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## **The role of performance and narration in translating professional standards into practice: four analytical models (0249)**

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Research Domain: Academic Practice, Work and Cultures

### **Abstract:**

This contribution to the round-table discussion will draw on the notion of ‘discourse as social action’ (Wetherell, 2001) to explore how those who support learning in higher education articulate their professional practice in relation to the discursive formation constructed within the UK professional standards framework (UKPSF). This paper will draw on data gathered during six workshops that focused on the role that performance and narrative can play in teaching, and on how creative activities can provide the space for critical reflection both in and on practice. Findings from the analysis, which will be presented at the conference, will provide the opportunity for delegates to discuss how the analysis might inform the ways in which they articulate their professional practice, and the role that the Higher Education Academy (HEA) might play in supporting them in this process.

### **Outline:**

The UK professional standards framework (UKPSF) is “a national framework for comprehensively recognising and benchmarking teaching and learning support roles within higher education (HE)” (Higher Education Academy, 2012, p.2). The HEA aligns its Fellowship categories with the framework descriptors, which are “a set of statements outlining the key characteristics of someone *performing* four broad categories of typical learning and teaching support role within higher education”. (*ibid.* emphasis added). A core aspect of achieving professional recognition via HEA Fellowship is the ‘Account of professional practice’ (APP). Applicants must provide a *narrative* account that outlines their experiences in relation to a series of ‘areas of activity’, illustrating their account with examples of how these activities demonstrate their competence in relation to ‘core knowledge’ and commitment to ‘professional values’, as outlined in the framework.

Discourse analysis (DA) takes as its starting point the identification of “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - a way of representing the knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Hall, 1992, p.31). DA aims to examine how discourses are replicated across a number of institutional sites, and how these discursive formations “govern the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about” (Hall, 1997, p.44) and how such formations “influence how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others” (*ibid.*). Within this context it could be argued that the UKPSF represents a discursive formation that shapes the practice of those involved in supporting learning in HE and that the requirements of the APP represents one of the technologies (Foucault, 1980) through which this discursive formation is both articulated and replicated.

Power relations within any discursive formation are not, however, 'one-way' or 'top-down'. The subject of the discourse, in this context those supporting learning in HE, are not simply 'subjected to' the discourse but have the potential to shape the discourse through the articulation of their practice. The notion of articulation in this context plays on two connotations of word - articulation as expression and articulation as a point of connection or contact between objects.

This paper will draw on three overarching principles of the notion of discourse as social action (Wetherell, 2001) - that discourse is constitutive, that it involves 'work' and is based on the co-production of meaning - to explore data relating to a series of six interdisciplinary workshops organised by the contributors to this round-table discussion. The aim of these workshops was facilitate activities through which participants could use the language of their disciplines to perform and narrate the connections between their own learning and teaching and the UKPSF. The workshops '[Performing teaching](#)' and '[Narrating your academic practice](#)' involved participants in a series of creative activities, including: creating images to represent their academic habitus, forum theatre; creating 'rich pictures'; using metaphors to explore teaching and learning; game-based learning; and, using poetry for critical reflection. My rationale for participating in the design and facilitation of these activities was not simply that creativity is 'a good thing', but rather that it plays an essential part in connecting individuals lives and practices with those of others, potentially creating a shared culture of practice. As Gauntlett (2011) outlines in his book *Making is Connecting*, creative activities are useful because:

...you have to connect things together (materials, ideas or both) to make something new... acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people... through making things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environments...

At the point of writing this proposal, analysis of the data, which include video recordings of workshops, contributions to blogs, artefacts created by participants and post-event interviews with participants, is still in the preliminary stage. It is hoped, however, that through analysing the ways in which participants engaged with the workshop activities and then drew on the outcomes of these activities to articulate their professional practice, we can explore the ways in which those who support learning in HE help to construct the discursive formation embodied in the UKPSF. This, in turn, can inform the development of further events and workshops designed to support practitioners in the development of their professional practice.

## References

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