

Deconstructing the Narratives of Educational Developers on the Enabling and Constraining Conditions in Their Growth, Development and Roles as Educational Staff Development Facilitators at a South African University

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ABSTRACT This study was inspired by the author's participation in a National Research Foundation (NRF) project involving eight South African universities, investigating the enabling and constraining conditions with regard to the professional development of academics in their role as teachers in higher education. Deviating from the NRF project which focused on academics, this study deconstructs the narratives of academic development practitioners on the cultural, structural and agential conditions which enable and/or constrain their own professional development, growth and roles as educational staff development facilitators at a South African University. Designed within the qualitative research approach, a case study design was used. Ten educational developers constituted the sample for the study. Individual interviews were held with the educational developers using a semi-structured interview schedule. Using the Archerian social realist theoretical framework qualitative data was analysed by first transcribing interview tapes and coding the transcribed data. Content analysis was then used to analyse data thematically. The study found that lack of laid down appointment criteria and huge workloads were the major constraining conditions; senior management support and seasoned expertise in the Centre were major enablers for the growth and development of educational developers. Based on the findings, the study concludes that educational developers are overworked and have loosely defined roles and recommends the crafting of a code of conduct for educational development and the development of an academy for educational developers.

INTRODUCTION

Most research conducted in the academic development field in South Africa seems to focus mainly on academic staff development and student support (Scott et al. 2007; Boughey and Niven 2012; Quinn 2006; Vorster and Quinn 2012; Ndebele and Ndlovu 2013; Machingambi and Wadesango 2011; Makondo 2010, 2012). Boughey and Niven (2012) trace the history of research in the academic development movement in South Africa and identify three phases: the academic support phase, the academic development phase and the higher education development phase. Dating back to the early 1980s, they argue that the slim volumes of work of the academic support phase show that, overwhelmingly, the research was practice-based and often focused on the courses researchers were involved in teaching. During the academic development phase some practitioners and researchers began to look towards 'social' understandings of students' learning and research around the language issue and academic literacies became prominent. In the higher education development phase, according to Boughey and Niven (2012), the new academic develop-

ment mandate was to support institutions in achieving their mission, vision and goals for student outputs and to train for, and monitor, academic teaching, and research therefore shifted to these issues.

The enabling and constraining conditions in the provision of staff and student academic development support seem to be well documented as shown above. This paper looks at the educational developers themselves rather than the academics and students they support. There is need, in the author's opinion, for more research on the enabling and constraining conditions in the work of the educational developers themselves. As Manathunga (2007) shows, "One of the first steps would be to openly air the tensions, ambivalences, and anxieties experienced by academic developers, both within our field of academic development and with our disciplinary-based colleagues."

Educational Development: A Conceptual Framework

The terms academic development and educational development tend to be used interchangeably in the literature and will be treated

as such in this paper. Those who work in this field will be referred to as educational developers in this paper. A key component of academic development is the improvement of teaching with the express purpose of improving student learning. Quinn (2012a) explains that in the international literature the terms academic/educational development are most often associated with academic staff development while in South Africa, the term academic development can be used to refer to a number of interlinked areas of work such as student support and development, including foundation provision; curriculum development; institutional development, including quality assurance work and staff development. Amundsen and Wilson (2012) use the term educational development to describe actions, planned and undertaken by academics themselves or by others working with academics, aimed at enhancing teaching.

According to Baume (2002: 109) however, academic development is wider and embraces educational development, "Academic development is concerned with the improvement of the process of HE –educational development and with enhancing the capabilities of those who directly support learning in HE. It is a professional activity carried in an academic setting." In this regard, Scott et al. (2007) recommend that there needs to be a sufficient number of educational specialists, at appropriate academic levels, to provide specialised educational design and teaching services, to provide professional development opportunities, and to disseminate systematic educational knowledge within the groupings of academic staff, departments or programme teams, that are responsible for mainstream provision.

To execute the educational development responsibility suggested by Scott et al. (2007) above, it is prudent that the developers carry this out in both a professionally and academically sound way. To achieve this, Baume (2002: 109) calls for, "an acceptance of the need for appropriate training and qualifications for academic developers and necessarily lecturers and it requires that our work be undertaken on the basis of knowledge and evidence and understanding; on a sound academic and scholarly base derived from and contributing to research." The above assertion emphasises the need for professional development courses for educational developers in universities to assist them

gain knowledge and expertise in the discharge of their duties as staff developers.

