

ARTICLE TYPE – RESEARCH ARTICLE

Transfer of academic staff learning in a research-intensive University

Abstract

In both Australia and abroad, there is increasing pressure toward professionalisation of university teaching, with the expectation that academic development courses, such as the Graduate Certificate in Education Studies (Higher Education), lead to better teaching and learning practices. However, the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes that educators intend students to learn may not transfer successfully back to the workplace. This may occur for a variety of reasons, including individual characteristics of the learner (e.g. ability, motivation), and situational characteristics (e.g. the climate for transfer, including adequacy of resources, and peer/manager support). The present study investigates the impact of these factors on teaching staff in a research-intensive University. Two in-depth case studies, followed by thematic analysis of fifteen Graduate Certificate alumni interviews regarding post-course experiences, revealed that qualities of the work environment played significant roles in interviewees' post-course attitudes, intentions, and activities related to the transfer of learning. Implications for encouraging transfer under similar circumstances are discussed.

Keywords: academic development; transfer of learning

ARTICLE TYPE – RESEARCH ARTICLE

Transfer of academic staff learning in a research-intensive University

PAUL GINNS^{a*}, JIM KITAY^b, AND MICHAEL PROSSER^c

^a*Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia;* ^b*Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia;* ^c*Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

Abstract

In both Australia and abroad, there is increasing pressure toward professionalisation of university teaching, with the expectation that academic development courses, such as the Graduate Certificate in Education Studies (Higher Education), lead to better teaching and learning practices. However, the knowledge, skills and/or attitudes that educators intend students to learn may not transfer successfully back to the workplace. This may occur for a variety of reasons, including individual characteristics of the learner (e.g. ability, motivation), and situational characteristics (e.g. the climate for transfer, including adequacy of resources, and peer/manager support). The present study investigates the impact of these factors on teaching staff in a research-intensive University. Two in-depth case studies, followed by thematic analysis of fifteen Graduate Certificate alumni interviews regarding post-course experiences, revealed that qualities of the work environment played significant roles in interviewees' post-course attitudes, intentions, and activities related to the transfer of learning. Implications for encouraging transfer under similar circumstances are discussed.

Keywords: academic development; transfer of learning

*Corresponding author. Email: p.ginns@usyd.edu.au

Introduction

In order to promote effective teaching in higher education, universities and colleges have traditionally provided a variety of short courses on “teaching skills”, ranging in length from hours to over a week. More recently, there has been increasing pressure to improve the quality of teaching in higher education through more intensive means, accompanied by arguments for framing teaching as a scholarly activity. In a recent review, Prebble et al. (2005) argued there are substantial differences in the impact of different types of academic development programmes. They found short courses to be limited in their impact on teaching behaviours, but might be suitable for informing staff of institutional policy and practice, or training them in discrete skills and techniques. In contrast, they concluded that more in-depth, intensive staff development programmes, which became more prevalent in the 1990s, can be effective in changing teaching practice, as well as teachers’ beliefs about learning and teaching.

However, intensive programmes to improve teaching in higher education, and teaching itself, are themselves situated in the broader institutional context. There is a large body of literature on transfer of learning in the workplace, but to our knowledge it has not been drawn upon to any great extent in looking at university teaching and learning. This study represents an attempt to examine factors which higher education teachers reported stimulated or retarded transfer of learning back to the workplace. In the following section, we briefly review this research literature from the fields of organisational psychology and human resources.

Transfer of learning: An organisational perspective

When employees attend training programmes, it is generally expected they will not only learn (develop new knowledge, skills and/or attitudes, or KSAs) during the programme, but will also transfer that learning back to the workplace. In a seminal paper, Baldwin & Ford (1988) reviewed the transfer of training literature and concluded that transfer back to the workplace cannot simply be assumed, but may be conditional on a variety of individual and organizational factors. They proposed a model of organizational training transfer in which “generalization and maintenance” of KSAs back in the workplace depends on both trainee characteristics (e.g. ability, personality, motivation), and work environment characteristics (e.g. support from peers and managers, and the opportunity to use the KSAs learned in training).

