Am I Doing a Good Job?

Theories of Change Guiding Lecturers' Self-Evaluative Practices in a Third Level Institute of Technology in Ireland.

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Abstract

Making value judgements on one's academic work is a fundamental skill, particularly for those within the higher education sector. Evaluative practices such as reflection *in* and *on* action (Schön, 1987; Cowan, 2006) and surveys on teaching effectiveness (Jones, Gaffney-Rhys and Jones, 1987; Praslova, 2010) are often proposed as a means of gathering evidence. The aim of this paper is to ask what theories of change (ToC) (Connell and Kubisch, 1999), self-evaluative practices, and barriers to effective implementation could be identified and what level of freedom and autonomy lecturers experience in evaluating their own work. This small study used a RUFDATA evaluative tool (Saunders, 2000) with sixteen full-time lecturers and took place in an Institute of Technology (IoT) in Ireland. Five theories of change were identified (1) transformative focused, (2) profession focused, (3) discipline focused, (4) workplace focused and (5) module focused, along with six self-evaluation practice themes and nine barriers to effective practice. Utilising Bamber's (2011b) discretion framework, participants were found to have autonomy in choosing *what* and *how* to evaluate their practice. The practical knowledge (Habermas, 1971) presented here offers an alternative approach to how academic work is 'valued', judged and understood from the lecturer's perspective. This paper proposes the view of self-evaluation, not as a set of standalone practices, but as part of a sequential process arising from a lecturer's purposeful academic intentions. The theories of change are used to judge the value of their work within the setting. Therefore, the proposed categories can offer a discourse to justify specific self-evaluative practices for quality assurance and enhancement.

Keywords: higher education, quality assurance, quality enhancement, RUFDATA, self-evaluative practice, theories of change (ToC).

1. Introduction.

Irish Higher education is continuously attempting to adapt to the ever-changing expectations

of meeting complex social and economic needs and political demands. Lecturers experience this volatility first-hand with 'neoliberal' policy directions (Walsh and Loxley, 2015), competition for students, core staff reductions, shifts in core funding allocations (Bekhradnia, 2008; Cassells, 2016; HEA, 2017a), higher student–staff ratios, greater student diversity (Clancy, 2015) and higher expectations regarding pedagogical skills with less resources (Clarke, Kenny and Loxley, 2015). With expectations of doing more with less, quality assurance (QA) seeks to test mission objectives and gain value for tax money (Dept. of Education & Skills, 2011; HEA, 2013) within a general 'accountability' (Clancy, 2015, pp.160) and audit culture (Power, 1994). Lecturers are at the coalface of this quality struggle.

This paper asks what theories of change, self-evaluative practices and barriers to effective implementation can be identified and what level of freedom and autonomy do lecturers experience in evaluating their own work? It also introduces the 'quality' context and implications within Institutes of Technology (IoT) debate as a backdrop to self-evaluation.

1.1.   Quality on the frontline.

For a lecturer in higher education, the ability to evaluate one's teaching to achieve effective learning is a presumed everyday practice. Indeed, this is reflected in the Irish national guidelines for professional development (National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education, 2016) and Irish and European QA standards (ENQA, 2015; IHEQN, 2005; QQI, 2014). Proposed strategies include feedback sheets (Van Petegem, Deneire and De Maeyer, 2008), peer observation procedures (Towndrow and Tan, 2009), surveys, reflective practices, student ratings (Cranton, 2001) and self-ratings (Miron, 1988). Although self-evaluation plays a significant role in achieving 'good' teaching, Cranton (2001) acknowledges other factors, such as the discipline area, and the characteristics of the teachers themselves.

Implementing quality policies can be problematic. Lipsky's (2010) 'street level bureaucrats' are public servants; they are like lecturers who implement policy at the public level yet perhaps observe the gap between what is officially 'valued' or sanctioned and what is actually happening on the ground. As a consequence, they may dismiss, alter and adapt quality policy messages and expectations at the point of implementation (Trowler, 1997, 1998; Newton, 2002). 'Quality' can mean different things to lecturers, students, state agencies, and research and employers' groups. Indeed, Prof Brigid Laffan (Ahlstrom, 2013) commented that quality

assessment in Irish HE was 'patchy' and therefore a challenging terrain to navigate.

