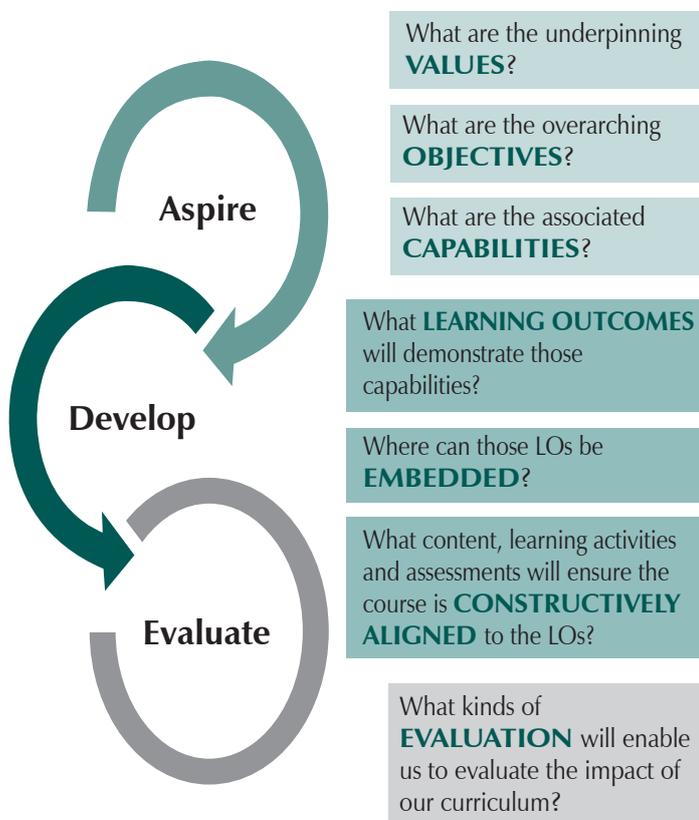


Figure 1 The ADE model for curriculum internationalisation

## Capabilities and attributes

The final area for consideration in the Aspire stage is our students' capabilities to make their way in the globalising world of their futures. As noted above, I draw upon Amartya Sen's work here and frame the task of IOC as being to enable our students to *lead a life they have reason to value* in a globalising world. Sen's careful wording of capability, as being directed at, or assessed by, enabling people to lead a life they *have reason to value* is important. To me, this implies a life reflected upon, an examined life, a life with stands up to critical and ethical evaluation by self and others.

Here is not the space to elaborate on the attributes which cluster around such capability (though several are referenced in the previous sentence); UNESCO (UNESCO, 2015) has recently published its own guidance on global citizenship education which sets out its three 'core conceptual dimensions' as being cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural. The socio-emotional is defined as having 'a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity'. While there may be differences in the specifics across others' taxonomies, there is no getting away from the need for attributes in the affective domain similar to those set out here. I believe this presents the biggest challenge for IOC, particularly in an age of outcomes-based higher education.

As will be seen below, I advocate very strongly for the use of intended learning outcomes (ILOs) as the driver for IOC. It would be disingenuous though to pretend that this approach fully addresses the issue of developing (and assessing?) affective outcomes. Nonetheless, important to the IOC process is setting out the capabilities and associated attributes which we aspire to for all our graduates.

Educational developers have the advantage at this stage of sitting outside the disciplines in so far as this may help them facilitate conversations across disciplines which can help to articulate the generic capabilities of benefit to all students. In the design stages, the disciplinary teams take more direct ownership of the task of framing the outcomes of most direct relevance to the subject area.

## Intended learning outcomes and constructive alignment

Educational developers are very accustomed to the importance of designing intended learning outcomes, and of the related process of ensuring that both assessments and learning activities and supporting resources are constructively aligned to those ILOs. In IOC, the shaping of those ILOs needs to be drawn from the capabilities and attributes explicated in the Aspire process. I suggest that to be a truly internationalised curriculum, those capabilities and attributes need to be embedded within the course and module ILOs of each programme; made specific to the programme and developed incrementally across programme levels. This 'infusion' approach means that it is not sufficient to add the occasional generic learning outcome to a module or two, nor is IOC about developing and implanting a specific 'international' module (as has been done, for example, with employability or enterprise in some cases).

Embedding dimensions of our defined capabilities and attributes does not mean doing more *in* the curriculum, as some colleagues fear, but doing more *with* the curriculum. It is not an 'add on' process, but an 'add in' process.

By way of a single example, we will all be familiar with ILOs along the lines of:

'At the end of this module students will be able to present [an analysis/a critical review/an evaluation/etc.] of [a subject specific topic].'

Embedding one possible attribute which relates to being a more globally capable graduate might be achieved by modifying the attribute to read:

'At the end of this module students will be able to present [an analysis/a critical review/an evaluation/etc.] of [a subject specific topic] in language appropriate for an audience which includes speakers of English as a foreign language.'

On the face of it, this is a relevant 'technical' skill. Arguably, though, it is something much more, because it raises awareness concerning the *responsibility* of first language speakers of English to respect an aspect of diversity in their

audience, to recognise that it is for them to learn how to communicate with others, and to see their place in the world from a more international perspective.

Educational developers are often highly visible in the process of curriculum design and in the development of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment which lead to constructive alignment. Embedding in this process the development of colleagues to critically evaluate their own curricula against the aspirations for IOC, and applying the same process to our own provision, be that our Postgraduate Certificates, our staff development workshops, or the resources we develop to support such processes, is a significant part of the task before us.

## Evaluation

The evaluation of any changes to the design and delivery of a curriculum must, of course, go back to the aspirations which were the drivers for the change. For IOC, as set out here, those aspirations are expressed as the capabilities of our graduates. I suggest that we might begin the evaluation while the students are still with us, for example, through focus groups in which students are asked to articulate how *they* feel they are learning and developing to be global professionals and disciplinary experts in their subject. We should also be interrogating the actual assessments set with regard to those ILOs in which dimensions of global capabilities are embedded, along with the criteria developed for their grading, and the profiles of results for those assessments.

The evaluation of longer-term educational outcomes is always problematic, and I think likely to be more so still for the kinds of capabilities which I believe IOC should be aspiring to develop. Current measures such as the employment destinations of our leavers are already inadequate to the task. If higher education is to be valued as a global public good as well as a private one, we need to develop the means to demonstrate its impact to all stakeholders – at home and in the international arenas in which we increasingly ply our trade. One measure we might look to develop is the degree to which the communities and nations in which we plant our educational footprint flourish – that is to say, the enhancement of their capabilities to lead lives they have reason to value. Our global stakeholders might be given a rightful place in our evaluations if we shifted institutional annual reporting towards the areas advocated for in Triple Bottom Line accounting (Elkington, 1997) which considers the impact of a university on ‘people, profit and planet’.

Educational developers can play an important institutional role in the evaluation of the impact of IOC on students during their studies. Undertaking research in this area is essential if we are to build examples of and models for good practice. Educational developers might also be well placed to advocate for the inclusion of a wider spread of institutional impact in its annual reporting.

## Professionalising the international academic

Out of the many changes which globalisation is bringing to the contexts in which higher education is delivered fall new challenges and new opportunities. Academic developers may be called upon to find solutions for the challenges, and it is at least equally important that we also look to the support we can offer to enable our colleagues to identify and utilise the opportunities. This article has dealt principally with the process of curriculum internationalisation, and the importance of establishing underpinning values and objectives to make explicit what our aspirations are for the process. It is, though, also relevant to add that in taking forward the delivery and the assessment of their internationalised curricula, academics may encounter new development needs which academic developers need to be ready to respond to.

I finish with some thoughts on the potential impact of burgeoning TNE provision on the role of the academic developer. Leaving aside very significant questions concerning how we (if we) support colleagues based in that provision, some of the emerging development needs of academic colleagues based in our home institutions include:

- Enhancing their cross-cultural capability, for example:
- Intercultural communication
- Communication in English as an international language/lingua franca
- Emotional recognition and resilience
- Dealing with ambiguity and uncertainty
- Mindfulness
- Adapting the curriculum to fit a new context (often with a complex mix of socio-economic, geo-political, ethno-cultural dimensions of difference)
- Approving the adaptations of the curriculum by others to fit a new context
- Mentoring/supporting colleagues at all levels and at a distance
- Moderating assessments of student work which have been assessed to different local standards and/or from different local perspectives and academic traditions.

Educational developers themselves may need to critically evaluate their own capabilities to provide the support needs emerging as academics are called upon to work in new ways in diverse contexts. To enable this to happen, there is an urgent need for evidence-informed guidance on international academic practice and on globally diverse conceptualisations of issues and approaches to ‘good’ learning, teaching and assessment.

In conclusion, I suggest that the internationalisation of the learning and teaching landscape is now so prevalent, so varied, and so important that we need to professionalise the international academic. Are we, the community of academic developers, ready for the challenges and the opportunities?

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## Further resources

HEA Internationalising Higher Education Framework (available at:

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# You've internationalised me, now support me: Building and supporting a global academic community – who, how, what, when and why

**Jenny Eland**, Birmingham City University and **Sarah King**, University of Birmingham

(This article is based on a paper presented at the SEDA Spring Conference 2015.)

As the number of students studying for UK degrees overseas continues to rise, the UK higher education sector has arguably only recently started waking up to the challenges, both theoretical and practical, that international education on this scale can pose in terms of quality assurance and enhancement. The internationalisation of higher education is not a new phenomenon but the impact it can have on curriculum design and on issues around inclusion and equality of experience has been slow to surface. This article focuses on a project undertaken by Educational Developers at Birmingham City University to develop a flexible programme of study for overseas partners that supports their professional development and encourages dialogue around issues of quality assurance and enhancement in higher education in the UK whilst celebrating and learning from the cultural diversity of our colleagues overseas. This collaboration has supported the first steps towards creating a community of practice for all those involved in supporting learning, whether on campus in Birmingham or further afield.

## Background and context

Whilst there is a growing literature around internationalisation of the curriculum and the experience of overseas students studying on campus at UK institutions, there is still relatively little research into the experience of students studying on a transnational basis. This form of higher education includes 'All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based' (Council of Europe, 2002). This crossing of national boundaries takes place through a variety of means that encompass distance learning courses, satellite campuses and partnership provision through courses which are franchised (where the overseas partner institution delivers the degree of the UK institution) or validated (where the UK institution validates a course that has been designed by the overseas partner).

The notion that the experience of students engaging in transnational

education should be equivalent whether they are studying at the UK campus or partner institution overseas is not controversial. Joanna Newman, Director of UK Higher Education International Unit, interviewed in *The Guardian*, noted that 'courses accredited or taught by UK institutions abroad should be as academically rigorous as those taught at home' (Ratcliffe, 2013). The QAA reinforces this message through its quality assurance mechanisms and the higher education review process. The QAA Quality Code expects higher education providers to provide opportunities for every student to 'develop as an independent learner...and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking' (QAA, 2012, p. 8). It is perhaps for this reason that many UK degrees offered overseas (particularly in relation to franchised provision) are identical in design to those being delivered at the UK campus and 'the offshore campus experience is structured to be educationally indistinguishable from the main campus programs' (Coleman, 2003). This increases the stakes in terms of the design of the

curricula that are delivered. A truly internationalised curriculum may be transferable into different jurisdictions without significant revision, but are we confident that when we export our courses overseas they are culturally appropriate for a different audience?

