

Development of identity for learning and teaching in online masters courses

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Declaration

I declare that all the material which is not my own has, to the best of my ability, been acknowledged. The material in this thesis has not been submitted previously by the author for a degree at this or any other university.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Hill', written in a cursive style.

Dated: 22/05/2022

Abstract

The movement for masters' students and staff new to fully online learning and teaching to embrace both is generally presented as a question of the development of skills. My work is an analysis of these transitions, and the perceptions around them. My publications and doctoral statement problematize identity in addition to considering skills required. I argue a holistic approach to identity development should occur at the boundary between previous experience and the new roles as online learners and teachers. My publications add to the body of knowledge investigating student and staff development for online learning and teaching by considering how the expectations of the academic community impacts these transitions. I investigate perceptions of the students and staff new to the online mode for masters education. I suggest multiple ways in which identity development can be supported during the boundary experiences for these new roles, along with the skills required. I underpin the findings in this statement with Hermans' dialogic self theory (2001) and relate this to the theories used in the publications I show that new online students and staff need to expand their skills knowledge *and* connections to, and within, the established online academic community. For both students and staff, online development courses and contact with the established online academic community (either tutors or mentors) is essential, benefiting their boundary experiences.

I describe how my own identity has altered from positivist to interpretivist through the course of my doctorate with my internal dialogue grasping this threshold concept, altering my dominant identity as a scientist to include a new identity as a social science researcher. I take a pragmatic realist perspective and draw on a number of different theoretical frameworks in addition to dialogic self theory. The publications include communities of practice, activity theory, social cognitive theory and the Foucauldian turn.

List of publications

	Publications submitted in support of the thesis	% Contribution
1	Clapp, A. (2022) Listening to the student voice in online masters community and resource development. <i>Higher Education Studies</i> 12(2), 35-47 https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n2p35	100
2	Clapp, A. (2017). An e-Learning Team's Life On and Offline: A Collaborative Self-Ethnography in Postgraduate Education Development" <i>The Electronic Journal of e-Learning</i> 15(1), 33-45, available online at www.ejel.org	100
3	Clapp, A (in press). Slaying the dragons: formal and informal collaborative approaches to developing the online learning and teaching identities required for running courses. In M. G. Jamil & D.A. Morley, <i>Agile learning environments amid disruption: Evaluating academic innovations in higher education during COVID-19</i> . UK, Palgrave Macmillan	100
4	Clapp, A. (2021) Preparing to teach online: lessons from before and during emergency pandemic teaching. <i>Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice</i> https://doi.org/10.14297/jpaap.v9i3.511)	100
5	Clapp, A. (2021) Lessons for Staff Development: Lecturers' Transition from Face-to-Face to Online Teaching for Masters Courses in Higher Education. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Education</i> 4(2) 31-43	100
6	Clapp, A., Reynolds, A., Bell, B., Lockhart, E., Todd, G., & Connell, T. (2019) Planning the development and maintenance of online distance learning courses. <i>Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration</i>	80
	Full publication equivalent	5.8

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Glossary: concepts and abbreviations

Activity theory: Used in the context of this doctorate as a theoretical tool to examine activity systems as described by Engestrom (2000). In the activity system a subject interacts with an object (both of which can be people) via mediating tools to produce an outcome, governed by the community rules, how labour is divided between the workers who are members of the community.

Blended learning: a mixture of online and face-to-face learning and teaching. Commonly seen as a 'flipped classroom' where students interact with resources online and bring their work to seminars for in-person discussion (which may be in online meeting 'rooms'). Not to be confused with virtual learning environments being used as a repository for resources, which students may not necessarily interact with.

CASAP: Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Studies in Academic Practice, the award at the end of the Newcastle University teacher development programme

CIMA: Centre for Integrated Research into Musculoskeletal Ageing. A research partnership between Newcastle, Liverpool and Sheffield Universities

Communities of practice: Groups of people with shared interests who may learn together with the more experienced teaching the 'novices'; developed by Lave and Wenger (1991).

Communities of inquiry: a method of developing online learning communities with social, cognitive and teacher presence required for good online engagement (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000).

Diffusion of innovations: this theory, developed by Everett Rogers (1993), describes the rate at which any innovation is adopted by members of a social system. The use of TEL and online education can be described as innovations which will be employed more quickly by early adopters, compared with the technology use by the late adopters and laggards.

DST: Dialogic Self Theory, developed by Hermans (2001) as a bridging theory to describe our identities. We have multiple identities within us as individuals, with the predominant identity dependent upon the social context at the time. Our inner 'dialogue' leads us to

continue or discontinue particular identities which may be our internal versions, or the identity we present to our social world.

EquATE: Equal Acclaim for Teaching Excellence. This is a programme run by the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences for academics in other schools and faculties to receive some training as education researchers and to carry out a research project during protected time, with the expectation of publication.

FMS: Faculty of Medical Sciences, Newcastle University

FMSGs: Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School at Newcastle University

FMSTEL: Faculty of Medical Sciences Technology Enhanced Learning Team at Newcastle University

i-position: one of the different facets of our identities in dialogic self theory

LTDS: Learning and Teaching Development Services at Newcastle University

MRes: Masters of Research Medical Sciences programme

NUTELA: Newcastle University Technology Enhanced Learning Advocates. This group provides occasional cross-university training and demonstrations of particular technologies in a social setting.

Online education: learning and teaching where students are at a geographical distance from the university with all course materials provided online. All student-staff and student-student interactions take place online.

Relational agency: working with others' support in a professional capacity with an equal distribution of power in the relationship which only lasts as long as is required (Edwards, 2005).

TEL: Technology enhanced learning

Chapter 1. Introduction

This doctoral statement forms part of a thesis studying identity in the context of learning and teaching online at masters level. The thesis consists of publications from several studies: one focused on students and five with staff. These are listed separately; not necessarily chronologically but in terms in their place as a body of work in the doctoral narrative. The first publication considers how students make their transitions to online masters from being undergraduates on campus, or from being professionals in the workplace with a bachelor degree sometime before. The majority of the thesis investigates how staff transition from being face-to-face teachers to online teachers. The studies cover both the time before and the time during the COVID-19 pandemic, the latter enforcing the uptake of online learning and teaching.

1.1 Content of the doctoral statement

The doctoral statement problematizes identity of newly online students and teachers. Most studies into the transition to online masters see development of skills as being paramount with the concept of identity often appearing peripheral. I posit the idea that developing identity in a transition to another role is different from, and in addition to, developing the skills required of that role, and is just as important, particularly for those involved in designing training and mentoring resources. In this doctoral statement I introduce myself as a researcher, showing the rationale for developing the thesis through my own experiences with struggles of identity in the transition to these roles. I felt 'all at sea' with no idea of what was expected of me as I crossed the boundary from long-ago undergraduate to online postgraduate master, and to a lesser extent, from practical face-to-face teacher to online teacher. In this statement I first describe the meaning of online learning and teaching in the context of my research before investigating the concept of identity from a dialogic self theory (DST) viewpoint (Hermans & Gieser, 2012). The findings are utilized to make recommendations for student and staff development for online masters, with some suggestions for future research.

In subsequent chapters I answer the following research questions:

1. What are the expectations of the academic community for students and staff learning and teaching online?

2. What appears to be student and staff perceptions of their identity as learners or teachers in online masters courses?
3. How can we facilitate the boundary crossing required in the transition to online masters learning and teaching?

When reflecting on the answers to these questions, my doctoral statement will show how I have added new knowledge to the current skills-focused development for students and staff moving to online learning and teaching. I also use reflective biography to demonstrate how my own identity has evolved during the process of conducting independent research for my PhD.

1.2 Online learning

Singh and Thurman (2019) conducted a systematic review of the different meanings of online learning, finding 47 definitions, which generally depend upon the technology being used. Throughout this statement, I refer to online learning as I practice it: students are at a geographical distance, all of the resources are available online on a learning management system, whether they are short videos and animations, podcasts, text, online journal articles or links to other websites. There are some synchronous sessions, but in general students and staff interact asynchronously via discussion boards where the fruits of student activities are discussed. Assessments are via coursework and submitted online. Students sign up to these online courses voluntarily; this is different from the emergency teaching online for the COVID-19 pandemic where there was no choice for students, or for staff having to teach in this mode.

I would argue that 'face-to-face' or 'present-in-person' learning also involves much online material, whether it is via a virtual learning environment or online materials such as journal articles, but in both modes, *learning* is *not* necessarily online. Hence 'online' and 'face-to-face' are actually artificial delineations, in agreement with Fawns, Aitken and Jones (2019) who suggest there is no boundary between 'online' and 'face-to-face'. However, traditionalists, such as some in the Graduate School where I work, compartmentalise and categorize learning as online where no lecture theatre or seminar room is involved. This governs my work and following from this, my research; hence I have also used the

delineation in my publications and doctoral statement, despite my view that one day we will just refer to learning and teaching rather than adding an online or in-person label.

1.3 Introducing the researcher and the motivation for the thesis

I am a veterinary surgeon and have worked for 22 years in general practice. After the foot and mouth epizootic, I lost enjoyment in practice and consequently looked for a new challenge. I gained a masters degree in food safety management via an entirely online course run by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) in 2008. This provided three years of experience of being a distance learning student. At first, I struggled partly due to learning how to use technology but mainly because the masters course was so different from my first bachelor of veterinary medicine and surgery degree (BVM&S). For BVM&S we did not necessarily apply critical thought to our knowledge which was gained through writing verbatim notes in lectures. Whilst practical classes were entirely about applying the knowledge, there was little chance of developing original knowledge, and the expectation was then of entering practice as a veterinary surgeon, performing emergency work alongside routine healthcare for animals. The transition for me after so long away from academia was not easy. I started the course with the assumption of gaining knowledge in a specialist subject rather than expecting that I would gain experience of research. I had a very limited idea of academic culture or the requirements for undertaking research. The masters course did not give me much hands-on research experience: the 'dissertation' was to provide a review paper of a student-chosen food safety topic and a design of a research study to provide new knowledge of a single aspect. Subsequently I planned to follow the masters with a research career, in which I hoped to study the prevention of zoonoses entering the food chain. However, when an online teaching post was offered to me by the 'North West Food and Health Taskforce' (Manchester Metropolitan and UCLan universities) straight after completing the masters, I accepted and have never regretted it. I did not receive any formal training for this role as course developer of a public health nutrition course (as subject specialist). A technician helped upload my materials to a virtual learning environment as I had no technical knowledge at this stage. I based the pedagogy I used on that of my tutor for my online masters degree. This tutor acted as my mentor in my new work.

I was employed by Newcastle University in 2010, as a Henry Wellcome-funded teaching fellow to develop online masters modules in ageing from the courses already taught face-to-face in the Masters of Research Medical Sciences programme (MRes). By this time, I had still not received training in online pedagogy from any of the institutions I worked for, and training in technology use was minimal with the basics to upload materials to the virtual learning environments. I successfully undertook 'CASAP' (Certificate in Advanced Studies in Academic Practice) which was a slightly more advanced version of the 'Newcastle Teaching Award', training offered to all new staff without teaching qualifications. There was no content or discussion of teaching online in the CASAP award at this time. I requested some teacher training for my online role, and my then line manager told me to look for courses. I was fortunate that I had most of my Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Digital Education from the University of Edinburgh funded by the Henry Wellcome grant. The PGDip not only exposed me to many different technologies which can be used for teaching, but also the pedagogies involved. However, much of my pedagogical learning came from observing how the teaching staff engaged with students on the discussion boards (which were used as the main form of communication) and how the content and assignments were designed. I had planned on completing the programme as a full masters, but by the time I was successful in the PGDip I had decided that I wanted to pursue a PhD. By then, I had transferred to a permanent post in Newcastle University's Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS) Graduate School as an e-learning lecturer, an original member of the e-learning team. In this role I helped clinicians and scientists put their courses online for distance learning programmes. I also continued to teach the e-learning modules on ageing which I had originally developed and lead the Centre for Integrated Research into Musculoskeletal Ageing (CIMA) MRes in Healthy Musculoskeletal Ageing programme, run as a partnership between Newcastle, Liverpool and Sheffield Universities.

There were several reasons for my interest in undertaking the research for a doctorate. Firstly, I was interested in how students learn. It seemed to me that we neglected to holistically educate our students in the online programmes we taught. This included my own experience of being an online distance student. By that I mean we should not just be covering our specialist subjects in great depth, but we should also consider the students' academic skills and their capability to engage in some level of independent research. Most

importantly we need to help them think like researchers, embracing the masters identity and acculturating them into academic life. This should not be left until the online dissertation module. For students on campus the library provided comprehensive training sessions in academic writing and other aspects of academic skills. For the face-to-face MRes there were many workshops for students to attend which would enhance their academic skills and their research abilities. The skills aspects aside, this provided exposure to members of the academic community as well as their peers, enabling enculturation and collaboration. But for the online distance learning masters programmes the student had to access any resources they could find on academic skills development via the internet without any guidance. Their access to staff was often limited to the staff member(s) running the module they were enrolled on at the time in a linear programme. Contact with peers tended to be asynchronous. It would have been beneficial to provide knowledge (and signpost it) on what was expected of masters students for the distance learning programmes. I suspect, but do not know, that on-campus training was the only academic skills education available during my time at UCLan, although some guidance for academic writing was provided as online resources from another university. Instead, most of my knowledge on the skills of a researcher, including study design and writing, came from my extensive reading of journal articles during my time as an online masters student. At a distance, interaction with the research community is limited. Consequently, as an online teacher I started some action research to change the practice of ignoring academic skills and expectation management for masters online students prior to starting my PhD. I continued this as action research cycles for several years subsequently (publication 1).

A second reason for pursuing a doctorate was the amount of training in pedagogy and technology use I and the e-learning team appeared to be carrying out in the years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. I was not particularly interested in this aspect when my then line manager suggested this was a problem I should address in my research. I had not seen staff development as a problem, instead, merely a part of my job to provide one-to-one training in pedagogy in particular, with some instruction on technology use. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic this seems to be very naive: for the small number of staff requiring training prior to the pandemic this was an easy task, compared with the mass move online for emergency

teaching, when everyone required knowledge. The research I carried out on staff development forms the bulk of my thesis (publications 2-6).

My last two reasons for enrolling as a PhD student were practical and intellectual. All my working life I had undertaken continuing professional development (CPD), partly because it was the right thing to do, but partly because during my career the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons brought in mandatory CPD for all vets. After my PGDip I felt that I needed an incentive to continue with CPD and this was a way to accomplish this. I also saw a PhD as an intellectual challenge.

1.4 Identity

There are many ways in which 'identity' can be defined. Identity is complex, made up of many different facets, or indeed 'i-positions' in dialogic self theory (Hermans, 2001). One of these facets is professional identity, which I consider fits both students and staff who are learning and teaching via online courses. I see that being a postgraduate student or an online teacher of masters students as aspects of membership of the 'academic profession', whether it be the academic community of the programme in the case of students, or faculty in the case of staff. Trede, Macklin and Bridges (2012) reviewed 20 studies published on professional identity development in higher education, finding that professional identity was not well-defined. They cited one study (p374)(Patterson, Higgs, Wilcox & Villennuue, 2002) defining it as *"as the sense of being a professional"*. Matthews, Bialocerkowski and Molineux (2019, p1) cited Adams, Hean, Sturgis and Clark (2006), defining professional identity as: *"the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs and skills shared with others within a professional group"*. The Trede et al. (2012) review included other facets of professional identity from the studies they examined. Some of these were: socialisation within a culture (Patterson et al., 2002); transformational learning having taken place (Bramming, 2007) and threshold concepts being understood (Clouder, 2005); self-identity (Barrow, 2006) and experiential learning (Peel, 2005). Publications 1, 4 and 5 consider socialisation within online education culture. Self-identity is considered in publication 1 and 5. Experiential learning is considered in publications 3 and 5. Threshold concepts have relevance although they are not mentioned explicitly for publications 2 and 6, where staff new to online teaching find difficulty beginning their course designs but undergo transformational learning with help from experienced online staff.

Edwards (2017, p4) considers that values and motives within professional practice hold together professional identity; identity shapes “*how practitioners navigate and achieve mastery in these practices*”. In light of this statement, it is of great importance that we consider the development of identity in our online masters students and teachers.

The concept of researching identity stemmed partly from my own struggles in transition from a working professional with a bachelor degree to a masters student. I found there is more to being an online masters student than subject knowledge. Some skills can be taught, but it took me a while to consider where I fitted in with the programme’s academic community, particularly when synchronous communication with my peers and teachers was limited to a couple of times per semester. I also had no idea of the concept of ‘masters’; I had embarked on the course to widen my knowledge of a specialist subject and was unaware of any other aspects such as becoming part of the academic community of the programme and developing other more generic skills alongside that knowledge. I had little idea of how research was conceived, designed, carried out and reported.

The step from limited face-to-face teaching experience running practical on-farm courses for the former Agricultural Training Board to online course developer and teacher was also challenging, although less so. I actually felt more at home as an online teacher because in my masters, and later in my PGDip there were teachers as role models. I felt that if I copied their style of teaching, I could at least cope without the training which was eventually given so late. I also had the benefit of a mentor, the tutor from my masters course when I first started developing online courses. But the step to online teacher for me was brought home in my Newcastle job interview, when the head of the panel said ‘You have never been in academia before....’. “*In academia*”, the preserve of academics, a community of which I was entirely ignorant, with no knowledge of how it worked, even though by then I had knowledge of what good online teaching looked like and had managed to join the academic community in two programmes to gain two degrees. I had no idea what would be expected of me when I became an ‘academic’ in an institution that, at the time, had only one masters programme online and saw ‘e-learning’ as a very new anomaly in higher education, a good ten years after it had become mainstream in many other institutions. It took me a while to settle to the identity of this new role, particularly as the online teaching community in

Newcastle University was so small at the time; I was the only academic whose sole role was online course development.

My transitions from campus-based student to online postgraduate and from face-to-face to online teacher led to my interest in identity for online masters learning and teaching. This has been the focus of my research for the last seven years.

1.5 Publications

The list provided covers the publications either published or accepted as part of this thesis. I was sole author on five out of six, partly by design: *my* research, for *my* PhD, but also out of necessity. Originally, I was the sole academic within an e-learning team, although later joined by others. In even later years, this team became exclusively professional services staff when a restructure of the FMS took place, leaving me feeling isolated. The team was generally too busy to engage in collaborative research with me. On reflection this was a mixed blessing: as sole researcher I had to learn fast, with little time for training. However, I know that collaborative learning provides a better grounding than learning in isolation. I would have benefited from others to talk through the research with. Multiple researchers can triangulate data, improving its trustworthiness (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014).

When referring to the publications in this doctoral statement, I use their numbers. Instead of being chronological, their numbering aids the development of the research narrative in answering the research questions in my doctoral statement.

	Publications submitted in support of the thesis	% Contribution
1	Clapp, A. (2022) Listening to the student voice in online masters community and resource development. <i>Higher Education Studies</i> 12(2), 35-47 https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n2p35	100
2	Clapp, A. (2017). An e-Learning Team's Life On and Offline: A Collaborative Self-Ethnography in Postgraduate Education Development" <i>The Electronic Journal of e-Learning</i> 15(1), 33-45, available online at www.ejel.org	100
3	Clapp, A (in press). Slaying the dragons: formal and informal collaborative approaches to developing the online learning and teaching identities required for running courses. In M. G. Jamil & D.A. Morley, <i>Agile learning environments amid disruption: Evaluating academic innovations in higher education during COVID-19</i> . UK, Palgrave Macmillan	100
4	Clapp, A. (2021) Preparing to teach online: lessons from before and during emergency pandemic teaching. <i>Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice</i> https://doi.org/10.14297/jpaap.v9i3.511)	100
5	Clapp, A. (2021) Lessons for Staff Development: Lecturers' Transition from Face-to-Face to Online Teaching for Masters Courses in Higher Education. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Education</i> 4(2) 31-43	100
6	Clapp, A., Reynolds, A., Bell, B., Lockhart, E., Todd, G., & Connell, T. (2019) Planning the development and maintenance of online distance learning courses. <i>Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration</i>	80
	Full publication equivalent	5.8

Table 1: Published work submitted as part of the thesis (Chapters 9-14)

Chapter 2. Rationale and motivation for the research

There has been very little research undertaken about the transition to masters courses from either undergraduate level education or from employment following a previous undergraduate degree (Shanley and Lambon 2016). There appeared to be even less research on the transition to an *online* mode, although the emergency teaching of the COVID era has resulted in many more publications. This transition can be problematic according to McPherson, Punch & Graham (2017), being complex, emotional and challenging for most students. This concurs with my experiences, both as a student where I was very unsure of myself as a developing 'master' and as a teacher where I could see students struggled with crossing the boundary into successful postgraduate masters.

I started the action research in my study with students to find a solution to managing their transition in my MRes group. My understanding was that students did not know what to expect of their courses, or of professional identity as masters in the academic community of the programme. Whilst paper 1 slants towards academic skills for masters students, it does include the concept of identity. The transitions of school-leavers to undergraduates are the subject of many studies (for example, Thurber & Walton, 2012; McMillan, 2013, Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017). Likewise, the transition to doctoral education has received attention. In particular, Kiley and Wisker (2009) discussed the idea that the transition to doctoral level study consisted of 'threshold concepts', described by Meyer and Land in 2005. I feel that threshold concepts are highly relevant for new masters students who need to cross the boundary from their undergraduate identity to attain the identity of a masters student in the academic community of the programme. This, aligned with my own experience, was the motivation to undertake research with students. This appears not to have been addressed by others, who have often concentrated on skills alone (e.g. Wessel & Williams, 2004; Posey & Pintz, 2013).

The rationale for my research on transitions of staff to online teaching was rather different. I had less of a problem with developing an identity to teach online, as I had a very good role model, a mentor, and easy access via funding to the University of Edinburgh's digital education masters course. I also had very little knowledge of teaching face-to-face, so online teaching was less of a threshold concept and held no particular demons for me. Through my

work in supporting staff, I could see many found the idea of teaching online an anathema, and they were at a loss to see the way forward due to lack of staff development. Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, Feldman & Hixon (2011, p6) describe the situation regarding skills exactly, in common with other studies discussing skills development for staff, but they fail to consider staff identity holistically:

“Faculty members may struggle with learning the necessary technological skills, adapting their pedagogic strategies for the online environment, adjusting to the more learner centered focus inherent in online courses, conceptualizing their courses differently to fit the new environment, and finding the time necessary for developing an online course.”

Research from the time period when online courses became widespread in the early 2000s shows a lack of staff development of professional identity for teaching online was the case then (Alexander 2001). It has still been the case with the current move to online emergency teaching with *“afflictions”* associated with the transition outnumbering the *“affordances”* (Watermeyer, Crick, Knight & Goodall, 2021, p623). Breeze and Holford (2021, p91) describe commonly designed professional development as *“top-down skills development”*. Help is required from the institution in the form of technologists and staff trainers to prevent lack of knowledge and enthusiasm from hindering the development of online courses. It appears that those of us with online roles in learning and teaching have not done enough to help other faculty in the ‘digital transformation’ of education, which has left staff finding the transition *“an unusual, disorienting and even an unwelcome experience”* according to Watermeyer et al. (2021, p624), concurring with the research in my thesis.

The motivation for undertaking the research in publication 2, was the opportunity to join Newcastle University’s EquATE programme (Equal Acclaim for Teaching Excellence) in which staff had protected time to carry out a research project on their teaching and were expected to publish the results. I had been interested in ethnography as a research method from my reading. I decided to use collaborative self-ethnography to study the Graduate School’s e-learning team interactions to gauge the amount of support staff needed to develop as online teachers. There was a gap in research methods here, with ethnographies published studying online students (e.g., James & Busher, 2013), but apparently none studying staff teaching online.

For myself, I felt that with an online role model and little prior experience of lecturing, development of my teaching identity was not necessarily a threshold concept compared to the staff in publication 5. I had already joined the online learning and teaching community as a student and then as a novice teacher with very good guidance. I felt comfortable as part of the online community suggesting it was already part of my identity. But for subject specialists who have been taught by lecture but who then become lecturers (literally) as part of their academic careers, I partly agree with Schesselmann (2020, p1043) that *“being a faculty member is the job you did not train for”* with the job they trained for being a subject specialist, not necessarily a teacher. There is plenty of training in this institution to teach how to lecture, and having undertaken the training myself, it does provide a reasonable view of what is expected of an academic. Training for online teaching is now available, although optional and short. There was none when I arrived in 2010; it was introduced as a half day in 2015 when I started my PhD. Pandemic emergency teaching led to an optional Newcastle University-wide online course with more detailed suggestions on replacing lectures for the majority of staff who were unused to teaching online, described in publication 3. Staff in universities are chronically short of time; the work overload is nothing new with research from 2001 suggesting this is a cause of stress (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001). With staff continually being asked to do more with fewer people, there is little time for training or even acclimatising to an online learning environment. I believe that acculturation is essential for staff to develop an online teaching identity, consisting of skills in technology use and pedagogy. This also includes other facets of identity including confidence in their own abilities to use these skills, thinking like an online teacher as well as a face-to-face teacher within the online teaching community. It was the idea of investigating how a climate for acculturation could be created so staff would feel equally at home teaching online that led me to carry out the underpinning research described in publications 2-6.

In the wider context, I saw the dearth of publications addressing the development of identity for students as masters in online programmes as a gap which I aimed to fill with my research. Whilst some universities have very good student development programmes running alongside their online courses, it is my experience that this is not the case for all. Publication 1 shows that we need to address this development holistically if we expect our

students to become 'expert' masters in their online programmes, and suggests ways of accomplishing this, hence filling a gap in the literature.

The rationale for investigating staff development in a wider context in higher education was rather different, with so many publications describing case studies of staff development for teaching online. Some described the identity dissonance of staff starting to teach online (Maguire, (2005); Watermeyer, Crick, Knight & Goodall, (2021)), although the dissonance is by no means universal. Delving further into identity dissonance specifically at Newcastle University FMS Graduate School, discovered in the course of my work, was likely to have wider applications for staff in other institutions who similarly felt uncomfortable with the idea of online teaching, with implications for staff development (publications 2-6).

Chapter 3. Theoretical background to the thesis

In this chapter I discuss how I have used qualitative research methods to answer my research questions, with dialogic self theory (DST) as the overarching theory which binds the different theories used in my publications.

3.1 Qualitative research and methodology

At the start of my PhD I had little knowledge of qualitative research, other than it often involved interviews which I thought might be a useful approach. PhD aside, I wanted to increase my knowledge of qualitative research approaches. I was certain that at least one of the different qualitative methods would fit with my research interests. Despite this I approached the PhD from a positivist mindset, thinking I would be studying barriers and solutions to development of students and staff for learning and teaching online. It took a while to realise I was not just 'doing stuff to people' which the clinical interventions I had previously read about might involve prior to quantitative analysis. The nature of conducting social research was such that I should take an interpretivist approach instead. This concurs with Silverman (2013, p43) who says we should not define phenomena at the start of our research; we should "*focus on what people do*" before reaching any conclusions. I found the interpretivist approach to be a threshold concept (Meyer & Land, 2005) and spent several years in a liminal place before I could identify as a social scientist involved in qualitative research. As MacDonald (2012) writes, qualitative research is used to make descriptions and lead to understandings of human phenomena, rather than the quantitative research purpose of prediction. Discovering more about, and being involved in, the practice of qualitative research has given me the ontological position of a pragmatic realist (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2013, p21). Pragmatism involves the choice of approach to research fitting the research question which I have carried out throughout the different publications and doctoral statement. I take a realist stance in that reality exists independently and externally from whatever I believe and it is up to my research skills to find that reality.

I started my research before I had enrolled as a doctoral student by using action research with each annual cohort of students as my participants as discussed in publication 1. Action

research was also the methodology for publication 3. Action research is defined by Lingard, Albert & Levinson (2008, p461) as:

“The iterative process in which researchers and practitioners act together in the context of an identified problem to discover and effect a positive change within a mutually acceptable ethical framework”.

The rationale for the action research in publication 1 was in response to the problem of student expectations of masterliness including provision of online training for academic skills required at this level. Involvement of students in determining the solution is an iterative process is along Lewinian lines (Hammersley, 2004). Lewin described action research as a spiral process where sampling, data gathering and analysis preceded a solution to a problem. The solution was utilised and evaluated to see if the problem was resolved. If it was unresolved, a second iteration of the process would begin again. In publication 3, action research was employed to solve the problem of staff development.

Publications 2 and 6 are the results of a collaborative self-ethnography of the e-learning team. The choice of ethnography was partly influenced by the ease of access to the e-learning team as a member. I also saw ethnography as a suitable inductive approach to the study, compatible with my interpretivist position. Using this methodology enabled me to theorise the results with activity theory (publication 6) as it provided an intimate knowledge of the community involved in the process of creating online courses.

Using surveys for publication 4 was a compromise as the participants had little spare time for interviews. I feel it would have enabled me to have richer data if I had conducted interviews instead, although text box comments provided some depth of richness to the data collected.

Having read a paper using phenomenological analysis in my PGDip (Teramoto & Mickan, 2008), which I found a powerful way of interpreting participants reported feelings, this was my next choice of method (publication 5).

3.2 Dialogic self theory

DST is the overarching theory I use in my doctoral statement. DST describes individual identity and how inner tensions (the self-dialogue) can lead to different facets of identity being more dominant than others depending on self-belief. This is highly relevant to the

findings in my research. In DST, there are two basic concepts: self and dialogue (Hermans and Gieser 2012). This stems from work by a psychologist, James, and a literary scientist, Bakhtin. James considered 'i' as a sense of personal identity, how we see ourselves as individuals, and we have dialogues within ourselves as knowers (Hermans 2001). According to Hermans, James considered that the "'i', self-as-knower", determined through the dialogue, how the 'me' or the "self-as-known" to the outside world appeared. James emphasised how the 'i' had continuity, differing from Bakhtin who thought 'i' was discontinuous in nature. Bakhtin was interested in what he described as the 'polyphonic novel' where many voices provide a 'multiplicity of perspectives' (Hermans 2001). Bakhtin and James's views were elaborated by Hermans, Kampen and Van Loon (1992) (cited by Hermans 2001, p248), who described self as a "*dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous i-positions.*" Depending on the situation and time, the 'i' can adopt different positions, with each different position having a voice, so an inner dialogue can develop. This is dependent upon the experiences and the person's point-of-view, which forms the 'complex narratively structured self'. Hence these different voices make up facets of our identity, forming a 'social community' in our brains (Hofstadter 1986 and Minsky 1985, cited by Hermans 2001) and some voices, or 'i' positions are more dominant than others. These 'i' positions alter according to the external social world the individual exists in. For example, as well as identifying as a university online lecturer and postgraduate student, I also have identities in my life outside work. In each of my roles I have 'i' positions according to the external social world and my own inner dialogue, so my identity is not fixed, any more than that of others. Identity is "continuously constructed" and DST can be used "*to describe how people develop themselves through time and position themselves differently in various situations and differently towards other persons*" (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011 p310). Akkerman and Meijer (2011, p310) describe the features of DST as follows:

"Dialogical views provide a theoretical viewpoint that assumes a multiple, discontinuous and social nature of identity, while simultaneously explaining identity as being unitary, continuous and individual. In doing so, dialogical views combine a post-modern and a modern stance."

