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Get talking about evaluation: Coordinating an approach to evaluating staff development events

Charlotte Stevens, The Open University

In September 2021, a post appeared in the *SEDA Digest* which asked for assistance with 'how to come up with a clearer strategy of how we evaluate what we're doing in terms of educational development'. Helpful advice was offered by the community, a variety of resources were shared, and a discussion ensued.

This thread was a reminder that evaluating and measuring the impact of educational development remains at the forefront of developers' minds. Indeed, the need to evidence value in development is ever more pressing in a world increasingly focused on metrics and accountability, in which 'quality and value for money need to be assured' (Bamber, 2020, p. 20).

Of course, knowing that an activity is working also brings satisfaction to those involved in making it happen, as does making evidence-informed decisions about its future direction. However, evaluation requires considerable resource and commitment; it also requires a careful balancing of needs of different stakeholders. This article explores how a coordinated approach to evaluating large-scale cross-faculty staff development events was developed within a small team, sharing the successes and lessons learnt along the way.

The Open University context

Open University students are supported through their studies by more than 5000 associate lecturers who mark assignments and provide detailed written feedback, facilitate online tutorials and day schools and offer support by telephone, email and online forums. The Open University Associate Lecturer Support and Professional Development (ALSPD) team works in conjunction with a range of colleagues across the University to deliver a programme of staff development for associate lecturers. One of the ways this is delivered is via cross-faculty events, which offer associate lecturers a unique opportunity to attend plenaries, participate in workshops and poster sessions, as well as engage in more relaxed social discussions, all with the aim of encouraging and facilitating the sharing of practice within and across disciplines.

More than 1000 associate lecturers attend cross-faculty events each year. Before the pandemic, these events were predominantly face-to-face, held in conference centres and hotels. However, during 2019-20, only three of the scheduled face-to-face events took place, with a single online event replacing the remaining events, attracting more than 600 participants. Since then, all cross-faculty staff development events have been held online.

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Experience has shown that events, face-to-face or online, are expensive and require substantial resource. Associated costs for face-to-face events, such as venue hire, accommodation, travel, catering, equipment, administration and staffing, are considerable. It is often the perception that online events will be less expensive, but online delivery requires technical investment in terms of platforms, hosting and support; unsurprisingly, there is evidence to suggest that costs for online and face-to-face events are the same (ALT, 2020).

Whilst seeking to justify costs of events might be a driver for evaluation, it is not the only reason for doing it. There is also the Quality Assurance/Quality Enhancement agenda in that events need to be evaluated to 'check' that they are working, both helping associate lecturers develop in their role, and also to inform and 'improve' events going forward (Pelik, 2016, p. 149).

It starts with the team

In 2019, evaluation of cross-faculty associate lecturer staff development events was identified as a strategic objective for the ALSPD team. Until this point, evaluation of events had been managed by different team members at different times using a range of different methods, from 'happy cards' to collect immediate feedback at an event, to surveys and online forums. Outputs were also reported, such as numbers of associate lecturers in attendance, the number and range of workshops on offer, and events were – and still are – monitored as they happened, with adjustments made as they progressed (Baume, 2008; Stefani and Baume, 2016, p. 164).

A team away day in 2019 presented an opportunity to consolidate thinking around evaluation for a number of reasons. Firstly, all team members were involved in the delivery of events in some capacity: developers, technical experts, managers and administrators; in addition, three members of the team were also associate lecturers (Huber and Harvey, 2013, p. 246; Fredericks and Bosanquet, 2017). The away day also took place in the summer when events for 2019-20 were starting to take shape, which meant that evaluation could be embedded within the planning cycle for the forthcoming year (Pineda, 2010; Huber and Harvey, 2013, Stefani and Baume, 2016).

The programme for the day was informed by existing models for planning evaluation activity (Saunders, 2000; Baume, 2008) and involved the team working through a number of questions:

- Why is evaluation important?
- What do we want to evaluate?
- What do we want to know?
- How should we do it?
- When should we do it?
- Who is going to do it?
- What do we want our outputs to be?
- How do we make this happen?

Discussions culminated in the team not only agreeing its approach to evaluation for the 2019-20 year for staff development events, but also identifying a number of different workstreams which would benefit from evaluation, or the existing evaluation being redeveloped.

Putting things into practice

For the 2019-20 period, a mixed-methods survey was developed enabling associate lecturers to give feedback on their experiences of attending cross-faculty staff development events. The survey was designed to focus on outcomes, and was informed by relevant models (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006; Steinert *et al.*, 2016; Guskey, 2016; Stefani and Baume, 2016). It included questions focused on reaction and learning, for example, 'In what ways was the event useful in helping you develop in your role?'; 'How did the interactions with others encourage you to reflect on your practice?'; as well as anticipated changes in behaviour, for example, 'Tell us how you plan to use what you have learnt in your role'. The decision was made early on not to include questions around hygiene factors (venue, catering *etc*.) as responses to these questions had tended to overshadow feedback in the past.

The survey also requested feedback on individual sessions which could be shared with presenters. The prospect of collecting this data quickly prompted a rethink; it didn't seem appropriate for associate lecturers to be asked what they thought about sessions without seeking the views of presenters too. This led to the development of a survey for presenters themselves and the model being redefined as co-evaluation. Like the associate lecturer survey, the presenter survey was designed to gauge reaction and learning as well as anticipated changes in behaviour; it contained questions focused on how the presenters felt sessions went from their perspective, what they might change if they were to present the session again, and whether they felt the experience contributed to their own professional development.

The surveys ran successfully for the first time during 2019-20 and were reviewed for the following years. Two years on and with good response rates (47% for associate lecturers, 57% for presenters during 2020-21), the surveys have provided considerable data to reflect on and work with. Associate lecturer respondents have said that the events have informed the tuition and the support they offer students, updated them on what is happening at the University and in the wider HE context, and provided a space for them to network and share practice. Presenters have found the events useful in contributing to their own professional development by enabling them to engage with associate lecturers and learn from them, help them progress projects or activities they are undertaking, and develop skills in workshop design and online presentation.

Going forward, associate lecturer respondents have said that they want to interact more with each other and with presenters; they have shared topics they would like to see included on future programmes and preferences for session formats. Feedback from presenters has clarified what is required in terms of technical support to help them deliver sessions and communications leading up to an event. Adopting a MERI approach (Monitoring, Evaluating, Reporting and Improvement) to evaluation has led to the formulation of a set of recommendations and an action plan of 'improvements' which are regularly reviewed and updated (Wadsworth, 2011).

Next steps

At all times the aim is to deliver associate lecturer staff development which positively impacts on the student experience. Evaluating cross-faculty staff development events is vital in that process. But there is still work to do. Whilst there is confidence in gauging reaction and learning, what of behaviour and results? Indeed, associate lecturers might detail the changes they are going to make to their own practice as a result of attending an event – but what happens next? There is much written about measuring impact in terms of educational development, but few studies explore this (Jones *et al*., 2013; Stes *et al*., 2010). The next step on this particular journey is to analyse findings from a longitudinal study focused on associate lecturers three, six or twelve months after an event has ended. It is hoped that this will test what Steinert *et al*. (2016) call the 'durability of change', and will go some way in helping to explore impact.

Simple lessons

It remains to say that two factors have been key to the success in developing a coordinated approach to evaluation of staff development events: teamwork and communication.

Putting aside time to discuss evaluation as a team was invaluable in terms of opening up discussions and facilitating an action plan for evaluating cross-faculty events. This was beneficial not only because team members were able to contribute to the strategy, but also because those initial discussions led to individuals developing their own expertise in evaluation; for Stefani and Baume, this is the 'enhancing capacity for evaluation' (2016, p. 164). Since those initial discussions at the away day, evaluation strategies for other areas of the ALSPD portfolio have been developed, for example, the associate lecturer development fund which provides financial support for professional development activities. Facilitating such opportunities has been rewarding.

In as much as the success of this endeavour is about teamwork, it is also about communication. Maintaining a dialogue around evaluation has been key, both within the ALSPD team and with stakeholders outside the team. Socialising the emerging narrative, as data is being analysed, has been instrumental in helping to set the scene for more formal reporting, whilst sharing themes from the feedback has provided an opportunity to co-create conclusions, recommendations and action plans for the future (Barr, 2020). And, of course, communicating about evaluation does not stop there. Anyone who is involved in evaluation will know that it's something people always want to talk about – and why not?

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Resilient academic leadership through a metaphorical lens

Alison Nimmo, Glasgow Caledonian University, and **Fiona Smart,** Edinburgh Napier University

This article will take you on one exploration of resilient academic leadership set in the context of the pandemic. It draws on data emerging from a QAA (Scotland) Collaborative Cluster project which facilitated its exploration from the perspective of members of the Principal Fellow Network Scotland.

Our collaborative cluster aimed to challenge thinking in respect of what resilient academic leadership means, how it can be recognised in practice, and the extent to which it is, or might be, invested in. In our project there were a dozen of the Principal Fellows from a range of universities in Scotland representing a range of disciplines. Resilient academic leadership presents as an intangible asset, something of value, but which is hard to pin down and arguably, therefore, difficult to invest in.

The search

Since 2020, the entire Higher Education sector in Scotland has been searching for Resilient Learning Communities encouraged and supported by the current QAA (Scotland) Enhancement Theme – what do they look like and how do you go about creating or building them?

We met during early 2021 in five online gatherings taking an autoethnographic approach and recording our discussions through comments in the Chat facility, through the project leaders' notes and on an interactive jamboard. We were looking for a glimpse or glimpses of exactly what resilience can look like. It was fun and it was, for a total of 7.5 collaborative hours, most productive.

As Principal Fellows (PFs) we worked from the premise that Descriptor 4 of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Student Learning (UKPSF) presents a sector interpretation of successful academic leadership in HE.

And from this premise we worked from the assumption that, as PFs, we all:

- Had been judged as folks who practise and have effective academic leadership skills through having taken an integrated approach (D4iv) to how we address challenges and projects, and demonstrate this by pulling together on our teaching, research, practice, administrative, management, mentoring experiences, to lead strategic initiatives to a successful conclusion and subsequent positive impact on learning and teaching practice (D4ii)
- Had influenced policy related to enhancing the student learning experience and promoting the development of the learning and teaching practices of others at an institu-

tional, national and/or international level (D4iii)

- Held values that guide what our academic leadership practice looks like *i.e.* practice that reflects respect for staff and students (Dvi), that promotes equality and diversity and inclusiveness in HE (PV2), that promotes research and evidence-based approaches to L&T (PV3)
- Reflected in our academic leadership practice an appreciation of the way local practices in our programmes, Schools/Faculties and universities operate – the micro and meso levels – and how these are influenced by developments in the external environment – the macro and exo – and that we need to anticipate and respond to this wider context of HE in our academic leadership decision-making and practice (PV4).