If there is little literature on the experience of *students* studying under transnational arrangements, there is even less in relation to the experience of *staff* engaged in the teaching of these courses. Transnational arrangements may be supported by what has become known as 'flying faculty' (where UK-based staff travel to the overseas campus to deliver teaching). However, very often franchised or validated courses are taught by staff employed by the overseas institution. Many will be experienced academics in their discipline areas but we cannot assume that they will be as familiar with the higher education sector in the UK. The issue of providing an educationally indistinguishable experience (if indeed that is what we want to do) is arguably then brought into even sharper focus.

The QAA define staff as being 'anyone involved in teaching or facilitating student learning' and it is clear that this would include staff who, whilst not directly employed by the UK institution, interact with students as a result of a partnership arrangement (QAA, 2012, p. 6). The Quality Code also requires higher education providers through its indicators of sound practice to 'assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed' (QAA, 2012, p. 15). This is not limited to campus-based UK staff but to all staff which, as defined above, would include those working for overseas partners. What we are left with is a community of overseas academics who are involved in the delivery of UK-designed degrees, many of which may be indistinguishable from the 'home' degree in terms of format and content, who require support and development without necessarily having recourse to the resource that UK-based academics have.

David Killick's keynote speech at SEDA's Spring Conference examined an internationalised curriculum that was explicitly linked to values of academic equity (Killick, 2015). This article chooses to focus on academic equity as it relates to those overseas academics who are involved in the delivery of transnational education and explains how a project developed at Birmingham City University set out to make our overseas colleagues part of the institution's academic community with access to the support and development opportunities that were already available to Birmingham staff.

### Supporting overseas partners – the project

Birmingham City University, like many other higher education providers, has a long-established Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PgCert) that new members of teaching staff (with limited exceptions) are required to complete as part of their probationary requirements. Over recent years this provision has been offered not just to student-facing teaching staff but also to anyone employed by the University who, as part of their role, supports learning. Alumni of the programme include heads of school, leaders of academic programmes and modules, library staff, learning technologists, careers advisors and student union officers. Participation in the programme affords staff the time and space to think about their practice, engage in scholarship of learning and teaching, share ideas and discuss challenges in a supportive environment. A key benefit of engagement in the programme and its extended reach across the institution is that it has created a networked community of practitioners who may hold diverse job titles but who share common values around higher education. This network has led to fruitful collaborations across different discipline areas, innovations in learning and teaching that have been disseminated and adopted by diverse course teams and opportunities for curriculum review and enhancement that have sometimes prompted institutional change.

Whilst the PgCert at Birmingham City University has been opened up to a new and diverse audience, it has remained the case that participants have all been members of staff of the home institution, or affiliate organisations. This is in the context of an institution that has been extending its reach internationally as partnerships have been forged with overseas institutions in India, Hong Kong and Singapore, for example.

The Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching was approached in 2013 by one of the Faculties within the University (then known as the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design) to explore the possibility of staff development (possibly in the form of a PgCert) for overseas partner institutions who were working with the University to offer transnational education. Successful working partnerships had been created but a lack of opportunities for the support and development of staff working in the partner institutions (as required by the QAA Quality Code) had been identified. In the first iteration of the project, Educational Developers were asked to think about ways in which we could engage staff teaching at a College in India in a dialogue around learning and teaching in higher education and how this might facilitate the kind of academic community envisaged in the title to this article.

The challenges were obvious. The transnational provision had been developed in India, was validated by Birmingham City University but taught by staff from the host country. In addition, the Indian institution comprised a number of different campuses spread right across the country. The scope of the task was huge and the Educational Development team back in Birmingham was small. However, it emerged that there was a window of opportunity each year where institutional and programme leaders from the College were required to visit Birmingham as part of annual quality assurance processes. This potentially allowed the Educational Development team access to overseas colleagues who were working with teams in

India and who had the potential to be conduits in the development of a network.

We were fortunate that our overseas visitors agreed to extend their trip by two weeks to enable a programme of activities to take place. From this the beginnings of what became the SEDA-accredited 'Supporting Learning and Teaching for Overseas Partners' programme were developed.

### Supporting learning and teaching for overseas partners

Supporting Learning and Teaching for Overseas Partners is not a PgCert and does not carry credit. It is, however, informed by our approaches on the PgCert. It became apparent that we needed something that was flexible and responsive to the needs of participants and not necessarily a course that was credit-bearing. The aims of the programmes are to: (a) support participants in their professional activities and development aspirations; (b) advance professional practice; (c) enhance the experience of students participating in Higher Education; and (d) encourage the development of learning communities with shared values (Supporting Learning and Teaching Handbook, 2014).

The focus for the learning and teaching approach draws on our experiences of teaching on the PgCert and 'emphasizes the development of practice by reflection, application of theory and active experimentation' (Supporting Learning and Teaching Handbook, 2014). Importantly, participants are provided with frameworks and concepts but are encouraged to examine these in relation to their own cultural environment and discipline. Whilst we found that there were many similarities between our experiences of working in higher education in the UK and in India (we found that there were many common issues around employability and student engagement, for example), there were obviously also many differences. One example of this was in relation to some of the factual content of case studies provided by the home institution. In one case study,

provided in relation to a franchised programme that included elements of study of 3D design, our overseas colleagues had noted that some of the materials referred to in the case study were not readily available in India and would not, therefore, be routinely used. The participants had worried that, as drafted, the case studies might not make sense to their students and could cause confusion but were reluctant about changing materials on what was a franchised course. Through our interactions and discussion grew a greater understanding of the purpose of the learning outcomes and the possibility of amending the case studies to be more culturally relevant to the Indian students without diluting the aims of the programme or putting the students at a disadvantage when it came to the assessment. At the end of the first iteration one participant noted 'the training has helped us to understand the theories and practices behind education and also boosted our confidence and morale'. It has become clear that one of the key benefits of this provision is empowering our colleagues overseas to make evidence-based decisions about their courses, whether franchised or validated, and to feel confident about contacting the home institution when further support or guidance is needed.

Ensuring that the framework of the programme was flexible also allowed us to develop a variety of study methods. Core sessions were facilitated by the Educational Development team but the participants also had opportunities to work within their discipline areas, observing teaching and engaging in dialogue with the teaching team in the UK. The timing of the visit also allowed the participants to join a PgCert teaching day that focused on assessment and feedback and enabled them to extend their network even further, working alongside staff from across the institution and learning from other, UK-based colleagues. The programme was intensive but there were even opportunities for the participants to engage in 'homework', something that put them back into the shoes of their students, one participant commenting: 'We were able to experience student's life once again (should mention about

home work) and it provided us with an opportunity to view and understand a class or teaching from a different perspective (student's perspective) which we felt was very important to better our classes in India.'

This programme is now accredited through the Staff and Education Development Association's (SEDA) Professional Development Framework (PDF) in the category of Supporting Learning, and there is an opportunity for participants to gain SEDA certification by successfully completing a portfolio assessment that requires them to critically review their practice through a self-evaluation document that includes evidence of engagement with student evaluation, peer observation of teaching and a reflective diary of professional development that includes an action plan for change moving forward.

The first cohort have successfully completed the programme and assessment and have received SEDA certification. The team at Birmingham City University have been delighted to read about how the learning that took place while they were in Birmingham has impacted on practice in India. The feedback has been extremely positive. Another participant noted, 'we have come back enthused to share and implement all the interesting concepts learned during our CELT sessions'. Whilst it was beneficial that some overseas staff journeyed to Birmingham to attend meetings, this has meant that the Birmingham team do not see the full course teams overseas to address their issues. Added to this, although we have enjoyed the teaching and development of this programme, CELT is a central department and we are aware that in some cases we are giving generic support that needs to be adapted for different environments. In the next phase of the project our ideal is to bring in the link tutor from the faculty and to work with them to deliver the programme and for them to provide the input when they do their visits overseas. Ultimately our goal would be for the overseas staff to develop and deliver their own programme so that we can extend our academic community even further.

## Conclusions

Developing, delivering and evaluating Supporting Learning and Teaching for Overseas Partners has been a great learning journey for the team, challenging many of our assumptions. We finish this article with some reflections and suggestions based on our experiences that others may find useful if considering similar approaches:

- Be flexible and adaptable. For example, we were expecting higher numbers and had to adjust to smaller groups, dates were changed and participants had particular needs and questions that were addressed by changing some of the delivery outcomes.
- Tie in opportunities for staff development where possible with other activities. We were able to work with overseas colleagues who were already visiting the institution as part of annual quality assurance monitoring processes. By extending their stay we captured some time in which we could work with them.
- Integrate participants into other teaching that is going on. For

example we integrated one session with a PgCert day that was already taking place and provided opportunities for participants to network with Birmingham academics from other disciplines.

- Create a dialogue with participants that can continue once they are back in their home institution. Remember that this is not 'teacher training' – our participants were all experienced teachers. The emphasis is different – this is about working across cultures and understanding different approaches.
- Consider the resource implications of this kind of provision. Longer term we are developing a plan to introduce more blended aspects and to look to academic colleagues in Birmingham to support our work when they visit the overseas institution. Those who have engaged with the programme should also be encouraged to share their experiences with overseas colleagues when they return.

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# So similar and yet so different: Five issues for academic developers in a New Zealand university

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For overseas colleagues, walking through the doors of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) at Victoria University of Wellington (Victoria) in New Zealand might feel very familiar. Indeed, they may recognise conversations about the latest workshop, consultation or PGCert class. They might hear similar discussions concerning new teaching-learning strategies or initiatives that are taking place around the institution, country or world. However, as they joined these conversations, they may find differences begin to emerge – some slight and some distinctive. Due to variations in government strategy, institutional foci, cultural context and funding, some interesting twists on familiar themes will soon become apparent.

These differences affect our roles and everyday practice as academic developers at Victoria. As a response, at CAD we have adopted the Māori term 'ako' to frame much of our work. 'Ako' means both to teach and learn, and is used conceptually to describe teaching and learning as a reciprocal process whereby 'the educator is also learning from the student and where educators' practices are informed by the latest research and are both deliberate and reflective' (Ka Hikitia, 2008, p. 20). Thus, in our work, we actively draw on the experience and knowledge of our university colleagues, our students, and the wider community, acting as both teachers and learners, developers and developpees. As academic developers, support is vital if

we are to succeed, but the relatively small and geographically spread community of practice across New Zealand and our physical distance from other international networks can make accessing that support a challenge. Here we reflect on five issues that we have to address in our academic development work, the approaches we adopt to address these issues, and the resources we draw upon in our academic development roles.

### Issue 1. Research/teaching tension

Like many countries, New Zealand universities are required to report regularly on their research outputs, and the outcomes of this reporting are used to rank the quality of each university. Unlike some countries, however, the national Performance Based Research Funding (PBRF) round is based on individual academic research performance, rather than at departmental level, and everyone with an academic contract is required to participate. As a result, thousands of university staff are required to develop and submit research portfolios to be assessed by an external panel of expert peers every six years, with the next round to be held in 2018.