I discuss how DST relates to the theorisation of the research in my publications in appendix A.

Chapter 4. The need for identity development: expectations of the academic community for students and staff learning and teaching online

Identity is negotiated in a social culture or community. Communities have rules or social mores. The behaviour of community members whilst not necessarily regulated tend to follow these rules. Expectations are that newcomers will also follow the rules when joining a community, becoming part of the community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) in an activity system (Engestrom 2000). Activity system analyses are drawn upon in publications 2 and 6 in order to explore aspects of community rules and roles.

4.1 Students

Expectations of academics teaching online masters students could be taken from the programme regulations: learning outcomes should be attained by the end of the programme. Looking at it this way does not take into account that the students are real people with real lives outside academia as well as histories in academia as undergraduates prior to their masters course. Academics often assume that just because students are successful undergraduates, we expect that they will be successful postgraduates because of their expertise as students. This is discussed in publication 1, as is the fact this is unfounded. Findings in Tobbell et al. (2010) working with campus-based students, and in my own work with online students, show that students' attainment of successful identity of undergraduates does not automatically ensure success as masters students.

We as academics do expect students to show the characteristics of masters, as laid down by the QAA (2020, p4):

“all master's degree graduates have in-depth and advanced knowledge and understanding of their subject and/or profession, informed by current practice, scholarship and research. This will include a critical awareness of current issues and developments in the subject and/or profession; critical skills; knowledge of professional responsibility, integrity and ethics; and the ability to reflect on their own progress as a learner.”

Despite this, as academics we often focus on specialist subject knowledge and the skills required to achieve this. There is a requirement for the student to conduct some independent research. However, we do not give enough consideration to the masters identity which makes student part of the academic community of their programme of study.

In my experience, online distance masters courses tend to be run by only a few academic staff who expect students to behave as masters without much (or indeed any) interaction with previous masters students. The previous students have either exited with their degrees or moved on to their PhDs leaving few exemplars to increase the new students' success in joining the programme's academic community. The community expects students to absorb the behaviour and community rules required for success from few resources and interactions. An external stimulus of greater social interaction with the programme's academic community is likely to lead to DST's internal dialogue favouring development of identity for joining this community.

Publication 1 shows that students have little difficulty with the technology used in courses. Online teaching staff (including myself) vary in approaches to socialise students for their online learning environment. Using synchronous means to welcome and acclimatise students is successful up to a point, but after that we assume our students are comfortable in an online distance learning situation with communication via asynchronous means. From my own experience, and student comments in publication 1, I realise we are expecting too much of students. They will feel isolated if failing to 'gel' as a group online. Academic expectations that students will automatically form an online, interactive and communicative community as advised by Salmon (2005) takes more time than the academic community generally expects, and there is a need for students to develop their online identities as postgraduate students. As academics we tend to assume that students as "*social media users are described as having an enhanced capacity to self-organize and provide for themselves*" (Selwyn, 2012, p2). This assumption I believe often results in a failure to provide enough support for novice masters when we should understand they are truly novice still with the 'i' positions of undergraduates and cannot attain the 'i' positions of full masters by 'osmosis'.

4.2 Staff

There is an expectation of the academic community that academic staff are able to teach, and provision is made to train them for on-campus face-to-face teaching if they lack previous experience. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic it was apparent from publications 3, 4, 5 and 6 that little thought was given to formal staff development to teach online, leaving staff with 'i' positions making up face-to-face teacher identity. The expectation of the

institution was that many staff would be able to alter their pedagogy and master the technology with no training at all, apparent in publication 5. Added to this, in my own experience, most online courses were expected to have originated as on-campus courses. The manifesto for teaching online (University of Edinburgh, 2011) makes it clear that the best online courses are those 'born online'.

Once emergency teaching started there was a sudden shift from informal to more formal staff development, with a multitude of resources being made available. This may have been the realisation that expectations of perfect online teaching after experience of face-to-face teaching without further development were unworkable. Many other universities created a 'just-in-time' system of faculty development for the move to online emergency teaching out of necessity (Sumer, Douglas & Nui Sim, 2021).

Despite my denigration of the institution's commitment to training online teachers, there was good training for face-to-face teachers, with the expectation that staff would make student engagement a priority. There was also an expectation that technology would be used: in advance of the TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) our education strategy was described as "*An educational experience supported and enhanced by technology*" (Newcastle University, 2018). However, the 'i' position of staff teaching in a face-to-face mode was not automatically continuous with the 'i' positions of online staff. This discontinuity was often the source of stress such as that experienced by staff new to online teaching and without prior experience of online learning as seen in publications 2, 3, 4 and 5. Interaction with experienced online staff in the studies recorded in these publications rapidly altered this position, showing concordance with Akkerman and Meijer's (2011) description of identity continually changing with new facets constructed.

It has not helped the development of an online teaching identity that prior to COVID-19 online teaching was seen as an anomaly and the Newcastle University expectation was that the academic community of students and staff were always on-campus. My previous experiences are consistent with this. In 2012, I created an online video describing how distance learning can work, which the postgraduate dean showed to the Provost of Medical Sciences. He is reported to have said "so that's what e-learning is", despite there being a fully online masters programme in the faculty since 2005. This, in my view, is an example

that the expectation of faculty staff is for an on-campus presence to teach, with online being something that may have been heard about but not engaged with.

Chapter 5. Boundaries and liminal spaces: what are student and staff perceptions of their identity as students or teachers in online masters courses?

Transition from being an undergraduate to postgraduate masters online, even with many years employment between, is crossing a boundary and for students this can leave them in a liminal space where they are neither the identity before, or the identity they wish to obtain. The knowledge they require to make this transition can be troublesome knowledge as described by Meyer and Land (2005). However troublesome knowledge can be transformative once it has been attained.

For staff, the transition from campus-based to online teaching also crosses a boundary. Without support, staff find themselves in a liminal space (publication 5) as they have not had access to the community they are joining. This has only been touched upon in a few studies which have shown that perceptions of the staff roles as educators online is an area of troublesome knowledge for new online teachers (Aitken and Loads 2019).

5.1 Students

Online masters students are at a level where they exceed undergraduate academic expectations where only the dissertation is expected to show some independence, but are not as advanced as the total independence of a PhD. Students have only a vague idea of what we as academics expect of them as shown by publication 1. Their perceptions of masters level study are that it is at a higher level than their undergraduate degree, but as I indicated in publication 1 they do not grasp precisely what is expected of them. The students I have taught make it clear that they are not sure what to expect when embarking on an online masters course, which does not help their perceptions of identity required to undertake their studies successfully. Pilcher (2011) describes this situation with regard to the masters dissertation which he considers to be a 'chameleon', neither undergraduate or doctoral, but not fully defined in between. I think student identities are also chameleon-like; their realisation that their new identity is 'a step-up' to quote a student in publication 1, but at the start of their programme they are not sure how they should behave in this new identity.

Online masters students do perceive that their new identity will require greater independence of thought and action, particularly with their projects. Once they gain confidence and acculturation with the programme's academic community students perceive greater critical skills are essential for their identity as successful masters (publication 1).

5.2 Staff

Whilst university teaching staff are mostly already part of the academic community, the majority of that community are engaged in face-to-face teaching activity; there is little negotiation required to attain the identity of a face-to-face teacher. Staff perceive this identity as the norm (publication 4). In Erikson's 1968 work, cited by Cote and Levine (2002, p15) psychological, personal and social dimensions of identity are required to all be present for someone to identify themselves as a particular someone. But when there is a demand to teach online running contrary to the 'usual' academic identity whilst not being part of the online learning and teaching community, the social element is not present. This is particularly the case with emergency teaching where everyone was physically away from the campus and not used to online working (publication 4). Staff perceived that they would need help, but did not know who to ask for this (publication 5). The 'i' position of staff tasked with teaching online for the first time shows a lack of confidence goes hand-in-hand with a lack of training for online teaching (publications 3, 4, 5). This results in the psychological dimension of identity also being absent so these staff are unlikely to identify as online teachers.

However, once novice online teachers develop connections to the online teaching community their teaching identity becomes reconciled to the differences in teaching style (publication 5). Without this connection, from publication 5 these staff feel like 'a fish out of water' and unable to move forward from this liminal position. It is unlike their previous 'i'-position, where they would have no problem with developing new versions of their face-to-face lectures. I have not considered liminality explicitly in my publications. However, in considering the 'in-between-ness' (Beech, 2011) when identity develops from one position to another, I agree with Beech that identity construction may reach a stage where the individual feels that they have yet to reach a point in their self-identity when they can call themselves a particular member/practitioner of whatever their goal is. One of the participants ("Clare") in publication 5 showed the difficulties of conflicting identity where

she was unable to move forward with online teaching due to her ties with her past teaching experience of small face-to-face groups. I believe conflict between 'i' positions occurs (Hermans, 2001) when staff are in a liminal position before becoming expert online teachers.

Hermans (2001) cites Hofstadter (1986) and Minsky (1985), describing how dominant 'i' positions can occur which are much more stridently 'voiced' than other positions. Hence previous experience as a lecturer could dominate, hindering the development of new 'i' positions in the transition to online teacher. In the collaborative nature of the development of 'i' positions - not necessarily social interactivity with others *outside* the person but using what Hermans (2001, p250) terms 'imagination' - allows the person to "*act as if he or she were the other*" Without another 'person' to imagine, as occurs with staff lacking any training and development for teaching online and links to the online teaching community, it is difficult to make the transition across the boundary to online teacher.

There may be great resistance to change from campus-based teaching to the online mode. Many previous publications report resistance occurring (Maguire, 2005; Dempster, Benfield & Francis, 2012; Pundak & Dvir, 2014). This is often due to factors such as time available for course development and running, and a view that online is sub-standard to face-to-face teaching, but I suggest it is also due to the change in identity required. When initially undertaking research for the ethnography (publications 2 and 6) I found that staff who had to develop and teach online courses would often show reluctance to make a start on their course designs, putting off what was always inevitable as their online course was a condition of research council funding. Once these staff made the social connections, mostly with the e-learning academic (myself), their enthusiasm grew and course development proceeded at a rapid pace (publication 2). This shows the malleability of 'i'-positions, with the inclusivity of 'self and society' (Hermans, 2001).

From some of the comments staff involved in emergency teaching wrote in their survey replies detailed in publication 4, it was evident there was quite a lot of anger at the transition to online emergency teaching. It was almost as though these staff perceived that online teaching should not be part of their identity. Their face-to-face teaching identity was the norm and according to Hermans and Gieser (2012, p11) in stressful times there is a draw towards "*'ordinary' self-positions that offer sufficient safety, security and relaxation*". I see

this as staff perceiving their face-to-face teaching identity as being the 'safe' 'i'-position, and anger is directed at both the circumstances and the institution which threatens to disrupt this particular identity.

Some staff embraced their new online identity, seeing it as an improvement on their old 'i'-position as a campus-based lecturer (publication 5). I suggest in this case that success in their new identity with greater student engagement as an 'external determinant' has led to an emerging 'i'-position as an online teacher (Hermans & Gieser, 2012).

Chapter 6. How can we facilitate the boundary crossing required in the transition to online masters learning and teaching?

Facilitating boundary crossing for both students and staff involves them joining and embracing the online academic community. Failure to make connections to this community will either slow or prevent them crossing the boundary (publication 5). In this light, active involvement with others in the online academic community is required and the external 'voices' (members already in the community) can help the self-as-knower develop an 'i'-position leading to membership of this community (Hermans 2001).

6.1 Students

Publication 1 shows that students need a connection to the academic community of their programme at masters level. This is particularly so online; without development of the online community, study can be an isolating experience, where students fail to identify well with their role. Ragusa and Crampton (2018) investigated the 'sense of connection' within their community in online undergraduates, finding a positive correlation between students identifying as university students and their feeling a 'sense-of-connection' to their courses. Whilst these were undergraduates it would not be injudicious to extrapolate this point to masters students. Development of a community of inquiry (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000), shown in figure 1, will go toward developing a connection with the academic community online. Exposure to the academic community via conferences, visiting lecturers and multiple staff teaching on courses in an online environment, as has occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic will also increase connection and belonging to academia.

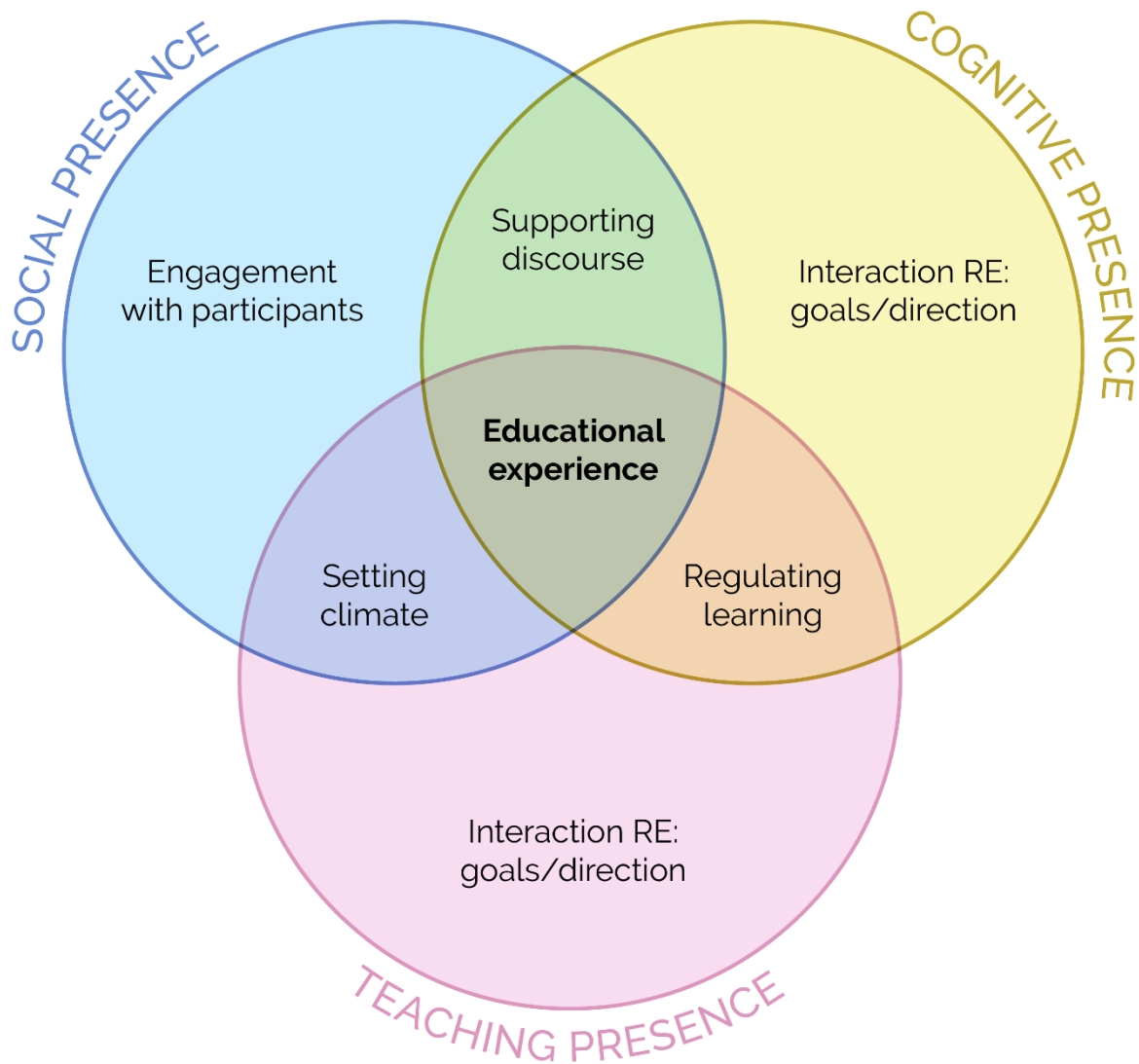


Figure 1 Community of inquiry. Reprinted from *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2, Garrison, Anderson and Archer; *Critical Inquiry in a Text-Based Environment: Computer Conferencing in Higher Education*, 87-105 © 2000 with permission from Elsevier and enhancement by Ashley Reynolds

Induction is another area where socialisation, and therefore acculturation can take place. Berry (2018) found that a three-day in-person induction was useful to socialise online students and included later mentoring with staff. This is not feasible for geographically distributed international students but perhaps worth pursuing for courses only with home students enrolled. Good online inductions are also useful, for example the generic areas of induction were comprehensively listed by Forrester, Motteram, Parkinson and Slaouti

(2006). This check-listed approach could be modified according to the programme utilizing it.

Students assuming that masters level study would be similar but a bit harder than undergraduate level will likely hinder transition to masters identity. Management of expectations is important. Spearing (2014) tried to manage student expectations of masters study by extending the usual course induction; this involved sessions on assessment for campus-based students. The use of synchronous sessions to manage student expectations in publication 1 was helpful both for their expectations and to develop the community of inquiry.

Providing students with an online course when they were unable to access on-campus skills training due to the distributed nature of distance learning (publication 1) was something the students perceived as useful for boundary crossing to study at masters level. Students need to develop skills, although some may have already attained a good standard in areas such as criticality in their reading from their undergraduate days: non-mandatory courses are more suitable than the compulsory course developed by Posey and Pintz (2014). However, it is important that students realise that skills of an independent researcher are needed at masters level and a discussion of this was added to the managing expectations synchronous session for my MRes students as part of the action research cycle.

Students need to practise their skills, as novices in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). To ensure practise online, Journal Clubs bring the class together synchronously to consider the literature critically, and provide social learning. In addition, each weekly topic in my MRes module had an activity designed for students to use different masters skills with findings communicated on the discussion boards to the rest of their cohort, and commentary on others work. Students need motivation to engage with discussion boards (Ransdell, Borrer and Su, 2018). As tutor, developing the community of inquiry by questioning the individual or class, asking 'what does everyone think?' keeping the conversation going, rather than just providing answers can be successful. Open questions help direct the students to work at a level that is expected of them for masters degrees. My own skills and identity development as a masters student was helped by practise in the course weekly activities.

6.2 Staff

For staff to transition to online teaching from a traditional lecture-based approach, it is useful for them to experience what it is like to be an online student as this will inform their course design and response to online students (publications 3, 4, 5). This situated learning introduces them to the online learning and teaching community of practice enabling them to develop knowledge of the expectations of the community, the 'rules' of the community as well as its divisions of labour (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Engestrom, 2000). An experienced tutor interacting with the 'novice' staff on the online course provides a role model facilitating the transition to an online teaching identity (publications 3, 4, 5).

It is imperative that institutions allow time for training. The speed at which the transfer to online teaching occurred in the COVID-19 pandemic meant that very little training could take place. Availability of training was not universal at the start of the move online in March 2020 (publications 3, 4). Online courses as just-in-time staff development did prove useful as shown by publications 3 and 4. However, the full affordances of online education as opposed to emergency online education were beyond the reach of staff under the circumstances where homeworking with problems such as homeschooling and poor broadband making this difficult. Time is also required to develop online resources once staff are trained (Freeman, 2013). Whilst specialists in online learning and teaching would benefit from full postgraduate qualifications, staff who teach occasionally online or are involved in emergency teaching need some basic training in the technology and how to best engage students. This needs to be timely as well as not taking up too much staff time (publications 3, 6).

The provision of mentors was shown to be beneficial (publications 5, 6). Mentors could be early adopters (Rogers, 2003) experienced in teaching online. The mentor-relationship with novice teachers need not be close, or long-lived, but it must be such that the 'novice' teacher's 'i'-position is able to take on the form of 'promoter position' where they are open to dialogue and new directions (Hermans & Gieser, 2012). This professional learning can be accomplished relationally as 'knot-working' (Edwards, 2007; Engestrom, 2008). Staff mentioned that they did not know who to ask for advice from, in both online distance learning and during emergency teaching. Publication 4 discusses the use of 'TEL (technology enhanced learning) leads': staff interested in online education spread amongst a faculty

during emergency teaching. The TEL leads advise and/or provide contact with the TEL team responsible for helping with technology use. In my experience this works to some extent but promoting the presence of a TEL lead is difficult with emails going unread. Further advertising via faculty webpages is needed so all staff know who they can talk to.

Similar to mentors, champions can act to increase take-up of TEL and aid transition across the boundaries between face-to-face and online teaching. Champions are usually innovators, or early adopters of innovative approaches (Rogers, 2003). They are able to act through departments, or schools, or whole faculties, such as certain staff in Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia. They can provide examples, showing later adopters the affordances of using technology, and how online teaching and learning works. Staff in publication 3 expressed a wish for more exemplars of online teaching practice. The Learning and Teaching Development Services (LTDS) in Newcastle University act as champions with a website dedicated to case studies of good practice including online teaching. Newcastle University also has 'NUTELA' (Newcastle University Technology Enhanced Learning Advocates) whose members can act as champions for both online pedagogy and use of technology.

Another way in which the transition can be facilitated is by having better access for academics to discuss and receive advice from education technologists. Publication 6 showed that much of the e-learning team's time was spent having one-to-one sessions with academics tasked with moving their courses online. The numbers of education technologists working in Newcastle University have increased recently, starting pre-COVID, which should make a difference to the transition to online teaching.

Whilst many of these facilitators for transition to online teaching are not necessarily specifically at masters level, the original online courses in Newcastle University were masters level, without training being given to staff. The examples given here are how some of the training and help given to staff could look for masters teaching. Providing links to the online community for staff new to online teaching will help with 'promoter positions', enabling them to make the transition to an online teaching identity more smoothly than has happened in the past.

Chapter 7. Critical reflection on study ethos and design

As with any doctoral study, there are various changes I might make to how I approached my research in hindsight such as researching with others interested in online learning. I have touched on collaboration before. There are other aspects in which I feel I should justify how I acted detailed here.

I use Lave and Wenger's communities of practice (1991) to theorise publication 1. This has been criticized in that it does not consider where power lies in learning, or that learning is really a process of negotiation rather than Lave and Wenger's apprenticeship model (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin, 2007). I believe that as a starting point it is useful. However the identity of students on a particular masters programme does not develop in a vacuum. I agree with Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin (2005): I feel publication 1 could be regarded as an over-simplification by assuming that learning only takes place within a community of practice, although the 'population' of this community is relatively stable with students advancing their knowledge towards a common attainment goal and developing identity within the programme community.

I could have used TPACK (technology, pedagogy and content knowledge) as a holistic package which summarises the types of knowledge required in the context of course design to consider staff development (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). At the start of my doctorate I was looking at identity transformation from the view of helping staff with technology use (the educational technologists' original role) or helping with pedagogy (my academic role originally) as these were siloed in our institution, similar to the dichotomy in the work of Shulman (1986). The technologists' roles have now become blurred as they now advise on pedagogy, and the new technology team siloes me as a pedagogy-only academic and seem surprised when I do anything with the technology. If I were to carry out this research again, I would 'silo' technology and pedagogy less, and consider them together, rather than as separate entities, in line with Fawns (2022, p1) who describes them as pedagogy as "*entangled*" with technology in education.

Edwards (2017, p10) suggests in workplace learning and identity development we should not be thinking about helping to cross boundaries. Instead, she says that using relational agency, we should just work "*at sites of intersecting practices*" to find shared

understandings of workplace knowledge. This may work for some staff, such as 'Jane' cited in publication 5, as she had experience of being a face-to-face teacher as well as an online student before she started to teach online. The intersection of practice for her was making courses engaging for students but I would argue that as she had a connection to the educational technologist and professional services staff who helped edit her course, she did not need to cross boundaries. Less fortunate staff would need to cross a boundary of using the technology as well as the practice of engaging students online, which may be a threshold concept to them.

The ethics involved in my ethnography (publications 2, 5 and 6) were complex. The ethnography was open for those in the e-learning team but not for those who interacted with them. I asked for written permission before quoting one of these individuals (freely given). The anonymity via false names of those in publication 5 could possibly be 'broken' by other members of the Graduate School who knew them well. I do not feel in this paper that I have included anything that would harm the individuals interviewed or be so controversial as to cause problems.

My dual roles of colleague and researcher in publications 2-6 provided a source of discomfiture for myself as I felt responsible to ensure there was no detriment to staff participants in how I reported my findings. This led me to exclude some comments in the transcript which could have been relevant to the study in publication 5, a compromise between faithful reportage and no-detriment for participants. I also felt like a spy (publication 3) when using analytics in the virtual learning environment for colleague participation in the online development course. However, staff at the boundary of an online role (chapter 5 and publications 4 and 5) were trusting enough to vent their feelings to me about online emergency teaching, despite knowing that publications would ensue, so the compromises made I feel were justified.

7.1 Impact of the researcher

My own history of being an online student, then online teacher with mentor, and later teaching development experiences will certainly have coloured my vision of how I carried out the research, and how I asked questions in interviews. I feel that I mostly avoided pre-empting answers to questions in view of my own experiences, but I am sure there was some

influence on the analysis, although I hope that I minimised it. I believe this is a 'chicken-and-egg' scenario: we research topics which we have some familiarity with but need to know more about; that familiarity is likely to lead to researcher bias. But I brought my own knowledge to my studies and would not have carried out the research had I no knowledge and/or participation in this world for my work, so this is an inescapable position for a lone researcher. I do not believe my positionality as a pragmatic realist has influenced my research problematically, although it influenced how I carried out the research (Holmes, 2020). It appears from others that there are always dilemmas when carrying out research as an insider such as equivocacy of identity as worker and researcher (Hanson, 2013) and dilemmas of an ethical nature (Humphrey, 2013). Some of these I have detailed below.

It was unfortunate that I was a lone researcher for the research into student transition to online masters study, as these were students I taught. I tried to minimise my impact on their answers by carrying out interviews after they have received their marks for my module. I had got to know these students well over the course of six months and believe they spoke freely to me. However, it would have been better to carry out interviews with an independent researcher.

One issue may have been unintentional coercion for the ethnography. As a member of the e-learning team, at a team meeting I asked my colleagues if they would mind participating as researchers in the collaborative self-ethnography. They all appeared to agree readily, but there is a chance that this was just to please me and not appear different from their colleagues. In hindsight I should have given them greater ability as individuals to decline to participate rather than possibly influencing their response by asking in a group situation. Problems with closeness to participants occurs in 'insider' research (Hanson, 2013).

As my research progressed, I became much more aware of my own influence on interviewees' replies, as well as how to frame questions to minimise my own impact. I tried not to let too much of my own history affect the analysis, though in future I would be eager to keep a reflective diary to help me note my thoughts and see on its' future reading where my thinking came from.

Chapter 8. Concluding remarks: summary and future research

The aims of this doctoral statement were to consider the expectations of the academic community for students and staff learning and teaching online, the perceptions of students and staff of their identities as online masters learners and teachers and how we can help them transition across the boundary from on-campus to an online identity. The support for improving 'boundary experiences' (Clark et al., 2017) was a theme throughout the publications.

This doctoral statement has answered the research questions by drawing upon a body of work discussed in my submitted publications and the contextual literature. It has showed that online masters students and new online teaching staff at the outset of these careers have little idea of the expectations of the academic community for these roles. The students appear to perceive their identity as being one of extension to that of their undergraduate identity, but certainly not a full member of the online masters community in their programmes. Staff perceive the change in identity to online teaching as something to dread, and this identity dissonance can harm their ability to cross the boundary to an identity of a member of the online teaching community. Boundary crossing to an identity for learning and teaching online can be helped by situated learning in online courses for both students and staff, creating an encouraging 'boundary experience' (Clark et al., 2017). For students, practise of the skills required within their online community and social presence in the community is essential. For staff it is also essential to have good connections with the online teaching and learning community by working with mentors and online teaching experts in pedagogy and technology.

My doctoral statement has added to current knowledge by evidencing that online masters students are just as unsure what to expect to work at this level as the campus-based students in Tobbell et al. (2010). I have also shown that online courses plus practise in skills obtained, along with interaction with academics as both teachers and tutors for guidance will help develop the identity expected at masters level in online students. I have demonstrated that face-to-face teaching staff at Newcastle University have identity dissonance which leads them to be fearful of the change to online teaching if they do not have good connections to the online teaching community. They too can be helped in

developing their online teaching identities by online courses, and it is essential they have experienced online teaching staff and technologists to interact with relationally.

For the institution and in wider higher education this thesis provides pointers to development for students and staff crossing boundaries to online masters learning and teaching, outlined in figure 2.

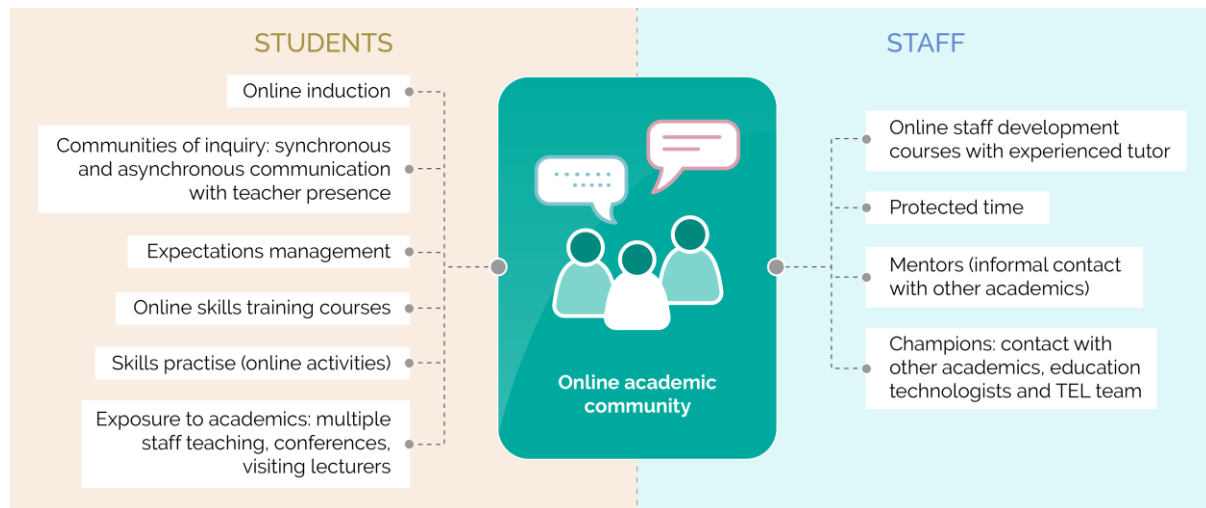


Figure 2 Suggestions for developing the online learning and teaching identity of students and staff to join the online academic community of their programme or institution (author’s diagram enhanced by Ashley Reynolds)

8.1 The research in the context of higher education globally

The COVID pandemic has ensured that online learning and teaching can no longer be considered an anomaly. Many institutes of higher education are said to be making a transition towards blended learning as the new normal, rather than making a return to purely face-to-face teaching (Tartavulea, Albu, Albu, Dieaconescu & Petre, 2020). This includes those involved with medical education (McGrath, Palmgren & Liljedahl, 2021). For online postgraduate students the use of blended learning does not really apply. However, the pandemic has highlighted how isolation affects the welfare of students (Aristovnik, Keržič, Ravšelj, Tomažević, & Umek, 2020), and this must be a future consideration for both blended and online teaching. It has long been known that for solely online education good socialisation and community building is essential. The recent research into student welfare

is an additional pointer to the importance of this (Defeyter et al., 2021). Methods of developing masters student identity within a programme of study must take this into account. My research in publication 1 shows how this identity development can be achieved and will hopefully be read by others and utilized beyond my own institution in the higher education establishments who are still concentrating on subject specialist knowledge in their online masters programmes, rather than a holistic view of student development as masters.

