Raising the Profile of Innovative Teaching in Higher Education? Reflections on the EquATE Project

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This paper presents a methodology developed by members of the Research Centre for Learning and Teaching (RCfLAT) to collaborate with university teaching colleagues to produce theoretically- and pedagogically-based case studies of innovations in teaching and learning. The Equal Acclaim for Teaching Excellence (EquATE) project investigates whether case studies of teaching innovation, facilitated by a research team and made public through a community of inquiry, can take educational research beyond simple descriptions, foster criticality, and facilitate participants' engagement with theory. The project supports participants as they plan and conduct their case studies and provides a community of inquiry in which findings are shared and discussed in relation to micro (classroom and discipline) contexts and macro (university-wide and higher education) agendas. This enables the project team to make comparisons across the case studies and to explore participants' epistemic beliefs and views of learning. The project team collected data from the case studies, project tasks, and discussion groups that were thematically analyzed using inductive and deductive lenses. The data suggests that participation in the project can promote greater reflectivity, defamiliarize habitual practices, and promote openness to new theoretical and pedagogical perspectives.

In recent years many research-intensive universities have sought to raise the profile and esteem of teaching. In the UK, the establishment of the Higher Education Academy, announced in the government white paper *The Future of Higher Education* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003), served to initiate this trend. Newcastle University responded with a strategic aim to "deliver research-informed teaching and training in a professional, challenging and engaging way" (Newcastle University, 2010, p. 10). The University mission is "[t]o be a world-class, research-intensive university, to deliver teaching and facilitate learning of the highest quality and to play a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England" (Newcastle University, 2012, p. 3). This mission statement implies that high quality teaching and civic engagement have equal status with world-class research. This has been borne out by new initiatives to recognize and reward teaching excellence in promotion criteria and with the introduction in 2009 of the Vice Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in the Support of Teaching and Learning.

While strategic developments are positive, cultural change takes time and many academics remain skeptical about the potential to gain career progression based on teaching excellence. Promotion applications citing teaching excellence require evidence of engagement with pedagogic research. Yet pedagogic research is discouraged within some disciplinary areas where teaching continues to be regarded as the "poor relation" to more valued forms of research activity (Young, 2006, p. 192). However, the current escalation in student fees in England has focused attention on the importance of promoting a high quality student experience. In an ever more competitive higher education market, evidence of teaching excellence has

become an essential part of the key information set used to attract students. This paper focuses on what is therefore a timely initiative that aims to raise the profile of educational research into innovative teaching in support of the strategy to recognize and reward teaching excellence and to provide a high quality student experience.

Background and Rationale

The Equal Acclaim for Teaching Excellence (EquATE) project, initiated in 2009-10, is delivered by a team from the Research Centre for Learning and Teaching (RCfLAT) at Newcastle University (see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cflat/EQUATE.htm). Research into effective teaching and learning in RCfLAT spans the school, further education (FE), and higher education (HE) sectors (Baumfield, Hall, Higgins, & Wall, 2009; Baumfield, Hall, & Wall, 2008; Higgins et al., 2007; McGrane & Lofthouse, 2010; Robson & Turner, 2007; Wall et al., 2010). Ideas first developed by John Dewey and Lawrence Stenhouse suggest that professionals are both more motivated and more effective at solving problems when they adopt an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). The process of practitioner inquiry through action research has been used successfully by RCfLAT in the context of schools, colleges, and FE to develop teachers' capacity to engage in and with research and to make productive connections between theory and practice (Baumfield et al., 2008; Hall, 2009; Higgins et al., 2007; Wall et al., 2010). With the EquATE project RCfLAT extends the scope of its research on professional inquiry into HE.

The project builds on earlier research that explored the importance of an epistemological perspective in teaching and demonstrated the ways in which beliefs

about the nature of knowledge and knowing influence the professional practice of educators and the choices and decisions they make in the classroom (Pintrich, 2002; Schommer, 1990, 1994; Schraw & Olafson, 2002; Tanase & Wang, 2010). Brownlee (2001) suggests that teachers who hold relativistic (more sophisticated) epistemological beliefs are more reflective and more likely to employ constructivist educational theories and practices that lead to transformative teaching. Teachers may be helped to clarify their epistemological beliefs and personal theories about teaching through discussion and guided reflection (Tanase & Wang, 2010).

