Working without a script – rethinking how academics can work collaboratively in changing contexts

Abstract

This chapter argues that the scope of the academic role in art, design and media has shifted in recent years from predominantly teaching, practice and research to one that places significantly greater emphasis on administration and other tasks, as a consequence of the wide range of policy, legislative and audit pressures to which institutions have had to respond. This has resulted in an experience of role fragmentation for academics, and is particularly accentuated in the context of art, design and media higher education, where logistical and identity tensions already exist between the roles of practitioner and academic. The impact of such increased pressures on the academic role is apparent through the stress levels documented for employees in the sector.

It is proposed that it is necessary to re-establish congruence between institutional mission and individual identity through a re-framing of the employment context of higher education by individuals and institutions. Potential models for such new working practices include "co-creation".

Our audience

Policy formers and makers

Practitioners – people that manage staff, those that develop staff, new entrants, practitioners and teachers of art and design/and staff undertaking Postgraduate Certificates in Learning and Teaching for Higher Education

The Context: complex and rapid change

In the past fifteen years UK Government policy and legislation have exerted considerable influence on the higher education (HE) sector. All institutions are now expected to deliver economic and social functions such as knowledge transfer, widening participation, community and voluntary activities, income generation and regional development in addition to the traditional activities of teaching and supervising students and undertaking research. Within those existing areas of activities there have been obvious changes as well. The numbers of students in the system has increased substantially over recent decades without a similar increase in staffing or in many cases a commensurate increase in teaching space. As Becher and Trowler (2001) note:

> …changes in the HE system have meant a growth in the strength and number of forces acting on academic cultures, enhancing the externalist rather than internalist character of the influences on them.

> (Preface to the 2001edition)

These changes have taken place in a society which Barnett has argued is "supercomplex", by which he means that individuals in contemporary society need to operate with multiple frames of understanding, self-identity and action, all of which are continually under challenge, and that we do so in a "radically unknowable world", due to the rate of change and the complexity of our environment (Barnett 2006).

Legislative requirements which affect university practices include the need to comply with statutes related to, in particular, equal opportunities and employment conditions. Institutions also have to participate in externally driven quality assurance processes,

such as QAA Audit, the National Student Survey (NSS) and other time consuming and demanding processes within the national quality assurance and enhancement agenda. This can all be seen to be impacting significantly on the roles and identities of staff who can feel themselves to be subject to evaluation and audit in every aspect of their work.

There is additionally an increasing expectation of, and requirement for, the involvement of academic staff in professional development activities. These are made explicit through institutional personal and professional development structures, and managed through staff review and appraisal. Again, this is part of a national landscape which includes, for example, the Professional Standards Framework (PSF) developed by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) for staff with teaching roles in Higher Education. The value that is assigned to professional practice within art, design and media as underpinning teaching is articulated through the PSF's areas of activity, core knowledge and professional values. While valuable and to be welcomed, it must also be acknowledged that with every further articulation of expectation and standards, the demands placed on staff increase, and individuals' sense of autonomy can diminish.

The Impact on Staff and Role Definition

The multiple expectations of an academic role include the elements described as follows. Despite the complexity of this picture, it is by no means exhaustive.

As stated above, the 'massification' of higher education has resulted in greater workloads, not least due to increased student numbers. Greater specificity around standards for teaching, learning and assessment has resulted in more explicit course and session planning; preparation of timetables, project briefs, handbooks, and

written feedback to students on formative and summative assessment. The incorporation of work based learning and placements into the curriculum require placement identification and support, building and maintaining relationships with employers, health and safety training and risk assessments. Quality assurance and enhancement processes have resulted in more demanding processes for course development and validation, requiring servicing by colleagues through peer review. Staff also participate in QAA review and audit, annual monitoring and self evaluation reports, institutional committee meetings, programme level committees, gathering, analysing and responding to student feedback, dealing with student complaints, and identifying and managing academic misconduct. Research has grown into an expectation in many academic roles, driven by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which itself consumes institutional time and resources on a substantial scale. Staff may also be involved in pedagogic research, investigating their own practice, and scholarship in order to keep up to date with their subject and contemporary teaching practices. Staff are also expected to participate in knowledge transfer, through community activity, commercial links and special initiatives, and in income generation and consultancy, through enterprise activities, project applications, research funding, course development through European Social Fund and similar initiatives. Projects promoting regional development and collaboration require staff to understand regional agendas, build partnerships, develop accord agreements, and contribute to targets. Professional development courses to support new staff including part time lecturers are a requirement in most higher education institutions, and increasingly there is an expectation of continuing professional development. Student recruitment involves interviewing, open days, schools' visits, further education links and design of marketing materials. Student admissions include

