

# Lecturer perspectives of using technology for student feedback

Lydia Arnold



Educational developer


Harper Adams University

@HarperEdDev

lydiaarnold.net

Lydia Arnold

Educational development, work-based learning, technology, creative assessment, facilitation, research and mentoring



Home About Lydia Arnold Contact me Publications, conferences and workshops

Senior Fellowship (SFHEA) readiness assessment  
Posted on March 25, 2018

To help colleagues assess whether they are 'really good' Fellows, or instead 'Senior Fellows' I have created a three step self assessment exercise. This tries to encourage teaching and learning practitioners to think about the scholarly or evidence based approaches that they use, the values that underpin their own practice and critically the ways in which they exert leadership and influence over others. Please feel free to use it

Follow me on Twitter  
Tweets by @HarperEdDev

Lydia Arnold @HarperEdDev  
Agree to both unless design strategies actively overcome the issues #whatuniversity



A

Emphasis Heading 1 Heading 2 Heading 3 Heading 4 Normal

2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

## Lecturers' experiences of developing feedback practice using technology

Dr. Lydia Arnold

Harper Adams University, [larnold@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:larnold@harper-adams.ac.uk)

### ABSTRACT

There has been an underrepresentation of academic staff in the discourse around assessment feedback; research has tended to give priority to the student perspective (Evans, 2013). If feedback is to be enhanced, more needs to be done to understand the perspectives of lecturers and others who have responsibility for providing it. This paper begins to explore the experience of academic staff who are working with technology in their own feedback practice. It reports on a narrative interview study of sixteen practitioners in five different UK higher education institutions, who were using a range of tools and technologies. Through their stories of practice lecturers describe the choices that they must make, and they share the factors that shape practice. Influences include underlying beliefs, personal biography, academic identity, and recent experience of family members, collegial networks, and quality management systems. The research reinforces the need for appreciative approaches in developing academic practices. The findings of this paper are especially relevant for academic developers, learning technologists and others who seek to support feedback practices using technology.

### KEYWORDS

Feedback, assessment, technology, interviews, lecturers

Sec: 1 Pages: 1 of 17 Words: 87 of 4965



# Why feedback and technology?

- The feedback challenge
- Use of technology - **uncritical acceptance** by universities
- **Staff voices missing** in the discourse (Evans, 2013)
- Harper Adams' **own feedback dilemmas**
- **Working better** with colleagues and/or feedback
- **Understand as a pretext to change** (careful here ....)



**“Well meaning as these interventions are, there is little evidence that they have had any effect on student satisfaction ratings in national surveys, and, indeed, there is a growing number of studies now showing that such enhancements of teacher feedback do not result in improved student learning”.**

(Nicol, Thomson, and Breslin, 2014, p.103)



# Literature

- The problems with feedback (you know what they are!)
- Redoubled efforts but more of the same (Robinson, Pope, & Holyoak, 2013).



# Technology in feedback

- Feedback technology goes back to early 2000's
- BUT universities have been slow to adopt
- Small-scale research studies
- Limited criticality
- Self selected researchers
- Conflation
- The risk of romanticizing (Clapham, 2012)
- Representation
- Skewed debate



# Methods & Methodology



**Tell your story:  
Critical realism + narratives**







What else?



Why do you you use technology for feedback? .....

What factors influence yours (or your colleagues' approaches to feedback?)

