

A matter of identity or accreditation? : An exploration of two different understandings of academic staff development

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In my role as academic developer, I invite university lecturers to engage actively in creating and responding to collage, poetry and other art forms as a way of enlivening their thinking about teacher identity. I argue that this practice of arts-enriched reflection provides a necessary corrective to narrowly instrumental approaches to academic development:

- it can be a restorative process for those involved
- it offers a starting-point for lecturers who are required to demonstrate reflective practice
- it reasserts the value of open-ended, exploratory activities and
- highlights the contribution of the arts and humanities to professional development.

The practice derives its power from a bringing together of planned and unplanned elements in an attitude of trust in the participants as meaning makers. This emphasis on artistry runs contrary to conventional ways of thinking about the continuing professional development of university lecturers as exemplified by the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (2006). The Framework delineates what a good university teacher should know, what s/he should be able to do, and the values that should underpin her/his practice. It was intended to be used as a guide for making equitable decisions about recruitment, promotion and disciplinary action. As such it is concerned with prediction, control and consistency. There is a place for this clarity, particularly in a context where the practitioner's role is widely misunderstood and undervalued. However an approach to professional development based on the apparently settled certainties of "knowledge of the subject material"(p27) "appropriate methods"(p24) and "effective environments"(p27) cannot adequately prepare academics for the unpredictability, exploration and discovery that are a vital part of higher learning for students and teachers alike.

In this paper I present a Scottish case study to show how arts-enriched identity work and professional frameworks can be used productively together, focusing on a CPD workshop for lecturers in the Arts and Humanities.

Reference

Higher Education Academy (2011) *UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education*