

The Professional Development of Academics with Regard to the Teaching Role – an Inter- institutional Investigation



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Full team (2011-2013)

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Key Assumptions for Operations

Contextual investigations

Multisite studies

Collaborative research

Reflection on practice as AD Practitioners

Continuum of and interrelationship between
being and becoming a good lecturer



Conceptual Framework

- **Interplay of structure, culture and agency (Archer)**
- Multiple determination (Elder-Vass/Bhaskar)
- Influence of the workgroup (Trowler)
- Social and material as mutually constitutive (Taguchi); distribution of resources as a key aspect of social justice (Nancy Fraser)
- Various lenses allow for different findings (Ashwin)



Research setting: South African higher education



	Historical Legacy (advantaged v. disadvantaged) (merged v. not merged)	Focus	University type	Student Population	Campuses	Urban v. rural	No of Students (in 2010)	Permanent Staff/ Student Ratio (2012)	Established	Student Success rate (in 2009) ¹ .
1	Advantaged	Research	Traditional	Elite schools	3	Urban	25 000	1:23	1829	84
2	Advantaged	Research	Traditional	Elite schools	4	Urban	27694	1:28	1881/1916	84
3	Advantaged	Research	Traditional	Elite schools	1	Rural	7274	1:21	1904	83
4	Disadvantaged	Teaching	Traditional	Disadvantaged schools	3	Urban	18031	1:32	1960	79
5	Disadvantaged Merged	Teaching	Traditional	Disadvantaged schools	3	Rural	11074	1:34	1916	79
6	Disadvantaged Merged	Teaching	Traditional	Disadvantaged schools	1	Rural	11000	1:32	1981	79
7	Advantaged and disadvantaged Merged	Teaching	University of Technology	Disadvantaged schools	8	Urban	36000	1:42	1960 and 1962	79
8	Advantaged and disadvantaged Merged	Teaching	University of Technology	Disadvantaged schools	8	Urban	23000	1:42	1956 and 1907	76

Research Design

- National Policy Environment
- Analysis of intelligibilia per institution (p.i.)
- Reflective reports by AD Directors p. i.
- Questionnaire p.i. (736 cleaned replies)
- Interviews:
 - 4 senior management p.i.
 - 10 – 16 academics p.i.
- Reflections on research process (x 2)



Outputs

8 case studies for institutional use ✓

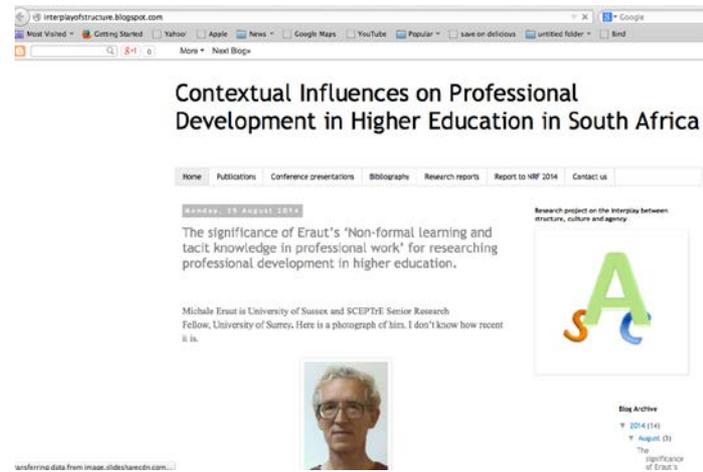
Papers for publication ✓

Blog ✓

Summary report with appendices ✗

National policy implications ✗

<http://interplayofstructure.blogspot.com>



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a blog post. The browser's address bar shows the URL interplayofstructure.blogspot.com. The page title is "Contextual Influences on Professional Development in Higher Education in South Africa". Below the title is a navigation menu with links for "Home", "Publications", "Conference presentations", "Bibliography", "Research reports", "Report to NWF 2014", and "Contact us". The main content area features a date "Monday, 18 August 2014" and a paragraph of text: "The significance of Eraut's 'Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work' for researching professional development in higher education." Below this text is a small portrait of Michale Eraut. To the right of the text is a logo consisting of a large green letter 'A' with smaller letters 'S' and 'C' in blue and red respectively. At the bottom right, there is a "Blog Archive" section showing "2014 (14)" and "August (1)".