processing paperwork, planning and delivering induction programmes. Widening participation requires staff to be familiar with national initiatives such as AimHigher and 14-19 Diplomas, and to understanding diversity theories and statistics around student diversity. If undertaken conscientiously, it involves curriculum redesign, changes to delivery methods and increased study support. Growing internationalisation results in the need to understand and accommodate cultural diversity in the classroom, and sometimes to develop and deliver overseas provision. Students' entitlements to pastoral support have become increasingly explicit, resulting in many staff spending more time on giving and documenting tutorials and becoming increasingly informed about services to which students can be referred. These new areas of activity all result in an increase in administration, such as timetabling, organising resources (such as booking rooms and equipment), undertaking risk assessments, record keeping, budget management, evaluation and feedback procedures.

Certainly all these initiatives have some, and in some cases considerable, value; many potentially contribute to improvements in education and society. However, they have undoubtedly increased the demands made on staff and the consequential complexity of individual and institutional roles. This has resulted in individual experiences of role fragmentation, dissonance and lack of clarity around what are the definitions and boundaries of academic activity. The consequences may be loss of engagement, alienation, stressed staff and inefficient organisations. There has been emerging evidence of employee stress in the sector, and increased numbers of allegations of bullying and harassment and contractual challenges by staff. A University and Colleges Union (UCU) survey of academic staff conducted in October 2006 found that up to 58% of respondents had experienced symptoms of stress, with

long working hours, increased timetabled contact with students and lack of control over demands made upon them being cited as key contributors to their anxiety. 50% of respondents said that their health had been adversely affected by their work, with bureaucracy cited as a key source of stress. There is in addition growing evidence of staff being subject to abuse and harassment by students, with Lee (2006) giving a disturbing account of the levels of this problem and the distress caused not just to staff within HE.

The results of increased role responsibilities is illustrated in the following model.

Figure 1: the relationship between skill, confidence and role stability

Pinch points at times of role change

Trajectory of skill and confidence within a stable role
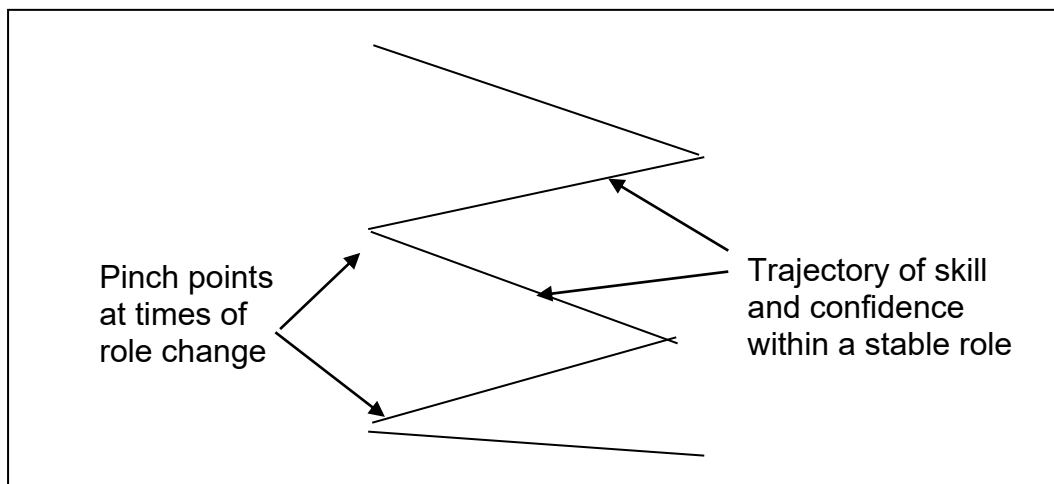
The straight lines represent the steady gain in skills and confidence someone experiences when their role remains stable. The pinch points at the turns represent the sudden pressure generated when a new role is adopted or assigned, and when the individual has a lack of familiarity with the problems and issues encountered, new knowledge and skills are required. In time, the new skills are developed, the context becomes more familiar, and the steady increase in confidence, knowledge

