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New academics' experiences of induction to teaching: An Activity Theory approach

Susan Mathieson, Linda Allin, Roger Penlington, Kate Black, Libby Orme, Emma Anderson, Helen Hooper and Lynn McInnes, Northumbria University

This article reports on a project that was supported by a SEDA Research and Evaluation Small Grant, 2018.

In this article we present findings of a research project investigating the experiences of new academics in the process of becoming effective teachers, using an Activity Theory framework (Engeström, 2001). The research was undertaken in a post-92 university that has shifted from teaching and professional development to prioritise a new emphasis on research. However, all academics have a dual responsibility for teaching and research. The project brought us together as education developers who were involved in the induction of academics into teaching across six departments. We shared a common aim in trying to understand the issues faced by new academics in their various disciplines and departments, in order to improve their induction experience and provide an enhanced CPD offer.

Activity Theory focuses on socially situated learning through engaging in everyday tasks – in this case how academics learn to teach in disciplines and departments. This offers an alternative perspective to individualised, performative, market-driven measures that are increasingly being used to judge academic teaching practices. Instead, Activity Theory views academics as learners within complex activity systems comprising six elements, which we defined for the induction of academics into teaching, as follows:

- *The Subject*: academics new to departments
- *The Object*: induction into teaching
- *The Community*: who and how they support learning about teaching
- *Tools and resources*: that support induction into teaching
- *Rules*: governing induction to teaching
- *Division of labour*: for new academics.

Activity Theory has been used as a tool for the professional development of teaching in higher education through engaging academics in reflection on contradictions as a way of stimulating changing thinking and practices (Englund and Price, 2018). The use of this framework for the current research thus served two purposes: as a research tool, and as a tool for staff development for the academics involved in the project. Activity Theory has the potential for promoting 'expansive learning' (Engeström, 2001) through engaging participants in reflection on the contradictions within the activity systems for induction to teaching, in disciplines and departments, and across the University more widely.

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In developing the research project, we first engaged in collaborative mapping of the Activity System for the induction of academics into teaching as in Figure 1, then each education developer wrote a vignette of the activity system for induction to teaching in their department. These vignettes were analysed using the six elements of Activity Theory, with a focus on key issues and contradictions.

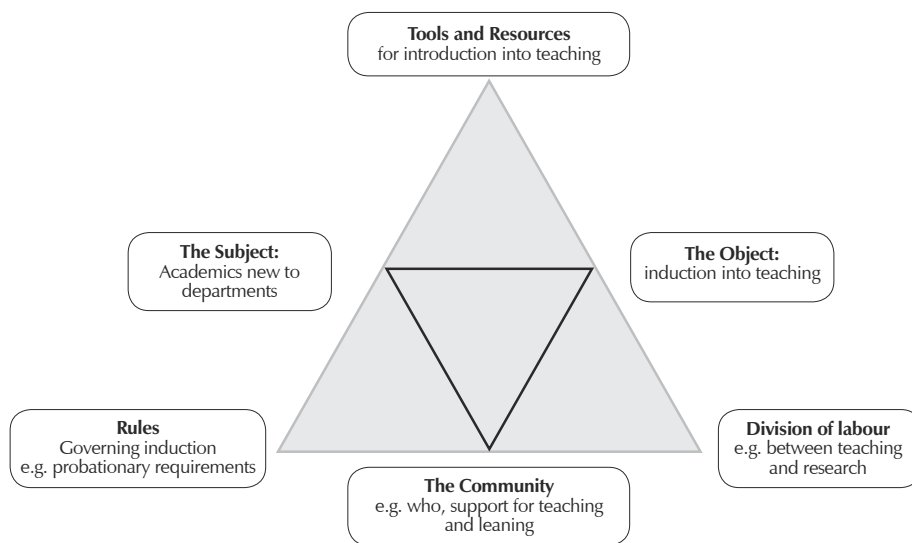


Figure 1 Activity System for induction into teaching in disciplines and departments

Semi-structured interviews were then undertaken with two new academics who were on probation in each department. The interview protocol was developed collaboratively, using the categories we identified for the Activity System for induction into teaching in disciplines and departments. The focus of the data analysis was on surfacing key issues and contradictions within the Activity System. These are captured in Table 1, below.

Aspect of Activity System
<i>Subject: academics who are new to teaching at the institution</i>
Many newly appointed academics had just completed a PhD, or came from industry, and were new to teaching at university. Several were international staff who had little experience of being a teacher or learner in UK HE.
There was a lack of confidence in adapting teaching to new contexts, with academics falling back on 'telling' rather than facilitating active learning.
New academics often experienced a culture shock at differences from their previous experiences: in student behaviour, and approaches to teaching.
Academics experienced conflicting identities around what it means to be an academic, in particular balancing teaching with research.
Many felt a sense of threatened wellbeing and uncertainty when faced with conflicting and unsupported demands, and work overload.
A personal commitment to succeeding as a teacher in HE was important in whether academics 'sank or swam'.
<i>Object: support for induction to teaching</i>
Academics experienced a lack of formal induction to their teaching role.
There was uneven support from line managers, often overloading work for new appointments.
Academics valued the support of programme and module leaders in their induction to teaching, and assigned Learning and Teaching Mentors, where this was offered.
The most important induction to teaching was often through informal support by academic colleagues teaching on the same programmes, often through room shares.

New academics did not feel able to keep asking colleagues who they perceived were overloaded, and were often unclear who to ask for help with teaching.
Support from non-academic staff was valued, e.g. admin staff and Technology Enhanced Learning teams.
Teaching often started before support for teaching had been put in place, and new academics were often left to 'sink or swim'.
The PGCert in HE was valued for creating spaces for critical reflection on practice, and widening the circle of allies for sharing of teaching experiences across the university. However, it rarely provided support for immediate classroom challenges.
<i>Community: who is the community for induction to teaching, and how do they support induction</i>
Programme and module teams were significant communities for induction to teaching, depending on the frequency and quality of team meetings.
Informal groupings, often linked to room shares, were significant communities for induction to teaching.
There were few clear discipline communities supporting teaching and learning.
Learning to teach often happened by observing and 'modelling' in programme and module teams, including, for example, team teaching, shadowing, using module sites on the electronic learning platform, and practising with existing teaching resources.
Departmental and discipline communities were generally less effective in facilitating deep reflection on pedagogical challenges; they tended to show how to manage immediate problems.
Teaching colleagues were often perceived to be too busy to provide support with teaching, and new staff found themselves having to share the burden of heavy teaching loads with colleagues.
There was often a mismatch between new academics' expectations of students and of how to teach, and characterisations by disciplinary colleagues of how to engage students in learning.
There was often a mismatch between how programme teams talked about students, and the reality of relations between academics and students in the classroom, with colleagues glossing over challenges in classroom management.
There was a contradiction between what discipline communities were wanting to do for students, and the realities of what there was time for. Teaching practices of discipline groups were often driven by workload pressures, rather than by pedagogy.
<i>Tools and resources for induction to teaching</i>
Informal learning from role modelling was valued, e.g. online module resources, Peer Observation of classes, also team teaching a module from beginning to end before teaching on own.
Formal departmental practices such as Peer Observation of Teaching and formal HEA mentors were valued, especially when they provided opportunities to model or reflect on good teaching.
Opportunities for learning by observing were not made explicit; new academics sometimes had to create these opportunities for learning.
Policies and expectations were typically communicated via emails rather than a conversation.
The PGCert in HE facilitated the transition from lecturer transmission to facilitator of learning, and created opportunities to share experiences with colleagues across the university. However, it was less helpful in addressing day to day issues in teaching as they arose.
Where accessed, central CPD to support teaching and professional recognition was valued, but it tended to be insufficient and poorly signposted.
There was a tension between Technology Enhanced Learning expectations and support, and the realities of the reliability of Technology Enhanced Learning resources.
<i>Rules for induction of new academics to teaching</i>
There was a lack of transparency, and variability in rules around expectations of academics on probation and their teaching workloads.
Academics were expected to take on challenging demands appropriate to an experienced academic from day one.
Academics valued a long lead-in time to teaching to enable settling in to teaching and developing confidence in their role.
Often a contradiction between espoused rules governing teaching, and rules in practice, with academics finding it difficult to know where to access the most recent rules governing teaching.
<i>Division of labour</i>
New academics often overloaded with roles without being prepared, from first day of starting, e.g. programme and module leadership.
40:40:20 division of labour often in contradiction with realities of teaching demands, and opaque, with lack of coordination of workload across areas of work.
Contradiction between expectations of new academics prior to starting that they would focus on research, and the realities of teaching workloads.
Little recognition of discipline expertise in allocation of teaching.
Lecturers became de-professionalised in some cases by being given teaching materials prepared by 'experts' for lecturers to 'deliver'.

Table 1 Key issues and contradictions identified through the interviews with academics

Summary of academic experiences of the key issues and contradictions in the process of becoming effective teachers

Most new academics experienced their induction to teaching as a process of 'sink or swim', with many being given challenging roles such as module or programme leader in their first semester, with minimal support. This was often experienced as threatening their developing identities and wellbeing. However, in some disciplines and departments new academics were given a breathing space before taking sole responsibility for teaching, with opportunities for team teaching and shadowing. This approach provided access to groups of academics, often through room shares, whom they could ask for advice about issues that surfaced on a just-in-time basis. Where this occurred, it enabled academics to develop a greater sense of self-efficacy.

The most significant elements identified by academics of their induction to teaching was the relative ineffectiveness of formal learning processes alone, and the importance of informal learning from colleagues, such as module teaching teams, office mates or programme leaders. Learning and Teaching Mentors often played a bridging role between formal and informal learning, which was valued by new academics. Where new academics had access to rich informal learning opportunities in programme and module teams, it enabled them to articulate their expertise and previous experiences in the discipline, such as areas of research or industry expertise, and they were supported to translate this into rewarding teaching experiences. However, others found themselves teaching topics they had little expertise in, and in some cases fell back on transmission of content, and experienced difficulties in managing student behaviour. Opportunities for informal learning were also circumscribed by the time pressures that academics were under, a reluctance from new academics to ask for support from overloaded colleagues, and the heavy workload demands they faced in the first semester. Many new academics experienced a sense of dissonance between the way they wanted to teach and the realities of how they were expected to teach within the time available. This was often articulated as a critique of teaching practices and expectations of students in their new discipline.

A key issue for new academics was that the rules governing the quality and quantity of work that new academics could be expected to undertake during probation were experienced as opaque, as were expectations of how they were to divide their time between teaching and research. Most new academics spent far longer on teaching, preparation and marking than they had been allocated as a workload, and experienced a sense of dissonance between their understanding that they were appointed to focus on research, and the realities of managing challenging teaching loads.

New academics experienced varying degrees of stress and work overload, which had impacted on their wellbeing, while incidents of loss of control of student learning had in some cases damaged their self-confidence. However, the majority had not only survived, but had a sense of having developed and grown as an academic during their probationary period, and of having passed from novice to experienced teacher.

The level of commitment of new academics to succeed in teaching was found to be very high, as was their self-efficacy in coping with challenges, and bouncing back despite these weaknesses in the induction process and activity systems supporting teaching. This suggests that successful induction may have less to do with the objective support provided to academics, than what Bernstein (2000) refers to as an 'inner dedication' of academics to knowledge and learning in the discipline. However, this came at a cost to new academics in terms of levels of stress and anxiety, and the sacrificing of life beyond work.

Key recommendations for improving academics' experience of induction to teaching

Through discussion of the issues and contradictions that had been identified in the Activity System for the induction to teaching across our disciplines, the research group proposed the following recommendations:

- 1) Recognise the key role of informal learning in disciplines and departments and work to create more explicit opportunities to promote informal learning, including:
 - a) Buddy system for new academics
 - b) Room shares where possible, including both experienced and new academics. Construct these support groups where they don't exist
 - c) Make opportunities for shadowing more explicit
 - d) Team teaching should be encouraged for all academics who are new to teaching prior to taking a module independently
- 2) Team teaching and shadowing of all aspects of a module should be integrated into induction as part of the formal workload for all new academics for the first semester, and individual teaching responsibilities in the first semester should be kept to a minimum
- 3) Recognise that new academics do not want to bother busy colleagues, and provide explicit access to a dedicated team of experienced colleagues to support them with leading a module, assessments, electronic learning portal, personal tutoring expectations, etc.
- 4) Be aware of the contradictions within the community in how it negotiates teaching and supporting learning, and the messages about teaching that the community is giving:
 - a) Consider how to support new academics manage the hidden curriculum – e.g. managing disruptive behaviour, managing conflicts in workloads
- 5) Develop clear protocols and rules around expectations of what new academics can be asked to do, and their workloads, and make these available to new academics and to line managers
- 6) Develop an induction protocol specifically for teaching, in collaboration with new academics, including how to lead modules, assessments, using the electronic learning portal, personal tutoring, video recorded lectures, understanding policies supporting teaching, etc.