The need for the training of educational developers is even made more urgent by the fact that this is an emerging field that recruits largely from other disciplines. As Manathunga (2007) shows the majority of academic developers have migrated into the world of academic development from other disciplines and in Manathunga's (2007: 25) own words, "Academic developers are very often disciplinary migrants, performing hybrid, liminal roles at the "fault lines" between teachers and learners, between academics and managers, and between teaching and research." The call for the training of educational developers is further corroborated by Peseta (2011: 84) who notes that, "Given what we know about how people arrive in the field and about transition between it and other forms of academic practice – as second careers ... one argument relates to the professional support and conversation offered to neophytes that might be more than learning-on-the-job."

What seems to emerge from the literature is that the educational developers should operate from an informed point of view in which they offer strategic support in wide-ranging issues pertaining to teaching and learning as well as research into such issues. In this regard, Baume (2002: 109) argues that, "To be taken seriously by our colleagues we should need and be able to show that our advice on teaching and learning as well as our own practice as developers has an academic underpinning...I suggest that we developers need to be explicitly scholarly and academic in our work." To illustrate the importance of grounding in the educational development discipline, Manathunga (2007: 27) provides an anecdote of how she struggled as a new entrant,

I was a refugee from the history discipline arriving into academic development in 1999.... My part-time arrival into academic development eventually translated into a two-year contract and finally a continuing appointment in 2002. As I struggled to transform myself yet again, I began to wrestle with notions of theory, evidence, and other research practices that seemed to dominate the scholarship of academic development.

Notwithstanding the importance of the growth and development of educational devel-

opers as discussed above, educational development practice is not without constraints. Lazerson et al. (2000) warn that educational development work in universities is not very easy as they have to grapple with deep seated institutional values and behaviour systems. Reporting on research conducted on teaching and learning centres in Australia, Palmer et al. (2010: 159) conclude that, "In their quest for success Centres face a range of systematic constraints, including preconceived assumptions about their role and functions." An example of some of these assumptions is given by Brew and Peseta (2008: 85), who write that, "it is not uncommon for senior managers to believe that any university teacher who has taught students in a faculty is capable of turning into an effective academic developer overnight without any kind of mentorship, training or understanding of the body of literature that informs academic development scholarship and practice."

Palmer et al. (2010: 159) provide a summary of some of the constraining conditions to the educational developer's role;

- Insufficient staff time in faculties to engage with Centre activities/initiatives
- Insufficient staff time in Centre to be effective in all the required areas
- Incorrect or outdated general perceptions of the role and Function of the Centre
- Insufficient resources to have a significant impact
- Institutional priority given to research over teaching and learning activities
- Perception that only Faculty (or equivalent) staff can improve teaching and learning
- Inadequate sense of a shared direction/purpose for the Centre

In light of these insights from the literature, the objective of this study was to examine the enabling and constraining conditions in the growth, development and roles of educational developers in their capacity as educational staff development experts at a South African University.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Designed within the qualitative research paradigm, a case study design was utilised in this study. A qualitative research study is an

inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2000). According to Creswell (2007), in qualitative research, the researcher employs a case study design to explore "a bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information." In the present study a case study of one educational development centre at one university, was conducted with the view of collecting data on the views of educational developers of the enabling and constraining conditions in their own development, growth and role in their capacity as staff development facilitators.

Population and Sampling

A population of ten educational developers in one South African university constituted the respondents for the study. In the present study, the researcher targeted all practising educational developers at the selected university as they were few and it was not necessary to sample.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through individual interviews with educational developers and a semi-structured interview schedule guided the interviews. Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and analysed. Content analysis aided analysis of interview transcriptions. The data analysis was premised on the social realist work of Archer (1995, 1996, 2000). Archer (2000) distinguishes between the people (agents) and the parts (structure and culture). Agents coming into the scene (such as new educational development practitioners joining the educational development centre), inherit a set of doctrines, theories and beliefs which dictate what can have an impact on them and these shape what agents can do (Quinn 2006).

This study used Archer (1995, 1996)'s social realist analytical framework to code and sieve through the data classifying the data under the three social realist analytical concepts of structure, culture and agency. The structural domain in Archer's social realist theory comprises things, which exist in the institution such

as policies, committees, educational development centres and sub structures within the centres such as specialised units. These structures, as Danermark et al. (2002: 181) show, constrain and enable the actions of the agents (for example the educational developers), and in turn, agents reproduce and transform structures. The cultural milieu comprises how and what we think about things. This includes values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, ideologies, theories and concepts which are manifest through discourses used by particular people at particular times (Quinn 2012b; Boughey 2010). From the interview transcripts in this study, analysis was done to ascertain at the level of culture the educational developers' sets of doctrines, theories and beliefs which dictated what could have an impact on their growth, development and roles as specialists in academic staff development.