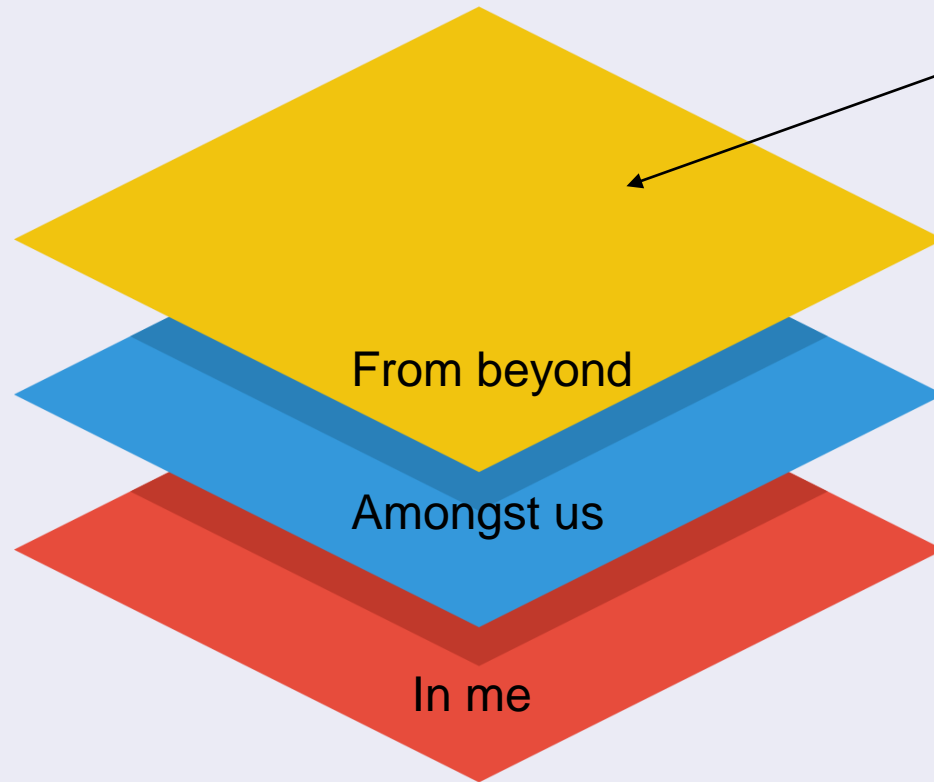


# Findings: Why use technology?

- External examiner feedback
- Team choices
- Change of delivery mode
- Realisations about writing
- Change in student group (international)
- Workload increase and a search for efficiency



# Dense rationale



Marketisation

Students as consumers

Technology normalisation

Widening participation

Requirements for  
accountability

Internationalisation

Fee environment

Recognition

# Feedback beliefs

1. Universal acceptance of feedback importance
2. Varied 'power' to influence the impact feedback (affects volume and type and tech choices)
3. Ideas vs structure (degree of negotiation varies according to power)
4. Limited confidence in power of officialised feedback influences choices
5. Professionalism (how much feedback is part of the role)

**Challenges the idea that poor feedback is apathy (linked to academic identity and beliefs about feedback impact)**



# And what about technology?

1. Where it can make a difference to student use  
(how so? ..... Media, access)
2. Where it can make a difference to upholding  
professional responsibility

And .... Malcolm and Greta

<b>Category descriptor</b>	<b>Confidence</b>	<b>Frequency of tools use</b>	<b>Connection of technology to identity</b>	<b>Leadership in technology use</b>
<b>Super champion</b>	High	High	High	High
<b>Technophile</b>	High	High	High	Medium
<b>Moderate native</b>	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
<b>Have a go-ers</b>	Medium	Medium	High	Low
<b>When it really matters</b>	Low	Low	Low	Low



“There's only so many hours in a day and you've got to make decisions about what you're going to do with those hours and what's going to be best for both your students and for yourself and your career ... I think some colleagues have got kind of drawn into IT, and they do a lot of work with IT, but then five years later, they're wondering why they've not been made [Principal Lecturer], and it's because they've not been putting time into the [research]” (Lecturer 11).