More recently, Colquitt et al. (2000) reviewed the available research literature on training motivation and its antecedents, and the relationship of these variables with learning outcomes such as declarative knowledge, skill acquisition, and transfer, using meta-analysis. As Baldwin and Ford (1988) had argued, trainee characteristics such as general ability, personality, and motivation variables had moderate to strong average correlations with learning outcomes. Situational characteristics, such as supervisor support, peer support, and a positive transfer climate were, on average, moderately correlated with motivation to learn, but strongly related to measures of transfer. Small to moderate average correlations were also found between these situational characteristics and declarative knowledge, skill acquisition, reactions to training, and job performance. Together, these results indicate that both individual and organisational factors are involved in successful transfer of learning.

Previous research on transfer of academic development concepts

The organizational transfer research reviewed by Baldwin & Ford (1988) focuses largely on research conducted in business and military settings. There is an emerging appreciation in higher education settings of the role of working environments that favour the professional development of academics' teaching knowledge and skills (e.g. Knight, 2006a; Knight, Tait, Baume, & Yorke, 2007). Similar themes have emerged from investigations using a range of methodologies. Hockings (2005) presented a case study of a university lecturer's experiences in attempting to adopt a student-focussed approach to teaching. Using a programme of action research, Hockings and the lecturer worked together to study how students responded to a student-focussed module, and how a traditionally teacher-focussed teacher would change his conceptions and practice of teaching and learning over the course of the action research programme. However, over the course of the research programme, Hockings noted several environmental factors that affected the teacher's attempted shift to a student focus, including student culture factors, such as the prevalence of surface approaches to learning among the student cohort; class size and diversity issues; and emphases on bureaucracy, quality and accountability, which were not supportive of student-focussed teaching innovation.

Knight (2006b) reported results from email interviews with 92 new, part-time teachers in the UK, focusing on barriers to professional learning. Reported hindrances included both internal elements (e.g. lack of confidence) and external factors (e.g. perceived management prioritisation of research over teaching; lack of support from colleagues). In another university-specific investigation, Stes, Clement, and van Petergem (2007) explored the long-term individual and institutional impact of a year-long faculty training programme. Fourteen novice faculty members (less than 5 years' teaching experience) responded to a written questionnaire consisting of open questions two years after completing the programme. Factors reported as constraining the impact of the programme on teaching included a lack of consensus and collaboration with colleagues; large class sizes and/or passive students; job responsibilities, including time and publication pressures; and a lack of support, including practical guidance, from academic policy-makers. Recently, Kandlbinder and Peseta (2009) reported results from an international email survey of 47 course coordinators of higher education programmes, with the "problem of time" for graduates of these programmes (e.g. in balancing learning and teaching development against research expectations) being a recurring theme in responses.

Together, these findings suggest that environmental factors can play an important role in the success of teaching innovations. As many teachers in higher education encounter such potential innovations from academic development educational programmes, determining which factors impede or support transfer back to the School, Department or Faculty may be as important a consideration as the curriculum itself.

The Current Study

In the past decade, there have been major changes in the ways in which the University of Sydney approaches academic development. The academic development unit's role has shifted from a tactical to a strategic focus, meaning a de-emphasis of academic development workshops run for large numbers of academic staff, and a greater emphasis on working with the Academic Board and Faculty-based working groups on policy development and implementation (Prosser & Barrie, 2003). To support this partial devolution of academic development and teaching evaluation responsibilities to faculties, programmes such as the Graduate Certificate have become crucial for developing teaching competencies among Faculty-based staff (for an in-depth description of the nature and role of the Graduate Certificate, see Ginns, Kitay, & Prosser, 2008). However, the extent to which KSAs developed through these programmes transfer back to the workplace, i.e.

the Department, School &/or Faculty, has not been assessed systematically, with anecdotal feedback to members of the academic development unit and Academic Board reviews being the only channels for such information.

The present study focuses on the experiences of fifteen alumni who completed the Graduate Certificate in 2001 or 2002. Alumni still working within the University were contacted and invited to take part in an interview on their experiences of the Graduate Certificate. We focus on the ways in which contextual factors affect the transfer of learning.

Due to the small number of alumni, it was not possible to sample evenly across demographic categories. Eleven of the interviewees were female and 4 were male; 1 was a Research Fellow, 5 were Associate Lecturers, 4 were lecturers, 2 were Senior Lecturers, and 3 were Associate Professors. Six were from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, 7 were from the College of Sciences and Technology, and 2 were from the College of Health Sciences.