1.2.   Context: Quality teaching and learning in institutes of technology.

This research took place in an Institute of Technology (IoT) with over 5,000 full-time students and employing approximately 250 full-time lecturing staff. It is predominately a teaching-focused college with a strong emphasis on applied learning. Lecturers are specialists in their field and are required to teach between 16 and 18 hours per week. Currently, the salaries of lecturers within the IoTs increase incrementally without review as the formal staff development and performance procedures have been withdrawn. Therefore, lecturers are not obligated to attend formal staff training or development and can decide their own professional development trajectory. In addition, lecturers are not required to submit evidence of teaching competence. The undertaking of formal research is at the lecturers' discretion, and post-doctoral lecturers can apply for reduced teaching hours, offset by external research funding. This may change, as a recent report on performance evaluation by the HEA (2013) suggests a future challenge to 'provide a suite of metrics for the evaluation of teaching and learning that will give an insight into institutions' performance that is cognisant of their mission diversity' (HEA, 2013, pp.22).

Guided by national (QQI, 2017; Department of Education and Skills, 2018) and EU (ENQA, 2015) quality policies, IoT lecturers partake in quality committees, councils, programmatic reviews, and annual quality-focused reviews with externs. The external examiners come close to evaluating academic work by commenting on the module assessment's alignment with the learning objectives according to the expected academic standards. Resultant reports are made available to senior management and are responded to by the lecturer. In addition, an annual national students' survey (ISSE) run by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) takes place in universities and IoTs and the reports are published online (HEA, 2017b).

Many of the quality (QA) mechanisms described here offer opportunities for gathering evidence that, according to Saunders et al. (2011), seek to 'improve or strengthen practices or projects' (Saunders, Trowler & Bamber, 2011). By focusing on the system's mechanisms and the experience of key stakeholders, evaluation reaches 'conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a program, product, person, policy proposal, or

plan' (Fournier, 2005, pp.140). The conclusions reached in the process can, if permitted, positively *enhance* practice and learning and introduce innovation (Bamber et al., 2009).

Implementing quality policy and procedures can be challenging from an organisation perspective. Lecturers may share a common setting and, arguably, a common working objective yet may differ in how they execute their roles based a plethora of rationales. Weick (1976) proposes the notion of 'loose coupling' within organisations, pointing to how expectations between those tasked with policy at senior management level and those on the ground, such as lecturers, can differ in implementation. In addition, Reynolds *et al.*'s (1987) metaphor of the 'implementation staircase' indicates how different stakeholders contribute, interpret and adapt policy messages and, in this case, evaluative intentions and outputs according to their situated experiences. Also important in this debate is Handy's (1993) concept of a 'psychological contract' between people, the power structures and role practicalities that, when fractured, can lead to decreased trust and autonomy.

1.3.　Theoretical frames and models underpinning the study.

1.3.1 Evaluation using a social practice perspective.

Evaluation involves a range of practices that, according to Saunders (2011), attributes a '*value*'. Formal and informal evaluative practices can either performed responsively and as required, or perhaps established over time (Saunders et al., 2011) within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). From a social practice perspective (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1992), Saunders et al. (2011) proposed evaluation within higher education with emphasis on what people actually *'do in the name of value attribution or evaluation'* (Saunders et al., 2011, pp.2). Individuals may also act as '"*carriers*" of a practice (Reckwitz, 2002, pp.249-250) or perhaps pass practices on, via '*secondary socialization*' (Trowler & Cooper, 2002, pp.14). Specific evaluative practices within a context may then become part of an unquestioned routine and cultural norm by those who carry them out.

Self-evaluation seeks to make 'value judgements' upon an individual's work and implies a certain level of internal motivation. This motivation, according to Sedikides et al. (1997), seeks to 'enhance, verify, assess or improve' the "self"' (Sedikides & Strube, 1997, pp.211-212). Paired with an evaluative practice, it strives to analyse, identify and address problems and identify good practice (Saunders et al., 2011). The power of this inward focus using practices

can, according to Bamber (2011a), provide a dynamic 'ground up' catalyst for change with foreseen and unforeseen consequences. In an opposing view, Centra (1993) casts doubt on the value of self-evaluation unless it forms part of a formal review.

