

Title: 'Can we have *us* on here?' Recognising collaborative practice in professional development frameworks: possibilities and problems

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Session Learning Outcomes

- Recognise some of the limitations of current frameworks for identifying and recognising collaborative work in UK HE;
- Evaluate the rationale for developing accredited frameworks to recognise the works of teams and groups;
- Weigh some of the difficulties of formalising recognition of group activity from a critical perspective and from thinking about their own experience;
- Understand how theory was applied to practice in a small case study.

Session Outline

Strategic imperatives have led to more collaborative working in UK HE. Staff developers increasingly deliver bespoke interventions for teams. Sector-wide innovations (e.g. the HEA's CATE scheme (2016 -)) also reflect this shift. Whilst the UKPSF (2011) recognises the positive role of collaboration in high-quality education, its active protagonist remains the individual. When much of the work on which applicants for recognition are being asked to reflect now takes place in teams, it no longer seems tenable only to support teaching staff to demonstrate experience and expertise by reflection on individual activity.

This paper will consider how such problems and their symptoms (e.g. reluctance to claim individual credit for team achievements; lack of professional services staff engagement) have been tackled in one UK HEI (Essex). Essex's staff development approach was being increasingly impacted by the fact it neither reflected the realities of the sector shift away from a 'lone-academic' model of development and recognition (Gornall *et al*, 2014)), nor adequately recognised collaborative work and achievement. In March 2017 – as part of its HEA re-accreditation – Essex proposed a new Collaborative Award within its PDF. This paper will outline the model proposed, summarise the responses it elicited, and update on further progress.

Acknowledgment of the role of collaboration in HE work is increasing, and yet there is uncertainty about how formal schemes can be configured, and how these might relate to individual claims to teaching excellence. Even if changes such as those discussed are furthered, questions will remain. Thus, if we continue to rely on reflection as an underpinning approach to development, might our frame of reference still be one dominated by individualistic introspection (Bradbury *et al*, 2009)? And might we, as Olssen and Peters

(2005) suggest, be promoting entrenched institutional and strategic interests by highlighting the contributions of (corporate) groups at the expense of those of (autonomous) individuals?

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Discussion paper: 20 min presentation + 25 minute discussion.

The discussion will begin with a five-minute free-writing activity which will draw on the attendees' experience of/feelings about their own individual achievements and how these relate to their recognition of what they owe to others.

Questions that might be discussed:

- In what ways have your roles as staff or education developers changed in the past five years and to what have been the impacts of these changes on your work with individuals/teams?
- What barriers do you face/have you faced relating your experience of collaboration/team working to the UKPSF?
- Does any professional recognition framework defined solely in terms of individual success have sufficient flex to be able to recognise collaborative activities?
- In assessing the achievements of staff groups and teams, might we encounter similar issues to those assessing student group work or are the challenges different?
- How do we engage a wider range of HE staff in professional development frameworks and recognition schemes?
- How might we respond to the charge that such initiatives promote an overly narrow, management-led model of 'communities of practice' in UK HE?

References

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