Interviewees were asked to reflect on their understanding and practice of teaching and scholarship of teaching and learning before and after the Graduate Certificate. Using pre-existing phenomenographic frameworks for analysing teachers' experiences, nearly every respondent showed change in the direction of more complex and student-centred understandings of both teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning (Ginns, Kitay, & Prosser, 2008).

If the Graduate Certificate changes minds, does it also result in changes in their activities back in their School or Faculty? Interviewees were asked a range of questions about their teaching practices, with an emphasis on specific initiatives that they might have taken during or after the Graduate Certificate. They were also asked about any influences or constraints upon their teaching or scholarship of teaching and learning. In the following section, we explore in depth the different experiences of two staff members following the Graduate Certificate, before drawing out some common themes across interviewees.

Case Study 1

“Anne” was Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning at the time of her interview. She had been teaching for seven years when she undertook the Graduate Certificate.

According to Anne, the approach to teaching in her Department when she joined the full-time staff was traditional. This was in keeping with the desires of the then Head of Department, whose view was said to be “that teaching was to be done in a very efficient, well organised way, but with a strong focus on information transmission to the students”. At the time, Anne viewed herself primarily as a researcher, with teaching “just part of the job description”, but became interested in more student centred approaches to teaching through the influence of some fellow junior colleagues. She felt, however, that she lacked “a cohesive framework of knowing what was good practice and why it was good practice and how I could implement it”. She asserted that this was provided by the Graduate Certificate.

As a result of having taken the Graduate Certificate, Anne and her colleagues completely revised a core subject in the curriculum that had previously been fragmented, with “lots and lots of little bits and pieces of content” and sought to integrate it in terms of principles of constructive alignment. They reduced the amount of assessment and changed its focus to one of applying and integrating their understanding rather than simply

testing content, “which was pretty revolutionary at the time because people thought ‘you can’t do this stuff with students who don’t know anything’”.

Anne had engaged in some inquiry into her teaching beyond standard student evaluation questionnaires, but had little understanding of the scholarship of teaching and learning prior to the Graduate Certificate. Since then, she has greatly expanded her scholarly activities, not simply with reference to her own teaching, but has played a leading role within her Faculty.

Anne undertook the Graduate Certificate at the same time as profound change was taking place in her Faculty, led by a new Dean, who “really took on board the poor student evaluations that we’ve been getting as a Faculty and sent us all a clear message that we have to do something about it”. The Dean was also keen simultaneously to conclude and implement a major change to the curriculum that had been languishing for some time. As well, he abolished Departments, transforming the Faculty to a single academic unit. At the same time, a number of longer serving, senior academics retired, opening the way to hire and promote academics who were open to new ways of doing things.

Anne became Chair of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee at the time she did the Graduate Certificate, and subsequently Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning. She noted that colleagues were telling her that “you’re going into a leadership position, you should be thinking about ways that we can transfer this learning, not just to your teaching but to the Faculty [more] widely”. She was strongly encouraged and supported in this by the Dean. Her activities have taken various forms. She noted, for example, that she uses her knowledge of the teaching and learning literature in her role of Associate Dean. She has introduced peer reviews of teaching, has sought to engage constructively with colleagues who question the value of more student-centred approaches to learning, and has used Faculty funds to improve teaching and learning materials. She led a major project on the innovative use of information technology, supported by a large grant obtained by the Faculty. Anne related that this was not something that the Graduate Certificate had prepared her, but that she felt able to further develop her own expertise to successfully lead the project.

Anne has also encouraged others to become involved in the scholarship of teaching and learning. She argues that “this is something that’s achievable for all academic staff, that we can all engage with this literature if we just get a little bit of training and build [our] own educational research communities”. While Anne continues to try to improve her own teaching, she considers that she has had considerably more impact on teaching and learning within her Faculty more generally. She continually referred to the Faculty context in which she worked, stressing the key role of the Dean in leading curriculum changes and teaching practices, as well as encouraging the leadership activities of people like herself.