and skills resumes. Due to the demands on institutions, changes in role expectations of individual staff are likely to happen more frequently and to more people, with resultant increase in stress and loss of confidence.

Changes experienced in academic roles are widely recognised. There have been explicit moves on the part of higher education institutions in recent years to analyse the academic role through systematic processes such as the Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA). Processes such as HERA attempt to specify and define the roles undertaken by academics and grade them against a national framework. Such an approach acknowledges and articulates the breadth of tasks and responsibilities required of those working in HE, and can assist in ensuring equal pay for work of equal value across institutions.

The changes and pressures outlined above are in addition to the tensions created when staff start work in higher education and change from being primarily a practitioner in art, design and media to a professional role which encompasses teacher/academic/researcher. Individuals begin to alter their self definition and to understand the implications of such a transition. This can be a difficult and uncomfortable process, particularly when the context of higher education and the academic role is perceived to be in flux. The "psychological contract" is the term used to describe what staff believe they are employed to do by their institution; the psychological contract does not necessarily reflect the detail of the legal contract or job description. This can be a source of particular dissonance for staff, given the existing tension discussed above between the role of practitioner and the role of teacher, and inherent instability in the boundaries of the role of an academic due to

sectoral changes. In art, design and media education, this is exacerbated due to the large numbers of part time and hourly paid staff who combine practice with teaching. The contribution of part-time staff is vital and highly valued within art, design and media due to the currency which professional practice brings to the curriculum. However, it also makes communication across groups of staff much more difficult and reduces the opportunities to develop a community and network which can support staff in their role. Furthermore, due to high numbers of part-time staff in art, design and media, there is a reciprocally lower proportion of full-time staff to manage the ever increasing workloads generated by the initiatives discussed above which are outside the remit of hourly paid staff.

Part-time staff can experience particular stress in their roles because, in addition to the factors already discussed, they may be provided with lower levels of support. They may also have limited opportunity to participate in staff development activities, as a result of their personal working patterns and due to lack of financial support from the institution to enable that engagement. This problem was recognised in the work of the 2005 Art and Design: Enabling Part Time Teachers (ADEPTT) project, supported by the Fund for Development of Teaching and Learning Phase 4 (FDTL4), which created a website with structured and practical model for supporting part-time tutors (available at <http://www.adeptt.ac.uk/>).

There appears to have been little significant analysis of the ways in which support for academic staff in their more complex and fragmented roles can be improved, although the 2001 Association of University Teachers (AUT) report *Building the Academic Team* is a positive analysis of the benefits of reconsidering the roles of

those involved in supporting academics. For example, where resources permit, the role of administrative staff and their relationship to academic functions may well be part of the solution to the increasing tensions within the sector. Further review of the location of administrative and technical staff and their increasing professionalisation and parity with academic staff within operational contexts may be essential. Similarly, debates around the role and responsibilities of technical support staff have been taking place for many years and the technical demonstrator role can be a vital bridge between support staff and teaching staff in relation to the student learning experience. However, both of these solutions assume a staffing budget which enables an increase in the number and status of administrators and technicians, and in the experience of many departments, this is unrealistic.

Thinking about Solutions

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest some of the ways in which individuals, departments and institutions can mediate the negative impact of the changes and the working context of higher education, and find productive ways of working which provide personal satisfaction as well as fulfilling the educational, social and economic functions of higher education. Becher and Trowler note that:

> Academics in general, and those in the UK in particular, are struggling to hold on to values and practices from the past….These will include not only negativity and resistance…but the enthusiastic adoption of change in some cases and the strategic undermining and reworking of it in others.