The PBRF impacts academic developers in two ways. Firstly, as academics, CAD staff are required to be research-active and to submit our own research portfolios for assessment. We therefore need to balance writing about learning and teaching with our development roles of supporting learning and teaching. It is important that we are aware of this tension if we are to maintain a focus on the idea that while a development need or initiative may not be innovative in a research sense, it may still be profound for the academics who embed it, and their students.

Secondly, for the time leading up to research portfolio submission, academic staff of NZ universities will understandably focus on their research. They will receive support and encouragement from their Vice-Chancellors, line managers, peers, and from their university research offices to submit a good quality portfolio. Many, including those new to New Zealand, will quickly learn that in order to progress in their careers, PBRF success is essential. Besides internal student feedback processes, however, there is no equivalent systematic national evaluation of teaching quality and few pathways to academic promotion in teaching-focused roles. This poses a significant challenge for academic developers, trying to engage academics with the teaching aspects of their roles, especially close to each PBRF round, or if working with staff new to the New Zealand context when they are both trying to establish an effective research portfolio, and develop courses and teaching relevant to their new context.

One way we address this is to help staff find funding for teaching initiative projects. Some funding is available internally through Faculty and University teaching grants, specifically designed to focus on introducing innovations such as peer assessment, team-based learning, or using digital technology in new ways, or externally from Ako Aotearoa, a national funding body, which focuses on recognising, supporting and disseminating excellent teaching practice in New Zealand.

### Issue 2. Māori academic development

One of the most distinctive aspects of academic development in New Zealand is the indigenous Māori culture and its impact on our teaching context, audience and environment. While Māori people make up 15% of the New Zealand population, Māori students make up only 12.6% of the university population studying towards bachelor's degrees or above (Education Counts, 2014b) and Māori academic staff make up less than 10% of total academic staff at the various New Zealand universities (Hall, 2014, p. 9). This presents a somewhat unique opportunity for academic developers to engage in the Māori concept of 'ako'. It also increases demand for professional development to all academic staff about teaching Māori students and course material. At Victoria, Māori academic development to date has focused on two main areas: preparing non-Māori staff to teach Māori students and material, and supporting Māori academic staff to meet their academic goals.

In relation to supporting non-Māori academics, CAD has developed a set of resources that are designed to help staff develop their cultural competence. Based on her research about Māori teaching pedagogies in higher education, Hall (2011) applied the scholarly standards of Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) to the process of teaching Māori course material and developed a booklet that identified a range of culturally appropriate teaching strategies and processes. In addition, another booklet produced by CAD about using the Māori language in the university environment has helped to normalise its use in teaching, and contributed to Victoria recently winning a national Māori Language Award.

In relation to supporting Māori academic staff at Victoria, CAD has been active in both delivering academic development opportunities, such as workshops, writing retreats and symposia, and researching the topic. In her recent research about the experiences of Māori academic staff at universities in New Zealand, Hall (2014) found that their cultural identities were more prevalent than their institutional or disciplinary identities, which therefore required academic developers to engage with Māori academic staff in culturally competent and appropriate ways.

Ultimately, one government-driven goal of every university in New Zealand is to increase the qualification completion rate of their Māori students. At present, 9.7% of the Māori population aged over 15 years has a bachelor's degree or higher (Education Counts, 2014a). The current Tertiary Education Strategy (2014) requires that to increase, and academic developers are expected to play a role in assisting that to happen.

### Issue 3. Postgraduate qualifications and professionalisation

Internationally, postgraduate qualifications in higher education learning and teaching, such as postgraduate certificates and master's programmes, are common, and Victoria is no exception. Staff undertake these qualifications to develop reflective practice, and to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning. All staff with a teaching

role who enrol for the programme are fully funded. Despite this, with no accreditation of teaching, nor a requirement to report the numbers and types of teaching qualifications, the numbers in these courses are small (approximately ten students each year from the Victoria PGCert, and one for the Diploma). However, the influence of these programmes is evident. Many of our graduates take on leadership roles in teaching for their faculty or the university, serving on committees, taskforces, and undertaking educational research and initiatives in their own disciplines. Many have also been recognised in Teaching Excellence awards at university or national level.

Ensuring these qualifications are taught, examined and moderated at an appropriate level depends on the support of CAD colleagues, who each teach to their specialist topics (for example, reflective practice, curriculum design, digital technology, student diversity or research methods). As a result there may be as many CAD staff teaching in a particular course as there are students. However, the diverse perspectives provide a range of theoretical approaches and topic areas. Here again, 'ako' is at work as students explore their roles of teachers-as-learners, learners-as-teachers, learning through reflection on teaching and teaching informed by research and scholarship. Resources provided through current research studies and professional networks such as HERDSA and SEDA ensure that content is up to date. While there are no formal external examiners for the programme, colleagues from other academic development centres in New Zealand often act as external markers for research projects, and may sit on curriculum advisory groups to ensure the quality of our programmes. These roles are taken on informally and in the spirit of collegiality and support, rather than the more formal positions operating in the United Kingdom.

Formal accreditation for teaching is not available within New Zealand; however some academics do apply for HERDSA fellowships, offered by the Higher Education Research Development Society of Australasia. More recently a number of New Zealand universities, with the support of Ako Aotearoa, have been exploring institution-wide accreditation with the UK's Higher Education Academy for both individual portfolio-based membership, and PGCert accreditation. In CAD we are watching this development with interest, as it may offer a new way of encouraging engagement with the professionalisation and scholarship of teaching for academics in New Zealand.

#### **Issue 4. Development of university staff capabilities in using digital technology in teaching**

In order for students to succeed in the modern world, they must experience a professional, supportive and enabling digital learning technology environment as they study and prepare for that world. To achieve this university staff must be able to engage with technology as a mechanism for enhancing the quality of student learning outcomes. Therefore, CAD staff have been challenged to find ways to help Victoria academics develop confidence and self-efficacy in the use of digital technologies for teaching.

In 2011, Victoria launched a staff capability project, based on the outcomes of a needs analysis of nearly 300 academic staff from all university faculties. The findings of the needs analysis provided a rich picture of faculty staff perceptions of and attitudes towards using digital technologies in teaching and learning. Staff clearly articulated their personal objectives and their support and training needs. In addition, a number of existing barriers to a wider adoption of digital technologies were identified. Three groups of needs were common across the University:

- Being better informed about available digital tools and resources for teaching and learning
- Being better informed about how colleagues use digital tools and resources
- Access to just-in-time discipline-specific support and training.

To address these needs, CAD recruited 12 part-time support staff (Master's and PhD students) studying in specific university faculties, with a good understanding of discipline-specific teaching and learning contexts of those faculties. These contacts for academic technology (CATs) had some level of knowledge about the digital technologies most commonly used at Victoria, and were themselves confident users of digital technology. In the spirit of 'ako', these graduate students became teachers/advisors in a reciprocal relationship with academic staff. CATs also received professional development and training in the key technologies used at Victoria, and participated in professional development activities organised by CAD, including the university teaching and learning conference. A community of practice was established and maintained through regular meetings and online tools (a reflective blog, discussion forum, document repository, wiki). The CATs provided individual and group support to faculty teaching staff in using academic technologies; facilitated staff exchanges for sharing practice in the use of digital technologies in teaching; and created support resources/materials for their faculties. By invitation, the CATs attended faculty teaching and learning committee meetings, and faculty and school development events.

The university staff and CAT feedback on the support model used in the pilot was very positive. It has since been adopted as a key model for supporting professional development in using technology in teaching across the university. In addition to increasing academics' interest in and awareness of digital tools for teaching and learning, the CATs were themselves mentored into seeing themselves as academic developers who enjoyed working with academics. A number of them have since been successful in obtaining appointments in this capacity at Victoria, or within the broader educational sector.

#### **Issue 5. Supporting and developing casual teaching staff**

Universities rely on tutors to provide a large amount of the face-to-face teaching for undergraduate students. At Victoria, as in many other universities, these tutors are employed on a part-time hourly basis to run tutorials for groups of between 15-25 students. Ideally, students prepare beforehand and attend a weekly tutorial in which they participate in

discussion and consolidating activities. In reality, tutorials do not always match up to this ideal. In common with many institutions around the world, student-tutor ratios are increasing, numbers of tutorials per course are decreasing and students in some subjects are increasingly finding

themselves being tutored by fellow undergraduates who may only have completed the course during the previous year.

It is in this context that CAD staff approach the training of these tutors. Currently, Victoria funds all new tutors to attend

	<i>CAD support for</i>	<i>CAD support from</i>
<i>CAD colleagues</i>	Mentoring Collaboration in teaching Sharing resources, ideas and practices Critical friendships	
<i>Faculty staff</i>	Scholarship of learning and teaching Theoretical and practical approaches Spaces for reflection Practical individual and group learning-teaching activities/ideas Supporting development of discipline-specific teaching-learning research	Disciplinary nuances of higher education concepts  Examples of innovative and best practice  Feedback on our own work
<i>University management</i>	Supporting pedagogically-based strategies and policies  Projects to develop learning-teaching thinking and practice	Focus for our development work  Policies to support our approaches and projects  Funding for and recognition of teaching-learning initiatives
<i>NZ academic developers</i>	Collaboration in research Sharing resources, ideas and practices Cross-institutional marking and curriculum feedback Critical friendships	
<i>NZ national teaching bodies</i>	<i>Ako Aotearoa, the national centre for tertiary teaching excellence</i>  Undertake and disseminate NZ-based research	<i>Ako Aotearoa, the national centre for tertiary teaching excellence</i>  Funding for NZ-based education research  A range of resources for development work  Workshops and consultancy for specific aspects of NZ education
	<i>TERNZ (Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand)</i>  Host biennial conference on a turn-about basis with other NZ institutions  Present research and work in progress  Act as critical friends and/or mentors to other (often new) presenters	<i>TERNZ (Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand)</i>  Opportunities to present work in progress  Opportunities for nationwide networking and discussion
<i>International conferences/colleagues</i>	Present research and work in progress  Act as critical friends to other researchers  Provide a NZ perspective on international issues	Opportunities to present research  Opportunities to learn from international experts  Opportunities for international networking and discussion
<i>International professional bodies (HERDSA, SEDA, ICED, ASCILITE, DEANZ)</i>	Sit on governance boards  Act as reviewers, associate editors and editors of publications  Act as critical friends for other members  Present research at conferences	Continuing professional development through online communities  Recognition of our work as a discipline  Resources to inform our work  Critical friendships

Table 1 *Ako in action: A reciprocal view of the support of academic development in the Centre for Academic Development at Victoria University of Wellington*

a paid three-hour introduction to tutorial teaching and a further two-hour workshop on marking and feedback. CAD staff also offer voluntary workshops that lead to a certificate of completion, and a small number of tutors take advantage of these opportunities. In addition, a tutors' Facebook group has been established to provide a forum for tutors to share ideas, ask questions and view forthcoming training opportunities.

