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Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: A United Kingdom Perspective

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Abstract

This paper explores the current teaching and learning environment in higher education in the UK, concentrating on England. We ask: Is there a positive and supportive environment for learning and teaching in the UK? The conceptual and theoretical foundations underpinning practice in higher education teaching and learning are examined as is the support and impetus provided by government and policy. The nature of academic identities and the structure and engagement in academic development is also assessed. We pose a series of important questions within this paper, of significance to the Irish Higher Education sector.

1. Introduction

The background to this paper is based on my personal experience as a teacher and academic in the further and higher education sector in Ireland for the last 25 years. Since becoming involved in the higher education sector in Ireland in 2001 it has been apparent to me that there is little or no coherent attempt to encourage and support engagement in the study of teaching and learning or pedagogy in higher education. That is not to say there is none, however there is no sector wide body with responsibility or oversight for learning and teaching or academic development. This is in contrast to the UK where there has been a series of initiatives, developments and investment in teaching and learning that can be traced back in part to the The National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education in the Learning Society (1997), generally referred to as the Dearing report. There is also a robust and widely recognised body of literature underpinning current policy and funding in the U.K. and finally there is an established system for academic development that underpins and supports the professional development of academics and teaching in higher education. This paper attempts to explore the linkages between these three main areas and to identify and develop possible areas for further research.

2. Method

My research into this area has been broad as I initially found it difficult to refine my ideas with regard to teaching and learning in higher education. This was in part due to the differences between the higher education systems in Ireland and the UK however there have been many relatively recent developments in this area and there is a significant body of literature to examine.

I have made use of the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester and have also used the electronic journals link to access material through the Internet extensively. I have also been fortunate to have access to the libraries of Dublin University, Trinity College and have made use of the facilities in the Lecky, Berkeley and Ussher libraries in my search for material and information for this paper. I also had access to electronic journals in the Berkeley library however this was limited and I would have welcomed more flexible access to the Internet whilst researching there. I found the Stella

catalogue was an excellent tool in carrying out searches. In addition to my use of the libraries and electronic journals I made use of the Internet and had access to the library in the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown.

3. Guides to Effective Teaching

There are a wide range of books available to individual lecturers who wish to improve or validate their teaching and teaching practices. This type of book appears at regular intervals, for example 'Preparing to Teach', Gibb and Habeshaw (1989) from the eighties, 'Learning to Teach in Higher Education', Wilkin (1995) from the nineties, and 'The Lecturer's Toolkit', Race (2007) a more recent publication. The focus of these books is on sound, realistic and practical advice on how to teach in higher education. There is little or no attempt to venture beyond the hints and tips of classroom/lecture theatre/laboratory practices. This focus on basic hints and tips is acknowledged by Morss and Murray (2005) who maintain that some aspirant teachers in higher education don't want to explore beyond the practical nuts and bolts to consider the research and theory of learning and teaching in higher education. But to understand and reflect on what teaching in higher education means and how to improve and build on positive experiences and practice a reference point is needed. What is needed in order to embed good practice and to achieve effectiveness in teaching in higher education is a theory or theories of education. The next section examines the theoretical background of teaching in higher education in the UK today.

4. Teaching, Learning and Understanding

The main conceptual framework or theories of learning underpinning UK higher education at present are referred to by Haggis (2003); Marshall and Case (2004) as 'approaches to learning'. This framework has its roots in research carried out by Marton and Säljö in the 1970s. The approaches to learning research is now widely accepted in the UK and farther afield especially in Australia, but is not without its critics. This section of the paper looks at the main features and ideas that characterise approaches to learning research and also considers some of the criticisms of these approaches.

4.1 Outcomes and process of learning

In the past number of decades research into teaching has focused on understanding learning and understanding understanding. Research has also focused on the student and can be said to be student focused. An important study into learning was taken by Marton and Säljö (1976a). This study examined the link between the quality of the learning outcome and the process of learning. This study brought into focus and use the terms surface-level learning and deep-level learning or simply surface learning and deep learning. Much of the research into learning outcomes prior to this period was based on, or described learning in quantitative terms, for example the total number of correct answers in a test. Research has since focused on the qualitative nature of learning. The study by Marton and Säljö (1976a) of university students found basically two different levels of processing (learning), surface-level and deep-level that correspond to different aspects of the learning material on which the learner focused. A second study, Marton and Säljö (1976b) highlights the link between the level of learning adopted by the student and the level of understanding reached. Deep learning shows a greater level of long-term retention. Marton and Säljö (1976b) conclude that

learning can be 'technified' (their emphasis) when task demands become predictable. Learning in these circumstances risks being reduced to a search for the type of knowledge expected on the test. These findings have implications for teachers when designing, delivering and assessing academic programmes as the delivery and assessment of students may be interpreted as requiring mainly the recall of factual information (surface-level) to the detriment of a deeper level of understanding.

Lindsay (2004) questions the validity of the research into deep and surface learning by Marton and Säljö drawing attention to the use of unstandardised interviews, a lack of clear criteria for classifying students as deep or surface learners, classifications being made by the interviewer/investigator, and no information at all about other relevant variables such as the intellectual ability of participants, or their competence with the narrative techniques that allow meaning to be communicated to interviewers. Webb (1997) draws attention to a lack of rigour and scientific research in studies on deep and surface learning and questions its applicability in non western cultural contexts.

However it is perhaps the qualities of the deep/surface metaphor that make it appealing and practical and explain why it has achieved its foundational status within higher education research, practice and development. What is undeniable is that these studies and their findings are significant and form the basis of approaches to learning research in higher education that have achieved such widespread acceptance in the UK.

4.2 Illustrating the learners approach

To illustrate the distinction between two different types of learners, both Prosser and Trigwell (1999) and Biggs and Tang (2007) present mini-situational case studies. The approaches adopted by students are divided into two contrasting approaches to learning, deep and surface. In a deep approach to learning, students aim to understand ideas and seek meanings. They have an intrinsic interest in the tasks and an expectation of enjoyment in carrying it out. Overall they have a focus on the meaning in the argument, the message, or the relationships, Prosser and Trigwell (1999), deep approaches generate high-quality, well-structured, complex outcomes and commitment to the subject, Ramsden (2003). In the examples given by Prosser and Trigwell (1999) and Biggs and Tang (2007) the students who adopt a deep approach seek meaning and understanding in their approaches to learning, they are intrinsically motivated and are prepared and actively engage in the classroom. In contrast, students who adopt a surface approach to learning take a pragmatic approach, seeking to meet the demands of the task with minimum effort. Surface approaches lack insight and understanding and the qualitative nature of the learning that takes place with this approach is characterised by an inability to relate previous knowledge to new knowledge, organize structure and content into a whole and retain knowledge over longer periods. The deep and surface approach has been dramatized in a presentation by Brabrand (2006) which helps to illustrate the difference in approach to learning adopted by deep learners and surface learners.

The examples given and drama presented illustrate clearly the deep/surface metaphor. Webb (1997) identifies the simplicity, universality and power of this metaphor and how this makes the message appealing, practical and generalisable. However the simplicity of the metaphor belies its shortcomings as highlighted by Haggis (2003) who questions the attempts to develop generalisations and argues that the model is acting as a normative paradigm with ideas falling outside or challenging the foundations of the

paradigm becoming invisible. This is an important criticism as it highlights the narrow focus of approaches to learning research.