> (Becher and Trowler 2001: 16)

We recognise both positions indicated in this quotation, and the rest of this chapter will be concerned with how to promote ways of working which are satisfying for individuals and effective and efficient for institutions.

Faced with a working context we have described as "supercomplex", in which the range and type of tasks that may be expected of academic staff in any one day or week can be multiple, diverse and difficult to predict and plan for, what are the options for action? How are individuals to keep their sense of self?

A number of responses can be seen on the part of academics as a means of coping with, or making sense of, the role. Where these responses are adaptive (i.e., the individual tries to cope without aiming to change either the environment or themselves), these responses can have negative repercussions for the individual and for the organisation, with a consequent perceived or actual loss of self-control and self-direction. In these circumstances, individuals feel alienated from the core values and identities they hold as academic-practitioners and find themselves in situations that seem to fracture their sense of self identity and to generate feelings of anger, frustration and loss.

Such reactions are made more understandable when they are put into the context of what we might call the "utopian perspective" of academic work. This Utopia is located in a mythical past, when academic life is believed to have allowed time for practice, reflection, teaching and research and where, in consequence, staff were fulfilled and happy. This may indeed have been the experience of a small number of staff when only an elite minority of the population entered higher education. However, if the higher education system had stayed as it was until the end of the 1960s, it would be of a size that most of us would not have jobs within it! The

juxtaposition of this folk memory of a simpler, happier life with the current complexity and financial and quality pressures of higher education adds to feelings of loss of power and estrangement.

These feelings of loss of power and being unable to recognise ones personal values in the work of the institution are not minor problems. Fulfilment at work gives the individual a sense of ownership and effectiveness which is of benefit both to the individual and the institution. In consequence, positive energy is generated and available in the working context. We can see examples of how this ownership concept still engenders a positive experience in HEIs through, for example, ways that course teams operate effectively together.

However, strategies for survival can resist institutional drivers for change where dissonance exists. In such circumstances teams can establish a discrete set of values and shared meanings to secure enjoyment at work at the level of the team. This is one of the contexts in which "situated learning" occurs, as described by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their concept of "Communities of Practice". Through '"legitimate peripheral participation" in a community of practice, a new member of staff gains the knowledge and practices they need to survive in their role through informal learning in context. This has been shown by Wenger (1998) to be a highly effective and efficient way to share knowledge and to ensure practices are carried out according to local norms. It also creates a cohesive, supportive community which can provide individuals with the companionship and enjoyment in the workplace that they need. Communities of practice can provide a sense of belonging and be a repository of shared knowledge, providing individuals with security and identity whilst also enabling tasks to be undertaken and accomplished more speedily. They can

provide a basis for the rapid exchange of knowledge and ideas (as described in the 2006 report by Knight, Tait and Yorke on professional learning which highlights the primary role of situated learning).

However, the downside to departmental culture being transmitted through communities of practice is that existing patterns of behaviour and interpretations and responses to situations may be reinforced and legitimated, and in times of rapid social and institutional change these responses may be inherently conservative and therefore in fact do not help individuals and teams make the most of the current and future environment. Interpreting a new situation within known and assumed paradigms can be an effective, if implicit, method of resisting change. In these ways the stability of the community of practice can be a way for staff to cope with complexity and stress. However, it can also contribute to work overload and stress by not enabling individuals to develop productive new ways of being and working in the higher education environment, contributing to discontentment rather than happiness at work in the longer term.

Another coping strategy can be to simply withdraw, with a consequential loss of individual and institutional energy. This may be seen in a spectrum of responses, from a pragmatic approach to dealing with issues and problems as they arise, to a 'jobsworth' mentality that throws up a defensive cordon around the individual who refuses to act outside narrowly set limits. Another recognisable pattern is for individuals to focus their attention on research, as a task which (at the time of production though not at the time of evaluation) is relatively free from institutional interference and in many cases can be conducted independently of colleagues and away from the office. This route has the added advantage of also offering a path to

promotion and greater independence, so it is very understandable when staff chose it as a way out of the messiness of institutional life.

