

Title: Transforming academic identity through engagement in technology enabled academic practice – challenges and opportunities

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify what motivates some academic staff to engage with technology enabled academic practice and how this affects their identity.
- Discuss some of the theoretical and methodological issues raised by research in this area
- Recognize some of the challenges academic staff face when learning new technologies and pedagogies associated with technology enabled academic practice
- Locate the engagement of staff with new learning and teaching technologies in contemporary debates about the shifting nature of academic identity.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

It is clear that Higher Education in the UK is undergoing a period of profound transformation and that integral to these changes is the impact of learning technologies on academic practice and identity (JISC 2010). From government policy announcements, funding models, national and local initiatives as well as changing student expectations, academics are under increasing pressures to adapt their practice to incorporate learning technologies and to undertake professional development to support this transition. These developments raise a number of questions:

- How are academics responding to such pressures?
- How are traditional academic identities changing as a result of their interaction with the new wave of learning technologies which are transforming the Higher Education teaching and learning landscape?
- How can research in this area help to inform and shape future staff development?

Traditionally academic roles are understood to comprise three discrete areas; teaching, research and administration, but, as Malcolm and Zukas argue (Malcolm and Zukas 2009), in practice these three areas often overlap and to some extent the blurring of these boundaries is partly a result of the implementation of learning technology, either imposed at an institutional level or as a consequence of individual academics' initiatives. As a recent small

scale study concluded, there is 'a need for further investigation into the impact of e-learning on academic identity, a factor which has not so far replaced academics, but may be displacing them' (Hanson 2009 p.562).

This session aims to outline and discuss some of the theoretical and methodological issues raised by the presenter's ongoing research into this aspect of academic identity. A further aim is to invite others to share their experiences in this area of research which, as the literature attests, is the focus of growing interest in the educational development community (Clegg S (2008), Harris S (2005), Whitchurch C and Gordon G, 2010).

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

1. A brief introduction and overview on how City University supports academic staff engaging with technology enabled academic practice and questions arising from ongoing research into the effects of the programme on academic identity. 15 minutes
2. A group activity: what are different institutions doing to motivate and reward staff to engage with technology enabled academic practice? What are the opportunities and barriers to staff engaging with learning technologies? How do groups feel the use of such technologies is changing academic identity? 15 minutes
3. Groups feedback the results of their discussions. 5 minutes
4. Future directions for the City University research in this area. 5 minutes
5. Questions and wrap up. 5 minutes

References

Clegg S (2008) Academic Identities under threat? *British Educational Research Journal* 34.3

JISC (2010) Briefing paper 6 Learning Technology: Key Implications for Academic Staff
http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/jos/briefing6_academic_finalcopy_jw.pdf
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Hanson, Janet (2009) 'Displaced but not replaced: the impact of e-learning on academic identities in higher education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14: 5, 553 – 564

Harris S (2005) 'Rethinking Academic Identity in Neo-Liberal Times'. *Teaching In Higher Education* 10:4

Malcolm, J. and Zukas, M. (2009). 'Making a mess of academic work: experience, purpose, identity', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14: 05

Whitchurch C and Gordon G, (2010) Diversifying Academic and Professional Identities in Higher Education: Some management challenges, *Tertiary Education and Management*, Volume 16, Issue 2.