4.3 The learners approach to learning

The literature on teaching effectiveness in higher education reflects the research and thoughts about the qualitative aspect of teaching and the focus on learning and understanding. Effective teaching in higher education is focused on the learner. Learning is about how we perceive and understand the world, about making meaning, Marton and Booth (1997), as cited in Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2003). Learning may involve mastering abstract principles, understanding proofs, remembering factual information, acquiring methods, techniques and approaches, recognition, reasoning, debating ideas, or developing behaviour appropriate to specific situations. Understanding learning is a starting point in much of the literature.

Differences with which learners approach learning or come to the learning situation is one of the central themes adopted by Prosser and Trigwell (1999). Motivation, attitudes and expectations of learners and their experiences both prior to the learning situation and during the learning situation are identified as key considerations. In addition prior conceptions of a subject and the students' conceptions of the nature of the subject matter they study are closely related to the students' orientations to the study of that subject matter.

Setting the stage for effective teaching as discussed by Biggs and Tang (2007) requires an understanding of what motivates students and determining whether that motivation is intrinsic or extrinsic. Students' expectations of success or failure and the teachers' role in managing those expectations are also important. Biggs and Tang (2007) highlight the powerful effect that teacher feedback can have on students' expectations of success and the importance of engaging students based on how they are motivated (intrinsically or extrinsically). Previous knowledge and experience of students will have an influence on learning. The increasing heterogeneity and diversity of students coming to higher education even when compared to the 1980s impacts on this previous knowledge and experience Entwistle (2009). Rapid expansion in higher education has provided opportunities for social groups previously excluded from higher education as well as ethnic minorities who bring with them different cultural beliefs and attitudes. Increasing access for students with disabilities has also added to the heterogeneity and diversity of learners and created a more varied and richer mix of experience among students. These changes will cause additional problems for academic staff Entwistle (2009: p 18). How students' approach learning will affect how they learn and the qualitative nature of their learning.

There are differences in the approaches to learning adopted by learners and the effective teacher should be aware of what these differences could be and how they can come about. Through the concept of approach to learning we can begin to unlock the puzzle of poor-quality learning Ramsden (2003: p 60).

The underlying methodology employed by the above researchers is phenomenography. Phenomenography is an empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which we experience, conceptualise, understand, perceive, apprehend, etc. various phenomena and aspects of the world around us Prosser and Trigwell (1999). Marton (1981) describes phenomenography as research which aims at description,

analysis, and understanding of experiences; that is, research which is directed towards experiential description. Svensson (1997) describes phenomenography as “describing conceptions of the surrounding world” (p 163). The descriptions of conceptions were/are developed to get descriptions of knowledge in research on student learning and are based on the assumption that knowledge fundamentally is a question of meaning in a social and cultural context Svensson (1997). As stated above phenomenography is the main underlying methodology and theory of knowledge in approaches to learning research. The next section looks at theories and approaches to teaching based on these methodologies and theories, followed by criticism and discussion of the shortcomings of these approaches.

4.4 The teaching perspective

Ramsden (2003: pp 85 - 86) addresses some of the “myths surrounding teaching in higher education” including, the illusion that good teaching in higher education is an elusive, many-sided, idiosyncratic and ultimately indefinable quality. He also challenges the belief that there are no better and worse ways of teaching or, no general attributes that distinguish good teaching from bad. There are two prevalent misconceptions about teaching in higher education, the first being that teaching at higher level consists of presenting or transmitting information from teacher to student, or demonstrating the application of a skill in practice and secondly that students in higher education must not be too closely supervised, lest the bad habits of dependent learning they are supposed to have acquired at school are reinforced. A combined focus on the teacher, their teaching strategies and transmission of information to students is generally referred to as a ‘teacher-centred’ focus on teaching, while a combined focus on students, their learning, development and conceptual understanding is generally referred to as a ‘student-centred’ focus. A teacher centred focus is consistently seen across the range of studies as constituting a less sophisticated understanding of teaching than a student-centred focus, and is regarded as less likely to produce high-quality learning outcomes amongst students Åkerlind (2007). Ramsden (2003: pp 86 – 87) identifies the important properties of good teaching, seen from the individual lecturer’s point of view and distils them into 6 principles of teaching outlined below:

- Principal 1** Interest and explanation
- Principal 2** Concern and respect for students and student learning
- Principal 3** Appropriate assessment and feedback
- Principal 4** Clear goals and intellectual challenge
- Principal 5** Independence, control and engagement
- Principal 6** Learning from students

These principles reflect a belief that good teaching starts with an attempt to identify with the student, trying to understand what the student perspective on learning is and designing and delivering teaching that improves the quality of student learning. Ramsden (2003) describes three theories of teaching to illustrate what he believes effective teaching is:

- Theory 1:** Teaching as telling or transmission
- Theory 2:** Teaching as organising student activity
- Theory 3:** Teaching as making learning possible

These theories are summarised in the table below:

Table 1. Theories of university teaching

	Theory 1 Teaching as telling	Theory 2 Teaching as organising	Theory 3 Teaching as making learning possible
Focus	Teacher and Content	Teaching techniques that will result in learning	Relation between students and subject matter
Strategy	Transmit information	Manage teaching process; transmit concepts	Engage; challenge; imagine oneself as the student
Actions	Chiefly presentation	'Active learning'; organising activity	Systematically adapted to suit student understanding
Reflection	Unreflective; taken for granted	Apply skills to improve teaching	Teaching as a research-like, scholarly process

Source: Ramsden (2003: p 115)

Biggs and Tang (2007) adopt a similar approach to theories of teaching or as they describe, levels of thinking about teaching. They also present three levels of teaching which correspond to a sequence in the development of teachers' thinking and practice;

Level 1. Focus: What the student is

At level 1, teaching is didactic – the teacher transmitting information to the student. Referred to as a 'blame the student' theory of teaching.

Level 2. Focus: what the teacher does

At level 2, teaching is didactic however the focus is on the teacher not the student. Biggs and Tang (2007) believe level 2 is also a deficit model, the 'blame' this time being on the teacher as they are lacking the skills and competences to be good teachers.

Level 3. What the student does

Here teachers focus on what the student does and how that relates to teaching. This is a student centred model of teaching, with teaching supporting learning. Expert teaching includes mastery over a variety of teaching techniques, but unless learning takes place, they are irrelevant; the focus is on what the student does and on how well the intended outcomes are achieved.

Level 3 teaching as espoused by Biggs and Tang (2007) marks the distinction between the type of teacher or teaching typified in the teaching guides books identified earlier and teaching that focuses on the student and how well the intended outcomes are achieved. This implies a view of teaching that is not just about facts, concepts and principles to be covered and understood, but also to be clear about.

1. What it means to 'understand' content in the way that is stipulated in the intended learning outcomes.
2. What kind of teaching/learning activities are required to achieve those stipulated levels of understanding?