Agency, according to Archer (1996) refers to the personal and psychological makeup of individuals, their social roles and relates to the capacity people have to act in voluntary ways. Agents can engage in concerted action to reshape or retain the structural or cultural features they inherit. Using examples from the educational development field, Quinn (2006: 52) illustrates how "Agents can have causal influences through the effects of the social groups to which they belong (for example, the Educational Development Unit (EDU) staff as a group); actors (for example, the director of the EDU), on the other hand, have the capacity for causal impact through their individual properties and powers given the roles and positions they occupy and the ways in which they occupy them." This analytical theoretical framework was used at the level agency to analyse the role of educational developers in their own growth, development and conceptualisation of their roles as staff development facilitators.

Ethical Issues

The purpose of the study was explicitly explained to the participants before they signed the informed consent forms. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed through giving the respondents the option not to write their names on the biographical data form. In order to protect the identity of the participants, where names were mentioned in transcripts, these were removed. In addition, the actual name of the

educational development centre has been removed and renamed as the 'Centre'. The name of the university has also been removed and where it appears in the transcripts it has been replaced by 'the University'.

RESULTS

Conceptualisation of Their Role

There was a question in the interview schedule that sought to find out the educational developers' conceptualisation of their staff development role. Participants generally seemed to have the same understanding of what was involved in academic staff development. Academic staff development was generally seen as enhancing lecturer expertise in teaching and learning and promoting a culture of critically reflective practice among academics. The following were some of the verbatim responses;

I see academic staff development work as a way of interacting with other academics to make them think critically about their work

My view of staff development ,we are trying to help lecturers to understand what learning and teaching is, they are skilled in their discipline but they do not necessarily know how to help students to become skilled in that discipline, so this is a way of trying to help them understand how to do that every day.

Academic development is there to provide them with an environment in which they can obtain that professional qualification as teachers and not necessarily researchers.

In order to analyse the enabling and constraining conditions in context, a question was included in the interview schedule which sought their current responsibilities in Centre. The educational developers were involved in various roles which included teaching in formal higher education studies with qualifications such as the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE), teaching short courses on teaching and learning, managing mentoring initiatives with academics , facilitating in the new staff induction programmes and conducting individual consultations with academics on teaching and learning issues. One educational developer responded, *I also do other things like consult with lectures about things like evaluation and assessment and curriculum development and so on.*

On the issue of job satisfaction, eight of the ten respondents expressed satisfaction with their current jobs while two indicated that although they were generally satisfied there were some challenges. Job satisfaction stemmed from working with a range of diverse people, the exciting and interesting nature of the job, the development opportunities afforded by the job and the support from senior management. Two quotes from the interview transcripts capture the general satisfaction;

it is a very kind of interesting field. .. There's like lots of scope for development. It's a wide range of things that you do. It's not boring. It's very exciting

In some ways I think it's an interesting job and it often can get you to engage with academics who are critical of their practice

Those who had reservations on job satisfaction also had their reasons, for example:

At other times its very frustrating because some people don't want to think about their practices,

I am not satisfied with how I do the job particularly because there isn't a training programme or there hasn't been up to now a training programme for academic developers so it's about learning on the job and about responding to issues as they arise.

The next set of questions related to enabling and constraining conditions in their growth, development and roles as staff development specialists. The data is presented in three tables according to themes using the social realist concepts of structure, culture and agency. Verbatim quotations from the interview transcripts are given in most cases for illustrative purposes.

Huge Workloads

In the domain of structure, as shown on Table 1, huge workloads were identified as a constraining factor which left little time for issues such as professional development and advancing knowledge in the field. Participants called for the need to hire more staff. Some of the comments from participants are given below;

Because we can be really busy, the time to read has become more limited and so I feel constantly that I am not keeping up with developments in the field.

There isn't enough money to employ, we could happily do with other two or three staff

members in my opinion but we don't have the money.

Sometimes we get overwhelmed with work. We are a small department and I think for the size of the institution it could be more of us.

If you don't actively decide to put time for research development on board or professional development you could find that what you are doing is work, work, work.