With up to 500 new tutors per year from all disciplines attending the introductory session, it is important that the CAD training is relevant, adequate and timely. Our training is based on Glassick, Huber and Maeroff's scholarly standards (see Hall and Sutherland (2013) for a full description) and models good practice in tutorials as well as providing a clear rationale for an active, student-centred approach. We also work with course co-ordinators as often as possible when it comes to preparing tutors to teach. Training which is integrated with disciplinary input and includes a high level of support and buy-in from co-ordinators is generally the most effective.

Our PhD students are not appointed as Teaching Assistants (of the type seen in many US institutions) and are predominantly being prepared for research rather than teaching. Those who receive university scholarships are expected to tutor as part of a 150-hour 'service to the university' requirement. While we cannot assume that all tutors are aiming for an academic career, a recent paper on this topic (Sutherland and Gilbert, 2013) found that 75% of surveyed tutors saw tutoring as a key step towards an academic career. On a positive note, 60% had not been put off academia as a result of being a tutor. While this is heartening, it does mean that there is a clear need for some kind of formalised qualification for tutors that will give them the most appropriate start.

At this point, a major challenge is to encourage the university and its teaching staff to value the opportunities offered by small group teaching, despite funding constraints. Appropriate resourcing, recruiting and support for tutors help us to create better learning for the university's students.

## Supporting the work of academic developers at Victoria

Clearly there is a lot happening in the academic development space in New Zealand, and support is vital if we are to succeed; but a relatively small and geographically spread community of practice across New Zealand, and our physical distance from other networks nationally and internationally mean that we may draw on these resources in more informal ways, or as research tools for more independent or university-centred approaches than some of our international colleagues. It would be great to have an active network of local academic developers with whom to learn, consult, share and, at times, commiserate. However, the situation at present is rather more devolved, although that does not stop academic developers from creating their own informal networks, both within and beyond their units.

Thinking in terms of ako, we might view the support for our work as a series of layers. We begin from a relatively independent and reflective centre of supporting ourselves through individual reflection, informed by the research done by our international peers, and through the reciprocal critical friendships of our CAD colleagues. From here we move outward through our ever-evolving network of Victoria, faculty and university staff, and academic development colleagues at other New Zealand institutions. Finally, we learn from our overseas colleagues, with whom we engage at conferences and through a variety of professional bodies. The resources these national and international colleagues develop then act as the starting point for a new cycle of independent reflection to international engagement. The reciprocal nature of these support networks is shown in Table 1, opposite.

## Conclusion

At first glance, the issues that impact our work in the Centre for Academic Development may well seem familiar to colleagues all over the world. At second glance, our geographical, political and cultural context may make us seem very different, and make us appear to have little in common. However, the truth is actually somewhere in between. By consciously adopting a role in which we both contribute to and seek development from a range of local, national and international support areas, we find ourselves to be part of a network of strong development communities, which connect us, and the academics we support, not only to Victoria, but to the world.

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# Is our academic practice transferable across cultural boundaries? A leadership case from Saudi Arabia

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## Introduction

Based on recent experiences gained through a consultancy at Princess Nora University (PNU), Saudi Arabia, this article explores some of the issues relating to the cultural transferability of our academic development practices.

PNU is the largest women-only university in the world with a capacity for over 40,000 students and 5000 women staff. It is also the newest women-only university in the world. Derived from former women's colleges, the University is now in its fifth year of existence, its opening having been celebrated in March 2011. The establishment of Princess Nora University marks a commitment to the advancement of women in Saudi Arabia.

Women comprise 58% of Saudi Arabia's college students and 14% of its labour force. Of this 14%, 85% of employed Saudi women work in education, 6% in public health and 9% in the public sector (Miller, 2011).

Late in 2013 I received an invitation to spend a period of time as a Consultant to the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement (DDSE) at PNU. I was seconded from my position at the University of Auckland as part of our higher education strategic engagement agenda. The overarching purpose of the consultancy was to support the development of a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching within the PNU Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement and to support the University in developing strategies to build leadership capacity and capability in learning and teaching.

## Taking on the cultural challenge

Prior to receiving this invitation I had been to Saudi Arabia several times

and had supported learning and teaching development initiatives in many universities in the Kingdom, and with the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education. I had gained professional credibility and insights into the challenges of change in culturally different universities, but I had not previously had a long-stay academic engagement in a university in Saudi Arabia.

In taking on the role of consultant to the Deanship of Skills Development and Enhancement, a context that was culturally very different from anything I had experienced before, I wondered if tried and tested approaches to academic development would necessarily be transferable. Would expectations within a different cultural terrain, a place with very different power and politics, be radically different? Would my philosophy, beliefs and practices be applicable in this different culture? To what extent were networks of activities a reality in Princess Nora University?

It is fair to say that as a woman travelling alone, nothing can quite prepare you for the culture shock of arriving in Saudi Arabia. You are one amongst the very many, conspicuous by your presence. Wearing the Abayah is mandatory at all times for women outside of the home. This issue is non-negotiable, a fact of life in Saudi Arabia and for many Western women this raises the issue of why one would choose to spend time in Saudi Arabia. For me it was about expanding my global perspective on the importance of education, my sense of myself as a global academic citizen, my enthusiasm for challenge and developing and growing my sense of self and my world view. The world is messy and complex and cross-cultural and cross-boundary collaborations

are educational and developmental. If we can understand each other better whatever our culture we might be able to build a better future.

Princess Nora University is a purpose-built state of the art university which boasts a monorail within its vast space to provide for easy movement between colleges, administration offices and staff accommodation. It comprises 15 Deanships, most of which are academic discipline-based Colleges. The term Deanship is also used for support units, such as administrative functions. PNU is described as a self-contained higher education city.

It is a challenging task to develop a university of the size and complexity of PNU, yet there is a strong desire for it to become not only the world's largest women-only university but also to build a reputation for excellence in academic achievement and the student learning experience. To realise this goal, senior managers within PNU recognise the need to develop all staff, to support and enable them to reach their highest potential. The university recognises the benefit of engaging individual academics and academic cohorts from national and international institutions to support it in achieving its goals. However, bringing in a raft of experience from international universities is not without its challenges as well as opportunities, both for the host institution (PNU) and for the individuals or groups providing consultancy and expertise.

## The leadership challenges

The most challenging aspect of working in Saudi Arabia is not in sharing academic development practices, but rather in understanding culturally different conceptions of leadership. This issue was even more prominent in Princess Nora University which cannot

be considered to be the norm. While it is a women-only university, there are significant issues regarding the status of women in Saudi Arabia. Women must wear the Abayah at all times; they are not permitted to drive; they must be accompanied at all times outside of the home and they must gain permission from a male relative to travel, and of course be accompanied. These societal restrictions on women have meant that women are not generally accustomed to being afforded or take on leadership roles in the workplace. On the other hand the women working in higher education are extraordinary in their commitment and their passion for success. Many of them have been educated in universities around the world, in the USA, Canada and the UK, for example.

In my experience of working in universities in Saudi Arabia, there is no question that there is an enthusiasm, a 'hunger' to learn as much as possible about learning and teaching, to adopt and modify strategies that consultants like myself bring to their universities.

It was not too problematic therefore to introduce across faculties initiatives such as Peer Observation of Teaching, writing a Statement of Philosophy of Learning and Teaching, and exploring the notion of developing a portfolio for the purposes of initiating Teaching Excellence Awards. It was interesting that in comparison to their male colleagues in other 'mixed gender' universities, women faculty in PNU did not have a problem about sharing teaching expertise, about introducing peer observation and feedback. In another university, the idea of peer observation was not welcomed because of a fear of reprisals if a 'bad report' was written about their teaching. It was not possible in that instance to reassure some faculty members that 'bad reports' was not the point or purpose of the enhancement strategy. The faculty in PNU welcomed the idea wholeheartedly!

What was much more challenging was engaging in conversations and initiatives to build leadership capability within PNU and in this respect, cultural conceptions of leadership

were at the forefront of the challenge. Perhaps this is not surprising. Absolute monarchy and autocracy are not compatible with distributed leadership and empowerment and, in addition, it would be very surprising if there were not significant gender differences in thinking about leadership, given women's traditional role in Saudi Arabian society. In the next section I outline some of the cultural mismatch between Western conceptions of leadership and those I experienced at PNU.

The leadership inputs that have impacted on me most include a *Leadership at the Peak* programme facilitated by the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) and the work of Jim P. Kouzes and Barry Posner in their book *The Leadership Challenge* (2012). The learning from these inputs is what I carry with me and endeavour to live up to in my work building leadership capacity and capability. I work towards blending together my leadership and pedagogical knowledge in my academic practice.

A means of articulating ways in which our approaches to leadership differ from those of such a culturally different environment as a women's university in the Middle East is to take Kouzes and Posner's 5 Leadership Challenges and give what may be considered simplistic comparisons but which hopefully give a sense of the cultural nuances that we can't ignore in sharing our expertise across cultures.

## Cultural comparisons

(Kouzes and Posner's 5 Leadership Challenges, 2012)

### Model the way

*(The key to successful leadership is influence, not authority',*  
K. H. Blanchard)

The first challenge Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner present us with is to 'model the way'. What they mean by this is that as leaders we need to be conscious of ourselves as role models; we must promote engagement by being engaged ourselves, show commitment, respect and dignity for all regardless of status. We should also

be influencers and advocates – and engage in taken for granted democratic processes.

In Saudi Arabia, however, there are few role models for women in leadership positions and there is a strong tendency to equate leadership with power. Leaders are not necessarily chosen for their skills and expertise but rather through patronage – status, class, culture. This could of course be considered not dissimilar to the House of Lords in the UK! It is quite wrong to consider that Western countries are models of democracy, and this was a comment I heard frequently from colleagues in Saudi Arabia.

There is a depth of hierarchy, power and authority in universities in Saudi Arabia that is extremely difficult to navigate and thus it is not always the case that 'modelling the way' is easy to do.

### Inspire a shared vision

*(Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality',* Warren Bennis)

The second of Kouzes and Posner's five leadership challenges calls upon leaders to engage in a collaborative effort to determine a vision for the organisation which is clearly aligned with organisational goals. In this respect most of us can participate in a democratic process. While we are by no means perfect, we do enjoy freedom of engagement and dialogue and different voices can be heard.

In contrast, my experience particularly in PNU was that there is a societal divide between traditionalists and modernisers. There are two views expressed about PNU. One is that by educating women they will make better wives and the other is that by educating many more women than has traditionally been the case, women will have a voice in the political, social and economic future of Saudi Arabia. But right now, women do not have that 'power' and it appeared to me that PNU is struggling to set out a clear vision, strategic plans, operational plans etc. It is an institution still in its infancy and as such is not yet in control of its own destiny and

therefore it is difficult to inspire a shared vision, and the levels of engagement across institutions that we recognise are not visible in PNU.

### Challenge the process

*(Leadership is the willingness to put oneself at risk', J. C. Maxwell)*

Most leadership literature, whether it comes from the business or the education sectors, would suggest that leadership is not about maintaining the status quo. In higher education there is an expectation that leaders will lead innovation and experimentation with a research-led approach to change underpinned by scholarship, and strategies to enhancing organisational performance. As a member of an academic development community with leadership responsibilities, the notion of challenging the process often requires courage, much advocacy and persuasion at different levels, but my belief is that I am not really expected to keep things ticking over, but rather to effect meaningful change through many different strategies.