Both Biggs and Tang (2007); Ramsden (2003) take a similar view of approaches or 'theories' of teaching. They both believe that effective teaching requires an understanding of how the student learns and how to achieve the intended learning outcomes. They both focus on the student and what the student does. Prosser and Trigwell (1999) contend that good, or effective, teaching is about creating contexts which make learning possible. Good teaching is about:

- Teachers developing a coherent and well-articulated view of what they are trying to achieve and how they are planning to achieve that outcome
- Teachers discovering the variation in the ways students perceive the planned learning context
- Working towards bringing their students into relation with, and understanding of that articulated view. Prosser and Trigwell (1999: p 11)

This is in contrast to views that good teaching is about presenting and structuring content or, developing good teaching skills or, flexible delivery or, giving student's choice. Students do not live in an 'objective' world but in an experienced world Prosser and Trigwell, (1999: p 59). The learning and teaching issue is not that of how the teacher has designed and constructed their subjects and courses, but rather how their students perceive and understand the way they have designed and structured them. This means that teachers need to take a student perspective on teaching.

Some academics seem to take the role of the teacher rather for granted according to Entwistle (2009: p 74). They see teaching in terms of conveying information and ideas to students in the ways conventionally accepted within their subject area. But 'good teaching' (his emphasis) also depends on explaining ideas in ways that are accessible to most of the students and monitoring how much has been understood.

The essential difference between contrasting approaches to teaching Entwistle (2009: p 75) is in the relative attention given to the subject matter seen from the teachers' perspective and to the activities that best support learning as experienced by the students. Seen from the teacher's perspective alone, the intention is to convey information as efficiently as possible but, if we introduce the student's perspective, this shifts the focus towards encouraging both active learning and conceptual change. The distinction can be seen, in its simplest terms, as a contrast between teacher-focused and student-focused approaches to teaching rooted in contrasting ways of thinking about teaching and learning.

Entwistle (2009) illustrates his thoughts about 'good teaching' in the following figure 1. The figure shows how a sophisticated conception of teaching and learning brings together knowledge and feelings, and links them together in thinking about the subject matter, teaching activities and relationships with the students. Entwistle (2009) also acknowledges the differences that each student brings to the learning situation which reflects the views of Prosser and Trigwell.

These ideas and theories outlined above have found general acceptance in UK higher education circles, however there are several criticisms of the methodological and theoretical bases of the approaches to learning research. Lindsay (2004) states that the theoretical framework adopted by both Biggs (2003) and Ramsden (2003) is simply dogma. Lindsay (2004) is also critical of phenomenography as is Webb (1997) who suggests that the 'qualitative' nature of the research is undeveloped and lacking the hermeneutical values usually associated with human as opposed to positivist science.

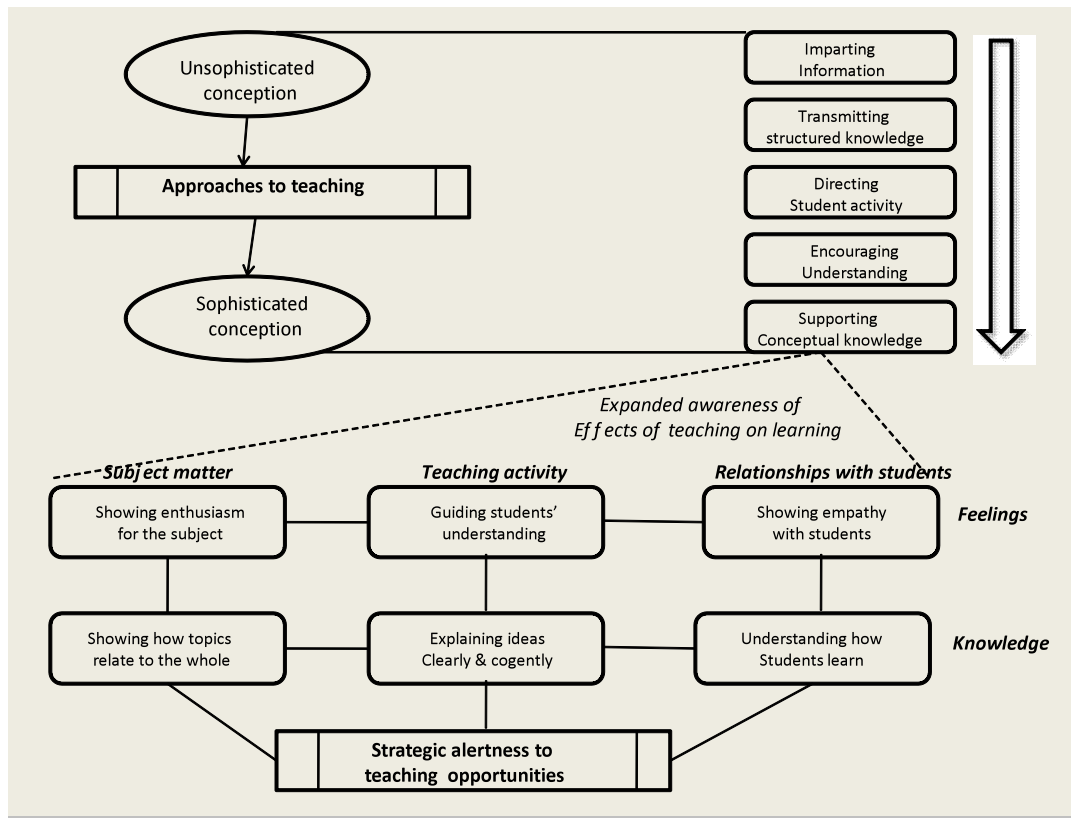


Figure 1: Approaches to teaching and aspects of a sophisticated conception

Source: Entwistle (2009: p 76)

As stated above Lindsay (2004) questions the validity of the studies of Martin and Säljö (1976a, 1976b) and also with regard to Biggs (2003) and Ramsden (2003) questions the conceptual basis of what he disparagingly labels “educational developmentology, ED”. Lindsay (2004) argues that there is a need to provide practitioners with appropriate conceptual tools to develop real theories, dismissing ED as being a nostrum and dogmatism rather than science.

Malcolm and Zukas (2001) argue that the current literature and discourse in ‘teaching and learning’ in the UK takes a too narrow and technicist view. They advocate the building of ‘conceptual bridges’ between understandings of the social and political context of higher education, epistemological inquiry, and discussions on teaching and learning. Haggis (2003) also calls into question the epistemological clarity of the model and its scientific rigour and also highlights a failure to take account of wider, more social perspectives on learning. Haggis (2003) maintains the approach has created a narrow conception of the problems of the field.

There is much validity in the criticisms outlined above, particularly with regard to the apparent lack of a link to established education research and theory. A link between research and teaching in higher education would place the theories and approaches in context with regard to the two major families of contemporary learning theory, neo-behaviourism or behaviourism and cognitive theories, Bigge and Shermis (1999) and provide the conceptual tools as identified by Lindsay (2004) above. Gredler (2001) describes three trends in theory from the 1950s; the first from 1950 to the mid 1970s was the shift from laboratory research to instructionally relevant research. The second

from the mid 1970s to the 1990s was the rise of cognitive psychology and overlapping this trend from the mid 1980s was the rise of social, cultural and personal factors in learning. As a result of the narrow focus of the approaches to learning research there is no consideration of important developments in learning theory especially with regard to the social and cultural aspects and theories of learning such as Vygotsky, Bandura and Lave and Wenger. Van der Aalsvoort and Herinck (2000) state that social interaction and its role in contributing to learning outcomes should not be underestimated. Lave and Wenger (1991) in particular with their theories and concepts such as communities of practice have great relevance in higher education and higher education research. Lave and Wenger (1991) see learners as moving towards participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. Their concept of legitimate peripheral participation provides a framework for a theory of learning as a dimension of social practice.