Globally, for university teaching staff, whether the future holds more blended learning, or online learning and teaching, the COVID pandemic has highlighted that staff development is required for online teaching identity. It is also likely to have improved the knowledge of use of technology for many staff who previously saw themselves as in-person lecturers only. Providing student engagement via teacher, social and cognitive presence, advocated by Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2000), to form an online community requires knowledge of online pedagogy and technology use. This involves troublesome knowledge (Meyer & Land, 2005) for many staff moving to an online teaching identity. Once knowledge is gained, staff should be able to move seamlessly from one mode to another, as shown by the staff in my own research.

As teaching online in higher education moves beyond the emergency mode, more staff are likely to make use of the affordances of online teaching to engage students, provided they can access suitable staff development and online teaching communities with e-learning academics and learning technologists. Online education with students at a distance has been considered a deficit mode (University of Edinburgh, 2016). Post-COVID, with the greater numbers of staff with online teaching experience, this is changing. As teaching staff develop their online teaching identities, this may reduce the dichotomy of online versus face-to-face education, with engaging teaching in both modes considered by students and staff as 'good teaching'.

8.2 Future research

My journey as an academic researcher will continue. I would like to interview online masters students in the future after their taught modules on different programmes (not just the MRes) to investigate how they handle the change to an online masters identity, and

whether the online course helped. It will also be interesting to interview staff post-COVID to investigate their perceptions of the transition to the subsequent increase in blended learning and any changes that may be sustained. I would also like to study whether the increased size and activity of the TEL team has enabled more traditionally minded staff to engage more with the online learning and teaching community.

The process of undergoing doctoral study has developed my identity to that of a social scientist researcher in addition to being a scientist with minimal research experience. It has given me confidence in using qualitative research methods where I feel I have attained a level of expertise. I will be developing modules on qualitative research methods for multiple programmes in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School over the next year. This shows a change in my dominant 'i'-position as scientist/positivist following much internal dialogue over the last six+ years to that of an interpretivist doctoral researcher. Adopting this different 'i'-position concurs with DST where 'self' consists of many 'i'-positions occupied by the same person, within my 'complex narrative structured self' (Hermans, 2001 p248).

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Chapter 9. Publication 1

Clapp, A. (2022) Listening to the student voice in online masters community and resource development. *Higher Education Studies* 12(2), 35-47 <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n2p35>

Abstract

Expectations of online masters students commencing their studies has been under researched, as have the challenges of transition from undergraduates learning on campus to postgraduate online students. The study described here investigates student expectations of this transition, development of resources for academic skills teaching, and student evaluation of interventions supporting them to join the academic community as masters.

The methods were a series of action research cycles with a total of 38 students participating from 5 annual cohorts of Master of Research students, with the taught component entirely online. A student cohort (12 students) surveyed for initial course evaluation led to resources being developed for the course induction. Group interviews with the following cohorts evaluated new resource development after each course iteration leading to further online seminars and skills resources development. In addition, further synchronous and nonsynchronous activities with teacher presence were employed to improve student enculturation in the academic community. Recorded online interviews in virtual classrooms preceded transcription and thematic analysis, showing that student expectations of masters study and the skills required to join the academic community in all cohorts needed management. Students expected a continuation of undergraduate studies, 'but harder'. Development of an optional online academic skills course, allied to student activities embedded in specialist content with increased teacher and social presence, was praised by the last student cohort interviewed. The online skills course is available to other online courses within this Graduate School. This model may be transferable to other institutions, particularly in light of increased online Covid 19 teaching.

Keywords: masters, identity, online, communities of practice, communities of inquiry, academic skills

9.1. Introduction

9.1.1 Transition to Online Study for Masters Students

The popularity of online masters education is increasing (Fain, 2018). Online masters students often enrol on these courses after a gap in their education due to employment following their undergraduate degrees, or undertake flexible courses part time so they can remain in employment. There has been little research into how students transition to masters from undergraduate study, or from employment gaps, with even less on the transition to online masters courses. This lack is significant because students are unlikely to have full knowledge of what to expect; they have been students before, but not at this level. New masters students need to develop an academic identity at a higher level of skill and independence than their undergraduate degrees, but not as high as that of doctoral students. There is much research on the transition to undergraduate level from school, and again for doctoral degrees (e.g., Briggs, Clark & Hall, 2012; Kiley & Wisker, 2009). Tobbell, O'Donnell & Zammit, (2010) suggested there has been little research into postgraduate masters students because it was assumed that they are already 'expert students' from their previous history of 'being' undergraduates. Tobbell et al.'s 2010 research showed that the change in identity of students becoming masters was negotiated in a highly complex environment, with many influences externally from students' non-university lives. Tobbell et al. (2010) studied on-campus students, but it seems reasonable to extrapolate these views to online masters students. Online courses generally have a higher attrition rate than on-campus courses (Shaw, Ferguson & Burrus, 2016). If we do not manage student expectations and the development of identity in our masters students by enculturating them in our academic communities, we risk a greater attrition rate (Su & Waugh, 2018). Consideration for students learning online has become even more important since the Covid-19 pandemic and the migration of emergency teaching online. This paper contributes new knowledge by using the student voice to shape the development of resources and their online community, needed to ease online student transition into their masters identity in the academic community of practice.

9.1.2 Study Aims and Research Questions

This paper aims to investigate the expectations of online masters students and reflect on the subsequent development of online resources and activities to enable students to attain the identity of masters. The following research questions are investigated through qualitative research as action research cycles over successive years of cohorts of students taking a Masters of Research (MRes) course with the taught component of the programme as online distance learning:

- What are students' expectations of online masters courses?
- How can students be helped to achieve the academic skills required as masters in an online study mode?
- How can students attain membership of the academic community of practice and thus masters identity at this level?

The results are discussed in terms of communities of practice (CoPs) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where the academic community at masters level is the CoP. This is used alongside the communities of inquiry (CoI) model of learning and teaching online (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). The study shows how the resources and actions developed from the findings can be used in online courses to assist masters students across the boundaries into the academic community as 'expert' masters. These interventions may be transferable to graduate schools with online courses in other universities, and could be useful in curriculum design for the flexible approach to learning and teaching forced upon institutions in the uncertainty of the pandemic.

9.1.3 Previous Research into Student Transition

Transition of students to an online master's degree from an on-campus undergraduate degree leads to greater flexibility in space and time of learning (Rabe-Hemp, Woollen and Sears, 2009). Crossing the boundary between undergraduate and postgraduate education has been less studied than other educational transitions. One example is Forde & Gallagher (2020), who examined expectations of healthcare students before their online postgraduate certificate course: students looked forward to the achievements of study but had anxieties over time management, use of technology and their ability to study. The paper did not

discuss what students thought would be expected of them, or what the faculty expectations of them were.

Technological preparedness can be low at the start of an online course. Stocker (2018) found that masters students enrolled on a nursing degree lacked the digital literacy skills required for their online course. To gain the necessary technological skills, Posey & Pintz (2014) state there is a need for 'comprehensive orientation for online learners' which should involve guided use of technology and signposting to access the resources required in the students' learning. Further information technology (IT) skills will develop provided practise is available through course activities.

The academic community's expectations of masters students include an advanced knowledge of the chosen subject, with the ability to carry out subject-specialist independent research. This differs from doctoral research as they are not required to contribute original new knowledge, but the subject knowledge and autonomy of research carried out are at a level above undergraduate. The masters identity includes ability to study independently, display critical thought and to undertake a research project relevant to their topic (QAA, 2014). Criticality is not attained instantaneously, and uncritical acceptance is said by Petty, Scholes and Ellis (2011) to be the norm at the start of a masters course. Time management, academic writing and communication with others by various means are other skills required by successful researchers. Hoffman & Julie (2012) showed these skills were lacking in campus-based masters students despite their successful undergraduate degrees. Those students were able to access on-campus help for skills development: a resource not available to online distance masters students. Online students require the same types of academic support as on-campus students, but these are also required to have flexibility and availability entirely online (Forrester, Motteram, Parkinson & Slaouti (2005), citing Krauth (1999)). Posey and Pintz (2014) developed a compulsory online resource to provide students with an academic skill set.

However, considering academic skills alone does not guarantee success at masters level as development of academic skills and new knowledge does not add up to the sum of masters student identity. Students' prior and present experiences, culture and motives add to 'being' masters students (Edwards, 2017 p9). These facets need consideration when enabling students to cross the boundary to the academic CoP. Lave and Wenger's CoPs (1991), places

where collaborative learning for people with shared interests could occur, are complex in reality. Wenger-Traynor & Wenger-Traynor (2015) describe a 'landscape' of practice, because in a social context, everyone inhabits more than one CoP. CoPs are not necessarily physical/geographical and can include virtual CoPs (Dubé, Bourhis & Jacob, 2005).

In an online environment, constructivist learning can be encouraged by developing a Col. Here, teaching presence coincides with social presence and cognitive presence (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000). Teacher presence is highly important for student success (Fendler, 2021). Forrester et al. (2005) found the social aspects of online courses important for transition to masters. The collegiality of on-campus students is not available to those online unless the social side of a Col is created via synchronous and asynchronous sessions with appropriate input from course tutors (Salmon, 2007). Cognitive presence in the Col is provided by the online resources.

There is an intersection of the Col with the academic CoP at masters level. The combination of social, cognitive and teacher presence acts to develop the self-efficacy of students as masters, enabling them to join the academic CoP (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010). Enculturation of new online masters students into the academic CoP is likely to be a problem if they are already considered 'expert students' by the academic community. This study catalogues action research using the student voice for the development of resources, practise and social interaction with, and for, online MRes students to develop a Col, to enculturate them in an academic CoP.

9.2. Method

9.2.1 Action Research in Managing Students' Expectations

The study reported in this paper took place in the United Kingdom where students were enrolled in an online programme. Following programme evaluation in a survey by the first cohort of MRes students, studying their taught modules entirely online, it was apparent that student expectations required management. As a response to this problem, to ensure new online masters students were aware of faculty expectations of study at masters level, qualitative research as action research cycles were carried out annually to investigate student expectations. Actions in each cycle provided subsequent cohorts with new

resources and activities, developed by reflecting on the previous student cohort comments in online interviews.

Action research, as utilized here, is defined as:

“a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out.” (Kemmis, 2007 p168)

For resource and teaching evaluation, along with further development of practice of the researcher-practitioner (the course tutor), action research is an appropriate choice of methodology. In this case it is used to determine the practitioner’s development of future resources and actions used to manage student expectations and encourage student transition to masters’ identity, beyond those tools already available.

9.2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were online MRes students from each cohort between 2013-14 and 2017-18. Many online masters courses are taken part-time entirely at a distance; this MRes was atypical. It was the product of a partnership between 3 UK universities, each university providing 20 credits of taught courses, taken as an online distance course by students registered at one of the three universities on the full-time programme. Bioethics and statistics training, as well as the project, were taken on-campus at the university where students were registered. It was variable whether participants enrolled on the programmes straight from undergraduate degrees or whether they had been in workplaces prior to becoming masters students. Many, if not most, wished to continue to doctoral study when they achieved their masters degrees. The author ran one taught online 20 credit course in one of the universities, providing access to each annual student cohort in the study: the purposive (and convenience) sample. This was a niche programme, developed at the request of funding councils, with low student numbers (up to 12 per year), so whole cohorts were invited to take part.

9.2.2 Data Collection

Ethical approval was received before each action research cycle. Informed consent to participate in the study was obtained before students were questioned on a voluntary basis

in online interviews. The first cycle followed a course evaluation by emailed online survey, sent to all course participants in the 2013-14 cohort who were deemed to have given consent for the study by taking part in the survey. In all the other cycles, whole cohorts of students were emailed with requests to participate in group interviews within the course virtual classroom (Adobe Connect®). At the start of each group interview, (or single interview in one case (2016-17)) explanations of the study were given and consent received with the option of withdrawing from the study at any time. The group interviews were for the researcher-practitioner (the author) to listen to the student voice evaluating current resources and suggesting further interventions to help transition.

The feedback and evaluation survey of the inaugural course provided an understanding of the 2013-14 cohort's online learning experience by asking for advantages and disadvantages of studying online, the most positive and negative experiences during the MRes and suggestions for course improvement. Reflection informed changes to the induction sessions and a slight redesign of course materials with evaluation of this intervention carried out by interviewing those who used it: the 2014-15 cohort.

It was expected that the action research cycle would complete at this point, but observation of 2014-15 cohort of students showed further resources were required for skills development in preparation for research. To determine these requirements this, and subsequent, cohorts until 2017-18 underwent recorded interviews online in the virtual classroom lasting approximately one hour, followed by resource development by the tutor. Interviews consisted of three semi-structured questions to start discussions:

- How did you expect studying for the MRes to differ from studying in your undergraduate degree?
- How easy or how hard did you find the online environment to work in compared to conventional teaching?
- Can you think of ways we could have made the transition to an online Masters level easier for you?

These questions were also emailed to students who wished to participate in the study but were unable to attend the sessions. The questions were informed by a wish for students to participate in course development as well as a desire to improve how it was run.

This method of data collection was deemed appropriate: Hammersley (2003) considers interviews to be extremely useful as a data collection tool when validated by other methods such as observation, which occurred in these groups due to researcher involvement in teaching. However, researcher involvement in teaching did have a downside of being too close to the students as an authority figure over their degrees, biasing their comments. Interviews suited the size of the study; cohorts were very small due to the specialised niche area of the degree, resulting in small numbers of students on the course, and as study participants.

9.2.3 Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Following upload to NVivo (QSR, 2016) transcripts were thematically analysed. Transcripts from interviews from each year group were read and re-read, interrogating them for recurring patterns in the student commentary data. Reflection on these patterns led to the emergence of themes, detailed in the results section 3.2. These covered areas which the author considered required action in the development of further resources for subsequent cohorts, as well as action to develop the online masters learning community further. Subsequently, for each cohort, changes were made to the course in the form of fresh online resources and seminars, sign-posted to students in subsequent cohorts. Their utility was discussed in the subsequent interviews to complete the action research cycle for each cohort.

9.3. Results

9.3.1 Participation

The evaluation survey received 11 responses out of 12 students surveyed at the end of the taught section of their programme. For later online interviews with each cohort, whole cohorts were invited to participate, also at the conclusion of the taught sections. Not all students were able to attend due to work commitments and project work being undertaken. As an alternative to interviews, two 2014-15 students provided written answers

to the questions when they were unable to attend. In 2016-17 only the student-staff committee student representative was available and interviewed so other students were emailed the three interview questions for electronic replies; in 2017-18 only four of the cohort were available. Figure 9.1 shows numbers in cohorts and what actions were taken on reflection of the student comments each year.

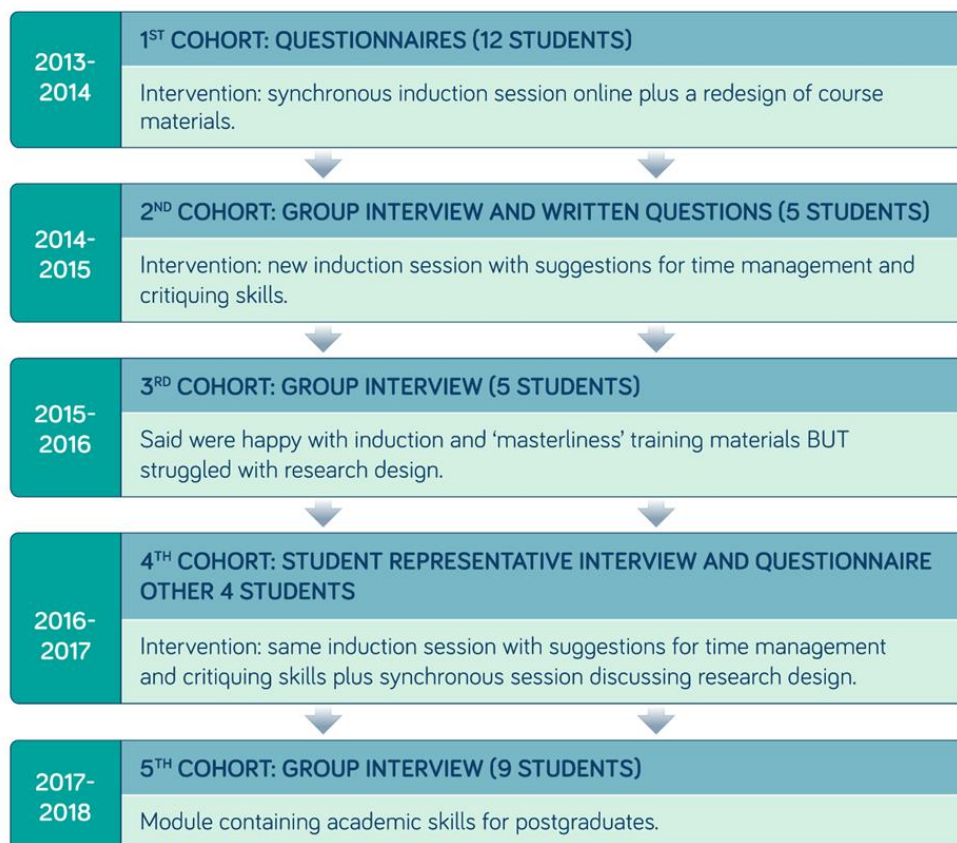


Figure 9.1. Action research cycles: study timeline, student numbers, data gathering type and action responses to the students' comments

9.3.2 Cohort Comments

During thematic analysis of the comment sections of the survey, written answers to questions and transcripts of the interviews were coded into recurring themes. The themes included academic skills (especially time management and critiquing literature), challenges of working online (including contact with others and technology problems), level of study,

student attitudes as researchers, student expectations and isolation. These themes are discussed within relevant cohorts, as are reflections guiding subsequent actions.

Cohort 1 2013-14

The first, 2013-14, cohort of students generally enjoyed the course, finding the flexibility of online learning suited them. They found the innovative ways of presenting material more stimulating than traditional lectures. However, they struggled to gain connections with fellow coursemates in the online environment, with a typical comment showing isolation was felt: "Main disadvantage is that I could not really built rapport with colleagues and sometimes I felt I need to see the people face to face to discuss topics". Workload was also a problem with time to complete tasks difficult over the whole programme.

In response, the action was to design a synchronous induction session geared towards managing student expectations. This ran for the 2014-15 cohort. Course re-design implemented limits on numbers of weekly essential journal readings (comments deemed article numbers excessive for the time available by the first cohort and some faculty staff). Occasional online synchronous Journal Clubs, for student presentations critiquing journal articles, were developed for one module.

Cohort 2 2014-15

Despite the 'managing expectations' synchronous session online during induction week, there were still problems managing the workload: "I don't think there is anything that can prepare you for that amount of work." There was the expectation that the workload would be greater as one student commented: "I thought it would be more intense than undergrad". The expectation of independent research was considered by this cohort of students: "...more responsibility that we have to take during our masters" "we start being more independent so that's a bit harder".

This cohort did not find the online classroom challenging; one student commenting: ".... the environment of the virtual classroom it doesn't stop your communication, it doesn't hinder anything". Technical problems were uncommon: "Occasionally we had technical issues which made things quite difficult, but they were fairly infrequent." Flexibility of online learning was positively appreciated by an international student, who participated in an

online seminar whilst travelling home, showing dedication and good engagement. However, screencasts did not suit all students with one struggling to take notes when these were of any length.

Academic skills of time management and critical thinking were only vaguely considered by students. Suggestions for developing time management skills were added to 'managing expectations' sessions, with links to online instructions for critiquing research articles provided for the next cohort.

Cohort 3 2015-16

This cohort of students showed confidence in their expectations of masters level study: "I already knew what to expect from myself more or less. I knew it was a step up". Realization of independent responsibility for their work was apparent: "I think it's more our kind of responsibility... obviously it's a qualification you know in a subject".

On developing criticality for reading journal articles, the resources were useful, and the importance understood: "I think it's a useful skill you know especially for practice for analysing critically medical journal articles."

Learning in an online mode was without problems: "I think the induction during the first week was really helpful to kind of settle you into how online learning really works. After that it was really OK." This suggests a good induction to the programme was present; these are essential for online learning.

Similar to the previous cohort, some of these students found watching screencasts challenging: "... too much screencasts.... I was just overloaded watching the screen too much", showing care was needed in the design of materials. Isolation was still present, one student commenting: "I think I did find it sometimes a little bit lonely".

Although this cohort were content with resources available, coursework showed critical thinking skills, particularly involving research design, needed development, suggesting cognitive presence was not fully present in this online community (Garrison, 2011, p43). In response, an online weekly, rather than occasional, Journal Club, was scheduled for students to present their article appraisals, including study design. In addition to practising a researcher's skill, subsequent discussions could also relieve feelings of isolation, increasing

engagement. A synchronous seminar on research design was scheduled early in the course timeline, separately from the induction week. This decreased isolation through interaction, whilst developing academic skills as part of the research culture.

Cohort 4 2016-17

The student representative interviewed on behalf of the cohort had given little consideration to what masters study entailed: “I hadn’t.....before I arrived. I assumed it would be very similar to undergrad.” The level of working and the development of independence was unexpected but relished: “This one felt like there was a lot more work for me to do here it’s get the work done yourself, get to know the material yourself... which is fine”., showing the attitude of an independent researcher.

Questioned on critical thinking, the student commented: “I do remember... there was a point where you did explain it to me, though I felt it got lost a bit over time.” The idea of academic skills as part of the masters identity was not grasped immediately: “Well we did have some stats lectures in the induction week here.... and they were talking about critiquing papers as well and I did think a few weeks later, oh this is quite important isn’t it?”

Synchronous online Journal Clubs enabled communication in person, which was preferred, including by those replying to questions electronically: “I think that’s the best way of doing things, someone in person you can talk to.” Engagement, with teacher and social presence is the key to the success of synchronous sessions, demonstrated here.

Informed by this cohort, an online module introducing masters study and containing resources for the development of academic skills was created, linked to by the MRes course, freely available throughout the year. Containing activities for practise, it is not mandatory as some students may need less instruction on skills than others, according to their education history. Content is shown in figure 9.2. Designed for students to ‘dip in and out’, the module showed students of varying abilities a scaffolded introduction to the practices of the research community and how masters (in the sense of experts) in the community carry out the skills required to conduct and disseminate research, enabling full participation in the academic CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p95).

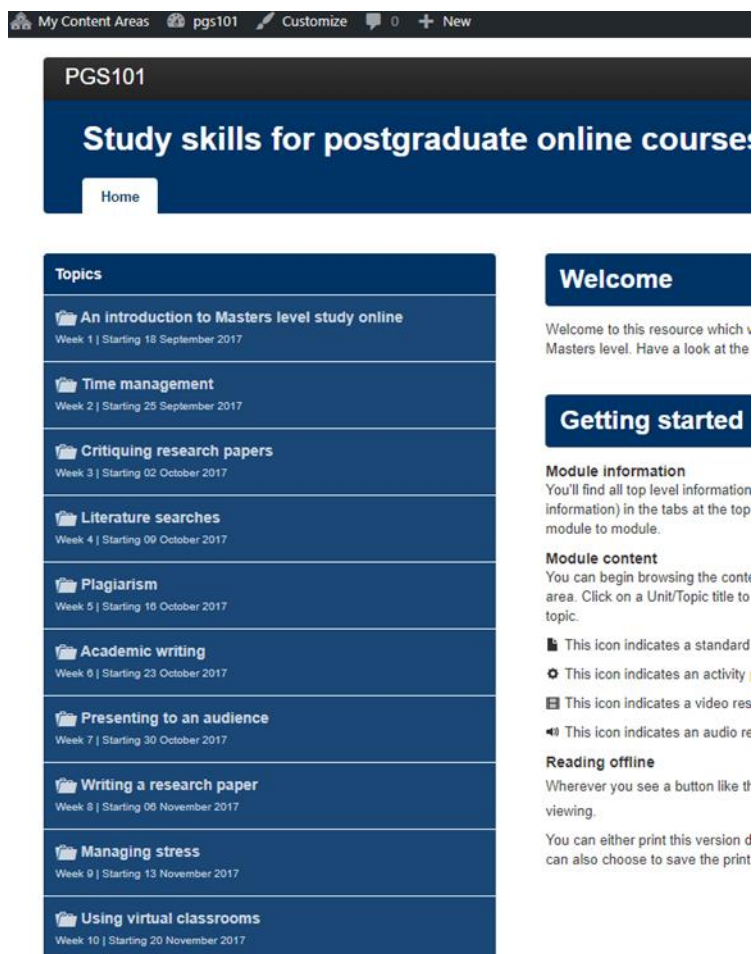


Figure 9.2. The online academic skills course for masters students

Cohort 5 2017-18

This cohort had varying ideas on the level of study for masters versus undergraduate degrees, although generally they had greater knowledge than earlier cohorts. One commented: “I did know before it was gonna involve more critical thinking.” Another student described their expectations compared with undergraduate study: “I think it comes hand-in-hand with the depth of knowledge required.... at undergrad I think you take a lot of things on face value.”

The academic skills module was well received, showing good engagement with the materials: “the study skills part I found it all right, I liked the critiquing part”; “.... useful for organizing the presentation..... I also used it for other points such as literature search and writing and presenting to an audience. I found those useful as well as they gave.... good advice.” The cohort had developed their ideas about the conduct of a researcher, particularly within the realm of critical thought: “You need to form an argument, you can’t

just state things like you could before.” “Yeah, you have to think beyond just accepting stuff and following a line somewhere...”.

Further ideas for the academic skills module were suggested: “I think if you annotated an example, it would be good, rather than just explaining the steps if people could see an actual example of a what constitutes a good introduction etc.” This is also suggested by Boud (2017) in the context of assessments; it could work well in learning activities: examples of what ‘good’ looks like are very helpful to students.

The academic skills module has since been available for subsequent cohorts and for other masters programs within this Graduate School with other topics (basic statistics) to be added soon. The specific skills mentioned are practised as formative activities prior to assessed assignments, with commentary from others collaborating on the same course to provide social and teacher presence in this online community. The development of the module and practice of its activities has provided a resource for the identity development of the students to help them ‘becoming’ masters, in parity with the resources available via the library to campus-based students.

9.4. Discussion

Students were not necessarily aware of the academic community expectations of masters level study when they started their courses, and their own expectations did not reflect the reality of masters study, other than it would be ‘more intense’ than their undergraduate degree. Reflection on their comments resulted in many resources, including an online course being developed, which they found helpful and expressed ideas about further development of resources. These resources were designed to provide them knowledge and practise of the skills required to become members of the academic CoP at masters level, as well as engagement with their specialist subject matter as masters. In addition, some students found the online experience isolating. Isolation is not unusual in online courses (Tullo, Newton & Clapp, 2012). To mitigate isolation, transition requires agentic action with course tutors and faculty staff developing a CoI (Garrison, 2011 p15). The increased teacher and social presence in the CoI in later cohorts acted to mitigate the isolation of studying online as well as enculturating students to the academic CoP.

9.4.1 Student Expectations of Masters Study

Cohort 2 confirmed Tobbell et al.'s (2010) assertions, having little idea of faculty expectations for masters level study. Time management skills were problematic; known to be a problem in postgraduate students, there are several causes, including fear of failure (Rakes & Dunn, 2010, citing Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Rakes and Dunn (2010) also mention procrastination increases in an online environment. Time management is essential for all members of the academic community, though this may not be resolved even as a full community participant. The online course later on provided ways of looking at time management skills without being prescriptive.

The masters level expectations of Cohort 3 were greater than that of cohort 2, but they did not have the academic skills to act on their expectations; the skills course would have been ideal for them. Whilst this cohort assumed that masters was a 'step up' from their undergraduate study, the course content failed to address subjects such as research design explicitly, with the academic expectation that students would develop this knowledge from their reading. As this clearly did not happen, the research design seminar and Journal Clubs were subsequently run. Discussion of others' research studies in Journal Clubs could be considered an 'authentic learning context' (Schulze, 2009), which can improve research methods training.

The cohort 4 student interviewed showed that as faculty we should be making the requirement for developing academic skills much more explicit, rather than leaving students to slowly absorb their importance. Student behaviour in this study was similar to students in the Petty, Scholes and Ellis study (2011), with uncritical acceptance at the start, requiring development of new ways of thinking to cross the boundary to masters.

For cohort 5, the message about competency in academic skills had been absorbed by the time of the interview, with all students engaging, and at least one engaging well, with the online module. It is important that the students can practise their new-found skills. Practising the activities which included literature reviews, critiquing journal articles and designing research studies helped the students not only achieve academic skills, but also join the academic CoP at masters level.

Student responses to the online mode of learning showed that technology generally held no problems for them. Subsequent (as yet unpublished) research from this Graduate School showed students are generally confident in the use of technology for learning and it is faculty who are less confident using technology unless they have received comprehensive training.

9.4.2 Social Presence

Clearly the CoI social presence had not been strong for cohort 1, despite some social and teacher presence, synchronous in seminars and asynchronous through the discussion boards, as recommended by Garrison, Anderson & Archer (2000). Social aspects of online study require greater consideration in the design of learning activities than those in the first iteration of the MRes. A sense of belonging to the community is required for optimal learning and needed more structured interactions, be they student-student, or student-staff. Increasing synchronous session numbers might have encouraged greater social presence, resulting in improved learning and less isolation (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). Mediating ways of working together with more collaborative activities, as described by Salmon (2007), would have strengthened the CoP as well as the CoI. Students have stated that they work better in communities online in a previous study (Delgaty, 2017).

Similar to cohort 1, cohort 3 showed isolation was a recurring theme for the MRes students despite the measures previously taken. Engelbrecht (2005) confirmed isolation is problematic in the change to online course delivery where one student stated: 'we do miss the contact with fellow students and course facilitators', mirrored by comments of the MRes students. Social isolation during online learning has been a problem during Covid-19, and Romero-Ivanova, Shaughnessy, Otto, Taylor and Watson (2020) described a student's commentary on the excitement of seeing her friends in collaborative sessions on Zoom, helping to mitigate the isolation of emergency teaching. Socialisation needs to be maintained throughout the course, with the tutor keeping students engaged with each other as well as with the tutor as social and teacher presence, aiming to increase the sense of community (Salmon, 2007). Synchronous Journal Clubs and seminars rather than just recorded lectures were found to be useful to increase the sense of community, and collaborative activities such as developing a wiki addressed the issues of isolation in later course iterations.