There is also compelling evidence to suggest that teacher learning is enhanced in collaborative settings (Cordingley, Bell, Evans, & Firth, 2005) where teaching inquiry involves critical reflectivity and scrutiny, and critique by peers (Andreson, 2000; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) and critical engagement with the purposes and goals of higher education (Kreber, 2005). While action research in university teacher development programs is not uncommon, the EquATE approach is based on Stenhouse's (1981) model of "systematic inquiry made public" (p. 104) with its two important facets of systematic inquiry and sharing the outcomes for public critique (see Figure 1). These processes complement two key aspects of the academic job description – to research and to publish.

EquATE therefore aims to provide a structure to support the individual enquiries and outputs and a community in which the epistemological and pedagogical foundations and rationales for the enquiries can be discussed and developed. An overarching inquiry by the project team makes comparisons across the case studies and explores the development of participants' individual and collective epistemic beliefs and views of learning, both during and after the project.

The EquATE Project

The project investigates whether a case study approach to teaching innovation, made public through a community of inquiry, can assist participants to engage in pedagogical research, foster criticality, and facilitate engagement with theory (Trowler, 2010, p. 3). Participants were drawn from all three faculties within the university and from a number of service units (see Table 1). Where possible, two colleagues from the same discipline, school, or service unit were recruited with their line manager's agreement. This helped to ensure that the project was relevant to and supported within the unit, to maximize its potential for impact. Participants were encouraged to select inquiry questions to fit with their own and their subject's priorities while taking a perspective beyond the immediate and specific context, for example to evaluate their teaching in relation to

Figure 1
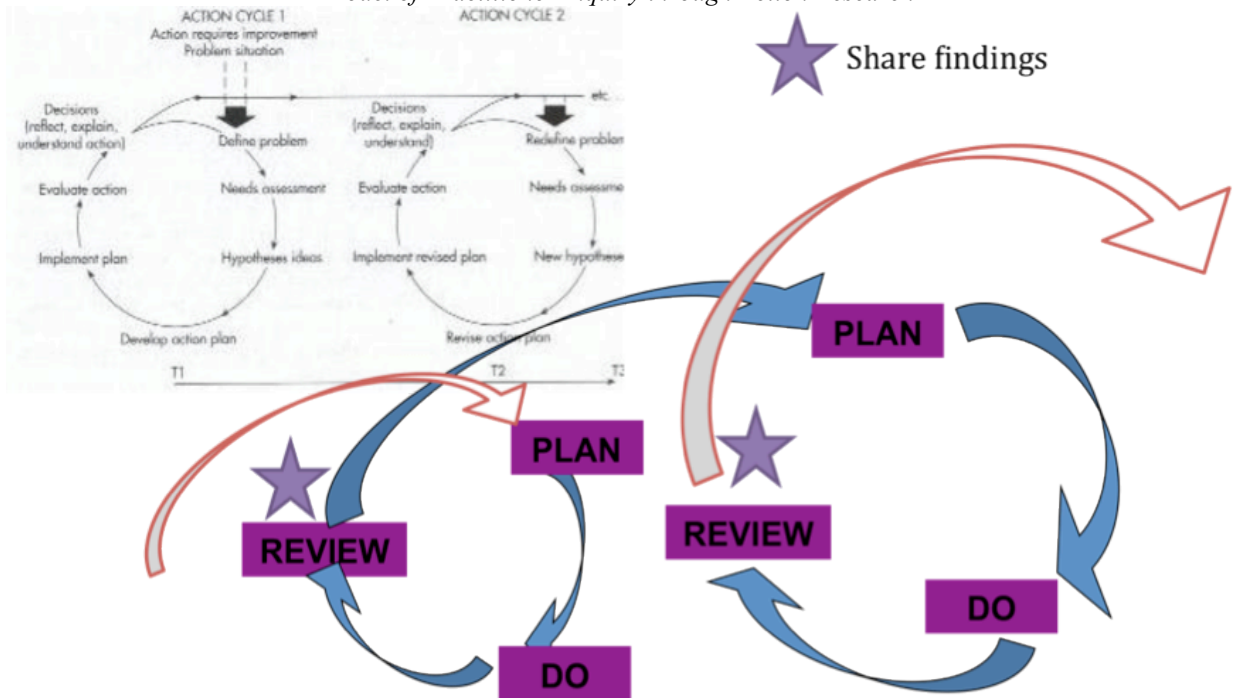*Model of Practitioner Inquiry through Action Research*