These limitations are highlighted by Haggis (2009) who states that even in the 2000s, a great deal of discussion about learning in higher education is still focused upon the same basic questions that arose in the 1970s:

- What can we discover about how individuals learn?
- What are the implications of our knowledge about individual learning for classroom teaching and curriculum design?
- How can we get students to take a deep approach to learning the content of our curricula?
- What is going on outside the classroom which might impact upon learning outcomes?

Despite the limitations and problems identified, the theories and methodologies discussed are not without relevance or value. They provide a base on which more robust and rigorous scientific research could be built and a platform on which to broaden research into areas that will enhance the conceptual basis of the theories. The value and usefulness of these theories is illustrated in the next section which examines models for teaching and learning based on these theories and methodologies.

4.5 Models for teaching and learning

To validate and give meaning to their theories and thoughts about teaching and learning the authors outlined above provide frameworks and structures within which their theories can be applied. Without such structure and frameworks these theories would be little more than observations on teaching, learning and understanding.

Biggs and Tang (2007 p 52) outline an approach to teaching called constructive alignment. It is 'constructive' because it is based on the constructivist theory that learners use their own activity to construct their knowledge or other outcome. The intended outcomes specify the activity that students should engage in if they are to achieve the intended outcomes as well as the content the activity refers to, the teacher's task being to set up a learning environment that encourages the student to perform those learning activities, and then assess the outcomes to see if they match those intended. The alignment in constructive alignment reflects the fact that the learning activity in the intended outcomes needs to be activated in the teaching if the outcome is to be achieved and in the assessment task to verify that the outcome has in fact been achieved.

In constructive alignment we see that the learners prior experiences, prior understanding and conceptions of learning are considered when designing the intended learning outcomes and considering what activities the learners will engage in, this is then aligned with the teaching and learning activities and with the assessment task.

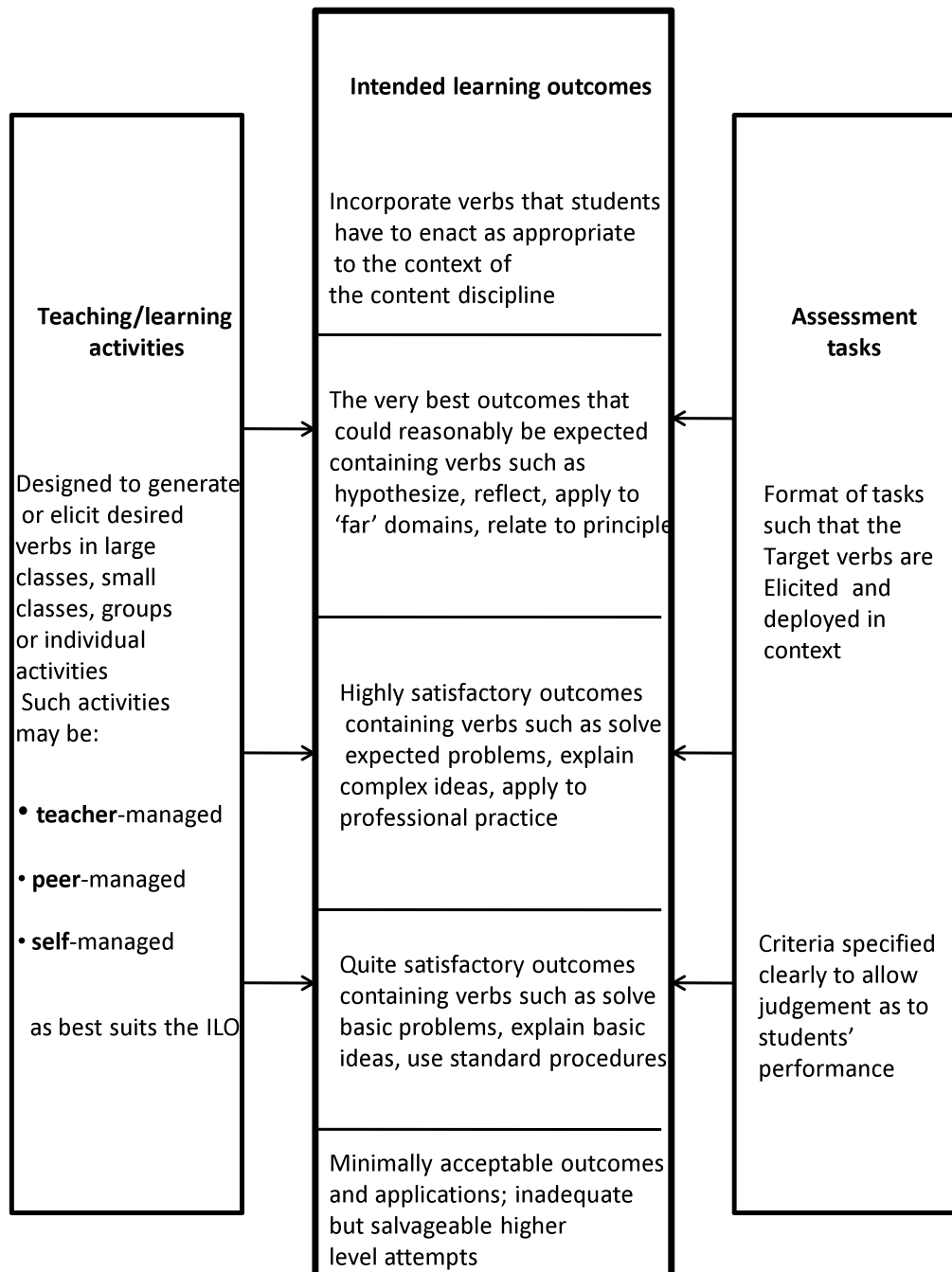


Figure 2. Aligning intended learning outcomes, teaching and assessment tasks

Source: Biggs and Tang (2007: p 59)

Ramsden's (2003) approach is to address the design for learning and he does this by posing questions around problems to be overcome. These problems are the problem of goals and structure, the problem of teaching strategies and the problem of assessment. Again these questions or problems mirror to a greater or lesser extent the components

as identified by Biggs and Tang (2007). Ramsden (2003) addresses the question/problem of goals and structure by considering expectations of the student in a general sense; he then discusses content, aims and objectives. The question/problem of teaching strategies considers the importance of deep approaches to learning and selecting an appropriate method of teaching. The question/problem of assessment is a critical one and one which is often misunderstood. Fundamentally assessment is about helping students to learn and teachers to learn about how best to teach them. Case studies of effective practice are given to illustrate the proposed framework.