9.4.3 Study Limitations and Strengths

MRes student numbers were small due to the very specialist nature of the course, totaling 38 online students altogether throughout the cohorts, making it questionable there were enough students interviewed to provide a true picture on student expectations in boundary crossing to masters. However, some of the study findings are also corroborated by other research, although in on-campus settings, such as Tobbell et al. (2010), suggesting the small numbers interviewed were enough to obtain a picture of student expectations.

Having a teacher/researcher was a study weakness, despite surveys and interviews being conducted subsequent to marks being made available to avoid participant bias. Ideally a non-teaching researcher would have conducted interviews. Interviewer bias was avoided by asking open questions, but the researcher-practitioner in action research imposes some of their own values on the study, and the single researcher had no other researchers to triangulate the data for increased validity.

In action research the researcher develops their own identity as a researcher-practitioner throughout the process of gathering data and devising actions (Vetter & Russell, 2011). This has been the case here as the researcher brought her own history of being a former online masters student and currently as a teacher to the project, before she developed further. Firstly, as a practitioner-researcher with greater understanding coming from practice and collaboration with students and other faculty as part of the academic CoP. Secondly, becoming more contemplative of student behaviour, self-evaluating of teaching practice, and the help required to contribute to developing identity as masters.

9.4.4 Implications for Practice

This study showed that for masters students online, academic skills teaching is essential as part of masters identity development. This needs online resources, with constant reminders in the form of practise. Isolation can be reduced, and integration into the academic CoP encouraged, by interaction with established researchers throughout the course, who could share their experiences. As an example, in the MRes studied, one assessment, popular with the students, involves writing a research grant proposal. Scaffolding of this with faculty discussing their experiences of grant proposal writing increases student knowledge as well as enculturing students as researchers, gaining knowledge of the difficulties.

Practising activities in a 'safe' environment is useful for students transitioning to masters. Greater effort to socialize students at the induction to the course could result in greater trust for knowledge sharing (Usoro, Sharratt, Tsui, & Shekha, 2007), concurrently increasing engagement within the CoI, reducing isolation. Facilitation by tutors in online learning can make the difference between student passivity or engagement (Stocker, 2018). Collective knowledge in a CoP is greater than that of individuals and increases with good facilitation (Johnson, 2001). That is not to say that masters students need to be 'spoon-fed' to develop their own independent research identity, but they require the encouragement in the form of teacher presence as well as the social and cognitive presence. These factors need to be considered in the development of emergency teaching during times where courses need to migrate online. Development of the masters community is also an essential consideration going forward where increased numbers of resources are placed online in a more blended learning approach, to ensure students are able to transition to this level of study without feeling isolated.

9.5. Conclusions

9.5.1 Study-specific Conclusions

The action research in this study has added to knowledge of transition to masters online, showing that whilst students in this MRes expect increased workloads compared to their undergraduate days, knowledge of the skills required to become an independent researcher as part of a masters student identity was low. The online resource development was successful in enabling masters students to join the academic CoP. Feelings of isolation occurred despite online collaboration and synchronous activities; these activities needed to be increased so that working relationally with others adds to a smooth transition to masters. There were few technical difficulties with the transition to online suggesting competency with technology from undergraduate teaching and use outside academic communities.

From interviewing successive cohorts of MRes students and reflecting on their comments it was clear that they formed a CoP along with the researchers who were teaching them. Using Lave & Wenger's (1991) CoP and Garrison, Anderson & Archer's (2001) CoI as frameworks to theorize this action research has been useful to consider how these students

cross boundaries from undergraduate to online postgraduate study. Further research could include evaluation of the contribution of practise of online course activities to the development of masters identity in the academic CoP.

9.5.2 Wider Conclusions

This study has wider implications for masters courses globally. Whilst generalizability was neither the intent nor the aim of this study, nor would it be coherent with the methodology chosen (Phelps & Hase, 2002), the findings are likely to be transferable to other institutions. Student expectations need management, along with education on the academic community's expectations, whether the students are online or on-campus. The development of online resources for masters students has become the norm during Covid-19, and the future is said to hold more blended learning, so resources online are needed (Universities UK, 2021). This study has shown the importance of online academic skills training provision to students at a distance, and this is likely to be of use to campus-based students in addition, due to the flexibility of access. A knowledge of what the academic CoP expects of students needs to be made explicit, and can be made clear during programme induction, with the subsequent practise of the skills enabled with teacher presence, as eventually occurred in this study. Provision of resources needs to be planned during curriculum design, a point that was omitted at the start of this MRes. Synchronous sessions, especially during induction, can increase the social presence in the online masters community, decreasing isolation and increasing belonging to this CoP.

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Chapter 10. Publication 2

Clapp, A. (2017). An e-Learning Team's Life On and Offline: A Collaborative Self-Ethnography in Postgraduate Education Development" *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning* 15(1), 33-45, available online at www.ejel.org

Key words: E-Learning team, online distance learning, ethnography, staff development, pedagogy, technology, communication, power, Foucault

Abstract

This paper primarily discusses the methodology of a case study into interactions and working practices of an e-learning team, on and offline. Although several ethnographies have been published on online learning, there are apparently none involving communities developing courses. This is a unique insight, bringing a new view of course and staff development. The e-learning team develops courses in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School in a UK higher education institution. Interactions occur online and offline, the team's workplace 'setting'. The ethnography is to inform future staff development by analysing interaction outside the team with the subject specialists, generally time-poor clinicians and research scientists who have varied experience of e-learning, but are required to provide course content and to teach their subjects in online distance learning courses. Records kept by team members were enlarged upon via weekly interviews and collated by a team member who developed a narrative, subsequently coded into content themes. The main themes were technology, pedagogy and communication. Conversation analysis provided theories on methods useful in staff development for later action research. Consideration was also given to issues of power within the interactional relationships. The paper discusses challenges and strengths of this collaborative self-ethnography as a research methodology in this e-learning setting. It was concluded that collaborative self-ethnography is a highly suitable research methodology for this type of study.

10.1. Introduction

Teaching online employs a different pedagogy to teaching in face-to-face situations (Kim & Bonk 2006), and has a requirement for technical support to develop and maintain course

content in an accessible and stable form. Expertise in interface design and graphics is required to improve student learning experience (University of Edinburgh 2016). In addition, administrative duties need addressing. Ellis and Phelps (2000) describe the change from an academic working alone in course design, to teams of people providing online course development. This may facilitate all these requirements; Restauri (2004) suggests there is greater student success if team development of distance learning courses is carried out.

Such a team is employed in the Graduate School of a Faculty of Medical Sciences in a UK higher education institution (HEI), working with clinicians and scientists (the subject specialists), who may have previously lectured face-to-face, to develop courses. Conversion from the traditional face-to-face lecturer and subject specialist to online moderator with knowledge of online instructional design is an important aspect of development for many faculty staff in online distance learning (ODL). In order to teach online courses they require knowledge of online pedagogy as well as knowledge of use of the technology (Salmon, 2005).

A collaborative self-ethnography to investigate the interactions of the aforementioned e-learning team developing ODL postgraduate courses was carried out. This was the inductive cycle of planned action research into staff development for clinicians and biomedical scientists who are required to develop and run these ODL Masters courses in their specialist subjects. Faculty staff and clinicians in particular have limited time available to undertake staff development so knowledge of the most beneficial and time-economic methods of staff development would be useful. This study into interactions of the e-learning team, initiated and funded by the HEI's Equal Acclaim for Teaching Excellence Project (EquATE), set out to inform how staff development for time-limited subject specialists is designed and implemented. Findings of this study are presented below.

However, this article mainly discusses the use of collaborative self-ethnography as a research methodology in the study.

10.1.1. Aims of the article

The article aims to answer the following research questions, which are listed in order of detail provided in this article:

1. How and why is collaborative self-ethnography useful as a research methodology in the investigation of teams developing e-learning?
2. How does the collaborative self-ethnography of the e-learning team inform us of future requirements and methods of staff development for online teaching?
3. What are the dynamics of the inter-relationships of the e-learning team with clinicians and scientists who are subject specialists?

10.2. Background

10.2.1. Collaborative self-ethnography

Ethnography, as defined by Bryman (2012, p432), is a data collection method where the observer/ethnographer is immersed in a group or community where they observe the interactions and behaviours of the populace recording fieldnotes on their observations. These are then used in descriptions of the population. Self-ethnography is defined by Alvesson (2003) as “a study in which the researcher describes the cultural setting to which he/she has natural access”.

Collaborative self-ethnography involves more than one researcher in a setting to which all the researchers have access (Burford May and Pattillo-McCoy, 2000). Methods of data collection in these types of study are mixed rather than just observation; participant observation, a characteristic of ethnography, is employed, but so also are interviews and other context-specific methods.

Ethnographic methods are novel for communities involved in online course development; Alvesson (2003) states that: “It is rare that academics study the lived realities of their own organizations”. There have been many ethnographies published about online learning (Browne, 2016; Fitzsimons, 2013) but apparently none involving communities developing courses rather than about those immersed in learning online, so this study is a unique insight, bringing a new view of course development and staff interaction. There appears to be a dearth of collaborative self-ethnography as research methodology around e-learning altogether.

However, Ngunjiri et al (2010), although describing the ‘blurred distinction between researcher-participant’ in auto-ethnography, say it allows a narrative to be produced where the self is seen in the context of the social world around it.

As a research methodology of choice for this study, collaborative self-ethnography was thought to provide a rich source of commentary by experienced e-learning design and development staff on their interactions with current and proposed subject specialist faculty staff. The immediacy and simplicity of recording interactions with other team members and faculty staff out-with the team made it an ideal method for use both on and offline.

10.2.2. Staff development for online course design

Staff development for online course design has been much-researched with many case histories published. These describe various development methods and strategies, but none stand out as more efficient than others.

Taylor (2003) describes the move to online teaching having a requirement for situated learning (citing Brown et al 1989) which is within both a social and physical context. Describing staff development in the University of Southern Queensland this approach using ‘immersion in interactive online learning’ seems to have been highly successful as this is now a well-known e-university. Here teams of early adopters created an online course to facilitate staff development in pedagogy and technology for ODL.

Ellis and Phelps (2000) discuss action learning and collaboration with an online course development team finding that the collaboration was one of the most useful aspects. Staff enthusiasm for online course development was high which is likely to lead to greater success, although there were issues around how much academic staff were meant to contribute to course development compared with the team. This study used action learning and research as at the time there was so little other research done to inform staff development.

Jenkins et al (2011) reported that a ‘committed local champion’ is one of the best drivers for the increased use of technology in education. However, they showed that since previous surveys had been carried out there had been an increase in the lack of staff knowledge of

online learning as a barrier to the use of technology, suggesting that staff development is as important as ever as ODL progresses from its' infancy to maturity.

10.2.3 Staff inter-relationships between e-learning teams and subject specialists

Consideration is given to power relationships and how these may affect staff development within the study, including how e-learning specialists share their knowledge with subject specialists, whose mastery is in another discipline. Personal authority may affect the resultant level of staff development.

Foucault wrote:

“Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order.” (Foucault, 1972)

This implies we all have to change but the change is forced upon us by the power of other people within their own structural systems. In order to change from a subject specialist with a history of face-to-face lecturing to online teaching, a subject specialist will undergo some changes in knowledge which may also require changes in attitude. Response to this requirement for change will have a bearing on the success of any staff development methods.

Cramp (2015) cites Lave and Wenger (1991) stating ‘the importance to learning of negotiating meaning, constructing shared understandings’. Both negotiating and sharing imply an equal level of power amongst the participants suggesting that less success in staff development may be the result of unequal relationships, with the perception of greater power in the more knowledgeable party.

There can be resistance to the change to online teaching for varying reasons. This may be lack of time, recognition, perception of quality, lack of knowledge of pedagogy and technology and particularly considerations of workload (Panda and Mishra, 2007; Maguire 2005). Delgaty (2015) argues for a cultural change in institutions developing ODL courses, suggesting there should be support allowing staff development and the possible change in identity that comes with changing teaching practices and working with others in teams.

10.3. The e-learning team

The e-learning team consists of a faculty e-learning co-ordinator (team leader), two programme co-ordinators, a pedagogic specialist, an e-learning administrator, an e-learning technician and an e-learning illustrator. Within the Graduate School office the team are seated closely together enabling rapid communication with each other offline. In addition to this close proximity there are monthly team meetings which allow the team to keep up to date with each other's work as well as mind-mapping to solve any problems and providing constructive criticism. The team members are encouraged to attend university-wide events involving technology-enhanced learning, seminars and meetings useful for their individual, as well as team, functioning. Occasional social events are organised for the whole team.

The team has grown with the need to employ more individuals in the development and running of e-learning courses over the past three years as the university policy includes capacity building at Masters level. Prior to this, individuals were employed according to programme requirements since the inception of the first fully online Masters course within the faculty eleven years ago. Then it was sufficient to have a single e-learning co-ordinator for the programme. As expectations of further markets for other programmes increased there was a greater need for the development of courses and improvement of content management systems and their aesthetics. Over two years the team was formed. There are now four different programmes containing several strands running or in development by the team.

The faculty e-learning co-ordinator (FELC) not only directs the team but also acts as an interface between the team and the postgraduate dean, helping to inform policy for future directions. The e-learning co-ordinator (ELC) and the programme e-learning co-ordinator (PEC) work on different programmes but have similar jobs, providing pedagogical, technical and to a greater or lesser extent, administrative support. The e-learning academic specialist (ELAS), the author of this paper and researcher, provides pedagogical support as well as actually leading two of the twenty credit modules as lecturer/moderator. The ELAS is responsible for legal aspects such as obtaining licenses for copyrighted images.

Administrative duties are undertaken by the e-learning administrator (ELA); the e-learning technician (ELT) develops the content management system and the e-learning illustrator (ELI) provides images and animations for the courses which not only add to the learning

experience visually, but in many cases make up formative assessments such as drag and drop quizzes. However, all the team may use their multiple skills when appropriate, for example the ELA is able to use illustrative software when required and the ELI directs technical aspects of the virtual classroom.

The team communicate with each other whenever necessary to ask for others to provide material or technical expertise. This usually occurs several times each day. Communication is mostly offline and verbal but may take the form of emails to ensure records are kept or when the recipient team member is too busy to provide instant attention. Team meetings are very informal with no minutes kept. Communication throughout the team is excellent. The team has been together long enough to know each other well, including who has skills sets for anything outside their day-to-day roles.

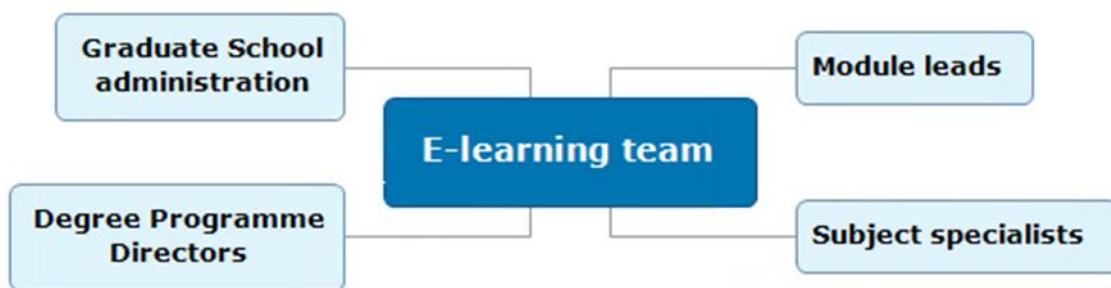


Figure 10.1 The e-learning team interactions

Figure 10.1 illustrates the team interactions with other faculty members. These interactions may be face-to-face or online as emails, and occasionally via Skype or the web-conferencing facility Adobe Connect. When a new course is planned, the programme or module leader usually finds subject specialists who will decide on assessments, learning outcomes and provide content with suggestions for activities to engage the students once these have been suggested by e-learning team members, or by themselves when they have prior experience of e-learning. This tends to be the exception rather than the norm. The subject specialists are usually clinicians and research scientists who may already teach face-to-face, whose experience ranges from none through some, often as an online student in the case of clinical staff, to a very small minority with a high degree of experience in teaching online, mostly at

other HEIs. All need some training on the use of the content management system as it is purpose built. However, many need training in online pedagogy in addition to this. There is nothing specific within the study team's work descriptions that they will engage in staff development, but it is assumed that this is implicit within the job.

10.4. Methodology

The e-learning academic specialist (ELAS) approached data collection with the questions:

- What can interactions of the e-learning team tell us about staff development needs?
- Through our working practices how do we help other faculty staff engage in e-learning?

It was felt that an interpretivist approach would be most suitable for the study design compared to positivist approaches, as this study was to form a theory rather than test one. Any theory developed would be used to design methods and content which would be later tested by action research for staff development. The choice of ethnography was governed by the ease of access to 'observees' and their willingness to take part.

10.4.1 Study design

Firstly, ethical approval from the Faculty Preliminary Ethics Committee was obtained to carry out the collaborative self-ethnography within the team. Prior to commencement the study design was discussed and agreed upon at a monthly team meeting. Team members recorded their own interactions electronically (including email records) or on paper with the ELAS interviewing them approximately weekly about their records. The interactions were either online via email and occasionally virtual classrooms and Skype, or face-to-face in meetings. This was essentially an open study for the team, removing the ethical issues of ethnographies with data collected in a covert way. Where any comments from staff outside the team would be used in the study, details of the study were fully explained to staff members and their permission sought for use ensuring maintenance of open-ness.

Considerations about power and workload issues led to the FELC maintaining her own records, concentrating on recording those interactions which were of interest to staff development only, rather than for example future policy meetings which would have a more indirect interest for this study.

Fieldnotes collated by the ELAS were shared electronically for all to triangulate for accuracy. The weekly 'interviews' were semi-spontaneous and constitute 'participant observation' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p1-2). Questions were unstructured and timing depended on the participants rather than procedure. In addition, the ELAS recorded team interactions at monthly meetings where new technical developments and problems are discussed. Minutes of the programme meetings were investigated for content relevant to staff development. The notes produced by these methods formed the narrative text for data analysis. The narrative was made available electronically for team members to triangulate the data.

Team members were interviewed at the end of the study by the ELAS to ascertain the training they had themselves received prior of during their employment in this field. In developing the study design, no consideration was given to the history of those outside the team and only small consideration was given to the history of the team itself. When the narrative was being written historical features became apparent so some consideration was given to this alongside the ethnography.

The study ran for five and a half months starting mid-January and finishing late June 2016, covering a full semester which was commenced and completed along with the run-up to another within the study period. This enabled the preparation, running and evaluation of programme modules to be completed during the study. This does run counter to traditional ethnographies which are carried out over twelve months or more to cover each season (Gonzalez, 2000) but the full cycle of 'seasons' was covered by this timescale, the full academic year merely repeating this cycle three times.

10.4.2 Data analysis

Content coding of a narrative produced by the research was used as the first step in data analysis. A scrutiny-based technique fitted the research questions to produce different themes. The author considered that further analysis of the themes would provide areas in which staff development could be built upon later.

Preliminary hand-coding of the narrative text at 6 weeks was carried out by the ELAS. 'Pawing' divided it into themes (Ryan and Bernard, 2003), which are detailed below. The themes found divided the areas of working practice. At this point only three themes were used: communication, pedagogy and technology which informed the author's development of some preliminary materials for staff development of subject specialists newly engaged in ODL courses, the subject of a future study. The final and complete narrative text was stored in the NVivo 11.0 database (QSR, 2016). Coding here divided it further into nine themes: pedagogy, technology, communication, time issues, training, marketing, aesthetic issues, external advice and social. The ELAS then took the content of each theme to interrogate further in conversation analysis in context, to make meaning of the interactions by considering what they achieved (Bryman 2012, p529).

Conversation analysis of the e-learning team narrative was used to provide answers to the study questions within the account of the study.

10.5 Narrative

This narrative first details the training and prior experience of team members which was gleaned from individual interviews. The purpose of this was to understand how they had developed their knowledge of ODL with a view to formulating development materials for subject specialists, shown by Table 10.1.

Team member	Formal training	Informal training	Experience
Faculty e-learning co-ordinator FELC	PGCertEd (online education)	Work in USA HEI and school where faculty and teachers willing to share online teaching knowledge and techniques; online PGCertEd student	Started by supporting module leads then developed full masters programme before becoming academic faculty e-learning co-ordinator, developing and

			overseeing programmes
E-learning administrator ELA		Natural administration skills and previous administrative experience	Ran the administration side of the new online modules in one programme and now inputs admin, design and pedagogy in several programmes
Programme e-learning co-ordinator PEC	MSc Digital Education (Masters year student)	Self-taught on VLE use	Role changed from admin to more pedagogically orientated with running of VLE and other teaching aspects then increased
E-learning academic specialist ELAS	PGDip Digital Education Current PhD student studying online education	Online MSc and PGDip student Mentored by experienced tutor during first course design	Developing, editing and in some cases leading modules in various programmes
E-learning technician ELT	Course for creatives in advertising industry	Self-taught website design	Website design and development both in HEI and freelance

E-learning illustrator ELI	HND multimedia design	Self-taught design	Developing medical education e-learning in industry before provision of images, animation and film editing for HEI
E-learning co- ordinator ELC	Certificate in teaching IT Masters in Computing	Self-taught website design	Developing websites in other HEI before developing programme in HEI

Table 10.1: The e-learning team including their formal and informal training

It can be seen that training was both formal and informal. Most subject specialists would have little time for formal qualifications so informal staff development is the likely path for future training.

There was much overlap between the categories produced by coding: training involved technical or pedagogical issues and there was an overarching category of communication. The importance of communication is such that without it team function would likely cease, but within the themes it was used solely for areas not necessarily covered by the other themes.

10.5.1 Technology

Of all references in the themes, perhaps unsurprisingly given the nature of the teaching mode, technical details and issues made up a large proportion. Technical training of non-team members was given one-to-one in many cases on an ad hoc basis. This could be described as just-in-time but had the advantage of immediate experiential learning. As an example, telephone conversations allowed practise in the use of virtual classrooms to

enable tutorials to be run in evenings, with the ELI as technician 'in residence' to prevent and solve problems:

"The ELA offered lots of advice over the phone and occasionally asked the ELI for more technical details for running the virtual classroom".

"Worked with a face-to-face administrator, teaching her how to upgrade tests on the virtual learning environment (VLE) for the next running"

These comments show that one of the primary functions of team members was staff development in an informal way. Incidences such as these showed how individual team members inducted non-team members into the e-learning community of practice. Cochrane et al., (2013) cite Lave and Wenger (1991) who describe communities of practice as "groups of people with a common interest exploring issues within a particular context". The support given by e-learning staff to less experienced staff enables them to join the community of practice via Zygotsky's 'zone of legitimate peripheral participation' (Smith, 2016). The just-in-time mode may seem lacking in organisation and poor time management, but it suits clinical staff in particular who have little time to attend organised sessions. This 'knot-worked' approach may form the basis of future action research.

The ELT responded to the needs of team course designers by creating a new page type to display content as a slide show (in this case for patho-histology). This is an example of the on-going continuous improvement of the technology which makes up the bulk of their workload. Demonstration and training the team to use these improvements often occurs at team meetings but is also on a one-to-one basis as needed.

The ELT, the PEC and the ELA commented on the lack of confidence many non-team staff have with technology. The ELT and the PEC both said that staff members were generally happy to edit and apply content to the content management system once they had received a short session of one-to-one training. Some staff appeared too busy to implement their new knowledge immediately and often required emailed instructions later in addition to the initial training, which sometimes caused irritation amongst the team. Historically many of the subject specialists had lectured face-to-face but had little to do with the institution's virtual learning environment (VLE). This may have provided some tension with the expectations of the team that faculty staff would learn 'new tricks' with the technology,

whereas these staff may have had no particular wish to change the status quo where previously they handed their PowerPoint slides to an administrator to post on the VLE. Furthermore, despite training, some staff did not gain the necessary confidence and preferred course changes to be carried out by the ELA. Whilst on the whole 'digital natives versus digital immigrants' (Prensky 2001) are controversial: we are both immigrants and natives at one time or another when using different technologies; however, confidence in technological use depends upon experience and practise will encourage self-belief in technological capability. Provision of a 'sandpit' where staff could practise uploading and editing content in the safety of privacy may improve confidence with technology.

10.5.2 Pedagogy

Much of the team's work involved developing new modules and updating old ones, eliciting many interactions with non-team staff. At two team meetings the progress of a new module development was peer reviewed by the rest of the team who provided constructive criticism on learning activities. In other modules under development the emphasis was on the application of the knowledge students would gain, so clinical staff were asked for case studies and reports based on real life for students to discuss.

One module being updated after student feedback suggested it was too heavy on content needed videos of 'talking heads' and diagrams added to more succinctly explain the details a large amount of text had failed to address. The PEC commented that specialists do not necessarily understand how hard content is to understand for non-experts; this may be core knowledge or threshold concepts (Meyer & Land 2003). This may form a barrier to students fully grasping concepts, but the PEC commented that if she could understand then so will the students, providing a solution in the course editing. Another module which the PEC was updating required alterations so the increased number of students taking the course would still be able to participate in collaborative activities successfully without their role being reduced or the tutor being inundated with work to provide feedback on.

At the other extreme, the ELAS found that in one course there needed to be more content, explaining to the subject specialist that some factual content as text and video was necessary rather than the suggested reading alone which needed scaffolding first. It was however the norm to be given too much material as content. Subject specialists all showed

great enthusiasm for their disciplines and the knowledge they had to impart, not realising that the workload they would produce within an ODL course would be oppressive to the students as well as being beyond the 20 credits specified. The course developers (FELC, ELAS, PEC and ELC) had to strike a balance between enough information for useful student activity and an excess of content for students to navigate.

In the development of new modules the response of staff with no experience of ODL was enlightening. In meetings with clinicians on more than one occasion the ELAS found that there was a high level of discomfort with the idea of teaching online as opposed to lecturing. This may be historical, due to clinicians receiving lectures as their main means of knowledge transfer in their own degrees. Some expected to use PowerPoints with voiceovers or lecture capture systems. This was a common occurrence and showed the typical transmission mode of teaching in face-to-face lectures where knowledge was presented rather than knowledge being discovered by the students. Many of these subject specialists were experienced face to face lecturers. Others had a little knowledge of running ODL in that they realised PowerPoints from lectures online would be a

dreary learning experience for the students, but they did not know which alternative methods to use. Once the ELAS explained how the team would work with the subject specialist to develop content with mixed media and plenty of individual and collaborative student activity there was a great deal of relief expressed. This was summed up by one clinician:

“I was really dreading doing this, but it sounds as though it might be interesting”.

This statement expresses a change in views as well as a willingness to engage, suggesting that care in depicting ODL and what is required for staff development will lead to greater enthusiasm for the task. The acceptance of differences in online teaching and learning from face to face and the willingness to develop their online pedagogy was generally at a high level once it had been understood that help from the e-learning team would be given and the onus was not solely upon the subject specialists. However, the notion that nothing could surpass lectures for teaching was not mentioned, but implied in a few cases (“You can’t use online for everything”). The majority of knowledge transfer in medical schools is by lecture (Brown and Manogue 2001). Discourse showing regression to their original training and

rejection of new methods suggests a certain amount of clinging to the past and resistance to change.

The ELI has developed many useful illustrations including self-test limb anatomy drag and drop animations which will be used as re-usable learning objects. Over the study period these were catalogued via a personal staff web-space and also sent to non-e-learning staff who might find them useful in teaching. It is noticeable that whilst there is a willingness to share resources there are no specific means to communicate their availability to other staff. A repository of resources linked to by staff areas on the institutional VLE would be useful to showcase reusable learning objects.

10.5.3 Communication

Whilst coding the narrative into themes it was realised that virtually all overlapped with 'communication'. It was decided to look at only those aspects of communication in this section which had not been covered by the other sections in the narrative and discussion.

Within the daily lives of the team communication was both a positive and negative force. Many of the positive incidences of communication involved non-team member e-learning 'champions' who were already very knowledgeable on the subject. In addition, people who had been given enough information at the beginning of the conversation to enable them to understand how ODL courses function were then able to grasp how the team could help them in course design. It was easier to meet and discuss course development with a champion:

"It's really easy to discuss pedagogy as he totally gets e-learning".

Where some training had been given to those lacking in experience:

"This was a more positive meetingshe has a number of images, history and the accompanying report so it should make a very nice activity."

The FELC commented at the end of the study that carrying out the study had brought the team closer together. This may have been due to increased communication and a greater depth of understanding of each other's roles developing courses.

10.5.4 Other coding themes

The other categories found when coding were: time issues, training, marketing, aesthetic issues, external advice and social. These will be discussed in less detail as they were only a small representation of the whole narrative; the majority have less bearing on staff development and are of more use to future policy.

Time issues were seen as a problem by clinicians.

“She was concerned about the amount of time it would require her to be online when running the module, particularly if the module is going to attract a lot of students.”

Other issues with time were how long it often took for the team members to receive course content:

“She is busy with stuff until the end of May and will start sending content then”

The time issues experienced suggested that greater emphasis on time management during the planning stage of new courses must be given. All subject specialists are informed how long to expect course development to take, but their clinical and research workload take priority, often until the last minute when courses are then prioritized. In one case a subject specialist was replaced by an e-learning champion (also a subject specialist) in an effort to speed the provision of material for a new module, showing the importance of planning and time management.

Training for the team often took the form of workshops and seminars either within or outside the institution, sometimes for specific needs such as training in new software use for the ELI. The PEC and the ELAS are both engaged in higher degrees in online education. Continuing professional development also occurred by attending conferences although it was surprising that these sometimes missed their mark as described by a comment post-conference about a regional teaching event:

“This year was probably the least useful with the most it was geared towards e-learning being talks on blended learning. One lecturer with a flipped classroom had an almost an evangelistic view of e-learning; what we have been doing for years still appears to be *avant garde* to other people”

Discussion about marketing involved the provision of illustrated materials by the ELI, potential venues for course information adverts to be placed and possible funding for students.

Aesthetic issues often involved discussion how to display content to the best advantage as well as improving the look of particular courses. This involved all the team and ideas were always welcomed by the team from individual members, such as icons to delineate different activities developed by the EI and deployed by the ELA.

External advice often came from other technical staff outside the team. A meeting of the FELC and the ELT with the IT support services in the institution was fruitful in that they mapped out how servers could be used and maintained for the content management system. Maintenance and planning are essential for the smooth running of ODL courses.

Within the life of the study the team had two social events: both were visits to local restaurants. This is an excellent way of increasing team bonding in a relaxed atmosphere. It is also said to increase creativity: Gilson and Shalley (2004) found that the more a team socialized, the more creative they were.

10.6 Discussions

10.6.1 The use of ethnography as a research methodology in the study

In this study ethnographic methods were chosen over single interviews to provide detailed descriptions of tasks over an extended period. The father of modern ethnography, Geertz, tried to ensure that meaning was considered from 'discourse' which enabled 'thick description' to be produced (Geertz, 1973, p20). The use of documented lists of tasks/interactions as a starting point for the ELAS to provide further detail from weekly interviewing team members developed the thick description required in ethnography.

