

An Insight to a Pilot Study: Implementing the National CPD Framework into a Higher Educational Institution – some lessons thus far.

Abstract

There are four institutions currently engaged in a pilot study to introduce a Framework for the national Continuous Professional Development (CPD) agenda. This pilot, at the University of Derby, may ultimately have an impact on all academic staff within the sector. At the very least, some lessons regarding implementation of the Professional Teaching Standards can be shared. With a potential shifting landscape for academic teaching practice as it begins to align with HEA policy and Government agendas, the success of CPD as a concept, may in part be due to how a Higher Education Institution (HEI) implement such policy and change in a meaningful way its structures and systems. Baume and Kabn (2004) ask an interesting question, 'Is development seen as fundamentally about creating contexts that make development possible? Or is it seen as the development of staff?' Can, and should, organisational structures, systems, and cultures change so that philosophical underpinnings of CPD can be considered, namely the technical rationale view and the artistic view. Whilst natural tensions exist in Universities because of the role of dual professionalism, what are the tensions between such views and the implications for implementation?

Introduction

Professionalism is not a naturally occurring phenomenon (Gold, Rodgers and Smith, 2002), and as such relies on processes, shared concepts and society's understanding not only of the ideology of professionalism, but how it works in practice. For some sectors this is well established but within the Higher Education Sector, in the field of learning and teaching, this journey is just beginning.

Implementation and its management therefore, are key considerations if Higher Education professionals can be self-regulating. Purdon (2003), indicates that CPD practice is ultimately about control. If Purdon is correct in her thinking, Universities may see this national agenda as an opportunity to take some control over academic staff. Goodlad (1984) also supports this view that ultimately it is reducible to questions about control, and long ago contested that 'the innocent notion that professional groups are politically neutral' did not exist. From an implementation and a managerial perspective, whilst practitioners in industry appear to adapt the concept, or just become confused between the terms, CPD, HRD (Human Resource Development), SD (Staff Development), ED (Employee Development), in an educational context, this adaptation or misunderstanding may prove extremely dangerous and damage trust within the sector.

For example, Williams (2000), whilst talking about Boeing's needs, claims, 'while CPD is more focused on operational requirements that emerge with a relatively short period in which to be met e.g. one year.' This is not CPD. Perhaps she is confused with the concept of competencies here or HRD, which if applied in an academic context could seriously damage the status of academics. Not only are there ethical issues involved with the implementation of the framework, but these are potentially exacerbated if linked to pay and the National Framework Agreement. Cheetham and Chivers (1996) warn of the links between competence only and job role, and whilst in some professions re-gurgitating facts or skills may be appropriate, this does not take account the dimension of knowledge formation or epistemological issues. Knowledge formation for a University is absolutely fundamental to its existence and organisational structures, systems and processes should reflect that.

Against this backdrop, before any implementation occurs, the challenge for many Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) it could be argued, is how well this concept of CPD is understood, and what implication does this understanding have for its implementation? There are issues for management and staff, strategically and operationally. How we may need to move towards a shared understanding as an organisation or as a community of academics. In light of the national appetite for quality audits and accountability in all walks of public life, the understanding of CPD may be clouded by issues of how much we trust our professionals. Or is it a genuine sense of accountability of public money? By examining the shift in the literature, on professionalism and CPD, away from its historical trajectory into its wider understanding in current day practice, and examining perhaps how CPD is understood or misunderstood, discussion will be developed as to why a shared understanding is needed to move forward.

The Concept of Professionalism and Continuing Professional Development

“The professional self is not a given but is continually negotiated” (Barnett, 1997. p 142)

‘A profession is something that presupposes an educational background.’ (Becher, 1994 p4). But is professionalism the social control of expertise? According to Eraut (1994), professionalism can be traced back to the 19th century in Britain and America to avoid state control. State control over professionals was deemed to be an inadequate response because professionalism is practice which ultimately involves trust between the practitioner and recipient. Does this trust involve expertise? Is this always, as in the case of a professional? Therefore is it not important that both the state and society have an awareness of what this expertise should be? Because of expertise, professionalism and relationships are important, (Eraut, 1994). Usually they involve some kind of ‘power’ over people who are ignorant in the area for which they seek advice. Understandable therefore, one could argue, that experts prove they do know their field and behave responsibly. Not all agree with this idea of social control though as the roots of professionalism. Favouring the view that ‘all professions are a conspiracy against laity,’ (George Bernard Shaw, cited Noon, 1994). He argues that professions have developed to raise their own ideas of self importance and social standing as groups of individuals. Looking at some of the ‘professions’ today one could be sympathetic with this point, as two qualities traditionally associated with professional status are those of the possession of esoteric knowledge and the ideals of high service (Soloman and Tresman, 1999), but there is also an implication of power of professionalism (Gold, Rodgers and Smith, 2002).

