

Title: **Incidental Learning**

Presenter: **Amanda Turner**
University of Bolton

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Evaluate a theoretical framework for incidental learning
- Analyse the student experience in terms of professional development (and apply this to their own teaching/subject area)

Session Outline

Incidental learning takes place when an individual experiences some sort of disjuncture, something unplanned and therefore unexpected. This type of learning can happen in a variety of contexts and has been defined as the by-product of another activity (Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Hunter, 2014; Kerka, 2000).

This discussion paper sets out to present a critical review of current literature on incidental learning and the resulting theoretical framework that has been developed from the key factors identified. The notion of incidental learning will be explored in terms of the development of trainee teachers, within the FE sector, based on recent primary research. There will be an opportunity to analyse how trainee teachers build identity and professionalism whilst undertaking a placement within communities of practice. There will be an opportunity to discuss how the incidental learning framework is relevant to the student experience in more general terms. The key areas to consider will be identity formation and transition of students in the HE setting.

Some of the literature argues that incidental learning can be difficult to capture, but what this discussion and presentation will aim to argue is that if a clear structure is in place (in terms of the theoretical framework), it can lead to deep learning. The research will demonstrate that it is through flashes of insight that happen when faced with moments of disjuncture that a trainee teacher develops their practice and moves from uncertainty towards a professional identity.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

15 minutes – introduction to the topic (using power point)

10 minutes – small group discussion about the framework and the notion of Incidental learning (using guided questions)

Questions:

1. How does the political and personal context of an individual influence their interpretation of unexpected experiences?
2. Can you learn incidentally without having creativity?
3. How does the CoP impact on incidental learning for students?
4. What sort of experiences do students have which might result in incidental learning from happening?
5. How does incidental learning impact on the student experience (particularly HE transition and identity formation)

15 minutes – feedback from the group discussions and opportunity for further questions and discussions

5 minutes – plenary of the session

References

Education and Training Foundation (2014) Professional Standards for teachers and trainers in education and training – England. Available online at: www.et-foundation.co.uk. Accessed on 6/7/2015

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Marsick, V; Watkins, K (1990). *Informal and incidental learning in the workplace*. Oxford : Routledge Revivals

Strom, K. J. (2015). Teaching as assemblage: Negotiating learning and practice in the first year of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 66 (4), 321-333