These can be understood as typical responses to situations in which individuals feel powerless and isolated. As discussed above, the sense of powerlessness can be mitigated by a re-assertion of control within narrowly drawn or restricted limits, or even by a partial or complete withdrawal from the perceived space of conflict and source of stress. The isolation can be dealt with through the creation and iterative reinforcement of bonds with a smaller community, formed and focussed around a particular definition or version of practice. Such communities can negotiate uncertainty and the unknown through the mutual reinforcement of their own narratives which present versions of the world in which they operate. However these 'world-views', comfortable and supportive as they may be, can divert and dissipate energy within the team and organisation. Staff can feel disempowered, disengaged and unable to control their own work with a consequent loss of efficiency to the institution as a whole.

In the academic context this can be played out as a scenario in which, for example, groups of academic staff perceive certain tasks as falling outside their role: for example, student recruitment or admissions, writing references, administrative work such as filing or distributing assessment feedback or tutorial records including a whole complex of demands often characterised collectively as 'admin'. This work can therefore be described in terms that reinforce it to other members of the group as onerous, additional, time-consuming and ultimately stressful. Alternatively, certain factors can be recognised and naturalised as specific sources of difficulty or as irrelevant to the key focus of the role: perhaps the students are perceived to be not

as able or as focused as they once were; perhaps management, often characterised as "the Other", is seen to make ever greater and more unreasonable demands; perhaps legislative pressures are seen to impose requirements such as Health and Safety compliance, risk assessments and so on.

There is a need to find new ways of conceptualising working relationships and structures that distribute the workload of academic staff and find better ways to share expertise within our institutions. We will consider this from two perspectives: what can be done by the individual lecturers, and what can be done by managers (heads of department or institutional leaders).

Action at the Individual Level

The most significant actions an individual can take to be effective, to have a sense of self-efficacy in an environment, and to be content at work, are to learn as much as they can about the environment, to identify and undertake routes to develop the skills necessary for that environment, and to establish support networks at work. For people already under time pressure these may seem unhelpful suggestions, but the investment of time in professional development, learning about the environment and building good relationships at work have a rapid and profound return in terms of sense of restoration of a sense of control and autonomy and release of stress, resulting in better motivation and capacity to manage time and tasks.

For these reasons, it is worth investigating new staff programmes that an institution runs, such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching if one is available. There may be other forms of professional development available that are relevant to your role, and the department or institution may also have formal systems to provide

you with a mentor. If none exist, building an informal relationship that provides mentorship is very valuable. The institutional website is worth searching for information about services available and activities taking place.

Ensuring participation in the academic community as much as is possible is always worthwhile. Communities are sources of considerable amounts of informally exchanged information, as discussed above, as well as sources of friendship and support. Getting involved with departmental and institutional projects is an excellent way to become better known to your colleagues and get to know them better. All these suggestions are founded on the belief that personal networks and relationships are key to contentment at work and to information exchange, that professional development activities increase confidence and effectiveness and decrease stress and that the more you know about your environment, the better informed your decision and actions will be.

It is also worth identifying and reflecting on your own values and the extent to which they coincide with those around you, amongst your immediate colleagues, in the wider department and in the institution. Finding areas of shared values are the ground on which to build relationships and trust. Being clear about areas of divergent values will help you manage these areas, or else focus on a move to employment or area of practice that is more clearly aligned with your personal values.

By and large, these actions and pathways are established within institutions and so provided a staff member can gain access to the necessary services and resources they are not contentious. The remainder of the chapter will be concerned with the

institutional role in addressing the changing context and the accompanying stress experienced by individuals, as here it is far less clear or straightforward what actions can be undertaken.