Working from this premise and basic assumption around academic leadership, we next considered our starting definition of what is meant by *resilience*. We looked at definitions of both individual resilience, and resilience found in learning communities and organisations, such as universities. We did not get overly focused on the definitions but we did ensure that we started with some form of shared definitions. There are many definitions in the literature but the more recent are interesting as they point to the need not just for individuals, communities and organisations to bounce back and survive, but also to prosper and flourish:

> *Individual resilience:*
> *'Ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events. … overcome hardship' (https://www.everydayhealth.com/wellness/resilience/)*

> *Organisational resilience:*
> *'The ability of an organization to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to, incremental change and sudden disruptions in order to survive and prosper' (https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/our-services/Organizational-Resilience/).*

In our search for resilience, we relied on a map to outline the different areas or dimensions of a university context, including the curriculum, the teaching practices and assessment approaches, the institutional systems and processes, the ethos or culture and the resources of our universities. This map we customised from the Evidencing Value Framework (EVF) developed in a previous Enhancement theme (Robertson *et al.*, 2019).

We spent time in each of these areas provided by the EVF map reflecting on what we, as individuals, and what our universities and the sector, had been doing to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to the sudden disruption of Covid-19 over the last year. We dug into our individual experiences of coping with Covid and rooted out examples of resilience in our own academic leadership practices as PFs, and in our universities' practices, particularly over the period of the current pandemic.

In this way we aimed to reveal how such actions could be perceived or interpreted as resilient forms of academic leadership that helped us individually, that helped us to help others, and that helped our universities to survive and to prosper.

And here's the rub

Resilience is a word, and there is a dictionary that explains all words, but somehow just exchanging words to convey why we thought our actions reflected resilience was not quite enough to help us to meaningfully share our experiences, or to indeed interpret others' experiences of resilience.

Words are our way of making sense of the world so that we can share it with others in an orderly way. Words are a way of coding our intended meanings, and we learn the code from an early age so that we can communicate with others, develop shared norms, behaviours and ways of living in our communities. We are social animals and having this shared understanding is important to us — it makes us resilient as individuals and social groupings.

Words help us to define social situations and they cue in our intended actions and signal our expected responses to others who, in turn, do similar. Turn-taking and conversation, and all is well when we know what the words mean – we point and we name.

But there are words that we have given to things that are not tangible things that cannot be directly pointed at, such as 'resilience'. When we ask you the reader to share how you develop your students, or indeed your colleagues, to be resilient graduates, employees or work colleagues — what do you think? If we ask how we can be as resilient in our practice as you seem to be in yours, what words of wisdom might you offer us? And yet we would argue that by working in HE we are all immersed in designing a student learning experience and staff development to embed resilience so that our students and our staff can face the world and deal with the challenges of the workplace and wider society.

So, there are times when the word that names the thing is limited in terms of its potential to share meaning of the thing, particularly where the thing or the concept is nebulous or intangible. And so, we resort to ways, other than words, to code or share our understanding of these intangible concepts. Just think about how we are communicating in this Teams or Zoom world, where we don't always have the ability to use words, when we must have our mics off or there is no access to Chat facilities. If things are going well, we will smile, put our thumbs up, use Clap emoticons, or mime clapping. It is interesting how we developed resilience to maintain team working and online teaching when our normal way of exchanging words had to change so drastically.

The about turn

So, in one of our five online meetings, we took a different direction and played with an activity to come up with alternatives to 'words' as ways of trying to 'see' resilience. We used a padlet to share our ideas of our understandings of the concept of resilience, and we sought to unlock what it meant to us through sharing alternative symbols or ways of expressing resilience – a piece of music, a painting, a poem, an image, anything at all that was not *just* words.

One of the contributions to our padlet was a link to a piece of orchestral music which reflected for one of the PF that intangible asset of resilience. Listening to this music, as a representation of resilience, created in us a collective sense of harmony and *togetherness*. We explored how these alternative words, harmony and togetherness, could possibly be glimpsed in some of academic leadership practice seen across the HE sector in the response to the digital pivot. We discussed how many of us and our universities had designed our staff guidance and development resources to support the emergency move to online teaching and remote working to create a sense of 'we are all in this together'. Staff were provided with structured online lesson templates, step-by-step guides to creating online learning activities, interactive how-to webinars and team-based curriculum design approaches, to provide a sense of structure and consistency in what had become a strange and unstructured world.

Image as well as music featured in our ideas for resilience. One post featured an image of a person walking on a high wire above a gaping canyon; they looked to be about half way along. This picture of a tightrope walker got us thinking about how resilience and *balance* might be related.

We reflected how in this recent crisis and the emergency move to online teaching and remote working, staff in universities had indeed managed to continue to support our students, but in doing so many of us had taken an approach that we did not need to go for the normal gold standard of teaching. We set our sights on being 'good enough', in other words, in order to keep going we took a *balanced* approach to how we continued to teach online in order that we, and our universities, could continue to deliver the student learning experience. This concept of balance could equally be perceived in how many universities had introduced 'no detriment' approaches to student assessment. And we mused that perhaps taking a balanced approach had supported both students' as well as staff resilience so that they could bounce back and show resilience in the face of the challenges posed by Covid. In other words, resilience could be perceived to have been created from providing the conditions for staff and students to get a sense of balance, to focus on looking forward, to take small steps to keep balanced, and so continue to make progress forward.

Metaphor to metaphor

From this discovery we continued to develop the use of metaphor in revealing actual practice associated with the nebulous word or intangible concept that is resilience. We discussed whether this insight might inform how we design in 'balance' when we want to develop resilience in our academic leadership practice, in our students, or in our curricula, resources, systems or culture. Taking such a social practice lens to metaphor allows us to consider how we might use metaphors, not just as proxies, but as design principles or symbols to guide our academic leadership actions. This is the focus of our ongoing research.

As the final activity in our fifth online gathering, we created a soundtrack for resilience by sharing one track that symbolised resilience for each of us – some music that spurred us on when the going gets tough and when we need to bounce back. There was quite a list including Happy Feet, I Will Survive, You'll Never Walk Alone, Bridge over Troubled Water, We Have All the Time in the World, and You Are Loved (Don't Give Up). Strangely, it is only now in writing the titles down for this article, and not when listening to them, that the metaphors of Togetherness and Balance have clearly emerged from our selection. More to ponder on the value of taking a metaphorical lens to see where intangible assets, like resilience, may be contributing in our universities.

The invitation

If you have found this approach interesting, we invite you to contribute your own representation of what resilience in academic leadership sounds like and extend our resilient academic leadership soundtrack even further. Post a Youtube link to your chosen track to the Resilience in Academic Leadership Soundtrack padlet – you can add in your name and a comment, or leave your post anonymous. Surely an invitation to engage in collective scholarly endeavour never sounded so much fun…

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Transforming practice: Becoming an internal consultant

Steve Outram, Higher Education Researcher and Consultant

Many commentators have suggested that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an irreversible impact on universities throughout the world. This is obvious. The question that follows is 'what to do about it?' A strong suggestion from a number of these commentators is that, having survived the enormous disruptive force of the effects of the pandemic, university leaders are in a position to be able to transform their institutions. An example of this way of thinking can be found in the new work of Donald Norris et *al.* (2021) *Transforming for Turbulent Times: an action agenda for higher education leaders*. At the outset, the authors suggest, Western higher education needed to change even before the pandemic. That, effectively, Western higher education systems were broken. As they say:

'We began work on this book...a few months before COVID hit. What drove us then was our belief that higher education worldwide was about to experience an existential crisis. This crisis was driven by lingering and looming disruptions including declining enrollment demand, a broken financial model, increased public dissatisfaction with outcomes and cost, and the entry of new providers with revolutionary and highly disruptive approaches, all contributing to an environment of increasing uncertainty.' (p. 1)

Following the pandemic, they go on to propose that:

'In the face of these coming, monumental changes, higher education worldwide must transform for the foreseeable future at a pace and scale that far exceeds anything we have seen to date. Indeed, we believe this capacity to transform significantly will determine whether an institution thrives, just makes it, or closes in the days ahead.' (p. 1)

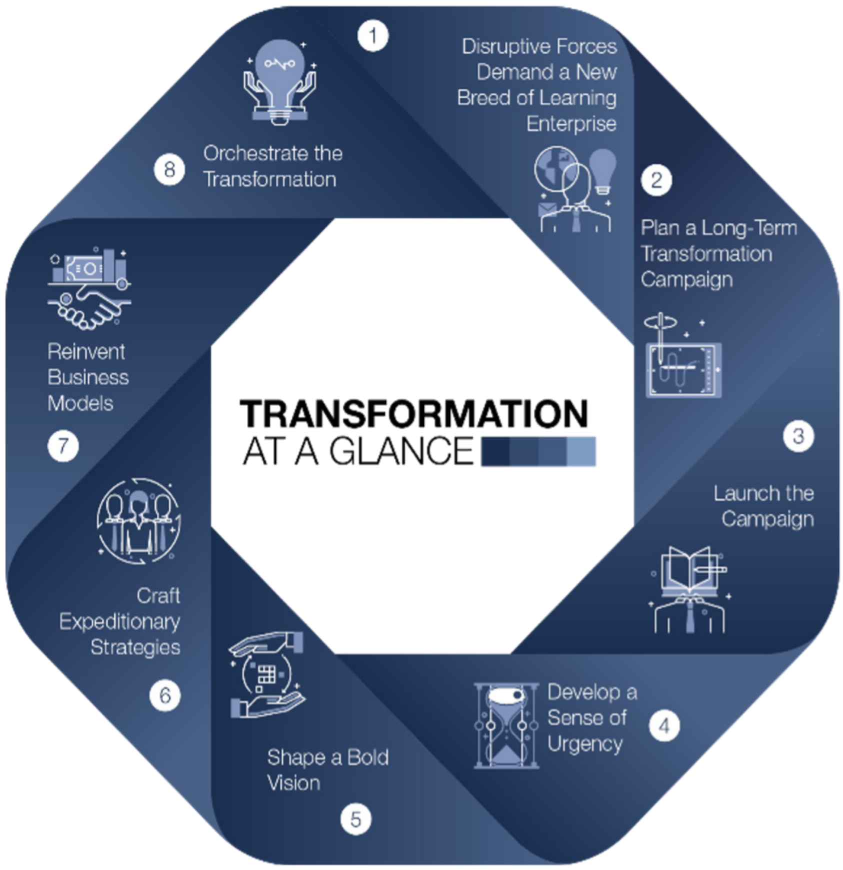

Figure 1 The transformation process (Norris et al., 2021)

With a large number of actual case studies, the authors go on to propose a model of transformational educational change that will enable universities to not just survive but to thrive, including how they might address the growing challenge of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in university life. Figure 1 portrays this transformational process – from 'Disruptive Forces' in position 1 through to 'Orchestrate the Transformation' in position 8. One of the central and strongest driving tenets of this model is that students, more than ever before, are at the heart of this change, that:

'A new ecosystem is emerging that links learning providers, employers, workforce knowledge facilitators, and learners – with learners always at the center of things. It will not only be learner centric, but also learner driven.' (p. 20)

Educational and academic developers have been, and are, central to universities and colleges working their way through the exigencies of the pandemic – lockdown and the emergence of wholesale digital teaching and learning. This has put the development role under a great deal of pressure to cope with this shift, let alone engage with future transformational imperatives. A possible consequence of this rapidly changing situation is to reconsider the nature and role of academic and educational developers and their units within the institution. For example, where universities and colleges have a unit for enhancing teaching and learning and a separate unit developing the use of technology-enhanced learning, they have had to find ways of enabling these units to work together with greater immediacy and importance than ever before. One of the ways in which a developer might adapt to these circumstances is to consider the practice of internal consultancy.

