

**Title:** **Doing better or different things rather than just doing the same things better: introducing more variety into the academic development practices we use**

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will have:

Reflected on their own practices and engaged with a variety of other academic development approaches to increase the risk and reduce their control or switch the ownership to those with whom they are working.

#### **Session Outline**

As academic developers we continually urge our colleagues to adopt more student-centred, active approaches to their practice. However, the methods we use to do this are often teacher-focused and input driven, though with a nod to interaction, action planning and some reflection.

This session advocates presenting an appropriate challenge to learners, whether students or fellow academics, introducing risk-taking and greater variety into our practice as a way of modelling good learning and teaching/professional development. We also acknowledge that learning may have uncertain and ambiguous outcomes – what Ron Barnett (2004) calls ‘learning for an unknown future’.

We will explore some of these issues through actually experiencing them and drawing on the experiences of participants.

Ranald (Macdonald, 2010) is particularly interested in exploring *change in complex organisations* such as universities and has used Harrison Owen’s (1997) *Open Space Technology* as an approach to supporting educational change at many levels within institutions and other contexts (Macdonald, 2008). He also draws on *metaphors, pictures and music* to prompt more divergent and creative thinking. Both techniques focus on participants rather than the facilitator and, as such, introduce uncertainty and risk for the facilitator.

A colleague from the US, Jim Groccia, recently introduced Ranald to Weisbord and Janoff's (2009) *Future Search* approach in workshops to assist in problem recognition and solution. This technique actively engages all participants by getting all parties with a stake in the outcome together, explores the "whole picture" before seeking to fix any part, strives for common understanding, focuses on past, present and future realities, and encourages self-management and responsibility for action by participants before, during, and after the future search process.

## **Session Activities**

The process and outcomes of the workshop will focus on individuals reflecting on and widening their repertoire of academic development approaches thereby assisting colleagues to take greater ownership of their own development and support for educational change. A template will be used to enable participants to locate their practice on control/ownership and risk continua.

Ranald will model his approach to risk-taking/presenting challenges by responding flexibly to what is happening in the room. In this respect, 'learning outcomes' can only be determined by individuals when reflecting during and after the session. As such, the workshop will model what Ranald believes are more effective approaches to learning in *higher* education. Participants **may** experience Open Space Technology, Future Search and the use of metaphors, pictures and music as well as reflecting on their own practices. Hopefully they will also have fun!

## **References**

- Barnett, R (2004) Learning for an unknown future, *Studies in Higher Education*, **23**, 3, 247-260
- Macdonald (2008) Trying something different: risk taking in professional development. *Educational Developments*, **9**, 2 11-14
- Macdonald, R (2010, forthcoming) Academic Development as change leadership in higher education, in Nair, S, Webster, L & Mertova, P (eds) *Leadership and Management of Quality in Higher Education*. Chandos Publishing
- Owen, Harrison (1997, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers
- Weisbord MR & Janoff, S (2009, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) *Future Search: An action guide to finding common ground in organisations and communities*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers