

Vitae researcher development international conference

5-6 September 2011 Midland Hotel, Manchester



Tuesday 6 September 2011 - Research strand titles and presenters

This year's Vitae researcher development international conference will include a dedicated 'research strand' in partnership with the International Journal for Researcher Development which will provide an opportunity for those carrying out research in this area to present their work. The research strand will be embedded within the Vitae conference programme.

Proceedings from the research strand of the conference will be published in a special edition of the International Journal for Researcher Development [IJRD] after the conference subject to the normal peer review processes of the journal see www.emeraldinsight.com/ijrd.html.

This will be an exciting and important opportunity for those with an interest in research in this area to meet and explore this emergent research field within the setting of the well-established and successful Vitae annual conference.

Research strand session one (C1)

11:00 Welcome, Dr Tony Bromley (Chair), Yorkshire and North East Hub Coordinator, Vitae, IEG

**11:05 Keynote: The scholarship of researcher development: mapping the terrain and pushing back boundaries
Dr Linda Evans, University of Leeds**

The launch of the International Journal for Researcher Development in 2008 marked the emergence of researcher development as a new field of study. But having begun to develop an identity of its own, the scholarship of researcher development is now ready to move up a notch – and, indeed, must do so if the field is to gather momentum and be taken seriously as a focus of academic study in its own right. Branching out from examination of issues such as: who needs to be developed, how, by whom, and for what purpose, and what the implications are of the answers to each of these questions, it is time to widen the field's investigatory foci to include a more introspectively-directed dimension.

With this paper, Linda Evans proposes a way forward: a research and scholarship agenda that maps out the terrain still to be explored, extending its parameters beyond what is immediately visible and accessible, reaching beyond the obvious and apparent. Description alone is not enough, she argues; there is a need for researchers and scholars of researcher development to employ the kind of analyticism that underpins and facilitates conceptual clarity and definitional precision. Drawing upon her own original conceptual and processual models, she illustrates the potential of theory and theoretical perspectives for enriching what we know about researcher development, for enhancing the status of this new field of study, and for informing the practice of developing researchers.

11:35 Question and answer session

**11:45 Paper 1: Facilitators of creativity in the science and engineering research context
Elaine Walsh, Imperial College London**

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The creativity of researchers features prominently in current policy developments as a key driver of innovation. Creativity is a core element of doctoral research, i.e. candidates must make an original contribution to their discipline. Those who remain in academia must establish a record of publications, requiring further novel work. However, the process of how creativity is fostered in the research environment is little understood. In addition, some elements of today's research context such as the 'publish or perish' culture and the 'impact' agenda even threaten to block creativity. Therefore, with Vitae Innovate funding, a qualitative research project was undertaken to discover the facilitators and barriers of creativity within the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines of a research-intensive UK university.

Three aspects of the environment were identified as having a major impact on creativity levels. The first factor was a positive research culture, i.e. one that balanced support and freedom. The second factor was constructive communication with fellow researchers where both formal and informal elements were significant. The third factor was establishing sufficient time and space for creativity. Three good practice guides have been written to report the findings in an accessible style, emphasising the agency of early career researchers.

This research also demonstrated the existence of wide-ranging understandings of creativity amongst STEM researchers, which could be placed into two broad categories: creativity as core to science and creativity as peripheral to science. Arguably, researchers whose views fall into the second category have certain conceptual barriers to creativity.

12:00 Paper 2: Revelation or irrelevant: researchers' perspectives on educational theory

Dr Ian Finlay, University of Oxford

This paper explores the engagement of early career researchers on a teaching development programme in a British, research-intensive university. The focus of the paper is on the tension between the participants' needs for immediate survival skills and their exposure to theories of learning and teaching. It draws on an online survey of 72 former participants in the programme of whom 39 responded. The survey was followed up with 10 in-depth interviews. Six of the ten interviewees spoke of their engagement with theory, sometimes using as synonyms 'the literature' or 'reading'. Their discussion of theory was normally in response to questions that asked them to identify either what helped them to prepare their portfolio (for assessment for Higher Education Academy accreditation) or what helped them to improve as teachers. The respondents gave a variety of perspectives on their engagement with learning and teaching theory. These included finding exposure to theory transformational; taking an instrumental approach to theory as a means to portfolio completion; and finding exposure to theory premature in terms of stage of development as a teacher. The research provides further empirical evidence of Kolb's and Engeström's settings of the tension between theory and immediate practice as necessary for expansive development as a teacher. The implication for those who develop early career researchers as teachers is that in recognising the importance of this essential tension, they can both reassure those undertaking development programmes and help them to work with it to achieve growth as a teacher.

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12:15 Paper 3: The 'Big Bang' of researcher development: where did it all come from?

Dr Ruth Garbutt, University of Leeds.

It could be suggested that the 'Big Bang' of researcher development was triggered by the spark of the Roberts Report (2002), which highlighted the lack of employability skills that researchers had gained during their PhD experience. Before the 'Big Bang', I would suggest that the fusion of different disparate elements had created an environment that was conducive to being triggered by the spark. I would define these elements as: policy, process and professionalism. I would like to put forward a conceptual model to show how these areas have initiated researcher development and driven the agenda forward. I will particularly focus on the employability agenda, the student as 'consumer' and the developing culture of continuing professional development. This paper will discuss how the new and emerging field we now call 'researcher development' came into existence and has developed thus far. It will also reflect on how the present drivers of researcher development might change in the future to affect the dynamics of the work.