Case Study 2

“Belinda” was an Associate Lecturer at the time of the interview. Her enrolment in the Graduate Certificate coincided with her first year of full time academic employment, after two years of casual teaching and commencing her PhD.

Belinda indicated that she had little preparation for teaching, and undertook the Graduate Certificate in order to learn about it. She felt that the programme helped her, particularly through an understanding of the concept of constructive alignment. She also realised that there was a research literature on teaching and learning,

which could be used both to enhance her own teaching and to explain to students why she was approaching teaching in a particular way.

Although Belinda found the Graduate Certificate worthwhile, her experiences after the course were not positive. She was a junior member of a team teaching a large subject in which they introduced groupwork and sought to enhance students' assessment experience through improved feedback. The teaching team found that there was a great deal of work involved, far more than anticipated, which left them feeling "really stressed out". However, colleagues were unsympathetic, advising those involved in the innovation that they "were bringing it on themselves". As a result, Belinda felt that "it's kind of a disincentive to do it again".

Belinda experienced the culture within the wider School as negative towards teaching as well. She particularly noted a practice of the Head to request teachers who obtained low results on standard student evaluations to meet with him. She related,

I don't think that that's a helpful approach at all. Most of us can probably deliver courses that score [highly] but that doesn't mean that we're doing good teaching or the students are doing any good learning. I think their approach, I don't think that's what the evaluations are for and I don't know if they're being misused but that's the kind of approach to teaching that seems to emanate, so long as there are not complaints, they don't care what you do and you should focus more on research ... teaching is just something you have to do.

Interestingly, conversations with the Head of School by one of the interviewers indicated that his objective in this practice was purely to see if he could be helpful if a teacher needed assistance or had issues that needed to be addressed, but this is not how it was perceived by rank and file staff, most of whom had little interaction with the Head. In Belinda's case, she concluded that her supervisors saw teaching as something to be gotten out of the way in order to focus on research.

Although Belinda indicated that she would be interested in engaging in scholarship of teaching and learning activities, this would only be the case "if the payoff was there, but it just isn't". This was clear in the following exchange.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: Why do I say it doesn't pay off... because we need publications in [my field], not publications in education.

Q: Is that a directive from your Head of School or something?

A: Well yeah, just we can get promotions or if you applied for jobs elsewhere in our area, it wouldn't really count for much.

Belinda also felt that attempts to encourage deep approaches to learning were resisted by the students themselves. She related that students focused on memorisation even when they were advised that the emphasis in assessment would be on understanding concepts, because that had been their experiences in other subjects. These students frequently expressed surprise at exam questions that required interpretation rather than simply memorisation. As well, "I found that students didn't like going to tutorials where there wasn't right or wrong answers. They just wanted to know the right answer".

Although Belinda expressed a wish to put into practice what she had learned in the Graduate Certificate, she experienced the environment in which she worked as one in which teaching was something to be done as quickly and painlessly as possible, with an emphasis on avoiding trouble or blame. She did not perceive that

there were any rewards from student focused teaching or the scholarship of teaching and learning, as these simply took time away from activities that she believed were more highly valued by her supervisors.

Emergent themes across the interviews

As our two case studies show, applying the knowledge gained in the Graduate Certificate is not always straightforward. We will now draw out and elaborate on some of the themes raised in the case studies and other interviews that encourage or discourage the transfer of learning to teaching situations.

Influence of supervisors and colleagues

Although only a few respondents commented on the influence of academic supervisors, their ability to affect the teaching experience was powerful. As in the case of the Dean of Anne's Faculty, supervisors could not only encourage staff, but also actively seek to create a culture of teaching excellence throughout an entire Faculty. Anne's account was supported by that of a Faculty colleague who participated in our study. Indeed, the strength of this culture extends to other academic units, as noted by a respondent in another Faculty, who said, "I don't tend to talk to anyone too much [in my Faculty]. I'm hopefully going to chat to some people in [Anne's Faculty], they've got a really big group going, teaching and learning So I'm going to go and visit them a little bit I think, because they're quite keen to interact".