Reflections on the value of Activity Theory as a tool for changing teaching practices

The research has deepened our collective understanding of the experience of academics of their induction into teaching,

and the contradictions they face in engaging with teaching.

However, we identified limitations in our capacity to use Activity Theory as a tool for changing induction practices, because while we have some agency to implement changes in our disciplines and departments, many of the factors impacting on academics' experience of induction lay beyond departments, in institutional policies and practices, and even beyond in national policy and changes in higher education globally. The value of Activity Theory as a tool for change agency is thus limited by the power of the people involved in the process to effect change.

While previous uses of Activity Theory as a tool for change agency (Englund and Price, 2018) have focused on knowledgeability surfaced through discussions between participants, in this research the main data source was in-depth semi-structured interviews with new academics. This research approach surfaced a range of issues that were surprising to the group of education developers engaged in the research project. As a research team we were struck by how much the academics interviewed were committed to their teaching and wanted to be successful teachers. Our perception prior to the research was that because the institution appeared to value research more than teaching, new academics would also value research over teaching. We were also struck by the levels of anxiety and tension experienced by new academics, and the pressures they were under. One outcome of the project is that as educational developers we have developed a greater degree of empathy for the experience of academics who are new to teaching, and a deeper understanding of their subjective experiences of induction.

Our reflections on the research led to valuable discussions about the tensions between the induction we would like new academics to receive, and what the time available to us allows. It enabled us to recognise that investing time in new academics is essential for the effectiveness of discipline-teaching communities. However, we recognised that we

need to engage more of our colleagues in understanding and empathising with the challenges faced by new academics, and find ways of mobilising them to offer the support new academics need. As Boud and Brew (2013) argue, the benefits of supporting the development of teaching are not just for the individual development of teachers, but are also essential for the health of the practice communities, or activity systems, that support teaching.

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The magic carpet of scholarship – An academic-led staff development project to promote the scholarship of teaching and learning

Peter R. Draper, Graham Scott and Emma Peasland, University of Hull

Introduction

This article describes the development and evaluation of an academic-led staff development initiative for staff employed on teaching and scholarship contracts from two faculties at the University of Hull. The project objectives were to:

- 1) Introduce colleagues to a practical, theoretically-based model of the scholarship of learning and teaching (SoTL)
- 2) Use the model as a framework for team-based, interdisciplinary SoTL projects producing tangible scholarly outputs

- 3) Foster interdisciplinary communities of scholars committed to enhancing the quality of learning and teaching through peer review and the dissemination of good practice.

The project emerged from an earlier, unfunded initiative in the Faculty of Health Sciences, which helped staff to develop projects for dissemination at the university's annual teaching and learning conference. A small grant from SEDA enabled us to develop the project, extending it to two faculties (Health Sciences, and Science and Engineering) and to undertake a formal evaluation.

The project was led by PD and GS. PD is Professor of Nursing Education and Scholarship Development in the Faculty of Health Sciences, and GS is Professor of Bioscience Education in the Faculty of Science and Engineering. Both are UK National Teaching Fellows and HEA Principal Fellows. Additional work was undertaken by Emma Peasland, PhD student.

The project

Most academics at the University of Hull are employed on one of two broad contract types. Those on Teaching and Research (T&R) contracts are expected to contribute to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), whereas those on Teaching and Scholarship (T&S) contracts are required to produce appropriate teaching-related 'scholarly outputs' commensurate with their role. Following informal conversations across the institution, PD and GS observed that some T&S staff lacked confidence as scholars of teaching and learning (SoTL). We created the current programme to enable colleagues to develop in this area. Having obtained ethical approval, we advertised the project to T&S staff in the Faculty of Science and Engineering and the Faculty of Health

Sciences, and recruited five participants from each faculty.

The workshops

Participants attended four workshops over a five-month period between March and July 2017. The formal content was based on the 'Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching' model published by Kern *et al.* (2015), who drew in turn on seminal work by Boyer (1990). The model has two axes, systematic vs. informal and private vs. public, intersecting to produce four quadrants as shown in the diagram (Figure 1). The model enables participants to situate their own practice, identifying situations where teaching is largely private (in that it is rarely evaluated by professional peers) and informal (because content and methods may not be systematically based on contemporary scholarship) to those in which teaching is both systematic, and disseminated through peer-reviewed channels. We had a copy of the model printed on a large vinyl sheet which we placed on the floor as a focus for the workshops. This became known as the 'magic carpet of scholarship'. The workshops were planned to enable participants to work collaboratively to peer review, share resources, and produce scholarly outputs.

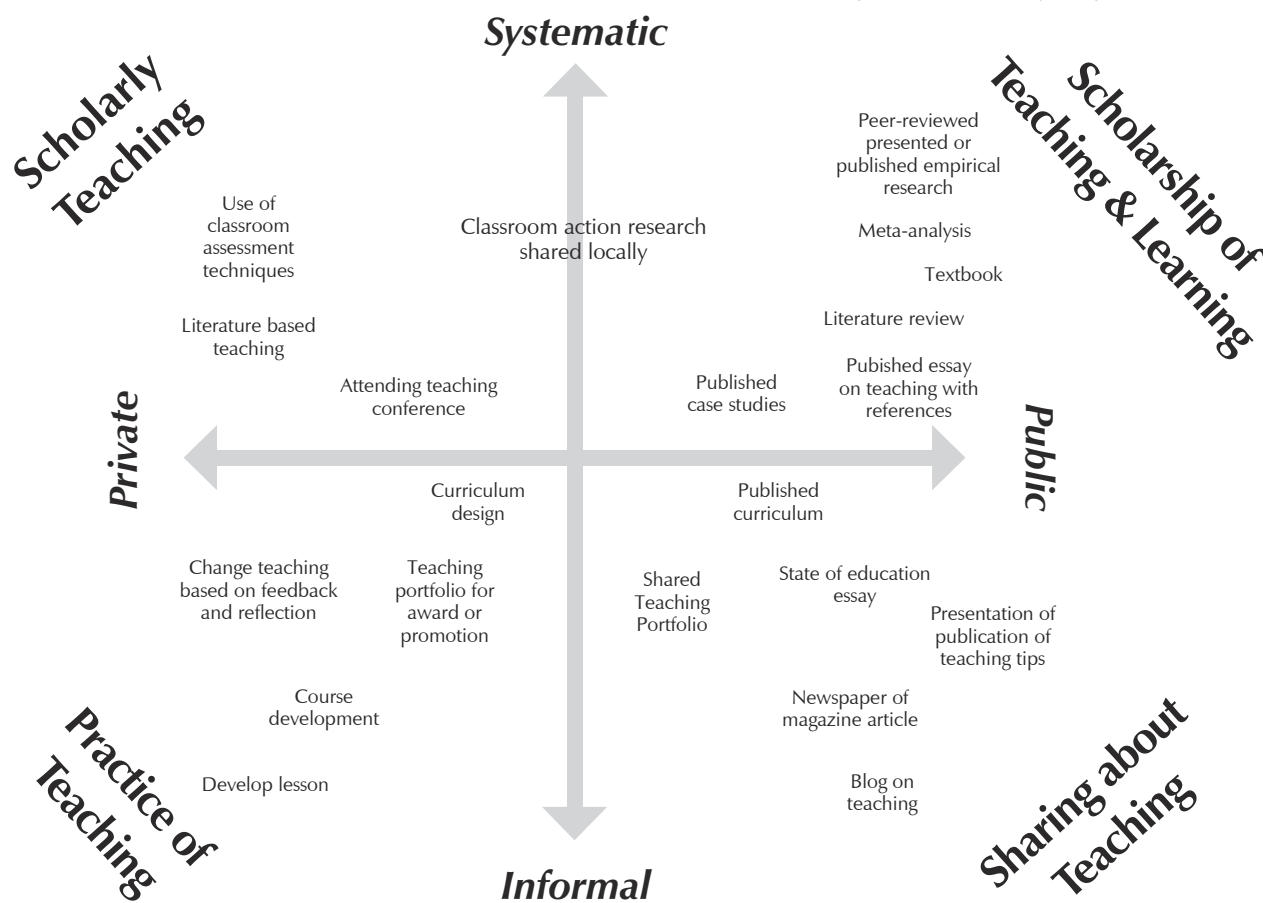


Figure 1 Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (DART) (Kern *et al.*, 2015)

Evaluation

Our project evaluation strategy was informed by Scott *et al.* (2015) and focused on process (to improve the design and implementation of the programme), and outcome (to demonstrate impact and success in relation to the project goals).

Process evaluation occurred during and at the end of every workshop to enable modification of the content to better meet the needs of participants. Outcome evaluation

was conducted once all four sessions were complete and consisted of individual interviews conducted by EP, a colleague who had not been involved in the design or delivery of the workshops.

Workshops: Approach and process evaluation

Workshop 1: Identifying current priorities

We asked participants to identify current practices they were proud of and to locate them on a large printout (the magic

carpet) of the Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (Kern *et al.*, 2015) using post-it notes. The practices they identified clustered around three broad areas:

- Authentic practice in teaching and assessment
- Supporting students individually and in small groups
- Encouraging engagement with learning.

Participants were far more likely to locate their practice in the private than the public quadrants of the model, identifying a total of 23 elements of practice as forms of private/informal scholarship. These included designing learning activities, re-designing practice in response to student feedback, and developing case studies as learning tasks. Eight participants identified 13 elements of practice that they considered to be private, but that were systematic rather than informal because they sat within the structure of a module specification or other externally imposed framework; and three participants had taken part in systematic/public activities including a poster at an institutional learning and teaching conference, formal evaluation of own practice, and submission of a paper to a peer-reviewed educational journal. In summary, participants varied in their level of experiences as SoTL scholars, from the relatively inexperienced to those who had successfully shared their work as peer-reviewed outputs.

Aspirations and perceived barriers to progress

When asked to identify their aspirations as developing SoTL scholars, all participants wanted to move from the private to the public and systematic quadrants by disseminating evaluations, publishing case studies, and systematically evaluating innovative practices. However, they also described a series of barriers that prevented them from progressing, including lack of time, competing institutional and student priorities, a sense of isolation from other T&S staff, bureaucracy, and lack of personal motivation. Some had experienced delays in obtaining ethical approval for projects, and several felt that they lacked knowledge of appropriate methods of pedagogic inquiry. The process evaluation of the first workshop showed that participants were able to formulate SoTL goals but sometimes lacked the skills, motivation or knowledge to achieve them.

Workshop 2: Identifying current priorities

Between the first and second workshops participants had used the model to reflect on additional aspects of their work, demonstrating engagement with the process and a broadening of their understanding of scholarly activity. Benefits of interdisciplinary working also began to emerge. For example, a health professional and a scientist realised that they both used clips from television programmes as focal points for discussion in class, and they planned to collaborate further on a scholarship project related to this.

In order to help participants move past the barriers they identified in the first session we introduced them to a simple pyramidal model to scaffold goal-setting. We asked participants to work in small, interdisciplinary groups to help one another to identify suitable strategies to move forwards.

One group discussed publishing peer-reviewed papers in pedagogic journals and developed a detailed strategy encompassing project and question development, data

collection and analysis, and writing and dissemination, to achieve their desired outcome. Another group contained individuals who had previously disseminated scholarship projects at the university teaching and learning conference. Their strategy addressed moving beyond individual performance to develop the teaching of their discipline at the School level. A further four participants linked their development as SoTL scholars to career goals, discussing career progression goals for promotion or to achieve Senior Fellowship of the HEA. Their strategies involved a shift in their dissemination practice from the private/informal to the public/formal to demonstrate greater impact.

Workshop 3: Scholarly teaching

By the third workshop the participants had developed a level of mutual trust and were increasingly prepared to encourage, challenge and support one another. The workshop began with an open discussion of progress at which it emerged that some participants lacked personal and professional confidence, believing that as T&S staff they were less valued by the organisation. Some also felt professionally isolated because they did not work closely with other T&S staff.

In order to address this crisis of confidence, we invited participants to share with one another details of activities from their life outside of work in which they were considered to be a success, using positive and self-affirming language. For example, ‘Something I do really well is...’ We then asked them to use the same kind of language to say things to the group about an element of their professional work where they excel. We linked this to the need to be professionally confident in order to publicly share scholarly activity.

Some elements of this discussion were a recapitulation of the first session, although now with a very different tone. Participants were now able to recognise novel/innovative practices and to suggest to one another how that practice might be further developed or formally evaluated and disseminated. It is possible that session marked a shift in participants’ self-perception, from thinking of themselves as teachers to thinking about themselves as scholarly teachers.

Workshop 4: Scholarship of teaching and learning

In the final workshop we focused on two activities requested by the group. The first was how to develop a dissemination strategy (indicative of the shift in aspiration towards the public/systematic and scholarly teacher identity) and the second about how to develop and use networks to develop and disseminate outputs.