In Saudi Arabia culture and tradition make it very difficult for women to 'challenge the process'. The university is merely a microcosm of cultural norms of high power distance in the hierarchy and many layers of bureaucracy, resulting in a long process of decision-making. It is not in the powers of faculty or management in PNU to challenge the process.

### Enable others to act

*(A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves', Lao Tzu)*

My interpretation of Kouzes and Posner's fourth leadership challenge is that as an individual with leadership responsibilities it is critical to my role to create a climate of *trust* and *lift people up*. There are many examples of leaders believing that 'it is all about them'. In fact a recent blog post from Henry Mintzberg (2015), an outstanding leader in leadership and management, is entitled *The Epidemic of Managing Without a Soul*.

In this posting, Mintzberg 'talks' about managers who specialise in killing cultures at the expense of human engagement! Enabling others to act means being generous with leadership roles to build capacity and capability, mentoring and coaching explicitly for leadership and creating transparency in career progression and the reward processes.

Again I could not claim that in our universities all is well; in fact we are less than perfect in many of our institutional processes. However, in an autocratic society, it is clearly much more difficult to enable others to act. The points below give an indication of some of the issues I discerned from working with faculty in PNU:

- Lack of continuity of practice, with many different consultants not necessarily all giving the same messages
- Systemic changes are required to enhance motivation amongst staff given that there is no transparency or embedded processes for recruitment and career progression
- Faculty members are doing a heroic job in challenging circumstances
- Faculty members are willing to engage, and seek appropriate development opportunities aligned with their roles, but individual women and the institution itself are not in control of their own destiny.

### Encourage the heart

*(The people who are lifting the world onward and upward are those who encourage more than they criticize', Elizabeth Harrison)*

The last but not least of the five leadership challenges espoused by Kouzes and Posner encourages us to:

- Recognize achievement, reward high performance, show generosity of spirit
- Live your values, be a role model for values-based leadership
- Show the best, encourage the best
- Engage, lift, enthuse, inspire.

These points are not so very different from those espoused by other experts in the field of leadership and would

seem to be applicable in all leadership situations. As leaders we need to work at living up to the challenges and the complexities of leadership within our higher education institutions, and in reality there are few barriers to us being the best we can be.

In the cultural context being considered there are many obstacles and barriers, not least of all the top-down and top-heavy leadership which stems from the cultural environment. Women in Saudi Arabia have to work immensely hard to 'prove' their leadership in an environment where there is a distinct lack of recognition. My experience at PNU was one of watching extremely courageous women doing a difficult job in very difficult circumstances.

To my mind it was not a case of women not wanting to be or become the best leaders they could be; it was not necessarily a case of Western assumptions being transposed into a very different culture. Rather it was the case that democratic processes as we understand them are not much in evidence. While women are making advances in society, in the workplace, in the politic of Saudi Arabia, the notion of leadership equating with power is deeply entrenched, and the idea of empowering people, women in particular, is more of an uphill struggle in this cultural environment.

Given that many of us will be invited to engage in consultancy contracts in countries very different from our own, it may be helpful to explore the cultural challenges and glean information from those who have gone before!

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# Enhancement through partnership: a virtuous cycle or lots of dead ends?

**Ellie Russell**, National Union of Students

Alongside engaging students in order for them to become stimulated by and invested in their learning, many institutions are supporting their students to be influential in decision-making and help shape their academic community.

Although the practices around this dimension of student engagement may be long-standing in some cases, such as the existence of a students' union and course representative system, student engagement as a policy priority at a national level and strategic priority at a local level is relatively recent. As the NUS pointed out in its 'Manifesto for Partnership', this has involved moving beyond a narrow focus on the validity of various systems of student engagement and instead describing concepts linked to student identities and the potential of individuals to influence their environment. The idea of students as partners being a way to produce enhanced learning, curriculum, academic communities and institutions has gained significant currency.

At its heart, partnership is about students and staff working together to improve education. However, when it comes to identifying specific ways for students to not only identify areas for enhancement, but also the good practice or new interventions that might help to carry out these enhancements, the idea of students as partners becomes more challenging.

As we go round the cycle of enhancement, where an evidence base is collected and analysed to inform the dissemination of good practice and identification of new interventions, the impact(s) of which are evaluated and regularly monitored, there will be plenty of opportunities for students and staff to work together in partnership. Whilst QAA defines enhancement as deliberate steps taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities, I'm often told that enhancement activity is conceived of and implemented at a more local level within institutions. This doesn't mean that it is any less deliberate, but it does mean that consideration of how students can meaningfully engage in this activity is also devolved and needs careful consideration. This should include considering ways to ensure that student voices move beyond simply being a data source in the evidence base, to the identification, implementation and evaluation of new interventions, and avoiding partnership being considered an outcome in itself, rather than a process of engagement that leads to desirable outcomes for learners and an improved learning environment.

In order to help students and staff orient their practice towards shared ideas of success, there will also need to be

a strong partnership approach at a senior level between the provider and the students' union; a mutual accountability for both the way enhancement initiatives are conceived of and implemented and the outcomes they deliver. An effective partnership approach between institutions and students' unions should allow for enhancement to be based on management information and strategic priorities, but the activity to be developed at a local level to ensure it is meaningful and context-specific. 'Building a Framework for Partnership', published by NUS, UUK and BIS, suggests student charters as one way of expressing partnership at the highest level and enabling it on the ground, by using the charter design process to set out a shared agenda or plan of work for enhancement. The Framework for Partnership sets out the following questions that staff and students seeking to initiate joint enhancement activity will need to address in their local context and which could provide a useful starting point for reflection and conversations about enhancing the learning experience through partnership:

- 1) What will be different about our environment when we have completed our work? How will things have changed for students and staff?
- 2) Why is the change we are seeking valuable and meaningful to us?
- 3) How can we work together to build an evidence base for the nature of the issue we are trying to address and a rationale for which interventions are most likely to move us towards our desired outcome?
- 4) What do we think is the value for staff and students in getting involved in this activity? Which students and staff will we target for involvement? How will we ensure adequate support is in place to develop staff and student participants to engage effectively and share power?
- 5) What barriers are likely to exist for specific groups of students or staff to participation in our activity and how might we mitigate these?
- 6) How long will it take, how much will it cost and what risks need to be addressed to maximise our chance of success?
- 7) How will we identify relevant learning from the process and disseminate it to others who might benefit from our work?
- 8) How will we ensure the sustainability of our activity once the focus is no longer on this specific issue or area of work?

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# Half a million unsatisfied graduates? Increasing scrutiny of the National Student Survey's 'overall' question

**John Canning**, University of Brighton

Question 22 (Q22), 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course', stands alone in the National Student Survey (NSS). University league tables include it more than any other question. It covers a multitude of sins. It is the litmus test of a course. However good or bad the assessment, the facilities, the course organisation, this overall question can condemn or redeem a course. Like checkmate in chess, a boxer's knockout punch, a judge's verdict, it does not matter who tried hardest, made the best moves or made the best arguments. In many respects it is the only judgment that counts.

In 2014, 86% of students agreed or strongly agreed with Q22, a figure colourfully highlighted on the HEFCE (2014) website.

## Does good in part mean good overall?

Marsh and Cheng (2008) recognised that Q22 was under-researched, especially in terms of its relationship with the other 21 questions. Q22 has such a taken-for-granted status that it has escaped individual scrutiny. Overall satisfaction is the headline figure and university leaders set targets for their own institutions. This is not to suggest that the other 21 questions are ignored, though. It is reasonable to assume extended effort, better coaching and developing better arguments to improve scores on Questions 1-21 will lead to a greater chance of a positive verdict on Q22.

Correlations between overall satisfaction with most of the other 21 items are fairly high (around 0.7) though correlation does not necessarily equal causation. Even the direction of possible causation is unclear - is a student satisfied overall when the other 21 components (plus other unknown issues not addressed)

are in place, or does a satisfied student take the view that all is well with the rest of the experience?

Yorke (2009) notes all the questions in the NSS are positive, leading to the possibility of acquiescence bias (or 'yeah-saying'). If some of the preceding questions were negative, would the overall satisfaction be 86%, greater than 86% or less than 86%? If the NSS included questions such as 'The teaching on my course was boring', 'Staff failed to give me feedback on my work', or the 'The equipment and resources required for my course were outdated', then we may see a propensity for lower overall satisfaction. I am entering the realm of pure speculation here, but the order of questions might be important. Would overall satisfaction be higher or lower if Q22 came first or the questions were generated to each student at random? Although Yorke found no statistically significant differences between responses when he made some of the existing questions negative, he suspects that the highly politicised 'real world' environment of the NSS may make for different results than the controlled environments of his experiments.

Question 22 does not come under scrutiny in the recent review (Callender *et al.*, 2014) of the NSS which recommends rephrasing and replacing certain questions in time for the 2017 survey. The 'overall quality' question is rated most highly by potential students (Renfrew *et al.*, 2010), but the assumption that this question is unproblematic could be usefully explored further. To my knowledge there has not been any study of the placing and ordering of the NSS questions. Sir Humphry Appleby, the erudite and pompous Cabinet secretary in the 1980s comedy *Yes, Prime Minister*, shows his

protégé Bernard Woolly how opinion polls can be manipulated. A majority view, either yes or no, on any question can be obtained by biasing the questions which precede it, then only reporting on the final question (Jay and Lynn, 1986).

The importance placed on Q22 in league tables and university publicity should lead us to scrutinise the 'overall' more, not less. How do respondents really interpret this question? As academics we often assume students demarcate clear boundaries between the learning and teaching experience and 'externals' such as the quality of university accommodation, sports facilities or social life. We may assume there is a strict boundary between the course and the experience of university outside the course, but this does not mean the students think about this in the same way. These outside factors can enable or inhibit the students' ability to benefit fully from the course. How can a student be satisfied with the overall quality of the course if he/she is unable to attend classes due to outside problems, some of which may be within the university's sphere of influence?

## Alarmingly big numbers

Then we have the psychology of percentages and big numbers. Is 86% a large or small percentage? At first glance it appears large. A vast majority of students are satisfied – more than eight out of ten (or four out of five, in marketing speak). No doubt many organisations would be delighted with that level of satisfaction.

However, let us forget the percentages for a moment and look at actual numbers. In 2014, 53,252 students did not agree or strongly agree with the Q22 statement.

53,252 is a big number, almost enough to fill the repurposed London Olympic stadium. Extend that figure over the ten-year period of the NSS and suddenly, the population of unsatisfied and ambivalent graduates is about the same as Leeds. As the NSS is undertaken in the final year of the course these unsatisfied students are mostly successful students. At the very least they have made it through the first, second or third year of assessment (depending on course length). These are not our drop-outs and failures.