Another positive environment was reported in a large School within the Faculty of Science, where a respondent with a senior academic appointment observed that the Head "certainly is supportive and he encourages us to actually apply for teaching grants. So he has encouraged us to actually broaden our scholarship to include teaching and some of our people have taken that up". Although there is a strong emphasis on international standard research in the specialist discipline, there is also an active teaching discussion group and a number of teaching projects underway. This School has a policy of sending two of their academic staff to the Graduate Certificate every year, and the two participants from this School in our study regularly engage in peer review in each other's classes.

The contrast between these academic units and the situation reported in the second case study is striking. Another junior academic in the same Faculty as Belinda reported that although she had published a teaching and learning article, she had been discouraged from doing more by her Chair.

Q: Has [your Chair] discouraged you from doing research on teaching? Overtly saying, 'this is something you really shouldn't be doing'?

A: Yes yes, I mean when I fronted up fro my [performance] review, he said that what I had done [was] not good enough and that I needed to publish in a technical journal and not publish about teaching. Yes, so totally turned me off it, totally.

Q: Are you continuing to do it anyway or did that sort of ...?

A: No, I handed in my notice.

There are two interesting points with regard to this particular academic. First, she asserted that the previous Chair of her subject area had supported teaching and teaching related research, and that this encouragement had disappeared with the appointment of a new Chair.

Second, she worked in a Faculty in which the Dean had a sophisticated understanding of teaching and learning, and had set up and lavished funds on a teaching and learning unit within the Faculty. However, there was no requirement for senior academic staff within the Faculty to become involved in student-focused learning activities or scholarship in teaching and learning, or even to understand what these might be. Thus front line academic supervisors could be – and as the interviews show, frequently were – uninterested in or even antagonistic towards efforts on the part of academics seeking to introduce student-centred learning practices or engage in research on teaching and learning, with the effect in some cases of actively discouraging them.

A third point raised by academics in this Faculty was that the students themselves indicated a preference for teaching practices that encourage surface approaches to learning. Belinda's interview indicates that this was due to their expectations based on their experiences in other classes. In other words, where traditional teaching methods are dominant in an academic unit, innovative teachers need to expend effort in convincing students that changes will benefit them. Thus without a positive environment, innovative teachers can become discouraged, or as another respondent from this Faculty said, "...sometimes I can get demotivated by students, like I try to think of creative ways to ... improve teaching and learning and then I get a student coming into my office, [saying] 'I'm thinking of doing your subject, how thick is your textbook?'".

Resources and reward structures

Resources and reward structures must be examined together for analytical purposes, because when considering how they will allocate their time and effort, academics take into account the perceived payoffs. Resources include time, funding, workloads and class size. These factors were mentioned by every interviewee as influencing what they could attempt or achieve in teaching, the scholarship of teaching and learning, or both.

Various funding initiatives, including generous grants for teaching innovations, have been made available by the University, faculties or external sources to individuals or groups of academics, and these were mentioned favourably by several respondents. This was seen above in the case of Anne, who indicated that since doing the Graduate Certificate, she had been involved continuously in projects made possible by Teaching Improvement Fund grants from the University. Similarly, the University provides funding to Faculties based on scholarship of teaching and learning activities (including completing formal qualifications such as the Graduate Certificate), and in her capacity as Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning, Anne earmarked these funds specifically for individuals undertaking research on teaching improvement.

Funding was more frequently experienced as a constraint by interviewees, particularly as it affects class size. Referring to one class, a respondent said, "The problem ... is that they're a much bigger group, it's harder to get interaction going except when we have smaller tutorials", but "I suppose it comes down to ... it's nice to split kids up ... into smaller groups but then you have actual, physically where you're going to put them. You need to put tutors in front of them, so that's a money issue again". Another respondent lamented, "I guess the main other constraint [on teaching] is that the sizes of the class, because as the classes get bigger and bigger, semester by semester, it gets very difficult...".

Workloads and lack of time were seen as even more constraining. An academic teaching in a business subject said, "I think the things that I learned from the Graduate Certificate ... it's like the ideal, this is what you should do to maximise student learning.... But when ... I go back to my own classes I'm thinking, 'I don't

have the time...”. The pressures are particularly acute for those who take on administrative or supervisory roles, as noted by a teacher in the humanities area: “[T]he main influence on my teaching and learning is I’ve just got too much other work to do ... and I’m not being funny about that. I mean it’s absolutely ridiculous the amount of administration.” Even more common is a perceived trade-off between teaching and learning, particularly scholarship, and publication in teachers’ area of expertise. This was well summarised by another humanities teacher.

