

Forging a new identity amidst 'super-complexity' and shifting landscapes

Locating a more productive educational developer identity
in a small Guild HE university

Session Learning Outcomes

- Discuss the relevant literature related to educational developer orientations and super-complexity
- Critique the value of 'third space' professionalisation and 'critical professional development' (Pilkington, 2016) as a response to HE super-complexity
- Apply a more enabling conceptualisation of educational development that adjusts to the 'slippery terrain' (Land, 2000) of organisational cultures

‘The purpose of educational development (also called academic development, teacher development or teacher training) is to help create learning environments that enhance educational quality. In the absence of educational development, teachers in higher education tend to base their teaching on their own experience as students. In this way, old teaching methods that focus on the teachers’ rather than the students’ needs and on the subject matter rather than on the transformation of student knowledge perpetuate from generation to generation.’

(Pleschová et al. 2012, p. 9)

Shifting landscapes

Academics will need other forms of professional development that are more equitable, less individualistic and more communitarian, where professionals co-operate to improve each other's efforts..'

(Locke, 2014, p27)

Chadha and Sota (2015, p 266)

‘..although there may be an appreciation of the value of academic development – principally to develop and support the teaching capabilities of disciplinary based colleagues – there seems to be little understanding of what academic developers do, how they do it, who they serve and how they can be credible in their practice’

Supercomplexity

A *complex* world is one in which we are assailed by more facts, data, evidence, tasks and arguments than we can easily handle *within* the frameworks in which we have our being. By contrast, a *supercomplex* world is one in which the very frameworks by which we orient ourselves to the world are themselves contested (Barnett, 2000)

Super-complexity

- Macfarlane (2011), Clegg (2008) – erosion of academic identities – rise of ‘para-academic’ and ‘meta academic’
- Pilkington (2016) – role of the lecturer becoming broader and more complex – ‘lecturer role is a site of tension between research, teaching work, administration and management
- Locke et al, (2016) Shifting landscapes –changing parameters of academic work, time and workload issues
- Fung and Gordon (2016) – complexity with respect to educational-related professional development
- Whitchurch (2008) ‘third space ‘ professionals – project working around enhancement themes – erosion of academic and non academic binary

Thriving in uncertain circumstances

‘learning how to be productive even when the space we occupy is troublesome and full of tensions..’

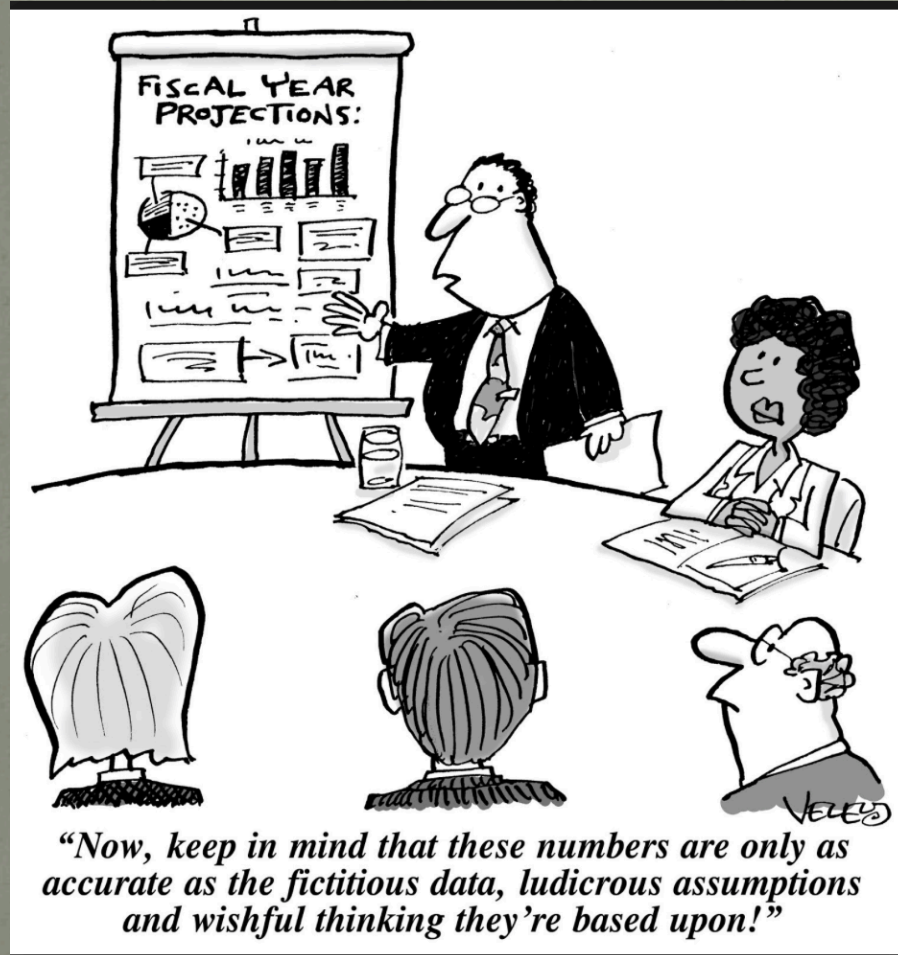
(Kensington-Miller et al 2015)