The unsatisfied graduate should give us more cause for retrospection than at present. Students are graduating, not only £50,000 plus in debt, but in possession of a degree certificate from our institution and three or four years of an unsatisfactory experience on their CV. If we are dissatisfied with our car insurance company or latest vacuum cleaner, most of us would go no further than avoiding that company or manufacturer in the future and perhaps warning our friends. Three years' work, £50,000 of debt and an identity as a graduate of a particular institution and course, cannot be resolved by doing better research next time, or accepting a bad experience as part of life's rich tapestry. For students who made it to the final year then left without a qualification the outlook will be even worse.

The unsatisfied graduate may eventually consider that their experience was

satisfactory after all. They may be successful and realise the value of their course was greater than expected. Conversely they may attribute personal success as having been achieved *despite* their university studies.

Percentages of 80 or 90 plus must not be allowed to distract us from the troublesome truth that tens of thousands of students express negative views on the NSS each year. Looking at the actual numbers troubles me in a way the percentages do not. Do we accept that there will always be students for whom university is a less than satisfactory experience and concentrate our efforts on trying to make these numbers as few as possible? Or do these vast majority positive experiences feed our complacency?

### Conclusion

A student in a prior project reported 'No-one knows what the question means, but everyone can recognise that the responses will be used to make the university look good' (Canning, 2011). That 16% of students still can't agree or strongly agree with Q22 is troubling, as damaging the reputation of one's *alma mater* appears irrational. Q22 offers an insight into a truth about the student learning experience, albeit 'through a glass, darkly'. With more than 50,000 students unable to agree with this overall question each year

we need more thought and research into understanding this question.

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## Back to front but successful: The 'reverse' drop-in

**Sally Burr**, University of Sussex

I am a Learning Technologist in the Technology Enhanced Learning team at the University of Sussex supporting two schools: Business Economics and Management (BMEc) and Education and Social Work (ESW).

The Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) team is newly formed within the university, just over a year old. We are a motivated team of learning technologists and there is much in our collective e-goody bag. Specialisms include Moodle, virtual reality, interactive polling tools, video editing,

Smartboards, bookmarking and web curation tools, to name but a few. Being new, we are keen to make a noise about who we are and what we can do.

### TEL for Sussex

One challenge to the team is to communicate what we can do for academic staff within a large institution. The university has always had dedicated technology teams to provide expert support. We are quite a new team and a rather different kettle of fish. Our focus is not on the functional

use of technology but more on how current and emerging technologies can be used to enhance how staff teach and how students learn.

What does the existence of the TEL team really mean to an academic at Sussex? Having a Learning Technologist to hand means that there is now help readily available to do all, or any, of the following:

- magic a static Moodle site into a thing of dynamic/interactive beauty
- demonstrate how to use tools for interactive teaching, for example, Clickers, Padlet, TodaysMeet
- show how social media can be implemented for use in teaching and learning
- point academics in the right digital direction to develop an online academic profile
- advise on tools to help curate, bookmark and manage the web
- share emerging technologies, as they emerge!
- support TEL projects.

### The reverse drop-in

An idea formed with Jackie to try a 'reverse' drop-in – essentially a 'knocking on of doors' to speak to academic staff about what the TEL team could do. Jackie Guillemard is the inspiring Senior Course Coordinator who helps to keep the large BMEc school of 2369 students, 327 staff and 48 taught courses well-oiled and running smoothly.

I had recently tried a traditional drop-in. Although a good number of staff had attended, we really wanted to reach and engage those staff who wouldn't readily follow a poster's suggestion to attend a drop-in.

I held my first reverse drop-in last month; it was not unlike being a car sales person. My *ratatat* wasn't completely cold as I had circulated a web-based advert to pre-warn of my intention to turn up at offices. However, I was a surprise to most.

### How did it go?

The reverse drop-in went really well. I had originally planned to run the reverse drop-in for two hours. In just one hour, however, I had managed to speak to five academic colleagues, conducted on the spot Moodle magic for one, unhinged a more traditional academic colleague with mention of Twitter, and created a sizeable volume of work with regards to video and creative commons licence and additional digital queries to take back with me. There was only a little resistance by the said traditional academic unmoved by the promised merit of Twitter as a way to disseminate research. However, experiencing resistance is a useful thing for a Learning Technologist. Finding out how academics feel about different emerging technologies can help with marketing and planning services in the future. A lot of how we engage with technologies is based on how we feel about them.

### Rinse and repeat?

I will definitely run the reverse drop-in again. It can be a challenge to get a new service known within a large institution

and although knocking on doors might not be to everyone's taste, it certainly meant that I reached academics who I might not otherwise have met. More often than not, I was very welcome and academics made the most of me there and then.

### Reverse drop-in tips

You need to feel perky, so aim to schedule yours on a day that you don't have conflicting demands. Another tip is to have a leaflet handy outlining your services. If an academic is busy, they can keep your TEL calling card. Useful, too, to prompt you in your patter.

If you knock on doors, you might not always be entirely welcome in terms of timing, but you will always reach more academics in an hour than you would if you were running a drop-in. It cannot be anything but successful, as you only need to rely on your own attendance! And who goes to organised drop-in events? Only a few, and perhaps not the ones that need the help the most.

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**Sally Burr**@burrblog - 51s

Off to knock on doors tomorrow@BMEcSussex for the Spring TEL reverse drop-in. See you tom!  
sussex.ac.uk/tel/help/sandb ...



Twitter image for the reverse drop-in

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# Re-thinking belonging

Nicholas Bowskill, University of Derby

*'I didn't use that service because I didn't think anyone else in my year would.'* [Student X]

## Introduction

A sense of belonging is a key indicator of success for student retention (Tinto, 1995; Tinto, 2000). Baumeister says that we have a basic human need to belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Maslow includes the need to belong in his 'Hierarchy of Needs' (Maslow, 1943).

Lack of belonging (social isolation) is a cause of various difficulties. It is associated with ill health (Haslam *et al.*, 2009). It is linked to clinical depression (House, 2001; House, 2002). It is associated with impaired memory and language function (Cacioppo *et al.*, 2000).

From this, we can see that a sense of belonging needs to be understood not just in terms of economic costs to different stakeholders. It is related to student mental health, student wellbeing, learning performance and socialisation. Having stressed the importance of belonging we need to develop a better understanding of how it is formed and developed. For this, we need to understand the relationship between belonging to one group relative to another. Drawing on a social identity perspective (Tajfel, 1969; Tajfel, 1974; Turner, 1975; Turner and Oakes, 1986; Turner *et al.*, 1994), we look at group membership (social identities) and the values, practices and beliefs (social norms) pertaining to those groups.

This is a necessarily brief summary of this theoretical framework and should in no way be seen as complete. For a more comprehensive view of the theory see elsewhere (Turner and Reynolds, 2010).

This article closes with suggestions for practice, particularly relating to student induction, transition and retention as times of uncertainty. These guidelines

are based on the social identity perspective.

## Belonging to social groups

We could think about groups as structures for teaching and learning. We can also think of them as an aggregation of individuals brought together for a particular task. However, to do so would overlook the influence groups have on our thinking, our feelings and on our behaviour.

Groups should be recognised as a psychological entity as well as a physical entity (Tajfel, 1969). They exert an active influence on us (Haslam *et al.*, 2012) even when other members are not physically present. Evidence of this can be seen in the quote above.

In social psychology, the groups to which we belong are known as social identities (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel, 1982; Turner *et al.*, 1994). These are the sense each of us has as members of a particular group. There are many different social identities. They include age, gender, ethnicity, nationality *etc.*, as those which come most readily to mind. There are also a great many others. The groups to which we belong bestow benefits for members. For instance, they give us comfort and security. We care about belonging to these groups. We have an emotional attachment to them. As a consequence, rejection by other members of those groups may be more hurtful than insults from non-members. We partly define ourselves in terms of our membership of these groups (Turner, 1975). However, belonging to certain groups, in particular situations, can also work against us (Steele and Aronson, 1995). Sometimes, we are categorised by others as belonging to a particular group. Those identities may generally be of little personal significance. However, if we feel that we are being stigmatised based on one of our social identities, and that identity is personally significant, then we may feel psychologically

threatened (Steele, 1997; Walton and Cohen, 2011).

## Defining belonging as social norms

We can give dictionary definitions of belonging. They would include ideas of how well we fit into different groups and how well we are accepted, welcomed or judged by others.

This could seem quite static. It could appear as though there was little variation in our sense of belonging across time and in different contexts. It also says little about the multiplicity of groups to which we may belong and the relationship of one to another.

Acknowledging this concern, we can think of belonging in terms of the meanings attached to/by the membership of different social groups. Each social group has a shared understanding amongst its members. These are the values, practices and beliefs associated with that particular group.

These 'social norms' have a practical use. They tell us what to do in group-related settings (Abrams *et al.*, 1990; Frith and Frith, 2012). They show us how to be with each other and they coordinate social interaction when we engage in group-related activities (Abrams *et al.*, 1990).

These norms also help members to measure their level of fit in the group. They inform our view of others. They even provide the basis for others to judge whether or not we belong. These group-situated norms therefore define belonging in a particular moment of social interaction.

Put simply, social norms are a working model (prototype) for understanding group membership in a particular setting. As such, belonging should be understood as fluid rather than static and in this sense, there is a myriad of definitions of belonging.

## Faulty norms

The internal representation we have of a group, and what it means to belong, may be problematic in different ways. For instance we may have an incomplete representation of the group norms. Our internal representation may also be flawed.

This may arise from an inability to imagine what it means to belong to a group (Burford, 2012). For example, a student that has no family history of going to university probably has a less developed prototype for 'being a student' than someone who comes from a long line of family members who have studied in different universities.

As an example, we may not have a very good sense of the final year compared with the first year at university (Burford, 2012). In the first year, we might have heard there are lectures and fresher's fairs. However, we may have a more impoverished notion of the final year and writing a dissertation.

If the representation of the social group is flawed, students may wrongly feel they do not belong. For example, if a new student feels their peers would not use a support service, they may also avoid using that service (see quote above) even though it is quite likely that in reality some of the peer group will use such services.

Social experience, including trial and error, can help to counter idiosyncrasies and adjust flaws in the individual perception of these norms (Hogg and Reid, 2006). However, on arrival at university students are yet to have that experience.

Much of higher education is also designed around individualistic models of learning and yet these problems are often related to group membership. As such any flaws may remain an active influence.

## Uncertainty and belonging

Arriving into a university, and into each year of a course, is a time of great uncertainty for many students, but when there is no objective measure available how can we gauge whether we belong? One way this can be done

is through comparison with others.

Interestingly, comparisons are more likely to be made in situations of uncertainty than in contexts where we know what to do (Hogg *et al.*, 2007). By definition, education and learning are all about uncertainty, which is heightened at key times such as final year exams and induction.

When we are uncertain about what to do, we are most likely to align with one of the groups to which we feel we belong. Aligning to one of our groups offers us security. We can follow the norms for that contextually relevant group. This may help alleviate stress and reduce uncertainty.

This would also be a group which is both accessible and a social category which fits with the social context. Being a 'student' would be a contingent example when arriving at university.

Group alignment is further heightened when the active identity has a greater sense of entitativity (Campbell, 1958; Hogg and Reid, 2006; Hogg *et al.*, 2007). In other words, the greater the coherence and definition of the group and its norms the stronger will likely be the level of identification (Campbell, 1958; Hogg and Reid, 2006). As a consequence, the sense of belonging to that given group will be similarly stronger (Hogg and Reid, 2006; Hogg *et al.*, 2007).

