

**NORMAN JACKSON**, Michelle Blackburn, Jackie Cawkwell, James Corraza, Luke Desforges, Ian Glover, Viv Thom, Jeff Waldock and Andy Young

## INTRODUCTION

This working paper was produced in collaboration with eight members of staff from Sheffield Hallam University. Its purpose is to develop perspectives on how teachers and others who support student learning and development view their own personal and professional development to inform a presentation at the University's learning and teaching conference. Responses also informed the design of an on-line questionnaire which was used to gain the perspectives on personal and professional development of conference participants.

The principal enquiry themes are: the meaning and nature of personal and professional development within the university and the relationship between the individual's development work and their own development as a professional in their university role.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### 1) What does 'personal development' mean to you in any life context?

#### *Summary*

It means 'PERSONAL GROWTH' by/through

- GAINING new knowledge, skill, capability, understanding or
- ENHANCING existing knowledge, skill, capability, understanding
- DOING THINGS THAT ENABLE ME TO DEVELOP
- FINDING WAYS to be better or to get better
- FURTHERING MY ABILITY TO THINK AND ACT IN ANY SITUATION

Through these things we are trying to

LIVE A BETTER LIFE AND BE AND BECOME A BETTER PERSON

Underlying these things is the concept of personal newness and adding to what already exists and it contributes to my sense of FLOURISHING and FEELING EMPOWERED.

#### *Responses*

A) New ways of thinking about how I approach things (both work and related to home) and relationships (family, friends and acquaintances). Could be quite philosophical and conceptual or very practical.

B) It means flourishing, and empowerment.

C) Finding ways to live better. Being a better human being.

D) Growth - in knowledge and understanding - a wider world perspective

E) Doing hobbies and activities that I enjoy and have a sense of personal growth regardless of whether or it is of practical value to my working life, e.g. improving my skills as a photographer, learning a new programming language, developing my graphic design skills or learning to ride a motorbike.

F) Becoming a better person - that is, someone better able to manage the stress and strain of life, and integrate with others to the benefit of all.

G) Gaining new knowledge and skills and enhancing existing ones. Getting better at being alive in the fullest sense

H) To me it means furthering my ability to understand and act in any situation. Normally it's about being able to act more effectively to achieve something, but it can also be about understand the world differently. For example, over the last year I've been involved in a local campaigning organisation and have understood better how they communicate using social media channels, and I've learnt more about how you can galvanise a group of people through communication.

## 2) What does development mean in the context of your professional role?

### *Summary*

Work and fulfilling a professional role provides an important context for personal development. Broadly speaking the same areas of personal growth and means to grow are contextualised within the purposes, goals and challenges of the particular work environment.

It means 'PERSONAL GROWTH & LEARNING' IN RELATION TO MY WORK CAN BE BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC

*In the context of performing a professional role*

GAINING knowledge, skill, capability, understanding

ENHANCING existing knowledge, skill, capability, understanding

DOING THINGS THAT ENABLE DEVELOPMENT

FINDING WAYS to be better or to get better

BEING ABLE TO THINK AND ACT BETTER

BEING AND BECOMING A BETTER PERSON eg teacher / colleague / researcher / thinker / designer

Underlying these things is the concept of personal newness and adding to what already exists.

AND HAVING A CONCERN TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP

The development of others is an essential focus for the work of educational professionals so it is not surprising that concepts of professional development are related to their role in helping and enabling learners to develop.

### *Responses*

A) Again, new ways of thinking but less personal and relating to tasks at work. And again, could be quite philosophical and conceptual or very practical

B) Helping students to help themselves, and set personal goals

C) Foremost learning. This links to being a better person and living better (sometimes). But it is also about being a better teacher / colleague / researcher / thinker / designer

D) Growth with a particular goal in mind

E) Developing skills and attributes that help me work more effectively in my role, especially those general skills that are not specific to a particular role or organisation, such as chairing meetings, time-management, project management, etc. However, it can also be related to the specific role that I am doing, such as keeping abreast of developments in my field, raising my professional profile through scholarly activity, etc.