Summary of process evaluation

The key observation from the process observation was that colleagues’ development required more than a theoretical understanding of SoTL. Some lacked confidence personally and professionally whilst others were inexperienced in goal-setting and project management. However, as colleagues gained trust and confidence in the facilitators and in one another they began to form an interdisciplinary community of practice in which all were able to share strategies, resources and aspirations. Although Kern’s model (Kern *et al.*, 2015) had provided useful theoretical scaffolding for the workshops, other features were also important, including strategies to build trust and share experiences.

Summary evaluation of the project – Interviews

At the conclusion of the workshops, each participant agreed to take part in an evaluation interview to discuss four broad issues as follows:

- What was your motivation for being involved in the programme
- Which aspects of the programme were most useful?
- Were your expectations met?
- What have been the longer-term impacts of participation?

The outcome of the evaluation is presented here as ten key points we have taken from the project.

1) The project participants were highly motivated to develop as SoTL scholars but felt they lacked the necessary skills and strategies to progress, and this is why they joined the project. They valued the opportunity to meet colleagues on similar contract types for collaboration and development:

'I really enjoyed it, I got a lot from it. So I didn't really find anything not useful. There was something in all of it really.'

2) Kern's model – the basis of the 'magic carpet of scholarship' – provided a useful framework to discuss participants' work. Participants were able to list teaching activities ranging from one-to-one student supervision to curriculum innovations, to pedagogic research, and then locate them on the model. Placing 'ordinary' teaching activities in the context of a model of scholarship helps to validate them as scholarly, whilst also suggesting routes for further development. The model helped in:

'Recognising that some of the things that you do because it is a responsibility of your role could be counted as scholarly outputs.'

3) Kern's model provided a great starting point because of its simplicity. However, the project's success also depended on the willingness of all members to share ideas, experiences and strategies. This required the project leaders to be flexible and not too directive, responding to issues as they emerged from the group.

4) The project validated scholarly work. Participants valued the opportunity to meet colleagues and hear about others' experiences. The interdisciplinary nature of the group offered opportunities to share experiences and discuss the differences and similarities in their roles. Respondents mentioned the challenge of making room for scholarship activities in a busy role and one described how it was reassuring to meet colleagues and hear that others also faced this challenge:

'Sometimes [you think] "I must be...the only one that's not doing [scholarship]" and to hear other people were...in a similar boat was useful.'

5) In addition to validating existing practice, the model suggested directions for participants' further development as SoTL scholars:

'Reflecting on your course is a type of scholarship, and writing a peer-reviewed paper is another type

of scholarship and they are different landmarks in the same landscape.'

6) Participants valued that the project was led by senior academic peers with track records as SoTL scholars who were willing and able to share their stories of success, failure and career development:

'They had a "can-do" attitude.'

7) It became evident during the third session that several participants lacked professional confidence. To tackle this effectively required sensitivity, a high level of trust between all participants, and explicit confidence-building strategies.

8) Career ambitions were important motivators for participants and we had underestimated this when initially planning the project. From personal experience, the project leaders were able to show how to maximise the outputs of projects, how to formulate them as case studies for the next level of HEA fellowship, and how to present them effectively in the context of promotion applications:

'What it's made me aware of is that it's not really about doing standalone publications...it's about building a body of work...on a topic area that becomes your strength.'

9) The project provided a great opportunity for interdisciplinary working as both the leaders and the participants were from different disciplinary backgrounds. Participants were encouraged to learn that they faced very similar issues whilst disciplinary differences enabled new perspectives to be applied to complex issues:

'It was really good to work with people [from other schools] and cross those boundaries...because then you can use the strengths of each group.'

10) The project germinated the seedlings of effective communities of practice. Interdisciplinary groups of colleagues identified common interests and developed strategies to achieve mutual goals creating real potential for significant scholarly outputs.

Conclusion

We developed this programme to encourage colleagues employed on Teaching and Scholarship contracts, who felt professionally isolated and were unsure how to fulfill the 'scholarship' dimension of their T&S roles. The project was based on a simple schematic derived from a theoretically grounded model of SoTL, which formed the basis of the 'magic carpet of scholarship'. The facilitators were experienced academics from different disciplinary backgrounds, a feature that helped to cross-pollinate ideas and draw out the project's interdisciplinary potential. Process evaluation helped us to refine the project as it went along, allowing the structure to evolve to meet participants' needs. Summary evaluation suggests that participants found this simple project very helpful because it enabled them to validate current work as scholarly, make plans for their future development as SoTL practitioners, leverage outputs for professional recognition, and forge productive interprofessional links with colleagues.

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A typology of keynotes

Donna Lanclos, Consulting Anthropologist, and Lawrie Phipps, JISC

Regular readers of *Educational Developments* will be familiar with conference keynotes, both as speakers, and as audience members. The authors of this piece have given several keynotes over the last few years, and prompted by the preparation and thinking through what it is to 'be a keynote', we started thinking along the lines of typologies. As one of us is a folklorist, and the other a naturalist (we will leave it to you to figure out which is which), we approach typologies in similar ways. Here we define typologies as tools for classifying materials, where classification is a necessary step before engaging in content analysis and interpretation.

Folk narratives, for example, can be divided into genres, and engaging with a typology of genres can be a first step towards analysing the meaning behind the narrative. Folktales are narratives that are fictions, legends are fictions told as true (or with a kernel of truth), and myths are sacred narratives told as true. There is, of course, slippage among the genres, but using them as discrete categories can allow for discussion of the motivations behind the telling of tales. When do people use fiction to make their point? When does invoking the sacred matter? Why make the choice to tell a fantastic tale as if it really happened to a friend of a friend?

In this breakdown of keynotes into types we've tried to allow for the reality that many talks (and people who give them) are doing more than one of these things. And, as with folktales, sometimes the motivation of the teller is not the same as the motivations of the listeners. We are additionally aware that the experience of an event such as a conference is not just about the invited speakers, but also about who invites those speakers (and their motivations around that invitation) and who is in the audience (and their motivations for attending) when the talk is delivered.

Let's start with the keynotes. Sometimes they are 'plenaries' but they are always speakers the conference organisers intend for the entire event to listen to. We think we see the following types of keynotes. We'd like to note that this exercise in categorisation is not one where we discuss about whether these types of speaker are 'good' or 'bad' in the delivery of these talks.

The provocateur

Sometimes speakers are invited simply to get people to sit up and notice, and, ideally, push back. The point is not to get

people to agree, but to get them thinking and talking. The content of the keynote is intended to outlast the talk, and carry on into the halls and the sessions of the conference. Inviting a Provocateur is supposed to encourage people to speak to, or against, or in some way connect with the themes explored in the talk.

The campaigner

In education this type of keynote is most often associated with political or policy imperatives. Sometimes, something is happening and changing that is so important that you have to get the message 'out there'. This speaker is particularly relevant in situations where a lot of senior people in a lot of different organisations and institutions know that their staff need to have an awareness of a particular current event/policy/political context.

There is a clear message that the Campaigner is trying to get across, and usually the talk will have wide ramifications across the sector. On the 'campaign trail' the speaker will have the opportunity to refine and hone their delivery, while, through necessity, keeping the integrity of the message.

The persuader

Whether it is the speaker who wants to persuade the audience, or the person who has booked the speaker, the Persuader is there with an idea and a message. It's on the continuum with Campaigner, but lacks the hard edge political or policy imperative. It might be that a change in practice has occurred, and the conference organisers are trying to get staff on board with it. It might be the rollout of a new system or technology, or a different way of approaching evaluation and assessment. In each case, the Persuader is making a case.

The entertainer

This is a speaker whose strengths are known, to the audience and to the organisers, and it's that known quality that they want to bring to the event. This talk can make people smile, or generate emotion in some way, but isn't designed to provoke or profoundly upset. In some ways the content of the talk is less relevant than the show put on by this speaker. That is not the same thing as being content-free. The Entertainer delivers talks designed to make people feel good, either about themselves, their situation, or their practices.

The reporter

This keynote is about work that has been done, and its output. The Reporter is giving a sense of the project they carried out, a situation on the ground in a particular field of study or practice. The point is not to persuade but simply to inform, and perhaps seek feedback or validation of results. This can also take the form of a retrospective, where the speaker is invited to narrate the arc of a project, research agenda, or perhaps their entire career.

The guru

The expert, the source, the philosopher who generated the idea. The Guru is synonymous with the concept in question in the keynote, so indelibly associated with an idea that it is that person that you want, and if you can't get them, you want them referenced by your Plan B speaker. This speaker is there to talk in broad terms about their idea, to engage with the audience, and to be questioned, but also to dispense their particular knowledge and understanding, their credo.

The seller

This keynote has something on offer, this speaker is doing more than persuading, they are selling a concrete thing. *Caveat emptor*, this particular manifestation of keynote may slip into any of the others without the conference organised realising. There are three sub-categories, the particular kind of thing being sold:

- *Service*: This Seller has a workshop, a consultancy, something that they would like you to pay for them to come in and run. Their speech is designed to identify the situations or problems that would make such a service necessary, and ideally for audience members to realise that they really need to bring the speaker in to run that service for their own place of work
- *Self*: The speaker is selling themselves, their personal brand or style is why they have been brought in to speak. The conference organisers are paying less for the content and more simply to have this Seller on stage, and hoping they will align with the content of the conference
- *Artefact*: This speaker has a book, DVD, or even a blog, some concrete product the speaker has produced as a researcher or other kind of practitioner (see above: Service). This Seller uses their keynote as an advertisement for their product, giving a preview of the content and perspective so that audience members will want to have their own copy, or make sure their institution acquires it.

But if you're the conference organiser, what do you want out of the keynote?

Conference organisers can also be organised within a typology. Both the authors can recount tales of being brought in thinking they are one sort of keynote, only to be derailed by expectations from the organisers that they be something else, something more, or something rather less. The interaction of the motivations of the keynote with the motivations of the people inviting them to speak is part of what informs the experience of the conference. We see the following types of conference organisers, defined by their motivations:

- *Challenge my audience*: This is the organiser who, in Education, might be the person responsible for Learning and Teaching. They want someone to come in and shake things up, to get people thinking about practice and changing their practice. They are often operating in an institutional context of change, and invite their keynote speakers while motivated by the desire to orient people towards those changes
- *Educate my audience*: Winter is coming. This conference organiser already knows the change that is coming. Like winter, it cannot be stopped. They invite their keynote speaker to make sure that the delegates can hear from someone who not only knows about the change in depth, but can talk about what that change means
- *Placate my audience*: The audience are all in the same boat, and probably unhappy about it. This organiser wants their keynote to point to good things over the next horizon, and to tell the audience that things will get better – or even, that things are not as bad as they seem
- *Motivate my audience*: When practice is moribund, and you want a spark of inspiration, the conference organiser is looking for someone who will motivate delegates, provoke enthusiasm, and initiate momentum. This organiser is often engaging in a Hail Mary, inviting particular speakers in a last-ditch attempt to effect empathy for a change
- *Find my audience*: This is the conference organiser who wants attendees, they need bums on seats – they hope that the gravity of a popular speaker will draw in delegates and fill seats. These organisers are not picky about who turns up, simply that people do.

But what about the audience?

We have all sat through keynotes. We have all engaged in a range of practices while sitting there. We have occasionally made decisions not to sit through keynotes, and have reasons for our lack of attendance. If you are there, what are you doing? What are you thinking, or hoping you will experience? The next time you are in an audience, listening to the keynote, look around. Think about how you might come up with a typology of delegates/attendees. What about the 'highly visible' delegates – there to be seen, whether it's on social media, or in the room asking questions (or not really a question, more of a comment)? How about the people who are too busy to be at the keynote, and demonstrate it by doing their email the entire time the keynote is speaking? Or, the networker, who is there not to hear the talk, but to plan how to work that they were at the talk into their conversations with contacts at the conference?

Who do you see? Who are you? How does the nexus of who you are, who else is there, and the motivations and delivery of keynote speaker and conference organisers combine to create the experience of an event?

An earlier version of this article can be found at <https://www.donnalanclos.com/a-typology-of-keynotes>

The authors are available for keynotes. Possibly keynotes about keynotes....

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Walking the talk: Academic developers reflect on the use of digital learning portfolios to support professional development

Laura Costelloe, Mary Immaculate College, and **Clare Gormley** and **Fiona O’Riordan**,
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Introduction

There is a growing body of literature highlighting the use of portfolios to support academic professional learning activities and reflective practice in higher education (see for example O’Farrell, 2007; Pelger and Larsson, 2018; Sjögren *et al.*, 2012). Portfolios are being used in many ways, for example to provide evidence of a quality approach to professional development, to document teaching practice for the purposes of promotion applications or membership of professional bodies, to showcase and reflect on academic practice or to provide evidence of engagement with professional development activities.

This article examines how academic developers can support academic faculty to create, maintain and share learning portfolios, drawing largely on our experiences of creating electronic learning portfolios for our own professional development. The three authors are academic developers based within units/departments which support the professional learning of staff. The reflections below will present personal insights, drawn from the focus on our creation of electronic learning/professional development portfolios, each of which varies in terms of purpose, structure and presentation.

