

Title: **Making values work? Using values as a framework for understanding and navigating change in higher education**

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Abstract:

This paper will outline a model for using values explicitly to shape our approach to **curriculum design and delivery**, and to **strategy and policy** (the discussion element of the session will also give participants the opportunity to explore its potential applicability to other themes).

SEDA Values - Indicate which SEDA Values may be relevant to your proposal:

An understanding of how people learn		Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice	✓
Working and developing learning communities		Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity	✓
Continuing reflection on professional practice	✓	Developing people and processes	✓

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- understand how a values-based approach has been developed and used in a range of contexts to explore issues in curriculum development and educational strategy;
- explore how values inform their own professional practice; and
- consider how a values-based approach might be applied in their own contexts to support professional, curriculum and/or strategic development work.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

What role do our values really play in our professional lives? and how might we harness them to better effect? This discussion paper will explore the potential merits (and limitations) of using values more explicitly as a framework for understanding and navigating developments in higher education.

“Most faculty members really have no underlying theory of the university or philosophy of education... With few exceptions, even the best professors are competent experts who do

research in some subject – or rather some small fragment of some subject... But... if one were to ask of them how their thing was supposed to fit into any broad educational scheme, what broad humanistic goals it was supposed to serve, and how those goals related to the goals of the Institute, and even what were the goals of the Institute, most of them would be stumped for an answer. They simply never gave these matters a thought.” (Searle 1972)

As a philosopher turned academic/educational developer, I am often struck by the extent to which the values underpinning changes in higher education can be difficult to discern and/or in apparent tension with other widely-held sector values. This conceptual diagnosis prompted me to hypothesise that a clearer articulation of our values, and their influence on policy and practice, might provide a useful tool for improving our understanding of the challenges we face, and how we might most effectively tackle these. I have experimented with using a values framework to inform discussions of curriculum development; educational strategy; and organisational change - in this paper I will draw on some of these case studies to explore the benefits and challenges of this approach, and the extent to which it might be suitable for adaptation and adoption in other contexts.

Session Activities

The paper presentation element of the session will briefly outline:

- the rationale for, and process of, developing a values-informed approach;
- a couple of case studies using this approach in different contexts; and
- lessons learned so far.

Participants will be invited to undertake a brief group exercise illustrating the model under discussion.

Questions for discussion will include:

- What role(s) do, and should, values play in debates about higher education?
- What (if anything) is to be gained by a more explicit emphasis on values?
- What are the success factors, and what are the potential pitfalls, of such an approach?
- How widely applicable is this model to other contexts?

Provisional session timetable:

1120 – 1230	Introduction to the values model
1130 – 1140	Group exercise to explore the model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this framework help to provide insights into the relations between your own values and practices? • How might you use this to inform your work with colleagues?
1140 – 1150	Presentation of case studies and lessons learned
1150 – 1205	Symposium discussion

References

This is primarily an exploratory paper drawing on case study material, but will also make reference to relevant texts such as those on the purpose of higher education, e.g.

- Barnett, R (1994). *The Limits of Competence: Knowledge, Higher Education and Society*. Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Dearing, R (1997). *Higher Education in the Learning Society – Report of the National Committee*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Mill, JS (1867). *Inaugural Address*. St Andrew's University.
- Newman, J (1996). *The Idea of the University* ed. F Turner. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Robbins, L (1963). *Higher Education – A Report of the Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Searle, J (1972). *The Campus War – A Sympathetic Look at the University in Agony*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.