Discussions of the consultancy role are not new to the SEDA community. Liz Shrives and Chris Bond (2003) pointed out that 'a large part of the day-to-day work of an educational development unit takes the form of consultancy'. They go on to discuss the use of external consultants who may bring particular knowledge and expertise or skills to assist the development role or may be used to confront issues 'that the educational development unit, which needs to maintain its good relationship with the rest of the institution over the long term, prefers to avoid confronting' (p. 62). Similarly, Sue Thompson (2016) has comprehensively described the why, what, who and how of educational development consultancy, particularly in relation to working strategically and supporting planned change processes.

The object of this article is to focus on the necessary skills and activities in becoming an educational development internal consultant.

What is a consultancy?

There are many definitions of consultancy. The Management Consultancies Association usefully describe consultancy as 'the creation of value for organizations through the application of knowledge, techniques and assets, to improve performance' (MCA, 2016). Of course, that definition needs contextualising within the realm of higher education. At the heart of the many variations on a theme of 'what is consultancy' two distinct elements stand out. Firstly, both external and internal consultants are used where an organisation, or part of an organisation, or an individual, are unable (or unwilling) to do something for themselves. Secondly, consultants lack power wherever they are working in an organisation, and their influence and ability to affect change is dependent upon their social skills and abilities to build relationships with the people they are working with, and for. More specifically, as Sue Thompson describes, the role of the educational developer as consultant might include the 'Why' of consultancy such as:

- Access to particular expertise and knowledge
- Support for strategic change initiatives including transformational change
- Support for staff development
- To support project delivery
- To evaluate and review activities.

If Norris *et al.* (2021) are right in their analysis of what universities need to do to survive and thrive in the future, then the educational developer, as an internal consultant, has a key role in the transformation process.

External or internal consultant?

There are advantages and disadvantages of using one or the other types of consultant, and Tables 1 and 2 summarise these (Hodges, 2017, pp. 74-75).

Internal	External
Understands institutional culture, history, processes, systems and people	Able to transfer into the institution knowledge and expertise from elsewhere
Understands working in the current situation	Extensive, comparative knowledge of change processes, contexts and choices
Understands the drivers for change better than an external	Fresh, creative insights from more varied experience
In regular contact with key stakeholders and able to build trust	Able to use expert status to be influential
Perceived as having a longer-term commitment to the institution	Might be able to gain trust as a 'stranger'
Financially more efficient and less costly	Credibility through reputation and previous experience
Potentially able to generate more internal commitment to change	Not emotionally involved in institutional issues
Can better tailor a more appropriate approach	Often have invested in new approaches and have 'something new' to offer

Table 1 The advantages of using internal or external consultants

Internal	External
May be blind to seeing some issues	May find it difficult to understand the culture and its issues
May have less experience with other institutions	Limited knowledge about the institution
Might find it hard to say 'no'	Limited time to build credibility and trust
May have colleagues reluctant to share information with a colleague	May be perceived as short-term/doing it for the money
May be seen as agents of management	May not be able to follow through beyond proposing interventions
Might be overcautious in 'telling it as it is' because of concerns for self	'Off the shelf' approach
Limited access to senior managers because of position in institution	Lack of 'ownership'
May not wish to disengage from an intervention	Timed, expensive, rare and rationed
Knows colleagues but may have preconceptions	May create a sense of dependency
Potentially lacks the apparent credibility of some external consultants	
Prone to being emotionally involved with the institution	
Required to live with the consequences of their interventions	Not always required to live with the consequences of their work

Table 2 The disadvantages of using internal or external consultants

The trend towards internal consultancy

A significant inquiry into the nature of internal consultancy was undertaken by the Roffey Park Institute, reporting in 2003 that there was an increasing trend by organisations to develop their internal consultancy capacity (Kenton and Moody, 2003).

The researchers found that the two main reasons for using internal consultants was an increasing 'push' by internal units in an organisation to further the organisation's strategic purpose and the second reason was to make the use of consultancy cost-effective. They go on to say that:

> *'The research highlighted how some organisations appear more equipped to gain value from the internal consultant. Factors influencing this include having a clearly understood strategic reason for the development of the role, visible senior level support, and an understanding of the role by the consultants themselves. The prevailing culture will, of course, strongly influence the role's success.'* (p. 8)

And they also caution that:

> *'Unlike external consultants, the shadow of internal consultants' previous roles casts a heavy influence over their perceived credibility and access to particular types of work. This is not helped by the way organisations "position" the consultant role. The research found that, in many cases, existing central service units had "rebranded" themselves as consultancy groups without substantive changes to personnel, skill levels, or modes of working. The survey identified that over half of these internal consultants (62%) class themselves as middle or junior managers. An impact*

of this is that more junior staff members are now asked to perform challenging and sophisticated roles, often to influence senior managers, without being perceived as having the credibility or authority to do so. Against a backdrop of increasing organisational politics, new internal consultants report feeling disempowered and unable to extend the range of their interventions.' (p. 8)

Above all, they found that at the heart of internal consultancy practice is a need to effect cultural change in an organisation.

Of course, it is a truism to point out that universities are not typical organisations. However, within the context of transformational change in universities there are clearly aspects of these discussions about internal consultancy that may be useful to inform future educational development practice. That is not to say that all educational developers and all development units should become internal consultants – rather, it is to suggest that adopting the practices of internal consultancy could be useful for development in 'turbulent times'.

What do consultants do?

The Roffey Park inquiry used a well-known typology of consultancy practice developed in 1969 by Schein in their inquiry, and it is useful to explore that typology in relation to educational development:

- *Process consultant*: true collaboration with the client, where the client owns both the problem and the answer and the consultant's role is as helper. Perhaps the facilitation role often adopted by educational developers fits this description of consultancy and the use of such activities as Open Space or Appreciative Inquiry exemplify this aspect of the role
- *Expert consultant*: where the consultant's credibility is based on their expertise, and where the problem is defined and the solution offered by the consultant. This raises the perennial question of whether there is an educational development canon of work and what it might be. Certainly, the work of SEDA will attest to over 25 years of developing ideas about appropriate higher education pedagogies; curriculum development; assessment; learning and teaching strategies, and so on. What has become clear through the pandemic is that educational developers have also had to become experts in online learning (if they weren't already) and, if Norris *et al* (2021). are right in their analysis of the future of higher education, educational developers are going to continue to need to develop their specialist expertise in relation to changing expectations and also in relation to the impact of AI on higher education
- *Pair-of-hands consultant*: where the client scopes the problem and the solution, and the consultant's skills are used to solve it. Enabling colleagues to transition effectively to online learning is perhaps the most recent illustration of pair-of-hands consultancy.

Becoming an internal consultant – knowledge, skills and values

The Roffey Park research reported that the repertoire of key skills needed to be an effective internal consultant comprises those listed in Table 3.

Clearly, there are many skills and

Repertoire of key skills		
Facilitating and understanding the nature of change	Relationship building	Active listening skills
Data gathering	Influencing	Challenging the status quo
Conflict handling		
To this list might also be added		
Maintaining a long-term perspective	Self-knowledge	Self-awareness
Contracting	Exploring contexts and situations (collecting data)	Diagnosis (internal and external)
Designing interventions – process and content	Delivering interventions/project management	Tolerance of ambiguity
Report writing	Presenting outcomes and recommendations	Maintaining credibility and trust
Disengaging and closure		

Table 3 Repertoire of key skills

values cited here which are well known to educational developers but also some that might need to be developed, such as contracting. Beverly Scott (2000) has suggested that there is an internal consultancy career progression that begins with being an internal consultancy *student* 'acquiring appropriate knowledge', before becoming an internal consultancy *apprentice* 'applying basic knowledge', leading to becoming a *practitioner* 'increasing their knowledge and skill base'. Finally, the internal consultant becomes more advanced 'assisting others to develop professionally' leading to becoming a complete advanced practitioner whose presence and impact leaves a lasting 'legacy'. Notwithstanding all of the skills needed to be an effective internal consultant, what is common to all of the analyses of doing consultancy work is the vital importance of building and maintaining good relationships with the colleagues one works with and for.

The internal consultancy process

Given the often unpredictable demands for academic and educational development, one of the advantages of adopting an internal consultancy role is the systematic way in which any internal consultancy might be undertaken. Although there is a variety of frameworks for internal consultancy work, the following approach (Table 4) is adapted from a mixture of the Industrial Society's Seven Steps to Consultancy in their Internal Consultancy Manual (sadly no longer available) and the Roffey Park work mentioned above.

It is not possible to go into detail about all of these elements but two or three of them require particular attention for a successful internal consultancy. Firstly, at the entry stage, it is important to use one's skills to ensure that the 'real' problem has been identified – perhaps using techniques for eliciting the 'root cause' for the request for one's services.

Stage One – Gaining Entry	Stage Four – Managing the Consultancy
• Entry to the Department, School or Service • Entry to the problem 'presented' • Identification of the 'real' problem	• Planned and delivered interventions • Agreed and met Milestones • Engaged Stakeholders • Managed Communications
Stage Two – Contracting	**Stage Five – Reaching Conclusions**
• Got clarity about the nature of your consultancy role (process; expert; pair-of-hands)? • Assessed your client's readiness and capability for change? • Prepared a clear and manageable contract	• Review and confirmation of client expectations • Secured joint ownership of conclusions
Stage Three – Planning the Consultancy	**Stage Six – Progressing the Conclusions**
• Collected and analysed appropriate data – taking the temperature • Established effective relationships • Fostered support for change • Formulated an Initial Strategy • Finalised an Action Plan	• Assist the client to acknowledge the conclusions and feel ownership • Support client during handover • Assist the client in visualising the future
	Stage Seven – Detaching from the Consultancy
	• Detach from the piece of work – NOT THE CLIENT • Be the custodian of your own credibility and trust

Table 4 Seven stages of consultancy

Similarly, at the second stage, it is very important to ascertain the readiness and capability for one's intervention. As the process comes to an end it is also important to enable the client to have ownership of the conclusions to allow one to detach from the piece of work.

Getting going – Using checklists

'Riders' are the requirements that performers insert into their contracts with venues for types of refreshment and so on. Van Halen had a 'rider' stipulation that their dressing room should have a bowl of M&Ms with the brown ones removed. At one venue they found brown ones, trashed the place and caused $500,000 of damage. The cost may be an urban myth but the obligation to remove brown M&Ms is true. As David Lee Roth explains in his memoir *Crazy from the Heat,* they were probably the first band to take nineteen, rather than the usual three, eighteen-wheeler trucks-full of very heavy and complicated gear. Often venues were not prepared for this amount of stuff – lives could be at risk. So they inserted in the middle of a very lengthy contract 'article 126', the no-brown clause. If they found a brown M&M, they would then insist on 'line checking' the entire production. This heavy rock band used a checklist.