1.3.2. Lecturer autonomy and control in context.

 Becher and Kogan (1992) propose a conceptual model of the normative and operational modes of the individual, as basic units, within the institution to the central authority of Higher Education. Their commentary on the individual is particularly advantageous, as they point to how the teacher 'seeks to fulfil personal wants and realise personal expectations, linked with a general concern to maximise job satisfaction' (Becher & Kogan, 1992, pp.11). Becher and Kogan (1992) also recognise the importance of the academic's discipline area or professional practitioners' group as a reference point. This then implies lecturer autonomy as a key factor in determining future goals concerning their context and how their discipline or 'subject values' influence this (Becher & Kogan, 1992, pp.12). As a result, the relationship between the individual, their discipline, and the context, is a factor in self-evaluation. A relational interplay exists between a loose or tightly bound relationship with others: Dean of the facility, Head of Department, colleagues, students and, more broadly, the public. Despite this inseparably, self-evaluative practice, as suggested by Bamber (2011a), is a private exercise within the work life of the lecturer, in contrast to other public evaluations within HE.

The extent to which the evaluative process can be controlled, and by whom, has been addressed by Bamber (2011b) as the 'discretion framework' (Table:1). It offers categories for how loosely or tightly controlled the evaluative practices are within the HE context. This level of control also highlights the 'power and control' exercised by the lecturers concerning evaluation (Bamber, 2011b, pp.165).
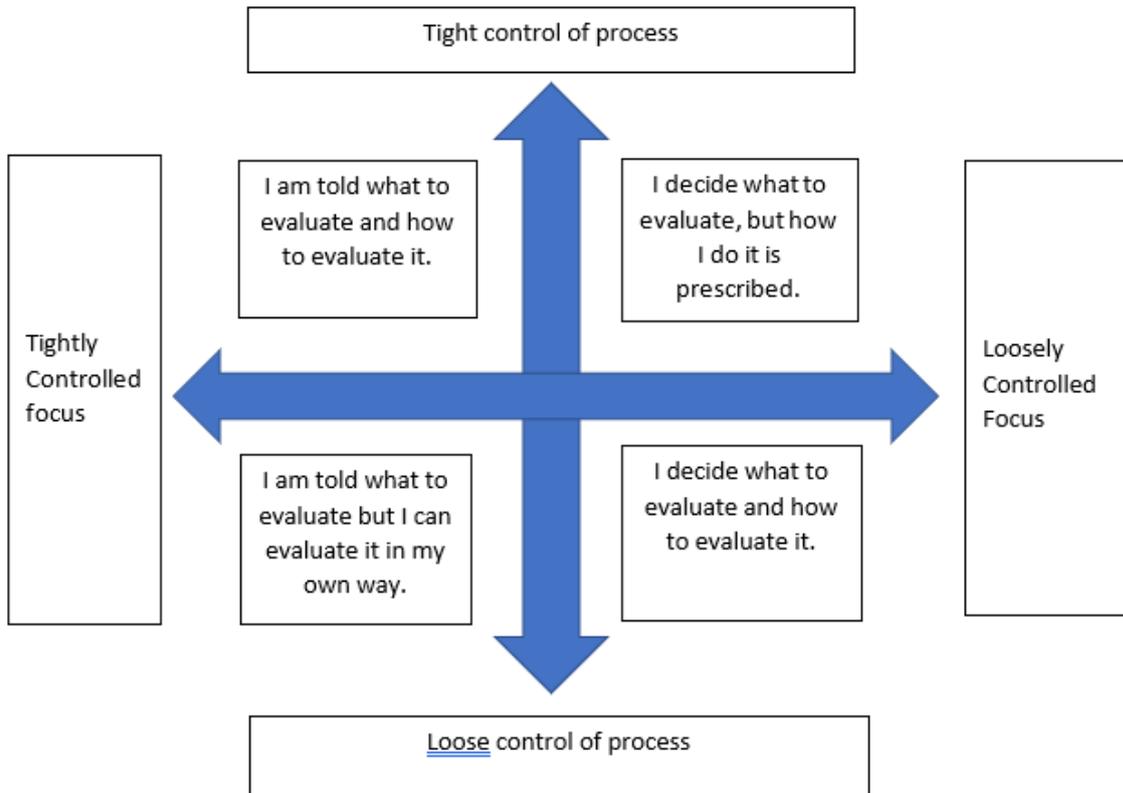
Table 1 - 'Discretion framework' for evaluative practices, adapted from Bamber (2011b).