For new students, this probably means that a comparison is easier to make with a peer group ('students') than with 'tutors.' That superordinate group ('academics') is initially harder to use as the basis for a comparison because the semantic gap may be too great. Either way, social groups are an interesting issue both as an influence and as a solution to uncertainty reduction.

## Developing belonging

So, what does all this mean for developing practice? Based on the above, we have a number of identifiable features of first year students as a social group:

- 1) They are likely to be uncertain about what to do and where to go for different issues and activities

- 2) They may be uncertain about their abilities to study at this level
- 3) Their membership of 'being a student' or 'being a student at this university' is likely to be psychologically active on arrival
- 4) That membership is likely to be the most accessible social identity in their first weeks (and possibly beyond)
- 5) They will have a prototype of some sort for these active social identities
- 6) Their prototype may be flawed
- 7) Their prototype may be incomplete
- 8) These flaws raise significant implications for students, staff and institutions
- 9) Students will be more likely to be motivated to belong in their course-group (greater entitativity and accessibility) than 'the university' (low entitativity and less accessible)
- 10) Their course group is quite likely to form the basis of comparisons they may make for purposes of self-evaluation.

Therefore, it makes sense to use the course group (or the classroom) as the focus for developing a sense of belonging. To do this, here are a number of suggestions for practice:

- 1) Create an awareness of the group level in the room
- 2) Facilitate dialogue around what it means to be here at the university and help them to share concerns
- 3) Help students to listen to each other even if they do not discuss those concerns
- 4) Help students to co-construct a view of their conversation as a summary of their emergent norms
- 5) Do not seek to achieve a consensus on the summary. Aim to show some level of diversity within the group
- 6) Help students to co-construct a representation of their group on the group-relevant issue
- 7) Help make that representation visible and communicate the representation of the *ad hoc* norms to everyone in the room. This will help correct flawed prototypes or deepen underdeveloped prototypes. It will also show common ground as a basis for belonging

- 8) Invite responses to the issues raised in the discussion from within the group. This will deepen a sense of ownership and group-awareness
- 9) Provide additional responses contingent with the issues raised
- 10) Supplement those responses with additional information once those group-situated concerns have been addressed.

These ideas have already been turned into an emerging practice. Student-Generated Induction (Bowskill, 2013a; Bowskill, 2013b) has been developed and implemented in various institutions throughout the UK. This is a practice which began with the combination of the snowball group discussion technique supported by electronic response technologies (clickers). Since the initial implementation, this technique has been developed into an established practice with many variations within and between sessions.

Even so, the guidance above points to a shift away from an individualistic

view for the design of belonging. Individualistic conceptions of learning design are exemplified by the frequent use of presentations and the conceptualisation of the students as an audience. This is particularly true of some contemporary approaches to student induction.

The social identity-based practice outlined above also marks a required shift 'from methodological individualism to methodological relationalism' (Ho and Chiu, 1998). This is the need to think about the design and development of a sense of belonging based at the group level of relationships as the primary focus. Key questions for researchers are: 'What is the active group?' and 'What are the norms which influence members?'

A sociocultural perspective may not be enough to show the complexity of social relationships when compared with a psychological point of view. We need to move beyond 'individuals in landscapes' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2010) towards a view of the 'groups in individuals' (Turner, 1975;

Turner and Oakes, 1986; Turner *et al.*, 1994).

Finally, this social identity perspective on belonging may be equally valuable for the design of learning, teaching and support. There are additional applications of this view of belonging for student health and wellbeing.

## References

A full version of this article with its references can be found at <http://www.seda.ac.uk/past-issues/16.3>.

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For Bowskill, N. (2013) *Student-Generated Induction: a social identity approach: a Staff Development Guide*, see <http://amzn.to/1a3rxFF>.

# Introducing neuroeducational development

**Steve Outram**, Higher Education Academy

It was bound to happen sooner or later. 'Neuro' is the new black. Think of your own discipline area or thematic priority such as employability. Now prefix it with 'neuro' and you will probably find someone has written about it, whether we are talking about neurohistory, neuroemployability or neuroleadership. What has this to do with the educational developer? Either it offers a whole new approach to our understanding of learning and teaching development or, as some suggest, it is a lot of nonsense – a fad that will run its course before we return to the orthodoxy of constructive alignment, threshold concepts and constructivist pedagogies.

## What is it?

Since the 1980s, it has been possible to capture images of neurones firing in the brain and relating that picture to some form of behaviour. This has enabled neuroscientists to 'map' which bit of the brain does what. Neuroscientists tell us, for example, that decision-making takes place in the prefrontal cortex. Since the 1980s, the technologies available to explore brain activity further have massively improved and, linked to computers, interactive experiments can be conducted that generate sufficient data to be significant and

enable the neuroscientist to determine which stimuli lead to what reaction in the brain. There's more. Neurological experiments have repeatedly demonstrated, for example, that an unconscious decision has been taken in the brain before we become conscious of it – we have decided to act before we become aware that we have decided to act!

This might suggest a worrying reductionist determinism not unlike the positivistic approaches to explaining behaviour that keep manifesting themselves in new ways. Once phrenologists examined the bumps on your head and geneticists counted the number of Y chromosomes that men have, to explain their criminality. Now neuroscientists take pictures inside your head to reveal the pathology that leads to criminal behaviour. For example, Nuzzo (2013) concluded that criminals with diminished activity in the anterior cingulate cortex, a brain region associated with executive function, were 4.3 times more likely to re-offend while on parole. There are obvious ethical implications that stem from this neurocriminology as well as a need to examine the research critically. What is clear is that academics have continually sought to identify causal

relationships between physiology and human behaviour and neuroscience is perhaps the latest manifestation of this quest. However, as the author of the blog *neurobollocks* continually demonstrates (<https://neurobollocks.wordpress.com/>), there is a vast amount of pseudo-neuroscience that now purports to use brain science not only to diagnose behavioural conditions but also, in many cases, find solutions. Stick before and after pictures of neurones ‘firing’ in the brain and it is truly scientific. Not! And as Julian Baggini argues in *Freedom Regained: The Possibility of Free Will*, this apparent determinism is misplaced. The evidence from neuroscientific investigations does not mean that free will is a myth; rather, it is to demonstrate that there is plasticity in the relationship between the brain and the mind, between the environment and psychology, that we now have to address in new ways.

### Neuroscience and the implications for educational developers

It is worth illustrating what this might mean for educational developers by looking at the ways in which researchers have extrapolated from this simple ability to map the brain working. Let’s start with a disciplinary focus. There is now a considerable literature focused on ‘neurohistory’. The Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (RCC) is an international, interdisciplinary centre for research and education in the environmental humanities and social sciences, based in Germany and supported by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research. In 2011, it hosted a series of workshops to explore the potential of ‘neurohistory’ and published the papers as a special edition of *RCC Perspectives* (Russell, 2012). Discussions included Benedikt Berninger from the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, who explored questions of whether our perception of time and causality are the result of the way our brains are wired, Daniel Lord Smail from Harvard University, who examined the ways in which cultural practices which exploit psychotropic mechanisms are used to gain power, and Steve Fuller, a sociologist from the University of Warwick, who described a 10-week interdisciplinary module that ‘surveys the history of Western thought from the standpoint of the brain, a locus of increasing interdisciplinary interest in the early twenty-first century’.

The learning objectives for this module comprise:

- An appreciation of the centrality of the brain as a site of not only contemporary scientific and policy-making interests, but also of cross-disciplinary understanding – a clear case of blind men trying to make sense of an elephant
- A grasp of the sociological contexts in which conceptions of the brain have been implicated, especially in terms of defining the evolutionary limits of humanity
- A reciprocal grasp of how various planned and unplanned developments in human history have potentially altered the character of the brain, including the relationship to its possessor
- An awareness of the relatively seamless way in which classic questions from theology and philosophy have been translated into the modern scientific discourses of medicine, psychology, and neuroscience.

Curriculum content and learning activities include students watching and critiquing at least one of five films selected for their focus on the manipulation of the brain and subsequent behaviour, including *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Minority Report* (2002), *The Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) and *Inception* (2010). Having explored the relationship between the brain, philosophy and social control in a variety of ways including the nature of ‘brainwashing’ and manipulation by the mass media, students are assessed by completing an assignment that may take one of two forms: (a) an academic critique of one or more aspects of the film in light of issues raised in the module; or (b) a dramatic script based on one or more aspects of the film.

Arguably, this module may be described as transdisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary since it involves a genuine fusion of ideas from several disciplines and perspectives generating new ways of thinking. The development of a truly transdisciplinary learning experience is the focus of research into creativity and entrepreneurship education undertaken by Andrew Penaluna, Jackie Coates, and Kathryn Penaluna (Penaluna *et al.*, 2010). Informed by design education, neuroscience and entrepreneurship education, the authors suggest that a different pedagogy is needed to support fully the authentic learning that is associated with both being creative and innovative as well as being able to realise and sustain the original ideas once they have been generated. Such a curriculum faces the challenge of fostering the polar opposites of creativity and predictability. This, the authors go on to argue, can lead to the establishment of ‘difficult students’ who are encouraged to be innovative and capable of original ideas and are perceived, therefore, within the context of business as being a ‘pain in the neck’. The authors suggest that a new pedagogy based on curiosity-based learning is the solution to this dilemma of promoting both divergent and convergent thinking strategies. To put it perhaps crassly, an essential learning outcome is that the student will have a ‘Eureka’ moment when a lucid insight into a solution to a problem is generated – often in an unpredictable moment or place emanating from the part of the brain that is responsible for divergent and lateral thinking. A different part of the brain is then needed to translate that new idea into a practical solution.

This focus on creativity is interesting, particularly since creativity is now being recognised as an important element in employability, if not a graduate attribute in its own right. Howard-Jones (2008) describes how creativity is a nebulous activity that is so spontaneous and unpredictable that many teachers will say ‘it cannot be taught’. His report goes on to demonstrate how different regions of the brain are all involved in quite small and controlled creative tasks. The creative act requires one to move readily between generative and analytical thinking. Each of these is influenced by the environment in different ways. Psychological studies have demonstrated that analytical thinking can be promoted through facilitating focused behaviour through the promise of reward or through the ‘mild stress’ of knowing that you will be evaluated. Generative thinking can be facilitated by moving into a

different environment altogether – going for a walk in the park. Through an understanding of how the brain works, Howard-Jones argues that it is possible for teachers to develop strategies that have creative outcomes though not in a step-by-step way. Rather, interventions are contingent upon where the students are in their thinking.