One way of getting started in developing an internal consultancy capacity might be in the use of an internal consultancy checklist. As Atul Gawande (2010) suggests in *The Checklist Manifesto: how to get things right,* using checklists avoids mistakes – particularly in complex situations where many people may be involved. Gawande was one of the pioneers of using checklists in surgery and draws on evidence not only from health but also from aviation, construction work and so on, to demonstrate the efficacy of checklists. They are particularly useful, he says, when people are very busy and under pressure, where there may be a temptation to 'cut corners' or skip steps leading to possible failures:

> *'Checklists seem to provide protection against such failures. They remind us of the minimum necessary steps and make them explicit. They not only offer the possibility of verification but also instill a kind of discipline of higher performance.'* (p. 36)

Of course, as Gawande points out, it is important to get the checklist right in the first place. Too much detail and it will not be followed or will not address the fact that all situations are going to be different in some way. Similarly, in their use they are not just boxes to be ticked – they are the starting point for a discussion. And, drawing on his exploration of the construction industry, a necessary feature of using a checklist is the need to track and communicate outputs and outcomes as they are achieved. In short, using checklists effectively is a balancing act between a number of, at times, contradictory mix of positions – 'between freedom and discipline, craft and protocol, specialized ability and group collaboration' (p. 7). As Gawande concludes:

> *'They supply a set of checks to ensure the stupid but critical stuff is not overlooked, and they supply another set of checks to ensure people talk and coordinate and accept responsibility while nonetheless being left the power to manage the nuances and unpredictabilities the best they know.'* (p. 79)

With these ideas in mind, and based on The Seven Steps to Consultancy from the Industrial Society's Internal Consultancy Manual and Kenton and Moody (2003), Table 5 is my attempt at creating an internal consultancy checklist and, like good checklists, it is evidence informed. And, of course, it can be amended to suit different situations.

Have you		Comments and Actions
Gaining entry		
Entry to the department, school, service	☐	
Entry to the problem 'presented'	☐	
Identification of the 'real' problem	☐	
Contracting		
Got clarity about the nature of your consultancy role (process; expert; pair-of-hands)	☐	
Assessed your client's readiness and capability for change	☐	
Prepared a clear and manageable contract	☐	
Planning the consultancy		
Collected and analysed appropriate data – taking the temperature	☐	
Established effective relationships	☐	
Fostered support for change	☐	
Formulated an initial strategy	☐	
Finalised an action plan	☐	

Have you		Comments and Actions
Managing the consultancy		
Planned and delivered interventions	☐	
Agreed and met milestones	☐	
Engaged stakeholders	☐	
Managed communications	☐	
Reaching conclusions		
Review and confirmation of client expectations	☐	
Secured joint ownership of conclusions	☐	
Progressing the conclusions		
Assist the client to acknowledge the conclusions and feel ownership	☐	
Support client during handover	☐	
Assist the client in visualising the future	☐	
Detaching from the consultancy		
Detach from the piece of work – NOT THE CLIENT	☐	
Be the custodian of your own credibility and trust	☐	

Table 5 Internal consultancy checklist

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Authentic assessment for academics: Reflections from the University of Birmingham PGCHE

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Introduction

Assessment on continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for staff who teach and support learning in the UK has been grounded in a culture of reflective narratives, utilising evidence from a range of sources, such as literature and peer/student feedback. Stephen Brookfield's 'lenses' has been a useful platform for such approaches, while other theories on reflection, ranging from Schön, Lewin and Mezirow, to (especially) Kolb, have been used as standard (Brookfield, 2017).

In many institutions offering credit-bearing programmes (typically PGCerts) with a 60-credit structure, there is often a final research project which acts as a capstone to the programme. In many programmes this final block (or module) is enriched with workshops on education research methods and approaches to enable participants to complete their projects.

Such programmes and capstone research projects offer a certain degree of authenticity and relevance to the participants' context, which may prove useful and impactful in the institutional context. Although at Birmingham we take a similar approach in principle, we have deviated from the formula and have introduced an innovative and unique method of summative assessment. This paper will discuss the rationale and minutiae of this approach, assessing its impact and suggesting steps for further improvement.

Why authentic assessment?

In every session on assessment in every PGCert across the UK we often discuss methods of assessment that are better aligned to learning outcomes than, for example, exams. Authentic assessment is seen as a useful and constructive method of assessment, linked also to skill development and student employability (Darling-Hammond and Snyder, 2000; Knight and Yorke, 2003; Hart, 1994). It is distinct in that it offers the opportunity to students to complete assessments which resemble (or are) real-life scenarios. This very characteristic adds a dimension to assessment which makes it extremely valuable to the student – if done well.

The work of Sue Bloxham, Sally Brown and many others is fundamental in transforming assessment in higher education practice (HEA, 2012). Authenticity is a key characteristic of 'good' assessment in higher education, and many publications include this as an important condition for assessment design. Such assessments also help to centre assessment practice within enquiry or research-based approaches to learning, and can be more meaningful and appropriate for higher education. Jon Mueller offered a useful overview for teachers on his website, which identifies the characteristics and potential benefits of authentic assessment (Mueller, 2006).

By nature, PGCert-type programmes should be at the cutting edge of practice and innovation, and serve as models of good practice which inspire their participants – not only through the material discussed, but crucially by the very approaches taken in the design of learning and assessment. Colleagues working within PGCerts are obviously aware of this crucial function, and the drive to include research projects as assessment methods clearly reflects this.

However, even such assessments tend to be introspective, and may not necessarily lead to impact beyond the participants' own development and knowledge. This is not to say that development and knowledge are not worthy aims in themselves. Quite the contrary. Building on this development and knowledge, and acknowledging participants' developing expertise, the question is: can we design assessment that directly contributes to the aims of our institutions (and sector), and help solve real problems? At Birmingham we certainly think so.

Forward and real: Authentic assessment at Birmingham

At the University of Birmingham (UoB) we run a 60-credit, Masters-level PGCert, the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE). Unlike many such programmes, our PGCHE is structured around a single, 60-credit module which has three linear summative assignments. The summative assessment utilises a formative 'patchwork' assessment approach, and enables the participant to receive regular feed-forward for their next piece of formative work, as well as utilise such patches in their summative assignments (Carless *et al.*, 2006; Carless, 2015; Ajjawi and Boud, 2018; Boud and Molloy, 2013; Winstone and Carless, 2019). Our PGCHE recruits annually 100 participants, many of whom are required to do the course as part of their probation. It is also very popular with colleagues who wish to undertake it as professional development, including colleagues in 'professional' roles who support learning.

In 2018-20, we introduced a new authentic summative assessment as a final 'capstone' piece of work. The vision for this final piece was to enable participants to investigate a real problem, or consider an innovation (or change of practice) within their own departmental context (or beyond). The principle, just as with authentic assessment and its links to real-life scenarios and employability, was that we should empower our participants to plan evidence-based interventions that focus on enhancement, and that mirror potential future work (JISC, 2015).

The assessment was designed to support the attainment of two learning outcomes as follows.

By the end of the module participants will be able to:

- Critically evaluate their teaching practice based on a range of evidence (such as: effective feedback from students and peers; relevant scholarship; research; quality assurance benchmarks; appropriate learning theories)
- Propose a strategy for enhancing their teaching and supporting learning practice that is practicable, consistent with quality assurance standards, and based on systematic evaluation of best available evidence and developments in relevant disciplines.

The 3500-word assignment was divided into two parts: a 2500-word evidence-based rationale (Element 1) for the project, and a 1000-word project proposal (Element 2). For Element 1, participants were asked to 'produce a rationale for an enhancement of an aspect of your educational practice (*i.e.* teaching, learning, assessment, curriculum design, *etc*.).'

Building on Element 1, for Element 2 participants were asked to 'develop an appropriate and relevant proposal for enhancing your own teaching and supporting learning practice.'

Following the same processes as our Educational Enhancement Fund (more on this below), we specified that project proposals should be practicable and feasible, and take into consideration other stakeholders and quality assurance processes where relevant. To offer some structure and scaffolding to participants, we used the same template as used in applying for funding, asking them to outline their project idea, budget requirements and dissemination plans, specifically asking them to address these elements:

- Overall aim or research question
- Background and scope (what is your baseline data?)
- Method (what activities will you undertake?)
- Impact and evaluation
- Sustainability.

This assessment was placed within the Higher Education Futures Institute's (HEFi) Educational Enhancement Fund (EEF) which awards annually approximately £150,000 for enhancement projects on particular themes. Our then PVC-Education, Kathy Armour, fully supported this integration as a way to introduce PGCHE completers to enhancement projects and the funding/support available in HEFi, thus building for the future with explicit connections between our PGCHE and enhancement work. Consequently, a sum of £10,000 was ring-fenced annually to support PGCHE projects. Participants were advised to bid for small-scale projects, from £500-£1000.

Participants therefore had a choice of applying for the funding in earnest, or simply designing their project as a paper exercise. For those who intended to apply for the project, we offered additional guidance, and expected a fully costed project with a precise timeline. Projects had to be implemented over a single academic year.

However, as the purpose of the assessment was also to create a strong evidence base on specific issues relevant to our institution, and the participants' contexts, we also asked participants for consent to share their assignments with relevant stakeholders (regardless of funding applications). Therefore, although a participant for whatever reason did not necessarily wish to apply for funding, they allowed their work to be shared with their education leadership in order to better inform ongoing processes and strategies within departments and Colleges.

Finally, as part of the project proposal template, we asked participants to consider future dissemination, again linking with HEFi initiatives such as our annual conference, and our MicroCPDs (which are extremely popular 90-second videos with accompanying narratives).

Outcomes: Successes

The assignment design was extremely successful in a number of ways. Firstly, in terms of attainment, the design enabled participants from all disciplines and backgrounds to engage with an assessment they were familiar with. Most of our participants (but not all) are research-active academics who write funding applications very regularly. The design enabled them to see how that knowledge and skills could be transferred to support educational enhancement. As a result of this, attainment on the final assignment was very high, with most participants achieving a distinction. Following from this, we had a very high number of extremely high-quality submissions. These were detailed investigations into a variety of topics, such as for example:

- Addressing unconscious bias in science education
- Introducing student journals for research-intensive learning
- Person-centred approaches to support disabled students
- Evaluation and education research on specific curriculum changes
- Supporting access to higher education among underprivileged communities
- Evaluating the impact of the pandemic on higher education
- Supporting student learning through use of anonymous interactive technologies
- Supporting student transition into HE.

The outcomes of the assessment were astonishing, and went beyond our expectations. We frequently read such high-quality submissions, with levels of detail, range of evidence and critical analysis, that could be found in the best higher education journals. This was the result of a design which empowered participants to select topics which were relevant to them, and which they felt passionate about. The PGCHE is designed to enable participants to make their values explicit, and this a capstone project proposal that enabled them to address issues which resonate with them in their professional lives.

The authentic nature of the assessment clearly played to participants' strengths, allowing most to write in a format (and for a purpose) they were already familiar with. Although on the PGCHE on the whole we place emphasis on evidence-based critical reflection with tangible and applicable outcomes, this final piece served as further culmination of this approach. Participants drew from evidence from the sector, such as the NSS, OfS, ONS, as well as institutional data on student progression, attainment, demographic characteristics, VLE analytics, and so on. We offered participants additional guidance with regards to funding applications, especially on ethics approval processes, budgeting, researching and analysing data, for example.

A number of participants applied for the funding, and we currently have two funded projects. A very high number of participants also gave consent to share their assignments with their stakeholders, and an annual report containing these is sent to the Colleges for information and further dissemination. This enables educational leadership to take better-informed steps in curriculum review processes.

Detailed evaluation of the final assignment showed that our participants found the design useful, and were able to consider tangible and feasible future directions for their work in teaching and supporting learning. The majority of participants chose not to pursue funding, as this was challenging with other work commitments also present. Overall out of 90 participants in 2020-21, we had seven applications for funding. Of these, three were assessed as fundable, and two proceeded to implement their project in 2021-22.

