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Considering the shift in lecturer roles as key skills and competencies are fostered in higher education students today. (0236)

Key words: Key skills; role identity; broaden the curriculum.

For many years now the main role of the lecturer was perceived as being concerned primarily with the transmission of knowledge and skills so that their students could perform successfully in set examinations (Owen, 1979). However, recent economic and social developments have instigated a wave of changes to the traditional learning and teaching environment within which lecturers operate, forcing a redefinition of their role to meet all new associated demands. As governments have become more concerned with strengthening their economies so as to compete in global and international markets, they have recognised the role a high quality higher education (HE) sector can play (Harris, 2005). Consequently, in many countries including Ireland, a flurry of policies, reports, and legislation has ensued, supporting the popular idea that economic prosperity and success can be enhanced through investment in better education and training (Ashton & Green, 1997; Wolf, 2004; Feinstein et al. 2004). 'Broadening the curriculum', 'widening participation', 'technology-enhanced learning', and supporting 'student mobility' are all issues now facing current day lecturers. Furthermore, the move towards mass higher education and an economy and society based on knowledge, coupled with a rather crippling economic recession, have meant a huge change in both the nature of the student body entering HE, and in what they now need from their education at that level. Irish HE institutions currently cater for students from very different socio-economic backgrounds than previously, who also speak different languages, and who have varying degrees of academic preparedness (Hicks et al, 2001; CHIU, 2003). In turn, this has put additional pressures on HE institutions and their lecturers to develop new modes of knowledge production, and improve the quality of the services provided, so as to help such students develop the kinds of key skills they need to progress smoothly from HE to gainful employment.

The importance of developing a strong set of key skills, or 'skills, understandings and personal attributes' that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, benefitting themselves, the community and the economy, has been highlighted (Knight & Yorke, 2003). In a major review of education Dearing (1997) described key skills as the key to the future success of graduates in what they intend to do in later life. While there is no consensus on a list of essential key skills, generally they include communication, numeracy, team-working, independent thinking, problem solving, and leadership (Dearing, 1997; Fallows et al, 1995). These skills have been described as the abilities or transferable skills that enable success in the workplace, in education, in lifelong learning and in personal life. Resultantly, the development of key skills in students in higher education is seen as hugely important, especially given the current economic climate characterised by high levels of unemployment, and initiatives to broaden the curriculum and foster key skills and competencies have increased right across the HE sector.

The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Ireland, responded to the demands to develop key skills in graduates by implementing the *Get Smart!* initiative and aimed it at first year undergraduate students. *Get Smart!* is an innovative programme, developed through a bottom-up approach within the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism, that integrates and embeds learning strategies, study skills, and professional and personal development skills into all modules of the first year curriculum. The project included not only lecturers, but also information literacy professionals and career development professionals committed to the innovation. It was designed in such a way as to give students greater

ownership of their employability skills, and the confidence to cope with change over their lifetimes. A four hour workshop was also included as part of the programme to encourage self-reflection amongst the students, and to expose them to a range of themes around the area of personal development. Comments made by students about that workshop included "It was brill", "It was fab", "inspiring" and "very impressive". Furthermore, as students' profiles, expectations and willingness to engage are very different to that of a decade ago (Cloete et al, 2009), social media tools such as Facebook™ and Twitter® were utilised to connect, engage, and communicate with the students and to distribute information regularly about project events.

Supporting and implementing new initiatives and engaging in new information and communication technologies, however, necessitates an inevitable shift in the academic and professional role of lecturers. Whilst every lecturer holds the same role identity of 'HE lecturer', they each have a very different understanding of what that means because the knowledge of what they do, what they know, and how they interpret their job are all "negotiated in the course of doing the job" (Wenger, 1998), and is "uniquely shaped by the person's experiences and interaction with others" (Burke, 2003). But, like the main lecturer at DIT responsible for introducing, organising and managing the further development and implementation of the key skills *Get Smart!* initiative, when they make the transition into a new role, their views and meanings of their role identities are reassessed during new interactions with others, all of which cause changes in role identity (Cast, 2003). This DIT lecturer was awarded a Teaching Fellowship at the Institute, giving her time to immerse herself in the development of the initiative, interact on a different level with her colleagues, forge links between the institute and industry, and carry out some much needed research into the area of key skills development. Over the course of this time she found her role identity as an educator changing into an 'influencer' of learners rather than 'controller' of a classroom Siemens' (2010).

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