

**Title:** **When excellence isn't enough – managing the teaching /learning relationship in an era of direct payments to higher education: a case study**

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

- 1) Have an awareness of the implications of particular pedagogic practices for student expectations of teaching/learning relationship – are we creating consumers or partners in learning?
- 2) Have a critical understanding of the issues associated with supporting and developing teaching in an era of direct payments to higher education
- 3) Understand one lecturer's experience of navigating student and University expectations and behaviour
- 4) Consider their own practice in relation to educational development in a new era of student funding

#### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

An informal survey at a Heads of Educational Development Group event in early 2012, indicated that more than ever before staff in educational development units were being called upon to explore teaching practices with academics in the light of student complaints and nervous University management. For some this was an uncomfortable change reflecting weaknesses in management approaches, an 'unhomely' (Manthunga 2007) world at the fault lines (Rowland 2002) of performance management whereas for others it was a welcome opportunity to help academic staff consider their practice and provide support, encouragement and advice prompted by more overt student expectations. This discussion is based upon a case study and is presented by both an academic and an educational developer. In the paper we reflect on an experience of being faced with student complaints, management concern and the strategies we developed to respond. The experience for us indicated the potential fragile and vulnerable position of a lecturer when faced with nervous management and unclear student expectations. Further we also explore a possible disconnect between what a student believes is important for learning and what they have experienced, and what the lecturer plans. Student conceptions of learning and knowledge will change over time (Saljo, 1979, Perry, 1970) and Gibbs comments on the perceptions of sophisticated and unsophisticated students – the latter may judge a *good* learning experience as supplying

lecture notes and tests of memory to enable learning by rote, whereas the former as supporting independent learning and developing one's own confidence in a subject area (Gibbs, 2010). These are issues that are even more important as some have argued students begin to exhibit consumerist tendencies (Porter 2011 SEDA Keynote Edinburgh Conference). Yet this is also a positive story about pedagogic practices which communicate high expectations, call for student participation and which are appreciated. Finally we consider how we can ensure that educational developers work with colleagues in ways which are positive, even joyful, collegial and confidential when interventions are prompted by a performative culture and student complaints.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

1. What kind of place should educational developers inhabit when they are called in to respond to student complaints about teaching?
2. What kind of pedagogic practices are excellent and what are the implications for academics and students?
3. What might be happening in our universities to create consumerist expectations and what can be done?

### **References**

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