Well, time constrains you, which is why I’ve never been able to do anything other than a very informal kind of action research [on teaching]. I can’t imagine that I would ever have time unless something ... happens to our workload that would allow me to do ... really in depth scholarly research. You know, we just don’t have time for that and I guess if we do ever have any time, there’s such a pressure for us to be publishing and doing our normal disciplinary research in our area of specialisation that there just isn’t the time.

While problems of time and resources have been noted in previous research (e.g. Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009)), these quotations lead us to consider the perceived costs and benefits of teaching, with particular reference to the University’s reward structure. In the context of declining funding levels, larger classes containing what are often perceived as more difficult students to teach, and demands to do “more with less”, academics must make decisions about how they will allocate their time and energy. All of our respondents derived intrinsic rewards from teaching and discussed in favourable terms how the Graduate Certificate had assisted them in understanding how they could become better teachers. However, the responses were mixed in terms of extrinsic rewards such as recognition and opportunities for advancing their careers.

Some of the interviewees were quite positive about the benefits of teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Not surprisingly, some of the strongest came from Anne’s Faculty. One individual remarked that at the beginning of his career, his discipline based research was going slowly, “and a lot of us saw publications in the area of teaching and learning research as an opportunity to get publications”. He added that, “the Faculty environment has changed to value that and to see that as an opportunity for professional development, development of the Faculty, I guess, intellectually and financially”. The fact that the University allocated some funding to Faculties on the basis of a teaching index and teaching scholarship index was not lost on this and other academics. Indeed, an academic in a humanities subject noted, having completing the Graduate Certificate was counted every year in the teaching scholarship index, which meant, “that gives you recognition in the Faculty and it means that our School or Faculty will get some extra funding in recognition of that”.

Teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning was also seen by some as important when seeking promotion. A senior academic in our cohort noted that he had recently served on a promotions committee, and observed that evidence of good teaching was taken very seriously in assessing whether candidates should be supported for promotion. He added, “The University rewards people who do put effort into their teaching and show interest in developing their teaching and therefore it’s a carrot”. Another academic confirmed that this was the case, and noted how this had changed over time.

[W]hen I first came to this University teaching and learning was really not regarded as being a valid activity, in terms of promotion. And so what was happening, was that the culture of the University obviously has changed and so I was very pleased in that I was able to make a case out and I still had a very solid research record but I went for excellence in teaching and I got promoted to senior lecturer on that basis.

It could, indeed, be argued that it is now difficult to address the criteria for promotion within the University sensibly without at least some understanding of the principles of student-focused teaching and learning. Yet for many, research is perceived to be more highly valued within the University than teaching. An academic in the humanities observed, “[W]e are very research oriented in our Faculty and in our School particularly.... The University is taking steps towards recognising [teaching] more but it’s still not as recognised as research”. This perception was echoed by several other respondents. The scholarship of teaching and learning was perceived to be valued even less than teaching, and several academics made it clear that in weighing up where they would allocate their energies, they would not engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning even if it potentially aroused their interest. A representative case was a senior academic in a science discipline, who said,

Well I guess one of the things is just pragmatic. I mean my career and my reputation is based on research in [my discipline] and that’s what I do best and that’s what I’ve made a reputation in. ... Yeah there are certain aspects of educational research which are interesting and fascinating, you know, I’m sure I could get interested about but you know, life is short and we need to attend to our speciality.

This academic and others among our respondents assert that they value teaching and put considerable effort into it, but in their view research in their speciality area comes first for career advancement, and the scholarship of teaching and learning is simply seen as research that will not pay adequate dividends, or that they believe is not viewed by others as “real” research. Such views were expressed by 10 of our 15 respondents, with only one reporting that engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning had enhanced his research profile.