Table 1: Educational developers' views on constraining factors for their development, growth and role in their capacity as staff development facilitators

Archerian category	Emerging constraints
Structure	- Huge workloads - Absence of policy on appointment of ED staff
Culture	- Departmental cultures - Negative attitude towards teaching and learning centre
Agency	- Feelings of lack expertise in the disciplines to be supported - Poor participation in professional development opportunities

Absence of Policy on Appointment of ED Staff

Another major concern in the domain of structure was the absence of a policy specifying requirements for the appointment and development of educational development staff. All the participants (Table 1) indicated that they were not aware of any such policy. A culture of continuous professional development had been built in the centre with professional development happening through individual initiative:

I don't think that there are any particular requirements... as far as I know there is nothing that's any different for us as academic developers. In fact we have been having our own conversation recently about how we are going to support our own development.

As far as I am aware there is no policy per se.

Well I don't know if there is anything specific to staff developers

There is no mandate that says you have to earn professional development points. It's about the department culture and it's about the individual.

No. More like a culture...the idea that we should be constantly developing ourselves was kind of part of the culture that I came into so I

was inducted into the fact that I should be reading regularly, I should be writing papers, I should be going to conferences.

Departmental Cultures

In the domain of culture, as shown on Table 1 educational developers were concerned about some departments that seemed not to value what the centre offered for example:

I think there are many academics who don't recognize the resource a place like this Centre offers, they think that their disciplinary expertise is enough and that's a pity.

They think we don't have anything to teach them.

Negative Attitude Towards Teaching and Learning Centre

There were also feelings that there were negative attitudes towards the Centre by some academics for various reasons which included jealousy and hidden agendas as depicted on Table 1. Two excerpts illustrate:

Inside of the institution there is always all sorts of politics and jealousy and turf wars and there is a lot that goes on...we have pockets of real resistance to the work that we do.

You will get others where I mean just as an example I can tell you (name of department supplied) anybody who arrives in (department supplied) is just told that (the Centre) is rubbish don't bother to go there. Ironically we do kind of get the odd person who we kind of hooked in and then they find something but I think it's very difficult for them because when they go back if they come up with any new idea it's just dished because it comes from (the Centre)

Feelings of Lack of Expertise in the Disciplines to be Supported

Under agency as Table 1 shows, one of the constraints was that staff in the Centre generally came from non-science disciplines and therefore was not confident enough to help the scientists as they lacked science disciplinary knowledge. One participant commented: *No-body in the Teaching and Learning Unit is a scientist and we do I think, feel a kind of lack of (knowledge would be a wrong word) but I don't think many of us know enough about the sci-*

ences to be able to with absolute confidence work with scientists .

Poor Participation in Professional Development Opportunities

Summary data on Table 1 shows that some educational developers felt they were not devoting enough time to developing themselves as experts in the field:

I feel that I need to be a lot more involved. I need to be part of a research program generating knowledge for the field. I feel that I am not yet sort of adequately prepared to work in the field.

No I haven't (taken up any professional development opportunity) and that's quite interesting because you know until (the Centre) itself developed their new course for educational developers I mean I wasn't aware or anything but what I am keen to do is to attend the (Centre) one. It's just finding time to do that.

Solid Educational Development Centre

Under enabling factors, as shown on Table 2, participants felt that the Centre had been in existence for a long time and had now laid a solid foundation for its work;

I think a big strength is the fact that (the Centre) has been in the institution and doing staff development for such a long time. I think it's an established unit and that we've got a well-established Centre

Exposure to the Broader National Context

In addition to offering staff development initiatives within the university, some of the educational developers as shown on Table 2, were also offering such credit bearing courses at other universities and it was felt this provided them with opportunities to broaden their understanding of the national situation. One educational developer commented;

In terms of new things and opportunities the other opportunity that I've had was to teach courses at other universities. And so what that does is, it exposes me to the broader higher education context.

Support for Personal Development

Generally participants felt the university provided the necessary support for their professional

Table 2: Educational developers' views on enabling factors for their development, growth and role in their capacity as staff development facilitators

Archerian category	Emerging enablements
Structure	- Solid educational development centre - Support for personal development - Exposure to broader national context
Culture	- Culture of collaboration and mentoring - National and international contribution to the field
Agency	- Valuing of teaching - Available expertise in the centre - Supportive key agents in the university

development (Table 2) whenever they needed it as illustrated in the following responses;

Support Oh, I think I have, quite a lot. I will be going on a sabbatical in a weeks' time. This is my first sabbatical ever so it's very exciting. They are all encouraging here wishing me to do PhD, so this will be a good opportunity to start something.