Table 1
EquATE Participants

Faculty/Service	School	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Examples of Case Studies
MEDIC	Dentistry, Medical Sciences, Medical Education, Psychology	8	2	Dentistry students' experience of managing their emotional intelligence during oral surgery
SAGE	Computing Science; Chemical Engineering; Agriculture, Food and Rural Development	3	4	Chemical Engineering students' perceptions of inquiry-based learning (EBL) modes of delivery to promote employability
HASS	Modern Foreign Languages; Education, Communication and Language Sciences; Architecture, Planning and Landscape; Historical Studies; Business	5	10	Impact of an autonomous learning program (ALP) on languages students' development and learning
Services	Library, Career Service, Language Centre	4	2	International student experiences
	Total Participants	20	18	

institutional factors (e.g., the internationalization and engagement strategies) or wider factors affecting the HE sector. The locus of control for the research topic remains with participants. This allows individual judgments to be made about what questions should be asked about teaching and learning and how they can best be researched (Baumfield et al., 2008). To insure that the individual enquiries are not overly descriptive (as critiqued in the HE sector by Ertl et al., 2008), participants are encouraged to collect three or more types of data including at least one set of quantitative and one set of qualitative data. The project includes eight contact days that involve working as a group in the university. Participants are introduced to a number of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological tools to support them to complete two connected cycles of inquiry. Additional online and in-person support is offered for data collection, analysis, case study development, and paper writing. An overview of the year can be seen in Table 2.

EquATE employs presence pedagogy in which all participants become members of a community in which "everyone is a potential instructor, peer, expert or novice, all of whom learn from one another" (Bronack et al., 2008). The project provides a unique focus for conversations centered on metacognition, and thinking about learning in both micro (e.g., classroom and discipline) contexts and in relation to macro (e.g., university-wide and higher education) agendas. The project team from RCfLAT collected data throughout the project from Cohort 1 in 2009-10 and Cohort 2 in 2010-2011. The research team provides opportunities

for participants to reflect on their individual case studies, to identify and explore common themes and issues, and to review perspectives in light of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks introduced throughout the project. Dialogue with the research team, as well as with colleagues from other disciplines and from the school and FE sectors, encourages reflection on epistemological beliefs and values, and it enables productive comparisons to be made about the ways these beliefs influence the analysis of the inquiry problem and decisions about practice.

It is perhaps unsurprising that participants from different subject and service areas have very different understandings of what "good" research looks like and what counts as sufficient evidence that something has worked. There are different levels of acceptance with regard to how subject-based models could or could not be applied to the context of educational research. It is important therefore to successful completion and dissemination of the enquiries that methodological decisions are not dislocated from participants' subject areas; for participants to deny the dominant methodological traditions of their field could make the research less meaningful for them individually or hinder further dissemination to colleagues. Open conversations about the concept of rigor, and the nature of education research and evidence in the social sciences are essential in moving dialogue and understandings forward.

In addition, in order to facilitate generalization from the case studies, data were collected by the research team and thematically analyzed employing a

Table 2
Timetable of the EquATE Project

Month	Events	Participant Activity	Research Team Activity
September	2 days – induction and planning	Design and implement first phase case studies	Data collected on constructs of teaching excellence. Input on research methodologies and relevant literature.
October	*Drop-in lunch*		
November	1 day – update and practical input		
December	*Drop-in lunch*	Prepare poster of case study 1	Support for poster design.
January	2 days	Poster presentation and practice sharing with schools and FE project partners	Data collected on cross sector and sector specific issues explored in the case studies.
February	*Drop-in lunch*	Review phase 1 outcomes and design phase 2	Data collected on research process. Input on research methodologies and macro issues (e.g., internationalization).
March		Implement phase 2	Analysis of vision, threats, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses – locating enquiries within micro/macro agendas.
April	1 day update and practical input		
May	1 day update and practical input		
June	*Drop-in lunch*	Case study 2 - paper	Conference planning and implementation
July	1 day – knowledge generation and transfer	Conference	
August	Writing	Further conferences, preparing for publication.	Co-authoring and writing support.

variable-based analysis approach (Bryne & Ragin, 2009) using both inductive and deductive lenses. Analyses of the cases reveal common themes and trends and helped to highlight issues related to innovating with pedagogy and the affordances and constraints of using a practitioner inquiry process in HE. For example, the research team promoted critical reflection and dialogue as a means to collect data on the inquiry process. Findings were validated using explicit feedback loops within the project. Across all feedback and outcomes transparency and a collaborative ethos are foregrounded while ensuring that ethical considerations are observed and confidentiality of data is assured where appropriate.