Perhaps one of the most comprehensive definitions of professionalism is given by Friedson (1973, p 22). “Professionalism might be defined as a process by which an organisational occupation, usually but not always, by making a claim to a special esoteric competence and to concern itself with the quality of its work and its benefits to society, obtains the exclusive right to perform a particular kind of work, control training for access to it and control the right of determining and evaluating the way the work is performed.” Controls for any teaching standards in HE are relatively recent and limited in the main to entry point. It could be seen as ironic that the oldest of professional associations, medicine and law, sought professional status and recognition from society by their involvement with education and Universities. These seats of power for granting the start of the journey along a professional path now have to examine their own worthiness of professional status for imparting knowledge on those who seek to learn.

Trigwell and Shake (cited in Baume and Khan, 2004) consider the scholarship of professional practice, and suggest it has three temporal components: awareness of relevant aspects that inform the practice, the conduct of practice, and the outcomes of that practice. It could be argued that in reality, it is usually outcomes only that are examined, perhaps because outcomes are easily measured. Can inputs, like awareness of situations in classrooms, or the conduct of dealing with students, in the transformative process in the middle be so easily examined? Are not awareness and conduct of situations and individuals as important as the outcomes of grades?

Can all the qualities of professionalism be defined in a logical and rationale manner? Any professional’s work is based on judgment in a particular situation (Fish, 1998. p 16). Knowledge and judgement must be qualities of professionalism for example, but how can knowledge or judgement be captured? This is particularly so in relation to knowledge of praxis as opposed to knowledge of fact. This tacit knowledge (Polyani, 1967), it could be argued, makes someone an expert in a professional field but rarely could they tell you how they do it. ‘That we know but can not tell’ – like love – organisations can do the same (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Presumably, if ultimately the aim of the CPD agenda is to give students a better experience in class, how can this be achieved? Two academics with the same educational knowledge, training and even the same lecture notes, can still give classes very different experiences. In a practical, real sense, how do we obtain this knowledge elicitation (Eraut, 1994, p 15) that we need to define good practice?

So, what are the properties for being a profession in learning and teaching, and can these be enhanced by an organisational structure? Schon (1983, p23) argues that the four essential properties are; that it is specialised, firmly bounded, scientific and standardised. Specialised, yes, firmly bounded, yes, scientific, why is this necessary? Let us examine caring professions. Should each child in a school be treated in a scientific manner, have the same techniques applied in exactly the same way? Standardised, why for what reasons? For the

convenience of the hospital, not the patient, in order to measure results? Is this for the convenience of the HEI, or the government, or the individual? How can academic debate be standardised if it is to be conducted in a meaningful way?

However, a profession must change and adapt to retain confidence in those who rely on the service (Noon, 1994), and perhaps academia has not changed or adapted to a changing world at the speed it should. If one of the facets of professionalism is about the control of access to specialist information which has value to the public (Goodlad, 1984), then maybe the internet is eroding this, or at least exacerbating the speed of this change. How do we conceptualise professionalism though? From a technical rationale perspective (Schon, 1983), where standardisation and measurement are key and justifiable, or from an artistic viewpoint (Fish, 1998 p 40), 'where risks are inevitable' or where we need 'esthetic knowing' (Chirin and Kramer, 1995. p 10). With differing perspectives on how we examine professionalism, what implications does this have when putting CPD into practice? Indeed who should be putting it into practice the organisation or the individual? To be a professional the 'whole expert is greater than the sum of the parts' (Yielder, 2004), so do the technical rationale view and the artistic view both provide this potential? No.

As has been demonstrated, the idea of professionalism is a complex one, not least because of the differing perspectives of this ideology, but also because of the connotations of social control. Whilst the term CPD can be traced back to the 19th century (Dunscombe and Armour, 2004. p147), in more recent times it has been growing in popularity since the 1960's and 1970's (Eraut, 1994, Schon, 1983, Lorrinan, 1997), and Noon (1994) feels that 'professional development comes a very poor second to academic respectability (although the two are not necessarily optional alternatives.'