Another consequence of this assessment design was that it inspired some participants to implement authentic assessments in their own contexts as a result. We openly discussed the 'meta' dimension of authentic assessment with participants with this very purpose in mind, and it was good to see it being utilised further afield. Therefore we can safely say that we can also model good practice.

Outcomes: Challenges, lessons learnt and next steps

Any reflection on practice during the 2019-21 period must inevitably deal with the fallout of the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on this particular practice was that funding for educational enhancement projects was frozen during this period. The first cohort to undertake this assessment submitted its work in March 2020 when the UK went into lockdown for the first time. As a result, our first four cohorts which undertook this assessment were only able to carry out a paper exercise with regards to a project proposal and funding application. Funding was made available again towards the end of the 2020-21 academic year, which enabled us to consider applications as above.

Reflecting on the design of the assessment itself, we found that some participants needed additional scaffolding and support in order to write up a practicable project proposal. Some participants, for example, wrote detailed proposals, but which lacked clear and tangible deliverables (*i.e.* change module X, or introduce technology Y). We therefore had to redesign our template to ask more specific questions such as:

- Overall aim or research question (why is your project needed?)
- Rationale and scope
- What do we already know? (*i.e.* do you have existing data?)
- Project activities (what activities will you undertake?)
- Deliverables (what will your project produce?)
- Milestones (when will you undertake each activity by?)
- Impact and evaluation (How will you know you achieved your aims?)
- Post-project plans/sustainability (as appropriate).

With regards to deliverables, we encouraged participants to consider what exactly their project would produce, suggesting that outcomes such as detailed reports for educational leadership, articles for publication *etc*., were appropriate.

Utilising research-intensive learning approaches, we also wished to support participants to consider how they could publish their work in their future (especially given the very high quality of submissions). As a result, for the 2021-22 academic year, we changed the brief of Element 1, asking participants to produce a literature review article on the topic they wish to address with their proposal in Element 2. We also asked them to identify a potential journal they would consider submitting their article to, and follow their guidelines with regards to format and scope (apart from word limits). As a result, many participants have identified journals within their disciplinary area, and have seriously considered publication (two cohorts are in the process of submitting their final assignment as we speak, =~60 participants).

This is part of our aspiration in HEFi to support SoTL at our institution, and to support colleagues to disseminate their work more widely by considering education research approaches, ethics approval processes, and ultimately taking first steps in writing for education journals.

HEFi is planning to re-launch its own journal from 2022 onwards, and current participants on the course are also asked if they would like to be considered for publication in this journal. The response so far has been very positive.

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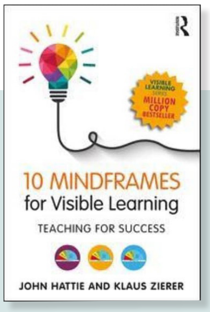
Book Review

10 Mindframes for Visible Learning

by John Hattie and Klaus Zierer
Routledge, 2018, pp. 180



(*A note about Prof. Hattie and Visible Learning*. 'Visible Learning' stems from John Hattie's initial 2008 statistical meta-analysis of research into aspects of teaching that impact learning. The subtitle of his 2012 book is 'Maximising impact on learning', which kind of sums it up. He has published many books about the topic with various co-authors. The town of his birth features in a 2004 song, on the album 'Brown Sabbath' by NZ band Deja Voodoo, 'Today, Tomorrow, Timaru'.)

This slim book opens with 17 pages of preface which starts by outlining Simon Sinek's 2009 TED talk about how the 'why' of leadership is more important than the 'how' or the 'what'. The message is that the 'why' is the most important factor which, the writers argue, can equally be applied to teaching. Teachers, they suggest, need to have a clear 'why' which translates into an exploration of how good teachers think about their work. These are encapsulated in the 10 mindframes, each tackled in its own chapter.

The succinctness of this book makes for an easy read, but it is probably best read after reading one of the other visible learning books, as some previous knowledge is required. Even having done this, I still found aspects of what 'good' effect size is and how to calculate individual student effect sizes a little baffling (pp. 8-9). In addition, the idea of assessing students seems to be treated as if it is not problematic, for example, 'my goal is to use objective methods of measuring student achievement to assess the success of my teaching'. What is it that makes an assessment objective? Facts, right/wrong – perhaps – but argument, evaluation, criticality.

Each chapter follows the same format; questions for self-reflection, a vignette, a section entitled 'what is this chapter about', the main text *i.e.* the visible learning factors (with their 'effecto-size-meter') that support the chapter's mindframe, suggestions for 'where to start', a checklist and exercises (deliberate practice). Within the text there are some gems to inform teaching practice. For example, within the 'I am a change agent' mindframe chapter there are some useful exercises about the role of the teacher in student motivation. Equally, in the 'I strive for challenge' mindframe there is useful discussion around the notion of teacher instructional clarity and what this entails. However, it all feels rather underdeveloped.

The 'effecto-size' meter is used throughout the book; examples like 'teacher clarity' have a calculated effect of 0.75, although I had to go outside the book to refresh my memory as to what a 'good' effect was. An effect of 0.5 represents a GCSE result increase of one grade. However, within mindframes how a factor like 'teacher clarity' or 'CPD' or 'goal orientation' can be applied to produce this gain is a little neglected; however, there are various other John Hattie 'Visible Learning' books that tackle this.

In other chapters the 'where to start' and the suggestion for practice are excellent. In the mindframe 'give and help students understand feedback', the modelled categorisation of feedback is thought-provoking and ready for consideration/implementation. Equally, in 'I engage in dialogue as much as monlogue', the practical elements of the mindframe and its factors are strongly developed. One factor 'classroom discussion' has an effect size of 0.82 – difficult for any teacher to not at least consider in depth, and several in-class activities to promote this are presented.

Other effect sizes reported and discussed are 'teacher-student' relationships (0.72), Piagetian programs (1.28) and prior achievement (0.65), all with large effects that teachers perhaps ought to explore.

Essentially, this book is a clustering of various factors into broader mindframe groupings. As such, I will be utilising it to provoke thought and action planning in our PGCLTHE in the session that discusses 'good teaching'. Up for discussion too is the application of these mindframes and their associated factors to the teaching context in HE. At roughly the same time as I read this book, I came across the Great Teaching Toolkit Evidence review by Rob Coe *et al.* (2020). There is an interesting comparison between the two to be made. One thing is abundantly clear, teaching is a wickedly complex activity and the interrelation of factors, mindframes (or elements and dimensions) takes time to formulate into an expert structure. Both of these two resources can aid teachers, particularly ones who have passed the initial novice stage, in this process.

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Ripping yarns – Crafting for community

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When Covid-19 hit in March 2020 the world changed in multiple ways. Educational developers were thrust into the foreground as institutions and instructors scrambled to move all teaching online. At the same time as experiencing a significant increase in demand for their services, developers were required to work from home. The initial lockdowns brought anxiety, stress and isolation for many.

In the wake of this isolation, one of us (Popovic) invited developers from SEDA (mainly UK) and EDC (Educational Developers Caucus, Canada) to join her for a weekly craft session. The short story is that just over 60 people responded with an average of 6 to 10 meeting regularly over the following months.

Ten weeks into the craft group meetings we investigated the experiences of participants, as well as their intentions for joining. The meetings were held weekly, and due to different time zones this was during the daytime for Canadians (over several time zones) and in the evenings for the British. After the tenth meeting, everyone who had expressed interest in the group was invited to take part in a survey to investigate the value of the group, what changes would improve it, and the likelihood of continued attendance, post the lifting of social distancing measures.

Sewing bees, quilting groups, knitting and crochet meetings are well documented in rural histories. During WW2 non-combatants, largely women and children, were encouraged to contribute to the war effort by knitting socks and balaclavas, rolling bandages and making blankets. The activity itself is of tangible value, but of equal if not more importance, is the sense of contributing something while so many brothers, husbands, fathers (and, to a lesser extent, female relatives) faced physical danger. These activities were encouraged as individual pursuits, but meeting in groups to craft and socialise was and remains popular in times of war, including during the current century. Community crafting as a tradition has continued in contemporary life with people meeting in person to sew, knit and or crochet for example, in sessions typically called 'Stitch and Bitch' – a term popular despite the innate misogyny. In a time of cheap clothing, fast fashion and international commerce, it may seem counterintuitive to find people reviving handcrafts of the past. But as Gauntlett (2018) argues, people like to make things and to connect with others. With this in mind, we investigated whether educational developers would find value in an opportunity to connect with others in their profession through an online community crafting group, particularly as a source of support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The role of the educational developer is widely reported as being supportive and nurturing in nature. Educational developers are accustomed to working behind the scenes. By nature, many are nurturing in disposition, empathic in outlook and generous in attitude. Some work in isolation, but many work in teams, gaining support from each other and from the wider educational development community. Educational developers, already undervalued and frequently isolated, were expected to provide a hugely increased level of support for others, while dealing with their own challenges and stresses. In common with those they were asked to support, many educational developers had to juggle parental and work responsibilities while adapting their homes to a work environment and in some cases learning rapidly on the fly in order to support their colleagues.

Even before the pandemic, there was an increase in the popularity of crafts. Sites like Ravelry, which provides community for those who knit and crochet, have grown rapidly along with a rise in availability and popularity of hand-dyed knitting yarn, quilting supplies, and the frequency of fabric and yarn festivals (Stannard and Mullet, 2018). Alongside the increased interest in crafts, we have experienced an explosion in online communities in recent years, from Facebook groups such as Pandemic Pedagogy, to Twitter such as the LTHE weekly Twitter chat. Educational developers in the UK and Canada share a similar demographic, which overlaps with that of knitting and crochet enthusiasts. There are more women in educational development than in the population or in Higher Education in general (Little and Green, 2012). Additionally, yarn crafts, while not solely popular with women, are dominated by that gender (Gauntlett, 2018). It was in this context that we began this study on whether educational developers would find value in an online community crafting group as a means of connecting with others in their profession and a source of support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Details of the survey question, response numbers and procedure are available on request, but for the sake of space we will limit our discussion to the findings of the investigation.

Why respondents accepted the invitation to attend the virtual meetings

'Social connection' and 'enjoyment of crafting' were extracted as popular themes, accounting for 35% and 20% of all themes that were extracted from the responses received for this question, respectively. Social connection encompassed any mention of the act of socialising as well as references to community. For example, as one respondent stated simply, 'sounded nice to have a community'. However, most members who indicated joining the group out of enjoyment of crafting also mentioned other factors for joining. For example, one respondent referenced 'professional development and interactions', as well as enjoyment of crafting as reasons for taking part in the group: 'I wanted to have the chance for work-related conversation with other developers, particularly as I am no longer attached to a centre and so can be quite isolated. I enjoy knitting so combining the two seemed like a great opportunity.' Along these same lines, other respondents indicated joining the group because they were seeking social connection with others in their field through a shared interest that they enjoyed: 'I wanted to be able to meet with others who have a shared interest (craft) as well as a shared background (HE).' Interestingly, 'enjoyment of crafting' was always referenced alongside 'social connection', suggesting that members who indicated enjoyment of crafting wished to engage in this activity in the company of others.