Returning to Stenhouse's (1981) model, publication of the case studies is essential to the project. This not only complies with university expectations for academics to publish, but also contributes to the creation of a community of practice with inquiry into learning and teaching at its center. The two cycles of inquiry are therefore designed to fit with common output strategies of the academic community: a poster presentation from cycle 1 and a paper from cycle 2. These outputs can be shared in a variety of fora so as to generate new thinking within the project community, within the wider university and with colleagues from the school and FE sectors (Towler, Hall, & Wall, 2009). The objective is to produce and translate new knowledge about teaching and learning.

Of the initial EquATE cohort of 20 participants, only one had previously published pedagogic research. A small percentage of Cohort 2 had published pedagogic papers within their disciplinary journals. A significant development for a number of participants is that papers produced during cycle 2 have been presented at international conferences and submitted for publication to peer-reviewed journals. The requirement for HE staff to publish in some ways assists this process, but dilemmas can occur when outputs do not sit easily within particular Unit of Assessment (UoA) strategies to prepare for the Research Excellence Framework (REF). A key issue is the extent to which each subject area or UoA values and includes outputs examining teaching and learning and the extent to which research leaders encourage academics to conduct pedagogic research.

Process Outcomes

Throughout the project participants were afforded opportunities to reflect on their teaching and to discuss changes in their perceptions and practices brought about through engaging with the inquiry process. Prior to the first inquiry cycle the project team asked participants in what situations they felt most confident about their teaching. Key features within their responses include the importance of group size – most participants favor small groups, although some prefer the "buzz" of the large lecture. Student motivation is also a key factor, as all participants clearly value student engagement and feedback. Relationship building with students to establish effective communication and frequent opportunities for interaction are considered to be important, as trust and shared enthusiasm for the subject are perceived to provide the ideal conditions for learning. Participants' comments refer to the need for students to be physically and emotionally "ready" for learning – "awake and well fed" and "comfortable in their group" so that they are prepared to be challenged and question their outlook, willing to participate, and share ownership for their learning.

Reflecting upon their experiences of successful teaching, participants note the importance of planning, to insure that their knowledge of the subject and resource preparation provide appropriate and flexible opportunities for student activity and engagement. "Taking time to reflect and review previous sessions to aid planning and updating" are also considered to be important. Reviewing the nature and quality of student responses and feedback during sessions, their progress during practical activities, their questions and indications of interest, and evidence that they are taking responsibility for their own learning are considered to be crucial. Student attainment in assessments is also perceived as a key success factor, although a number of participants agree that lack of time to feed back to students on their progress (both formally and informally) is an issue of common concern.

At a mid-point in the project cycle, participants were asked again about their views of formative assessment and feedback. Formative assessment is regarded as valuable but time consuming, particularly to support progress in large cohorts. Participants agree that it is difficult to create a balance in workload to allow a sufficient focus on teaching and feedback to meet student needs (e.g., to assist student learning and to help shape their thinking, to encourage reflection for deeper learning and self- and peer-assessment for social/personal support; see Tables 3 and 4). These reflections provide an interesting benchmark of the personal and professional values underpinning participants' inquiry cycles.

In month nine of the project, participants were invited to reflect back on the process of being involved in the project. Reflecting on the first cycle of inquiry and the analysis and presentation in poster format, participants reported that they liked the "immediacy about it, whereas when you're working on a journal article on your own you keep putting it off." When asked how the EquATE process had impacted on their practice, participants reported that the project had held their interest and personal motivation to keep the inquiry going in the face of conflicting work pressures. One participant notes that being part of a group means that " . . . there's been enough time to do the work and I like the deadlines to work to, you want to keep up with everyone else." This sense of collective responsibility coupled with engagement with the process means that some participants are working beyond their original intention leading to further cycles of inquiry. Through the visual presentation of the first cycle of inquiry in poster format, one participant notes that "something crystallised. . . . I saw something I hadn't seen before that stimulated a lot of other thinking and empowered it." Participants comment that their inquiry seems to amount to more on paper and that the posters are more accessible to sharing with colleagues, stimulating verbal interactions. The posters become epistemic objects: "It's about tools . . . the poster as a tool and we can use them differently. A poster requires somebody to go up and read it, whereas as a lecturer I feel I'm inflicting it on students." The posters also stimulate reflection and evaluation: "and time . . . you can go back to it."