1.3.3 Reflection and self-evaluation.

Reflection is an ever-present theme in HE and provides a grounding for the activity of self-evaluation. It is promoted as an essential thinking skill to learn *through* and *from* experience (Dewey, 1929; Boud & Fales, 1983), for students (Schön, 1987; Brockbank & McGill, 1998; Moon, 2000) and for lecturers (Schon, 1983; Cowan, 2006; Kinsella, 2010; *National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education*, 2016). The ability to evaluate the 'value' of one's practice by reflecting, gathering evidence, examining assumptions, experimenting, making judgements and making alternations (Brookfield, 1995; Finlay, 2008), is the basis of 'good' professional practice in teaching and learning (Ryan, 2008) and can be transformative (Mezirow, 1990). The literature suggests that reflection is a means to address the unpredictable and complex nature of professional practice (Schön, 1987; Fish and Coles, 1998; Finlay, 2008). Models and theories of reflection (Boud,

Keogh & Walker, 1985; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Johns, 2013) vary from Gibbs' reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988), to Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb & Fry, 1975), using critical incidents (Brookfield, 1990) and the reflective judgement model (Kitchener & King, 1990). Whatever the model, *worthwhile* reflection is acknowledged as unsettling due to the introspective nature of acknowledging deficiencies (Finlay, 2008).

1.3.4 Theories of change and evaluative practices.

The 'theory of change' originated from the Aspen round table (Connell & Kubisch,1999; Anderson, 2005) to evaluate the impact of policy (Sullivan & Stewart, 2006). The theory is advantageous in this research as it seeks to elicit lecturers' underlying ToCs by making explicit a participant's logic, intention, goals, interventions, barriers, and indicators of the success of their academic work. Taplin (2013) explained ToC as 'a working model against which to test hypotheses and assumptions about what actions will best bring about the intended outcomes'(Taplin et al., 2013, pp.2). An explicit theory of change can be beneficial as it makes the intention of practices, for example, a programme direction, available for scrutiny (Connell & Kubisch, 1999; Funnell & Rogers, 2011). Using ToC, according to Connell et al. (1999) seeks to '…*determine intended outcomes, the activities it expects to implement to achieve those outcomes and the contextual factors that may have an effect on implementation of activities and their potential to bring about desired outcomes*' (Connell & Kubisch, 1999, pp.2). Indeed, as Brookfield (1995) asserts, lecturers as professionals 'must recognize and generate their own theories for a kind of continuous investigation and monitoring of their efforts' (Brookfield, 1995, pp.129). This research focused on what and why particular self-evaluative practices were deployed, the barriers to implementation, and how these, in turn, informed or disrupted teaching and learning intentions. This offered evidence of the lecturers' underlying and operationalised ToC.

2. Methodology

This constructivist aligned qualitative research project (Christie & Alkin, 2008) recognises numerous constructed subjective realities within a naturalistic inquiry paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), offering an insight into the experiences of participants who share a common setting, It is therefore context-bound and plausible and not representative of a larger

population. However, the study has potential transferability across the IoTs sector. In the following sections, I will discuss the data collection sample, methods, analysis and limitations, research design using the RUFDATA evaluation tool, and the discretion framework.

2.1 Data collection sample, methods, analysis and limitations.

All full-time staff were invited to take part. Sixteen people (P1–P16), nine women and seven men, took part in a semi-structured interview over a seven-week period in 2017. All were experienced academic staff with teaching experience varying from 10 years to 30 years. Five participants had PhD qualifications and four were PhD students. Ten had worked extensively in industry before teaching and six worked exclusively in academia. The interviews were 'active' and a 'meaning-making conversation' that permitted tuning into each participant's reality (Holstein & Gubrium, 2016, pp.70). One interview was conducted via Skype as it was convenient and it also ensured privacy and anonymity (James & Busher, 2016; Hammersley, 2017). The transcripts from the interviews were analysed as they became available using an inductive constructivist grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Charmaz, 2006; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2013; Charmaz & Bryant, 2016). The data was thematically 'open' coded as described in the Helix model (Waring, 2017) using Atlas.ti software (Hwang, 2008) to find patterns. 'Member checking'(Carlson, 2010; Birt et al., 2016) was used for validity, with the preliminary results diagram and transcripts sent to participants for comment. However, limitations related to self-selection bias (Collier & Mahoney, 1996) may exist, as all were interested and eager to contribute. Also, the majority of academic staff and the views of novice lecturers were silent voices and remain unheard (Berry, 1983).