The Centre has been very accommodating, for example, making available time to ensure that we've all finished the PhD, you know, for the rest of us who have been working on PhD.

It supports 100%, I think I am the one who is not fully taking advantages of the opportunities but otherwise the opportunities, the funds are there and so on and so on."

The whole idea that one is in long life learning and developing one's self is supported pretty much at all levels through the University

Culture of Collaboration and Mentoring

One theme that emerged in the domain of culture as shown on table 2, was that the educational developers worked together a lot, sharing ideas and learning from each other.

I co-teach a lot with colleagues and I think that is an invaluable learning experience, ongoing learning experience. This is illustrated in the following extracts from the interview transcripts;

a culture of mentoring, so even those of us who have been here for a long time learn from each other.

Fantastic really, you know, I mean I was very lucky I think, the first two short courses that I have gone out to teach, I went out with (name

supplied), in the first instance and secondly with (name supplied) and I don't think I can really ask for better support.

Colleagues at our university or in our department rely quite a lot on one another for personal development as staff developers

Because there is a community of practice around staff development I think what happens is that people develop themselves through their colleagues all the time

Valuing of Teaching

Another enabling condition identified and indicated on Table 2 was the culture of valuing teaching and learning that existed in the university and which enabled easy access to the lecturers as shown in the following excerpts:

Teaching is very highly valued, generally in the institution.

I think that because actually teaching is fairly highly valued at (the University) we have less trouble than in some other institutions. The University does pride itself on being kind of a good teaching institution.

I think the university does valuable good teaching. It always has valued good teaching. Somebody gave me a few years ago, a set of minutes from a teaching development committee that was set up in the 80's and so there has always been this tradition of taking care of and attending to teaching in (the University).

National and International Contribution to the Field

From the responses it was also apparent that educational developers played a key role in contributing knowledge in the field (Table 2) through publications and conference attendance. Some participants commented;

My colleagues read extensively and it's through their reading, they are reviewing articles, they serve in the editorial panels and things like that. So they would keep themselves up-to-date they go to conferences.

I have done a hell lot of reading and it never feels like enough and you know. I listen to things on the internet and just keep up in the current media and subscribe to mail mailings so that I'm up to date with what's actually happening in the field.

Well, we all attend conferences and we all often attend each other's stuff.

One of the very useful things that we did quite recently was to work together on a book, about professional development and it was a collaborative project.

Available Expertise in the Centre

In the domain of agency, as Table 2 shows, the educational developers felt adequate expertise existed in the Centre to drive academic staff development and singled out their qualifications as evidence as shown below:

I have done a PhD in an area which educational developers working quite a lot. My PhD is in an area of curriculum which I think is an important area for academic developers to work in.

I think that people in CHETL have developed a great deal of expertise over the last number of years.

We have got a strong group of well qualified academic development practitioners with great experience.

Supportive Key Agents in the University

Closely linked to the culture of valuing teaching and learning educational developers felt that the support of key agents in executive management in the university created a conducive environment for academic staff development as shown on Table 2 and illustrated in the following comments:

The vice chancellor talks a lot about the importance of teaching, research and community engagement at (the University).

When we got our new vice chancellor we have had very strategic guidance. As you will know from our Dean of learning and teaching (name supplied) we have had sort of a stable core group of staff members kind of going for quite a few years now. I think all of that has kind of helped us to become a strong group of academic developers so we've been very very lucky.

We have got good leadership in the form of the Dean and of course having a vice chancellor who is a kind of person from higher education.

An Academy for Educational Development

Among the recommendations from the educational development practitioners, there was a call for a training centre (Table 2) where they

could go occasionally to research the field, share knowledge and enhance reflection of their practice. Two participants commented:

I think that it may be useful to have something more intensive and more highly structured like an academy. A week or 2 weeks long or a month long academy that academic developers could go to every now and then.

And then the other thing is to really make concerted efforts to develop our own scholarship researching the field and publish a great deal more than we've been doing.

In addition the proposal for an academy, the educational developers called for a professional qualification in educational development. However, they cautioned that resistance could be expected if such a course was compulsory as shown in the responses below;

I do believe that a specific kind of development course has got to be a useful way to go. There is some resistance to it which I don't quite understand you know. It's hard for me to understand why anyone in a university doesn't think that a course focused on something that you want to do isn't a useful thing to do

A course that focuses on and gives people dedicated time to think about their roles not just to be going from one thing to another as we change.