The project team gathered findings related to participants' constructs of teaching excellence, and in doing so modeled data collection and analysis techniques to participants. Data were gathered on participants' perceptions of the challenges and opportunities in teaching and learning to enhance the student experience, on their attempts to shift the practice of teaching and learning in their schools and programs, on their engagement with professional learning opportunities, and on their attempts to influence the strategic direction of their disciplines and the University. Participants recognize readily that their participation in the project has impacted significantly on their professional practice. Having the program structure and contact days is important: "I'm not a good planner so EquATE provides a framework that makes this easier. This project has activated me, set me off in different directions, giving it some structure. It's given me insight, which allowed random ideas to coalesce." One participant reports that EquATE has exposed her to new paths and means of communication:

One of the things that has impacted on me personally is getting involved in online feedback –

Table 3
Tutors' Views About Feedback

The most common forms of feedback I provide:	Purpose of feedback	No. of Responses
Face to face (answers to technical questions/ comments in lectures/practicals/seminar groups)	To provide immediate clarification/correct understanding of student-raised issue, challenge assumptions	5
. . . with annotated notes	To record progress	7
. . . get students to discuss	To self- and peer-assess	6
Formative and summative written feedback on coursework	To assist student learning and shape thinking	3
Electronic/email group and individual	To shape thinking and signal progress	2
Questions	To encourage reflection	2

Table 4
Tutors' Views About Feedback

Ideally I would . . .	No. of Responses
Have an additional resource to provide feedback more quickly (i.e., another lecturer).	2
Be able to spend more time on continuous assessment.	1
Separate feedback from assessment.	5
Give immediate, individual feedback and create individual 'action plans' to help students act upon the feedback given.	3
Ask questions which avoid value judgments and provide a stimulus for constructive reflection.	1
Have more accurate idea of what my students find helpful feedback.	3
Improve the mechanisms for presenting and re-calling the feedback given previously (i.e., do more with it).	1

that was too far beyond my comfort level. It exposed me, forced me to explore Survey Monkey, before I never would have allowed myself permission to fool around with Survey Monkey.

Data collected during discussion groups indicates that participants regard the project as a way to legitimize and prioritize experimentation with teaching innovation: "I think the reason why I've associated with the EquATE project is you have to influence and develop the teachers. The university is focused on developing researchers but working with the curriculum and moving things forward is crucial." Two colleagues who collaborated on an inquiry also commented that the project provides a different focus on their work as they realize that they "can actually make a difference and that we can justify that in the library."

The focus on the learning environment enables participants to investigate "entrenched practice" and "motivates [them] to continue looking: EquATE has speeded up the process." Participants perceived the advantages of participation to include "coming into

contact with people from a range of schools, different perspectives" and "having protected time, the structure." "What's incredibly useful, if you've got a deadline you find space for it, it gives it legitimacy." Another participant agreed: "Not only does it protect our time; it forces us to go forward . . . little goal posts that are achievable and realistic." One male participant who had recently promoted for teaching excellence said:

I'm quite old, I've been through the process but this has given me the opportunity to reflect on how I've got to here. I've worked in isolation for the last twenty years. This has been a real opportunity to discuss things, talk to people; it's been very useful for me to do at this stage, so I can only imagine how useful it would have been twenty years ago.

As part of the thematic analysis, during the second cycle of inquiry participants were asked to complete a Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths (TOWS) analysis to reflect on their vision

for their enquiries, the strengths and weaknesses they perceive as specific to their context, and to consider these alongside the opportunities and threats that are external or systemic and beyond their immediate control, yet influence their teaching. When collated and thematically reviewed (see Table 5) these dimensions provide a sense of scale for the projects, allowing immediate and long-term objectives to be considered. They also reveal the degree to which individuals working within the system perceive that they can use their capacity for change to beneficial effect.