In a more recent research report, Howard-Jones (2014) explores how different neuroscience research projects have informed our understanding of learning with their concomitant implications for teaching strategies. These include a number of examples of how students learn maths, for example. In Table 3 in this report we learn that, with a ‘medium strength of evidence’:

*‘Neuroscience has helped reveal the importance of both non-symbolic and symbolic representation of quantity in both the earliest and later stages of mathematics education. Students must learn to link these representations.’* (Howard-Jones, 2014, p. 8)

Teaching approaches that have been informed by this knowledge such as attempting to train children’s non-symbolic representations, however, have had mixed results. Much stronger evidence comes from ‘spacing’:

*‘The spacing of learning sessions improves outcomes compared with massing sessions together. A neuroimaging study suggests the effect is due to enhanced maintenance rehearsal in spaced, as opposed to massed, presentations of learning material.’* (Howard-Jones, 2014, p. 10)

## Neuroscience and performance

The potential of neuroscientific investigations to have an impact on learning and teaching does not end with a focus on subjects or the delivery of the curriculum. Howard-Jones also reveals that there is a neurological basis to sleep, nutrition and hydration having an impact on our ability to learn – or at least perform. Although he points out that the effect of these on academic performance is yet to be demonstrated, it is also something that Russell Foster, Professor of Circadian Neural Science at Oxford, has investigated. In a variety of ways his work has implications for learning and teaching. For example, Foster and Kreitzman (2005) state that neuroscience research demonstrates that:

*‘The best time of day for doing a given task depends on the nature of the task. For example, complex problem solving or logical reasoning is most efficient around noon. Tasks that rely more on physical coordination, such as athletic events, are performed best in the early evening.’* (Foster and Kreitzman, 2005, p. 11)

Indeed, our daily optimal performance time varies according to age, we are told. Below the age of about 40 we perform better from the afternoon onwards. Over the age of 40 we perform better in the morning – on the whole. Such findings, of course, have led to newspaper headlines about letting students sleep late.

## Neuroscience and organisational development

As educational developers our role is to facilitate change as well as enhance learning and teaching, and here too neuroscience has something to say. There is now a growing literature on neuroscience and organisational development. In particular, there is a new field of neuroleadership that purports to explore what neuroscience can tell us about an individual’s autonomic responses to change and the implications for change leadership. One of the leaders of this new field is David Rock (no date) who has devised a framework for using neuroscience findings to inform organisational change. Neuroleadership, we are told, integrates findings from neurosciences, biology and the social sciences related to business management. The outcome of this fusion is then used to inform effective organisational leadership. Like other discussions of neuroscience the focus is on the emotional dimensions related to leadership and change as revealed through brain scans. These reveal, for example, that the brain responds to ‘social pain’ in the same way that it responds to physical pain. If one has just been informed, for example, that one’s university is going to restructure, one’s brain autonomically responds as though this is a painful event.

The new framework is known as SCARF – Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness. Status is about relative importance to others. Certainty concerns being able to predict the future. Autonomy provides a sense of control over events. Relatedness is a sense of safety with others and Fairness is a perception of fair exchanges between people. According to Rock, there are two principles that inform this framework. Firstly, our motivation driving social behaviour is governed by the will to minimise threat and maximise reward. Second, social needs are treated in much the same way in the brain as the primary needs such as food and water. By addressing the SCARF issues prior to launching a new change, individuals are reassured that the ‘threat’ to them is minimal and there may even be rewards.

Of course, ideas such as these have met with a number of criticisms. Firstly, there is an enduring concern that the socially-situated nature of the behaviours that neuroscience purports to explain is so complex that they cannot be reduced to a simplistic causal relationship. Authors such as Healey and Hodgkinson (2014) suggest, therefore, that a neuroscience perspective is one amongst many that need to be used to explain what is going on.

Secondly, there is a concern that neuroscience infers a causal relationship and there is a need for much more research. One is reminded of the logical fallacy *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* – after this, therefore because of this. For example, the cock crows as the sun rises, therefore the cock crowing causes the sun to rise. The link between neurones firing and some sort of behaviour warrants further investigation.

Thirdly, there is a sense of revolutionary fervour shared by champions of this social neuroscience and it needs to be remembered that it is not the silver bullet that it might look like. Neuroscience is not, in itself, going to help one

get better NSS grades, help one select the best tutors nor facilitate the introduction of new approaches to learning and teaching.

On a final note, as predicted in the opening sentence, there is already the neologism 'neuroeducational development' – but it is probably not an educational development that SEDA members recognise, based as it is on a medical model where even 'sloppy handwriting' (Coot, 1999) may be eliminated through neuroscience-based interventions.

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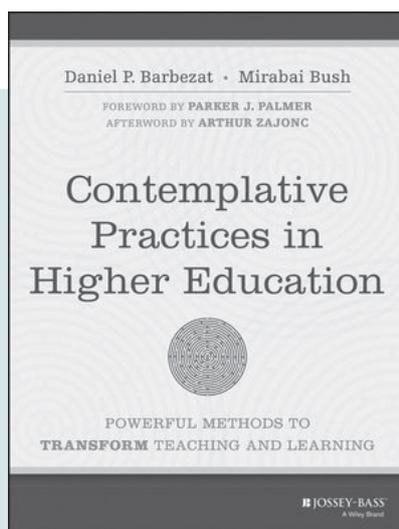
# Book Review

## Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning

by Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush

Publisher: John Wiley and Sons; 2014

ISBN-10: 1118435273



As a read and as a book this is an easy document. The font and line spacing are 'train-read' friendly and the writing style is accessible. The structure divides the book into two sections: part one dealing with the theoretical and practical background and part two offering an introductory guide to some contemplative practices. Six such practices are included, but the chapter headings are very broad – contemplative movement, for example, ranges from labyrinth walking, through walking meditation to Tai chi, stopping off at yoga along the way.

Obviously, with a foreword by Parker Palmer, you know that this book is

going to offer a challenge to the 'establishment' – as Dylan would say 'don't criticize what you can't understand...your old road is rapidly aging. Please get out of the new one if you can't lend a hand'. Palmer suggests that we should evaluate any proposed new development within HE by considering if it 'deepen[s] our capacity to educate students in a way that supports the inseparable causes of truth, love and justice'. Of course, it is impossible to disagree with such a statement, but whose truth or justice? And operationalising love? Here the argument presented is broadly that contemplative practices slow down learning to make it more meaningful.

In each of the practice chapters there are many successful application stories that can be filtered, tweaked and applied to your own context. In this respect, I found the contemplative reading section to have the most direct usefulness – mostly I think because I would be terrified of trying contemplative movement in a class on student/colleagues learning how to teach. My feeling here is that I do not quite understand and so I ought not to criticise.

Essentially, we are examining a distinction between external objective knowledge and an approach to enhancing personal learning that, it is argued, can enhance the learning of the knowledge. In addition, it is suggested, that contemplative practices disrupt heuristics, allowing for a greater awareness. Within the reading chapter, for example, the authors suggest that exercise to slow students down and provoke greater attention to reading changes the students' relationship with the material. Various ways to do this are then described. Similar formats are adopted for the other chapters and are accompanied by a broad warning that any teacher of such practices really ought to be well versed in them before trying to use them in teaching.

As such, the chapters provide a taste of the practice and the way it could be used in learning, but to become a practitioner a rather more detailed engagement is required.

If you are interested and aware of contemplative practices and wish to consider how they might be used within higher education, this book is

an ideal starting point. The journey to being a sufficiently practised personally contemplative person, someone who is 'brave' enough to use this approach in a higher education context, as described within this book, is perhaps one to start now. The compassion and loving kindness chapter claims that many students want to engage with education in order to make a

difference to human suffering. We can only hope that this is true and that (from the conclusion p. 199) education does not forget the need to 'challenge students to create lives of meaning and purpose'.

**Peter Gossman** is a Principal Lecturer in Academic CPD at Manchester Metropolitan University

# Social Networking with the SEDA Community

**Sue Beckingham**, Sheffield Hallam University

<https://magic.piktochart.com/output/6013137-social-networking-with-seda>

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# SEDA News

## Forthcoming events

### 20th Annual SEDA Conference Scholarship and Educational Development: The importance of using an evidence base for Learning and Teaching

Thursday 19 November to Friday 20 November 2015  
St David's Hotel and Spa, Cardiff  
Now taking bookings

### SEDA Spring Teaching Learning and Assessment Conference 2016

#### Innovations in Assessment and Feedback Practice

Wednesday 11 May to Friday 13 May 2016  
The Carlton Hotel, Edinburgh  
Call for proposals now open

Date for your diary:

### 21st Annual SEDA Conference Research and Teaching

Thursday 3 November to Friday 4 November 2016  
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## Courses

We are currently taking bookings for the following courses:

- Supporting Higher Education in College Settings, 28 September – 18 December 2015
- Supporting and Leading Educational Change (Professional Qualification Course), 26 October 2015 – 12 February 2016
- Online Introduction to Educational Change : A four-week online workshop, 2 – 27 November 2015

## Committee Members

SEDA wishes to thank the following outgoing committee members for their contributions: **Debby Cotton** (Vice Chair, Scholarship and Research Committee); **Julie Hall**, **Mike Laycock** and **Liz Shrives** (Executive Committee); **Yaz El Hakim** and **Peter Hartley** (Services and Enterprise Committee); **Chris Rowell** (Conference Committee).

We welcome the following new committee members: **Fiona Campbell**, **Rachael Carkett**, **Carole Davis**, **Mary Fitzpatrick**, **Annamarie McKie**, **Charles Neame** and **Helen King** (Executive Committee); and **Ellie Russell** and **Susan Wilkinson** (Educational Developments Editorial Committee). We would also like to congratulate **Jo Peat** on being elected Vice-Chair of SEDA. She joins the current Co-Chairs, **Pam Parker** and **Yaz El Hakim** and Outgoing Vice-Chair, **Stephen Bostock**.

## SEDA Legacy Grants update

- **Dr Karen Smith**, University of Greenwich, 'Higher education policy and the shaping of educational development practice'
- **Dr Colleen McKenna** and **Dr Jane Hughes**, 'ExILED: Exploring Identities and Locations of Educational Developers'

These two projects, for which we awarded Legacy Grants in our 20th anniversary year, have now completed. You can view the full project reports on our website at: <http://www.seda.ac.uk/seda-20-legacy-grants-2013>

## Potential dimensions of a TEF Framework, proposed by Sally Brown (sally-brown.net)

- 1) The HEI recognises and rewards excellent teaching e.g. by supporting HEA Fellowship accreditation, appointing Teacher Fellows, offering Professorships for L&T, and valuing academic leadership
- 2) Students are involved in assuring and enhancing teaching at all stages from curriculum design through teaching to evaluation, there are robust systems for training, supporting, valuing and making good use of student representatives
- 3) All new-to-HE staff are trained and supported through their early years of teaching (linked to probation) including GTAs, sessional and fractional staff, and career-wide CPD is provided for all who teach and take up is monitored
- 4) Students are satisfied with their learning experiences as indicated by a basket of measures, one of which will be NSS outcomes
- 5) Outcomes for students are excellent as indicated by retention and successful degree achievements and students are employed in graduate professions within three years of graduation
- 6) Quality assurance measures result in QAA and PSRB confidence
- 7) Assessment is fit-for-purpose, appropriate to subject and level and is integrated with learning, with robust moderation in place to assure standards
- 8) The HEI demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and redressing all kinds of disadvantage, particularly in terms of Widening Participation and Fair Access

## Notice to Publishers

Books for review should be sent to:

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