F) Gaining new skills, developing positive attributes and being better able to recognise and evidence it all

G) Gaining new knowledge and skills and enhancing existing ones which are used solely or most often in my working life.

H) It means being able to think and act better in my professional role. To think better means arriving at a better analysis of my surrounding context, by using concepts, ideas, information better to understand the issues we are facing. To act better means to be more effective in organising myself and working with others to do the things we need to do.

### **3) What aspects of your professional role require you to develop yourself?**

#### *Summary*

There is a sense that every aspect of the professional role provide stimulus for development eg the subject, the teaching and learning process, relationships and systems and organisational change. The twin fields of discipline and teaching role are apparent.

There is also a sense of developing taking place in a more general way that enables people to extend their ability to communicate, manage and lead and use technology, together with a concern for enabling others to develop.

#### *Responses*

A) Keeping up-to-date with my academic field (T&L pedagogies and staff development) and responding to changes at work

B) As a practice educator, and health professional

C) Every teaching situation. In official terms appraisals.

D) All aspects from subject matter and pedagogical stuff, to stuff around systems, relationships, every point in my working life really.

E) Much of my role requires interacting with others in a variety of roles across the institution and outside it, which means constantly developing and refining communications skills. It is also important to maintain currency with what is happening elsewhere, and as the volume of information is constantly increasing, developing skills and strategies for sifting through the

information becomes increasingly important. My role also includes regularly leading and participating in projects on topics that are outside of my experience, this requires both the development of new knowledge but also skills required to effectively undertake the work.

F) As a subject group leader, I have to manage the team of staff and coordinate the activities of the group effectively. This means learning how to support those individuals in developing themselves, their skills and their careers to benefit them and the group.

This requires me to develop skills in staff management, emotional intelligence, and (in order to succeed in integrating the needs of the group with those of the wider university context - skills in diplomacy in dealing with management,

G) Keep up to date with sector , education issues, university wide information and policy. Meeting people from different cultures. Working in a team.Using IT.

H) My teaching requires me to develop my understanding of my subject area, but I really value being able to develop my teaching ability, by which I mean not only the performative dimension of teaching but also the organisational and design side of teaching. I think I value my teaching development more than my subject development because I think that if I teach well, the students will be able to make discoveries about the subject area themselves.

My leadership role means that I need to develop my leadership skills. This means thinking and developing my actions and interactions so that I'm able to make good decisions, help others in making good decisions, and act on them. This takes all sorts of communication, organisational, influencing and reflective skills.

#### **4) Why do you engage in personal/professional development?**

##### *Summary*

People engage in personal development in both intentional and unintentional (as a bi-product of doing something) ways for a variety of reasons. There are reasons linked to wanting to achieve and to be successful. There is a sense that people are deeply motivated to get better at what they do and reasons that they want to remain interested and 'fresh' by finding interesting challenges. Improving and maintaining interest are both motivational forces. There is also an expectation that people who perform a professional role are expected to engage in professional development and that their credibility depends on it.

##### *Responses*

A) Inspiring, motivating, rewarding. Also gives me credibility and, thus, confidence in my work. CPD is also expected of staff

B) To stay fresh and interested, and critical

C) I am fascinated by my area of research (educational research) which links explicitly to my teaching. I

D) Because I like to provide the best solution or walk the smartest path

E) Professional development is essential to the role that I am in. Personal development is often a by-product of things that I am interested in rather than a conscious aim.

F) For all of the above reasons! (i.e. to be better able to achieve success in my role)

G) To be better at my job, to keep my job- as in being useful to an organisation, to learn new things and maintain my knowledge

H) Often it is to do better at a particular aspect of my role. It may be that there is a particular dimension of my role which I don't feel particularly good at, or which I need to do better, and this would normally drive me to find out how to do it better.