More Staff

To reduce the workload, which, as already shown earlier affected their ability to develop themselves, there was a call for more staff in the Centre. Two educational developers commented:

We are oversubscribed in terms of our workload and it makes sense if that is the case to have more staff to do the part of work that we do.

Increased capacity, we need more people

Development of Scholarship in the Field

In the domain of culture, the educational developers, as shown on Table 3 called for the development of the scholarship of academic development in order to build a knowledge base for the field. The following verbatim comments illustrate this call:

We are teaching in higher education. I feel strongly about that. We have to think about it in a more theoretical kind of scholarly thoughtful

Table 3: Educational developers' views on how the professional development of educational developers could be enhanced

Archerian category	Emerging suggestions
Structure	- An academy for educational development - HE teaching qualification for educational developers - More staff
Culture	- Development of scholarship in the field - Creating a culture of valuing of teaching among academics
Agency	- more contact with academic development units at other institutions

way. We can't just be doing what we do without thinking about it.

The other thing is to really make concerted efforts to develop our own scholarship, researching in the field and publish a great deal more than we've been doing.

It's a growing new field, and it actually needs people who are kind of prepared to expand the field.

Creating a Culture of Valuing of Teaching among Academics

While a culture of valuing teaching and learning was said to generally exist in the university, some educational developers felt as shown on Table 3 that there was still need to enhance this culture as some academics tended to value research more than teaching as illustrated in the following comments:

My vision will be that everybody takes their role as teachers seriously, values it equally to the other aspects of their academic life like research. And that they become critical teachers' critical reflective teachers.

I would like to see academics engaging with teaching with the same kind of regime as they do their research so it's about making sure those two things are equally valued in the institution

I really think it's about persuading people; it's about people seeing the value of engaging with their teacher roles I wouldn't make anything compulsory.

Contact with Academic Development Units at Other Institutions and Break Way Professional Retreats

As shown on Table3, a feeling arose from the responses for the need to benchmark with

colleagues at other higher education institutions and professional bodies as a way of sharing best practice. The following verbatim comments serve to illustrate:

I would love us to actually organize almost like a two day retreat a year where we could go away and we focus on our development. I do think that we are in danger of focusing so much on everybody else that we lose sight of ourselves.

People should actually have little gaps to really develop themselves, so that they aren't just on a trade mill of developing other people and never ever sitting back and reflecting on what they are learning through that and doing some of the academic work that helps one to develop one's self.

I think in one sense the professional development Special Interest groups of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA) could contribute to that (professional development).

I also think it would be useful for people to have more contact with academic development units at other institutions.

DISCUSSION

One of the emerging themes in the results related to the educational developers' understanding of their role. They conceived of their role to generally involve working with academics to enhance lecturer expertise in teaching and learning and promoting a culture of critically reflective practice among academics. In this regard, Brew (2009) sees educational or faculty development, as comprising the professional activities of people who work in universities and particularly the work of those people whose job is to assist this process. The argument raised, for the need to assist the academics improve their practice, related to the fact that academics were generally hired in universities on the basis of their disciplinary expertise and not necessarily on pedagogic expertise. This assumption is corroborated by Amundsen and Wilson (2012: 90) who note that, "Some long-standing assumptions in higher education are that academics are not adequately prepared for their teaching role, have unsophisticated conceptions of teaching and learning, and have little knowledge of effective teaching practices, both in general and in their own specific discipline". The educational developers therefore come in to 'fill' this

gap. Manathunga (2007: 31) cautions against this deficit labeling of academics and states that instead, "I would like to imagine what holistic academic development pedagogy might look like. It would be based on "mutual recognition" where I would respect my academic colleagues' understandings of pedagogy, and where they would respect me as a fellow academic colleague from the higher education discipline"

Another finding from the study relates to the issue of job satisfaction where the educational developers generally expressed satisfaction with their current jobs. Educational development, they argued, afforded them the opportunity to interact with a wide range of diverse people, facilitated engagement in critical debates as they worked with academics and opened up opportunities for personal professional development. Commenting on satisfaction in the role of education developer, O'Keeffe (2012: 5) writes, "I feel that I am fortunate to have a role that enables me to "live my values" which allows me to extend and deepen my knowledge, work creatively within my institution and other organisations and ultimately empower and prepare others with a disposition for lifelong learning". In a study on educational developers' sense of satisfaction with their jobs, McDonald (2011) reports that not only did the participants appreciate a sense of community in their work, but they derived a great deal of satisfaction from their daily practice, particularly the variety and challenge associated with their job and the ongoing learning opportunities afforded to them.