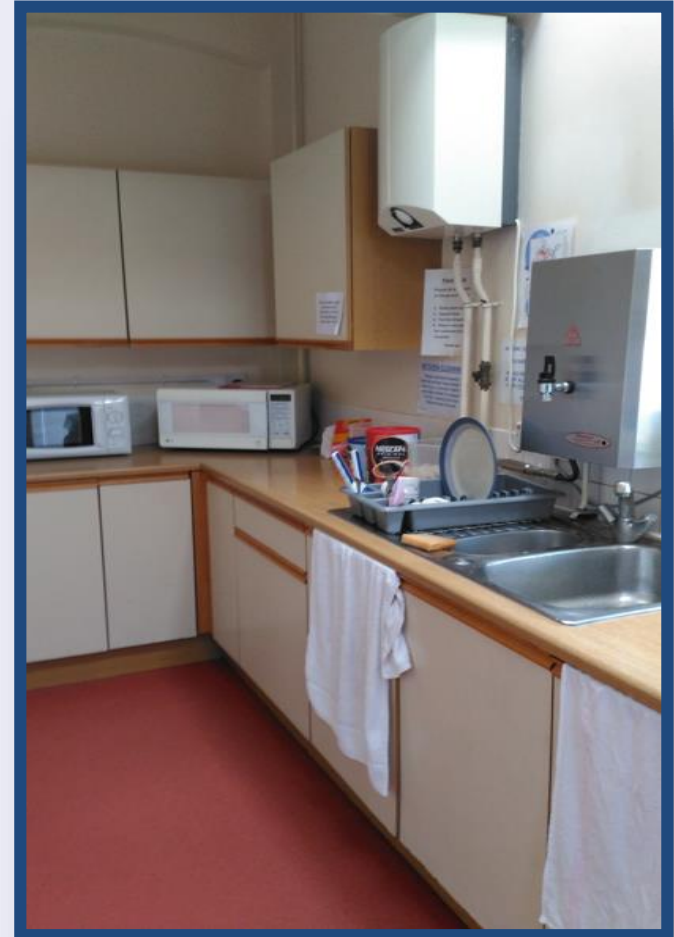
# Influences on practice

- Family experiences
- Professional experience
- Media preference (mine)
- Beliefs about student learning preferences of students
- Emotional concern
- Fit with existing practice (rubrics)
- Fit with structure or 'ideas' emphasis of feedback intent
- **Social practices**
  - Training
  - Acculturation
  - Specialist teams
- **Quality management**
- **Efficiency and enhancement**



# Social process

- **Acculturation** – shown the way
- Informal networks – **corridors of awesomeness and kitchens of creativity**
- Formal networks – the super power of the **course team**
- The **e-learning hub**



# Spreading practice

- Acculturation
- Office location, campus location
- Matching (knowing the options)
- Technology first – externality
- Course team



# Quality

- Uncertainty
  - Experience and attitude
  - E.g. Requirements for anonymous marking

I will use stickers  
on my screen

I will defer my use  
of technology

I'll press on  
anyway!

I'll find a tech  
solution

# Quality: Responses

- Use of written word:
  - Compliance
  - Negotiation and consultation
  - Change agents
- Second marking
  - Reluctance
  - Change opportunity
  - Persuasion



# 5 conceptions of time

1. A primary aim
2. An appreciated benefit
3. An aspiration as practice developed
4. A relative concept
5. A veto on innovation; when a technology is too burdensome it is rejected.