In addition to considering the questions/problems outlined above Ramsden (2003) addresses the question/problem of evaluating the effectiveness of teaching in a reflective way as part of the structure and framework for implementing his theories and finally considers the question/problem of accountability and educational development. Here the discussion is centred on creating an environment that encourages the underlying principles of good learning and teaching in higher education. The importance of good academic management and leadership is stressed as are coherent policies for the encouragement of good teaching. Another important dimension is the context and process of educational development where there is a shift away from a simplistic way of understanding teaching to a more complex, relativistic and dynamic one. Here the application of theoretical knowledge is integrated with the practice of teaching. This model implies recognition that learning how to teach is a process that never ends.

Prosser and Trigwell (1999: p 166) do not propose or identify a framework or model for teaching, rather they propose principles of practice arising from their view of learning. They articulate these principles in a two dimensional table which provides a summary of their research into students' prior experience, perception of the learning situation, their approach to study and the student's learning outcome as a basis for practical development of learning and teaching contexts. It is noted that the issues highlighted in the table are not meant to be guidelines for, or provide templates or recipes for good practice, but to highlight those aspects which teachers need to maintain in the foreground of their awareness when designing or redesigning learning and teaching contexts in higher education. This reflects the overall theme of their book which emphasises the need to understand how students understand and that teaching methods and assessment methods must reflect this and is a continually changing process. Effective teaching requires teachers to continually research their students and their students learning if they are to be student centred.

Table 2. Analysis of principles of practice

Aspect	Variation in aspect	Relationship between aspects	Situation evocation	Learning outcomes
Student's prior experience	Students enter our learning and teaching situation with substantial qualitative variation in their prior experiences of learning and teaching	These prior experiences of learning and teaching are related to specific prior situations in which those experiences occurred	A new learning and teaching situation they find themselves in evokes certain aspects of these prior experiences, the aspects evoked being related to the congruence between the previous situation and the new situation	The aspects evoked have a subsequent substantial impact on what and how students learn in the new situation
Student's perception of learning situation	Students have substantial qualitative variation in the way they perceive their learning and teaching situation	This variation in perceptions is related to their prior experiences of study and present approaches to study	In a new learning and teaching context, different students focus on or perceive different aspects of their situation in that context	The aspects focused on or perceived are related to their approach to study in integrated or disintegrated ways, the nature of this relationship being fundamentally related to their post conceptual understanding and achievement
Student's approach to study	In the same learning context, there is qualitative variation in the way students approach their learning	This variation in approach is related to students' perceptions of the learning situation and their prior experiences of learning	Different teaching/learning situations evoke different approaches to learning	The way students approach their learning is fundamentally (not just empirically) related to their learning outcomes. For example, if they do not seek to understand, then they do not find understanding
Student's learning outcome	In the same learning context, there is qualitative variation in the outcome of students' learning	This variation in outcome is related to students' perceptions of the learning situation, their prior experiences of learning and their approach to their learning	Different teaching/learning situations evoke different learning outcomes	The quality of students' learning is fundamentally related to their ability to draw on their understanding in new and abstract situations

Source: Prosser and Trigwell (1999: p 167)

As stated above these models and frameworks validate and give meaning to the ideas and theories of approaches to learning research. In their questioning of the dominance of explicitly psychological versions (particularly humanistic and cognitive models) of the learner and teacher Malcolm and Zukas (2001) suggest a link to 'Governments' new found enthusiasm for evidence-based practice' Malcolm and Zukas (2001: p 35). Government motives are also alluded to by Lindsay (2004) in his review and critique of the books of both Biggs (2003) and Ramsden (2003). Haggis (2003) also sees links to government policy issues through the monitoring activity of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the provision of evidence for 'evidence based' policy. There are undertones of suspicion and opposition to managerialism, Deem, Hillyard, and Reed (2007) in Malcolm and Zukas (2001); Haggis (2003); Lindsay (2004).

4.6 Summary of teaching, learning and understanding

Given the criticism and limitations of approaches to learning theories it is evident that there are many questions about the applicability and relevance of this research. However, as noted by Case and Marshall (2005) it is nevertheless a powerful framework with which to make sense of aspects of student learning situations. Rather than discarding these approaches and theories Case and Marshall (2005) argue that other perspectives have the potential to enrich and extend it and in so doing address some of the valid critiques levelled against it. Malcolm and Zukas (2001) advocate the

building of ‘conceptual bridges’ between understandings of the social and political context of higher education, epistemological inquiry, and discussions on teaching and learning. Malcolm and Zukas (2001); Haggis (2003) conclude by calling for a broader academic debate on the nature of the educational transaction rather than an outright dismissal. This debate would include current conceptions but also would include a critical understanding of the social, policy and institutional context of learning and teaching.

The following section examines the policy/institutional structures and environment with regard to effective teaching in higher education. It looks at developments over the past two decades with regard to supporting excellence in teaching in higher education and analyses the impact of changes and developments.

5. Policy Considerations

In considering effective teaching in higher education, or in education in general, the importance that is given to and the esteem in which effective teaching is held by stakeholders is useful in gauging both its acceptance and its adoption in practice. The stakeholders that have the greatest influence are the government and policy makers, the higher education institutes and finally academics themselves. This section of the paper explores the policies, institutions and structures within which effective teaching in higher education is promoted and fostered.

5.1 Government, Policy Makers and their Agents

Universities in the UK are publicly funded bodies with considerable autonomy. They are legal entities, with overall responsibility for the sector lying with the appropriate government department. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was established in 1992 to exercise funding direction within the context of Government policy. Each year the Secretary of State ‘advises’ the HEFCE as to the policy shifts the Government wishes to see, and the major changes in policy and structural arrangements are introduced through legislation Layer (2002). Today the HEFCE works within a policy framework set by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, but not as part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The HEFCE has distinct statutory duties that are free from direct political control HEFCE (2010). The policies, planning and strategy of the universities therefore act as a yardstick by which commitment to effective teaching can be gauged. The role of government, policy makers and government sponsored agencies in the promotion and fostering of effective teaching and learning is examined below.

5.1.1 UK Government Reports

The report of The National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education in the Learning Society (1997) generally referred to as the Dearing report has had a significant impact on teaching and learning in higher education. The Dearing report outlined a vision for higher education over the following 20 years and articulated this vision in the wider economic and social context in which it operates. The report states that the United Kingdom will need to develop as a learning society. In that learning society, higher education will make a distinctive contribution through teaching at its highest level, the pursuit of scholarship and research and increasingly through its contribution to lifelong learning. The linking of research, scholarship and education is identified as being a way in which the distinctiveness and vitality of higher education

can be maintained. The report explicitly states that one of the visions for higher education is to be at the leading edge of world practice in effective learning and teaching.

The report identifies increasing student numbers not supported by a proportionate increase in funding as being potentially problematic in achieving the objective of excellence in teaching and also commented that despite significant changes to structure, traditional teaching methods still prevail. This raises questions about lack of expertise, and/or a lack of readiness, and/or a lack of trust or belief in alternative methods of teaching and also points to a need for training/development in education for teachers/lecturers in higher education.