A younger participant demonstrates that she now integrates the inquiry structure into her own forward planning:

> I'm thinking about forthcoming time over the next few months, and for me it's generating the thinking: dealing with international students on the foundation program, it's generating questions I might deal with next year around the transition process. I think the research element, the idea of exploring issues around international students coming onto a program and their context . . . it's given me the confidence to research, something

that can inform the future development of the program at a local level.

Another participant similarly comments on her increased levels of confidence:

> I've made a second poster and moved on to a third cycle. This has been accepted for a big conference for medical educators and I've applied for a researcher's grant so it's given me that OK to go ahead and do it, very valuable. It's allowed me to think about my teaching and the courage to go ahead.

Common broad objectives are revealed in participants' articulation of personal "visions" for their teaching. Participants typically demonstrate a concern to create independent or autonomous learners who connect with the academic community and who are more likely to be satisfied with their learning experience. Participants recognize that this requires a shift in teaching and learning practices, especially around feedback. From their own perspective participants want to engage in and to learn from professional development opportunities related to

Table 5
Thematic Review: Vision, Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths

Vision	Threats	Opportunities	Weaknesses	Strengths
Enhance the student experience & broaden the learning outcomes	Practical barriers leading to limited leverage	Locating projects within wider current university agendas	Lack of time & conflicting workloads	Personal & professional relationships/ support from colleagues
Enhance teaching & learning practices (e.g., quality of feedback)	The role & influence of external agencies	Recognition that this is an appropriate time for this inquiry	Limited student engagement or small numbers of students engaging in sample studies	Prior knowledge and experience /qualities of existing programs
Engage in & learn from professional development opportunities in community of inquiry, locally and nationally	Inflated expectations may undermine perception of outcomes	Collaboration within & beyond EQUATE	Narrow acknowledgement by some colleagues of the significance of the issues/resistance to change	Students who are engaged & motivated to support project
Influence the strategic direction of the schools & university (e.g., internationalization of curriculum)	Underlying issues related to student, staff and institutional "buy in"	Linking teaching with research	Practical and procedural problems (e.g., time constraints, timetabling issues)	Opportunities and permission to make changes in programs

teaching and learning and to have a greater influence on the strategic direction of their schools and the university. It is clear that participants recognize that these objectives are often interrelated, as indicated in one case study which strongly relates to the university's internationalization strategy by exploring "how an internationalized curriculum best supports students' learning and development."

These broad objectives can be contrasted with the strengths or success criteria specified by the participants in terms of characteristics of their working environments which act to support their inquiries. Responses strongly indicate the significance of personal and professional relationships leading to support from colleagues, and in some cases from students who are engaged with and motivated to support the project. This finding is indicative of the importance of social capital (Hargreaves, 2001) in the learning organization. In addition EquATE participants state that they draw on their prior knowledge and experience of the "job" and the qualities of existing programs, qualities that Hargreaves (2001) characterizes as intellectual capital. These findings illustrate the iterative and progressive nature of the inquiry cycle.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the main threats or barriers that participants perceive to achieving change relate to conflicting demands and workloads. These are recognized at a personal level, but also with respect to colleagues and students; and thus they act as factors that limit motivation and engagement in terms of the potential of EquATE projects to have leverage and impact within the institution. An additional concern for some participants relates to the role and influence of external agencies which have a stake in the teaching provision within some disciplines (especially those in professional fields). There is a potential tension here between the individual practitioner seeking to improve practice and pedagogical understanding through inquiry and the established doctrine and approaches of some professional organizations.

Despite these potentially limiting issues, participants identify the opportunities for development that exist within the system. They perceive that EquATE provides a working space and a permissive environment in which innovation and inquiry are promoted. In a higher education system which is facing ever increasing demands, participants valued the opportunity to foster change through disciplined and evidence-based inquiry, as well as to develop the relationship between research and pedagogic practices. The case studies themselves provide evidence of impact on the teaching experience, the student experience, and curriculum development.

In summary participants report that participating in the EquATE project has shaped their planning, provided the possibility of exploration, given the confidence to use research, and increased their awareness of potential uses and limitations of research tools. Project deadlines allow the creation of space and leverage to focus on teaching innovation and the setting of achievable goals. The social contract to peers, coupled with personal motivation and engagement, empowers participants to make changes to curricula and environments, to re-evaluate their own knowledge and skills and their personal pedagogical narrative, and to articulate and share findings with others.