What respondents hoped to get out of the meetings

'Social connection' and 'professional development and interactions' were extracted as dominant themes for what respondents hoped to get out of the meetings, accounting for 37% and 21%, respectively, of all themes that were extracted from the responses received for this question. As mentioned above, social connection was associated with references to community and a means of socialising. For example, one respondent expressed that they sought 'a sense of community with like-minded people who could offer some support during the current crisis and an improved opportunity to see people in a non-work environment', whereas another respondent reported that 'because of Covid-19 and not going out, not visiting family local and further afield, it was company of others and made a change from just watching the tv as I live alone'. Multiple members referenced socialising in the context of the lockdown and indicated how meeting through an online teleconference platform provided an alternative opportunity to meeting with people in person. In their response for what they hoped to get out of the meetings, one member noted 'chat, and "seeing" other people', highlighting the importance of audio-visual communication, suggesting that this combination allows for a richer form of connection compared to corresponding via email, text message, or phone.

The second theme of 'professional development and interactions' corresponded to references made to socialisation in an educational development sphere that had clear ties to professional development and networking. For example, in reference to networking, one respondent shared that they hoped that the meetings would provide a 'chance to get to know other developers as I am relatively new to the field', whereas another respondent indicated that they wished to 'meet some of the people I have known virtually or have read or heard of'. Still, in addition to networking, other members also indicated a desire for learning and receiving information from other educational developers, as demonstrated in the following passages: 'Connections with other EDs as fellow journeyers and also learn from across contexts and "generations" of EDs', and 'insights into what is happening in educational development, as well as new ideas for hobbies'.

Benefits of attending the online meetings

'Social connection' and 'professional development and interactions' were extracted as themes in response to what benefits members received by attending the online meetings (38% and 18% , respectively, of all themes that were extracted from the responses received for this question). As with question 2, social connection came through as references to community and a means of socialisation. Respondents reported that being part of the group was beneficial to them in that 'social interaction with some new like-minded (*i.e.* crafty) people lifted my spirits', and more generally 'far reaching conversations and the companionship'. In addition to this general sentiment about connection, there was reference made to the flexibility of attending the meeting since it was virtual, as well as the opportunity to meet others from around the world: 'I benefited by being able to talk with people from all of the world, who I likely would not have spoken with if it wasn't for the virtual meetings, and also just by listening to interesting conversations had by other people in the group. It was nice to be able to connect with people, and I was able to do so in the comfort of my own home.' Again, the theme 'professional development and interactions' referred to socialisation in an educational development sphere that had clear ties to professional development and networking. As demonstrated in the following passage, respondents indicated that being part of the group enabled them to strengthen their professional network: 'Now able to put faces to some of the names on the JISC list as well as a wide view of SEDA.' Respondents also noted exchange of thoughts about the impact of Covid-19 on educational development and experiences across institutions as a benefit to having joined the group: 'Chance to talk to people outside my lockdown bubble. Interesting to hear about what was happening at other universities, what we think the impact of Covid-19 will be on educational developers. And I got a sense of achievement having completed a piece of knitting.'

How the meetings could have been improved

Most respondents reported there wasn't anything in particular that they would change, accounting for 40% of all the responses received for this question. However, the next most frequently occurring theme indicated that respondents just didn't attend enough meetings to be able to comment, or respondents left a blank response, accounting for 25% of all responses received for this question. Lastly, timing was also extracted as a theme (15% of all responses received for this question), making some reference to the timing of the meetings that, if changed, would be beneficial to the respondent.

Preference to continue the virtual meetings once social distancing is lifted

Approximately 70% of respondents reported that they would like to continue joining the online crafts meeting once social distancing is lifted, whereas 26% responded with a 'maybe' and about 4% responded with a 'no'. In terms of scheduling, 13% of respondents indicated that continuing to attend the online crafting meetings would result in schedule problems after social distancing is lifted.

Preference for an in person or an online meeting

Approximately 48% of respondents reported preferring to meet online, whereas 30% indicated no preference for meeting in-person or online, and 13% indicated a preference to meet in-person. The remaining 9% did not respond to this question.

For those who felt a connection between the two interests of educational development and crafting, the group provided a valuable source of support. Specifically, in addition to the 'enjoyment of crafting', 'social connection' and 'professional development and interactions' were also extracted as themes regarding why members joined the group and what they hoped to get out of it. Our respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction with the group, noting that the main benefits of the group coincided with what they were hoping to get out of being a member, specifically, social connection and professional development and interaction. Only about 4% of our respondents indicated that they would not continue joining the online craft meeting once social distancing is lifted, which may be related to challenges with scheduling, as 13% of respondents indicated that they would encounter scheduling conflicts. Interestingly, a large portion of the group also indicated that, given the choice, they would prefer to continue meeting online (48%), with the second largest subgroup indicating they have no preference for meeting in-person or online, which lends support for use of *online platforms for community-based activities*. Understanding the danger of attempting to generalise our findings too freely, we focus on the specific experiences of members in our group, which align with prior research on how connections are formed when individuals craft together (Gauntlett, 2018).

Craft and professional connection

By virtue of their profession, educational developers have access to various means of community. For example, SEDA and EDC in Canada provide a community which predated the outbreak of Covid-19. The provision of the virtual craft group added to the opportunities provided by professional organisations. As the responses suggest, the interest was not solely to address a lack of community, but also to engage in a pleasant activity. It seems to be the combination of craft and professional connection that proved to be the most important factor for most of the participants who elected to join.

Professional development vs. improving their craft skills

Participants reported benefits of professional development rather than improving their craft skills. Most seemed to enjoy having time to craft and discuss work-related issues. The space provided an oasis in the week when they could engage in their craft, while simultaneously improving their work-related knowledge and building networks.

The participants in our study identified themselves in terms of their employment role. In conversations they were more likely to refer to themselves as 'educational developers', for example, in this context than 'a knitter' or 'a crocheter'. The virtual crafting group provided them with a purpose (crafting) while engaging in professional development. However, the discussions that took place in the meetings ranged across both spheres and into general discussion that would be of relevance regardless of one's interest in Higher Education or crafting.

The context of the pandemic, and the subsequent disjuncture of working life, together with the sudden juxtaposition of domestic and work life, threw people's sense of structure and expectation out of kilter. In this environment, much like the women knitting socks and blankets in times of war, those who attended the virtual craft sessions found solace in their craft and each other, as they discussed the issues that were on their minds with people who shared a common understanding both of the general situation (lockdown during a pandemic) and the specific context of working as an educational developer.

While most of the respondents indicated they enjoyed the conversations, there were a couple who reported feeling isolated within the group. The design of the study tends to quieten these voices, since those who felt isolated would be unlikely to respond to the survey ten weeks after the meetings began. That said, that voice was present. It acts as a reminder that it may be a mistake to assume that everyone gets the same out of an experience as those who are willing to discuss it.

Limitations

This was not a large study. It was intentionally qualitative rather than quantitative as we wished to explore the experiences of those who took part in this particular virtual craft meeting. The benefit of this is that we have been able to include minority voices as well as those of the majority. What the study does do is to combine an examination of the often-overlooked sphere of domestic and frequently female crafting with that of another often overlooked and frequently female profession of Educational Development. Our findings suggest that enabling and valuing a combination of the two offers an escape and a means of community for those to whom it appeals. It should be noted that the group attracted one man and more than 60 women.

Conclusion

This study arose from the exceptional circumstances created by the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on the work of educational developers. Facing unprecedented stress in their work and physically removed from their accustomed sources of support (*i.e.* the work-based community of fellow developers) educational developers with an interest in crafting were enthusiastic in their response to an invitation to take part in a virtual crafting group.

Our findings support previous research suggesting the value of community crafting in providing support in times of stress, such as war or national disaster, and provide a unique insight to the intersectionality of Educational Development and crafting.

The results suggest such groups are an effective means to provide community and support to developers who are themselves expected to provide support to others: crafting in groups can build community and provide identity, particularly in times of stress.

A final footnote

For images of craft work produced by the group, see Educational Developers Thinking Allowed, https://edta.info.yorku.ca/, Chapter 14, https://edta.info.yorku.ca/covid-19-virtual-knitting-crafting-meeting/.

The illustration (Figure 1) was commissioned for the Educational Developers Thinking Allowed website; the artist is Liz Smith (https://www.lizsmithillustration.com/).

Figure 1 Liz Smith Illustrations

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Developing academics as coaches: Preparing the future-ready graduate

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We are in unprecedented times. The ways we learn about, make sense of and navigate our rapidly changing world demand a new approach to almost every aspect of life, inclusive of how we teach and support our students. Globally, tertiary-level institutions should be thinking beyond the exigencies of covering the curricula to prepare students to traverse the increasingly unpredictable societies in which they are expected to succeed. In the typical structure, academics and advisors most closely support students' journeys from the classroom to the workforce, with select staff counselling students through challenges outside of the institution that may affect their studies and transition into adulthood. It is fair to assume that academic institutions are inherently interested in preparing their students to be competitive, contributing citizens. Therefore, if a student graduates with professional qualifications but lacks the wherewithal to think creatively and innovatively, it can be argued that the tertiary experience has underprepared them for the real world. Penprase (2018) advocates for a focus on the soft skills that would help graduates to assess and navigate the ever-evolving and increasingly competitive job market and workforce.

There is growing recognition of the need to address the whole student as opposed to their academic pursuits alone (Bland, 2003). Today's students must be prepared beyond academia and the basic tenets of personal development. Soft skills become even more critical in geographies described as *developing or emerging nations* where gaps in commerce, that may not exist in more developed places, propel graduates to step up as leaders, innovators, problem-solvers, and creative thinkers. To compete in global markets, these young professionals may have to create their own jobs, businesses, and industries.

How can soft skills be developed when both students and staff are already burdened fulfilling the mandates of what is expected of them? Perhaps the answer lies in utilising and upgrading existing academic advising structures. Academics and advisors are already in a position to leverage their status and academic-student relationships to *coach* students to develop the soft skills needed for the world ahead. Subtly different from advising, mentoring, or supervising, coaching focuses on guiding students to rely on their own knowledge and ingenuity in order to map out and steer their futures.

The International Coaching Federation describes coaching as '...a thought-provoking and creative partnership that inspires clients [students] to maximize their personal and professional potential, often unlocking previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity and leadership' (International Coaching Federation, n.d.). Coaching is still a relatively new approach, but recent research on coaching tertiary-level students has emerged. Iordanou *et al.* (2016) describe the usefulness of coaching in thesis supervision. They underscore that postgraduate research is more than a cognitive exercise; it is also a test of the student's ability to remain resilient, self-motivated, be outcomes driven, and manage time. While a supervisor may be able to support their students' research skills development and assist with the conceptual direction of the project, if soft skills are lacking, then successful completion of the dissertation could be significantly compromised. Similarly, for academic advisors working with undergraduate students, a one-dimensional focus on degree requirements does not always translate to the timely completion of a program. Retention is optimised when a holistic approach to student support is implemented (Robinson, 2015). The coach [academic advisor] combines thoughtful questioning, facilitated brainstorming, and exploratory discussions to guide their students (coachees) to problem-solve, goal set and plan. The coachee should display a greater level of insight into familiar situations, and elevated performance. This becomes proof that they have unlocked their full potential and maximised their educational experience (Iordanou *et al.*, 2016).