2.2 Research design: RUFDATA evaluation tool and Discretion framework.

An evaluation tool called RUFDATA, developed by Saunders (2000), was used to design the interview schedule (Table 2 and Appendix 1). The tool is designed to help novice evaluators by offering a structure. In this case, it informed the interview questions, prompting participant reflection on their self-evaluative practices by identifying the reasons and purposes, uses, and so on. The interview process was designed to make known the lecturers' ToC and the barriers to achieving it. The participants were also asked to identify a statement within Bamber's (2011a) evaluation discretion framework, as discussed earlier, that represented their level of freedom and control.

RUFDATA	**Examples**
Purpose or **R**easons for this evaluation	For management, accountability, planning and development, and improvement of teaching.
Uses for this evaluation	To provide evidence, learning opportunities from good practices, and staff development.
Foci for this evaluation	Focus on a range of activities and practices related to the evaluation priority.
Data and Evidence for this evaluation	Formal and informal feedback, observation, numeral data, surveys, and assessment results.
Audience for this evaluation	Management, students, employers, professional groups and self.
Timing for this evaluation	Mid or end point, continuous cycle and responsive to events.
Agency conducting this evaluation	External stakeholders, peers, students, management and self.

Table 2 - RUFDATA adapted from Saunders (2000)

3. Findings and Discussion.

This section will present the findings and discussion based on the research questions. It will firstly present the five identified ToC, the self-evaluative practice themes identified, the barriers to effective practice and lecturers' freedom and autonomy related to the discretion framework question.

3.1 Five identified theories of change.

Five ToC were identified from the data: transformative focused, profession focused, discipline

focused, workplace focused and module focused (see Table 3). Each ToC was found to guide the lecturer's work. The *transformative focused* ToC had the intention of using teaching to change students' thinking for personal 'good' and to reach their potential. Success was measured by feedback from students who declared personal change in thinking. *Transformative focused ToC* lecturers see themselves as facilitators of a process of change, utilising interventions and the pedagogical devices at their disposal. For example, the ToC *workplace focus* used teaching strategies based on workplace visits and practical workplace skills whereas the *profession focused* ToC engaged lecturer role modelling and fostered professional identity and values. The *workplace focus* involved evaluative practices to measure the applicability of learning skills for the world of work and whether employers were satisfied with the students' performance. The *profession focused* measured success by monitoring and observing students' use of language, knowledge application, their values, attitudes and behaviour.

Evaluative practices included reflection on interactions, responsive observation of class discussions, use of appropriate language in debates, demonstrated knowledge in exams and informal feedback. Thus, the *profession focused* ToC lecturer is the conduit between the student and their 'new' profession and a 'carrier' of expected professional practices to be replicated. The m*odule focused* ToC sought to teach the content with few links to external factors. Evaluative practices were then based on successful completion of the module and the associated grade. For the *module focused* ToC lecturer, the learning has a specific bounded purpose and is intended to be situated and self-contained. Lecturers with *discipline focused* intentions placed importance on students learning discipline-specific core knowledge and expected competencies. Evaluative practices were then based on what students knew and how competent they were within the discipline area. The *discipline focused* ToC lecturer saw their role as a carrier of specific knowledge and skills that permits one to become part of the discipline 'tribe' (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

The research demonstrates the number of ToC variations that can exist within a relatively small group yet provide a strong, rational and compelling guide for the individual's academic work. The value of making known these categories can advance dialogue in justifying specific self-evaluative practices, pedagogical approaches and how they link to strategic purposes if so required. For many of the participants, the ToC was a working model in action, a tacit knowledge-bank, operational 'below the surface'. As 'value' judgements may differ based on assumptions, the opportunity of making the ToC available for scrutiny through the RUFDATA

tool may bring clarity and possible alignment.