Further observations in the report point to a lack of real and perceived support for effective learning and teaching or to encourage excellence in teaching envisioned by the report:

“a number of those offering us evidence commented on the irony that, in institutions devoted to learning and teaching and to the advancement of knowledge and understanding, so little attention is paid to equipping staff with advanced knowledge and understanding of the processes of learning and teaching.” (Dearing, 1997: 3.41)

“With certain exceptions, staff perceive promotion opportunities and financial rewards to be associated with long service or research excellence, and not with excellence in teaching, in spite of many institutions stated commitment to consider research, teaching and administration.” (Dearing, 1997: 3.44)

The report also recognises that there are few funding incentives to encourage teaching excellence (Dearing, 1997: 3.92) and that Higher Education Institutes are drawn towards the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), because it is “one of the few opportunities for securing additional funding”. It could also be argued that the RAE draws energy away from teaching insofar as funds are awarded on the basis of research active staff and research outputs, Queen’s University Belfast (2010). There is no benefit to be gained from the RAE for excellence in teaching. This policy of rewarding excellence in only a limited range of activities, particularly research, has encouraged all institutions to try to achieve in those activities. (Dearing, 1997: 3.117)

The report recommended the establishment of an Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE). This Institute was launched in 1999 Evans (2001) and has since merged with the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), and the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) National Co-ordination Team (NCT) to form the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The report recommended that with regard to the ILTHE that institutions of higher education begin immediately to develop or seek access to programmes for teacher training of their staff, if they do not have them, and that all institutions seek national accreditation of such programmes from the ILTHE (Dearing, 1997: Recommendation 13) and additionally that it should become the normal requirement that all new full-time academic staff with teaching responsibilities are required to achieve at least associate membership of the ILTHE for the successful completion of probation (Dearing, 1997: Recommendation 48). This points to a

recognition of the importance of learning and teaching in higher education and recommendations as to how the recognition and professional development of teaching in higher education could be achieved.

The later report, *The Future of Higher Education* DfES (2003), a government white paper presented by then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Charles Clarke, in January 2003 also recognised the importance of teaching and learning and made proposals to link funding to strength in teaching, proposed reform to support improvements in teaching quality in all institutions, new professional standards for teaching in higher education and the celebration and reward of teaching excellence. The white paper created impetus for the Higher Education Academy and made proposals with regard to centres of excellence in teaching and increasing the size of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme.

The *Future of Higher Education* report mirrored the Dearing report in recognising the stronger link between performance in research and promotion.

“In the past, rewards in higher education – particularly promotion – have been linked much more closely to research than to teaching. Indeed, teaching has been seen by some as an extra source of income to support the main business of research, rather than recognised as a valuable and high-status career in its own right. This is a situation that cannot continue. Institutions must properly reward their best teaching staff; and all those who teach must take their task seriously.” (DfES 2003: p 51)

The *Future of Higher Education* report is probably best remembered as the white paper that led to the Higher Education Act 2004 and the controversial changes in funding in higher education and the operation of tuition fees, replacing the up-front fixed fee. In addition to the more controversial aspect of the white paper it also restated government support for the enhancement and recognition of excellence teaching in higher education and endorsed the recommendations of the Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee for the creation of a new unitary body to oversee quality enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education (TQEC, 2003). This new unitary body was to become the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

Both of the main contemporaneous reports discussed above have had a significant impact on the structure of higher education in the UK. With regard to teaching in higher education much of the infrastructure has been directly influenced by the findings and recommendations of these reports. This would indicate a level of effectiveness and success in achieving change. The bodies discussed below have been successful in raising the profile of teaching in higher education. However, questions still remain with regard to the status of teaching relative to research. Recently Clegg and Smith (2010) state that the highly selective approach to research assessment puts pressure on researchers to concentrate on research at the expense of teaching. It would appear that a culture change in higher education is necessary to change this situation. Nevertheless at a macro level it would appear that government policy and objectives have been successful in fostering and promoting teaching in higher education.

5.1.2 Higher Education Funding Council for England HEFCE

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. In doing so, it aims to promote high quality education and research, within a financially healthy sector. The Council also plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice, HEFCE (2010). Excellence in teaching and learning is one of the main strategic aims of the HEFCE.

One of the key roles of the HEFCE in learning and teaching was the establishment of 74 Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) in 2005. These centres of excellence in teaching and learning were first proposed in the white paper on higher education in 2003, DfES (2003). The 74 CETLs are widely distributed geographically throughout England and have two main aims. The first aim is to reward excellent teaching practice, and secondly to further invest in that practice so that CETLs funding delivers substantial benefits to students, teachers and institutions, HEFCE (2010).

From 1995 to 2009 the Fund for Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) supported a total of 164 projects aimed at stimulating developments in teaching and learning in higher education and to encourage the dissemination of good teaching and learning practice across the higher education sector.

Through the funding of programmes such as the FDTL and the CETLs the funding councils have an active and strategic role in the promotion and fostering of teaching in higher education. The evidence would suggest that this role is carried out successfully and has seen many initiatives and developments that have enhanced teaching in higher education.

5.1.3 Higher Education Academy

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) was formed in October 2004 to work with the higher education community to enhance all aspects of the student experience. It aims to promote high quality learning and teaching through the development and transfer of good practices in all subject disciplines, UK centre for Materials Study (2010). The HEA was formed from a merger of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHe), the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) and the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF).

The ILTHE itself was created from the Institute for Learning and Teaching, a direct result of the Dearing Report of 1997, Trowler, Fanghanel and Wareham (2006). The aims of the ILTHE were to enhance the status of teaching in higher education, to improve the experience of learning and to support innovation in higher education teaching and learning, Stefani (2003). The LTSN was set up specifically to provide resources tailor-made to the teaching and learning demands of 24 different disciplinary-based subject areas, and for the purposes of disseminating good practice within and across different subject areas. The TQEF has supported three strands of developmental work to enhance learning and teaching in higher education: institutional, academic subjects/disciplines, and individual. The institutional strand has centred on funding higher education institutes to support enhancements in learning and teaching subject to the production and implementation of institutional learning and teaching strategies HEFCE (2005).

Thus the Higher Education Academy assumed the roles previously adopted by the three previously separate entities. The strategic plan (2008 - 2013) of the HEA outlines the vision, mission and strategic aims of the academy. The strategic aims are as follows:

- Identify, develop and disseminate evidence-informed approaches
- Broker and encourage the sharing of effective practice
- Support universities and colleges in bringing about strategic change
- Inform, influence and interpret policy
- Raise the status of teaching (HEA, 2008)

The HEA acts as an independent broker working with individual academics, subject communities and institutions across the UK, to share expertise and to disseminate evidence-based practice (HEA, 2010). It is a manifestation of a culture and commitment in the UK higher education sector to excellence in learning and teaching. This commitment and culture is further reflected in the HEA's statement of support for teaching and learning; teaching, curriculum and assessment are central to the student experience and to effective learning outcomes (HEA, 2010).

One of the key supports to teaching and learning provided by the HEA is through the subject centres (HEA, 2010). The subject centres provide subject-specific support for enhancing the student learning experience through a nation-wide network of 24 Subject Centres. They are located in higher education institutions and each engages in a wide variety of activities to support academics, departments and institutions. Some of the subject centres cover a single discipline and some a group of related disciplines.