Tensions between space and legitimacy

- Gosling (2008) – describes amalgamation and disaggregation of educational development units and ‘deep sense of insecurity’
- Emerging trends – emergence of ‘hub and spoke’ models and distributed models of learning and teaching

Passing bandwagons and 'quick fixes'?

(Land, 2004)



"Now, keep in mind that these numbers are only as accurate as the fictitious data, ludicrous assumptions and wishful thinking they're based upon!"

The many faceted aspects of
academic developer agency

| | |
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| Managerial / HRM | Manage transition from one state of staff competence to some other state aligned with institutional policy. |
| Political – Strategic | Strategic alliances and informal networks for policy to be implementable, requiring trust and collaboration. |
| Entrepreneurial | Emphasise the employability of graduates as a key objective. |
| Romantic: Ecological Humanist | Aim to support personal as well as professional growth of individual academics. |
| Opportunist | Take advantage of context and circumstance to promote innovation. |
| Researcher | Encourage research to challenge orthodoxy and empower staff to identify innovation. |
| Competent Professional | Achieve professional and technical competence with the role of theory being the handmaiden of practice. |
| Reflective Practitioner | Become more competent to address “messy, confusing problems [which] defy technical solution” (Schön, 1987). |
| Internal Consultant | “Bring me your issues and I’ll help find a solution” as a proactive strategy for infiltrating departments”. |
| Modeller-Broker | Collate examples of good practice and promote them within the community of practice. |
| Interpretive Hermeneutic | Engage in dialogue - “a dialogical activity: it is staff development by conversation”. |
| Provocateur (Discipline Specific) | Depend on staff within disciplinary departments who can act as “agents provocateurs” and agents of change |

Slippery terrain?

- Domesticating and emancipatory tendencies
- Permeable identities - Internal consultant, educational expert, academic coach, mentor, critical friend, reflective practitioner, knowledge broker, researcher, competent professional?

‘Chameleon on a tartan rug’ (Handal, 2008)

What orientations to academic development can you relate to in Land's (2004) model?

What challenges can you see with the model given the current shifting landscape we work in?

Searching for a more fruitful
identity

Di Napoli et al (2010)

- Counsellor, coach, partner, facilitator, teacher, modeller, reflective observer, technical adviser and hands on expert
- Overall bias towards an advisory, facilitative and reflective model for academic development
- The work of developers is 'recursive, cumulative and requires time and patience...'

Handal (2008)

Promotion of the 'critical friend' orientation, which 'corresponds with roles that are deeply embedded in the academic culture when it comes to research..'

Reflection in action and 'artistry'

'we have different academic and professional identities inscribed within different discourses' and we draw on our own repertoire of situationally adaptive knowledge (Land, 2004, p9)

'a skilled performer adjusts his responses to variations in phenomena to deploy a wide ranging repertoire of images of contexts and action' (Schon, 1987, p29)

Mode 2 knowledge (Gibbons et al 1994)

‘a kind of professional knowledge that within the outer shell of ‘education’ is context-adaptable, usable and inter/intra disciplinary, and therefore ‘fuzzy’ in nature (Di Napoli, 2010, p15)

Third space professionalism (Whitchurch, 2008)