# Fractured practice

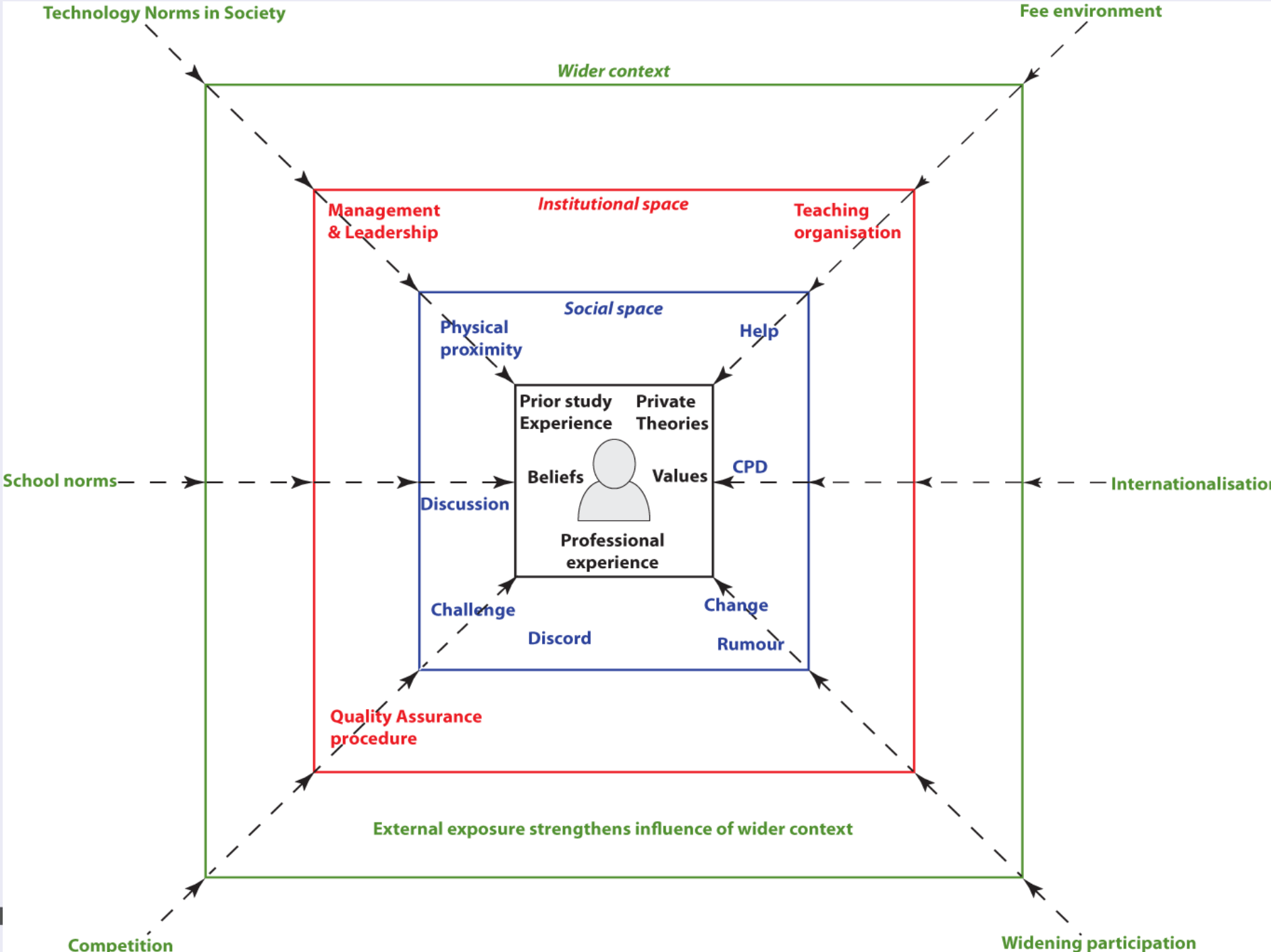
- Alienation of those not involved
- Perceived poor feedback
- Lack of willingness to use technology
- Workload imbalances



- Under the waterline .....
- Ecosystem







# What next?

1. **Systems** thinking about change (But systems which complement academic identity)
2. Forming ways to work with (accept or change) different **academic identities**
3. Consider the **fault lines** in practice (tech and feedback) – appreciate them? Build links between?
4. **QA** and clarity (or do we like a murky space?)
5. 6. **STOP** considering efficiencies without consideration of enhancement
6. Develop feedback **consciousness**
7. **Change** as a trigger for reframing practice



# Next

- Spaces and feedback practice
- Structure and ideas – orientations
- Critical realism as a methodology



- @HarperEdDev
- lydiaarnold.net
- [larnold@harper-adams.ac.uk](mailto:larnold@harper-adams.ac.uk)



# Sources of images – Creative commons attribution

- <https://pixabay.com/en/struggle-push-uphill-battle-effort-1271657/>
- <http://cliparts.co/person-waving-clip-art>
- <http://www.iconarchive.com/show/small-n-flat-icons-by-paomedia/layers-icon.html>
- [http://www.ywpafl.org/apps/events2/event.jsp?eREC\\_ID=1414200&d=2014-12-11&id=0](http://www.ywpafl.org/apps/events2/event.jsp?eREC_ID=1414200&d=2014-12-11&id=0)