CPD, as it is understood today, was born from this trajectory to allow 'professionals' to demonstrate their continued ability to practise and their growing expertise, and is now seen as an integral part of the development of professions (Cole, 2000). Defined by Lorrinan (1997, p2), as, 'the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skill, and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner's working life,' and even on Wikipedia (Jan, 2007), as 'the means by which members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives.' Continually developing is necessary because professional practice is not static (Fish, 1998, p.89), but what should be learned in the process of self development? Roscoe (2002) in the specific context of higher education proposes; technical knowledge in the area, the development of transferable skills and attributes, and general managerial skills. With more work needed as you move through these three areas. Is the implication therefore that to develop in the academic arena now, you need to have more management development than subject development? If so, why does Roscoe think this is the case? Fish (1998, p 40), however, feels that 'professional development itself is actually about further development of artistry' which in managerial terms could be argued is a bottom up approach, rather than the top-down approach of the technical rational view. The artistic view though poses challenges for performance management. If the sum is greater than the parts, how do you measure the whole?

Staff reflecting on their developmental needs should be the driver. When looking at the lessons learnt in recent years with the implementation of CPD for the teaching profession, Davies and Lee (2001) do not speak kindly about central state direction. They argue that it has diminished the personal element in CPD and has produced a technicist and managerial model of development. Perhaps this is because professionalism has been under increasing attack for a long time, by politicians, by journalists and the public (Soloman and Tressman, 1999), and the feeling in academia is one of justification rather than enhancement in light of other public sector scrutiny. More evidence can be seen for the feeling that the technical rational view for the CPD process is dominant at present even within the HEA itself. 'The ILT has adopted a model of professional development that places uniformity and comparability of outcome above quality and creativity of process,' (Nicholls, 2000. p74). However, in our dealings with the HEA this has not been the case and the statement is further questionable particularly as four HEIs, from different backgrounds (University of Derby, NEWI, University of Exeter and Cambridge University) are helping to develop how frameworks can be implemented in each institution.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for any HEI, is to determine its own understanding and working definition of the term CPD that academics concur with. It is often used out of context because of a lack of understanding in many professions, and it could be argued that those misconceptions are exacerbated for academic staff

because of dual professionalism. That of a subject based professional body and the Professional Standards proposed for teaching. This need to have dual professional is not the norm in society.

Implications of Understanding

CPD is commonly used out of context, or as a generic term for something else. Clarification between Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Personal Development Planning (PDP), Employee Development (ED), Human Resource Development (HRD), Staff Development (SD), Professional Knowledge (PK), Professional Competence (PC), Professional Learning (PL) and Training, needs to be made for implementation. Exactly what are we implementing as a sector and is the same philosophical basis for the development of the profession shared by the staff? Do the National Standards which can be traced back to 1964 (Eurat 1994) have a place in CPD, or are they more in line with Employee Development, Human Resource Development and Staff Development? Healy and Jenkins (2003), argue that CPD is a more common form of discipline-based educational development than are initial training courses, and that many disciplines run sessions as part of their professional association meetings. This example appears naive by academic educational developers which displays the ignorance of many in HEIs pertaining to reality and the complexity for the HE sector. Other authors also make claims that seem to reflect a further ignorance of the concept. For example, Williams, (2000) feels that the lines are blurred between CPD and Life Long Learning (LLL). Not so, CPD is about action and modification of behaviour from learning with an intention to improve ones abilities. Life Long Learning may not necessarily have this feature.

From an implementation and a managerial perspective, whilst practitioners in industry appear to adapt the concept, or as previously demonstrated just become confused between the terms, in an educational context this adaptation or misunderstanding may prove extremely dangerous and damage trust. One such example is given by Williams (2000), whilst talking about Boeing's needs, when she claims, 'while CPD is more focused on operational requirements that emerge with a relatively short period in which to be met e.g. one year.' Perhaps she is confused with the concept of competencies here, which if applied in an academic context could seriously damage the status of academics, and make research difficult. Not only are there ethical issues involved with the implementation of any framework, but these are potentially exacerbated if linked to pay.

Cheetham and Chivers (1996) warn of the links between competence only and job role. *Whilst in some professions re-gurgitating facts or skills may be appropriate, this does not take account of the dimension of knowledge formation. Knowledge formation for a University is absolutely fundamental to its existence.* Another point worthy of consideration is how would competencies be judged? Linked to student feedback perhaps? This would be a dangerous pathway for a knowledge based institution to follow, allowing for exceptional results based on personality or spoon-feeding rather than professionalism. A profession is an occupation with the responsibility for giving clients what they need rather than what they want (Goodlad, 1984. p 24), which can seem rather obvious for a University education.