Participants	Theories of change identified
P1, P14	**Transformative focused**: *Students will think differently & know more about themselves.* Using tasks to change students' cognitive perspectives, experiential exercises and personality tests.
P2, P3, P5, P7, P12, P15	**Profession focused**: *Develop the profession via students learning to impact positively upon the client experience.* Using speakers from the profession, role modelling behaviours in the classroom, addressing the students as their future professional selves, developing essential skills for professional practice.
P13	**Discipline focused:** *Develop students' academic knowledge, skills based on the syllabus and programme learning outcomes.* Broad focus on the norms and expectations of the discipline area.
P4, P6, P9, P16, P14	**Workplace focused**: *Develop students employability skills within a specific industry, based on their interpretation of the syllabus.* Using examples of from work situations, feedback from industry, feedback to improve teaching, working with external groups, authentic workplace assessments, using personal experiences to explain content and context, and placements.
P8, P10, P11	**Module focused**: *Applying learning within a specific contained context, based on the syllabus and learning outcomes.* Inward focused teaching of specific skills, knowledge and competences.

Table 3 - Theories of change categories identified

3.2 Self-evaluative practice themes.

Six themes regarding self-evaluative practices were identified from the data: (1) reflection, (2) peer interaction, (3) discipline, profession influence and international links (4) student feedback, (5) community and workplace, and (6) external examiner.

Refection was identified as a prominent practice underpinning self-evaluation. Reflective self-questioning was identified as the ability to actively question teaching practices to improve the intended outcomes.

> *'I don't know if I necessarily have an awareness [*of self-evaluative practices*] but I would do it all the time, in that you'd always be thinking is my lecture good enough? I come out and I think that I need to tweak that, or that, a couple of sets of slides weren't great, or I need to add something to that because a bunch of students didn't get what*

> *the point that I was making, took them a while. You've got to always be evaluating, even your approach to students.'* (P5)

Interestingly, for P10 and P6 there was a negative connotation to reflective practice. It was perceived as *airy fairy* and *touchy feeling* and not *macho*. There was more ease with the use of the terminology of 'evaluation' and 'self-evaluation' due to the emotional connotations. The reflective practices were class observations, daily or weekly written plans, student reflective accounts, reviews and notes. In addition, P12 noted the need to check assumptions based on observation by asking direct questions on their learning experiences. The danger of reflective practice and self-evaluation, as P6 pointed out, is that people tend to focus on what they are already good at and improve those, rather than focusing on their blind spots.

Peer interactions, either through team teaching, within teaching and learning (T&L) courses, formally with a mentor or informally with colleagues, were identified as opportunities for self-evaluation. These practices offered constructive criticism and advice. For P13 and P3, the experience of peer-evaluation in their careers abroad was a positive one. A collegial experience, open to critique and formal review and feedback, was a practice they missed as it does not form part of the institute's evaluative approach. The formal feedback on their teaching was an aspect of their work they had grown accustomed to. For P13, being part of the peer-evaluation staff team was also a valuable learning experience.

Discipline and profession self-evaluative practices are those that seek to align teaching practices and pedagogy by attending conferences, publishing research, and discussing current practices with experts. In a similar way, international links also provided opportunities to engage with the wider discipline area and adaptions occurred based on all these interactions.

Gaining formal feedback from students is a well-known practice; however, formal class-based student surveys were not used as frequently in this setting. P6 pointed to a setting wide abandonment of this formal approach, with it being '*… nearly frowned upon in some ways"* P6. Other participants concurred with this and highlighted an unease regarding comments of a personal nature about lecturers within feedback sheets. However, for P3, evaluation presents opportunities to hear feedback one may not like but can make one think.

> *'I've always liked evaluation you see, part of my working life, if you like. Sometimes things that were written down I didn't particularly like, but it made me think about it. Even if one person says one negative thing, it might be the one person that's actually*

identified something that I did need to address.' (P3).

The lecturer's apprehensiveness aligns with Cramer et al.'s (2000) point that students judging effective teaching is a complex endeavour. Multiple variables could be at play, such as dissatisfactions and perceptions, suggesting possible bias and unreliability (Martin, Dennehy & Morgan, 2013). However, P6 pointed to the importance of student consultation in closing the evaluative gap, as without it, the validity of the lecturer's self-evaluative practices is in question.