We all agree that the experience of creating and maintaining our portfolios has afforded us excellent ideas on the opportunities and challenges of a portfolio-based approach to documenting and evidencing professional development. We hope that, by having ‘walked the talk’, we have learned some lessons which we can use to support academic faculty who decide to embark on their own portfolio journey. It is important to note that in the three cases outlined below we are reflecting our experiences of the Mahara platform.

Case study and insight 1: Using a portfolio to keep track of professional development activities

In 2007, I developed a reflective teaching portfolio as part of my MEd. At the time I struggled with the concept and practice of both reflection and the use of portfolios. I could not appreciate the value or need for one. However, it was the beginning of a learning journey. Despite my not fully appreciating the value of the portfolio at the time, I enjoyed

developing it; it was rewarding to gather my experience and accomplishments into one place. Receiving feedback from my colleagues and students was energising. However, upon graduating in 2008, I parked the portfolio practice. Nevertheless, I never lost the art of reflective practice and it continued to inform my teaching, albeit in an *ad hoc* manner.

My next encounter with portfolios was as a result of engagement with the Professional Development Framework (PDF), which was launched in Ireland in 2016 (National Forum, 2016). As part of the pilot phase I was invited to work on the National Forum Professional Development Expert Group (NFPDEG). The NFPDEG comprised ten people tasked with piloting the implementation of the PDF in various contexts. In my role as mentor to a group of thirteen part-time lecturers, and as coordinator to a group of ten academic developers, I decided to lead by example and developed a digital portfolio. I used WordPress as the platform and divided the pages between each of the five PDF domains:

- Professional Identity, Values and Development
- Professional Communication and Dialogue
- Professional Knowledge and Skills
- Personal and Professional Digital Capacity
- The Self.

At this point I was more concerned about aesthetics rather than flexibility because I was using my PDF as an exemplar to the two pilot groups I was working with. In essence, my reason for developing the portfolio was to showcase my professional development to an external audience, but I found the approach a little inflexible and static.

More recently, in March 2018, when I started a new job as Academic Developer at Dublin City University (DCU), I had the opportunity to try Mahara. As a new member of the academic development team, it was important that I understood the value of Mahara, in order to engage with the wider teaching staff. Thus I embraced the opportunity to start my electronic portfolio again from scratch. This time I designed my portfolio for my own professional development needs. When combined with Google Drive, Mahara offered me great flexibility to update and modify content. It presented me with an accessible and useful way to record, store, and source resources and reflections. Whilst requiring further

aesthetic refinement it is, nonetheless, useful to me. I have categorised collections by: projects; readings; professional development workshops and badges; and my writing. In addition, I have made extensive use of the tags so I can quickly search and access specific material across categories. In addition to topic tags, all entries are tagged using a minimum of one of the PDF domains. This allows me to pull together my professional development in each of the PDF domains at any point in time.

Case study and insight 2: Using a portfolio to provide evidence required for SEDA membership

I first encountered digital learning portfolios in 2011 as a key assessment element of a Masters in Applied eLearning I was undertaking at that time. Over a period of two years, I used this portfolio primarily as a platform for documenting learning activities and sharing assignments, thereby capturing an evolving learning journey. Many of the assessments were reflective in nature and we were encouraged to produce creative and personalised multimedia digital artefacts that could be presented on the platform of our choice. However, while I used this online portfolio extensively to develop and showcase my learning throughout this programme, it would be fair to say that I did not revisit it frequently upon graduation.

In early 2018, I decided to reinvigorate my portfolio usage for a different, very specific purpose: I was undertaking the online 'Supporting and Leading Educational Change' SEDA fellowship course which is also assessed via portfolio. This time, partly because I wanted to experiment with the tool itself, I elected to use Mahara and to use the portfolio as a vehicle for presenting the evidence needed to demonstrate achievement of SEDA Fellowship requirements:

- A description of my current professional context, role, and responsibilities
- A detailed case study focusing in depth on key activities I was engaged in from initial goal-setting right through to evaluation
- A reflective commentary detailing how the SEDA values inform my thinking and everyday work
- Development of a CPD action plan, including the use of various profession-focused diagnostic tools, to identify future development needs.

As the core criteria evidence did not have to be presented in textual form, I made conscious efforts to make the range of evidence as clear, easy to find, and engaging as possible, hoping that different types of media could add variety and life to the content. For example, I collected video- and audio-based reflections and it was easy to pull in photos and other types of graphics. The overall page structure of the portfolio was also adjusted with the goal of making the portfolio easy to navigate for anyone who wished to explore it. Having heard lecturers express concerns about the potentially vast volume of materials to be assessed within a portfolio, I took care to signpost the core assessment items as clearly as possible.

I was not sure how widely I planned to circulate the contents of my portfolio beyond the fellowship assessors. There is certainly potential to share it further and it might

be useful to others. In fact, a particularly valuable source of learning on the course was in having the ability to browse examples of previous participants' portfolios. I was able to see how beneficial that could be for those seeking ideas and reassurance about how to potentially approach and develop a portfolio of one's own.

While there are clearly a number of significant benefits to using a digital portfolio, there is one caveat that I would emphasise: the reflective prompts and questions – particularly the availability of quality self-assessment tools – were, in my view, absolutely critical to the process. Whether it is due to increasing workload or age, I find it can be challenging to remember all the activities I have undertaken and why I have done them in a particular way. Therefore the accompanying guidance prompts in the form of questions, sample case studies, and sample portfolios, were absolutely critical to drawing these sometimes forgotten conversations and activities out. Without good self-assessment tools, I would be less certain of what to include so I see those as a valuable and sometimes overlooked enabler in the portfolio development process.

Case study and insight 3: Using a portfolio to evidence and share examples of effective academic practice

I first developed a reflective teaching portfolio in 2012 as a requirement for a Level 9 accredited programme in third level teaching, learning and scholarship. It includes many of the characteristics of a 'typical' teaching portfolio, including a teaching philosophy statement, evidence of innovation in learning, teaching and assessment approaches, and a reflective account of my academic practice and professional development activities to date. Statements in my portfolio are supported by a large number of appendices, including student and peer feedback, examples of teaching and assessment innovations including screenshots, images and teaching resources that I have created in both print and online formats. The portfolio is organised similarly to those required for HEA Fellowship, using the following headings:

- Teaching Philosophy Statement
- Teaching and Supporting Student Learning
- Design and Planning of Learning Activities
- Assessing and Giving Feedback to Learners
- Personal Development: past, present and future.

The preparation and development of my teaching portfolio was unquestionably one of the most formative exercises of my early career. It allowed me to examine critically my practice and to reflect on my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, including observing the teaching of others and using these observations - combined with ongoing reflection – as a 'mirror' through which to examine my own practices. This journey of learning through reflective practice has continued and, since 2012, it has been developed and expanded over the years, with new evidence and examples included throughout to showcase my current academic practices. My portfolio has been shared, in full or in part, with prospective employers at interview stage and used to support applications for promotion or teaching awards. As such, although it is a personal reflective portfolio, it is created with an external audience in mind.

On joining the DCU team in September 2017, I embraced Mahara as a platform to thoroughly review and update my teaching portfolio. I revised each section, ensuring that the discussions/reflections were still relevant and applicable, but also that the artefacts were appropriate. In particular, Mahara allowed me to include more digital artefacts, including a podcast of an interview a colleague conducted with me on my teaching philosophy; it allowed me to share examples of audio, video and digital resources, including my Twitter feed, video animations and my screencasts, infographics, podcasts and Padlet boards.

Additional documents are now embedded or shared as downloadable PDF documents, enabling the reader to access those artefacts which are of most interest, thereby removing the necessity for pages of additional appendices. For me, this has meant that I can present information and artefacts in a livelier and more visually appealing format than permitted in the paper-based portfolio. However, it is worth noting that moving from a paper-based to an electronic portfolio has not been without some challenges, in particular the time and technical expertise needed to exploit the Mahara platform to its full capabilities.

An ongoing challenge has been in finding – or perhaps making – the time to update my portfolio on a regular basis. All too often I have waited until a deadline loomed to dedicate time to review and update my portfolio; this typically involves rewriting sections of the written components and adding new supporting artefacts to evidence my academic practice and teaching innovations. I have become better at keeping notes throughout the teaching semester and setting aside an afternoon during a quieter period to update my portfolio. Although this practice is somewhat sporadic (typically once or twice a year), it is always a fruitful exercise to take stock and reflect on the various twists and turns on my journey as an educator.

Conclusion

Not surprisingly, all three of us experienced similar challenges and learned similar lessons. The big challenge for all is the demand on our time: protecting time to advance our digital portfolios gets side-lined by other priorities. Whilst we each saw value in the process of reflection and in utilising the portfolio, these efforts need to be acknowledged and recognised in the institution.

Another common thread across all case studies was the need to determine in advance the purpose of the digital portfolio, and who will be accessing and viewing the portfolio. This will define the structure and approach taken. Our three portfolios are vastly different in terms of organisation, use of artefacts and emphasis; thus there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

We feel that the availability of exemplars and reflective prompts can scaffold and support the creation and development of a learning portfolio. Seeing several curated examples might spur ideas about potential tools and applications, encourage creative and novel approaches, and provide a general sense of what is acceptable and even inspiring in a digital portfolio.

While we agree that an electronic platform offers many advantages, it can be a steep learning curve and quite time-consuming to exploit the technology to maximum effectiveness. As a result, when supporting faculty to develop their own electronic learning portfolios, a suite of 'how to' guides might empower academic staff to use a varied and creative range of artefacts throughout their learning portfolio. Overall we are agreed that, whilst the development of a learning portfolio can take time, it is an extremely worthwhile endeavour.

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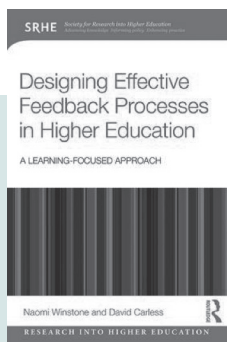
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Book Review

Designing Effective Feedback Processes in Higher Education: a learning-focused approach

by Naomi Winstone and David Carless
Routledge SRHE: London and New York, 2020
ISBN-10: 0815361610



this latest book by Naomi Winstone and David Carless on *Designing Effective Feedback Processes in Higher Education: a learning-focused approach* shows me that this is not the case.

With a foreword by David Boud in which he proposes a root-and-branch review of the purposes and processes of feedback, this volume takes us into new domains (or old domains revisited in a refreshing way) to support effective assessment design to enhance student learning. Feedback is currently the most discussed area in higher education with aspects of its inadequacy

Anyone who has worked in the field of assessment in higher education for as long as I have might think there was nothing new to say about the topic, but reading

brought into focus by student satisfaction surveys in the UK and elsewhere, highlighting unhappiness not only with feedback timeliness and approaches but also with its modes of delivery and usage. What is so original about this book is the way it focuses on the importance of developing interactive dialogues to integrate feedback into the day-to-day student experience, rather than having it solely as an end-of-process judgement.

In this volume, the authors suggest that we should place much less emphasis on the teacher role in making judgements and giving feedback, and significantly more on exploring how students genuinely make use of the commentary we provide, as well as contributing to the dialogue themselves.

Based on research financially supported by the Society for Research in Higher Education to explore how feedback processes can be enhanced, this evidence-based and scholarly book draws on their work in the UK, Australia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, using a variety of data collection methods to explore how feedback processes can be enhanced in practice. They do this by examining diverse institutional feedback cultures,

with some HEIs providing assessors with significant flexibility about the nature, timing and scope of feedback given, and others requiring close conformance to institutional or departmental conventions which, for example, mandate particular feedback formats or timescales. They also consider the extent to which assessors' practice is based on their own conceptions of what feedback should be. Crucially, they unpack the distinctions between transmission-focused and learning-focused models, the latter of which they consider to have more benefit for learners.

Key research findings throughout the book provide useful and accessible information to shape practice and particularly useful is their taxonomy of reciprocity processes as first expounded by Naomi Winstone *et al.* (2017) covering: Self appraisal; Assessment Literacy; Goal Setting and Self-regulation; and Engagement and Motivation). These four components together comprise the skills that students need to develop the capacity for evaluative judgements, and provide a checklist of areas in which academics and professional support staff can work

to foster enhanced student capability to evaluate the quality of their own work.

As someone who spends a great deal of time working with university staff thinking about assessment and feedback enhancement, with this work often triggered by poor scores in the UK National Student Survey, I particularly value the clarity of explanations and the questions for reflection and debate that conclude each chapter, as well as the invaluable resources they provide, including a reference list that is highly relevant and current. This is the best book on feedback available in 2020, and I can't see that accolade being superseded in the near future.