Note that in the academic context, coaching is *not* the same as, and should *not* replace, mental health services or other non-academic support services that may be found on a campus. Rather, I am endorsing coaching as a means of facilitating students' efforts to deepen their academic and career development experience. As such, staff employed in non-academic support can also utilise coaching philosophies to assist students. The focus of this project is to encourage academic advisors to leverage their unique positions to shift the siloed ways in which students currently experience support.

My interest in exploring a nimble and culturally adaptive coaching approach for academic advisors led to the conceptualisation and design of a three-part professional development workshop series piloted with nine lecturers and academic advisors from one campus of a regional university situated in the Caribbean. This project also aimed to broaden how staff think about their role in developing 21st-century students. The project was funded by the SEDA Small Grants Research Award.

Designing the 'Academics as Coaches' workshop series

The initial planning for this professional development workshop series involved identifying and curating foundational information and definitions, such as what constitutes coaching, its tenets, and an operational model that participants could adopt in their practice. Those key areas were fleshed out, and my local university partners, an educational developer and an adjunct instructor, provided feedback on the curated material. Together, the workshop objectives were finalised as follows.

At the end of the workshop, participants were expected to:

1. Differentiate between coaching, advising, and mentoring in purpose and approach
2. Identify the needs of coaching in a 21st-century context
3. Employ efficacy and positive psychology research to promote resilience and change mindsets in their students
4. Adopt a simple coaching model that could be used to support students
5. Assist students in creating accountability plans, and identifying their role and parameters as accountability partners
6. Hone active listening skills
7. Develop and use powerful questions to invite shifts in thinking
8. Reflect on their mindsets and attitudes while engaging in coaching and predict its impact.

My two local university partners, who also were participants, assisted in the recruitment and retention of seven additional participants, making nine in total. The participants represented a combination of full- and part-time lecturers and academic advisors from a postgraduate Human Resource Management programme and an undergraduate Economics programme. The workshop series ran over a three-week period in March 2021. The series was conducted completely online due to the constraints of the pandemic.

There were three modules. A module consisted of one synchronous 75-minute session and 90 minutes of independent reading, plus an extended learning task. The extended learning tasks were either coaching practice assignments or reflective activities completed independently or with peers. The activities we intentionally job-embedded and designed to have participants consider their professional contexts. Professional development should be job-embedded and contextualised in order to be meaningful. Ultimately, the focus must be on improved student outcomes (Doherty, 2011).

Among the other design and facilitation elements that we know foster high engagement and meaningfulness for participants, professional development should:

- Encourage active participation
- Build on the participants' personal and professional experiences
- Employ collaborative inquiry
- Be designed for some level of immediate application
- Encourage reflection and action as an outcome of their learning.

Taking these factors into consideration, the workshop series was designed to introduce the concept of coaching through a cultural lens, meeting participants at their varying points of entry to the approach. Before participants could envision how to change the way they saw themselves supporting students, they first had to identify the need to do so in their own practice. Therefore, we began with a self-evaluation exercise of their practice that helped participants determine what was working and what was not.

Time was specifically allocated to differentiating between coaching, advising, mentoring, and mental health therapy. The primary focus was on developing mindfulness of practice, that is, of demonstrating to participants how to identify which role they were undertaking, being careful to impress upon them that they ought not to therapise students. Additionally, it is important to recognise that there are instances when a student may require advising or mentoring. Deep listening and mindfulness help staff assess what is appropriate for each student's particular case.

We acknowledged the characteristics of coaching and what it is intended for, the notion of student-staff partnership, and the social and cultural implications of this type of partnership, as it may go against traditional cultural norms. The first session grounded coaching in a local Caribbean context. Participants unpacked the possible threats that may be present in adopting a coaching approach based on their lived professional and personal experiences. Aligned with the coaching tenets of creative problem-solving, participants were actively encouraged to keep a watchful eye on how challenges might be mitigated. Space was created for exploration into roles that may be seen from a cultural lens – academic roles as positions of power, keepers of knowledge, knower of right and wrong – and how coaching requires a disruption of those dynamics.

Given that much of the existing research on coaching has come out of North American and UK contexts, it was important to identify where there may be tension in the interactions with Caribbean students, managing expectations, and establishing appropriate boundaries. Coaching is highly relationship based, so significant time was spent focusing on the relationships that must be created and fostered for effective coaching. Included in the discussion was the question of what empowerment can look like for students in ways that are both culturally aligned and progressive.

Engagement for application

The workshop design gave opportunities for participants to:

- See the model in action (demonstration)
- Dissect its parts and phases
- Practise the model
- Provide and receive feedback from their peers.

To aid participants who were interested in immediately applying their newly minted coaching skills, they were asked to outline how they would create a viable coaching relationship with students. What would they explain to students who would likely be new to this type of relationship to prepare them for a different type of partner-like engagement? As an extension of the discussions about creating relationships with students, participants were advised to frame how they would establish guardrails and articulate expectations to students. The intention was to provide participants with concrete takeaways that they could apply as soon as they wished.

Coaches' workshop experience and impact on practice

There were several opportunities for participants to provide feedback on their experiences and coaching development throughout and at the conclusion of the workshop. A workshop evaluation form was designed to allow participants to anonymously comment on their learning experiences and to describe the extent to which the various aspects of the workshop were meaningful for their professional development. All participants completed the evaluation.

Throughout the workshop there were regular opportunities to check in with how participants were developing skills and knowledge. There were written reflections on the concepts presented in the series and occasions for ongoing reflections on their past and current practice. To delve more deeply into shifts in attitudes and behaviours, participant interviews were held three to four weeks after the conclusion of the workshop series. I was able to interview eight of the nine participants who willingly shared their adaptation of the coaching principles covered in the workshop and describe mental shifts in their methods of working with students.

I was interested in uncovering the potential alignment between the workshop content and the lasting impact on participants' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Table 1 summarises the themes that emerged as the common areas of impact, and direct quotes and statements from the participants that speak to impact.

The three areas of impact are identified as:

1. Internalisation of coaching concepts
2. Mindfulness of the coaching role and relationships
3. Adoption of fundamental coaching practices and/or processes.

Implications for the future

Coaching in higher education is a relatively new concept but it has deeply resonated with the participants of the workshop. They were able to appreciate how coaching can easily complement the existing guidance they provide to students around academic support and progress toward degree completion. They connected coaching to developing

Impact Area and Description	**Source of evidence**	**Sampling of direct responses pointing to workshop impact *** ***The 9 participants are anonymously identified in this table as P-1 through P-9**
Internalisation of coaching concepts Recognition and value of coaching in higher education context. Ability to rationalise how coaching may be effective in working with 21st-century students.	• In-course peer-written reflections • Post-workshop interviews	*'There is a definite need to apply coaching as a conduit for organizational learning and problem-solving.'* (Written reflection, P-1, P-2) *'Coaching requires a commitment to the process by both the coach and the learner – can benefit both parties. For students (and coaches) – stimulate lifelong (and) master adaptive learning skills and for coaches improve self-monitoring and career development.'* (Written reflection, P-3, P-4) Beneficial implications: • *'Independence in decision making'* • *'Less litigation implications (university-wide)'* • *'General personal development of coaches and learners'* (Written reflection, P-3, P-4) *'Key definitional concepts identified e.g. appreciative listening, discerning problems, referring to resources, and goal-setting among others have implications for supporting learners in our context.'* (Written reflection, P-8, P-9)
Mindfulness of the coaching role and the design of coaching relationships Ability to reflect on practice and differentiate when engaging in coaching behaviours as opposed to traditional advising or mentoring.	• In-course peer-written reflections • Post-workshop evaluations • Post-workshop interviews	*'It is important for the coach to be aware of his/her role that they are assuming at the time, to ensure that the right attention is given, so that the student's issue or situation is properly addressed.'* (Written reflection, P-3, P-5, P-6) *'This will better help me to be empathic to students who may be confused, especially new incoming students and first generational university students.'* (Anonymous participant) *'There is a deeper consciousness when we might be practicing coaching and when we might be in the realm of advising.'* (P1) *'I've been trying to remind myself of not being as directive as I'm accustomed to being, but I think it takes, for me, an adjustment as well because you know it's hard to unlearn something, especially if it's something you're accustomed to. It's part of my personality because I see that it's a responsibility, that it's hard for me to disconnect between taking on that responsibility as directives rather than sharing the responsibility'* (P4)

Impact Area and Description	Source of evidence	Sampling of direct responses pointing to workshop impact * *The 9 participants are anonymously identified in this table as P-1 through P-9
Adoption of fundamental coaching practices and/or process Perceived ability to operationalise basic coaching skills, such as deep listening and powerful questioning to support student growth. Intentions to employ a basic coaching process.	• End of workshop evaluations • Post-workshop interviews	*'I will be using the GROW [coaching] model in future mentoring sessions. I think it can also be used in creative problem-solving. I am also more mindful of the terms I use to describe my interactions.' (Anonymous participant)* *'I [upped] my listening game with my students.' (Anonymous participant)* *'I asked her what was the first thing she wanted to do.' (P5)* *'He wanted me to tell him, more or less, what he should do beyond, so I told him that I can't tell him what to do. It's your degree. You know what you want.'* (P5)

Table 1 Workshop impact

their students' intrinsic motivation, resilience, and problem-solving skills.

The success in the design of this professional development series was the provision of a space for a deliberate lean into the cultural and situational context of the institution and the wider Caribbean. Participants were better able to identify and map out how they could develop coaching partnerships with their students and shift student expectations and interactions in an 'advising' setting, to one where students display greater agency in their own decisions.

For Educational Developers

Educational developers are always concerned about the impact and *stickiness* of whatever skill or knowledge they are introducing to academic staff. This is particularly true when we are asking staff to think differently about their practice or move away from deeply rooted professional practices and beliefs about students. That stickiness is often a driver in our design, planning, and decision-making process. This 'Academics as Coaches' workshop asked participants to question and redesign the relationship between themselves and students within a cultural and institutional backdrop. Much of the coaching research, resources, and models available were of North American and Western European origins, so it was important for these Caribbean-based academics and staff to translate and modify the subject matter to their cultural circumstances. As part of that modification, the active partnering with locally-based educational developers was critical to providing insight into institutional goals and priorities. This allowed for greater connection to the content and for participants to find their own spaces for application within their responsibilities.

In summary, the implications of this *Academics as Coaches* workshop are two-fold. Firstly, the potential for coaching to be a game-changer in higher education within emerging nations is worth deep investigation. Using coaching in an advising relationship to encourage creative problem-solving skills and innovative thinking is a high-leverage practice worth considering. Secondly, this project illuminates the importance of educational developers who are working with staff in the global south or other non-Western geographies to ensure their professional development materials are mindful, respectful and reflective of cultural and institutional priorities. No content is culturally neutral. Making an explicit connection to the academics' realities may be a way to maximise impact.

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SEDA – Ethics and values

David Baume, University of London, **Elaine Fisher**, Independent Consultant, and **René Schegg**, University of St Gallen

Introduction

We were tasked by SEDA Executive to suggest an approach to ethical issues in SEDA Accreditations, in relation to implementing the SEDA values. The emphasis was to be on SEDA's work outside the UK, where of course we may find different cultures in different countries. But on reflection, it did not feel appropriate to apply different standards outside and inside the UK, so we suggest an inclusive approach here. As well as making recommendations, we share our reasoning.