Cheetham and Chivers (1998) propose a model of professional competence that they argue is different to generic competence. However, this still leaves the connotations of competence, the minimum threshold. The bare minimum does not represent professional development. As Bines and Watson (1992) argued, there is a distinction between becoming a professional and remaining a professional. Professionalism is about continually learning, adapting, moving on, as well as many other qualities. A surgeon may be competent at knee surgery but may not be able to practice in latest keyhole techniques. This makes him competent, but it can be argued that professionals in health care should be looking to cause the least pain and suffering possible, which he can not demonstrate. Ethics must also be a component. CPD requires more time and attention than competency based training alone which in turn equates to money for the HEI to invest. As competencies are easier to measure than development this makes the technical rational stance tempting from a performance management point of view. Also, what is the balance of responsibility between the individual, the organisation and the professional body? In the case of the HE sector, the balance is heavily tilted towards the individual and the organisation.

The essence of many of these initiatives is 'development,' so what does it mean to develop? Is it progression beyond competence (Eurat, 1994), about maximising the learning process (Lorriamn, 1997), about learning the tradition of a practice (Fish, 1998). Is development personally led in this context, institutionally led or publicly led and how are HEI going to change structures and systems to allow this development to flourish? Here perhaps is where the implications of the understanding of CPD are crucial. The changing of any structures or systems would be in line with the organisations understanding of CPD.

Schon (1987) developed a strong argument that reflection is a critical component of development, and that the ability to reflect in action and reflect on action are key components of being a professional. Can organisations build this into structures and systems to allow a culture of reflection to develop? In the technical rationale world this 'space' for reflection may not readily and certainly not immediately be transferable to bottom line results. Barnett (1997, p 132) criticises Schon's conception of professional though as unduly individualistic, neglecting the extent to which professional life is necessarily social and inter-subjective. He further goes on to state that, 'peer judgement and the sense that the professional receives her authority partly from her standing in her profession does not sit easily with the notion of the individual reflective practitioner.' This concept of peer review is judged to be particularly important for the implementation of a CPD framework, as one could argue that if self-reflection is all that matters, why do we have to gain accreditation with any professional bodies at all? Actions and interpretations of those actions are intertwined in which one must examine one's own ontological stance on professionalism. Is your own interpretation sufficient or should the interpretation ultimately be decided by peers? How does this sit with the personal, and is this problematic for the HEI?

Without doubt though, the concept of CPD is personally led, and yet it seems to have been hijacked particularly by Human Resource Development, Employee Development and Staff Development, all of which are institutionally led, and tied to institutional development (Brew, 1995, p159). Institutional development and personal development is not necessarily the same thing. At a more philosophical level though, one could argue that under all these terms which use development, what are the basic assumptions about what it means to 'know' something? (Rowland, cited in Eggins and MacDonald (2003, p 14). How do you know what to develop, and if you've developed it, irrespective of whether personally led or institutionally driven. Could it be argued that development is seen as fundamentally about creating contexts that make development possible as argued by Baume and Khan (2004, p120). This concept of development is a necessary component of professionalism as professional status is always contingent and unfinished. (Gold, Rodgers and Smith, 2002)

Creating Opportunities to Develop Knowledge and Praxis in the Field of Learning and Teaching

It was recognised that key factors needed to be taken into consideration when building a framework. Some of these involved finance, relationships with stakeholders, process and existing University structures. Who is going to pay for and why should they? was an interesting question raised by Friedman, Durkin and Phillips, (2000). There are difficulties of measuring CPD costs to individuals, employers and professional associations. Implementation must consider the balance between these three stakeholders, not only in terms of finance but the cost of time. Part of the problem from a management perspective, appears to be an inability by companies to quantify the benefits of CPD in monetary terms, (Burgess, 2000). This is an over-riding imperative for the technical rational approach to be followed for implementation. Gilpin (1996) also found that a 'mistrust of learning' still exists from management with factors such as lack of measurable results and high costs. Should this mistrust of learning from management be found to exist in the University sector, this would raise more fundamental and serious questions as to the construct of our understanding of a modern University.

Relationships are also a question to consider for implementation of any framework. How these relationships between stakeholders interact and the way any 'power' will manifest itself? For example, a research led institution will naturally pull CPD towards this element, but some HEI's are already specifying research agenda's which academics will have to adhere to. What will an HEI do though if the 'pull' from the student/parent dimension is greater in terms of quality of student experience? Will CPD evolve for HEI's in terms of the market pull, or will it remain personal? Individuals have personal expectations and life-plans, and as such their interests may not always neatly coincide with the intentions for them of either sponsors or providers. (Bines and Watson, 1992).