Under the constraining conditions in the growth, development and roles of educational developers in the domain of structure, huge workloads came up as one major hurdle in the execution of duties with participants calling for the need to hire more staff to ease the pressure. Huge workloads result in insufficient staff time in the Centre to be effective in all the required areas (Palmer et al. 2010) as the educational developers take on more than they can manage. In the same vein, Gosling (2009) in his report on a study on educational development centres at public universities in South Africa, argues that any strategy to improve learning development of students, or to improve teaching quality, will require the issue of staffing in academic development centres to be addressed.

Another major concern identified in the results in the domain of structure was the absence

of laid down policies specifying explicit requirements for the appointment and development of educational developers. This means that the status and job description of educational developers in different institutions often varies. According to Boughey and Niven (2012), previous research shows that the practice of academic development is not uniformly conceived across the country. Similarly, McDonald (2011: 41) identifies the absence of formal career structures to articulate requisite credentials and to induct and socialize educational development practitioners as a cause for concern and further notes that, "Upon entry to the field, the diversity of individual practitioners is further fragmented hence the lack of a common position profile". Commenting on this absence of common educational credentials in Ireland, O'Keeffe (2012: 10) points out that, "As educational development is a relatively new concept in Ireland, job roles and titles are often loosely defined and available for specific durations of time."

In the domain of culture, educational developers were concerned about some departmental cultures that led to negative attitudes towards the teaching and learning centre. Some departments, according to the findings, seemed not to value what the Centre offered. Commenting on the findings of a study of educational development centres in Australia, Palmer et al. (2010) explain that in their quest for success, Centres face a range of systematic constraints, including preconceived assumptions about their role and functions including for example, incorrect or outdated general perceptions of the role and function of the Centre. In this regard, Brew (2009) forewarns that staff in an academic development unit may be confronted by negative attitudes of faculty staff to their existence. The culture of academic departments, for example, can be resistant to the notion that academic development is an intrinsic function of their role and view those who have an academic development role as lower status professionals (Gosling 2009). Educational developers need to be aware of, and be sensitive to the fact that they work in complex, and sometimes contested contexts and that the range of their potential roles and identities is highly varied given the diversity of organisational cultures, drivers and needs within contemporary tertiary institutions (Carew et al. 2008).

There was a feeling among educational developers that in the domain of agency, the ex-

expertise in the Centre did not match the diverse range of disciplines they had to support in the university leading to feelings of discomfort and insecurity when supporting academics from disciplines different from their original disciplinary homes. Staff in the Centre generally came from non-science disciplines and therefore was not confident enough to support the scientists as they lacked science disciplinary knowledge. The issue of lack of staff from a range of disciplinary backgrounds is also captured in a study of academic development in South Africa by Gosling (2009: 50) who comments, "The recruitment of suitable AD staff is a major concern, particularly the difficulty of filling vacancies with appropriately qualified staff and finding sufficient personnel from diverse backgrounds". Gosling (2008) further urges educational developers to have specialist knowledge, which they are expected to share with those they work with.

Notwithstanding the identified constraints, a number of enablers were identified in the domains of structure, culture and agency. The university was said to facilitate exposure of the educational developers to the broader national context through providing support to the educational developers for offering credit bearing courses at other universities (specifically the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education) and it was felt this provided them with opportunities to broaden their understanding of the national situation. In this regard, Boughey (2010: 24) argues that academic development practitioners need to be organised in a national structure to professionalise and share learning and further advises them to, "Explore regional collaboration in order to offer/develop professional development programmes. In order to support and build the discipline of research in academic development, practice needs to be encouraged". In the same vein, O'Keeffe (2012) confirms that participation in broader national and international communities of practice helps educational developers to acquire important opportunities to communicate with similar professionals, interpreting knowledge and beliefs which emerge from activities and sharing meanings of frequently experienced situations and practice.