**5) Please provide an illustrative example of a process you have engaged in during the last two years in which you have developed yourself in your professional role?**

*What was the context and why did you engage in development?*

*What did you do and how did this result in your development as a professional?*

A) I am a co-leader of a new special interest group within SHU on Critical Thinking. I took up the opportunity for my own interest more than anything else but hoped that I could inspire other work colleagues. It worked and I have been able to inform the wider CPD agenda within SHU by being very active and 'seeding' the idea. It became one of the most popular CPD groups for 2012/13 and has strengthened the commitment throughout SHU to academic *rigour* and quality in the fundamental challenge how we teach and why, as well as contributing to my own profile and reputation. This enhances the professionalism of staff and the student experience. It has also encouraged me to take more risks in what I think and do.

B) Personal and professional development review/teaching observation process *How did this result in development?* Learning from constructive feedback, encouragement

C) My PhD and Senior Fellowship application (retreat) Both residential, but also collegiate.

D) Writing academic journal articles with co-authors. *What did you do and how did this result in your development as a professional?* Subject matter knowledge, the politics of journal writing, how to maintain patience with the timescales of others, different perspectives on my world view, compromise!

E) In September I completed an MA in Academic Practice at City University London. I began it while working there as it seemed a good way to obtain a qualification, get to know academic staff at the institution and the issues that they face, and put my own knowledge and work on a sounder theoretical footing, all the while being challenged to undertake activities that I had little or no experience of or would actively try and avoid.

As a result of the course I had a better understanding of the variations of practice across the institution and how to 'exploit' them to improve things for myself and those I worked with, worked closely with people from my own faculty (improving my relationship with them) and others (building a network of 'critical friends' within the institution) and developed methods of working that would increase the impact of my work, such as writing a paper that won an 'outstanding paper' award at a conference.

F) I have prepared and submitted applications for both senior and principal fellows of the HEA.

*Context* I had a Faculty lead role in employability, and needed to show competence both in the pedagogical aspects of this area but also success in helping develop it both in students and (via curricular interventions) in staff. I also wanted to provide a greater level for change, which I felt would be more likely to happen with the endorsement implied by these qualifications.

*What I did and how it resulted in development:* Both applications required a reappraisal of my own development together with an honest appraisal of where I was going, and what I was

trying to achieve. By identifying what I had felt about higher education as a recipient I was better able to be clear about what I wanted to achieve and why the approaches adopted were appropriate. This self reflection gave me a better understanding of my own skills, attributes and limitations, and therefore helped me develop a more balanced plan of action to take forward.

G) I have learnt a fair bit about the Erasmus scheme and intercultural communications in order to develop student mobility. I have started to improve my language skills, applied for Headstart, got on a course. Have learnt to use social media, write blogs and webpage content, camtasia lectures.- to save time in delivery and free time to talk to students

H) I recently took on a 'task and finish' piece of work which involved setting up a robust Quality Assurance process for the Faculty. I volunteered to take on this task because I knew the process had caused a lot of stress across the Faculty the year before, which I thought I could resolve this year. But I also took on the task because I know I'm not very good at setting up processes, and it gave me the chance to work with a colleague who is very good at setting up processes. He is about to retire, so I thought I ought to try and learn from his experience before he leaves, in the hope that I would become better at setting up processes in the future. We have worked together on planning the process and communicating with others. I do feel that I have learnt from working on this particular task - my worry is that if I need to set up a process in the future, I won't give myself the time to do it properly, as I've learnt from my colleague.

## **6) What factors encourage you to engage in professional development?**

A) An inspiring colleague to work with helps as does support from my team leader but I am prepared to do things in my own time if I think they will enhance my profile for the future or contribute to my understanding of a key part of my work.

B) Empowerment, flexibility to be innovative, inclusion

C) Things that I can use. Facilitators with strong reputations. Group (course level) interactions

D) Acknowledgement of my CPD efforts would help, but I'd do them anyway.