The approaches to learning research has achieved widespread acceptance across institutions such as the HEA. As noted above these approaches have been questioned. Malcolm and Zukas (2001) are critical of what they call 'cafeteria' psychology approaches, adopted by the Institute of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (ILTHE), now part of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), criticising them both for their implicit assumptions of how theory informs practice; theories as sets of rules for professional behaviour rather than a form of critical engagement with and understanding of practice. This reflects the prominence and status of approaches to learning research in the HEA. Webb (1997) also points to the underlying theory of knowledge and methodology as not concerning itself with the social consequences of education or being politically radical. This neutrality and the simplicity, universality, and power of the metaphor are the qualities that make the message appealing, acceptable, practical and generalisable, particularly so for educational and staff developers.

Despite these and earlier criticisms of approaches to learning research the emergence of the Higher Education Academy and the associated structures and supports points to a successful and effective structure to enhance teaching and learning in higher education.

5.1.4 Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP)

The TLRP was a response to Government concerns about the quality of educational research in higher education across the UK. This led to a major programme managed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) but funded by the HEFCE and the other funding councils. The focus of the research undertaken by the TLRP was on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout education from pre-

school to higher education and lifelong learning (TLRP, 2009). The TLRP addressed the following questions with regard to post compulsory education:

- What are universities for and how should they be organised?
- Are they to be mainly of benefit to the economy, society or the individual student?
- Should different types of university receive similar resources for similar purposes, or should each type of university focus on specialisms and select its students accordingly?
- Do the differences between subject areas such as social science versus Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) affect the quality of student learning in different subjects, settings or contexts?
- Do 'research active' staff offer better pedagogic practices than 'teaching active' staff?
- Are findings in this area based upon pedagogic research, or upon research which contrasts the social sciences and humanities with the natural sciences? TLRP (2009: p 8)

The TLRP's output and findings are in the form of commentaries and research briefings. The research briefings cover topics across the spectrum of education and some notable research briefings in the context of this paper are No. 17 Learning how to learn in classrooms, schools and networks, and No. 31 Learning and teaching at university for example TLRP (2010). Other outputs include books, journals, videos and conference booklets.

In the commentary on effective learning and teaching in UK higher education recommendations are addressed at the government policy level, the institute or university level, the subject and course leader level, reflecting the views of Trowler et al. (2005) with regard to the meso level, and finally the individual academics, lecturers and tutors. The recommendations for improvements and more research across a range of issues in higher education however the recommendations that have specific relevance to this paper are; pedagogic research to develop teachers and lecturers in higher education and professional educational or academic development, the development of expertise and experience in relation to pedagogies to engage socially diverse students and social and informal contexts for learning in the full range of institutions and subjects including the active engagement of the student as learner TLRP (2009: p 37).

The TLRP generic project work ended in September 2009 although the TLRP is due to continue until 2011. The TLRP is another example of government policy actively promoting education in the UK and supporting effective teaching in higher education.

5.2 Summary of Policy Considerations

The Dearing report has been something of a watershed in teaching in UK higher education. It marks a concerted effort in the UK to enhance the status of teaching in higher education and may be seen as an attempt to manage the move from what can be described as an elitist model of education to a popular or 'populist' model Milliken and Barnes (2002). Developments since its publication have seen the establishment of the Higher Education Academy, Centres of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the TLRP and changes in funding through the funding bodies to promote and reward excellence in teaching. These developments and changes are all evidence of a

commitment to teaching and learning, however it would appear that teaching has still not achieved the same status and recognition as research. Nevertheless the structures and rewards to support and encourage effective teaching in higher education in the UK have been put in place.

The next section examines how identity impacts on effective teaching in higher education and how professional development in teaching is perceived in the UK.

6 Professional Identity and Development

There is a sound theoretical basis for the study of effective teaching in higher education and from my research and observations there appears to be a coherent, structured, and supportive environment in place to enable academics examine their roles in teaching and the role of teaching in higher education. There is considerable support at government and policy level for the development of excellence in teaching in higher education. Nevertheless it appears that the role of teaching in higher education is not highly valued, especially in relation to the perceived high value placed on research Dearing (1997: 3.44); Lea and Callaghan (2008). This has a negative impact on how academics perceive and engage in their professional identity and professional development as teachers.

6.1 Identity

With regard to identity, West (2006) observes that academics describe themselves as being ‘historians’ or ‘computer scientists’ more readily than they describe themselves as employees of their university, and that is a constant source of tension between loyalty to their profession or to their university. Their primary loyalty is often horizontal to discipline rather than vertical to institution. Great emphasis is placed on the stability and the centrality of the discipline in constructing academic identity and membership of the disciplinary community James (2000).

In Becher and Trowler (2001) academic careers and in some instances personalities are defined by research interests and perhaps revealingly “the actual process of *teaching* (my emphasis) was generally held to be enjoyable and worthwhile and could sometimes be found to have a broadening effect on one’s research”, (p 148). Taylor (1999) argues that the concept of identity is broader than that of role, ‘identity’ referring to aspects of the person’s character generally, while ‘role’ refers to the part played by a person in a particular social setting. Taylor (1999) outlines three ‘levels’ of academic identity: signs linked to the site of one’s work; signs linked to the discipline of one’s work, and more universal signs of being an ‘academic’. The first level involves relationships with employer and work. Universities aren’t identical. In the UK for example there are the traditional universities and the new ‘post 1992’ universities.

In Ireland there are traditional universities, new universities (DCU, University of Limerick) and, the Institutes of Technology (occupying a similar space to that occupied in the UK by the Polytechnics prior to 1992). According to Taylor (1999) these differences impact on the way the public, and therefore those who work within them, view them and are viewed. This has an impact on what he calls ‘the index of self’ that is signalled by the type of institution and of work by, and with, which academics are involved: ‘I’m from Trinity’ for example. The second level of identity as discussed above involves identification with an academic discipline. Here the identity is signalled

through reference to the discipline: 'I'm an historian' (see above). Taylor (1999) describes a third identity or 'version of self shaping', Taylor (1999: p 42). Academics have to learn to work with two 'publics': the general community, and the disciplinary community. This equates to the more universal image of the academic identity, one which overlaps disciplinary boundaries, a cosmopolitan identity. Here the identification is with the career: 'I'm an academic'. Hocking, Cooke, Yamashita, McGinty and Bowl (2009) suggest that teachers' identities are influenced by their own educational experiences, their conceptions of knowledge generation in subject communities, referring to academic discipline, and by their beliefs about themselves and their students.

These 'identities' influenced their pedagogic practice and were refracted to some extent in student learning. This identity with educational experiences is reflected somewhat by Henkel (2000) who states that academics for the most part engage with their disciplines or subject communities in higher education institutes. These discipline or subject communities have their own traditions and values, which make their own contribution to academic identities. The critical relationships within which academic identities are pursued are those between individual, discipline, department and institution, although the balance of importance as between these relationships varies between individuals, Henkel (2000).

The formation of academic identity is influenced by three key roles – researcher, teacher and academic manager. The key components of identity are academic values, academic agendas and sense of self esteem. Key variables are discipline, institution and age, Henkel (2000). An area for research is prompted insofar as how are these identities affected by major reform and change in higher education? What are the patterns of continuity and change?