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Staff-student interviews for better feedback literacy

Jenny Marie, Nick Grindle and Bob Mills, University College London, and **Tyler Fisher**, University of Central Florida

Introduction

In a recent article, David Carless and David Boud define feedback literacy as 'the understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and to use it to enhance work or learning strategies' (Carless and Boud, 2018, p. 2). They suggest that:

'Modelling the uptake of feedback is an important but underplayed part of a teacher's repertoire in supporting and encouraging students to use feedback. Discussing how academics are exposed to feedback from peer review can be used to model responses to critique, share some of the emotional challenges, and illustrate the need for action. Such modelling plays a role in reducing distance between teachers and students by emphasising self-improvement as a core element of academic habits.' (Carless and Boud, 2018, p. 7)

Taking Carless and Boud's idea as our point of departure, we ran a small pilot study designed to help students understand how staff use feedback and increase their disposition to engage with comments offered on their work. This article outlines the study's findings, which indicate that the activity can achieve these aims and that it is logistically feasible.

The activity

The premise of students talking to staff about their research is well established in the literature (early and recent examples being Cosgrove, 1981; Evans *et al.*, 2018). In 'Meet the Researcher' activities students work in groups to interview a researcher, before producing an output about what they learnt from the experience. The activity described here began with the question 'what would happen if students could use "Meet the Researcher" interviews to talk about the ways that researchers used the peer review process to develop their academic work?' In particular, we were interested to know whether it would support the development of students' feedback literacy.

The activity ran in two different departments in a research-intensive, London-based university whose education strategy prioritises the enhancement of feedback. Separate guidelines were issued to the participating staff and students (Grindle and Marie, 2019a and 2019b). The first department (Department H) is part of the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences. Here, the activity ran as a one-hour personal tutoring activity for 12 first-year undergraduate students during their first term at university. Student participation was entirely voluntary and there was full take-up. The students were split into two groups because of timetable clashes. The professor (Professor H) provided the following documents:

www.seda.ac.uk

- Extracts from a draft of a research article (which later became a chapter in one of his books) in the form in which it was first submitted to an academic journal
- Extracts from two anonymous readers' reports that he received on that draft
- His responses to the reviewers' comments
- Extracts from the same article as it was eventually published.

This is a short account of the activity in Professor H's own words:

'I began by asking the students whether they had any general questions about the exercise and about academic publishing. I then asked them to explain what they understood by "peer review" and whether they could think of links between the scholarly peer review process used to determine the suitability of scholarly texts for publication and experiences they've had themselves of giving and receiving feedback. I asked them to identify key issues raised in the readers' reports and discuss how I had responded to the reviewers and recommendations.'

The context for the activity in the other department was somewhat different, which allowed us to consider whether the activity is flexible enough to work in different settings. This department (Department S) is in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. The lecturer (Dr S) ran the activity as part of one seminar in a module for seven second-year students in the second term. It was therefore a compulsory activity (insofar as it was part of a taught module, although it was not assessed).

This is Dr S's description of the activity:

'For the activity, the students read (in class) a brief encyclopaedia entry (of about 1200 words) on [F], an author featured in the module. They read my draft of the entry, which I submitted for publication, alongside the editor's comments/corrections and the final, published version. The students then discussed their reading in pairs or trios, and fed back to the whole group with free-form questions, observations, and criticisms, to which I responded in the course of discussion.'

Indicators of the activity's success

We asked student participants to respond to the following question by email: 'Say you are meeting up with a friend following the "Meet the Researcher" activity. What would you tell them about it? Feel free to mention anything at all, for example what you learned, what you enjoyed or didn't enjoy, what was easy or hard, or anything else.' Seven out of 12 students (58%) responded from Department H and three out of eight (38%) from Department S, giving a response rate of ten students (50%) overall.

The responses from students (Table 1) suggest that they found the activity very engaging. Every student reported that the activity was either 'enjoyable', 'interesting' or 'fun' in their response. For example: 'I really enjoyed the fact I was able to engage with the literature of my tutor.' Most said they found it helpful and three said it was motivating or inspiring: 'It put a lot into perspective, and getting to look at the success of

the researcher (for example holding the book he had worked very hard to research for, write and get published) was quite motivating.' The majority reported that it helped them learn more about what their tutor did, which was identified as enabling them to get to know their tutor better and improving the relationship between students and staff:

'Mentioning having found out a lot about the researcher himself/herself, [more activities of this kind] would also help to make relationships between our teachers and students more friendly.'

Three of the students reported that they would like to do the activity more often, so that they could meet other researchers, and another said they would recommend it. For example:

'When I told my friends that my tutor just let us read his published work they were all so surprised and excited. We should do more of these sessions. I suggest not only in [Professor H's field] but also in any academic discipline with [sic] be helpful for the students.'

Between them, the students identified that they had gained an understanding of how projects could be led and what research is, as well as the motivations to research and publish:

'It is a great experience to get to know your personal tutor better but also a way to understand what a research is and how long and fastidious it can be.'

'I found it interesting how laborious and thorough the process is...I found it curious to learn about the selection process, as well as why he/she would want to do it – if there were a financial incentive or perhaps the accolade of having published an entry.'

Another also recommended asking questions about how the researcher chooses their sources: 'I would tell the friend to ask the Researcher questions regarding the sources he used for the process', which suggests that they had made a connection between the working processes of the academic and their own written work.

Many students commented that it showed that staff, as well as students, benefited from receiving feedback, with one writing about how it had improved her own disposition towards feedback:

'It shows that even experts can benefit from detailed feedback.'

'It was a lovely change to see that everyone, even the professionals who are teaching us students, make mistakes and receive criticism, even on the level of sentence structure and grammar.'

'Made me realise that academics cooperate and support each other's work through constructive criticism.'

'Put a lot into perspective...[and] honestly improved my attitude towards my own work and the criticism I've received.'

Another student observed:

‘What I have learned is the type of feedback you can expect as a researcher and that even experts in their field need a second opinion. It was interesting to see how the feedback was addressed, even though the author did not agree completely with the editor.’

This suggests that the student thought the process the academic had experienced could serve as a model for their own use of feedback and they recognised that there is room for differences of opinion about academic work. However, it is important to note that student feedback is rarely iterative, and that students seeking feedback from one another might be construed as collusion in some settings. This therefore raises wider questions about the extent to which the process of producing work at student and professional level is and should be similar. As we show below, Professor H discussed these differences with his students and how they could nevertheless make use of the feedback they received to enhance future work.

The element of group work was commented upon by two of the students. One said this was helpful because others asked questions that they would not have done and, afterwards, the group discussed what they had learnt and ‘what we would use in our essays and during our year more broadly.’ While the other student did not say what was useful about it, they recommended that the activity continued to be done in small groups of about five people.

Description of activity	Number of students who described it this way
Enjoyable/interesting/fun	10
Very/really enjoyable/interesting/fun	7
Helpful/meaningful/informative	5
Motivating/inspiring	3
Gained a sense of what lecturers do	6
Recognition that staff gain from receiving feedback	4

Table 1 The number of students describing the activity in different ways

The two members of staff who took part in the pilot activity responded to a questionnaire in which they gave information about the activity, the participants and how successful they felt it had been.

Professor H thought that his discussion with the students highlighted the fact that dialogic feedback (both written and oral) had been crucial as he wrote his book:

‘One discussion point was the length of time it takes to publish a scholarly text and the multiple drafts it goes through (including orally delivered versions) before it gets to the stage where it is deemed publishable. Another was the extent to which academic research takes place within a scholarly community and develops through a process of debate and dialogue.’

Similar questions about the revision process were raised in the discussion between Dr S and his students:

‘I was highly impressed by the questions the students raised regarding the editing and publishing process. They asked, for instance, how free I was to reject the editor’s changes and suggestions, and if there would be opportunity for further editing of this entry now that it is published online.’

Professor H stated that he was able to use these topics as a bridge to discussing the students’ own struggles with feedback:

‘We also discussed different ways in which students can respond to feedback on their assignments. Unlike in academic publishing, students do not normally have opportunities to revise and resubmit a piece of assessed work. However, we talked about how they can refer back to the feedback they have received on one essay when preparing for the next one, perhaps even building up a “library” of feedback over time.’

A second theme in the conversations dwelt on the writing process. Dr S’s students raised a question which will be familiar to many lecturers: ‘They asked how “personal” I could be in the tone and content of the draft...this led to a helpful discussion regarding the students’ own approach to writing essays on literary matters.’ Professor H’s students raised similar points:

‘We also discussed other informal forms of peer support, such as sharing essays...how to respond to feedback and use it to develop writing and research skills; and how to view academic writing as taking place within a research community, which includes students.’

Professor H concluded that the activity:

‘Did highlight how working practices and conventions within academic research such as peer review can be used to open up a discussion with students about their own writing assignments.’

On a more logistical note, Professor H also noted: ‘Compiling the dossier of materials required some time and forethought. I was conscious of not overloading the students with too much advance reading material.’ But he acknowledged that ‘it should be easy to run a similar activity again in future now I have the material to hand’.

Discussion

Our findings are based on a small sample but, notwithstanding this and other limitations discussed below, we think that they furnish some useful indications about the ways that the activity can help develop feedback literacy among students. In particular, our pilot suggests that the activity creates a space for dialogue, whereby students can gain a better understanding of the purpose of feedback, and it also helps to demystify the process of academic writing. In addition, the findings show that students and staff genuinely enjoy getting to know each other in this way.

The activity provides the opportunity for students and staff to engage in a dialogue about feedback practices and the production of academic work. This creates an environment

for students to reflect upon the purposes of feedback, reinterpret it more positively, and consider how they can act upon it more productively. The activity also enables students and staff to discuss academic writing issues in relation to feedback received on work. This is important because students often see feedback as divorced from the process of producing work, either because feedback is perceived as too specific to one assignment or because their university has a deficit model of academic writing (Carless, 2006; Wingate, 2010). It is clear from the students' comments that the activity helped them understand that feedback was necessary for researchers to produce their work, and normalised the idea that feedback enhances academic writing.

The insight that academics receive and use feedback on their academic work improved students' disposition towards receiving and acting upon feedback. The fact that academics use feedback may normally be obscured to students by the language of 'peer review'. When reviewing the students' reports and staff reflections, we noticed that both groups used 'feedback' when talking about opinions delivered on student work, but used 'peer review' when discussing comments given on work produced by staff. Notwithstanding the differences between student and professional work mentioned in the previous section, a big step towards improving student dispositions towards feedback could be taken by breaking down this language distinction.

If this activity were to be repeated we think it would consolidate the development of students' feedback literacy and provide opportunity for deeper and further exploration of related issues (Carless and Boud, 2018). The student comments indicate that this would be welcomed by their peers, particularly if it allowed investigation of academic production in different subjects.

Colleagues have suggested that asking staff to share how feedback has made them feel would stimulate productive discussion on other aspects of receiving and using feedback. Studies (Carless, 2006; Sutton, 2012) show that developing students' sense of educational self can be a challenging and anxiety-provoking experience but it can also be very affirming. We think it would be interesting for students to see how true this is for staff, and how resilience can be developed through a process of internalising standards that allows an expert to make key judgments about quality (Sadler, 2010).

One way to achieve this would be to encourage discussion about experiences of receiving feedback on live presentations of work, as there is a danger that if the review and discussion focuses solely on peer review the activity could reinforce student perceptions that feedback is only written (Price *et al.*, 2011) or part of a formalised process. Doing so may have the effect of changing student dispositions towards a wider range of interactions than feedback given on coursework, particularly if students are asked to think about what other forms of information proffered by others could help to inform and enhance their work.

Our findings are limited by the small size of the pilot and the fact that it was conducted within a single research-intensive UK university, which has promoted 'Meet the Researcher' as a research-based education activity over recent years. The activity was only used to discuss the production of academic

work (academic paper/book chapter and encyclopaedia article). It would be worth exploring how well the activity works for considering feedback on other forms of professional work.

Conclusion

Our pilot indicates that, as a result of taking part in this activity, students came to realise that receiving and responding to feedback is fundamental to professional activity and that feedback was not simply used to correct mistakes and errors.

One of the activity's strengths is that it creates an open space for students and staff to discuss feedback, research and academic writing. Where the author has disagreed with the reviewer's comments there is also the opportunity to discuss the contested nature of knowledge. The exercise also appears to be beneficial for students' understanding of what staff do, and was generally found to be enjoyable and motivating for students.

We recommend that the activity is embedded throughout a curriculum. Some of the students in our study were in their first term and such early first use will help students understand, from the start of their university careers, that using feedback is an important part of producing academic work. In order to develop the other aspects of feedback literacy Carless and Boud (2018) identify the activity could be followed by formative peer review activities, which would enable students to develop their capacity to make academic judgements and apply feedback they receive.

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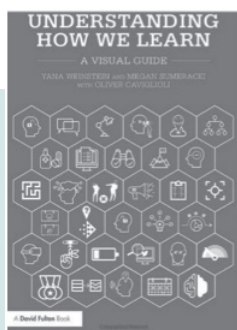
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Book Review

Understanding How We Learn: a visual guide

by Yana Weinstein and Megan Sumeracki with Oliver Caviglioli
Routledge, 2018



The key premise of *Understanding How We Learn* is that, in terms of promoting effective learning, teachers do not act on the existing evidence from cognitive psychology. There is a strong avocation, unsurprisingly, for the use of experimental evidence and six strategies for effective learning (spaced practice, retrieval practice, elaboration, interleaving, concrete example and dual coding) are outlined after three chapters on the basics of human cognitive processes (perception, attention and memory).