E) Where I see a need for it, either as something that I need to develop for my current role or, less importantly, something that will help my career move in the direction that I want it to go.

F) The need to display professional competence; working with colleagues and peers to create a framework that helps other develop themselves; collegiality; altruism; fun.

G) Interest, change, supportive colleagues, good managers

H) The sense that if I do engage in professional development, it will make my working life more effective and hopefully therefore easier. A motivation for me is also that it make the lives of others easier as well, as in the example above.

## **7) What factors discourage you from engaging in professional development?**

A) Opposite of above although time is probably not a major barrier as I often find ways of integrating development into something quite routine (I do have quite a lot of autonomy in my work which helps)

B) Being told, rather than asked, a lack of collaboration, a lack of time for reflection

C) Very little - because I am interested in being an academic / learning / HE. However it is also an area beset with poorly conceived and executed 'workshops' and development opportunities and this does very little to encourage engagement IMO.

D) Hoops to jump through, having to push when the case is clear...

E) Where a programme of development is either mandatory, such as an induction session at a new job, or is unlikely to have direct benefits to my current role or ones I may hold in the future.

F) Time! Preordained outcomes; being expected to do it on other peoples timescales and to other agendas.

G) Lack of time.

H) Time. There always seems to be very immediate tasks to undertake, which don't allow 'time out' for professional development. That's mainly why I chose to do 'on the job' development in the example above.

**8) Is the environment in which you work generally favourable to you being able to develop yourself in order to fulfil your professional role? If the environment is not as favourable as you believe it could be, what would improve it?**

A) I work in a very conducive environment generally although my direct team leader rarely initiates ideas - I usually convince him to support me in the end!

B) Yes, broadly speaking, but there are challenges, more time/resources for LTA innovation, less inequality

C) Generally favourable in developing the individual. But my working experience is at course level. There is a paucity of development for course teams. Plenty of course leaders, but this doesn't in itself ensure you can develop a course, teaching, learning etc.

D) Yes it is, I've had a considerable amount of personal development since I joined the university but it has pretty much been self directed.

E) Yes, there are many opportunities for development at SHU, both as part of formal training delivered by the university HR department and as part of a wide variety of CPD sessions organised by various groups around the university.

F) Yes - very favourable. More so at this institution than many others. *What would improve it?* A real appreciation that meaningful development takes time; hence the creation of work plan hours that explicitly identify specific professional development/CPD activities.

G) Yes generally. I think the size of the organisation isolates us from others and the department isolates us from practice. We should have time to share our work and ideas more.

H) I don't think I take the time to interact with my peers outside the University, so that I can learn from others in a similar role to me. I think I need to negotiate with my line manager to open up some time to do that.

**9) What is the relationship between your development work and your own development as a professional in higher education?**

A) Critical - but then I work as a professional development manager for academic staff!

B) I would not make the distinction, I was an enthusiastic student, and now I am a committed academic, it begins and ends, with passion for learning and helping others to learn.

D) I'm very focused on developing and writing about innovation in pedagogical practice so it is a very neat fit with how I teach.

E) The formal activities that are conducted as professional development are naturally directly related as the intent behind undertaking them is to develop in ways useful to my role, whereas the other, less obviously developmental activities also have an impact, though it may take longer to manifest or be significantly more subtle.

There is also a relationship between some personal development activities and my developing as a professional. This development might be visible in obvious ways, such as taking better photographs to illustrate blog posts, record events, or for inclusion in papers, but they can also have much less obvious applications, such as learning a new programming language encouraging thinking in different ways or stimulating problem solving abilities. Learning to ride a motorbike is unlikely to have any professional benefits, however.

F) One informs the other. I learn more (about myself, my work and how to better achieve my own objectives) through developing activities for others.

G) I could have been more strategic about it

H) I'm not quite sure what this means I'm afraid.

18/06/14