‘Blended’ relationships

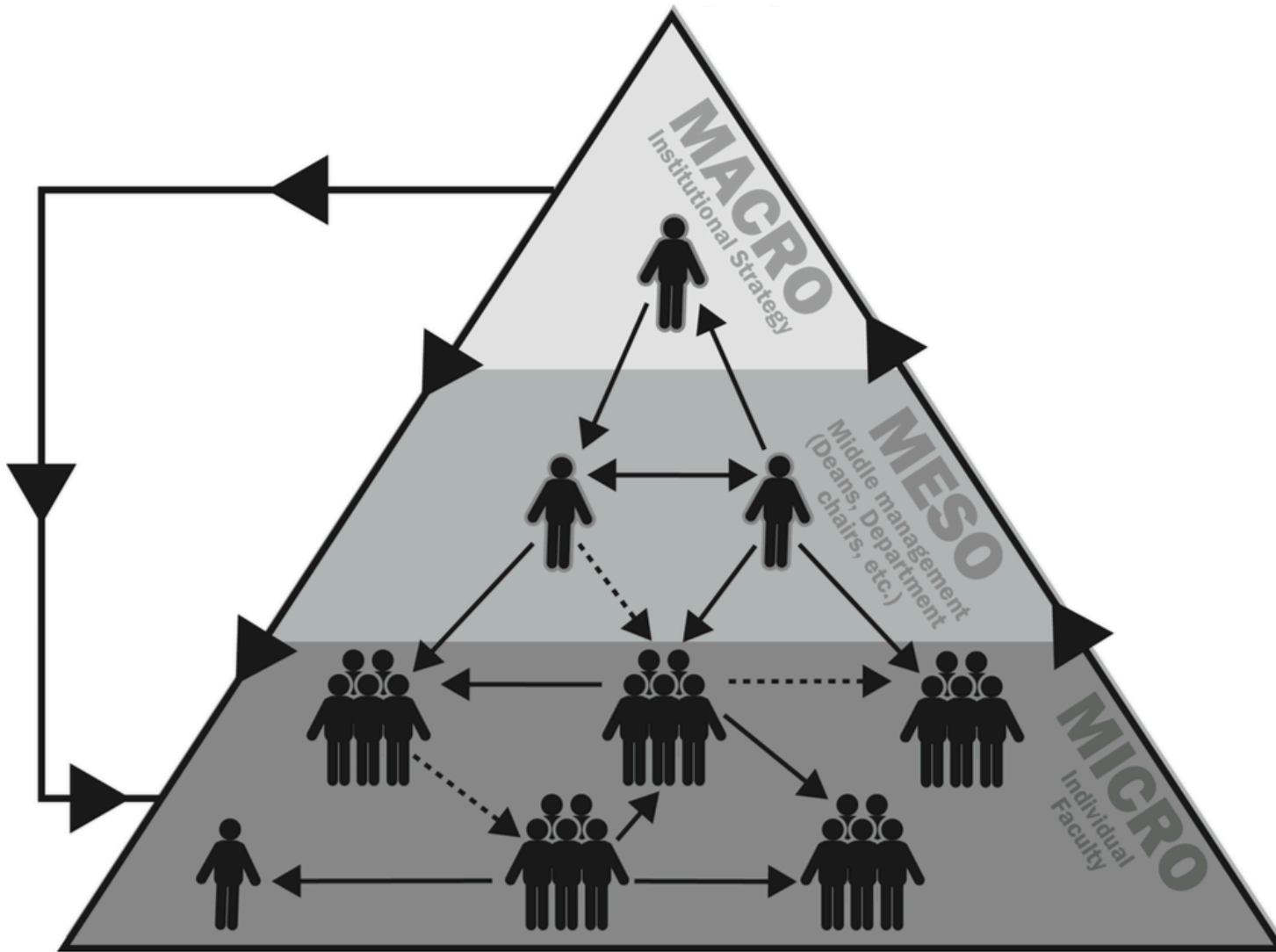
- Partnership rather than management
- Lateral team working
- Weak ties and networks (Granovetter, 1973)

Legitimacies

- Credibility based on social and professional capital
- Mode 2 activity – transdisciplinary knowledge

Discursive and situated nature of professional educational learning

- Laycock and Shrives (2009) – credit bearing programmes the least preferred option. Preferred options for teaching and learning practice lie with networks, peers, reading, scholarship and curriculum development



Macro Level: Sets the strategic direction

Meso Level: Interprets key issues and acts as conduit of information both upwards and down

Micro Level: Activities of communities of practice, individual faculty and students

Figure 1. Social Network Formation across Micro-, Meso-, and Macro-Levels in a Higher Education Institution.

Nodes and networks

- We are most powerful and effective when we work not alone, but as part of coordinated social networks, which can become “change networks” (Kezar et al., 2011, p. 149) working within institutions to transform student learning.

Weak ties, nodes and networks

- People serving nodal functions are in the unique position to see possible connections among individuals working at the micro-level, and they have the skills and connections to bring people belonging to different groups together, both within and across disciplines. People serving this nodal function create “weak ties,” which do not involve emotional closeness, yet which can facilitate access to information and resources and coordination (Granovetter, 1973).