The 'visual' part of the title refers to the frequent use of images within the text which break up the design and make for a pleasant reading experience. However, they often add little to the text. There are exceptions where a well-constructed diagram does enhance the text.

As a text for teachers, it tackles fundamental concepts and their application to practice. For example, within the 'perception chapter' discussing top-down and bottom-up processing, there is a neat illustration of how top-down processes occur rather more often than people recognise. Teachers therefore need to link abstract ideas back to existing concrete examples in students' lives. In 1968, Ausubel *et al.* advised to find out what the learner already knows and teach accordingly; he would recognise echoes of his advice.

The heart of the book is the chapters on strategies for effective learning and these are organised into how students might approach their studying. So the chapter entitled 'planning when to study' considers the strategies of spaced practice and interleaving. In 'blocking' (repeatedly practising the same thing) each shape's faces are considered (triangle, square and so on). Interleaving is, simply put, the variation in study sequence of ideas. In interleaving, the variety of shapes would be interleaved with a variety of geometrical concepts (so triangle/faces, square/edges and so on). The diagram here is enlightening, with images of shapes with questions relating to their geometry. The authors note that the topic needs more study: for example, what topics might be interleaved (clearly interleaving wildly different ones will be unhelpful) and what ought to be the frequency of interleaving? However, an application might be that students alter their revision sequencing. A diagram for this shows a sequence of study as (topics) A, B and C. These could be revised A, B, C then C, B, A or B, C, A.

Students have occasionally suggested to me, in PGCLTHE classes, that this is all 'just common sense' but this book provides some valuable and thought-provoking background science. It also provides a range of challenges to practice that teachers seeking to develop might

consider implementing in their teaching to directly influence and hopefully improve student learning.

This is certainly a PGCLTHE/PGCAP piece of required reading, and reading it has reminded me of the simile: 'Anatomy is to medicine what psychology is to education'. For a brief article that covers similar territory, see Markovits and Weinstein (2018).

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Reflecting on the Academic Professional Apprenticeship: Lessons learnt at a large higher education institution

Ros O’Leary, Shaun Mudd and Helen King, University of the West of England

As we near a year since the launch of the Academic Professional Apprenticeship (APA) at the University of the West of England (UWE), it seems an appropriate moment for the programme team to take stock and reflect. Furthermore, as one of the early adopters of the APA, we thought it useful to reflect on lessons learnt for others developing or considering developing similar apprenticeship programmes.

The UWE Academic Professional Programme was launched in February 2019. It is a large-scale programme for new academic staff which combines a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) with the APA, and is mapped to Descriptor 2 of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning (UKPSF). We have initially limited the programme to the APA’s teaching specialist route, though we are considering developing the research specialist route in the future. UWE is a large Higher Education Institution (HEI) with c.30,000 students and c.3700 staff, and the scale of our programme has presented notable challenges. As of December 2019, we have almost 200 participants, and by the end of 2020 we will have approximately 300 participants registered on the programme at any one time.

Apprenticeship drivers

The single main driver for UWE implementing the APA was undoubtedly financial. Yet we also encountered further emergent benefits whilst implementing the programme. We outline here four benefits which may be significant drivers for other HEIs considering implementing the APA:

- *Financial.* Implementing the APA allows UWE to draw on our apprenticeship levy (HMRC, 2018) and offset the costs of initial professional development for new academic staff. A provider can draw down up to £9000 per apprentice, although up to £1800 of this is given to an external organisation for the End Point Assessment (EPA). This is expected to be the most significant driver across the sector given that over 50% of UK universities have recently considered or implemented measures to manage or reduce their staff training budget (UCEA, 2019, pp. 27-28)
- *Providing a more holistic approach to staff development.* The APA Standard (Institute for Apprenticeships, 2017) draws upon both the UKPSF and the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), and focuses not only on teaching and research but also on a variety of topics frequently omitted from academics’ core initial staff development (e.g. administrative duties, career management, work-life balance, etc.). The APA’s more holistic scope therefore responds to the traditional pattern of academic development, which sees doctoral training focus largely on research, and early career academic

training focus on teaching (Jenkins and Healey, 2005, pp. 41-44). There are also two specialist routes in teaching and research, which allow the APA to be tailored to a wider range of academic colleagues

- *Integrated approach to probation.* The APA necessitates greater involvement of a range of stakeholders across the University. A priority was therefore to use this as an opportunity to create a more integrated academic development experience for new staff, notably including greater alignment to probation
- *Protected time for staff development.* The APA requires more time to be allocated to new colleagues’ professional development than on UWE’s previous PGCert, and there is greater protection for this time. The typical expected duration of an APA programme is 18-24 months (extended pro-rata for part-time staff, and followed by up to 3 months for the EPA). It is a firm requirement that the employer dedicate 20% of an apprentice’s time for development (‘off-the-job learning’) during this period.

Programme design

Discussions with stakeholders across the University generated a number of key principles. Our APA provision should:

- Support an integrated and holistic perspective of academic practice
- Meet the APA Standard and appropriately prepare participants for the End Point Assessment
- Align to UWE’s strategic priorities in order to best support our staff (e.g. mental health)
- Offer flexibility to meet individual start-dates and roles
- Provide opportunities for non-apprentices to engage, in order to support all colleagues and take advantage of economies of scale
- Ensure connections with the academic career structure including probation, Performance and Development Review (PDR), and our internal Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship scheme
- Align with UWE’s curriculum design model (the Enhancement Framework)
- Ensure the new programme’s outcome offers a credible and portable qualification/accreditation
- Integrate and build on existing provision and training expertise at UWE.

The following sections describe significant elements of our programme design in further detail.

PGCert/APA combination

UWE’s new Postgraduate Certificate in Academic and Professional Practice (PGCAPP) is nested within our APA

programme to structure the apprentice's off-the-job learning. It builds upon enhanced versions of the three modules from the predecessor PGCert programme:

- Module 1: Higher Education Theory and Practice
- Module 2: Enquiry into Academic Practice
- Module 3: Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

Each is 20 credits at Level 7. Participants are recognised as HEA Associate Fellows following completion of Module 1, and HEA Fellows after completion of Modules 1-3. These modules are supplemented with a completely new, non-credit-bearing module:

- Module X: Professional Development for Advanced Academic Practice.

Participants must successfully complete all four modules before proceeding to the EPA. Completion of the EPA is required in order to be awarded the PGCAPP.

An equitable experience for all

The programme's design offers the same programme experience for all new academic staff, including those not eligible for apprenticeship levy funding. All new academic staff who have a significant responsibility for teaching and learning, and are employed on a contract of 0.5 FTE (full-time equivalent) or greater, are required to complete the full programme. This includes Module X and the EPA, and we provide a local equivalent of the EPA for those not apprenticeship funded.

Alignment with probation

The programme aims to provide a more coherent development experience for new staff arriving at UWE, by aligning to the numerous induction and probation activities which academics must complete alongside the programme. Key elements include:

- *Completion of Module 1* is required to pass probation (N.B. UWE has a 12-month academic probation period)
- *Mentors* are required both by this programme and for probation purposes. In order to better align processes and reduce duplication, participants' probation mentors are also their mentors for this programme wherever practical. A participant's regular Progress Review Meetings with their mentor therefore addresses their progress in a more holistic sense, including against probation requirements and the APA Standard
- *Teaching observations* are required both by this programme and probation. Both now use the same form, and a given observation can now easily be employed for both purposes.

Cross-institutional delivery model

This programme was based on a previous PGCert, which had been designed and delivered by UWE's Department of Education and Childhood. The new UWE Academic Professional Programme (including its nested PGCAPP) is now delivered centrally by the Academic Practice Directorate, which has opened up further opportunity to align the programme to our curriculum design model (the

Enhancement Framework) and our internal HEA Fellowship scheme. Our design and delivery team currently comprises over 30 colleagues from across the institution. This reflects the programme's valuing of disciplinary approaches to teaching, mirrors the approach of UWE's internal HEA Fellowship scheme, and is another key mechanism for disseminating practice across the University.

Professional development module

Module X is a zero-credit spine module designed to support a self-determined and purposeful model of professional development. Its introductory workshop is offered at regular intervals throughout the year, in which participants revisit their Initial Needs Assessment undertaken as part of their enrolment. Rating their confidence against each of the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the APA Standard enables them to identify key areas for their professional development that are not addressed in the credit-bearing modules. They are facilitated to develop a professional development plan using tools such as the GROW coaching model (Whitmore, 2002), and to think about their professional development in terms of identifying evidence to inform changes to their academic practice (King, 2019). Regular Progress Review Meetings with their mentors provide touchpoints for the participants to reflect on and revise their progress through the APA, and further optional workshops offer face-to-face opportunities for connecting with the module leader. Module X also acts as a vehicle for managing the gateway process and supporting participants to prepare for their EPA.

e-Portfolio

The programme uses the PebblePad ePortfolio system. This provides space for participants' reflection, record keeping, and the submission of assessments. It also facilitates working with their mentor, and allows participants to retain access to all reflections and resources long after they have completed the programme, even if they leave employment at UWE (Mudd, Narborough and O'Leary, forthcoming).

Lessons learnt

Decide early on about eligibility

The percentage of apprenticeship-eligible staff is likely to be a major factor behind whether an institution decides to implement the APA. This can vary dramatically according to the demographics of a group. For instance, Table 1 shows the first 130 staff admitted to UWE's Academic Professional Programme and whether they were eligible to be apprentices.

Faculty	Apprentices	Non-Apprentices
Arts, Creative Industries and Education	75% (15)	25% (5)
Health and Applied Sciences	72% (33)	28% (13)
Business and Law	48% (12)	52% (13)
Environment and Technology	31% (12)	69% (27)

Table 1 Percentage of UWE apprenticeship-eligible staff

The range is startling. It is crucial to have a strong grasp of eligibility early on, as it helps to project likely eligibility numbers more accurately, to maximise the number identified eligible for apprenticeship funding and to streamline these processes.

The main reasons for an academic not being eligible for apprenticeship funding are:

- *Citizenship and residency:* These eligibility rules are complex (ESFA, 2019b). In most situations an academic must be a citizen of a European Economic Area (EEA) country, or have the right of abode in the UK, and must have been ordinarily resident in this area for the last three years
- *Prior learning:* Apprentices are not allowed to repeat significant previous learning, and providers are required to check for this (ESFA, 2019a). Our Initial Needs Assessment checks for qualifications, experience and confidence against the APA Standard. We then recognise any identified learning via accredited prior learning (credited and experiential), and correspondingly draw down less levy funding and reduce the duration of their programme. Our programme allows participants to accredit prior learning against up to two of our three credit-bearing modules. However, as an apprentice is required to be on a programme of at least 12 months, participants can only accredit prior learning against one module (at most) and still have sufficient original learning to be eligible for apprenticeship funding.

Further related considerations are:

- *English and Maths qualifications:* Apprentices are required to obtain Level 2 Functional Skills in English and Maths unless they already hold certain qualifications in these disciplines (ESFA, 2019c). These include GCSEs, O Levels, CSEs, AS and A Levels at certain minimum grades. International qualifications may also be acceptable for this exemption, but a formal statement of comparability (NARIC statement) must be obtained which incurs a cost. We advise it is crucial for institutions to make a decision about this early on, weighing up financial benefits against the complication and difficulty of putting staff through this training. UWE decided not to make a colleague an apprentice if they did not already hold relevant English and Maths qualifications, as it is too time consuming to make them pursue these qualifications. Other difficult decisions include: what do you do when a colleague claims to have a relevant O Level but has lost their certificate? Who does the work and pays the cost to obtain a NARIC statement?
- *Resignations:* An institution does not receive the full amount of funding for an apprentice who resigns before they have completed the programme. Institutions with high staff turnover may therefore find the APA less appealing to implement.

Uncomfortable as it may be, obvious deductions can be drawn. Overseas career academics are less likely to be apprenticeship-eligible than UK nationals drawn from industry. Younger colleagues are less likely to have lost their GCSE (or similar) certificates, and so are easier to accommodate as apprentices.

Building relationships and networks is key

Introducing the APA has the potential to be contentious and sensitive, for example, the extra time allocation required of new staff (compared to just a PGCert). Different faculties in the same institution often provide different allocations

and support for staff engaging in their PGCert programme (Smith, 2011). Implementing the APA spotlights this area and threatens to aggravate disparities, and so having cross-institutional agreement on how this is going to work is imperative. To this end, we project-managed the design and launch of the programme to ensure key stakeholders were involved at every stage of the development process, and developed clear roles and responsibilities.