Ethnography emphasises the importance of social and cultural contexts as well as the value of peer-like relationships between ethnographer and participant (Brown and Dobrin, 2004, p5). The cultural context was one of the strengths of the study: it allowed a picture to develop of the e-learning experts at work, how they carried out the everyday tasks and how those with less experience found challenges and were helped to meet them. Interviews, while providing an intimate view of certain aspects of the culture, would form an

incomplete picture. It is unlikely that in an interview the level of discomfort of those engaged in e-learning for the first time would be catalogued. This is especially so if the interviewer were the ELAS as this would bring issues of positionality (Mikecz 2016); clinicians could be described as 'elites' and a single interview is unlikely to unearth anything which would have the effect of dispelling this position. Within the workplace, the researcher working together with the 'elite' brings in trust and a shift in positionality to a more equal relationship as both start to rely on each other for the task ahead, each with their own capabilities.

Using collaborative ethnography leads to a rich picture being developed; however, there are limitations. Some may have reported as others expect to hear, leaving the question of whether there is 'no one shared or consistent reality' (Hoerber and Kerwin, 2013). This was not obvious in most instances with the ELAS being present for much of the time to observe as well as receiving the record of interactions from each team member. However, there was one omission noted by the ELAS. None of the other team members recorded their weekly or fortnightly 'catch-up' meetings with the FELC. This was not commented on by the ELAS in any interviews as she considered it their privilege to regard conversation with 'the boss' as a private space. However, this omission made for a less rigorous ethnography whether it had any bearing on the goal of considering staff training or not. It is also a demonstration of power structures; acceptance that time with an authority is built-in within work patterns making this a mundane activity going unreported.

Over-familiarity with the setting may lead to omissions (Burford May and Pattillo-McCoy, 2000); subjects may be considered too mundane to warrant reporting. An example of this was observation by the ELAS of several team members suggesting to an allied, but non-team member how to solve a computer problem. The exchange took less than five minutes and was not noted by team members participating, probably due to the mundane nature of the problem rather than a desire to exclude this from the study. In ethnography there is "a tension of involvement and distancing" (Hill, 2000). This is an example of involvement within the minutiae of life but a lack of distancing when it came to record details in that the study itself was forgotten.

Some aspects of power issues were considered in planning the study design; this could have taken the form of oppression of the team members if someone in a position of authority

examined the minutiae of their working life. This possible conflict was overcome by having a team member rather than the team leader collecting the data, giving the team members the capacity to describe their lives at work without fear of adverse comment. Tew (2006) cites Weber (1968) who considered power as a capacity to do something despite opposition from others; it was empowering for team members to consider their working lives in conjunction with an equal peer, providing much rich data.

However, all ethnographic studies have some issues of power and as the study went on greater consideration was given to this. This includes power of the researcher to reveal truths which are damaging to those observed; the power the observer has in their choice of material for narratives and what to leave out as unimportant or considered too controversial to use. In the case of this close-knit team this does not appear to be an issue. The narrative will be discussed in this paper as comprehensively as possible by the researcher in order to answer the other study questions and in order to satisfy academic integrity, although there has been consideration given to the choice of words over sensitive issues. Furthermore, the problem of over-closeness in a study (Gallinat 2010 p26) has generally been avoided here as each participant has their own separate role and therefore differing ideas about life on and offline in the e-learning team. Power issues from a Foucauldian point-of-view will be discussed later.

There are also ethical issues, as with any ethnography. Just because we can access, should we? Taking issues of ethics into account within the workplace, do employees want management to know exactly what goes on? Highly detailed narrative descriptions of interactions may be above and beyond what actually occurs. The observer's idea of 'truth' is merely a construction of that of others in the interpretivist mode espoused by Geertz (1973, p9). The observer will always bring preconceptions which may cloud the clarity of their data collection. In the practicalities of this study having the team triangulate the data will go towards ensuring its' veracity although it is impossible to ensure every interaction is reported without individual bias. Fieldnotes were electronically available for this triangulation and there were no comments on any discrepancies leaving the ELAS to believe that this version was the 'truth' and the notes were a good record of reality.

10.6.2 Considerations for future staff development for online course design

Throughout the course of the study, it became apparent that where 'staff development' was discussed there had been no definition of this term and therefore no expectation of an 'end product'. This was not necessarily a disadvantage as it removed constraints on what was expected for a very diverse group of people. It could be argued that staff development should be on a continuum and indeed the team themselves engaged in further professional development. The argument for informal training is shown by the team progressing the courses with the subject specialists once details of pedagogy and technology had been provided. It would also be wise to extend informality to the term 'staff development for online teaching' which could cover anything from developing student activities to the use of different social media and collaborative tools and meaning an increase in knowledge and practice in the subject. Assessment of development could also be diverse and could include student course evaluation and a decrease in questions to the technical side of the e-learning team.

Cramp, 2013 mentions 'the pedagogy of discomfort' citing Joyes, Hall and Thang (2008) who suggest that it is common to find staff teaching online without any training having moved from face-to-face teaching. This takes them "outside comfort zones and challenging assumptions to encourage emotional engagement may be important in developing meaningful dialogue in DML [distance mediated learning]". The ethics surrounding this as well as the practicalities of developing and running a functional course make this a hit-and-miss method of encouraging dialogue and may decrease the standard of the courses provided. The author considers it should be mandatory for training before teaching online.

The e-learning team ethnography showed that one-to-one sessions for staff development in technology were vital. The same could be true for online pedagogy and this could benefit from the provision of previous examples of online teaching materials. Greig and Skehill (2008) found benefit in peer action learning for staff development.

More use could be made of champions in light of the enthusiasm shown towards their knowledge and abilities by the team, perhaps talking about course design and running via short videos available to new online teaching staff. Jenkins et al. (2011) considered

champions improved the standard of e-learning courses. Mentorship might also be beneficial.

10.6.3 Team inter-relationships with subject specialists

Of interest is the influence of power in the interactions of the team with faculty staff and clinicians with the e-learning team members which became apparent to the author on scrutinising the conversations within the content themes. In the author's view all these players are specialists in their own world which have a bearing on attitudes, making it of interest to consider these in the Foucauldian turn.

Downing (2008) cites Foucault (1976) that:

“Discourse is a much more specific context, describing the intersection of knowledge and power and the forms of expression and articulation they take in various fields”

Hill (2009) also found it useful to analyse the results of ethnography in an educational context in conjunction with genealogy in the Foucauldian turn. Analysis of the discourses within the narrative shows that as a team there is a certain amount of judgement of those who 'get' e-learning, and those who don't, creating divisions. Here, Foucault's bio-politics, the different bodies, are apparent where the world is categorized according to those who understand ODL teaching and learning (the e-learning team) and those who don't (almost everyone else). Hill (2000) shows teachers as politically situated as they have "theoretical ideas about disciplinary power, hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement". This suggests care must be taken within staff development approaches to avoid alienating those who show 'otherness' to the team experts in their knowledge of e-learning. Approaches should be empowering rather than emphasizing the differences in knowledge of teaching activities. Burke (2000) comments that understanding differences in cultural practices in context, searching for that which is common and an acceptance of the differences will counteract a fear of change. To this end communication between team and subject specialists as Foucault's discourse 'as a foci for struggle and resistance' (Burke, 2000) should be sensitive to possible issues of standing within the community of practice of online teaching.

In terms of power relations perhaps too much is assumed that training equals change; staff specialists may see this training as a new way of adding to their workload without empowering them and perhaps demeaning them if they are used to someone else doing technical work for them. Sensitivity needs to be shown when working with specialists highly skilled in their own world who may be reluctant to embrace new teaching methods, at the same time clinging to the older and more familiar methods. The high esteem in which they are held as clinicians could interfere with the relationships with others who are engaged in teaching them something new in an apparently unrelated subject they have been coerced into participating in. There was no evidence of this found in this case study, just a reluctance of some to teach online as this would add to their workload as well as requiring time to develop the new teaching skill.

10.7. Concluding remarks

Ethnography has provided a rich description of the working practices and interaction of an e-learning team in a HEI. It has shown many ways in which they interact with faculty staff who are subject specialists with varying experience of teaching online. Considering the results in the light of Foucault's attribution of power in all aspects of life, future staff development should be sensitive to the ethos of subject specialists who are already experts in their own field. Using ethnography as an interpretivist approach has enabled theories about what is beneficial for staff development to be synthesised. A positivist approach would be less attractive as it would be hard to elicit from staff what training they need if they have yet to understand what the new work would entail and the study was to formulate suggestions for staff development, not to test them. From the interactions it can be concluded that the following ways of staff development will be beneficial for future engagement in ODL:

- Course 'samples' as examples to show the multimedia and text content and how social media may be used in ODL
- One-to-one training for simple use of content management system
- Mentors and champions for support

- Provision of a 'sandpit' within the content management system where ideas can be tried and tested

Whilst not all HEIs have e-learning teams involved in developing courses, where clinical lecturers and research scientists require a knowledge of ODL when required to act as subject specialists in their development and running, the suggestions for staff development are likely to be generalisable.

The use of ethnography could have been complemented by interviews with other subject specialists who were engaged in running ODL but not necessarily interacting with the team during the period of the study. This would provide a more comprehensive picture than that constrained by interactions during the time period. Questionnaires sent to a wider audience, in other faculties and other HEIs in the UK and the wider world on the type of training staff receive for ODL, or wished they had received, would also complement the findings of this study in the planning of staff development activities and could provide information on cultural differences and therefore requirements. Both these research methods will be utilised by the author for planned future research into staff development.

A narrative developed over several months has provided a much deeper level of knowledge about the culture of the e-learning team than single interviews would have done. Avoiding issues of power and sensitive reporting in this case has provided a good framework to answer the research questions without courting controversy. Ethnography has been beneficial to unlock the development needs of subject specialist staff for ODL Masters courses and can be recommended as a research methodology within this type of e-learning situation.

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Chapter 11. Publication 3

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11.1. Introduction

Any move to online learning and teaching requires staff development (Salmon, 2014) and with the COVID-19 pandemic, this transition was, and is, of necessity, at scale, and without choice independent of staff readiness (Cutri, Mena & Whiting, 2020).

This chapter describes a case study, beginning pre-COVID, as an action research study in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School at Newcastle University. In the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School, there are several masters programmes taught as entirely online distance learning. The staff tasked with running the modules within these programmes are usually clinicians, other healthcare professionals and research scientists, who may have taught as on-campus lecturers, but lack any experience of online teaching. They also have very little spare time for staff development training. Action research was a useful methodology for developing a response to this problem. Action research is defined by Kemmis (2007) as: “a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out.” (Kemmis, 2007 p168).

Reflecting on the problem of the need for rapid and ‘just-in-time’ training resources for a move to the online teaching, the researcher-practitioner (the author) developed an on-demand short course. Consisting of topics on pedagogy and technology use, it was run by an experienced e-learning lecturer (the researcher-practitioner). Evaluation of this course and subsequent edits completed the action research cycle. With the universal move online due to COVID-19, the pedagogy section was re-purposed to run as part of the university’s Learning and Teaching Development Services course for all the university staff. In this chapter, the rationale, development, running and evaluation are described, with a

discussion of future uses and approaches which might be continued into the post-COVID world.

In the years prior to the pandemic, support for the development of staff tasked with developing and running modules online was patchy and fragmented in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School. It was often assumed that staff able to teach present-in-person lectures and seminars would automatically be able to teach online. It was noticeable to the e-learning team in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School that those faculty who were inexperienced in online teaching often asked them for help just at the time the task in question was due to be carried out, and sometimes the same questions were asked again during annual iterations of the courses. To provide evidence that training was problematic, and to develop solutions for staff development, an action research cycle commenced. A collaborative self-ethnography was carried out within the e-learning team. The collaborative self-ethnography involves the pooling of data from several researchers describing their own environment (Alvesson, 2003); in this case that of the e-learning team, with data collated by the e-learning lecturer. The ethnography found that online pedagogy is to present-in-person faculty the equivalent of the medieval dropping off the edge of the map into the unknown, where 'there be dragons.' The ethnography recorded that several staff, inexperienced in teaching online, commented prior to their involvement in online courses 'I was dreading this', also bemoaning their lack of time for staff development (Clapp, 2017). Whilst training and workshops were available, the lack of time to participate was problematic due to their clinical and research workload.

Teaching in an online mode has different characteristics to teaching in present-in-person sessions. Not only do staff require a competency in the technology use, but they also need to understand the differing pedagogy of teaching online. This is thought to be more effective in the constructivist tradition rather than the transmissive method of traditional face-to-face lecturing (Secore, 2017). Providing activities to enable students to construct their own knowledge is one way of ensuring student engagement in online courses. Many staff find the transition to an online role is discomfiting, with what Maggio et al., (2018) describe as 'identity dissonance'. The unknown world challenges the beliefs staff hold about teaching. This concurs with the ethnography of the e-learning team (Clapp, 2017). Many of the clinicians, healthcare professionals and scientists had never experienced being a student

online except from 'tick box' types of course associated with good clinical or laboratory practice. It was notable that when these staff members designed course content with both technical staff and the e-learning lecturer within the team, confidence developed extremely quickly. This informed the response to the problem of staff development for online teaching within the action research cycle.

11.2 Designing and running an online staff training module

Responding to the problem of 'slaying the dragons' for the teaching staff, an action research cycle, in which the practitioner reflected on the problem (a lack of knowledge of online teaching), provided a solution (design of a short online module for staff development) which was subsequently evaluated by participants and slightly edited. The module developed knowledge of online pedagogy and provided practise in the use of the technology. The staff would use the knowledge and skills gained, that are required to teach their own students in the specialist subjects covered by the modules they were taking over or developing for one or other of the online programmes in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School. The staff development module was to be permanently available, and participation was voluntary but encouraged for new online teachers in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School. The content was built in a customised content management system which was used in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School at that time, linked to the virtual learning environment (then, Blackboard). The module was to be run on-demand and was to be tutored by the e-learning lecturer, who developed this resource. The theory behind the suitability of an online course was to provide staff with experiential learning in an online mode as students. The e-learning lecturer, with many years of online teaching experience, tutored the course to encourage collaboration between staff as student participants, and facilitate collaboration between 'students' and the tutor, which enable good student engagement in online distance learning. Socially situated learning is highly beneficial (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). With these interactions, it was hoped to provide an exemplar of what 'good' online teaching could look like. After peer-review by another staff member with a previous history of online teaching, and subsequent editing of the wording of some topics, the course was released for piloting with staff new to online teaching. Following that first iteration, as part of the action research cycle, evaluation using the experiences of the two pilot staff participants enabled some further content editing. It was

then rolled out to all new online teachers in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School, with the e-learning lecturer (the 'tutor') as module leader running the course on-demand.

Staff as student participants worked their way through the content which was a mixture of video (some developed by the e-learning lecturer with others obtained from YouTube), text, and reading. These types of resources are commonly found in online distance learning courses (Caplan, 2004, p178). The pedagogical section provided knowledge on the community of inquiry model, which is a social approach to learning and teaching based on Dewey's model (Thornton and Flinders (2013), cited by Williams (2017)). This was further developed for online distance learning by Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2000). The model requires sufficient levels of social presence which allows students to feel safe in the online environment; cognitive presence as student critical thought which is communicated to the rest of the community of inquiry; and teaching presence, where the tutor ensures students are engaging with online activities, contributing to discussions and provides tutor feedback on student work. These elements add to higher order learning. To carry out this approach there were activities primarily concerned with developing student and tutor commentary on the online discussion boards, as well as student-developed content on blogs and wikis. These activities involved the 'student' participants planning how they would develop and run their own online courses, reflecting on the differences between the online and the on-campus modes of teaching.

Gilly Salmon's five-stage model (2014) was used as a blueprint for scaffolding student learning. The stages are accessing the course and motivation; socialisation; exchanging information (here the discussion boards are useful); constructing knowledge; and finally, encouraging student development. The model showed the importance of socialising students, including how to ensure students felt comfortable in the online environments, and making the courses seem 'human' despite their distributed nature. For example, participants were asked to create welcome videos for the students on their courses, to put the five-stage model into practice.

Overall, the aim of the theoretical part of the course was to encourage participants to develop their learning communities, in practical terms creating a learning object (the

welcome video) which they could then use in their own courses to save their time. They also planned their own course development through the discussion boards, collaborating with other students and the tutor.

Authenticity of course content in the provision of real-world examples is important, guiding the content of this module (Herrington & Herrington, 2007). Discussion boards were available for activities in the topics on pedagogical theory, providing a commonly used example of collaborative learning online as the tutor further engaged participants here, encouraging continuing discussions. The relevance of the tasks is revealed to the students when using 'real world' activities; in this case, collaboration on discussion boards in solving problems of student engagement (Lister, 2014). Suggestions for running the discussion boards were considered particularly important in the online distance learning courses in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School, where there was only a small amount of synchronous teaching due to the wide geographical distribution of students in different time zones. Online tutors need to 'nudge' students to develop their arguments, rather than reach a conclusion where all discussion ceases. Encouragement needs to be given to those students who 'lurk' rather than participate, so tips for handling 'lurkers' were given, and activities encouraging participants to consider their response to students enrolled, but not participating, were provided for reflection and future practice. Reflective learning increases depth of knowledge and can be enhanced by collaborative activity (Chang, 2019).

Other topics included theory and practice in the use of technology, with detailed step-by-step guides available. These could be instantly accessed anytime by staff members, considered useful for times such as marking assignments and editing content in the virtual learning environment for future iterations, as well as running the virtual classroom (Adobe Connect, before it was replaced by Zoom). Other areas considered to be useful knowledge for staff were the duties of module leads, and the importance of copyright considerations when developing resources.

11.3 Evaluation

The module was evaluated as a staff development resource just as COVID-19 became a pandemic. Two staff members who had used the resource were interviewed, one in person and the other via Zoom due to the lockdown. One of these staff members had already been

a student on an online masters course, as well as receiving a postgraduate certificate in education online. Despite this, she said her confidence in knowledge of online pedagogy was not high, although her knowledge of the technology was good and she regarded herself as 'being quite teckkie'. She found the theories of online learning, and especially the tips on using discussion boards for maximum student engagement, were both new and useful, improving her expertise. The only change she would have liked is to have taken the course earlier to allow her to consider the changes she wanted to make to the module she inherited sooner. She thought being an online student would engender empathy with her students, and that it was beneficial having a resource accessible all the time, as well as being able to ask an experienced staff member for help (the e-learning lecturer).

The other staff member had no experience as an online student before this course, although she had participated in a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course). When taking over her module, she said she was nervous about the lack of visible body language which she relied on in her present-in-person practical training sessions to gauge how well the students were understanding the content. On completing the course, she said the content on communities of inquiry was key for her, as well as discussion board tips. She thought that the general content could not be improved, but when the course was introduced was important, as well as being more explicit about what the 'student' would get from it. She said that she was pleased to be able to access the course continuously, and that the knowledge had made her feel more responsive and better able to engage her present-in-person students as well as online students. However, she would have preferred a larger cohort to complete the module with; this was not possible because of the limited numbers and different starting times of staff newly appointed as module leaders.

A new video introducing the course was designed in light of the feedback, providing staff with clear expectations of what they would gain from participating. Managing student expectations in the online environment is important to maintain student motivation (Bordeaux & Schoenack, 2016). Whilst the course continued to be available in the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School, at this point it became clear that present-in-person teaching across the university would need to be curtailed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

11.5 Re-purposing the pedagogic knowledge for the university's response to COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the majority of universities globally moved their courses online with a requirement for staff development in online pedagogies increasing (Johnson, Veletsianos & Seaman, 2020). This was true of Newcastle University. The pedagogical development section of the on-demand short course was repurposed within a wider course known as 'Flexible Learning 2020', covering alternatives to present-in-person teaching available across the university, with tutors from Learning and Teaching Development Services replying to comments and queries in discussion boards. The aim was to provide staff development to continue an excellent student learning experience within the parameters of teaching during COVID-19.

This course ran similarly to a MOOC, with the entire staff of the university, as well as postgraduate students involved in teaching, having access. A rota of staff from Learning and Teaching Development Services and the wider university provided interaction with staff commenting or querying points on the discussion boards. The course was built into the virtual learning environment, Canvas, which the university had embraced in the middle of the pandemic. The 'building your learning community' section, repurposed from the pedagogical section of the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School course, was situated near the start of the course. It contained videos and text, as before, with communities of inquiry and Salmon's five step model prominent. The introduction showed how students could be 'socialised' online, and how to retain 'human-ness' by starting classes with a synchronous session, and ensuring staff profiles had their pictures with descriptions of where and how they could be contacted, as well as how they would communicate with students. 'How to develop a community of inquiry' made suggestions for using virtual classrooms (online sites such as Zoom or Teams) providing teacher presence, and encouraging collaborative working. Activities were designed to help the staff consider how they would transfer their knowledge to their own courses, and discussion boards were set up for responses and 'student' queries. The role of the tutor when teaching online was considered, including setting tasks and developing collaborative learning. Suggestions for enabling their students to work using analysis and synthesis at the higher end of Bloom's Taxonomy were provided (Gogus, 2012). Students vary in their motivation for activity using discussion boards (Hartnett, George, & Dron 2021), so ways of responding to students

featured in the resource. Finally, Learning and Teaching Development Services provided guides for using the various technologies (Canvas, Zoom, Teams) which would form the environment of the online learning communities.

Evaluation could have taken the form of assessing engagement on discussion boards; here it appeared that engagement was lacking due to the paucity of posts. Despite encouragement to use the boards for social learning, participants were more likely to view pages without connecting with others, decreasing learning (Askeroth & Richardson 2019). Evaluating course impact was difficult to do at scale compared to the previous small studies mentioned, with enrolled staff having such varied participation levels. In addition, the course continues to run with new participants invited to join regularly (new staff and more postgraduates as teaching assistants). Analytics available in Canvas were used to gauge numbers of staff participating as well as to case-find staff to provide feedback on the 'building a learning community' section via an online survey. At the time of writing, there were approximately 11,800 people enrolled on the entire course, although huge numbers did not actually participate for varying possible reasons: they may have been researchers rather than teachers, they used other sources of staff development training such as the webinars available from the Learning and Teaching Development Services, and they may have been involved in online teaching already. The highest number of whole course views occurred when the course was launched in June 2020, with another peak in mid-September 2020, and viewing held steady over the rest of the period.

Approximately 10% of enrolled staff and postgraduates viewed the 'building a learning community' section, higher than many other sections. Interestingly, this section was viewed by similar numbers to the section on 'alternatives to lectures', suggesting staff are open to developing knowledge of theoretical and practical aspects of teaching online. Using Canvas analytics, staff who had spent more than 2 hours viewing the whole course were investigated further to ascertain if they had viewed the 'building a learning community' pages. A selection of these staff (around 33%) were then emailed a link to a survey. There were only four questions: prior experience and knowledge of online teaching; confidence level for teaching online subsequent to participating in 'building a learning community', and if they obtained information from elsewhere other than 'building a learning community'.

Finally, they were asked whether their new knowledge had made a difference to their students.

The response rate to the questionnaire was low (19%), likely reflecting the current workload precluding what might be considered superfluous extra work, responding to surveys. For the question of prior experience and knowledge of online teaching, those who responded described completing the Newcastle University teaching award (compulsory for new staff lacking other teaching qualifications) where online teaching 'was touched upon. Little did we know it would be so useful today!'. Another had used the lecture recording system, available as 'personal capture' (Panopto) to enable students to present to their peers and receive feedback. Overall, staff did little blended learning and had not taught fully online before. Subsequent to completing 'building a learning community', on a scale of 0-5, where 0 was no confidence in their ability and 5 was a great deal of confidence, overall score was 4, a lot of confidence in ability to teach online. Staff had used the Learning and Teaching Development Services webinars as well as the online course for their information. There were requests for more videos to be available in 'building a learning community', as well as more exemplars of successful ways of making students comfortable in their online environment. They also requested more idea of the time it took to develop materials for their students, in the chronically time-deficient academic environment. Beneficial impact for students included greater thought in the development of engaging synchronous sessions, and more confidence in developing collaborative activities for the students. It would have been useful to discuss with students how well prepared they felt staff were in the move online, but it would have been hard to tease out just the use of 'building a learning community' as a pedagogical theory resource.

11.6 Ethical considerations

At each step for evaluation, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the university's preliminary ethics committee. In conducting the ethnography, whilst all the e-learning team under study were well aware of, and participated in, the research, the staff who they interacted with were not. It was decided to ask those whose comments were used as quotations for permission, which was freely given in writing. Care was taken in how these quotations were used, with anonymity maintained, with thought given to possible

consequences of reporting the comments. Ethnographers have to reflect on their own actions to formulate ethical use of data (Ferdinand et al. 2007). The use of Canvas analytics to determine staff use of 'building a learning community' could be deemed 'spying', and possibly contributed to the lack of response to the survey. The researcher did feel uncomfortable about using analytics, which she would have felt less so had it been to help university students achieve their goals. However, all staff lists remained anonymous to others in the university, following the 'do no harm' principle described by Kitto and Knight (2019).

11.7 The learning from this case study

An online course, accessible to all on-demand is a successful means of providing staff development for the transition to online teaching, providing confidence and 'slaying the dragons' of the fear of the unknown. Resources should be available at all times, particularly for guides in use of the technologies required for online learning, as staff do not necessarily work in the hours that advice can be sought. However, rather than solely using the online course as a standalone resource, collaboration with staff who are experts in the field of online education for interactions alongside creates more social learning. This provides staff with an exemplar of online teaching, and the ability to translate the experience to their own courses for students.

Working with others who were experts in the field of online education provided the relational agency for the development of a skill set within one group (present-in-person teaching staff) from the expertise of others (the e-learning lecturer prior to COVID-19, and this lecturer plus Learning and Teaching Development Services staff during COVID-19). 'Partnership practice' has been described by Hopwood, Day and Edwards (2016): the practice includes relational expertise where, in this case, the experienced academic worked with those less experienced academics to develop knowledge of the pedagogy of online teaching. These 'inexperienced' staff already have some common knowledge of the academic system they work in: rules surrounding degree programmes in the university and how labour is divided between themselves, and only need to develop an understanding of how to respond in an online environment to complete their knowledge.

It was noticeable that on a small scale pre-COVID, it was easier for the experienced online lecturer to act as informal 'mentor' to newer online staff. Inexperienced staff participating in the online module collaborated with each other and the e-learning lecturer as tutor, who could additionally act as a mentor when these students were developing and editing their own online modules. The e-learning lecturer designed the module so that it would provide exemplars of online teaching, with the student-staff able to observe, and discuss after reflection how they would use their knowledge in their courses, following Bandura's social cognitive theory. Here, agentic action leads to behaviours which are not created by autonomous knowledge development (Bandura, 2001). This was harder to accomplish well in the larger Flexible Learning 2020, which lacked the more personal touch due to the high numbers of participants, who dispersed without much further communication with their online course tutors. Instead, later they were able to work with technology enhanced learning staff from Learning and Teaching Development Services when required.

Activities within the staff development courses were developed to show exemplars of how students could be asked to participate, such as reading and reflecting, visiting websites and commenting, and solving problems. However, staff participating in Flexible Learning 2020 commented that formal exemplars would be useful, so it is necessary to be more explicit as to the purpose of these when showing exemplars in future. This is now addressed with case studies of where innovations have worked well displayed, although there are many types and methods which can be used to provide good online courses (University of Edinburgh, 2016).

Participating in a staff development course online prior to and during COVID-19 has been a successful experience for many staff. With the addition of an informal mentor/e-learning champion to help staff with their questions and provide advice on what works well, a pathway has been provided to develop the online teaching identity and skills of staff involved in online courses and blended education for the new 'normal' reached when the threat of COVID-19 infection abates. This increase in confidence in pedagogies and use of technology has been reported by other institutions during the pandemic, with some finding their development has been transformative (Zuo & Juve, 2021).

In summary, when considering the practice of developing staff to teach online, we need to ensure time is set aside for staff development, preferably in a timely manner prior to

developing online courses/resources. Training should be situated, i.e., online, with a variety of materials and activities including videos and synchronous activities to humanise the course. Exemplars and case histories should be provided for staff to see what courses could look like. Mentors should be available, ensuring staff know who they can turn to for help.

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Chapter 12. Publication 4

Clapp, A. (2021) Preparing to teach online: lessons from before and during emergency pandemic teaching. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*
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Abstract

Online teaching, using internet-based resources with students at a distance, could be described as an innovation when compared to the traditional in-person teaching carried out by universities. This makes Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory useful for examining the factors that enable this mode of teaching to be used, including staff development. Teaching online requires different techniques to teaching campus-based courses to provide good student engagement. Transition to online teaching can be a daunting experience if development of online teaching skills and knowledge is poor, or absent. This study aimed to investigate practices and perceptions of efficacy in staff development, utilising staff survey replies to suggest future provision of staff training, in terms of Rogers' theory. The study objectives were to elucidate from staff what training was received prior to their transition to online teaching, their opinions on its effectiveness, other specific training they consider necessary and timeliness of current provision. Two groups were surveyed. The pre-COVID-19 group (22 staff), mostly innovators, taught online distance master's students in a UK medical school Graduate School. The COVID-19 emergency teaching group (27 staff) normally taught in-person master's courses and could be considered Rogers' late majority adopters. Thematic analysis of comments revealed that for both cohorts training was hit and miss, with some feeling adequately trained and others struggling with the new mode. Clear knowledge of who to ask for help, with education technologists as innovation champions, provided confidence in teaching, as did the availability of exemplars of good practice. Barriers to teaching confidence came from lack of support and time for training. Future training provision with technologists acting as innovation champions and support from them and early adopters as mentors is suggested, with staff working relationally together.

Keywords: staff development, online teaching, innovation champions, education technologists, mentors

12.1 Introduction

Online teaching has developed as an education innovation over the years since the internet became a universal means of communication (Volery & Lord, 2000). Teaching online requires different techniques to ensure student engagement compared to teaching face-to-face, so staff development is essential (Salmon, 2005). Online distance learning (ODL) differs from the emergency teaching the majority of higher education institutions (HEIs) were obliged to carry out during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in how quickly emergency courses were designed and pivoted to online modes (Hodges et al., 2020). However, ODL and emergency online courses have commonalities in their pedagogy, in that students need to interact with learning materials delivered at a distance, as well as collaborating with other students and staff in flexible ways online, often at differing times (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Online materials that are delivered asynchronously need to engage students; collaboration and authenticity of learning activities need to be considered in their design, to provide both learning and social contact (Bennett & Lockyer, 2004; Ally, 2008). This online learning differs from the campus-based education where students and staff are able to communicate in person using verbal and non-verbal cues, though often through a more passive approach using lectures (Petronzi & Petronzi 2020). Both HEIs and their university teaching staff should see the necessity of staff development for online learning and teaching activities, though provision of timely and useful staff training with time for engagement does not always occur at optimum levels (Clapp et al., 2019). HEIs are more likely to invest in technology rather than the training to use it (Laurillard 2008, cited by Cramp, 2013). Many studies show that new online teachers receive their development in various ways: courses online (Donnelly, 2013), informal sessions with education technologists (Dempster, Benfield, & Francis, 2013); the presence of mentors (Barczyk et al., 2011) and even communities of practice involving whole online teaching and learning communities (Cochrane et al., 2013; Peacock & DePlacido, 2018). Lack of training can be a significant barrier to staff abilities for teaching online (Panda & Mishra, 2007).