Support for personal development was another major enabler identified under the Archerian social realist category of structure. Generally participants felt the university pro-

vided the necessary support for their personal and professional development whenever they needed it. The issue of personal development seems to be an ingrained culture in educational development as the literature shows. McDonald (2011) for example, indicates that, "Many developers take it upon themselves to engage in self-directed learning, drawing upon a variety of sources and opportunities to prepare them for and aid them in their developer roles". Writing in support of continued professional development, O'Keeffe (2012: 13) asserts that, "Academic practitioners are a learning profession and higher education institutions should be involved in cultivating learning environments for professional development"

One theme that emerged in the domain of culture was the culture of collaboration where educational developers worked together a lot, sharing ideas and learning from each other. Educational development, as Gosling (2008) shows, is by its nature a collaborative activity. The rationale for collaboration in educational development is given by O'Keeffe (2012: 14), who notes, "We as educational developers are burgeoning third space professionals without previous professional customs, consequently our development needs should be discussed and highlighted from within the community and appropriate directions for development sought out".

In the domain of agency, the educational developers felt they had a solid educational Centre and that adequate expertise existed in the Centre to drive academic staff development and singled out their qualifications as evidence. The need for expertise in order to gain credibility among the academics we support is emphasized by Baume (2002: 109), "To be taken seriously by our colleagues we should need and be able to show that our advice on teaching and learning as well as our own practice as developers has an academic underpinning". In the same vein, in a report to the heads of educational development centres in the United Kingdom, Gosling (2008: 58), argues that, "By having this specialist knowledge, staff acquire credibility among their academic peers and have a sound base to inform the advice that ED staff are often required to give to individuals and departments".

It emerged from the findings that support from key agents in university management was

a key enabler in the execution of educational development work. Commitment from management helped to create a culture of valuing teaching and learning among academics and the importance of educational development work in this regard. Gosling (2008: 32), notes that, "A key factor in the operation of EDUs (Educational Development Units) within their institution is the relationship between the Head of the EDU and senior managers". Where senior management does not fully understand the role of educational development, heads of educational development centres need to play an active role in developing such an understanding. As Brew and Peseta (2008: 85) show, "it is not uncommon for senior managers to believe that any university teacher who has taught students in a faculty is capable of turning into an effective academic developer overnight without any kind of mentorship, training or understanding of the body of literature that informs academic development scholarship and practice".

Another positive finding in the domain of agency was the fact that some of the educational developers were gaining international recognition through contributing to the knowledge base of the field through publications and conference attendance. This finding corroborates the assertion by Baume (2002) that educational developers need to be explicitly scholarly and academic in their work. In the same vein, Peseta (2011: 85) adds that, "... it is also important to learn deeply, read widely with curiousness and generosity, engage with and learn how to position yourself to be part of the debates, discussions and critiques that constitute the knowledge of the field".

Educational developers were also asked to give recommendations on how they thought the growth and development of educational developers could be enhanced. Among the recommendations there was a call for a training centre where they could go occasionally to research the field, share knowledge and enhance reflection of their practice. Such a call is, in the author's view, justified. As Gosling (2009: 51) shows in his report on a study of academic development centres in South Africa, "There is currently no central source of training and development for AD staff, particularly in their role as agents of transformation for staff and students. Indeed it is not clear how this policy objective is currently supported at a national level." This is augmented

by Boughey (2010: 21) who calls for the establishment of a, "National structure to coordinate capacity building and research in relation to teaching and learning in higher education".

Closely linked to the issue of an academy for staff developers, in the domain of agency, a feeling arose from the responses for the need to benchmark with colleagues at other higher education institutions and professional bodies as a way of sharing best practice. Such opportunities can indeed create a platform for benchmarking and sharing of ideas on common problems in the sector. As McDonald (2011: 44), shows, "Many developers take it upon themselves to engage in self-directed learning, drawing upon a variety of sources and opportunities to prepare them for and aid them in their developer roles".

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there are indeed both constraining and enabling conditions in the growth, development and role of educational developers. Under constraints, huge workloads, conflicting departmental cultures and lack of clearly defined appointment guidelines for educational development staff and the poor spread of disciplinary diversity came out as a key finding of the study. Under enablers, the study concludes that there is adequate support for personal development both from within the centre and from senior management. Finally the study notes that the educational developers are keen to cement their academic status and to contribute knowledge to the field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and the conclusion above, this study advances the following recommendations;

- The establishment at national level of a code of conduct for educational development;
- The establishment of a national academy for educational development which will seek to recruit and train academics from a diverse range of disciplinary fields;
- Increased funding from central government to facilitate adequate staffing of these crucial educational development centres;
- More research be conducted in South Africa, at national level on the enabling

- and constraining conditions the practice of educational development work, and
- The establishment of a fellowship fund at national level to enable neophytes entering the field to visit universities with well-established centres for specified periods of time for induction into the discipline.

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