The relationship with HR is critical. They represent the Employer in the apprenticeship, and they not only need to be closely involved with the development of the programme, but there is also need to establish a strong ongoing relationship. This is crucial for effective sharing of information (e.g. a colleague's full-time/part-time status, start and leave dates, etc.), following up engagement issues, making decisions about how to adjust learning plans and handle assessment extension requests, and so on. This relationship is also pivotal for aligning the programme with probation and PDR processes. We are in contact with HR daily, co-run the programme's mentor training, and are currently working with them to admit participants to the programme closer to the point of recruitment.

Another key relationship is with the institution's apprenticeship team. These are often new teams working to embed apprenticeship processes across the institution, so close collaboration is incredibly helpful. The APA is atypical for a HEI in two senses: it is not a degree apprenticeship (rather it is an apprenticeship into which we have chosen to embed a degree-level qualification), and it is an Employer/Provider apprenticeship (where the University represents both these roles). Having ready advice on how to interpret the complexity of apprenticeship rules is essential.

Relationships with a breadth of other professional services teams have also proved important to cultivate and maintain, especially given the complexity of processes and connectivity of systems. For example, our programme's flexible and regular start dates have been especially challenging. Our intakes fall outside of traditional semesters and are difficult to align to usual enrolment processes. We have therefore spent a significant amount of time working with our admission team and student records team to streamline the process of admitting staff onto our programme.

Communications, communications, and more communications

We have found you can rarely have too much communication! We consciously had a communication plan to release regular updates to the University as a whole (e.g. via weekly newsletter), and also targeted communications to Deans, Heads of Department and line managers. We also ran (and recorded) information events before the programme launched as well as providing online guidance. You may find this is still not enough, particularly around faculty expectations of new staff and the time allocated to the programme. Collaboration with HR has been extremely helpful in this regard. For instance, we are currently working with them to enhance our initial communications to new starters and their managers.

We have also improved our messaging to participants over the last year. At the programme's introduction, we originally spent some time giving background to how the programme

has changed (from a PGCert to a combined PGCert and apprenticeship), which seemed to create some anxiety and negativity for early participants. We have since refocused our messaging. This includes a nod to the financial imperative, but now focuses on the key benefits to them, including:

- A significant investment in their development, in terms of the cost of engaging in the programme and the time they have to study and develop themselves
- A holistically designed programme bringing together development concerned with teaching, research and administration
- A programme that has been thoughtfully integrated into the probation process, especially with mentoring and teaching observations
- A transferable suite of qualifications: a PGCert, HEA Fellowship, and having completed a programme mapped to the APA Standard.

Administration and data

These programmes require significantly more administration than a traditional PGCert. Documents such as Commitment Statements and Apprenticeship Agreements, Initial Needs Assessments, and eligibility checks need to be created, stored and be accessible to different stakeholders. Several participant-maintained documents need to be audited (e.g. Off-The-Job Learning Records, records of Progress Review Meetings, etc.). Numerous processes also need to be established robustly (e.g. breaks in learning, change in programme duration, withdrawals, etc.).

Implementing an Employer/Provider apprenticeship seems to take administration to another level of complexity. This is partly because we are dealing with participants who are both staff and students (and UWE's systems are generally not necessarily amenable to reconciling the two), and partly due to our programme's design principle of flexibility and with regular start dates (as we are less able to do administration in large batches).

In our programme development phase we employed a fixed-term Project Manager who kick-started our administration planning. However, we have found this to be an ongoing journey. We currently have between 0.5-1.0 FTE administration support, as well as 0.5 FTE learning technology support, though we are aware that we need to increase this overall. Ideally, we would also have some kind of senior administration, such as a Relationship Manager or Programme Officer. We envisage they would ensure timely collaboration with other teams (e.g. HR and UWE's apprenticeship team regarding the Individualised Learner Record), ensure participants' Individual Learning Plans were kept up to date, manage the many programme processes (e.g. those around accredited prior learning), and ensure our apprenticeship compliance.

Learning-technology support has been indispensable in terms of implementing some of our processes so that they can be accessed by everyone who needs them (e.g. participant, mentor, programme team, administrators). We still have more development ahead to make sure that these processes are as smooth and as efficient as possible. For instance, we are developing a means of mass automatic reporting of such things as the number of off-the-job learning hours logged

or the date and key details of a participant's most recent Progress Review Meeting; manual tracking proved particularly time-consuming for such a large programme.

We also recommend developing a robust data-sharing policy between all stakeholders (e.g. HR, the institution's apprenticeship, admissions, and student records teams). This should be consolidated with a single shared database which can give specific viewing and editing access appropriate to the teams involved. A particular bottleneck has been the number of different isolated databases, and hesitation around sharing records with the appropriate teams at the right point. For example, sharing staff National Insurance numbers held by HR was initially problematic in terms of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), but was essential for the Individualised Learning Record.

Really ensuring participants have time to engage

We created the programme with the intention of making it as flexible as possible, to most easily fit around participants' working patterns and other priorities. Time is allocated via the institution's workload-allocation model, and the programme offers several identical iterations of core face-to-face workshops, as well as allowing participants to schedule further self-identified off-the-job learning as befits their schedules. Although participants appreciate this flexibility, many report difficulty engaging. They state that they have to prioritise other work, or that the time allocated for this programme exists only in theory rather than in practice (presumably as they believe higher-priority work takes longer to complete than estimated via allocation models).

One response we are implementing is to move the admission process to the point of recruitment. We intend to communicate with the participant and their manager at this early stage. This is designed to combat the idea that the programme is 'yet another thing' added to a new colleague's workload.

Another method of combating this could be to dispense with the flexibility and 'block out' participants for one day per week to engage with this programme. We have spoken to colleagues in other institutions who have implemented this model, and they report fewer concerns in this area.

Conclusion

Despite having plenty of room to make our processes and administration more streamlined, we have reached a point where we are proud of our participants' experience. The holistic approach to academic development, which more neatly integrates with probation, makes good sense for a new academic faced with a myriad of new things to get to grips with. In particular, our new professional development module (Module X) has been a significant shift forward in helping staff to develop a sustained and deliberate approach to their own development.

Reflecting on the UWE Academic Professional Programme has been a useful exercise in itself. It has helped us identify our 'what next' steps. We also hope that in sharing these reflections more widely, our key messages of lessons learnt can inform other institutions' developments. To this end, we have also developed a short summary of our apprenticeship approaches, which is available on the following website: <http://www.drhelenking.com/publications>.

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Extending conversations about what is an inclusive curriculum

Danielle Tran and **Dawn Reilly**, University of Greenwich

Introduction

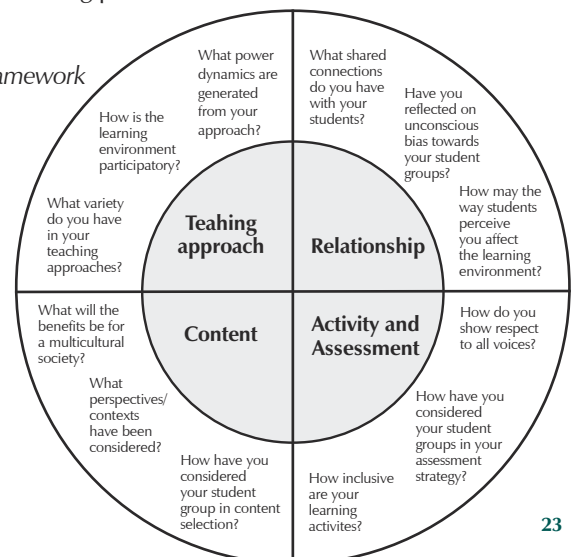
As part of our professional development, it is good practice to continually review the extent to which content, activities, assessment and relationships in the classroom are inclusive. Morgan and Houghton (2011, p. 5) define an inclusive curriculum as '...one that takes into account students' educational, cultural and social background and experience as well as the presence of any physical or sensory impairment and their mental well-being'. By critically considering what is taught, who is teaching, who is being taught, how things are being taught, and why, we can pinpoint how both micro- and macro-changes can be implemented to enhance levels of inclusivity in our higher education classroom. These questions can and should be considered across subject areas to review and develop our university offerings, and enhance the learning experience for students. This should help to address the attainment gap between particular groups of students, for example black and minority ethnic (BAME) and white students (McDuff *et al.*, 2018).

Developing a model for inclusion

The topic of inclusivity continues to receive much critical attention. The subject of decolonising curricula is a growing area of discussion which can be understood as extending conversations concerning inclusive learning and teaching. Extending these discussions involves reflecting on our own

position, perspectives and unconscious bias so that we can consider how these affect our relationships with students, the ways in which we approach teaching and curriculum design, and therefore the student learning experience. The TRAAC (Teaching, Relationships, Activity and Assessment, and Content) model (Figure 1) which is discussed here captures some of the key questions being raised within discussions across the sector (see, for example, Morreira and Luckett (2018), and Sabaratnam (2017)). By bringing together important questions raised within academic debate, the model provides an entry point for deeper reflection on our learning and teaching practices.

Figure 1
The TRAAC Framework
(Tran, 2019)



In the 'Decolonising learning and teaching toolkit', made available online by the School of Oriental and African Studies (2019, p. 8), it is noted that 'Given the increasing diversity of resources we now have for teaching and learning about different subjects, [...] it should be increasingly possible to diversify perspectives and representation within curricula on a range of subjects whilst maintaining core academic principles'. The TRAAC model can be used as a developmental tool to encourage reflection and review of materials and approaches. It is not a tool for criticism, or to be used to point out flaws in a module or programme. Rather, it may shed light on the strengths of a module, the areas for further development, and help pinpoint where consideration for enhancement would most benefit the student learning experience.

Application of the TRAAC model

The TRAAC model was piloted on a core financial accounting module for third-year students on an Accounting and Finance degree. Typically, there are approximately 150 students on the module. Around a third of the class is made up of international students who join the programme as direct-entry students in the final year and who mainly come from institutions in China. The challenges faced by Chinese direct-entry students include language-related issues, culture shock and also 'learning culture shock', as students encounter a more active form of learning than the passive style they have been accustomed to (Warren *et al.*, 2019). Further, the majority of students continuing from the second year are from BAME backgrounds. The task of designing and delivering an inclusive and decolonised curriculum in a subject such as accounting is at first sight challenging because of the nature of the subject. This would also be true of other subjects, mathematics and the natural sciences being other examples, but nevertheless the TRAAC model provides helpful guidance on areas to be considered. Therefore each segment of the TRAAC model was worked through and used to review core aspects of the module.

Teaching approach

Starting point: The teaching approach for the exam-related component is a traditional 2-hour lecture in a large lecture theatre and a 1-hour tutorial. Many students are reluctant to speak in class because if their answers are correct, they may be seen as showing off by their peers. If their answers are incorrect, they worry that they will be seen as struggling to keep up. For similar reasons, students are not necessarily confident to ask questions in front of anyone else.

Questions raised: This front-led teaching style arguably reinforces a hierarchical power dynamic between lecturer and students. This raises questions concerning the lack of opportunities for peer interaction and participation of students, which in turn may affect the learning experience.

However, lecturers on the course need to ensure that core knowledge is communicated clearly so that students are appropriately prepared ahead of their assessments.

Proposed changes: Smaller changes may help to strike a balance between ensuring student understanding while allowing room for increased levels of student engagement. The introduction of short online quizzes provides opportunities to practise calculations. This would help to support the learning

of students with part-time jobs and other commitments, who can learn while 'on the move'. It encourages self-directed learning and is an easy to implement change which might also help students to acquire new digital skills. The simplicity of the online quiz means it would not be onerous to design by the teacher and would be easily supported during the lifetime of the module. It would also be a supportive way of enabling students to practise and receive online feedback on whether their answers are correct or incorrect. The latter would particularly help shyer international students to feel more comfortable at putting forward their answers.

However, encouraging in-class discussion can help to develop students' communication and soft skills. Creating more opportunities for students to work in groups during tutorials can help to introduce a relaxed setting for regular discussion. The introduction of group tasks during tutorials will create more opportunities for student-led discussion and peer learning. This will open up levels of participation and decrease the sense of distance and hierarchy between the lecturer and students, thus enhancing levels of inclusivity through the learning activities.

Relationship

Starting point: The university has a diverse student population and this is reflected in the class. The teaching team on the module comprises three white female lecturers and therefore cannot be said to reflect the entire student population.

Questions raised: Given the high level of student satisfaction on the module and the good academic outcomes, we do not intend to change the team at this point. In an advanced accounting module of this type, the most important thing is to have lecturers who are technically qualified and who have a caring and supportive attitude in their delivery of the module. However, we did question how greater levels of rapport between staff and students could be created, and how this could develop the learning atmosphere.

Proposed changes: The TRAAC model has caused us to pause and reflect on the lack of diversity on the teaching team and how it would be useful for individual members of the team to reflect on any shared connections they may have with their students. Such a task may be a continuing professional development (CPD) activity in itself and help the teaching team to understand how they are being perceived, as well as how they are perceiving their students. Another way in which the team can become more aware of how the relationship between staff and students can affect the learning environment is by reviewing resources on unconscious bias to encourage CPD and critical reflection.