The study described in this paper aimed to discover the perceptions of staff around their development in both technology use and pedagogy for online teaching. These staff members had gained experience in an online mode, as either teachers in online distance learning programmes prior to COVID-19, or for emergency teaching during the pandemic.

The second aim was to utilise these perceptions to suggest how staff development should proceed in the future.

The research questions were:

1. How adequate did staff believe the substance and timeliness of their training to be in technology use and online pedagogy to prepare them for practice?
2. Reflecting on their practice of teaching online, what did staff feel would be of additional benefit in their initial introductory training?
3. From the results of questions 1 and 2, how can we improve staff development for online teaching and learning?

As an education innovation, online learning and teaching can be considered in terms of Everett Rogers' diffusion of innovations (DOI) theory (Rogers, 2003). This has been used previously to theorise the use of technology in education, including for training the different categories of technology adopters (Sahin, 2006). Rogers' theory defines diffusion as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers, 2003, p5). In this study, the innovation is online learning and teaching, the members of the social system are university teaching staff, and the social system is the HEI. The categories of innovation adopters, and typical proportions in the community are shown in figure 12.1.

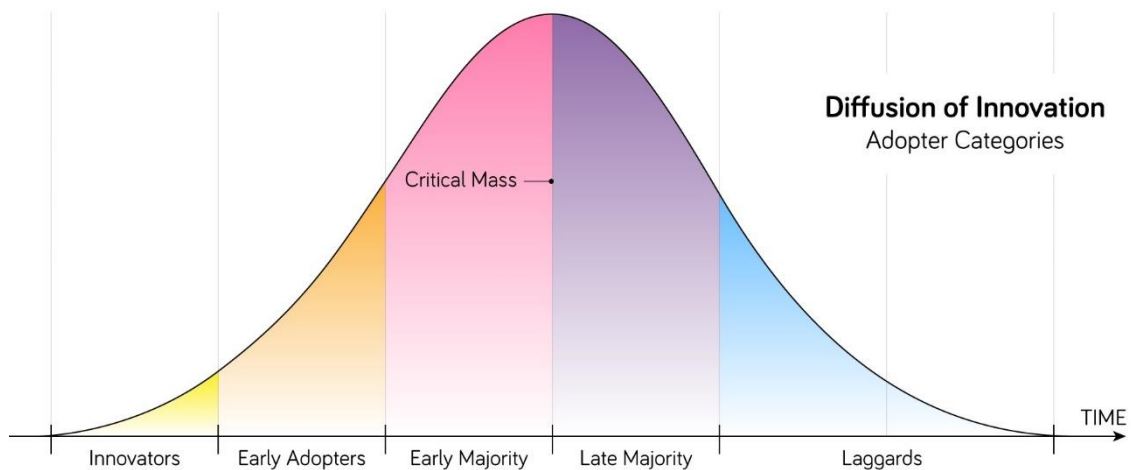


Figure 12.1 Diffusion of innovations adopter categories (Reynolds 2019, adapted from Rogers 1995, used with permission)

Early adopters tend to be opinion leaders, whose use of an innovation decreases uncertainty and provides confidence for later adopters (Kimberley & Suvandzhieva, 2021). Early majorities tend to think about the pros and cons of an innovation before using it (Rogers, 2003), and the late majority start off as sceptics but often adopt the innovation due to peer pressure. Without organisational leadership on innovations, particularly radical ones, innovations tend to be adopted more slowly (Rogers, 2003). DoI theory may, however, oversimplify innovation diffusion with the reality being more complex (Rogers, 2003). This study uses DoI to discuss how staff training in online teaching can be improved, in the context of training already received by cohorts of staff in various adopter categories.

12.2 Methods

The Graduate School in Newcastle University's Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMSGs) provides several programmes, both as ODL and as campus-based courses. For the purposes of this paper, ODL is defined as courses where all resources are online, with students and staff interacting either synchronously or asynchronously, at a distance from the HEI. One of the programmes, the longest-running ODL course, was considered by the university to be ground-breaking as a new innovation in teaching when it started up nearly twenty years ago. The FMSGs campus-based programmes use the more traditional lecture and seminar-based approaches, but had to rapidly transfer their courses online as emergency teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. A retrospective study into staff development for online

teaching with participants from long-standing online programmes was carried out pre-COVID-19. Following the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, additional information was sought from participants who taught on campus-based programmes, after moving their courses online in emergency teaching. The participants in the respective studies were module leaders on the ODL and campus-based programmes. Retrospective studies have been used in education research previously (Pancucci, 2008). The researcher and author is an online lecturer in FMSGs, with an interest in staff development; the aim of the study was to inform future directions for training.

Both surveys sought free text responses, rather than the more usual quantitative-type questions using a Likert scale because of the richer data produced, and were treated as qualitative research for this study. Ideally, interviews would have been conducted with each cohort (Paradis et al., 2016) but the survey reached a greater number of staff than would be available for the researcher to interview, particularly in the case of the second cohort.

Following ethical approval (1806/2017), teachers on the ODL programmes were surveyed pre-COVID-19 via an emailed link to an anonymous online questionnaire built in Survey Monkey®, using the semi-structured questions detailed below. This was repeated for staff conducting emergency teaching during the pandemic, with slightly different questions. Full participant information on the study was given at the start of both questionnaires, and survey completion was considered as consent for their responses to be used in the study.

The first questionnaire was piloted with two of the researcher's colleagues who taught on one of the online master's programmes. After editing, the questionnaire opened between July and December 2018 for all staff on the email list for the online programmes, teaching on all three of the entirely online programmes. The survey was advertised by email and also by the faculty newsletter, and consisted of these questions:

- What was your motivation to teach online?
- What technology training did you receive and was it timely?
- What pedagogy training did you receive and was it timely?
- What do you wish you had known before you started teaching online?

For the second cohort, ethical approval was again received (9167/2020): staff teaching on the normally campus-based master's programmes were emailed the second questionnaire link. The second questionnaire was not piloted due to researcher satisfaction with the wording of the questions, but more importantly due to staff (potential participants and the researcher) time available. Questions were:

- Have you taught online before?
- What help have you received from others to put your course online?
- What resources did you turn to for help both inside and outside the university?
- What do you wish you had known before the move online?

The questions for the second cohort were informed by wanting to know any past history which would inform experience and knowledge of teaching online. It also elucidated any help received from the faculty technology team (FMSTEL) and the central university Learning and Teaching Development Service (LTDS); what resources were used (an online development course was available throughout the university); and reflection on development. The questionnaire was purposely kept short (4 questions) because the lack of staff time available for the extra work of completing others' research questionnaires might add to the general level of stress for this staff group.

The following process was used in thematic analysis (guided by Nowell et al., 2017):

- Uploading survey comment data to NVivo (QSR, 2016)
- Familiarisation with the data
- Generating initial codes
- Searching for patterns within codes to generate themes
- Reviewing themes
- Reporting (this paper)

The themes were: help from FMSTEL, help from LTDS, administrative support, institutional understanding, complete lack of support, 'unhelpful' support, training relevancy, more advanced training, chance, accessibility, pedagogy training, technology training, time for

work and timeliness of training. The ODL staff comments were also interrogated for their motivation to teach online. On reviewing these themes, they were divided into the following overall categories for the purposes of this paper: technology training, pedagogy training and timing of training, with motivation to teach online for cohort 1.

Any limitations of the analysis could have been mitigated had there been other researchers to triangulate codes. Also, the author being an experienced online teacher may have brought bias to the analysis. The themes are discussed in depth in the results section, and are used in the discussion to formulate suggestions for future staff development for teaching online. The findings may not be generalisable but may be transferable to other HEIs in similar situations (Firestone, 1993).

12.3 Results

Staff comments are recorded with the identifiers '1S' plus number for the first cohort, and '2S' plus number for the second cohort.

12.3.1 Cohort 1

Of the 32 staff involved in teaching ODL courses, there were 22 responses, a 69% response rate. Of these, 17 taught online only and 5 taught blended courses as well.

Motivation for teaching online

Motivation for teaching online was an expansion of their teaching abilities, the flexibility ODL afforded them, improvement of education due to the greater student engagement in ODL as well as enabling their courses to reach a wider audience: literally world-wide. Some were innovators, teaching on the first online programme in FMSGs, and many followed as early adopters. However, some staff were 'press-ganged' with courses having to be put online following grant authority stipulations and for convenience: these staff could be referred to as 'early adopters' within the timeframe of online programme development, or late majority compared to the original online staff, though there were no complaints regarding any enforced moves online.

A typical comment on improving accessibility for the wider student population was:

“I believe it allows students to engage in a wider range of courses, particularly clinicians who struggle to be released from their clinical workload.....we must remain up to date in practice.....online learning allows this. It also allows a rainbow of students to come together who wouldn't ordinarily have the chance to engage with each other, fostering positive peer learning.” (1S12)

Technology training

Training in the use of the technology such as the virtual learning environment (VLE) and online classrooms was not universal with 6 (27%) receiving no training, 11 (50%) having received training, and 13 (59%) describing themselves as self-trained (some in addition to official training). One staff member commented: “I received one-to-one coaching from university staff about how to update the module and navigate the system, but have learnt a lot through using the system myself”. (1S5). Another said: “Mostly self-trained with good support from the online learning team [FMSTEL]”. (1S7).

One participant saw the FMSTEL team as mentors:

“Luckily for me I had brilliant mentors available to me who put the course together online in the way I wanted it presented.....They taught me as we went along, not formally but until I had a better understanding of how to navigate most programmes myself as at first even the IT language used was foreign to me.” (1S8)

Workshops were a starting point for technology use for some:

“I attended university workshops.....I learned then by playing around with the systems after the workshops.” (1S17).

Pedagogy training

Fewer teachers received formal staff development for pedagogical knowledge, with only 7 (32%) receiving training; 12 (55%) did not receive any training and 5 (23%) trained themselves, some in addition to receiving training in pedagogy. One had formerly worked for the Open University, as well as gaining a master's degree in education, commenting:

“I think I have an advantage through my work with the Open University where there is a lot of training on the pedagogy of online and distance learning. I also did a master's in education funded by the OU which included modules on online learning”. (1S2).

Knowledge was more likely to be gained by informal means, and more than one person made comments about how they self-taught themselves.

“The (small!) amount of knowledge I have of online pedagogy I have gained mainly informally by talking to colleagues.” (1S10).

“I started looking into the theory after having developed the materials. So, it was not really evidence-informed but luckily aligned well”. (1S14).

Workshops and other university online resources were also used, but less so:

“I attended a workshop and module leader also advised. I also did some reading around myself and have used the university's online resources. However, I found them myself and signposting to resources at an early stage would have been useful.” (1S17)

Staff wished they had known how much time it took to develop and teach online courses, and a desire for help from ‘experts’ was obvious, with the comments:

“Tips from anyone who has successfully transitioned from novice to expert would be welcome.” (1S4);

“I think it would have been very helpful to have talked to people who had experience of running online courses about how best to engage students and in particular how to encourage group work.” (1S10).

They found the support from FMSTEL invaluable, though some staff did not know who to ask for help.

Timing of training

Of the 21 staff who responded to this question, only 3 staff (14%) said the training in both technology and pedagogy was timely, whereas 5 staff (24%) thought training was not timely. However, 6 staff (29%) found technology training was timely but only 1 staff member (5%) thought pedagogy training was timely. Some of the comments were: “I would have liked to have been trained before the course went online” (1S8), and “I have only had any formal training in the past few months - but began delivering online teaching over 3 years ago.” (1S21). Their opinions of training were generally very good, though one commentator said: “Really helpful. Would have been good to practice on my own module rather than mock scenarios though”.

12.3.2 Cohort 2

The response rate to the survey was 37%, with 27 out of a possible 73 module leaders and lecturers teaching on face-to-face courses moving to emergency online teaching responding. Of these staff, 20 had no experience of teaching online, 1 had previous experience and 6 had used blended learning in their teaching previously. These staff, except for the single one with previous experience, could be described as late adopters.

Technology training

There were several ways these staff gained knowledge of the technology used in the FMSGs, with the most common being informal advice from other staff as well as more official training from FMSTEL and LTDS. Typical comments were:

“TEL team and LTDS provided a range of meetings and good level of support for asynchronous lectures” (2S14);

“I received a generic offer from FMSTEL but didn't take it up in the end. There were useful conversations between the module leaders” (2S3);

“... informal advice from some other lecturers.” (2S10).

However, 9 respondents received no help at all, but did not say whether they had sought help or not. University resources were used by all but 5 staff members. This included the cross-university staff development for online teaching course which also provided information on online pedagogy, ‘Flexible Learning 2020’. Some people said they

“just worked things out for myself” (2S7), (2S27).

Pedagogy training

Whilst some staff felt that the Flexible Learning 2020 course, available from June 2020, and occasional contact with FMSTEL was enough, others would have liked more training on pedagogy, as one commented wishing they had more knowledge of student interaction:

“I wish there had been more emphasis on the social and interactive aspects of teaching and less on content of lectures.” (2S7).

Also, it was interesting to see how some staff thought learning increased in emergency teaching:

“That some aspects are better than on-campus teaching, such as critical appraisal seminars where students seem to contribute more readily.” (2S20).

Staff were keen to know how others developed their online resources as one commented:

“I would like to see practical examples of people using some of the more imaginative and creative ways to use Zoom/ Teams, deliver material” (2S6).

Another would have liked examples:

“Would be good to have some detailed examples - perhaps videos.” (2S8).

Time

Time was a perennial problem, with one staff member commenting:

“Everything was pretty straightforward in the end, but was quite time-consuming. Without doubt, the most irritating and time-consuming function was adding and editing the transcript.” (2S26).

Several staff members commented on the time it took to develop their resources and run their course.

12.3.3 Comparing cohorts

Despite the differences between routine ODL development and teaching and emergency teaching, the results for each group were fairly similar. The ‘press-ganged’ staff in cohort one, as well as all the staff in cohort 2, taught online out of necessity. Both cohorts said they self-trained; both the cohorts had various online courses eventually available to them. They also had informal sessions with FMSTEL, as well as more formal workshops or online course training. Use of mentors, whether they were other colleagues or FMSTEL members were mentioned by both cohorts. The wish for more examples, particularly those provided by staff who had already experience of online teaching was mentioned. These elements are considered further in the discussion below.

12.4 Discussion

The situations of the two cohorts surveyed for this study are very different, though, despite the differences with ODL teaching, emergency teaching is still teaching online even though a rough and ready version, requiring both technological and pedagogical skills (Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo, 2020). Staff require access to resources, whether they are online materials or people involved in both formal and informal staff development for their training (Hamill, 2020). The same is true for ODL courses; lack of training can be a very real barrier for the ability and confidence of staff to teach online (Muilenburg & Berge, 2001; Clapp, 2021). Hence, for both groups of staff, their development was important, even if over-looked for some.

In terms of diffusion of innovations, some of the first cohort surveyed were truly innovators and early adopters as they worked on the online programmes, one of which started in 2002, long before the rest of the university considered putting courses online. This group led opinions on online teaching, helping it succeed, concurring with Kimberley & Suvandzhieva (2021). However, some of the first cohort were press-ganged module leaders, making them late adopters. With 'time', over a period of nearly 20 years before the second cohort (the late majority) adopted the innovation of online teaching out of necessity, rather than voluntarily, saturation of the innovation was reached very quickly. This is important because the communication of the innovation needs to reach the whole community for universal uptake, and any innovation requires users to be trained to operate it for success. Other sources of advice are the 'innovation champions' who influence others in a positive way about the innovation (Rogers, 2003, p414). In this study, the FMSTEL and the university LTDS team acted as innovation champions, demonstrating to staff the advantages of online learning and teaching, as well as providing training in its use.

The DoI is useful to examine the results in this study because it not only shows the social change associated with moving to online teaching, it also helps us to understand how communication of the innovation use can be utilised as training in the future. The use of diffusion research tends to have a bias towards positive considerations of the innovation (Rogers, 2003), but in the case of emergency teaching there is no choice whether to use the innovation or not, negating this aspect. The process of diffusion is illustrated in figure 13.2.

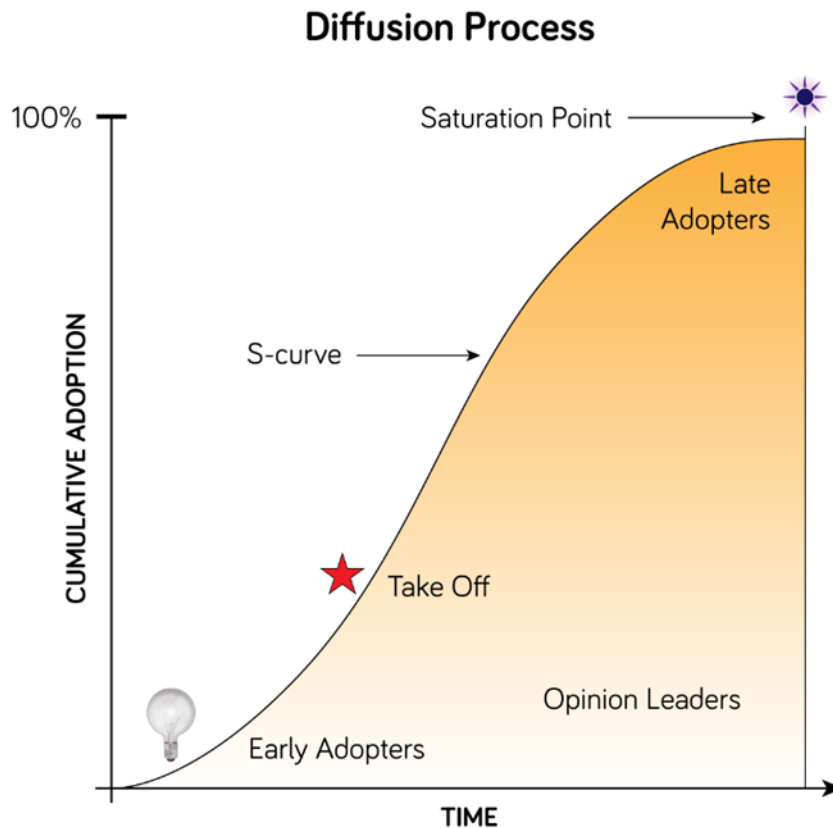


Figure 12.2: Diffusion process of an innovation within a community (Reynolds, (2019), adapted from Rogers (1995), used with permission).

The first, pre-Covid, cohort used their desire to improve accessibility to education for clinical staff, who otherwise would not have access to courses which could improve their working practices, to innovate with ODL. According to Rogers (2003, p4), an innovation is adopted by early adopters if it is “compatible with beliefs and past experiences of individuals in a social system”, which online teaching clearly is for clinicians as honorary teaching staff, believing access to master’s level education is important for other clinicians. The second cohort were forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to teach online, but for this group the adoption curve seen in figure 1 was extremely steep due to the compulsory move online.

The first cohort perceived timeliness of training in technology use and online pedagogy was not always optimal. However, when they did receive training, they found it to be of high quality. In particular, members of the FMSTEL team helped with staff development, mostly on a one-to-one basis. We can consider the FMSTEL team as innovation champions; these are often innovators or early adopters who have gained experience in the use of an

innovation and see the benefits. They are happy to communicate the benefits to others to improve the uptake of the innovation. For example, one commentator described the team as “brilliant mentors”, receiving a great deal of help from the e-learning technologists and e-learning academics who were then part of the team, on an informal basis. Once the innovation champions have trained staff in the use of the innovation, there can be much less contact as the staff have greater confidence in their own abilities: a form of relational working (Edwards, 2007). There were also staff who self-trained, but nearly a quarter to one third of staff reported receiving no training on technology or pedagogy for online teaching. This is common amongst online teachers in HEIs (Cramp, 2013). Staff need to be supported in the development of their online teaching skills (Peacock & DePlacido, 2018), so it is essential that good signposting to resources as well as other staff for support are available.

Of the second cohort, 33% did not use training resources at all, although they may not have tried to. Instead, some staff ran their usual campus-based lecture as a synchronous online session. There are many ways to employ online teaching methods (University of Edinburgh, 2016). However, if this was the case, staff failed to take advantage of the affordances of online teaching to produce the constructivist learning which engages students so well (Bryant & Bates, 2015). This was apparent from staff who had engaged students with asynchronous resources prior to synchronous sessions, finding their engagement better than in previous face-to-face classes, concurring with results on flipped classrooms reviewed by O’Flaherty and Phillips (2015). For example, this was demonstrated by comments from the lecturer running resources and sessions on critical appraisal. Staff who said they lacked training may have had a communication breakdown as resources and training was certainly available, though signposting to them is sometimes problematic. The university LTDS provided an online course in June 2020 (‘Flexible Learning 2020’), and FMSTEL team had been on hand to provide advice all through the pandemic. Several staff said they would like more training on pedagogy, suggesting that technology training was adequate, and/or technology use had been intuitive.

It was noteworthy that colleagues were an informal source of online teaching knowledge for both cohorts, concurring with Kimberley & Suvandzhieva (2021) whose early adopters provided professional development for the late adopters. It would have been useful to know where early adopters had received training prior to the pandemic, whether it was from

other institutions, workshops or one-to-one training from LTDS or FMSTEL, or yet other colleagues. Some of the first cohort were involved in providing knowledge for the second cohort, able to impart this knowledge by interaction with their less experienced colleagues in online meetings due to working from home becoming the norm. This is a case of professional learning leading to the individuals in the community providing a good online teaching experience for students, mediated by other individuals in that community (experienced staff), via agentic action (Edwards, 2007).

Both cohorts described a wish for “help from the experts”; in this Graduate School, FMSTEL are ideally placed to provide this help, working as innovation champions. Previous research showed innovation champions to be useful for e-learning (Gachago et al., 2017). However, the timing and spread of FMSTEL help could be problematic if too many staff wish to receive support at the same time, such as just before the start of a semester. This has been planned for by having ‘TEL leads’ throughout the faculty, who are the ‘go-between’ groups of teaching staff in schools and institutes, and the FMSTEL team to enable planning of support, a strategy previously used in other HEIs (Sharpe, Benfield & Francis, 2006). However, communication could improve: staff need time to read emails and TEL leads need access to email lists to ascertain staff training needs and wants. Despite these problems, involving whole institutions such as this faculty is seen as a good way to utilise champions to diffuse the innovation (Charlesworth & Murphy, 2016).

Staff in both cohorts would have liked more examples of actual teaching online, and tips from others with experience of running courses. The Flexible Learning 2020 course aimed to provide staff with some exemplars of successful teaching, and the university has a website dedicated to case studies of successful education, but these may not be well enough signposted, and staff may find exemplars more specific to their specialism to be more useful. Northcote et al. (2015) developed a website to provide practical tips and resources for development for staff as ‘just-in-time’ training. They do not say how this is communicated to staff which would be useful knowledge for other institutions.

The results of the study show how staff development can be improved in certain ways. In light of these findings, it is apparent that ‘just-in-time’ training due to constraints on staff time provides a way forward. However, collaboration provides a greater sum of its component parts and in developing courses it has been shown staff working with

educational technologists will not only design engaging courses, they will also undergo substantial professional learning (Brown et al., 2013). Improved communication of availability of the human resources, FMSTEL as the innovation champions and 'early adopters' for advice on the practicalities of teaching online, would all be useful to roll-out training in both pedagogy and technology use. Finally, it would be useful to have a 'one-stop-shop' such as a website containing case studies specific to the faculty as well as links to other courses and resources, including who to ask for help.

12.4.1 Study limitations

Surveying staff was a way to gain information rapidly. The second cohort the staff had little time available to participate, making the questionnaire a good compromise, despite interviews producing richer data (Paradis et al., 2016). It was apparent that staff were comfortable speaking their minds, and in the case of the second cohort, some used participation as a cathartic process to blow off steam about the additional work the move online had caused them. Moving online may have affected which of the staff were willing to participate in the surveys, with those who were dissatisfied with their training and the move online more likely to answer the questionnaires to complain which could in turn skew the results. However, enough staff replying seemed to be satisfied with aspects of their training for this not to be the case.

12.5 Conclusion

The results of this study have shown that some staff found the move online challenging, for both ODL and emergency teaching. Training in online pedagogy and technology use was not necessarily timely, or even present. Staff moving to online teaching feel they would benefit from greater access to experts and examples of good online teaching practice. Some staff have shown how willing they are to train themselves. In order to improve staff development for online teaching in this institution, communication of the availability of FMSTEL as a resource, and signposting to online resources needs to improve. Some practice points developed from this research include the following:

- Time should be set aside for training, course development, running and updating
- Improved communication on resources available for staff development

- FMSTEL and experienced staff to act as mentors and innovation champions for less experienced staff to enable online teaching
- Training, whether formal e.g., workshops, or informal with mentors/FMSTEL team should be timely and situated
- Exemplars should be provided for staff to see what courses and different technology use could look like
- A dedicated website for resources and case studies including information on who can be approached for help should be available.

It has been useful to utilise Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations as a theory to investigate the use of online learning and teaching, showing how the use of innovation champions can benefit staff challenged to take up new modes of teaching. Interaction between members of the online teaching community (early adopters) and less experienced later adopting staff will provide development in order to improve the student experience. This study may be of use to other institutions involved in staff development for online teaching.

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Chapter 13. Publication 5

Clapp, A. (2021) Lessons for Staff Development: Lecturers' Transition from Face-to-Face to Online Teaching for Masters Courses in Higher Education. *International Journal of Contemporary Education* 4(2) 31-43

<https://redfame.com/journal/index.php/ijce/article/view/5248>

Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic there has been an almost universal pivot to emergency online teaching in higher education, requiring staff development as online teaching differs from teaching face-to-face. The transition has been at short notice, with rapidly created training and little time to engage. Past research into the transition to teach online is scarce. The study described here, carried out in the year before COVID-19, aimed to investigate the how previous experiences of learning and training affected transition, and how staff made sense of the experience, adding to knowledge on successful transition to teaching online distance learning courses. Interpretive phenomenological analysis was carried out after interviewing five experienced online teaching staff in a Graduate School, using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questioning. The overarching themes found were connections to online learning and teaching communities, and developing membership of, and activities in, these communities themselves. Staff with good connections to the online teaching community via other experienced staff, training, and prior experience as online students were able to make the transition to teach online with comparative ease, compared to those who did not. With little connection to the online teaching community, transition was slow and staff retained a greater connection to face-to-face teaching and its community. Post-pandemic, the study suggests that designs for staff development, relational agency (working for short periods with online teaching experts) and situated learning within an online environment are beneficial if elements of online learning and teaching are to be retained for the future.

Keywords: staff development, online teaching, community, connection, online training, mentor

13.1. Introduction

During 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced universities to pivot their courses online, increasing the requirement for staff development. 'Emergency' teaching differs from full online teaching, being a rapid stop-gap. Online teaching, carried out for many years previously, may use constructivist approaches leading to collaboration, with courses developed over a longer time period. Since the first online courses, to the present day, attitudes towards teaching online, and availability and accessibility of staff training to develop their online teaching skills, have been both barriers and opportunities for success (Clay 1999, Aitken & Loads, 2019). Whilst there has been a myriad of case studies published on staff development in the past, there have been fewer studies investigating how prior experiences of online education, as well as engagement with staff development opportunities, influences attitudes towards online education (Rolfe, Alcocer, Bentley, Milne & Meyer-Sahling, 2006).

Prior to the pandemic, an ethnographic study of an e-learning team within a UK higher education institution (HEI) Graduate School, involved in supporting online learning, found staff tasked with running these courses having taught only on campus previously, showed a great deal of trepidation at the prospect (Clapp, 2017). Lack of confidence has been mentioned in other studies (Maguire, 2005, King & Boyatt, 2015), with identity threat or dissonance common (Maggio, Daley, Pratt, Torre & Dario, 2018; Aitken & Loads, 2019). It is useful to conceptualise identity for teaching in online environments to understand this dissonance. Online learning is often in the constructivist tradition compared to the more transmissive teaching often seen in lectures on campus (Bennett & Lockyer, 2006), requiring different skills of staff for online teaching compared to that of teachers on-campus. A smooth transition to an online teaching role is important for several reasons. Jarvis (2015) describes experience as being 'conscious and socially constructed'. Those lacking experience of online learning and teaching require development to create expertise in this role in a social community. Developmental context is important. Being shaped by the community in which they work develops different facets of the individuals' own working identity: their teaching experiences, their learning experiences and their attitudes. Relational working with others - teachers and technologists - develops expertise and confidence in staff abilities for their online role, without creating dependence on others (Edwards, 2007).

Without expert teachers, the quality of courses for students is diminished, and a likely rapid staff turnover due to lack of confidence results in succession planning difficulties.

To investigate the transition to online teaching, this study aims:

- To interpret the sense-making of experienced online teaching staff in their transition to online teachers
- To assess how previous experiences, whether training or teaching and learning in practice, impacted upon their identity as online teachers
- To use the findings for future staff development suggestions

The study was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. A small group of highly experienced staff, either actively engaged, or previously engaged with online teaching, were interviewed for their individual views of the transition to this role.

The research questions for this study were:

- What staff development and support did participants receive prior to, or during, their change to online learning and teaching?
- How did this development affect their ability to make sense of the transition to an online teaching identity?
- What experiences, both in the past, and in their role as an online teacher, influenced their current attitude to online learning and teaching?

The report on the findings, following interpretive phenomenological analysis, extends research into the development of an online teaching identity, providing suggestions for staff training to teach online, to enhance the student experience in ODL courses within this HEI. Lessons may be transferable to HEIs more widely, as greater use is made of the online mode post-COVID-19.

13.2. Literature Review

13.2.1 Online Learning and Teaching

For this paper, online courses are defined as learning delivered in an online environment via the internet, to students who are at a distance from the instructor, in-keeping with definitions discussed by Moore, Dickson-Deane & Galyen (2011). This is entirely different to traditional face-to-face lecturing, where technology (the virtual learning environment) is used as a repository to store lecture slides, or emergency online teaching where materials are supplied online as recordings or synchronous sessions alone. Online teaching theory differs from face-to-face situations because the lack of immediacy in asynchronous learning requires different methods to engage students. Synchronous sessions differ from face-to-face, with continual eye contact causing fatigue, less body language expressivity and more 'queuing' to speak (Wiederhold, 2020).