Links with the community and the workplace offered opportunities for lecturers to observe students working with external community groups and placement visits. In addition, guest speakers and site visits offered opportunities for the lecturer to check the validity of their teaching and learning approach as well as the syllabus content.

The IoT's external examiner, as a formal mechanism, provided advisory services for QA and self-evaluative practice. The examiner's expertise determined the level of utility. According to P4, industry experts make a helpful contribution by updating the lecturer on industry developments. For P5 and P13, examiners have an important role in keeping the syllabus on track. However, their role in measuring the quality of teaching was limited, according to P5.

Those engaged in reflective questioning and internal dialogue acknowledged the need for benign instability and the need to remain somewhat '*uncertain*'. This uncertainty, it seems, provides a ground for the continuous checking of assumptions. Yet for some participants, the act of performing their duty exposed vulnerabilities. Avoiding direct feedback in a class-based survey may protect the participant from this type of exposure. Unwelcome personal comments were hurtful and placed the student in a position of disruptive power. From this result, the concept of teaching was understood to be '*performative*' and therefore a communication of the best '*self*'. For others, mentoring and peer-evaluation were suggested safe methods to gain further insight into one's teaching practice, as they are not currently in operation.

There was a negative association with the class-based feedback surveys. A contradiction existed between surveys as a 'useful' evaluative tool and the low level of actual use. This dissonance was exposed as some participants went on to express a desire to use them in the future. The survey's negative connotations are based on a vague memory of the union intervention and the negative commentary some participants had experienced. An official non-participation rule, module evaluation by the union has become lost in translation over the years. Previously, non-participation practices were '*carried*'(Reckwitz, 2002) without question,

becoming distorted and thus were replaced by a general wariness of undertaking surveys at all.

3.3 Barriers to effective practice.

The research identified nine barriers to effective practice: (1) students, (2) time, (3) technology, (4) meetings, (5) lack of support and value, (6) lack of trust, (7) poor facilities, (8) modules (9) and lack of staff feedback. Student disruption, large groups, absenteeism, poor level of English and varying levels of ability contribute to making teaching a challenge. Time to think and research was also a barrier to effective work along, with technology failures and restricted access to equipment. Meetings without tangible outcomes and no meaningful staff input were also put forward as wasting time. Newton (2000), who undertook a study of quality monitoring among academic staff, reported similar a finding.

There was a perceived lack of support for new learning–teaching initiatives and this was linked with not feeling valued and a lack of trust between lecturers and management. Trust issues were also found by Newton (2000), with reference to Handy's breaking of the '*psychological contract*' (Handy, 1993) resulting in low morale and less loyalty. This may indicate a growing managerialism, as Trow (1993) points out, emerging from the substitution of trust with accountability. For some of the participants, professional value was linked to monetary value via their timetabled hours. In addition, the timetable hours were deemed to be a poor expression of the workload actually undertaken. The individualised nature of academic work can pose a risk of isolation and this was seen as a barrier to self-evaluation and evaluative practices more broadly. This was echoed by reports of infrequent team-based programme reviews to assess what worked and what didn't.

The facilities posed barriers due to their poor design, with few informal spaces for student engagement, a lack of break out rooms and silent rooms for recording. The equation of credits to hours, the ECTS system (European Commission, 2009), was deemed to be restrictive in terms of assessment and specifically teaching '*difficult*' subjects. Complex modules, especially shared modules, restrict innovative teaching and learning due to the need to cover content in a short time; all modules are not equal. Local practices of offering '*hidden*' extra hours '*off timetable'* have emerged to overcome the problem. This is in line with Libsky's (2010) belief that alternative coping mechanisms are developed and Trowler's (1998) '*coping*' and '*reconstructing*' responses to change. In addition, shared modules were less likely to be

evaluated as a total unit due to differentiated responsibility, autonomy and differing ToCs. The annual formal national ISSE survey (HEA, 2016) was only mentioned by one participant, P3. She expressed disappointment at the lack of feedback to staff and therefore questioned its legitimacy and utility. In addition, Prosser (2011) cautions interpreting surveys of student perceptions as their learning is complex and individualised due to deep and surface approaches (Biggs & Tang, 2011). These barriers all contributed to the reported lack of control, apathy and frustration and may present a fracture in the *'psychological contact'* (Handy, 1993) within the organisation.

