

Title: **Developing research communities through writing and publication**

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Abstract:

Session learning outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Examine the potential for using writing and publication as a strategy for developing a research community
- Explore using this approach for professional development within their own practice
- Look critically at the benefits and barriers to this approach

Session outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

This session will explore using writing as a way of connecting and sharing research and practice in HE. Three recent examples from the University of Central Lancashire will be explored looking at both the process of creating communities of writers and how what is produced can impact upon a wider community of learners. The first example is an Action Research journal containing a selection of Initial Teacher Training students' projects. Once published this annual journal becomes a teaching and learning resource representing the voice of the student teachers for others in the partnership and a wider academic audience. The second example is a development from this and is a recently published book written by the tutors and managers from the partnership. This book will also become a self-generated learning and teaching resource articulating the voice of the tutors. The third example is a collaboratively written handbook for Pedagogic Research supporting the university's commitment to research informed teaching.

In each example supported writing enabled a research community to develop. We suggest that James and Biesta's (2007) notion of 'learning cultures' is a helpful framework to explore this community activity as it extends Wenger's (1998) communities of practice to account for situated learning. As well as producing a resource to support the learning of others the research communities provided structured professional development for the writers within the learning cultures. Each of the three examples provided facilitated spaces which supported professional development through critical reflection (Brookfield 1995).

There are many potential benefits to creating research communities through writing, both for individuals and for HE institutions. However there are also barriers such as sustainability, negotiating the complexity of collaborative work and of gaining academic as well as

pedagogical recognition for what has been written. We will explore these challenges as well as providing a taste of writing together.

Session activities and approximate timings

The ninety minute session will start with an introduction to the theme of developing a research community through writing drawing upon James and Biesta's work on learning cultures to explore how they work as structured facilitated spaces. (10 minutes)

The three examples will be explored discussing common themes and outlining the process of creating the learning culture through writing. (30 minutes)

Participants will take part in a writing activity (20) and share experience (10)

Potential and barriers will be discussed with reference to participants own teaching/learning contexts. Questions will include: Have you experience of writing on your own or within a group? Is there a theme or topic that you want to explore with others? Is there institutional support (human or physical) you can draw upon? (20)

References

Brookfield, S. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, San Francisco: Jossey -Bass.

James, and Biesta (2007) *Improving Learning Cultures in Further Education*, London: Routledge.

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.