Action at the Institutional Level

We will explore the idea of co-creation, a model of organisational learning that emerged within business settings as a response to the difficulties organisations face in releasing the creativity and energies of staff working within structured, hierarchical and complex environments. John Winsor (2006:17) describes co-creation as ways of working collaboratively and creatively to bring about innovation, claiming that linear working methodologies and hierarchical structures are insufficiently organic, flexible and adaptive to respond to the conditions of change. Co-creation is by no means an original concept. However it does bring together a number of working models and approaches that challenge organisational structure, but more importantly, organisational culture. The chief problem for organisations that Winsor poses is how to innovate, quickly and effectively. Learning to communicate in qualitatively different ways is perceived as critical to the innovation process. Winsor discusses the need to develop the concept of dialogue within organisations: to re-examine communication methods in such ways as to build open, trusting and intuitive forms of communication. Winsor suggests this is the only way to increase the likelihood of expertise and ideas being shared across an organisation. Developing the right kind of innovative environment is a further means to improve the speed and quantity of communication and it is also an opportunity to re-think the proximities, types and range of expertise within an organisation.

Areas such as theatre and community self-build have long histories in using co-creation to exploit co-operative, performative and improvisation strategies to fundamentally change the process and arguably, the reception of creative work. In devised theatre for example, there is only a simple outline structure and core idea from which actors, director, writer and production team co-write and direct, allowing the script to emerge as ideas are tried and tested through improvisation. Self-build schemes such as those pioneered by Segal and Habraken in the 1970s were based on the concept of flexible building systems that enable the future occupants of the scheme to construct housing in ways that are specific to their needs. In both examples, traditional professional roles are conceived flexibly: actors directly assist the writing process, the architect becomes facilitator and householders become producers rather than passive consumers of the built environment. In these examples, the co-creation process can be seen as one which is dependent on specialist skills and knowledge but wherein historical hierarchical constructs of production (and consumption) are fundamentally challenged and problems and decisions are owned and distributed within teams.

To return to examples of co-creation used in business, the advertising agency Mother (www.motherlondon.com) uses the concept of 'the table' as a metaphor for open communication, dialogue, connectivity and equality. The table provides a working space for all functions of employee whether copywriter, finance, design or print production, and all grades of staff, including the partners of the firm. Although the original concept of the table grew from an evolving and limited working space, the company saw the table as a vital means to bring about rapid dialogue between staff and perceived this to be essential for creating an environment of innovation. 'In

a larger, philosophical sense, when things go wrong in most companies and departments, it's usually because people start thinking that only one thing is their job, like making a rivet. When you sit at one table, you see the whole picture…you're making an airplane' (DeFlorio 2006: 24). 'The table' concept might pose significant logistical and cultural difficulties within many organisations. However, the essence of 'the table' concept is that, by sustaining connectivity and channelling problems through multi-disciplinary teams, problems can be perceived holistically and solutions conceptualised simultaneously.

The design firm IDEO (www.ideo.com) provides a very compelling case for the adoption of multi-disciplinary teams, comprising anthropologists, psychologists, designers, engineers and business specialists so that a complex understanding of clients' needs can be quickly and comprehensively conceived. IDEO describes its approach as a collaborative methodology that simultaneously examines desirability, technical feasibility and business viability through the use of multi-disciplinary teams.

A further aspect of co-creation is recognition that little genuinely innovative activity occurs in isolation and an organisation's ability to harness new relationships is likely to increase the chances for, and the quality of, innovation. In business settings there has been something of a paradigm shift in re-thinking the relationship of organisations to their customers, perceiving consumers to have a wealth of cultural and intellectual capital as well as vested interest. The concept of "value creation" from Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004:5-14) describes the shift from a "product or firm-centric" view of value, to one which places value in the context of the consumers' experience. "As value shifts to experiences, the market is becoming a forum for conversation and interactions between consumers, consumer

