

## **What is the role of an educational developer in the neoliberal university?**

### **Teamwork, tensions and transformation**

This keynote will focus on the changing face of educational development in an increasingly marketized university system. Educational development is now an established part of the UK HE landscape, with most universities housing a teaching and learning enhancement unit of some kind. Arguably, the recent policy focus on teaching excellence through the TEF has strengthened the position of educational developers within this system, and yet it also crystallizes some key tensions in the role and throws a spotlight on the question of how developers work within the HE system.

Teamwork - within ED units, teaching teams and across the boundaries of discipline and professional roles - is increasingly important in achieving our goals of teaching enhancement. However, whilst often held up as an ideal, effective teamwork and collaboration is not easy to achieve nor necessarily risk-free. Higher education staff who have generally been successful in a very individualized academic system may not be well placed to work in teams; involvement of colleagues in teaching teams or peer review may be seen as actively threatening; and the increasing use of teamwork can simply serve to embed structural inequalities.

The talk will analyse some of the discourses around teamwork and collaboration in higher education and identify tensions within them, concluding with some suggestions for potential transformation of practice.