Following this, it is helpful to consider Giddens (1984) structuration theory to comprehend the lecturer as both free and constrained within their social structures. The findings suggest self-evaluation takes place with a *push and pull* process, as the barriers to practice demonstrate. Lecturers or 'agents' attempt to construct bespoke practices within the boundaries of their freedom yet are constrained by their social system. Lecturers, in this case, are the masters of their teaching domain, with external evaluations by invitation only. Based on this research, doing a good job or not relies almost entirely on the lecturer exercising their academic freedom towards their ToCs and making value judgements on the outcomes. Thus, it can be concluded that lecturers have clear intentions and have tailored the available self-evaluative practices to judge the value of their work, although some practices remain 'hidden' and assumed.

3.4 Lecturers' freedom and autonomy.

Based on Bamber's (2011a) evaluation 'discretion framework', the majority of the participants agreed with the statement, '*I decide what to evaluate and how to evaluate it'* (Bamber, 2011b, pp.167), with one participant saying they were accountable to a professional standards body. Additional remarks were made regarding the impact of external examiners' comments on their academic work. From this data, according to Bamber's (2011a) framework, the IoT is, for the most part, a loosely controlled system in process and focus. The findings suggest lecturers have considerable freedom to make judgements about the value of their work and to make decisions about different approaches to achieve their intended outcomes. For P13, the freedom and authority of the lecturer to make decisions as a professional within the remit of 'academic freedom' were vital. Any prescriptive self-evaluative methods arising from T&L, he said, would undermine this.

As the participant is closer to the knotty problems of the everyday classroom, they are well placed to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions. However, it was found that the self-evaluative process did not always exclude others. Unique evaluative engagements and consultations with students, colleagues, externs and industry informed the final decision making. In this case, the participants took full responsibility for their own work. No fully integrated or collective evaluative practices were found within this individualised culture. The UK experience of academic staff being 'constantly urged or required to evaluate their work' (Bamber, 2011b, p.166) was not the finding of this research. The findings support a strong autonomy among the participants, subsuming individual power and control within their own work. This correlates with Brookfield's (1995) ideas on the 'good' reflective teacher being able to recognise and analyse practice assumptions, thus finding creative responses to their unique context and work demands.

4. Conclusion.

In summary, this research identified five ToCs, six self-evaluative themes, nine barriers to practice and noted the considerable freedom lecturers have in deciding what and how to value their work.

What can be concluded is that while the motives (Sedikides & Strube, 1997) and actual practices of self-evaluation may vary, all were guided by the individual's ToC. Thus, the ToC is, metaphorically speaking, like a compass, guiding and directing the work, for without this intentionality, self-evaluative practices are aimless and a meaningless series of disjointed actions. The self-evaluative tools described here offered a means to assess the value and impact of the work undertaken. Value decisions were then situated and linked to how achievable their ToC's intentions were. From this, it is it assumed that an imposed 'one size fits all' evaluation may induce 'impression management' (Saunders, 2012) if they fail to link to the lecturer's ToC.

At the time of writing, no changes are proposed within the IoT sector for an externally imposed evaluation of teaching. The findings of this evaluation support the premise that identifying and supporting good practice from the ground up may be more sustainable going forward. Contagion change within the system, especially if it emerges from among a community of practice, has more chance of finding roots and developing. Authentic self-evaluative practices

arising from within embedded and established practice are more likely to be a better fit within the culture, rather than rigid imposed controls, rules and direct inspections from outside. Good self-evaluative practices arising from the professional's responses to their teaching effectiveness based on well understood ToCs is self-sustaining, as internally operated practices are more likely to outlast those that are imposed.

Self-evaluation is a valuable professional skill used to gauge the value of the work lecturers do. As demonstrated here, there are many variables at work to either support or hinder the academic work. Finding solid ground upon which to develop one's self-evaluative practices takes time, confidence and experience. Knowing how to answer am I doing a good job? is not a simple task, nor is it a tick box exercise. It requires trust in one's agency and sometimes an uncomfortable honesty to achieve the individuals' theory of change. It is, I believe, a worthwhile pursuit in the service of efficacious learning and lecturer professionalism.

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