Mode of analysis

- Writing retreats
- Combined initial coding
- Whole team and sub-groups
- Use of one key theoretical approach (social realism)



Conceptions of good teaching: Middle and Senior Management

greater focus on university strategy

“Our success rate, our pass rates have actually been at a fairly good standard if I may say so, which means ... that approach was yielding some result”

management of staff capacity

I would like to see that all my HOD's are on a Masters level, you know. All HODs should be on that level at least because if they are on that level, automatically their relationship with students is also different and that helps the university”

broad vision

“I think my personal vision is to actually produce a graduate that can compete anywhere. So for me (and for South Africa presently) I sincerely believe that we have to insist on producing a graduate that can actually make a meaningful contribution to the economy... “

Conceptions of good teaching: Lecturers

focus on imparting knowledge

... we all work in our insular worlds and the teaching that I, I...the knowledge that I impart to the students. I don't know to what extent it equips them for the world outside this space.

“What I like about teaching is that I want to tell people, those who do not know what I know. I want to pass information”

“love” of teaching

interest in students as people

“And I guess I teach chemistry because I love chemistry not because I think the teaching of chemistry alone is important. Although, I think it's an amazing opportunity to develop young people's minds to give some a sense of direction. But it's not just about the subject matter, it's really about developing character, developing the whole person, helping people find where they fit in life”

Findings: Constraints and Enablements according to AD Directors

- history, geography and resources;
- leadership and administrative processes;
- beliefs about quality teaching and professional development;
- the research-teaching relationship;
- recognition and appraisal;
- and the capacity, image and status of the TLC staff

History, geography and resources

“High staff turnover both within the centre – it is a struggle to get people to stay, although the same could be said about the faculties, **you work with them in the department, come next year, there are new people.** At [our one rural campus] we struggle to retain staff because the town is not able to offer amenities, eg decent shopping, decent school for the kids, the university is not paying as much as other universities.” (HDI5).

Corroboration from questionnaire

“The chart shows that 70% (21) of respondents at HDI5 had five or less years of experience teaching at HDI5 although 7 of these respondents reported that they had worked at other HEIs. HDI6 also had more than the average respondents with less than five years service 54.6% (24) at this institution, ... At the other end of the scale respondents from HAI1 had the longest record of service with 94.5% (16) having worked in the sector for over 30 years”.

Leadership and administrative processes

“Buy-in by senior management and HODs across certain departments [is important] – new people arrive and immediately there is a conversation they are slotted into, encouraged to think about ...” (HAI1).

“When we have a DVC academic who has a full understanding, things go smoothly, but in instances where we had a DVC academic who was not so sure, things would not go as smoothly. Then the Director [of the TLC] must explain and convince...” (HDI5).

Beliefs about quality teaching and professional development

They “lack [the] authority” (HAI1) to challenge [having to attend training]. Across contexts, reports identified teaching as undervalued by many university teachers: there was a “widespread belief that teaching does not require support and complex sophisticated skills to produce quality learning” (HAI1).

The research-teaching relationship

“...under-qualified ... still working on masters or doctoral qualifications, so when they must do the PGDHET [Post Graduate Diploma on Higher Education and Training] or new course, they can't register [because they] are still busy with masters or doctoral qualifications” (HDI5).

Recognition and appraisal

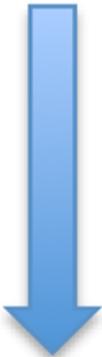
“Institutional policies have enabled [the uptake of professional development], e.g., the promotions policy stipulates that nobody will be promoted if they don’t have the assessor training course. Academics started taking that up ... Also the university insisted that every lecturer should have a teaching or professional development portfolio, so consultations around that have [occurred]” (HDI5).