Recommendations to SEDA about promoting and responding to enquiries about SEDA-PDF

1. We will talk with anybody about PDF.
2. The SEDA values will be made prominent, alongside the outcomes and processes, from the start of the conversation and throughout.
3. SEDA will stress that the values (and outcomes) are not negotiable. However, we are happy to discuss local interpretations of them.
4. In considering a proposal, we shall focus on plans and actions more than on words.
5. We shall judge according to our mission, by asking, each time: 'Would this implementation of SEDA-PDF improve education in the particular setting?'
6. We shall make explicit, in relation to explicit although possibly sometimes emergent criteria, the reasons why we made the judgement we did.
7. We shall continue to publish an evolving account of our criteria, for clarity and as part of a continuing conversation with the global higher education sector.

Background – Academic development and improving higher education

- In response to the many and familiar pressures for improving higher education, 'a new set of functions and services has emerged. They are concerned with developing and supporting the development of policy and practice about the design and operation of courses, about teaching, learning and assessment' (Baume, 1996). This historical account suggests a mission for academic development and academic developers – to support and lead the improvement of learning and teaching in higher education. SEDA's mission statement is a shortened version of this.
- Improving higher education is SEDA's mission because we believe in the power and the vital importance of education, in helping individuals both to achieve their potential and also to lead better lives in better societies.
- Academic developers have to be 'principled opportunists' (Baume, n.d., quoted in Bamber, 2020). Some of our principles are well set out in the SEDA values. Opportunism, otherwise known as consequentialism, suggests doing whatever is necessary, consistent with our values, to work towards achieving our mission.

Possible overarching approaches to working with difference

1. Mitter (2020) says, in the conclusion to a book on UK universities and China:

1.1. 'A message that runs through…is the importance of engagement.' Also:

1.2. 'We must welcome students from China and work harder to make sure that they feel that welcome in reality and not just in words. But we must also do so in terms that make it clear there are some values central to our sector and our society – in particular, liberal values of open, transparent research and teaching, with the freedom to debate and to ask awkward questions of the powerful – that we will not compromise.'

2. We suggest that Mitter's comments about welcoming Chinese students apply equally well to all forms of academic engagement with countries with different cultures, and more widely with everyone with whom SEDA might be invited to engage.
3. In the context of SEDA's mission and values, the obvious-sounding challenge here is to find a balance or compromise between these two pressures: the pressure to engage, and the pressure to stand firm to our values.
4. But this may not be the most helpful approach. Rather, the challenge may be to do both at once – engage, and stand firm to our values.
5. To achieve this, we may we need to dig behind the current value statements, to identify if there are ways in which they are context-specific, and see what other meanings they may legitimately carry in different settings. The values were first written in the UK. They have mainly, but not exclusively, been applied in European and Commonwealth contexts. They are SEDA's values. But they are not automatically global.
6. It has to be possible for an institution or programmes to fail to demonstrate (yet) the SEDA values during a bid for recognition. If this were not possible, then the values would have little content or substance. For SEDA not to accept a claim for accreditation or recognition is okay, including on values grounds. Because SEDA accreditation is not compulsory, and is not the only possible badge of virtue or recognition in this area.
7. We note the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4, quality

education, which includes the statements:

7.1. 'Education enables upward socioeconomic mobility and is a key to escaping poverty.'

7.2. 'Education helps reduce inequalities and reach gender equality and is crucial to fostering tolerance and more peaceful societies.'

We won't go far wrong if we are in support of this kind of education.

Unpicking the SEDA values a little

For each of the SEDA values, in assessing claims, of course we go behind simply accepting assertions of compliance. We dig deeper, looking for evidence of practice, or highly credible plans, which embodies these values.

But issues remain

1. *Developing [presumably, also applying] understanding of how people learn*:
   There may be many different understandings of how (different) people learn, in different settings. Would we expect/require to see the familiar (Northern/Western/mainly male) names, sources and understandings here, typically based on research with Northern/Western students? Or would we accept understandings, authors, sources with which we were not previously familiar? If so, how would we judge the validity of previously unfamiliar sources? By what standards? We could pay attention to reputation and citations of authors, international rankings of journals where such work was published, publishers of books published, the University where the work was undertaken. It could be interesting and valuable for SEDA, perhaps the Publications Committee, perhaps working with ICED, to attempt an intercultural account of how people learn.
2. *Practising in ways that are scholarly, professional and ethical:* Do we bring Northern/Western accounts of scholarship, professionalism and ethical behaviour? Or will we accept other accounts, including from international bodies such as UN/UNESCO? Again, against what criteria do we accept or reject unfamiliar accounts of scholarship, professionalism and ethical behaviour? To what extent are we moral universalists and to what extent moral relativists? And, of course, how do we justify our stance?
3. *Working with and developing learning communities:* This should be relatively uncontentious. Although – do we carry views of 'community' which are not made explicit in this value statement? In other words, are there accounts of community — whether these accounts are explicit, enacted, or both — which we would *not* recognise as legitimate? And, as always – why?
4. *Valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity:* We could legitimately ask questions in a recognition about the range of different kinds of identity in the particular setting. We could ask for data to show that members of each of these identity groups have proportional representation, and further that the institution/programme has measures in place to support members of each of these identity groups to success. Of course, we may be dealing with fundamental societal issues here, not just the University. Some countries deny the existence of some minorities, some identities. Do we wish to engage with this issue? Whatever we decide, can we justify our decision? (Also – to what extent do we do this with UK recognitions?) The authors suspect that this issue in particular may make it difficult or impossible for SEDA to work in particular settings. But we have to be prepared to justify our decision in explicit relation to SEDA values in each case. SEDA, surely, has to consider each institution and each programme, rather than each country, acknowledging the possible impact of national context?
5. *Continually reflecting on practice to develop ourselves, others and processes:*
   A UK/Northern/Western account of 'reflection' typically includes the idea of critical reflection. And 'development' typically includes, not just learning facts and skills, but a deeper process of transformation of educational worldview and practice. Are these ideas, especially the critical and the transformational approaches, fundamental to the value? Or would we accept other accounts of reflection on practice, and of development?

References

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Mitter, R. (2020) 'Conclusion', in: Natzler, M. (ed.), *UK Universities and China*, [online] Oxford: HEPI, pp.79-82 (available at: https://tinyurl.com/27v6ydr9).

David Baume SFSEDA FHEA is a Fellow of the University of London Centre for Online and Distance Education, **Elaine Fisher FSEDA** is an Independent Consultant, and **René Schegg**, University of St Gallen, is Co-chair of SEDA's PDF committee.

SEDA News

SEDA Fellowship

in addition to membership, as a professional body SEDA has degrees of fellowship to recognise colleagues whose practice and leadership is of high standard and exemplifies the professional values that SEDA holds dear.

Associate Fellows are SEDA members with roles that have some involvement in academic development. Fellows can be those who are leading and contributing to change in teaching and learning through academic development.

/continues on page 28

SEDA News /continued from page 27

Senior Fellowship is aimed at academic development leaders who make significant strategic contributions to their institutions and who make significant impact on the community of academic developers beyond their own institutions.

Fellow and Senior Fellow candidates will demonstrate, through the creation of a portfolio, how their work is informed by the SEDA Values:

1. Developing understanding of how people learn
2. Practising in ways that are scholarly, professional and ethical
3. Working with and developing learning communities
4. Valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity
5. Continually reflecting on practice to develop ourselves, others and processes.

In reflection with their cohort, candidates will be encouraged to situate their current role and responsibilities related to academic development within the Values framework. As candidates progress in their career and move from Fellow to Senior Fellow, these values might change meaning; see Erik's blog (2021) for an example. In addition to the SEDA Values, candidates will demonstrate a commitment to continuous professional learning and development for themselves and their colleagues.

FSEDA Programme

This year, the FSEDA Programme successfully went through a renewal process and like SFSEDA, it is now organised around a cohort-based model. Throughout the six-month programme, FSEDA cohorts will be guided through the development of their portfolios in a number of ways, including participation in synchronous webinars and workshops, and one-to-one mentorship. The cohort acts as a community to share, reflect, and develop their own practice (demonstrated through the Core Development Outcomes) and the work of their institutions (demonstrated through the Specialist Outcomes).

Want to know more?

If you'd like to know more about the Fellowship programmes, or if you are interested in participating in a future cohort, please connect with Erik Brogt for SFSEDA and Arushi Manners for FSEDA queries. Please copy in Vic Wilson-Crane, the CPD Framework Co-ordinator. into all communication. (**Victoria Wilson-Crane** SFSEDA (victoria.wilson-crane@kaplan.com), SEDA Fellowship CPD Framework Co-ordinator; **Erik Brogt SFSEDA** (erik.brogt@canterbury.ac.nz), SFSEDA Programme Lead; **Arushi Manners FSEDA** (manners.ed.dev.gmail.com), FSEDA Programme Lead.)

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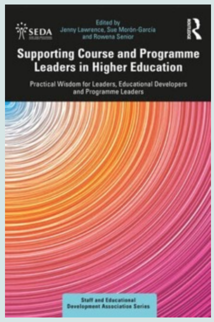
Brogt, E. (2021) 'Engaging with different professional recognition and development opportunities for academic developers', *International Journal for Academic Development*, 26(4), pp. 477-480 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2020.1840380).

Programme Leadership



SEDA has been sponsoring a series of activities around programme leadership including this new SEDA Routledge book which has been received with nods of recognition and shouts of 'at last' across the sector!

Supporting Course and Programme Leaders in Higher Education: practical wisdom for leaders, educational developers and programme leaders
Edited by Jenny Lawrence, Sue Morón-García and Rowena Senior. ISBN 9780367650155

This book is a 'labour of love' that includes a manifesto for sustainable support of programme leaders. It is crucial reading for programme leaders, as well as academic and educational developers and leaders working across faculties and whole institutions. There are 12 chapters, each with a practitioner response, and 10 case studies. With contributions from teaching- and research-focused higher education institutions, as well as established and modern college- and university-based providers in both the northern and southern hemispheres.

Full details on the Routledge web site: https://tinyurl.com/yap4mhck. (Institutional members will be given access to an electronic copy.)

Associated activities

Oxford Brookes will host a series of seminars from contributing authors over the coming academic year. See 'Talking Teaching across the globe' (https://tinyurl.com/2j6dcc2u).

The SEDA Blog, open to all, has a series of five posts (which started on 1 June 2022) from the book's co-editors and some of the contributors (https://tinyurl.com/ycuff6jp).

The Programme Leaders' Tool Kit is a member benefit. It is based on chapters in the SEDA Special Supporting Programme Leaders and Programme Leadership (https://tinyurl.com/bdewc6m3), and is hosted on the SEDA VLE, Canvas. Details of how to access will be circulated in the next members' newsletter.

Compiled by one of the SEDA/Routledge book's co-editors (Jenny Lawrence), the Tool Kit offers evidence-based, practical wisdom, which the busy educational developer or programme leader can use in planning for the coming academic year (whatever that year may bring) – specifically when working with programme teams on programme-assessment reform and on team or organisational development. All of the resources can be downloaded and adapted to suit your context and are suitable for online/remote working. The Tool Kit complements the SEDA Professional Development Framework award 'Leading Programmes' (https://tinyurl.com/2yfuk587).