communities, and firms" (ibid). Such a view re-conceptualises consumers as having a productive and co-creative role in society and the economy, acknowledging that expert knowledge is distributed both within and external to the organisation constituting much untapped capital and potential for innovation. Many of the organisations that have used the idea of customer-made successfully are among the creative industries, particularly advertising agencies and product design companies. The design competitions set up by Nokia and Electrolux exploit the global capabilities of designers and design students and have resulted in significant new product development for these organisations. This approach recognises that consumers have diverse and extensive intellectual capital and insight into their future needs. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) describe the affects of this model as "value creation," a departure from firm-centric innovation models common to most corporations. Co-creation with consumers is not synonymous with DIY or personalisation, as these involve consumers after production decisions are made. While there are many examples of companies asking consumers to send in their ideas, others have used the customer-made approach in a rigorous way to bring about innovation. The use of design contests for Nokia's Concept Lounge (2005) (<www.designawards.nl>) resulted in the wristband phone, the 'Nokia 888' and Electrolux's Design Lab (<www.electrolux.com/designlab>) now in its 5th edition receives many thousands of entries each year for new product concepts.

In the context of higher education, co-creation would need to be interpreted as working much more closely with students, as well as with staff across functions (academic, administrative, technical, and managerial) in order to develop solutions and in more time efficient ways. Perhaps the most important way this would differ

from existing committee structures would be to ensure that authority for decision-making rested with the team that shares a close and comprehensive insight of the 'user' or 'customer' perspective (which is unlikely to reside at committee level). This would require committees and management groups to sponsor solution-finding groups providing them with the resources, support structures and reporting opportunities to bring about change. Institutions accepting the influencing power of such groups would equally consider their status and value in developing organisational culture and change, alongside recognition of the professional development opportunities they provide for staff including the building of cross-institutional networks.

We would argue that all the illustrations given above already have some parallels within institutions.

One such example is open source culture, a social and cultural movement making information accessible across the internet, allowing content to be widely shared, modified and re-distributed. It can be harnessed within institutions to improve participation and communication. Wikis, blogs, weblogs and message boards have stimulated unprecedented peer-to-peer discussion and the sharing of expertise between communities across the world. Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) provides a first class example of the way in which open source technology has assisted with the co-creation of the internet based encyclopaedia which allows expert volunteers to collaboratively create and edit articles amounting to the 7.2 million articles that exist on the site today. Despite the concerns that the editorial process of Wikipedia brings with it uneven consistency and quality, research (Rosenzweig 2006:117-146)

suggests that it is as accurate as other encyclopaedias and ranks among the top 15 most visited websites.

Other ways co-creation is realised within institutions include informal networks which spread new ideas and innovative practices organically rather than hierarchically. The importance of this is recognised by Senge (2001: 17), who identifies leadership communities within organisations. Similarly, discussing organisational change, Quinn (2004: 63) sees highly productive communities as being nurturing places, transformed by individuals; this in turn attracts people to empower themselves leading to what he terms emergent organisations, which have many leaders rather than one traditional leader.

This is demonstrated in a further example that has been applied in higher education. *World Café* is a growing global movement predicated on the assumption that individuals possess the knowledge and creativity to confront challenges, to be shared through "a living network of collaborative dialogue".   The background to the World Café movement, developed by Juanita Brown, is given on her website with resources and case studies (<http://www.theworldcafe.com/>). The Higher Education Academy's Change Academy (http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/institutions/change) promotes this model along with other team-based learning approaches in the belief that achieving "complex institutional change is a collective enterprise

For our organisations to be effective we need to build relationships with diverse groups of people to encourage meaningful communication and problem solving. Complex change requires that we are not afraid to confront problems or challenges

that do not have ready solutions. Change leadership literature puts relationships and lateral communication at the centre of complex organisations. In proposing a framework for *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Fullan acknowledges that when change initiatives are successful relationships improve and "if relationships improve, things get better" (Fullan 2001:5). A collaborative work culture with "purposeful interaction between diverse groups of people" (Fullan 2001:5) is a key driver for successful knowledge sharing and innovation.

If fostering genuine relationships and interaction between groups is needed for successful organisational change, how can the art, design and media sector contribute to the changing organisational culture within UK Higher Education? Can the value of working creatively and collaboratively be promoted within a culture of continuous improvement as our academic learning communities move away from more formal organisational models?