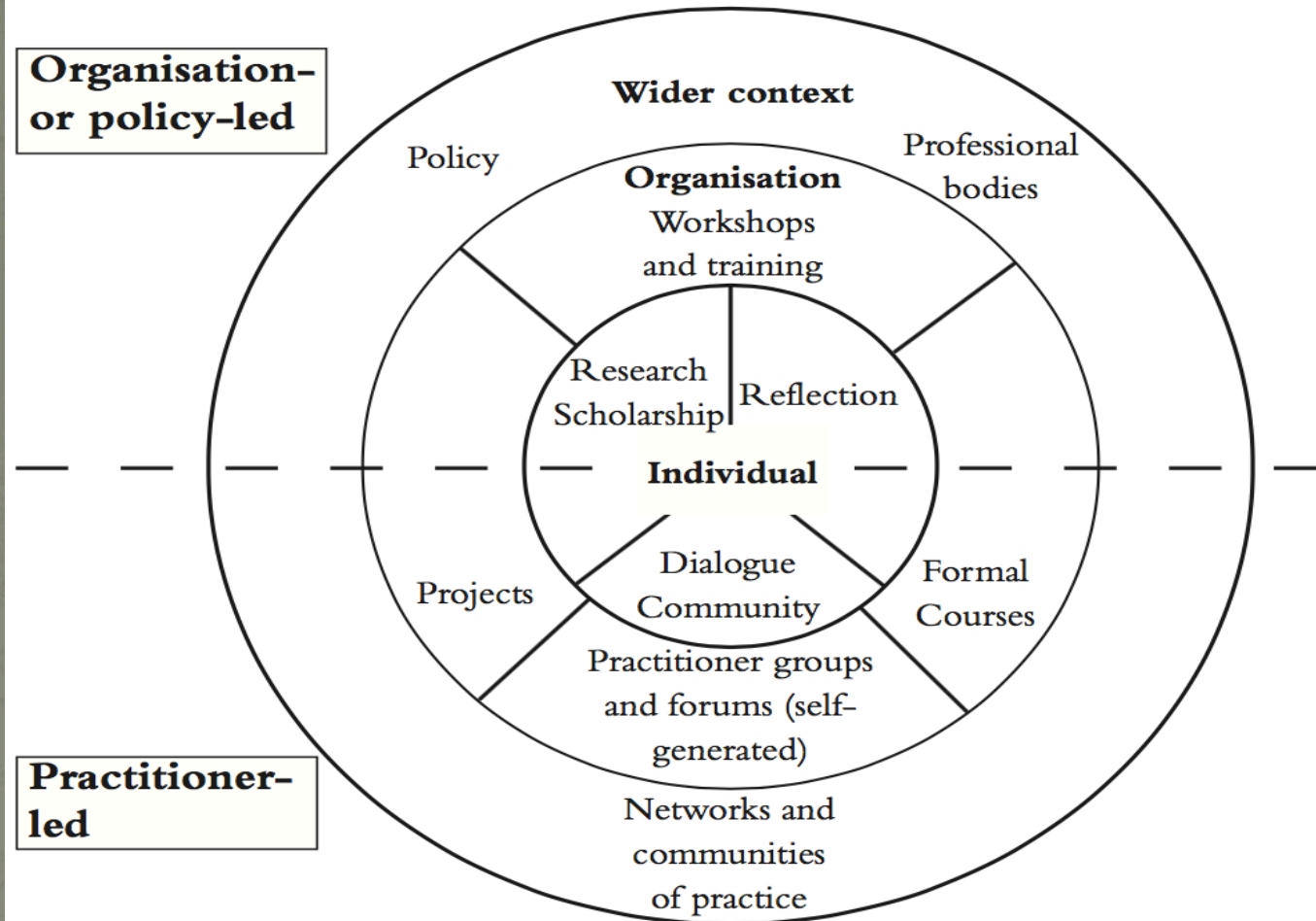
How might these models and frames be best utilized by educational developers to address the challenges of super-complexity?

Model for 'critical professional development' (Appleby & Pilkington, 2016)

Critical professionalism also requires an understanding of choices and opportunities and knowing how to exploit them within the context of professional learning and organisational processes.

To be effective this requires facilitation.

Figure 8.1 Revisiting the model for supporting critical professional development



Professional dialogue

The key to making a professional dialogue work is to focus it around the individual's own process of meaning making and articulation of tacit understandings developed in practice. It synthesises widely accepted components of professional knowing such as knowledge, values and practice

Appleby & Pilkington (2016)

‘Its what you are, not what
you represent’

(Whitchurch, 2008)
