

SEDA Spring Conference 2024



Session Title: What makes an education developer? An exploration of academic and professional trajectories

Session Type: Workshop (60 mins)

Main presenter(s): Silvia Colaiacomo, University of Greenwich

Co presenter(s): Stuart Sims - University of Greenwich

Session Summary: What makes an educational developer?

The workshop aims to explore the identity trajectory of educational developers at a pivotal time when on the one hand the role is becoming more professionalised, with dedicated study paths and development routes, but on the other it still broadly defined mostly depending on institutional cultures and areas of expertise. The session will be exploratory and will unpick some of the key elements that contribute to making an educational developer by engaging participants in discussions and reflective activities.

Session Outline: The responsibilities of educational developers are broadly defined in scope and expertise. Whilst the role seems to be moving towards a clearly defined professional path with dedicated qualifications and opportunities for progression (Skead, 2018), at the same time, it appears to be differently constructed in job descriptions, expectations and spheres of influence, based mostly on institutional cultures, structures as well as areas of expertise (Green and Little, 2016). Still the role attracts colleagues from varied backgrounds and diverse profiles, both in academic faculties and academic support roles (Mori et al, 2022). The proposed workshop aims to explore the overarching aspects and professional trajectories of educational developers to outline the key aspects and features that constitute a common denominator of practice throughout the sector (Mizrahi-Shtelman, R. and Drori, G.S., 2023).

The session will include a presentation and discussion of preliminary findings of an ongoing research project looking at the discursive construction of educational developers' roles in UK based job descriptions. This will be followed by an interactive workshop engaging participants through individual and group reflective activities centred on identifying drivers and barriers to the profession, common traits and values. The workshop will explore the following questions:

- What constitutes an educational developer?
- Which disciplinary areas and/or previous professional experiences are commonly represented in the sector?
- How can inclusivity and representation be enhanced?

What constitutes impact and how is the role evolving? Are developers shaping, enacting or supporting the implementation of education strategies?

The workshop will unpick current biases shaping the construction of the educational developer's role and will discuss possible future trajectories and approaches to enhance inclusivity and support for current and perspective colleagues. Participants will have the chance to share perspectives and views on the sector's current status and be involved in further research on the topic.

The session will be highly interactive, with plenty of opportunities for discussion. All information will be shared confidentially and anonymously.

References: Green, D., & Little, D. (2016). Family portrait: A profile of educational developers around the world. *International Journal for Academic Development*.

doi:10.1080/1360144X.2015.1046875

Mizrahi-Shtelman, R. and Drori, G.S. (2023), "Who's A Colleague? Professionalizing Academic Leadership as a Platform for Redefining Collegiality", Sahlin, K. and Eriksson-Zetterquist, U. (Ed.) *Revitalizing Collegiality: Restoring Faculty Authority in Universities (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 87)*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 111-136.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20230000087005>

Mori, Y., Harland, T. and Wald, N. (2022) Academic developers' professional identity: a thematic review of the literature, *International Journal for Academic Development*, 27:4, 358-371, DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2021.2015690

Skead, M. (2018) What's next? Experiences of a formal course for academic developers, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37:2, 390-403, DOI:10.1080/07294360.2017.1359500