The cross-disciplinary *Creativity or Conformity?: Building Cultures of Creativity in Higher Education* conference (http://www.creativityconference.org/) hosted in January 2007 by Cardiff School of Art and Design at the University of Wales in Cardiff (UWIC) included specialists from education, psychology, biology, engineering, literature and health, in addition to art, design and media. Contributors considered how to promote a creative environment and how to embed this in HE policy to counteract growing bureaucracy, looking "to defend academic creativity against the perceived onslaught of red tape and bullying managers" (Tysome 2007).

Within academic communities, collaborative working and knowledge sharing with staff from across the institution breaks down barriers and releases energy in an open

and flexible environment. Glasgow School of Art presents itself as a "creative hothouse" where the diverse community of all staff (including maintenance, administrative, support, academic and technical staff) and their commitment to continuous learning and innovation are essential to its culture. The sense of community and emphasis on consultation and dialogue with staff "to share best practice and find new ways of doing things" are clearly regarded as key strengths and drivers for change. (www.gsa.ac.uk).

Flow Issue 5 (10-11), (2004) Glasgow: Glasgow School of Art

(http://www.gsa.ac.uk/downloads/publications/Flow%20Issue%205_A3.pdf)

Similarly boundaries are crossed and exciting creative breakthroughs are made when staff form networks both across institutions and with external agencies and partners, regionally, nationally and outside the UK. When staff from all the art and design HEIs in Scotland met to debate enhancement themes, QAA joined the discussion and responded to innovative developments being reported. Funded projects are providing alternative opportunities for collaborative working and creative networks which motivate and engage staff both within and across institutions. The North West Network Project for research informed teaching and supporting new academic staff is one example. Formed of six HEIs as part of the Supporting New Academic Staff (SNAS) strand 3 project based in the HEA, it specifically focuses on the link between disciplinary research and teaching and in the context of this project within art, design and media but does not exclude pedagogic research. The project was an opportunity for a group of staff interested in research informed teaching to work together and produce sector wide outcomes. The case Studies can be accessed at:

Writing PAD has proliferated as "a grass-roots movement which has grown and developed organically" across the UK, principally in 40 institutions in England and now being extended to Scotland and Wales. This HEFCE funded project has created a network for staff from across disciplines and roles and provided an arena for debate and exchange of practice in writing in art, design and media. Writing PAD has generated a variety of models which can be viewed on: www.writing-pad.ac.uk

Colleagues in the sector may well recognise some of the working practices described above within their institutions, drawing on ideas of co-creation and non-linear organisations discussed here. Task groups, problem-solving sets and project teams established to work intensively on thematic issues such as widening participation and sustainability are often cross-departmental and involve colleagues of differing degrees of seniority. Collaborative projects across HEIs, and between HEIs, industry and other sectors and agencies, can harness the potential of working in new team configurations and across traditional subject boundaries. However, such instances usually arise as a result of a need to take action on issues that are a source of cross-institutional anxiety, or where the problem is perceived to reside across a number of departments. Many institutions remain essentially committed to structures that are reliant on linear models of communication, including the positioning of students as consumers rather than active 'producers' of the next generation of HE provision. Co-creative ways of working have to date had little impact on the day-to-day experiences of academic teams managing both complexity

and bureaucracy. Higher education should look to the creative industries which are adopting such strategies for dealing with complexity and change.

Conclusion

Staff in higher education find that expanded roles, rapid change, external requirements, resourcing pressures and a high level of monitoring contribute to a stressful working environment. Within art, design and media education, this is exacerbated by the logistical and identity tensions between being a practitioner and being an academic, by the high numbers of part time staff which make communication, developing a staff community and professional development more difficult, and increase the load on full time members of staff. Some of the most frequent ways of coping with stress, such as creating an oppositional sub culture within a team or department, withdrawing from the community or ring fencing what the individual will and won't do, increase the difficulties for individuals and institutions. For individuals, professional development, social networks at work, and increased understanding of the institution help restore a sense of autonomy and self-control. For institutions, exploring non-hierarchical methods of communication, planning and problem resolution across all staff and students, as adopted by some successful and fast responding creative companies may, at least in part, ameliorate the situation.

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