Online teaching staff need to enable student socialisation (Salmon, 2007), important for collaborative learning, which may be facilitated by using tools such as discussion boards, blogs, and wikis in addition to synchronous sessions. Without the embodiment of lecturing, the teacher has to provide resources suitable to develop student knowledge. Not all staff have the continual assistance of an education technologist, so some technological know-how is also required. The online teacher is often less of the 'sage on the stage' found in face-to-face lecturing, and more shepherd-like, guiding students and encouraging them to form a learning community, constructing their own learning, without necessarily being 'present'. This constructivist approach has roots in Piaget's theory that development is dependent on the learner's active experiences, in addition to Vygotsky and Dewey's theory that learning is a social process with the learners' history of experiences in the past influencing knowledge (Mayer, 2009).

13.2.2 Staff Development and Identity

Staff development is a requirement for learning and teaching online (Salmon, 2007). To staff, identifying as subject specialists and face-to-face lecturers, the change required may be perceived as a threat to their professional identity (Brownell & Tanner, 2012). There are a multitude of factors contributing to teaching identity. These include being a member of an established teaching community, having the skills associated with being an expert teacher,

self-view, and previous life experiences (Lerserth, 2013). According to Lerserth (2013), self-view determines success. However, little attention has been given to change in identity to online from face-to-face teaching, manifest in staff self-view, or confidence in their abilities at the transition.

Staff are more likely to be trained in technology use rather than the pedagogy of online education (Owens, 2012). However, training availability and time for engagement with it varies. Methods employed are online courses, workshops and mentoring amongst others (Cramp, 2013; Campbell, 2016; Barczyk, Buckenmeyer, Feldman, & Hixon, 2011). Greater student engagement occurs after effective staff training (Stephens & Mottet, 2009). For HEIs to retain staff in an online role, staff must feel competent to carry it out; effective professional development can be transformational (Dempster, Benfield & Francis, 2012). This is of importance when considering the methods and resources used for staff development as is shown by the study detailed below.

13.3. Methods

13.3.1 Phenomenology

Investigation of people's experiences lends itself to an inductive qualitative design. In this study, the experiences related by the participants were subjected to interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) allowing meaning to be made of the lived experience of a person (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). IPA is an interpretation of someone's experience, rather than an account of that experience, because researchers try to interpret others' 'sense-making' (Smith & Osborn, 2007). It was deemed appropriate for this study as a method attempting to view others' experiences from their point-of-view. Previously, phenomenological studies have been used to investigate staff experiences in online teaching; e.g. Cornelius (2014) investigated staff experiences in synchronous virtual classrooms. Aitken and Loads (2019) investigated the experiences of staff starting to teach online postgraduate students. In the study described below, phenomenology is used to investigate how experienced staff handled their transition to online teaching.

13.3.2 Interviews

Five experienced staff involved, or formerly involved, in teaching on postgraduate online programmes were interviewed. This sample of staff were in an UK HEI in one faculty's Graduate School, teaching on three different programmes there. The sample was purposive as it used the appropriate population to sample for a study into the transition to online teaching and learning. It could also be described as convenience sampling, as all were known colleagues of the researcher. The sample was small due to the availability of staff members to participate in the interviews, although around five is not an unusual size of group for this type of study (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Ethical approval was first obtained from the institution's preliminary ethics system, and informed consent received from the participants prior to their interviews.

Staff, recruited via email or in conversation with the researcher, were interviewed in-depth in person or online via Skype for up to one and a half hours each. Open-ended questioning in individual semi-structured interviews was guided by questions detailed below, developed by contemplating how to ensure experiences were captured to enable the aims of the study to be met. Additionally, they provided a non-threatening and empathetic atmosphere, enabling participants to be honest and reflective about their attitudes and feelings towards work, at the same time avoiding participant bias.

- Please could you tell me about your job.
- How did you get into teaching/tutoring/lecturing?
- What does 'teaching online' mean to you?
- Could you tell me about any training you have had?
- Do you think there are differences between online teaching and face-to-face? What makes you say that?
- Please describe a typical day when a course is running.
- How do you feel about your work as a lecturer?
- Do you feel different from when you first started?
- How do you see your future teaching career developing?

13.3.3 Data analysis

The full interviews were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo (QSR, 2016). IPA, detailed in Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), was carried out as a process, shown in figure 13.1.

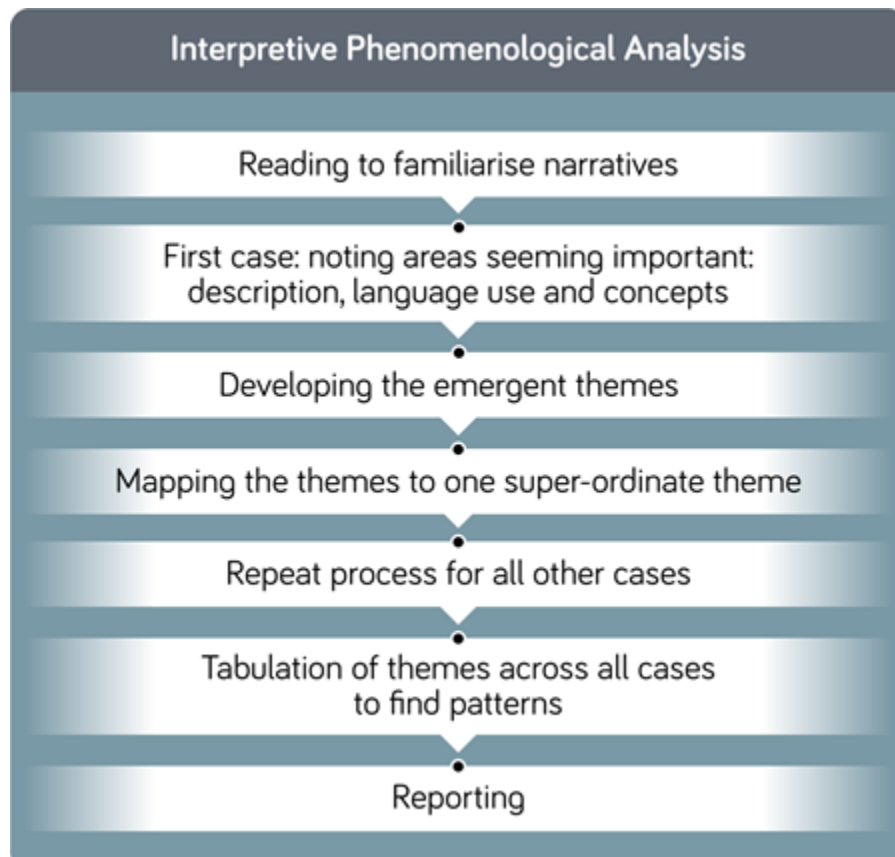


Figure 13.1. Flow diagram showing IPA process

The social context of the participants' transitions to online teachers in this institution, including interactions with other staff involved with online learning and teaching, was considered. The social context also covered rules or expectations governing the online teaching community, and how work is divided between the community's players. This is described in activity theory, which can be used as a tool in analysing the flow of work within a community (Engestrom, 2000).

13.4. Findings

13.4.1 Interviewees

The participants have been given the pseudonyms Clare, Frances, Kelly, Jane and Laura to maintain anonymity. They are, or had been, working in the Graduate School of a medical faculty in the UK as module leaders or associated roles in online masters programmes. Kelly no longer taught on Graduate School courses, although she continued to teach in face-to-face mode outside the university. She had taught an online module annually for four iterations. Frances had a non-teaching role in the Graduate School, but continued to run an online dissertation module in another institution. Clare, Jane and Laura, at the time of their interviews, had run modules in their specialist subjects for more than three years. Despite all being women, this was an incomplete reflection on the gender balance of online module leaders in this Graduate School. Outside teaching, the participants were clinicians or had other healthcare-related roles. All were subject specialists within the scope of their modules. Sieber (2005) describes the changing role of an online teacher from subject specialist to more of a guiding role but despite being less of the 'sage on the stage' entailed in face-to-face lecturing, subject specialists are still required online.

13.4.2 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

In carrying out IPA, whilst mapping the themes discovered in the analysis of the first case, the superordinate themes that appeared were community and connections, recurring as patterns across all the cases. The findings below provide evidence and details of these themes.

Community: Face-to-face Teaching

All participants were members of the face-to-face teaching community, being highly experienced in this mode of teaching as subject specialists. All were relaxed about this role, which held few stresses for them, having become experts after commencing teaching careers in this mode long before.

Clare is a medic and a highly experienced clinical trainer in face-to-face situations, saying that this is an expectation of being a clinician:

'most of the clinical stuff is expected of you so if you're going to have trainees working with you, part of your role in supervising them is to try to help them become better doctors and learn about things that they haven't seen before'

'Helping people' was a common thread across participants with clinical-facing roles. The expectation was to teach others their speciality in face-to-face situations as their specialist knowledge became expert. Clare said she had a role model in the past:

'there was very definitely a consultant who I worked with when I was training... whose style...I thought I would aspire to'

Frances, Kelly and Jane were all invited to teach face-to-face, both formally and informally, due to their subject specialist knowledge. Only Laura found teaching more on the periphery of her research role, with a few lectures and seminars delivered to campus-based students annually. Laura was the only one of the participants to not mention enjoyment from face-to-face teaching sessions, the others showing enthusiasm for participating in this teaching community. For example, Clare commented:

'I really enjoyed it, getting involved in teaching and we frequently get emails coming round from the education centre saying we're short of two people to do seminar today, please can you help... and I say yes.'

Kelly also was enthusiastic, finding the formal study days she ran for multidisciplinary teams to be 'fun'. Both Frances and Jane emphasised their enthusiasm for teaching generally: *'I love it'*.

In Clare's case, 'helping' pointed to helping in an offline, face-to-face community which she clearly identified with, rather than the online student community. For Kelly, the 'helping' was a face-to-face informal session, and direct email/Skype with consultants and general practitioners to improve knowledge of staff caring for patients.

Participants had all been in the face-to-face teaching community for more years, sometimes many more, than they had been in the online teaching community. They had received training for the face-to-face role, and their conversations showed this role was now firmly part of their identity. Clare's training was a postgraduate certificate in clinical education; Frances, Jane and Laura had participated in the local staff development courses provided by their institutions, either just before or as they started teaching face-to-face classes. These did not have elements for online learning and teaching. Only Kelly received no formal training, but it was something she thought nurses were expected to pick up as they went

along, with seniority delivering an expectation to teach the less experienced, however informally. Likewise, any computer skills she had were not formally taught, but gained as the norm in her working community:

'I think about the computer skills you use on an everyday basis for a job...you never had any computer training whatsoever...you learn it on the job as it evolves, you learn off your mates'

Community: Online Teaching and Learning

Membership of the online teaching community required a transition to the different style of teaching, problematic for some of the participants. The new identity took time to develop, and a lack of time available may have slowed this further. In all the cases, the overwhelming impression was one of busy-ness in their working lives. Combining this workload with lack of time for exploration of resources, a barrier to full participation in the online education community is built. Kelly commented:

"my diary...it's almost set for next year... things have to be really quite far in advance planned in, and whilst all the sort of telephone and email stuff is just done on the run all the time'

This does not bode well for ability to attend training courses and workshops.

Availability of training in online pedagogy and technology at the time of entry into the online community was said to be poor by all except Frances. Clare found the technology intimidating:

'Really scary.... suddenly you're on the university system it's nerve-wracking.'

Laura had some previous experience of being an online student in some of the more 'tick-box' types of courses, which failed to provide her with knowledge of the online teaching and learning community. She described these courses as:

'a very static thing, that you could access and download and watch'

Laura had heard of MOOCs (massive online open courses) but had not come across online degrees, so this community was entirely unfamiliar to her. She described taking over a module, previously run by someone else, without training:

'I was really quite terrified! And thought, oh my goodness, I've no idea what to do....and actually realised quite quickly, and the module was about to start and I didn't have time.... before they were live and the students were querying'

Likewise, Kelly was unsure of both technology and pedagogy when she started, again taking over someone else's module:

'I knew I wasn't competent doing the practical interface and setting up the content and the activities in the way in which I would have liked to have done them, which I think would really have enhanced what I was trying to teach.... I think in part that was my lack of skills in actually doing stuff because.... that's a whole new area of learning and I just didn't physically have the time to take on that learning really'

This led Kelly from initial enthusiasm for the challenge of online teaching to become frustrated.

Both Frances and Jane appeared to be full participants in the online teaching community, moving between the face-to-face and online communities with complete ease. Both had been part of the online learning and teaching communities in student roles. Frances completed an online masters, subsequent to another masters degree taught face-to-face. She was enthused by the learning enabled by the online mode:

'The fact that I didn't just cram in the information and pound it out for an exam and it was all just forgotten... your critical thinking around it is just fantastic, and you just keep digging in...so the learning became so much more meaningful for me than my first experience. And I loved that, I really loved that different way of learningand it meant I was much more engaged, a much more meaningful learning experience as a student.'

Frances had participated in a full month-long online staff development course providing training in technology and pedagogy at another institution, initiating her into the online teaching community. A mentor was provided for the first few weeks of teaching, consolidating her membership of this community.

Similarly, Jane had prior experience of being an online student which developed her experience of what 'good' online learning and teaching looked like:

'So, I'd been involved in being a recipient. So, I suppose all I did was bring...that knowledge..... I must have just thought this is how it should look'.

Successful Connections with Online Teaching Communities

There needs to be established connections to the online teaching community to join it. For these participants, connection was via other faculty already involved in teaching online or via learning technologists who help in course development. For example, Jane was well-

connected to the online teaching community, first via an education technologist who had designed the course in conjunction with Jane and another subject specialist, then with an e-learning team administrator who helped with running and changes, meaning that she had very few technology issues despite a lack of training.

In discussing the differences between online and in-person pedagogy, Jane thought that good teaching was 'good teaching' no matter where it was. It was just in the practice of it these two communities differed. Jane enthused about the affordances of the online teaching community compared to the face-to-face offerings:

'I don't think there's a lot of difference between working online and teaching face-to-face. Except teaching online, I think there's more opportunity for engagement with the students.....Because if you are standing up there in a lecture theatre.... I could count on one hand the number of times that people have asked questions'

Frances had few worries, saying that whilst apprehensive at the start of her online career, this was mitigated by the training and the mentor:

'Did it seem daunting? Probably a little bit. So, I was also very grateful for having a mentor in the background, who was very good, who had been there for many years. I also had one of the most difficult students I've ever had in my very first class, so he helped me to deal with that as well'

Connection to the experienced mentor resulted in a high level of confidence for Frances in her transition to online teaching.

Less Successful Connections with Online Teaching Communities

Kelly had few connections to other online staff and technologists resulting in a battle to teach online. This was compounded by a lack of connection to the university, where Kelly's role was solely in teaching the module, whilst working in geographically distant situations, feeling isolated in her position. Interpreting that lack of connection led to a loss of confidence in her teaching ability and difficulties with the transition to the online teaching identity. She commented:

'I really enjoyed the principle of it. I think the practice of it was much more challenging!'

An interpretation of Clare reaching out into the online teaching community was part of the willingness to say 'yes' in her desire to help, rather than a desire to fully take on the identity

as a member of this community. She thought that the online learning and teaching community had much potential, unfulfilled due to economics, of providing education to healthcare staff in developing countries informed by her work in a hospital in Africa:

'And it's a shame that so many people could benefit from that learning but can't afford it. So that [free education] would be the way I see it going if I was going to do more of it, yeah.'

Clare's comments about technology being intimidating might have been elicited by her tenuous membership of the online teaching community, unable to fully understand its language. The idea of not knowing the terminology of technology for online teaching (mentioned specifically) made her feel diminished and unable to make the connection to cross the boundary of teaching types. Initially, she had little connection to the e-learning team who might have helped with understanding the technology. In contrast, her connection to her identity as a face-to-face teacher was very strong. She made a comment about online learning and teaching being different to face-to-face, feeling that online 'lacked the personal touch':

'I think it does feel very different to teaching in the old-fashioned sense.'

'Old-fashioned' teaching could be interpreted as an equivalent to 'the good old days', metaphorically replaced by a recent poor substitute. However, she enjoyed the flexibility of online teaching.

Laura felt there were major differences between teaching face-to-face and online, as well as a discomfort with understanding how her module fitted into the full masters programme. She described a feeling of bewilderment, which seemed to have abated once she had made connections with other online teaching staff:

'well, speaking to people like xxxx and yyyy, and people who've done it – their advice is really useful. And also getting the students' feedback and getting the previous year's and seeing what they liked, it was that kind of thing.'

Gaining Experience with Greater Connections to Online Teaching Communities

Once the participants had gained experience, as well as some staff development advice and training, they gained confidence in their approach to online learning and teaching. This included making deeper connections to the learning technology team in the Graduate

School. Clare said she received training from the education technologist on using various technologies, as well as recent access to an online pedagogy development module:

'I feel I've got a much better handle of what is expected of me and what is expected of the students having had the module run a few times.'

Similarly, Laura found her confidence grew with experience, though time was still an issue:

'Well, a lot more confident than I did, but I still feel there is an enormous amount to learn and I'm also awfully conscious that I could improve it just a bit, you know if I just had the time, more time when I could make it a priority'

The prior lack of connection to the online community, who could have helped them gain confidence and knowledge, was evident in Laura and Clare's comments, although Clare 'self-helped' in learning the technology:

'you just need to have some time on it and click your way about. And certainly a few top tips or a sort of handy hints leaflet sort of explaining the terminology would... maybe save some angst'

Laura described 'fumbling' her way around the virtual learning environment. It was two to three years of teaching before either she or Clare had any connections with the e-learning team, but from then on, they gained confidence, becoming more at home with their online identities. Laura, like Kelly, thought that the university had made the assumption that because she could teach face-to-face, she would be able to teach online just as easily, not providing a connection to those 'in the know' until long after Laura's online teaching had begun. Any training and advice were late, but well received, giving her confidence to act in her role online:

'certainly, now knowing where to go to ask, I feel comfortable with people and like seeing things that they've done well and think oh I could do that next time'

Kelly, whilst feeling more confident with later iterations of her module, did not connect with other staff or much training due to geography and workload:

'if you are actually someone who is working in clinical practice out of the area, that's the whole day taken up for me to get to [a training session], do that hour and a half session and then come back again'

This was not the stated reason Kelly no longer teaches online; however, it may have been contributory. She thought assumptions had been made that if she could teach face-to-face, she would be able to teach online:

'I think it was just an assumption that you know your subject and you've been teaching, so you would somehow evolve to know how to do this. And actually, there was a clear knowledge and skills gap for me!'

This disconnection engendered isolation, and the under-developed knowledge of the norms of the university community appeared to leave Kelly feeling incompetent, lacking in confidence and stressed by the technology.

Connections with Students

Clare keenly felt the lack of connection to students, compared to those in face-to-face situations where she could visibly see development occurring:

'when you've seen the same students on the ward.... you get a feel for their communication skills, you see how they interact with different people and patients.... umm.... you see them caught off the hoof just a little bit; they haven't had a chance to polish everything before it's loaded online for me to look at it. So, I think you get a better understanding of them because you're in the same room with them at the same time.'

Clare described a feeling of disconnect or detachment from her online students:

'the interactions that we have via the [VLE] and the, umm, blogs that they put up...it feels quite removed from teaching if you were in a small group with people... it can be quite difficult to get that involved....'

Kelly developed a good connection with her online students:

'I got some quite interesting discussions going.....either the second or the third year that I did it there were some really good discussions...sharing their experiences, and the others in the group say ooh, that's a bit unusual, and it obviously just piqued people's interest.'

Overall, the findings indicate that participants perceived development of knowledge of online teaching community practice, and being connected to members of the online community itself, affects their self-view of abilities and confidence in the transition to online teaching.

13.5. Discussion

The comments from the study participants illustrate the patchy support available for the staff development to enable online teaching identities to develop, as well as the effect this had on the participants perceptions and attitudes towards teaching online. Formal training was available for Frances as well as the experience of being an online student, both for a

masters degree and for staff development. Jane used the experiences of being a student online to inform her identity development, as well as the aid of an education technologist and later, an e-learning administrator. Clare, Kelly and Laura initially received no support for development and lacked prior experience as online students. Their development was helped later in their careers as online teachers by interactions with e-learning technologists as relational working, occasional workshops and an online course.

When taking on the responsibility of running an online module, Clare, Kelly and Laura were barely in Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development', the area where a learner needs help from others to be able to accomplish tasks, which they will be able to complete independently when their knowledge and experiences are complete (Shabani, Khatib & Saman, 2010). Despite experience in face-to-face teaching, they lacked the social interaction, or connections, affording access to the online teaching community. Situated learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991) taking place in a social context was non-existent, resulting in fear and lack of confidence shown by Laura and Clare, and frustrations felt by Kelly.

Consideration of the online teaching community as a community of practice, where there is an informal learning interaction between experts and novices, enabling novices to also become experts, described by Lave and Wenger (1991) is too simple for the participants in this study. It is more useful to consider in terms of Engestrom's (2000) activity theory. The transition from face-to-face teaching, with its own rules (or expectations and practices) and community to online teaching is a process forming an activity system, having rules or practices, and community consisting of other online teachers, e-learning technologists, administrators and Graduate School management, with the labour divided between the players. However, in the activity system in the cases of Clare, Kelly and Laura, some of the connections normally seen in the teaching transition activity system are absent, preventing the smooth transition to an online teaching identity. These novices already identify as expert teachers, but just not in the environment they are charged to work in.

To become members of the online teaching community, novices need to connect with the experts such as other online teachers and e-learning technologists, who have the experience and understanding of the practices of this community. These include how to use technology, constructivist pedagogy and connecting with students effectively (Bao, Selhorst, Moore & Dilworth, 2018). This was available to Frances and Jane, but not to the others, at best

leaving them in a liminal area. The lack of connection hampered the development of their online teaching identity to the point of leaving Clare tethered in the face-to-face community with 'old-fashioned teaching', rather than extending her identity to that of online teacher during the course's first iteration.

Staff development requires an interaction with more experienced staff via mediating tools such as courses, workshops and other resources required for the transition to online teachers as well as interaction for collaborative learning. Where this interaction failed to occur, work in the online teaching role was problematical, being described by the participants as 'terrifying' and 'scary'. The perception of Clare, Kelly and Laura that the university assumed they would be able to teach online without further development because they were experienced lecturers is common among staff tasked with changing to an online role. Cramp, (2013), cites Joyes, Hall and Thang (2008) who found that in practice many universities' staff transition to this role with little training. Anecdotally many staff are providing emergency online teaching with little or no training due to time available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The prior experience of Frances and Jane of the community and practices surrounding the design and running of online courses made them more comfortable in the online mode than those without prior experience. The history of being an online student, who has learnt how good online courses run, helps develop the identity of the new online teacher via "pre-existing personal understandings gained in other situations" as Hopwood & Edwards (2017) describe the workplace construction of knowledge. This former identity ensured the route to an online teaching identity provided confidence: Frances had been a member of an activity system, albeit a different activity system (as student) and had seen how the teaching staff had acted in this system. It enabled her individual learning (the new identity development) as well as a systemic change (an increased population of online teaching staff), concurring with Edwards' comment that agency requires mutual responsibility as well as individual action (Edwards, 2007).

Jane lacked formal training, but her prior experience as a student on online courses, and working relationally with an e-learning technologist, developed her identity as an online teacher to the point where she felt comfortable and confident. Both she and Frances stated their enjoyment of their online role, contrasting with the experiences of Clare, Kelly and

Laura who, despite enthusiasm, failed to 'love' their online teaching. The barrier to online teaching identity development can be bridged by working relationally with experienced online teaching staff. In relational working for staff development, expertise is given to those less expert with the novice and expert remaining as equals (Hopwood & Edwards, 2017).

The pressures of taking over from someone at the last-minute, leading to stress over a lack of pedagogical and technical knowledge, could be averted by good planning. Unfortunately, the instrumentalization of education has meant that staff have less time to spare with fewer people undertaking more (Maringe & Sing, 2014). The repression of professional identity development by this system is another 'layer' which needs to be considered in the context of staff development. Clapp et al., (2019) suggested a series of steps to be taken in online course development, including planning staff training, which would avoid last minute calls upon inexperienced staff.

Frustration shown by Clare and Kelly at their lack of technical ability resulted from their initial lack of connection and collaboration with the online teaching community. Training should be ongoing and timely as technology tends to change from year to year with upgrades to software and newer technologies being used. Knowledge of, and training on, technology needs to be available by various means on a regular basis, as well as time to attend (Restauri, 2004). This requires a connection to the community, needing learning technologists or online pedagogical specialists available to 'knotwork'. Here, the online experts will work relationally to solve the problem of using technology, in conjunction with training the fledgling online teacher how to use it in the context of their online specialist subject course. They are not permanently bound as an activity system as this relational work only occurs when required, and knotworking is not necessarily governed by any particular rules (Engestrom, 2008, p20). Time for training is problematical; this could be avoided by having online materials as a 'just-in-time' resource. Encouragement of a mindset which enables growth would also be helpful in gaining confidence for technology use (Dweck, 2006, p33), replacing technophobic attitudes.

13.5.1 Limitations and Ideas for Further Study

IPA has enabled insights of how online teachers' experiences of the transition to an online teaching role affects their attitude towards online learning and teaching. The author is an

experienced online teacher; Gadamer (1960) cited by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) warns that we need to be aware of our own bias which will affect the interpretation. Whilst aware that the interpretation should be solely of these particular people's experiences within their particular context, some of the author's experiences were similar to that of Frances and Jane in the transition to experienced online teacher. In the role of an online student and with an informal mentor present early on in her online teaching career, she now trains staff to teach online via online courses, and may bring some preconceptions to the interpretation from this experience.

The choice of participants was heavily influenced by availability of staff for interviews. That more women generally are online lecturers reflects socialisation theory that 'pigeon-holes' individuals into specific roles governed by their gender by socialisation as children, leading to women entering careers with teaching and caring roles (Silander, Haake & Lindberg, 2013). This is despite equal opportunities being the norm in this institution as well as in law in this country. The lack of other genders of participants is not a true reflection of the gender-balance of staff in the Graduate School, but merely a reflection of this study using convenience sampling. Further research using a greater number of participants and other genders could be useful.

These findings show that in the transition from teaching face-to-face to the online teaching community, timely support for staff development, or its' lack, influenced the attitudes of those interviewed for this study.

13.6. Conclusions

IPA was used to uncover the attitudes, perceptions and practicalities involved in the transition to an online role for Graduate School staff. It has been successful in that the study aims of capturing their previous experiences, and how participants made sense of the experience of becoming an online teacher, have been met. The results lead to a conclusion that good training and interaction with other online teachers and education technologists is essential in the development of an online teaching identity. Whilst it has long been known that good training is required, this study adds knowledge of how stressful it can be for staff left to complete this transition alone, which may impact them and their students.

The confidence shown by Frances, who had received the most extensive training, suggests that an online course plus a mentor is a very successful combination. Online courses provide situated learning, enabling staff to experience the same parameters as students. Provision of a mentor, or availability of an e-learning team for online learning development, to also provide advice, is quite common in online programmes, where it is beneficial for subject specialist staff not to be sole course designers (Restauri, 2004). However, it needs to be made explicit that this help is available.

This study has used activity theory to theorise the opportunities and challenges faced by staff in the transition to an online teaching role, and inform the conclusions. Prior history of the community as online students, and training, enables a confident transition to their new identity. Relational agency is a powerful means of developing identity for new online teachers interacting with more experienced staff in this community.

The author as an online teacher may have brought bias into the interpretation. That all the participants were known to her would have aided their confidence to speak the truth known to them, and using open questions avoided influencing responses (Smith & Noble, 2014). Selection bias is possible, but all the Graduate School online teachers are known to the researcher, so this would occur whoever was invited to participate from the school.

Around the time of this investigation, an online module for staff development was designed for new online teaching staff with an experienced mentor (the researcher) available as tutor. Future research will be conducted to evaluate its success, and sections have indeed been used to inform part of the cross-university online staff development course during COVID-19. For many other institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced staff development into online courses, which this study's results suggest is a good move, provided enough experienced staff such as educational technologists are available for interaction, enabling staff to develop their online teaching identities. Post-COVID-19, universities should not make the assumption that staff have the skills for full online teaching, as opposed to emergency teaching online, but provision needs to be made to connect staff with the online teaching communities for collaborative induction into this role. The role requires the provision of time for training, as well as development of resources for students, whether it is for full online programmes or blended learning. A good transition will

develop a self-view of competence enabling staff to be positive about their identities as online teachers.

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Chapter 14. Publication 6

Clapp, A., Reynolds, A., Bell, B., Lockhart, E., Todd, G., & Connell, T. (2019) Planning the development and maintenance of online distance learning courses. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*
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Abstract

Development and maintenance of online distance learning Masters courses in a higher education institute Medical School Graduate School involves the interaction of an e-learning team with subject specialists, all of whom are time poor. To allow course development to proceed smoothly it must be a managed process. Challenges were revealed during an ethnography of the team; the ethnography narrative was used to study these further to answer the question 'how can online course development be managed?'. Team interactions with subject specialists consist of relational working, leading to the challenges of course development being analysed using Activity Theory. This involved finding activity systems in course development and detailing where 'contradictions' (difficulties) in the process occurred. A new model of working was developed containing a checklist to be followed prior to course development, providing a means of managing online course development and maintenance, to enable working with best use of time.

14.1 Introduction

In view of the increasing requirement for online distance learning (ODL), a sizeable amount of time and effort from faculty staff is required for development and maintenance of courses, be they programmes or single modules within programmes. It has long been known that there needs to be management of these processes (Care and Scanlon (2001)). However, there is no definitive method of doing so. Ideally, learning materials will have been designed using pedagogical theories according to the institutional quality assurance standards; technologies used are supportive of users, and timely development can be within budget. The use of project management software to streamline the process has been used (Abdous and He (2008)). These rely on an ideal world; ideal worlds are not the routine experience of this study's authors. In the real world it is the authors' experience that there is little strategic management of online distance learning (ODL) development. This paper's authors

are members of team developing ODL within a medical school Graduate School in a UK higher education (HE) institution.

A case study exemplifying the use of relational working between the e-learning team and subject specialists developing ODL master courses is described in this paper. The team took part in a collaborative self-ethnography, originally to ascertain requirements for faculty development for online learning and teaching, covered elsewhere (Clapp 2017). Information on the management of course development, including challenges, emerged during the ethnography.

The ethnographic information from the case study was subsequently analysed using Activity Theory to show the complexities of the process of developing online courses. The results were used to create a management plan as a more joined-up process for the development of new Masters level online modules as part of the expansive learning cycle in Activity Theory (Sannino, Engestrom and Lemos 2016). It could equally be applied to the development of whole programmes. This was in answer to the research question 'how can online Masters course development be managed?'

14.2 Background

Previously, there has been a range of research into challenges in the development of ODL. Maguire (2005) reviewed barriers to ODL in HE institutions and found lack of time, training and faculty workload was repeatedly a problem. These were still a problem twelve years later (Clapp 2017). Amongst other factors involved in the management of ODL development are the presence of organisational infrastructure and market research; provision of all these factors could be accounted for in an ODL strategy but it needs to be applied in practice. This was examined in the past in the development of an ODL strategy and an ODL media unit, finding patchy implementation of strategy with evidence of missed targets in development, concluding that thorough planning is required for ODL courses (Sharpe et al. (2006)). Although this research is now dated, the ethnography conducted by this papers' authors shows a similar picture with the same barriers. None of these previous studies used ethnography as a research methodology.