12:30 End of session one

13.00 Lunch

Research strand session two (D1)

13:45 Paper 4: Not just another statistic! A qualitative approach to understanding research staff issues!

Elena Golovushkina, Glasgow Caledonian University.

Recent years have seen a lot of attention being paid to the development of researchers within the UK as well as in other countries. Over the last eight years, the UK has seen a large number of policy and practice initiatives undertaken in relation to improving the support provision for research staff. Over this period, much quantitative data (e.g. Careers in Research Online Survey) has been collected and this has provided an overview of the successes and remaining issues in this area. However, there is still a significant lack of in-depth qualitative data covering the views of research staff as well as those of other key stakeholders on the central issues surrounding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for research staff. In an attempt to address this gap, this paper details the results of 20 semi-structured interviews with 10 members of research staff, 5 Principal Investigators, 4 staff developers and 1 senior manager responsible for the researcher development agenda at a UK Higher Education Institution. The results of the interviews provide in-depth and holistic perceptions on the research staff and key stakeholders' understanding of research staff-related CPD activities. The paper offers an insight into the motivations of research staff in engaging with the CPD activities, the challenges to their participation as well as the ways their involvement and experiences can be enhanced. Triangulation of data reveals certain areas of contention in relation to the understanding of CPD by research staff and by key stakeholders. Overall, the paper provides a valuable addition to the data collected by national surveys and contribution to the existing knowledge in this key area.

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14:00 Paper 5: A postdoc: what is it worth outside academia?
Annik Leyman, Ghent University (Expert Centre R&D Monitoring)
Prof Ronan Van Rossem, Senior researcher, Ghent University

Many researchers leave academia after some years of postdoctoral experience. We investigate the added value of the postdoctoral training period for those who leave the academic world. According to the Flemish Survey of Senior Researchers, the added value of a postdoc and the motivation to stay at the university varies according to researchers' scientific discipline. Large differences were found between the social sciences and humanities and the 'hard' sciences (medical, exact and applied sciences) with on the extremes the humanities and medical sciences. Researchers in the humanities consider their postdoc particularly as training for an academic career and less as a preparation for a non-academic career. Their preference for an academic career is also more inspired by their limited career options outside academia. Researchers in medical sciences see their postdoc more often as a valuable additional training for non-academic careers. They are also more positive about the added value of a postdoc for their research. These perceptions are confirmed by the results of the Careers of Doctorate Holders survey. Significantly more researchers in the exact, applied and medical sciences stated that a postdoctoral experience was a prerequisite for their current job outside academia than researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Results from this study indicate that the professional and career development for postdoctoral researchers should take into account the different situation and career prospects of these researchers.

14:15 Short break

14:25 Paper 6: Outcomes of Entrepreneurial Training and how to improve them
Dr Kevin Parker, KKI Associates

This paper summarises the statistics gleaned by KKI in presenting commercial skills and entrepreneurship training to post-grad students over the last 15 years. During that time, KKI has trained over 2000 researchers in these skills. This paper analyses outcomes over a 10 year period. Of those receiving entrepreneurship training how many did anything about it or even had an idea? How many of those took it to the University Commercial office or development agency? How many started a commercialisation project? Or started a company? A small but significant proportion have gone on to not just form a company but actually grow significant businesses - but what is the ratio of successful entrepreneurs to student trainees? As well as these facts and figures the paper will consider ways to improve the statistics - important considering the emphasis placed on innovation and entrepreneurship by the current (and previous) governments.

14:40 Paper 7: CREATE: Development of global research management skills
Thale Kvernberg Andersen, SINTE
Inge Liekens, VITO, Belgium,
Stefano Salvador, Trieste Area Science Park
Cathérine Steelant, Fraunhofer, Germany

This practice-based abstract will focus on two different topics: The impact of international multidisciplinary training courses on the development of global management skills, and the key aspects for the successful organisation of these. The abstract is based on a European Marie Curie project, and its goal was to strengthen young and inexperienced researchers' competencies in research management on a European level through training courses

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including 60 young European researchers tied to creativity and innovation, cross-cultural collaboration, knowledge transfer and human resource management. These topics are seen as complementary qualities of global research management, and the trainings focused on the quality of work processes in a multidisciplinary research environment. The project was a collaboration between four partners (Norway, Belgium, Italy, Germany), and important learning points were tied both to the planning of the academic and practical training of the program as well as logistics, and feedback from participants. We found that the mix of participants with different academic backgrounds proved to be a crucial asset of the events, and that untraditional training approaches and a focus on multiple perspectives was in particular appreciated. A survey conducted at the end of each event showed that the overall degree of satisfaction for the final course was 4.8 out of 5 for all participants, and the participants' comments showed that these skills were highly sought after, especially as the training courses also focused on the on-going evaluation of lessons learned through-out the events and the application of these to the participants' everyday work situation.

14:55 Closing comments and moving forward (conference 2012)

15:15 End - Research strand