LEARNING LANDSCAPES
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND THE FORMATION OF COALESCENT SPACE

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Professional Development can be conceived as activities that are intended to engage professionals in new learning about their professional practice (McAlpine, 2006; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Whereas, Professional Learning is a continuous process that builds throughout a professional's entire career (Loughran, 2010). As such, professional learning "cannot be mandated, coerced or controlled, but can be supported, facilitated and shaped" (Webster-Wright, 2010, p. 12).
THE CONTEXT

For professionals working in UK Higher Education, professional learning and development is a complex and messy endeavour.

In January 2017, I sent out a survey to 525 academics, 182 responded (35% completion rate). These were their “top ten” barriers to engaging with some form of CPD:

1. Lack of time (69%)
2. Lack of time to follow up afterwards (59%)
3. Getting release time to attend the event (38%)
4. Too expensive (28%)
5. Commitments to family members (28%)
6. Lack of relevance (24%)
7. Lack of incentives (23%)
8. Travel to another site / campus (21%)
9. Lack of encouragement from department (19%)
10. Completely unaware of the event (19%)

Other issues arose from interviews (n:12) and photovoice (n:12):

- Having to learn “stuff” that often sits outside of an academic’s area of expertise (e.g. sustainability).
- Knowing where to find this “stuff”, or even who to go to find out more about this “stuff”.
- Information that is not consistent, not right, and/or keeps changing.
- “Escaping” or “hiding” from institutional noise (both physical and digital interruptions).
- Finding a suitable space to learn.
TYPES OF SPACE

- physical space
- digital space
- psychological space
- biological space
- sonic space
- timeless space
SPATIAL PROPERTIES

SPACETIME

TIME

TRANSENT

AFFECTIVE

SPACE

CONTROLLED

IMMERSIVE
THE IMPLICATIONS

These spatial properties will have implications on how, where and when academics go about engaging in their professional learning and development activities.

Policy Makers
- Consider creating quiet (and possibly private) workspaces.
- Ensure learning and development time is created and protected.
- Understand that many of the objectives of professional development concern changes and outcomes that are not easily measured in the traditional sense and that the measurements currently sought are often not those that that have the greatest impact on university performance.

Academic & Organisational Development Teams
- Carry out a professional development needs analysis to provide more tailored and targeted professional development for academic staff – recognising disciplinary differences.
- Recognise the value of informal and tacit professional learning as well as learning-on-the-job and design greater opportunities for such forms of activities.
- Facilitate the engagement of academics with professional development sessions through more flexible availability of opportunities (e.g. micro-learning, flipped professional learning).

Academics
- Engage in a time management course.
- Develop a professional learning network (PLN) that taps into a variety of spaces, tools and people.
- Take a reflective approach to documenting your engagement in professional learning and take note of the impact and outcomes of this engagement.
THANKS FOR LISTENING!

QUESTIONS?


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