

**Title:**                   **Facilitating Academic Communities of practice**

**Presenter:**           **Geof Hill**  
Birmingham City University

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

1. Identify logistics for establishing an academic community of practice.
2. Consider the facilitator skill set for facilitating a community of practice
3. Discuss the problems and challenges involved with encouraging communities of practice with university academics.

### **Session Outline**

Reflective practice is seen as worthwhile for advancing professional identity (Schön, 1983; Boud, 2010) and specifically academic practices (Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2009). Communities of practice (Wenger, 2010; Kerno, 2008) provide one professional development strategy for bringing together groups of academics to consider their academic practices and possibly advance them. Such sharing can be mobilised into practitioner inquiries (Stenhouse, 1981; Anderson and Herr, 1999; Brydon-Miller and Maguire, 2009) to add value through introducing participants to research into academic practice and benefit from their publication of that research. Provisioning such an environment of professional sharing that scaffolds practitioner inquiries involves honed facilitation skills. Such provisioning invites consideration of an additional facilitation skill set.

This session uses an experiential approach grounded in facilitation of several academic communities of practice designed for and initiated at Birmingham City university, including the SEDA accredited (2016) community of practice around research supervision program, communities of practice for educational leadership and a community of practice for exploring performative modes of research dissemination. It illuminates the facilitation requirements to provision these environments, drawing on a SEDA accreditation required facilitator development program to parallel the BCU community of practice around research supervision.

Dr. Geof Hill is Reader in Education at Birmingham City University and (previously) Managing Director of The Investigative Practitioner, an Australian management consultancy which encourages advancement of professional practice through practitioner inquiry and communities of practice. He has designed face-to-face and on-line communities of practice in Australia and U.K. for local government and higher education organisations as well as professional teacher and management groups.

## Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The 90 minutes is structured around the facilitator community of practice designed to complement the (SEDA accredited) community of practice around research supervision.

It will start with an 8 minute introduction in which participants introduce themselves. The remaining time in the workshop is divided over the five led discussions around:

1. Getting started as a community of practice.
2. Protocols for engagement and sharing of practice.
3. Facilitator skills
4. Working with literature about the practice.
5. Mobilising participants into practitioner inquiries.

Each of which will involve 10 minutes and will be undertaken to model effective community of practice strategies.

There will be approximately 32 minutes at the end for questions and further discussion. With appropriate numbers, the session will also be run as a community of practice.

## References

Anderson, G., and Herr, K. (1999). The New Paradigm Wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in Schools and Universities? *Educational Researcher*, 28(5), 12-21.

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Brydon-Miller, M. and Maguire, P (2009). Participatory action research: contributions to the development of practitioner inquiry in education. *Educational Action Research*. 17(1), 79-93.

Fry, H., Ketteridge, S. and Marshall, S. (2009) *A handbook for teaching and learning in Higher Education: Enhancing academic practice*. Milton Park, U.K.: Routledge,

Kerno, S. Jr. (2008). Limitations of Communities of Practice: A Consideration of Unresolved Issues and Difficulties in the Approach. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* Volume 15 (1), 69-78.

Schön, D. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action*. U.S.A.: Basic Books.

Stenhouse, L. (1981). What counts as research? *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 29 (2), 13-114.

Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of practice and social learning systems: the career of a concept. In C. Blackmore, (ed). *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice* (pp.179-198). London: Springer-Verlag.