When looking at the suggested dimensions to process, to what extent does the culture of the HEI influence the implementation? For example, to what extent, how quickly, and how strongly does the organisation intend to make the links between its staff appraisal system and any framework? Madden and Mitchell talk about a sanctions model and a benefits model for CPD (Jones and Fear, 1994) which may also give an indication to the strength of the intended links and the affects this has on culture. Watts, feels that for staff in higher education today, they are working within a system that requires them to constantly balance and re-balance the demands placed upon them in terms of teaching, (Bourner, Katz and Watson, 2000 p 11) which

has implications for the individual. In physiotherapy for example, evidence suggests that there is a guilt culture in devoting time to CPD in the workplace (O'Sullivan, 2003. p 107).

If we look at Wenger's view of process and practice he suggests that the two to be inseparable, particularly in the context of how we interact with our environment. 'Practice is first and foremost a process by which we can experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful.' (Wenger, 1998. p 51). He argues that in this way we develop communities of practice based on the organisational culture, usually informally, in order to make sense of our relationship with work, and to give us identity. He makes a strong argument for communities of practice to create contexts for individuals, which is something that an institution can, perhaps partly, influence by strengthening and providing a focus for such communities. For example, the University of Derby's Quality Enhancement Department (QED) introduced a Teacher Fellow Network two years ago with Central Champions in learning support roles. Each Faculty and various Central Departments have someone with allocated time and responsibility to act as a lead for a theme (Assessment, CPD, Foundation Degree, Employability, PDP, E-Learning and Pathfinder). This structure allows key individuals to meet cross institutionally with a common purpose and early indicators suggest these networks are becoming highly effective. QED also led an initiative with regard to Teaching Informed by Research (TIR) projects which again have created a group of staff with a common focus for development. All the Teaching Fellows and TIR award holders meet as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Advisory Research Group (LTAARG) to share and advice on good practice. Decisions made here ultimately reach the University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.

The University of Derby also launched its key Organisational Values, known as the 'Five Values' two years ago (Quality, Valuing People, Opportunity and Openness, Customer Focus, Challenge and Innovation). The values are used to underpin all the strategic documentation produced by the University and as such are heavily used by the 'centre' in an organisational context. No substantial evidence exists as yet that these are beginning to change culture at the ground level or affect professional development, although this research is planned to take place shortly. Only anecdotal evidence exists to date. At an internal Faculty conference, one member of staff was heard to comment – 'they even want to control the way I think and behave now.' However, most other members of academic staff say, what values?

Moving forward, taking into account the previous discussion on Schoen's view of personal reflection for development, and Barnett's view of peer judgement for development, we are allowing opportunities for both where needed. Personal space in an e-tool will be made available with opportunities for sharing if the individual so chooses. Sharing will be allowed between peers and, again should the individual so choose, their line manager for review purposes. Peer judgement, was ultimately the choice for reviewing CPD portfolio's, particularly for members of staff who wish to gain Professional Standing with the Higher Education Academy. It is also recognised that any framework needs to be 'owned' by both the University and the individuals for implementation to succeed. Therefore, considerations of balance, natural tensions, and scalability as well as cost implications are being taken into account, but the most challenging aspect of building a framework is how it aligns with existing University structures. The question is not that it aligns, but what it aligns to. CPD Teaching Fellow's favoured attaching Peer Review of evidence to Faculty Learning Teaching and Assessment Committees, whilst other suggestions included that of 'mocking' the exam board model. Issues of scalability though after the pilot phase were serious concerns particularly with the former. The conclusion has been to use LTAARG whose members will be asked to perform the review process and act as the peer judgement element considered by Barnett (1997) to be crucial to development. It is a wide body of individuals from all areas of the University and already reports to the University Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee for which it is entirely appropriate to tie the Professional Standards to. Work will commence with this group in the Autumn Semester 2007/08.

Capturing Continuing Professional Development – the challenge for the next Academic Year

Perhaps the most difficult challenge over the next academic year (2007/08) is not that we have structures and processes in place as an institution to facilitate and enhance CPD, but that of how we persuade academic and support staff to acknowledge, capture and record what they do in the development of learning and teaching practice. From the artistic paradigm of CPD, development is in the main continuous in any HEI, but recording it in 'chunks' to facilitate the technical rationale view likely to be used by management will be difficult. In these times of performance management, it is not sufficient that we continue to develop our learning and teaching practice we must evidence that we do so, and in doing so, attempt to justify the qualities, of our professional judgement in Higher Education.

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