Capacity, image and status of the CTL staff

“us and them” discourse (HAI3)

“We are viewed as a support centre with an academic function. We are not given full academic status. It is constraining because some academics don't take us seriously. They say we are not academics, we are looked at as a para-professional” (HDI5)

Findings according to lecturers

	Systemic structural and cultural features		
	Level	Feature	
	Macro	National and international networks and initiatives	
		Institutional policy environment	
		Provision of professional development opportunities	
	Meso	Informal learning	
		Culture	
		Organisational climate	
	Micro	Student responses	
		Workload	
		Resoures	
Individual Properties			

Significance of the material/resources; culture; agency

...like the lecture venues that aren't, you know, that don't support a projector, I've actually done a workbook for students. I can actually show you the workbook that I did last year and so I give them lots of notes and stuff that they can follow in class....[in the absence of a microphone] I end up circling the lecture venues, so that everybody can get to hear me at some point in time. (ST-3)

Individual properties: agency

“I often buy things out of my own pocket because it’s quicker, it’s easier and it enables me to teach in the way that I want to teach. I don’t begrudge that money because it’s part of me developing the students and I’m tired of asking for things” (UOT7)

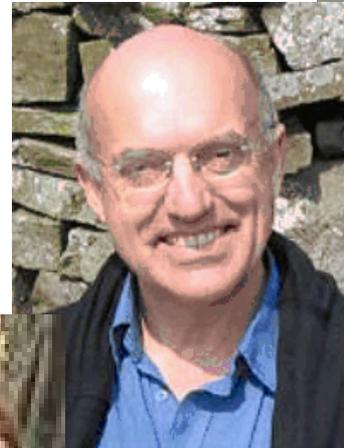
“Look, it’s hard to say the environment is conducive, but I think we have the attitude to make it conducive, we look beyond the potholes” (UOT8)

Role of workgroup and conducive climate

“there’s a lot of backstabbing and real nasty stuff going on but I have learned to cope with it and I’ve learned how to distance myself from it, so that whereas before it used to affect me personally and I used to get very upset - not because of the students but because of the colleagues - I’ve moved into a position where I am able to switch off. I don’t get involved in any [academic development initiatives]. I don’t associate, so it’s quite lonely” (UOT7)

Reflection on Analytic Approaches

- Social realist
- Socio-cultural and workgroup
- Socio-material



Inter-institutional Collaborative Research

- value of multi-site research providing wider lens
- symmetrical data collection
- collaborative research requires trust and reflexivity
- project leadership is important
- management and structure of project
- geographical distances of team members
- power differentials - status, expertise and social location
- need to study collaborative process as part of the methodology
- effect of theoretical framework on collaboration

Recommendations

- teaching needs to be uplifted nationally
- more and improved professional development opportunities
- teaching conditions need further investigation
- history, geography and resources impact teaching
e.g. high turnover rural HEIs
- casualisation militates against investment in teaching
- infrastructure, leadership and admin have impact
- central organisation needed to assist teaching
- binary between research and teaching
- academics learn from peers

Papers associated with the project

- Leibowitz, B. and Bozalek, V. 2014. Access to higher education in South Africa: A social realist account. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*. 16 (1), pp 91 - 109. <http://wpll-journal.metapress.com/link.asp?id=X7243U561274>
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- Jawitz, J., Williams, K., Pym, J. and Cox, G. 2013. Why we do what we do: Interrogating our academic staff development practice 76. In: T. Tisani and M. Madiba (Eds) Proceedings of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) 2012 Conference. ISBN: 978-0-620-55540-1 Publication date: April 2013.
- MacMillan, W. (on-line, *HERD*) 'They have different information about what is going on': Emotion in the transition to university. CHER-2012-1069.R2
- Ndebele, C., (2014). Deconstructing the Narratives of Educational Developers on the Enabling and Constraining Conditions in Their Growth; Development and Roles as Educational Staff Development Facilitators at a South African University. *International Journal of Education Science*, 6(1), pp.103–115.
- Quinn, L. and Vorster, J. (2014). Isn't it time to start thinking about 'developing' academic developers in a more systematic way? *International Journal for Academic Development*. DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2013.879719
- Ndebele, C. (2014). Approach towards the professional development of academics as espoused in institutional policy documents at a South African university. *J Soc Sci*, 38(3): 255-269
- Leibowitz, B., Bozalek, V., Winberg, C. and van Schalkwyk, S. (2014) Institutional Context Matters: the professional development of academics as teachers in South African Higher Education. *Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1007/s10734-014-9777-2
- Leibowitz, B. (2014) Conducive Environments for the Promotion of Quality Teaching in Higher Education in South Africa. *CRISTAL*. 2 (1) 49-73 DOI: 10.14426/cristal.v2i1.27