Conclusions

Our goal in this study was to explore the experiences of university teaching staff who had sought to apply what they had learnt in a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education in their teaching. Based on a substantial body of previous research, we expected that transfer of learning would not be straightforward, but would be contingent to at least some extent on organisational factors. In two case studies, we found substantial differences between two interviewees in their perceptions of the supportiveness of teaching innovations in their respective Faculties. These differences also emerged across the broader sample of interviewees, with marked differences in perceptions of supportiveness of supervisors and peers. Previous theorising by organisational psychologists (e.g. Baldwin & Ford, 1988) has identified supervisor and peer support as key elements of the perceived transfer climate; perceptions of low support will reduce motivation to apply what has been learned in the work context.

The results of the interviews of Graduate Certificate alumni support Baldwin and Ford’s (1988) theory that transfer of learning to the workplace is not a given, but often depends on the extent to which the work environment provides sufficient support and opportunities to practise and develop KSAs. Consistent with earlier investigations (e.g. Hockings, 2005; Knight, 2006b; Stes et al., 2007), the extent to which interviewees felt encouraged or constrained in applying what they had learned through the Graduate Certificate varied considerably. The most commonly reported constraint was available time. With high workloads, many academics did not feel there was sufficient time to develop and apply new teaching or assessment methods or engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Many interviewees also believed that, even given the available time and resources, there would be insufficient support and rewards for engaging in educational

research, compared with disciplinary research. Thus lack of support from academic managers and peers were identified as significant limiting factors in pursuing scholarly activities in teaching and learning.

However, some interviewees reported support for their efforts in teaching and scholarship of teaching and learning. At least in some faculties, the increasing recognition that the University's policies regarding teaching and learning have financial and political implications appears to be filtering down to departmental level, with recognition and funding to support activities. Interviewees reporting a positive environment were often within Faculties which have devoted considerable resources to developing Faculty-based teaching and learning units. One of these units in particular is responsible for both developing innovative learning materials and supporting scholarly activities. However, the positive effects of teaching and learning units and programmes such as the Graduate Certificate are likely to be uneven without strong encouragement from Deans for Heads of School and Department to understand and support the efforts of those staff who wish to engage in student focussed teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

This study has identified a variety of factors which may support or constrain transfer of learning to the higher education workplace. Perhaps the most important finding is the strong perception among interviewees that, given time constraints, disciplinary research will have a much greater payoff than scholarship in teaching and learning. Addressing this perception through education of all levels of management, developing appropriate performance management and reward systems, and more equitable funding arrangements may be necessary if the University is truly intent on enhancing its profile in teaching and learning.

References

- Baldwin, T.T., and J.K. Ford 1988. Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology* 41: 63-105.
- Colquitt, J. A., J.A. LePine, and R.A. Noe 2000. Toward an integrative theory of training motivation: A meta-analytic path analysis of 20 years of research. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85: 678-707.
- Ginns, P., Kitay, J., & Prosser, M. (2008). Developing conceptions of teaching and the scholarship of teaching through a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 13, 175-185.
- Hockings, C. 2005. Removing the barriers? A study of the conditions affecting teaching innovation. *Teaching in Higher Education* 10: 313-326.
- Kandlbinder, P. & Peseta, T. 2009. Key concepts in postgraduate certificates in higher education teaching and learning in Australasia and the United Kingdom. *International Journal for Academic Development* 14: 19-31.
- Knight, P. 2006a. Quality enhancement and educational professional development. *Quality in Higher Education* 12: 29-40.
- Knight, P. 2006b. *The effects of postgraduate certificates in teaching and learning in higher education: A report to the project sponsor and partners*. Retrieved 12 June 2009, from <http://kn.open.ac.uk/public/document.cfm?docid=8640>
- Knight, P., Baume, D., Tait, J., & Yorke, M. 2007. Enhancing part-time teaching in higher education: A challenge for institutional policy and practice. *Higher Education Quarterly* 61: 420-438.
- Prebble, T., H. Hargraves, L. Leach, K. Naidoo, G. Suddaby, and N. Zepke, N. 2005. *Impact of student support services and academic development programmes on student outcomes in undergraduate tertiary study: A synthesis of the research*. <http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/tertiary/impact-student.html>
- Prosser, M., and S. Barrie 2003. Using a student-focused learning perspective to strategically align academic development with institutional quality assurance. In *Towards strategic staff development in higher education*, ed. Richard Blackwell and Paul Blackmore, pp.191-202. Buckingham: Open University Press.