In a UK HE Faculty of Medical Sciences (FMS), an e-learning team was established to develop postgraduate ODL courses. The team works with the subject specialists to produce useable materials for course content, hence ODL development is a process involving multidisciplinary working. Teams and units within institutions have been employed to facilitate online course development in many cases (Davis et al (2008, p126)). The e-learning team is in effect a community of practice as knowledge and skills are practised by a group.

Communities of practice were first mooted by Lave and Wenger in the 1990s and are found in 'stable' workplaces where the community of individuals does not change very much and others enter by participating, thereby gaining the identity of the community (Wenger 1998 p89). However, relational agency is at the heart of the team's work outside their own community of practice, as working with subject specialists involves training individuals for 'joint action' (the development of ODL) when required (Edwards, 2017, p6). Contrasting this, most of the subject specialists are not dependent on the team in any way during the rest of their own working practice.

The study exemplified in this paper uses a collaborative self-ethnography of the e-learning team. Self- or auto-ethnography has been used to study personal experiences within a particular culture (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011). Where there is more than one researcher, it is considered a collaborative self-ethnography (Lapadat (2017)). Whilst several ethnographies have been published relating to the process of learning online (e.g. Saadatmand (2017)), as far as the authors are aware there have previously been no ethnographies of ODL development teams, making this a unique contribution. Whilst barriers to the development of ODL have previously been researched, ethnography has not been a method. Ethnography was the ideal research methodology for several reasons. Accessibility: Bryman (2012 p433) questions ability to access study populations without problems but due to the collaborative nature of this self-ethnography, rich data could be obtained without difficulty. The interests of the researchers do not have tensions with the reflection of what is occurring due to any assumptions they might make as they are also the participants. Richer data can be collected by ethnography compared to interviews as a data collection method; the problem of positionality of the interviewer is avoided (Mikecz 2012) and the social and cultural context of daily life is emphasised. Hence the findings in this study are driven by the rich data produced by ethnography.

The working practices involved in the development of online courses result in several 'activity systems' being created. Activity systems are defined by Engeström (2008) as 'a collective formation that has complex mediational structure'. They contain a subject who interacts with an object through mediating tools, resulting in an outcome or a product (Engestrom (2000)). In the case described, as an example, the e-learning team interacts with subject specialists to produce ODL. As these are in effect separate communities, the use of Activity Theory is of utility to show the complexities of ODL development, further adding to conceptual thinking about the use of Activity Theory in education. It details the process, and where there are flaws in the process, it shows which points need changing.

Originally developed by Leont'ev and Vygotsky, Engestrom describes Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a theoretical tool to examine activity systems, to enable 'frictions and conflict' or 'contradictions' within the interactions to be found. Where these occur, there is instability in the activity system. In trying to resolve the frictions, staff within the activity system question it, creating a new model of the system. The cycle of 'expansive learning' is completed by collaborative development of a new model which is then tested and reflected upon (Sannino, Engestrom and Lemos 2016). Implementing it will be followed by reflection. If successful, the new practice will be consolidated and permanently implemented. Edwards and Daniels (2012) state that 'the use of Activity Theory provides a depth of description enabling analysis', leading to development of practice in education.

Analysis of activity systems encouraged by activity theory results in change ('the new model') (Engestrom (2000)). This new model is developed as multiagency working, with each set of players coming together when necessary to provide smooth delivery of ODL courses. This approach has been used in primary school education (Sannino and Engestrom (2017)), and to provide 'tools' in multi- professional service networks (Seppanen and Toiviainen (2017)) as examples.

Examining the activity systems involved in ODL development is likely to identify areas where contradictions can be rectified on a local level, transforming practice.

14.3 Methods and data analysis

Steps in this study were: a collaborative self-ethnography of e-learning team, followed by thematic analysis of the narrative. The narrative was interrogated for 'activity systems' and for negative comments applied as contradictions within the activity systems, and from this a new model was developed.

14.3.1 Ethnography

Following ethical approval from Faculty Preliminary Ethics, a collaborative self-ethnography was carried out by the e-learning team over five months, extending beyond the full cycle of course development, maintenance, running and evaluation. The final fieldnotes were available for all the team to triangulate to ensure this was an honest account.

The team consisted of seven members shown below:

Team member	Role
Team leader (academic)	Management of team plus pedagogic development
E-learning pedagogic specialist (academic)	ODL development and advice on pedagogy
E-learning co-ordinator	Design role
E-learning co-ordinator	Some design, also administrative
Administrator	Administrative role with some design (course appearance) and technological expertise
Education technologist	Images, videos, interactive activities and virtual classroom
Web designer	Custom building and maintenance of the content management system

Table 14.1 E-learning team member and their roles

The team works on Masters level ODL, some continuing professional development, and resources for blended learning for both under- and post- graduates.

Discussions at a monthly team meeting led to team agreement with the study design: each member recorded their interactions within and outside the team, either electronically or in paper-based records. Anonymity was maintained for those interactions outside the team and if comments were recorded for publication, permission was obtained. Notes were collated weekly by the e-learning academic who discussed the interactions recorded by

members and also observed the team at work. The team leader's records were supplied for analysis separately, with overly personal material not being recorded for ethical reasons.

14.3.2. Thematic analysis

The fieldnotes forming the ethnographic narrative were analysed by the lead author thematically after transfer to qualitative research software tool NVivo (QSR 2016). After familiarisation, the initial codes were generated, which were then divided into themes. These were agreed by the team for subsequent analysis.

14.3.3. Analysis based on CHAT

Analysis of the ethnography themes used an approach based on CHAT to find 'activity systems', described in detail below. For the purposes of this paper, 'activity system' refers to a collective of separate activity units which make up the work actions of the e-learning team and subject specialists as 'subjects' to produce the online courses as 'products or outcomes'.

Once the main activity systems were elucidated, analysis of the themes pertaining to management was interrogated to find areas where there were contradictions or frictions, preventing smooth running of the activity system, according to comments in the narrative. The contradictions show which areas in the system need changing.

14.3.4. Subsequent action

The team met to discuss the contradictory areas to develop a new model of course development, as part of the expansive learning cycle.

14.4 Findings

14.4.1. Ethnography narrative

The day-to-day working of the team involved interacting with faculty staff (clinicians and scientists as subject specialists, who usually have lecturing, but not online, teaching experience), to develop Masters level courses for ODL students. Meetings take place on and offline; mostly offline for long content discussions with much shorter email comments and occasional Skype meetings when participants are not on campus. During these meetings development and content is considered. Informal training of faculty staff takes place. Other meetings include full team monthly meetings where we discuss what we are doing, the

challenges and solutions. There are also meetings between individual team members and the team leader to decide the future areas of developments such as increasing the dissemination of reusable learning objects (for example illustrations and animations) and widening page types to increase functionality of the content management system. The team also talk to each other informally, solving problems and developing new software and expertise. These informal discussions were observed by the lead author and recorded in the field notes along with summaries of monthly meetings and the collations of team-recorded interactions.

Analysis of the narrative found the management codes and the themes within. For the purposes of this paper only the areas where comments were negative are reported in Table 14.2 which shows examples from the narrative which were problematical in the management of development of ODL.

Code	Theme	Comment
Faculty staff training in online pedagogy and technology	Lack of training	<p>'Only one person had previous experience of teaching online'</p> <p>'daunted by the idea of online courses'</p> <p>'a lecturer thought activities are drag and drop exercises only, rather than collaborative exercises which engage the student'</p> <p>'Probably I should have given her more 'training' on how to run online courses as there now seem to be lots of questions on how often and how to reply to students' posts.'</p> <p>'Over time module leads need to learn how to use [the CMS] and often after having lessons with xxxx it seems they get some confidence when they realise how simple it is, but on the way they can be exasperating.'</p>
Time management	Lack of time available	<p>'She [a consultant tasked with leading a module] was concerned about the amount of time it would require her to be online when running the module, particularly if the module is going to attract a lot of students'.</p> <p>'She then suggested that she may not have time to concentrate on thinking about it until July'</p> <p>'I've been working on the module as I finally got hold of xxxx for a meeting'</p> <p>'Still haven't heard anything back and xxxx is meant to be working on something else so needs chivvying'.</p> <p>'having to make course changes uncomfortably close to the running of it.'</p>
Support system planning	Failure to join-up support system and course development work	<p>'I was in contact by email over server issues, need to make sure they keep us informed about what they are doing; could there be a spike in traffic causing problems with the CMS?'</p> <p>'He wants a meeting to provide more confidence in their system, and thinks he should be more involved in what resources there are for us as there are over 100 people editing on the CMS platform'.</p>
Market research	Lack of market research	<p>'Market research is fairly minimal'</p> <p>'Several courses were developed without market research as obligatory courses in line with grant funding receipts from research councils; these were not necessarily popular with students'</p>
Financial resources	Lack of discussion of financial resource availability	<p>'Funding [other than team salaries] is an opaque area'</p> <p>'Certain research bodies funded student participation increasing numbers on courses, challenging as to how collaborative activities were planned at the last minute'</p>
Quality assurance	Management of approvals applications	<p>'We were talking with xxxx about problem approvals....'</p> <p>'The approvals take time and need managing'</p>
Personnel management	Shortage of subject specialists	<p>'We mostly talked about the modules under construction and the lack of input from subject specialists'</p> <p>'We had a meeting with xxxx on the new programme where it was decided to put this on hold unless a new DPD [degree programme director] and students can be found as well as getting approval'.</p>

Table 14.1. Problems in management of ODL

14.4.2. Activity systems

From the ethnography it became obvious that more than one activity system or unit was at work in the overarching activity system of course development when considering socio-cultural activities undertaken by the e-learning team. It showed that the team was both subject and object of activity systems depending upon the point reached in the development of courses. Also, that there were different objects within these activity units.

The first activity system defined consisted of the clinicians and scientists as subjects providing pre-course clinical and scientific knowledge, along with e-learning team knowledge, mediating the transformation of various online materials (presentations, personal capture recordings, audio) to the pre-course materials as the outcome. Pre-course materials are subsequently worked upon in a separate second activity unit with the e-learning team as the subject using their technical and pedagogical skills to transform online pre-course materials into the outcome, an online course. A third activity system was found where the e-learning team as subjects use their pedagogical and technical knowledge as mediating tools training the objects, the clinicians and scientists. The outcome is competence in online teaching as course leaders and online lecturers.

The negative themes in table 1 from the ethnographic analysis showed the 'contradictions', where the activity process does not flow smoothly. These are applied to the three activity systems, described in figures 1-3 with the contradictions shown as wavy red arrows.

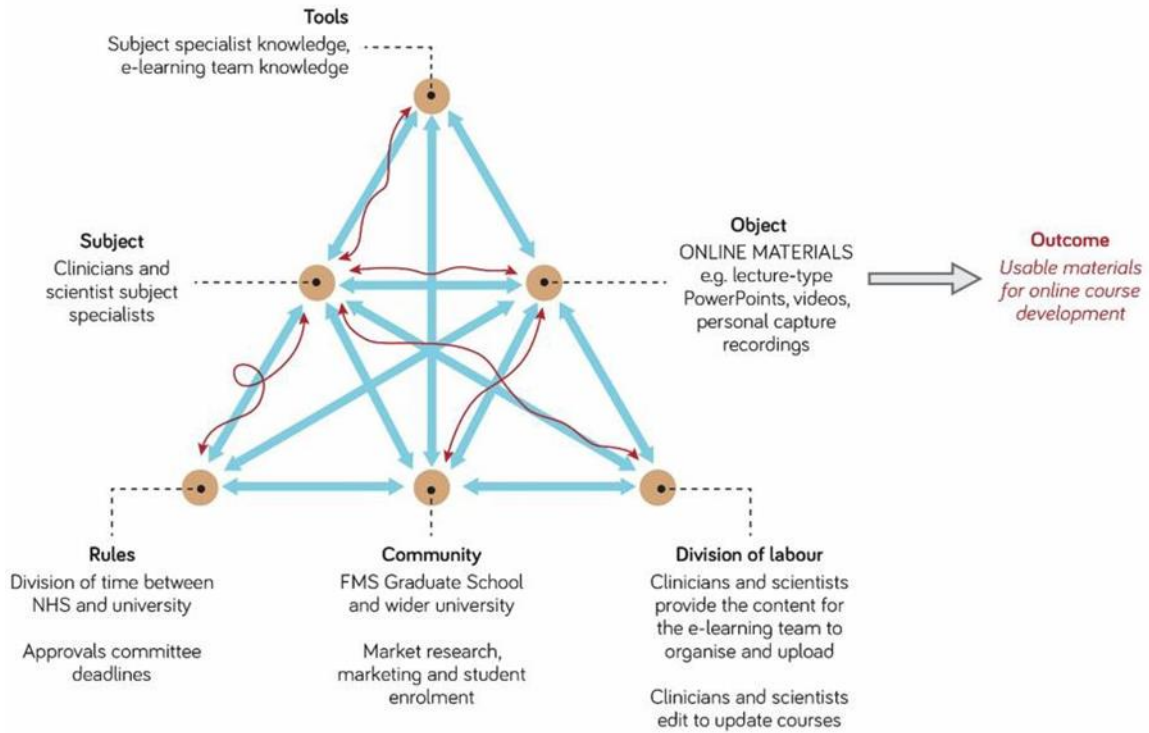


Figure 14.1: Activity unit with subject specialists as subjects

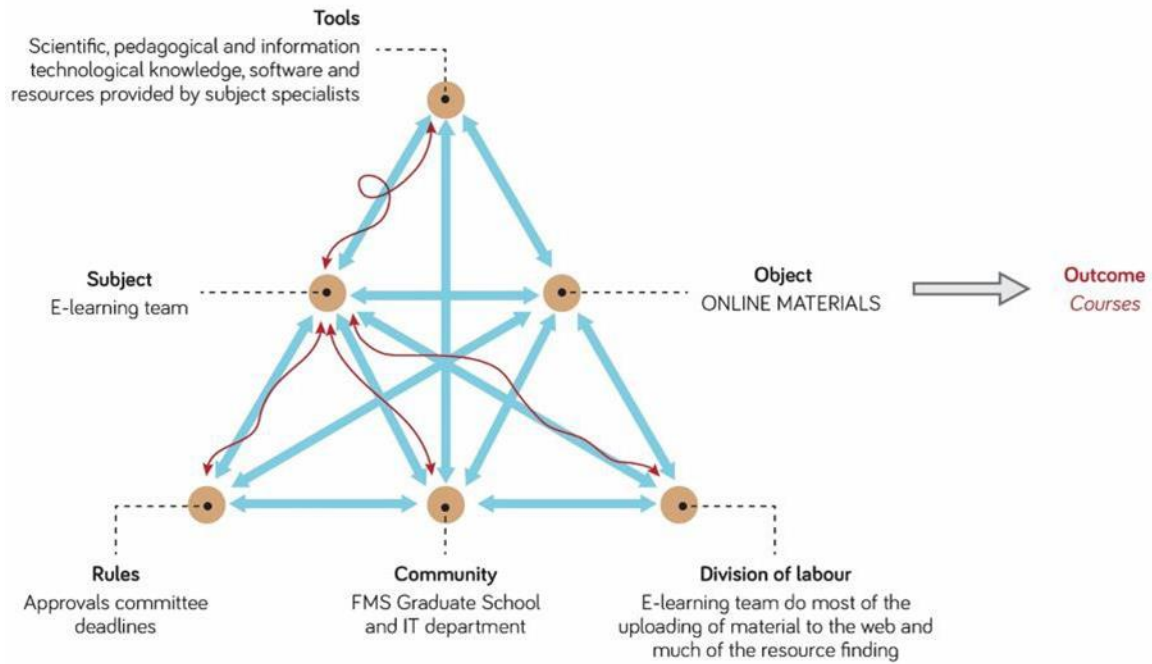


Figure 14.2: Activity unit with the e-learning team as subjects

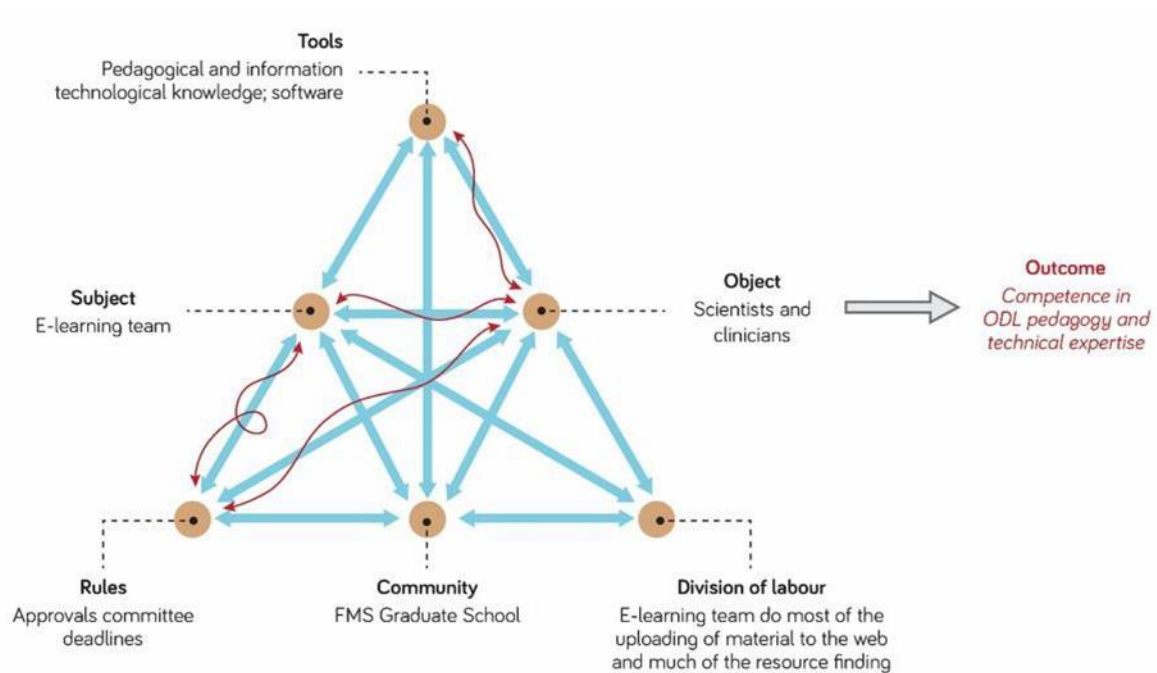


Figure 14.3: Activity unit with the e-learning team as subjects and subject specialists as objects

In the first activity system, subject specialists have little knowledge of types of materials to usefully provide pre-course for collaboration with the e-learning team. They are unused to collaborating in education development and have little time set aside. They fail to engage well with the team, missing deadlines. Subject specialists sometimes do not take ownership of the course due to a lack of confidence in technical matters. The time issues create problems with the division of labour when editing and updating. Market research is often absent or sketchy before ODL course development starts.

In the second activity system there was a problem with the 'tools': the e-learning team has issues with timeliness of obtaining materials from subject specialists so the tools for activity were lacking. Rules: quality assurance processes for approvals of courses should be in place before commencing development requiring scheduling on time; this was a 'time' problem when not all information was available for administrative activities due to subject specialist time limitations. A contradiction was seen in the division of labour for finding further resources and developing activities: team members expended time searching for materials when subject specialists did not deliver them. Further contradictions in the system were that the budget needed discussion and negotiation with the Graduate School community for new software and licences for images required Knowledge of enrolment numbers was required in good time to create activities. Communication with the wider community: information technology services communication was problematical for the bespoke CMS.

In the third activity system with the e-learning team as subjects, contradictions included specialists having little idea of online pedagogy and technology, requiring training by the team 'on-the-job', causing delays. The timing of engagement between the team and subject specialists for training combined with a lack of enthusiasm amongst the clinicians and scientists for training was contradictory as was the lack of management of approval process.

14.5. Developing the new model

The contradictions within the activity units outlined above was discussed within the team. These contradictions in the management of course development provided an initial list to concentrate on for a new model. The points in the list are discussed next.

14.5.1. Training subject specialists

Knowledge of online pedagogy is required for online teaching (Salmon 2014). It was decided within the team that there should be pedagogy and technology training for subject specialists with some being mandatory before course development starts, so there is some knowledge of what is required as input. Situated learning meant that some training is 'on-the-job', relationally working with the team. This professional development can occur in an informal way similar to an apprenticeship where learning also takes place 'on-the-job' (Billett (2016)); this is also the experience of the e-learning team. Training will help define the roles of the subject specialist.

14.5.2. Time as a resource

Lack of enthusiasm shown by subject specialists for taking charge of courses is due in part to time constraints; time is a major contradiction. University staff require time to engage in staff development for online teaching, as well as actually developing courses (Barczyk et al (2011)). Provision of time will also help the e-learning team meet its' deadlines in a timely fashion, rather than trying to complete tasks at the last minute due to lack of time of subject specialists. Timing of quality assurance processes needs to be managed with approvals obtained in good time before course development commences.

14.5.3. Financial and technical support for course development resources

Although new learning programmes and updating older ones may require experimentation with different technologies so there is 'trial and error', all technology needs support from developers or university-wide information technology staff, planned for in advance (Davis et al. 2008, p100). Similarly, library resources need to be available along with time for library staff to aid reading list availability. These need to be part of the development management plan.

14.5.4. Market research

Where ODL is a requirement of grant-funding bodies in this institution, course development goes ahead without market research as development is mandatory. However, were market research to take place, a course more specifically aligned to potential student requirements

could be designed. All courses need to be economic so market research needs to be carried out before too much investment in the course takes place (Chipere (2017)).

14.5.5. The new model

The e-learning team used a checklist to define the new model. Checklists have been initiated in the aircraft engineering industry to reduce human error and in surgical procedures where mortality rates were subsequently halved (Clay- Williams and Colligan (2015)). The checklists are in place before procedures start and without their completion the procedure does not go ahead. Whilst course development is hardly a life-threatening procedure, it is time and resource- consuming so the process should be streamlined and without disturbances, hence the advantage of having a checklist prior to commencement. However, as Clay- Williams and Colligan state, it is how checklists are used which means they will be successful or not. In this case it is a simple work flow to be achieved in steps, resulting in yes/no answers, making the checklist a useful tool for planning course development.

From the discussions of the e-learning team on the contradictions, it was decided that the development of ODL should proceed once the elements of a checklist had been completed. The checklist has the following nine points:

1. Has market research, and marketing, taken place? If so, is there an idea of student numbers?
2. Are university course approvals for quality assurance in place? If not, how long will they take to be arranged?
3. What is the budget (software, buying time for clinicians' availability, attending or running training courses)?
4. Do the e-learning team and subject specialists have the time and other resources required?
5. Is there a subject specialist willing to lead the course?
6. Subject specialist staff need training in pedagogy and technology: is this in the timeline of course development prior to course running?
7. Are institutional support systems suitable and available?

8. Are the roles of subject specialist staff and team developers well defined?

9. Has consideration been given for course updating including time?

The implementation of the checklist could be managed using project management software, similarly to Abdous and He (2008). It will be used as and when future courses are planned, and the effectiveness subsequently evaluated.

14.6. Conclusions

In answering the question ‘how can online Masters course development be managed?’ this study used an ethnographically-inspired approach and activity theory as the methodology and in the analysis of data to show where contradictions lie in the process of ODL course development. These areas were particularly in time available to staff, but also in training, resources, quality assurance approval, supporting systems from wider faculty and in marketing. The lack of time and the unknown quantity of online pedagogy and technology were the main constraints for subject specialists, reducing their buy-in to ODL development.

Collaboration within the e-learning team resulted in a checklist to be used in the management of course development, streamlining the process which should save time for all concerned. Use of the checklist as part of the new model of activity before the online development process begins will be tested using action research with reflection and further editing. This completes Engestrom’s cycle of expansive learning (Sannino, Engestrom and Lemos (2016)).

This research was original in its subject and methodology (the ethnography of the e-learning team and those who interact with it; the use of Activity Theory to elucidate areas where professional working was challenging). It has provided insights into collaborative working across disciplines towards online education, increasing conceptual knowledge of relational working. The resulting checklist is likely to prove useful in managing the process of course development if as successful as their use in the aero-engineering industry and in surgery. Benefits from streamlining in a time-poor environment using this management may be generalizable to similar situations of ODL module and programme development in other HEIs.

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Appendix A. Dialogic Self Theory and theories used in the papers

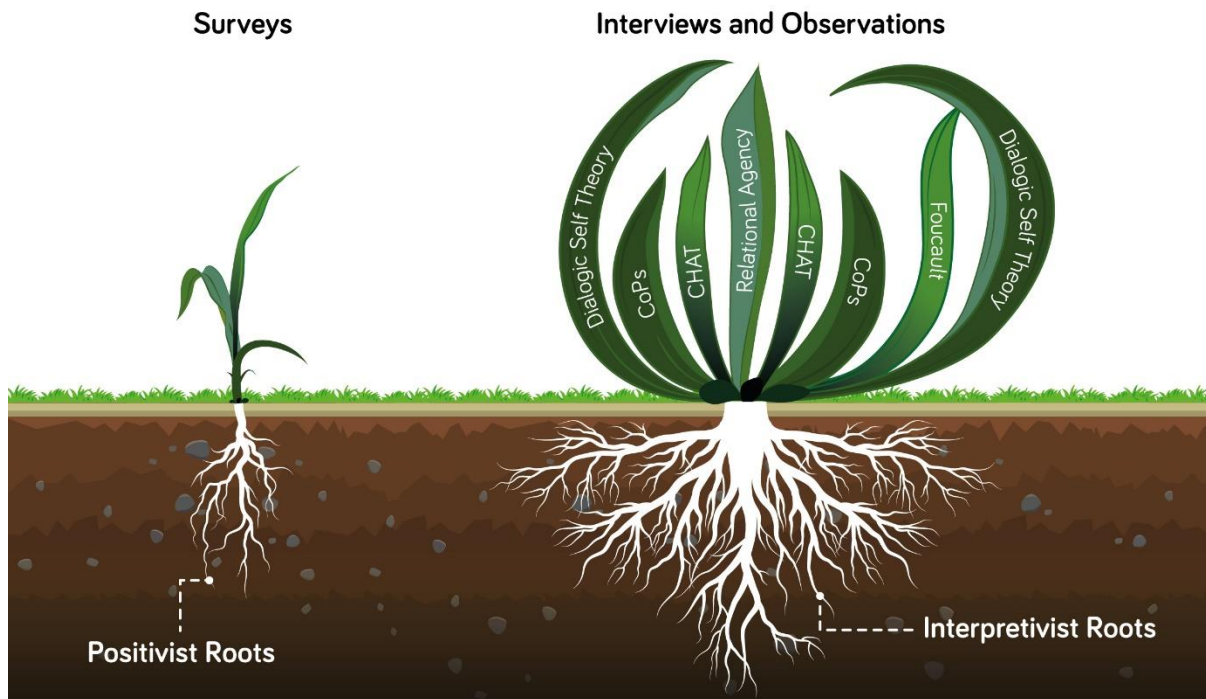


Figure 1 The epistemology and theories used in my research (my diagram, enhanced by Ashley Reynolds)

In my publications I have used communities of practice, the Foucauldian turn, relational agency, social cognitive theory, diffusion of innovations theory and activity theory to theorise my findings. I do not feel that these theories oppose the overarching use of DST.

Lave and Wenger (1991) considered the development of identity in a social situation, where novices became experts by participation in communities of practice, moving through the ‘zones of proximal development’ where they are unable to complete tasks without help from others, becoming experts with experience. This change in position, or boundary crossing, is dependent on participation in a social situation: the external social situation does not require the novice to forget their entire history, and their new position will be negotiated by internal dialogue constructing their new identity. This conforms with DST and the self-narrative which makes up our identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). I view the research in publication 1 through a community of practice lens.

I employed the work of Foucault in publication 2 to theorise the relationship between online teaching staff and an e-learning team. This is congruent with DST because the inner tensions between ‘i’ positions as the individual develops, I consider to be an internal version of

Foucault's external life filled with continual power struggles (Rabinow, 1984, p6). Different 'i' positions, and their importance in any given situation may be in tension with each other but they can also be in conflict with the 'me' as known, in line with Foucault's comments that knowledge transformation is never 'smooth' and can develop in new directions against the 'ways of speaking' (Rabinow, 1984, p54, citing Foucault: *The Order of Things*, 1970). This may lead to resistance to change, whether it is internal or external factors acting on 'i' positions. In addition, external pressures in the form of power of others (the e-learning team) with greater knowledge of online learning could 'threaten' the me-as-known: the expert subject specialist, less expert in certain aspects of teaching.

Activity theory, as developed by Engeström (2000) from cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), originally developed by Leont'ev and Vygotsky, considers a whole community where transformation of subjects using mediating tools and interaction with the objects of the activity system (which can be human as well as material) occur, resulting in the production of something. It is more specific about the effects of the community, taking into account the community rules and divisions of labour, and was useful in publications 2 and 6. This socio-cultural theory is in agreement with DST; as Akkerman and Meijer (2011, p313) describe, "*continuity [of identity] is also maintained more implicitly by routinized personal behaviour as well as by cultural and historical mediation*". This parallels the flow of work within an activity system, the central unit of activity theory. It also chimes with the words of the originator of CHAT, Vygotsky, who related Marx's historical realism ("*historical changes in society and in material life produce changes in 'human nature' (consciousness and behaviour)*") to the effect of working with tools (which could include language and writing) leading to behavioural transformation and individual development following internalisation of these changes (Vygotsky, 1978, (1930) p7).

Edwards (2007, p1) describes relational agency as the "*capacity to offer support and ask for support from others*". The relationships this encourages are fluid, without dependence on others. However, mediation is central to relational agency, and this is external to the self. But this fits with DST as agency needs individual actions following interpretation of the situation, and this involves dialogue with the 'self' and may change according to 'i' -

positions. So, there is individual understanding with learning, leading to change according to the situation this occurs in, described in publications 3 and 5.

Bandura's social cognitive theory (1999) was mentioned in publication 3. Bandura (1999) describes a 'triadic reciprocal causation' in this theory: a person's patterns of behaviour, factors within their environment, and their own 'internal personal factors' act together to influence their behaviour. This is allied to 'human agency' acting through 'personal agency' or through others. This theory lies within the parameters of DST as the internal dialogue could be considered the 'internal personal factors' influencing their behaviour.

Diffusion of innovations theory was used in publication 4 (Rogers, 2003). This theory is compatible with DST in that it is dependent upon the dominant 'i' position governing actions whether the individual is an innovator, an early or late adopter, or a laggard. Having an institution enforce an innovation on its' community can result in much internal and external conflict for individuals. Rogers made use of change agents as mentors (Rogers, 2003): I suggest mentors can encourage prompter sources in DST. Prompter sources, whether human as mentors or non-human in the form of training materials, could encourage the development of an 'i'- position towards wanting to use the innovation, in this case learning and teaching online. I discuss this further in answering research question 3.

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