Discussion

Stringent funding cuts are forcing research-led universities to think beyond their reputation for research excellence and to give serious consideration to the student experience as a means to improve their market position. In this environment excellent teaching becomes an important mark of quality and competitiveness. It is timely that teaching should be elevated from the status of a "poor relation" to research (Young, 2006, p. 192), and it is critical that institutional expectations and values regarding quality in teaching are clearly articulated and that decisions about quality in, and rewards for, teaching are directly linked to performance in a similar manner to rewards for research output (Lemass & Stace, 2010). While a robust framework of quality criteria is helpful to those making judgments about promotions and awards and those applying for them, applicants face the challenge of demonstrating that they meet the criteria by constructing convincing theoretically- and pedagogically-based cases for their applications.

The use of case study methodology as the predominant output for the EquATE project could be considered to be a pragmatic decision, enabling busy participants to profile innovations in their teaching. A risk of employing case study methodology is that is has been regarded as generally weak in theory when compared with survey research (Hammersley, 2010). Hammersley (2010) argues, however, that comparative investigation is crucial, and that the more cases studied, the more effective any generalization to a larger finite population is likely to be. Through embracing mixed strategies of data collection, thematic analysis, and feedback, the validity and reliability of the data is increased. The flexibility of the application of case study research is also useful in that it translates well across personal epistemologies, subject disciplines, and policy agendas and, perhaps more importantly, across the methodologically diverse research areas represented by participants.

We argue that the methodology developed in the EquATE project provides a structure for rigor within individual inquiries as well as a community of inquiry and valuable space for collective reflection, dialogue,

and strategic thinking (Moseley et al., 2005) which is supportive of project wide analysis. The data suggests that this approach can enhance participants' practice knowledge and engagement with theory and theory building in ways that they seldom experience within their disciplinary communities (Robson & Turner, 2007). Indeed the processes of "systematic inquiry made public" (Stenhouse, 1981) employed by the project and the resulting discussions arguably reduce the disconnect between theory and practice and encourage and empower participants to engage in theorized practice. As well as exemplifying a methodology which supports the unifying of research perspectives across the University, the case studies also arguably become a catalytic tool (Knorr Cetina, 2001) for effective professional learning. Extending the typology of tools outlined in the Learning to Learn in Schools Project (Wall et al., 2009), the case study can be seen to act as a,

- frame: a structure for supporting the articulation of ontological and epistemological beliefs;
- lens: a process through which different ideas and understandings about practice and inquiry can be shared;
- scaffold: supporting strategic developments;
- measure: to capture changes as they occur; and
- catalytic tool: leading to powerful pedagogical engagement with evaluation and reflection, leading to theorized practice.

We suggest that this analysis begins to demonstrate the potential of presence pedagogy and a case study approach to contribute to transformative professional learning in HE. This evidence is supported by the recognition achieved by some participants who have gained promotion or awards for teaching excellence and the success of others who have had pedagogical papers accepted for major conferences in their disciplinary areas.

Findings emerging from the project suggest some thematic and pragmatic issues that resonate with findings from similar work in other sectors. The EquATE project has enabled the research team to explore participants' epistemic beliefs and compare their views of learning with the views of school and FE practitioners (Woolner, 2010), thus leading to a better understanding of "ideal" and "sector-valued" learning. Members of the EquATE and Learning to Learn communities are constructing a common language to support communication within and beyond their community and to demonstrate theorized practice. This enables colleagues to consider the structures, policies, and environments in which their studies are located and to identify how departmental, faculty, university,

national and international agendas impact on their "pedagogical constructs" and "the way they conceptualize, approach and relate to teaching and learning" (Fanghanel, 2007, p. 2), challenging what Morley (2010) describes as the "social stasis and archaism that . . . haunt the sector" (p. 6). In order to extend the community of inquiry established in EquATE and to accommodate the growing interest of other members of the academic community a Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Research Group has been formed to promote on-going dialogue and collaborative research. We suggest that the EquATE methodology might be useful in other HE settings to provide a hub for pedagogic research, as well as rich data for educational researchers seeking to challenge negative perceptions of practice knowledge and allegations that we are insufficiently thoughtful about the methodological concepts we employ, and what we are aiming to produce (Hammersley, 2010).

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