Title: **Sitting on the fence might give you splinters in your community of practice**

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Abstract:

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

1. Identify potential conflicts of interest in the expectations on tutors on professionally accredited courses
2. Consider possible ways in which educational/staff developers can help tutors manage professional and institutional demands in course design and delivery.
3. Explore the nature of professional identify in higher education and how it relates to the external demands placed upon academics.

Session Outline
Key issues to be addressed are:

Educators who develop and deliver professionally-accredited programmes must respond to the demands of Higher Education and those of the professional bodies that recognise their programmes. It is inevitable that these may not always cohere. This session will explore the possible tensions that might arise in these situations by examining how educators respond to legislative duties concerning the development of inclusive curricula in professionally–accredited programmes. The author argues that this requires reconciliation of two distinct philosophies of education.   This is based on the perspective that the inclusive curriculum is aligned to humanist or radical theories of education (eg Freire 1995, Rogers 1994, Hooks 1993) and views effective education as a bottom-up, student-centred endeavour. Here, the purpose of education is to maximise personal potential and encourage social justice and fairness. In contrast, professional education can be seen to follow a functionalist or instrumental model (eg Durkheim), with focus on preparation for work and the acquisition of predetermined knowledge and skills.

This session will illustrate this argument through presentation of research on nurse educators' perceptions of the inclusive curriculum. Analysis of interviews with15 nurse educators offers an image of professionals who are caught between 2 professional worlds. On the one hand, they want to be fair to all students and meet institutional demands. On the other, they have to make decisions relating to potential fitness-for-practice, as defined by a powerful professional body and the wider culture of nursing. The conflict between the demands of Higher Education and nursing was seen to coalesce around the notion of an effective practitioner. It was heightened by the fact that nurse educators (though employed in Higher Education) are compelled to retain their original professional status. This may have resulted in

the development of a hybrid professional identity and create a crisis of confidence in managing conflicting expectations.

The author feels that this mirrors the working experiences of most educators on professional programmes. It also may reflect a higher education profession that is disproportionately constrained by external demands (Shepherd, 2006). This begs the question whether there is a robust professional identify for university educators. If this is lacking, it may discourage practitioners, and the sector as a whole, from asserting their needs in the face of external partners and legislators. The session will conclude by exploring this question and considering the ways in which educational development can address this situation.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Introduction and presentation of research findings (20 mins)
Small group discussion and feedback– what support do academics in these situations need? (20 min)
Concluding remarks – focus on uncertain professional identity in HE (5min)

References

Durkheim E (1972) Selected Writings (edited and translated by Giddens) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Freire, P. (1995) Pedagogy of Hope. Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed Penguin, Hammondsworth

hooks b (1994) Teaching to transgress: education as the practice of freedom Routledge, London

Rogers C and Freiberg HJ (1993) Freedom to Learn (3rd ed) Merrill, New York

Shepherd J (2006) Juggling staff have crisis of identity Times Higher Education Supplement 7 July 2006