6.2 Development

Given the multifaceted nature of academic life it is understandable that there is a fairly high likelihood that individual academics may be aware either consciously or subconsciously of various identities as academics. If there is a strong identity as a teacher, then, there must arise a need to develop and achieve excellence or proficiency in teaching. In my experience however, this is not always the case. Since becoming a lecturer in an HEI in Ireland in 2001 and prior to that, having spent fourteen years in further education in Ireland I note that relatively few of my academic colleagues have any formal qualifications or training in teaching or pedagogy. To become a recognised second level teacher in Ireland one must complete post graduate qualification in education, (equivalent to a PGCE in the UK), in addition to a primary degree, or alternatively one must graduate with a specialist degree in education, for example a B. Mus. Ed. to teach music. I find it surprising that until recently in Ireland there were no formal qualifications in teaching in higher education available to those involved in the sector. The situation was similar in the UK; however recent years have seen the introduction of the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) which in some instances has become a prerequisite for individuals wishing to pursue academic careers in the UK. At the time of the Dearing report, only just over half of academics had ever received any training in how to teach and over two thirds of those had received training only at the beginning of their careers. Dearing (1997: 3.40). It is understandable therefore that there has been much emphasis put on teaching in the

wake of the Dearing report and there is a greater level of consciousness about development in teaching in higher education.

Blackmore (2009) notes a major increase in the attention paid to formal support for development at individual, group and organisational levels in UK universities over the past 10 years. At national level, two agencies exist: the Higher Education Academy (HEA), dealing with teaching and learning issues; and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE), dealing with leadership and management. Other organisations have been nationally influential. The Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) has, since 1992, focused on the support of educational development.

The Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD) is the main body dealing with the development and recognition of expertise in human resources-based development functions. At institutional level, institutions have invested in a range of development centres, units, and functions, which have been arranged in a huge variety of ways. The number of people involved in the provision of support has grown substantially over the period.

Blackmore (2007) acknowledges the difficulty in defining development in the academic context and staff development, educational development (development of curriculum and assessment), academic development (the development of academics' expertise), faculty development (development of academic staff, usually relating to teaching, in the USA), and organisational development (focused at an institutional level). Blackmore proposes a model for development based on four dimensions; Inclusion, Strategy, Integration, and Scholarship (ISIS), however almost immediately he draws attention to limitations of such a complex model. The model provides insight and is thought provoking however the fundamental difficulty with the model is its one-fits-all model of development for the university.

There are obvious difficulties with the implementation of such a model for example the issue of academic tribes and territories, Becher and Trowler (2001) and suspicion and rejection of 'new managerialism', Deem et al (2007). Blackmore (2009) also acknowledges that allegiance to academic and professional groupings can be an effective means of safeguarding an appropriate level of autonomy and of assuring standards, including ethical issues. This suggests equity of approach as an alternative to uniformity or a one-fits-all model. Blackmore (2009) cautions against the pluralist approach, however in conclusion he notes the inherent negative image and suspicion of Human Resources and advocates an overarching framework that accommodates all the disparate pluralist provision.

What does it mean to develop as a teacher? Effective teaching means becoming a reflective practitioner, and for that you need a theory of teaching, Biggs (2003). In the context of his own theories of teaching that theory should be what he describes as theory 3 teaching, see above. Biggs (2003) advocates a wider perspective in reflective practice including review at the departmental and institutional level, however, it is important to consider development at the level of practitioner or individual teacher/lecturer. Academic development is considered in the overall context of continuous professional development, Pennington and Smith (2002). It is not uncommon for individuals to adopt a short-term here-and-now stance aimed at

identifying an area of current ‘deficit’ requiring some form of ‘remedial’ action and typically, with few exceptions, little attempt is made to reconcile longer and medium-term objectives or to mediate between individual, group or ‘corporate’ goals, Pennington and Smith (2002). This offers some insight into the reasons why there is a lack of medium to long term engagement in the academic development of teaching within academia with the focus being on development of qualifications portfolio, or research portfolio or perhaps short term training courses to address syllabus or curriculum changes. At the individual level it is up to the individual academic to take responsibility for their own development however there is a need for a well managed environment where institutional and subject-related CPD needs are transparent, acknowledged and resourced.

7. Conclusion

It would appear that teaching in higher education is an under-researched area and there is potential to develop research beyond the narrow confines and scientifically limited scope of current research and theory, Malcolm and Zukas (2001); Haggis (2003, 2009); Case and Marshall (2005). The foundational status that approaches to learning research has achieved has been viewed with suspicion, Webb (1999) states that phenomenography and the deep/surface metaphor developed contemporaneously with the growth of educational development centres in HEIs. Lindsay (2004) also makes a connection between approaches to learning research and educational development centres and makes a further link to “cost-cutting agendas of governments and universities”.

There has been significant development in support for teaching and learning at the policy and structural level since the Dearing report (1997). This support has not been as effective as it could be as a result of opposition to and suspicion of compulsory courses on teaching and learning and standardised practices. This “imposed professionalism”, Skelton (2005) avoids fundamental epistemological, relational, and political questions and undermines the development of knowledge, responsibility, and autonomy. Deem et al (2007) state that the power, status and role of academics in university governance and management have declined as a long term consequence of what they call ‘new managerialism’ or ‘new public managerialism’.

This new managerialism has dominated the ideological context, policy agenda, and organisational technology through and on which universities have been transformed in the course of the last two decades, Deem et al (2007). The changes and developments driven by the Dearing report such as the Higher Education Academy have thus been tainted by their association with new managerialism and imposed professionalism.

The impact and importance of identity in higher education is not to be underestimated. Academic identities are complex, Jawitz (2009) and tribal and territorial, Becher and Trowler (1999). One could look to the work of Wenger (1998) to suggest ways in which academic identity could be linked to the practice of teaching through the development of communities of practice in teaching in higher education.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) suggest seven principles for cultivating communities of practice in an organisational context. Whether these seven principles could be adapted to the higher education arena is debatable.

Table 3. Linking academic identity to the practice of teaching

practice as...	Identity as...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negotiation of meaning (in terms of participation and reification) • community • shared history of learning • boundary and landscape • constellations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negotiated experience of self (in terms of participation and reification) • membership • learning trajectory • nexus of multimembership • belonging defined globally but experienced locally

Source: Wenger (1998. p150)

In conclusion a number of different directions and avenues for research are suggested by this paper. How can the narrow focus of approaches to learning research be widened? How can the scientific rigour of approaches to learning research be intensified and deepened? How can the disparity of esteem between teaching and research in higher education be addressed more effectively? What role/significance do academic identities have in determining effectiveness in teaching in higher education? Can academic identities be changed? Are there core, generalisable skills and knowledge in teaching in higher education? What are the arguments for and against a 'one-fits-all model' of development in higher education? Is there potential to build a model of development for teaching in higher education? How can such a model be implemented whilst gaining widespread acceptance amongst academics?

The answers to the questions above are important because there is a definite, if not always, manifest link between effective teaching in higher education, the academic identities of teachers in higher education and their professional development. Further study of these issues and the relationships between them will develop our understanding and hopefully lead to more scientifically relevant theories and research in teaching in higher education and, by extension, to more effective teaching in higher education.

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