Activity and assessment

Starting point: The module is assessed via an essay and unseen exam. The exam-focused material is technical and aligned with the syllabus required by the accrediting bodies.

Questions raised: It is documented that BAME students are more disadvantaged than white students when exams are the means of assessment (Institute for Policy Studies in Education, and London Metropolitan University, 2011). However, the exam is essential for the module's accreditation which is important to all students and is valuable to them in their future careers. As the exam cannot be replaced, we questioned what

additional support could be offered to students ahead of their final exam.

Proposed changes: Additional classes to review past exam questions are already provided. A formative assessment task on key topics in the form of a marked mid-term mock exam followed by written and verbal feedback is now planned for next year. This will help to better prepare students for not only the type of questions asked, which are structured and written differently to essay questions, but also to help prepare them mentally and emotionally to cope with an exam setting which can be highly stressful. The mid-term mock, like the online quizzes and group discussions, will allow for increased opportunities to receive feedback and forge a dialogue for feedback and responses.

The essay assessment within the module develops students' academic writing skills through a critical analysis of academic literature on a topical current issue within accounting. The essay is not the first coursework submission in the third-year structure of the programme. However, reflecting on the various student groups and the differences in assessments across the various modules, moving forward it will be beneficial to involve the academic skills team specifically to help students with their accounting essay. Consideration of the make-up of the student cohort is taken into account when picking essay themes. For example, we recently asked students to review a particular accounting issue in a developing country of their choice. Students were enthusiastic about being able to choose their country of focus. Students from developing countries were able to draw on their own knowledge within their analysis of the issues. This inclusive approach to the selection of our essay topics will continue so that students are able to reflect their own nationalities, backgrounds, and global and industry perspectives which interest them in each essay.

Content

Starting point: As a technical accounting module with professional accreditation, there is no scope for redesigning the main part of the content which is assessed by an exam. However, the module has a focus on international financial reporting which should make it relevant to all students.

Questions raised: Is the international perspective of the module as outlined in the handbook sufficiently explained so as to engage all students in the module?

Proposed changes: The increasingly globally recognised qualifications with which the module content is aligned will be emphasised more explicitly in next year's handbook. This will increase the relevance of the subject to students and encourage them to aspire to graduate careers within a worldwide accounting profession.

Conclusion

The TRAAC model can be used as a conversation starter, to focus on a particular section, or, more fruitfully, to support a holistic review of a module, as has been done here. The developmental conversations which have arisen from applying the model have led to an honest review of module content and pedagogy. It has underlined what is working well already within the module and suggested ways of further

enhancing provision. This has culminated in some small and more significant changes to the content and delivery of the module. What is key, however, is that the model encourages ongoing reflection, commitment to good practice, and continually seeking ways of forming a more inclusive learning environment and experience for students.

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'That won't work here!' What can campus universities learn from their distance learning counterparts?

Georgina Blakeley, University of Huddersfield

The question of what, if anything, campus universities can learn from universities whose main business is distance learning has been at the forefront of my mind. I have recently returned to a position at the University of Huddersfield following over 13 years at the Open University (OU) where I worked on entry-level interdisciplinary social science modules. This article will begin by dispelling some of the myths which reify one type of university over another and will argue that the differences between each type are more apparent than real. It will then suggest five lessons that can be learned for those teaching and supporting students starting to study the social sciences, the principles of which can be applied in many other disciplines.

Dispelling the myth of difference

The Open University is unique in the UK higher education sector in terms of its size, scale, mission and student body. There is much that is true in this statement: the Open University is the UK's largest university with 122,326 students across England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Open University, 2017). It is the only higher education institution to operate across all four nations of the United Kingdom. Its mission to be open to people, places, ideas and methods contains a strong element of social justice within it which aims to provide education opportunities to all regardless of background. These three factors alone lead to an extraordinarily diverse student body.

Certainly, at least in terms of size, the University of Huddersfield is different from the Open University. Its student body stands at around 18,000 students, the majority of whom come from the surrounding local regional area. Its vision echoes that of the OU in that its aim to be an 'Inspiring, Innovative University of International Renown' expresses our determination to secure the very best HE experience for all students regardless of background' (University of Huddersfield, 2017).

Yet in terms of the student body, the differences are more apparent than real. Most OU students are part-time but, increasingly, many are studying at full-time intensity. University of Huddersfield students are ostensibly full-time but this label hides the fact that many combine their studies with part-time work and caring responsibilities. OU students study at a distance. University of Huddersfield students are expected to attend regularly but being on campus can be difficult for the over 50% who are commuter students. Around 40% of OU students are from low socio-economic backgrounds and begin their studies with low or no prior educational qualifications. The University of Huddersfield does not have open entry, a characteristic which is distinct to the OU, but many students are from similarly deprived backgrounds and begin their studies with low prior educational qualifications.

If, as I have argued above, the differences between a campus university like the University of Huddersfield and a distance learning institution like the OU, are not as sharply drawn as first posited, then what might campus universities learn from their distance learning counterparts in terms of teaching and supporting students?

Lesson 1 – Don't assume anything about students' prior knowledge

Although campus students will generally start with at least some prior educational qualifications, these should not be taken as a guide to what skills or knowledge students might confidently have. It is important to start teaching with something that is familiar and connected to students' everyday lives. This allows students to build up confidence and learn experientially. Modules should start with a trigger – an issue, a problem, an idea or a puzzle – to stimulate students' curiosity while starting from students' existing knowledge base in order to build confidence and to facilitate learning experientially. In this way,

Lesson 2 – Be explicit about teaching students how to think like a social scientist

Entry-level students typically take a suite of modules introducing them to various aspects of the social sciences in terms of both skills and knowledge and understanding. What these modules less typically do is to explicitly teach students about social science inquiry. By beginning with something familiar like 'The Street', it is possible to start to encourage students to look at the familiar in new ways. Beginning to question the 'taken-for-granted' is the first step towards thinking like a social scientist. On the OU's entry-level Introducing the Social Sciences module, social science inquiry is taught explicitly by taking students through the elements of social science inquiry step-by-step – questions, claims,

Lesson 3 – Use a blend of teaching tools

There is no such thing as the typical student. Even if one does not subscribe wholly to the idea of learning styles, students arrive at university with differing strengths and abilities, different needs and interests and preferred ways of learning. While campus universities are to some extent constrained by a teaching and learning model of lectures and seminars (even if these are sometimes flipped), such constraints do not mean that within those teaching and learning spaces a range of resources such as animations, videos, audios, quizzes and online activities cannot be used to reinforce, extend and excite students' learning. It is unlikely, for example, that a student will grasp a concept like social class just through having it explained in a lecture or reading about it in a book. Yet if this explanation is extended and reinforced through audio-visual

material, for example, students' understanding will be deeper and more authentic. Watching a video about an individual's lived experience of social class will deepen and make real knowledge about the concept of social class. Online activities can then be designed to check students' understanding as well as offering ways to plug gaps in knowledge and understanding.

Lesson 4 – Work holistically as an interdisciplinary teaching team

For those who have not had the opportunity to work at the OU, trying to describe how teaching materials are produced through the OU module team is difficult. Teamwork is essential to the production of teaching materials and each module team meeting is a learning experience. The closest way to describe it is to imagine that you regularly meet with colleagues to critically peer review the lecture and seminar notes you deliver word by word and line by line. While the process can be challenging, even uncomfortable at times, it leads to teaching materials that are holistic and often interdisciplinary. Modules at the OU are produced in teams which develop content (print, audio-visual and online activities), map skills and design assessment across the module so that these are built and developed incrementally. This helps to achieve Bigg's (2003) idea of constructive alignment so learning outcomes, teaching materials and assessment are not separate components designed in isolation but integral elements designed simultaneously and iteratively. In campus universities, staff tend to teach individual modules which students often study as isolated units without being aware of the whole to which they contribute. Both teachers and learners need a sense of the whole – how both content, skills and assessment fit together – so the point is not necessarily more team teaching but more teamwork in terms of how the curriculum is designed and delivered.

Lesson 5 – A blend of support mechanisms is as important as the teaching blend

It is common to talk about blended teaching but less common

to talk about blended student support, yet a blend of support mechanisms is just as important when we consider the differing needs of students. This is as true of distance learning students as it is of their campus counterparts. The commuter students at Huddersfield who might struggle to spend much time on campus would benefit from many of the online support tools that distance learning providers take for granted. These might include, for example, pastoral telephone calls, online induction sessions, online discussion boards and online peer mentoring. Social media can also be used creatively to build online communities.

Conclusion

In drawing these lessons from my experience at the OU, there is a danger that I have exaggerated the distinctiveness of the OU and oversimplified the ways in which campus universities teach and support their students. There is of course now more overlap than ever between different types of institutions and their student bodies, making categorisation of particular institutions difficult. This in a sense is the point of the article: to emphasise that there is much to learn even from institutions which may at first glance seem very different.

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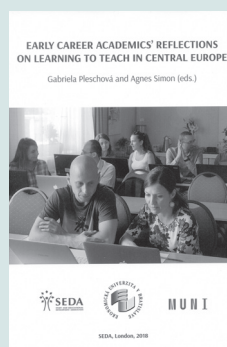
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Early Career Academics' Reflections on Learning to Teach in Central Europe

by Gabriela Pleschová and Agnes Simon (eds.)



We have important news about the spread of educational development in Central Europe. A major project, in which SEDA was a partner, is coming to a successful conclusion, and a fascinating book written by its participants is now available as a free download on the SEDA website.

The Project was based at the University of Economics in Bratislava (Slovakia) and Masaryk University in Brno (Czech Republic) and led by Gabriela Pleschová and Agnes Simon. The partner universities were Tartu in Estonia and Lund in Sweden, with SEDA and the Central European University. It was supported

by Erasmus+ and was called 'Extending and reinforcing good practice in teacher development'.

It brought together academic participants from all across central Europe and concentrated on student-centred approaches and innovative teaching methods. Written by the participants with commentaries on each chapter from independent reviewers, the book is their reflections on their whole experience of the workshops and the incorporation of their learning into curriculum design and classroom teaching.

Please download the whole book from <https://tinyurl.com/y4czpeyr>, or go to the Publications pages of the SEDA website.

SEDA News

Forthcoming events

SEDA Spring Conference 2020

Rethinking the Remit of the University in Uncertain Times
2-3 April 2020
Radisson Blue Hotel, Glasgow
Booking will open towards the end of January 2020.

ICED Conference 2020: The Future-Ready Graduate

15-18 June 2020
ETH, Zurich, Switzerland
Call for proposals and registration now open: <http://iced2020.ch>

Courses

We are now taking bookings for the next *Online Introduction to Educational Change* course. It will run from 17 February to 13 March 2020. For more information and the booking form, see: <https://www.seda.ac.uk/online-introduction-educational-change>.

New SEDA Senior Fellows

Very well done to **John Bostock**, **Steve Cook** and **Penny Sweasey** who have recently been awarded the Senior Fellowship of SEDA.

Educational Development Initiative of the Year 2019

Congratulations to **Penny Sweasey** and **Graham Holden** of the University Alliance, whose Teaching Excellence Alliance (TEA) Sandpit was the winning initiative.

The UA Teaching Excellence Alliance have created the TEA Sandpit innovation – outcome-focused design intensives which support universities' sense of strategic urgency around educational priorities through rapid and effective generation of ideas, delivering concrete outcomes in a single day. The

TEA Sandpit, named for its characteristic as a vibrant, safe and collegiate space to work creatively, enables collaboration with like-minded but very contextually different HEIs, and facilitates intra- and inter-community cross-institutional 'fast cycle design'. The TEA Sandpit utilises educational development expertise to generate strategic impact, and foster relationships and communities and sustainable culture change in a non-hierarchical and inclusive environment.

Congratulations also to our two runners up:

The Open University Scholarship Steering Group and Centres for Scholarship and Innovation led by **Stefanie Sinclair**.

This application relates to the set-up of a cross-university collaborative network of five faculty-level Centres for Scholarship and Innovation at the Open University. These Centres form part of a renewed and reimagined focus, role and ambition for the scholarship of teaching and learning at the OU, and facilitate collaboratively developed, research-informed, knowledge exchange in teaching and learning in HE. They work in partnership with each other, professional services staff and OU students, to co-ordinate the scholarship of teaching and learning conducted within the OU, maximise the benefit of evidence gathered, speed up the adoption of good practice and make innovation more visible across and beyond the OU.

The University College ABC Learning Design initiative led by **Nataša Perovi** and **Clive Young**.

ABC is an effective approach to curriculum (re)design, developed at UCL and now used internationally in over 60 universities and colleges. At its heart is a fast, engaging hands-on 'design sprint' workshop for busy academics. In just 90 minutes using a game format, teams collaborate to create a visual 'storyboard' outlining the type and sequence of blended and online activities required to meet the module's learning outcomes. Assessment, cross-programme themes and institutional policies can all be integrated. ABC focuses on the student learning journey and at UCL has been applied to whole programmes, individual modules, CPD courses and MOOCs.

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