CHAPTER A5

The teaching portfolio in higher education, and the nature of knowledge, curriculum and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)

Chris Trevitt, Oxford Learning Institute, University of Oxford

Dr Chris Trevitt is the Coordinator for the 'Developing Academic Practice programme' at the University of Oxford. Prior to this appointment, Chris was a Visiting University Lecturer, on secondment with the Institute between June, 2006, and May, 2007. With some 10 years experience in educational development at the Australian National University, Canberra, he completed his graduate studies higher education in 1995, and has a PhD and a research and academic teaching background in the environmental sciences. He has enduring interests in practice-based and work-based continuing professional learning, both in the professions and in academia; action learning as a means for fostering reflective professional practice; and, harnessing information technologies to support such activities.

Introduction

Developing robust frameworks to promote and support Continuing Professional Learning (CPL) is of mounting interest across an increasing number of professions (eg Cervero, 2001; Webster-Wright, 2009), with clinical health (especially nursing, eg McWilliam, 2007, and medicine, eg Hilton and Slotnick, 2005) tending to lead the way, despite reservations from some (eg Woollard, 2008). The emphasis is on learning rather than development, with a focus on positioning for the future rather than remedial action premised on defects in past performance. Working under the umbrella phrase 'Developing Academic Practice' the University of Oxford has recently established a range of initiatives supporting new and established academics to strengthen their practice-based perspectives, with an emphasis on cultivating capacity for and a disposition towards continuous improvement (especially in teaching). This is informed by prior experience working with clinical lawyer- and medical-educators (Trevitt, 2008a, 2008b; Trevitt and Carera, 2009).

Table 1 shows three extracts from academic job descriptions (and position documentation) located at random in mid-2010. In these position requirements we can identify key teaching related work-based practices such as:
- Review and develop curriculum
- Marking formative and summative assessment
- Mentoring students
- Setting examination papers
- Act as a unit co-ordinator
- Teach post-graduate units

When seeking to represent their capabilities in these sorts of activities, many new and aspiring academics find themselves at odds as to how best to represent the experience they have, and often find they need to resort to new and sometimes alien language and concepts. Many have not yet had an opportunity to rehearse how to describe what it is that they have to offer. This issue goes to the heart of the motivations and ambitions behind the Oxford programme, and these examples are a pragmatic illustration of some of the capabilities we seek for people to develop. We want next generation academics ideally not only to become more skilful and purposeful in their development of these sorts of professional practices, but also to become more adept at articulating their stance and capabilities in ways that are both true to form and will resonate with senior colleagues (eg those on selection committees).

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development) Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

1

Newly qualified PhD (and DPhil, Oxon) graduates vary markedly in their capacity to interpret expectations such as those in Table 1, and the extent to which they have rehearsed how to render their own experiences in text so that they meet the sort of qualities being sought. In recent years, much has been achieved in understanding needs and making provision for continuing professional learning (CPL) opportunities for academics. As part of wider initiatives intended to support new appointees understand and adjust to the expectations being made of them (eg by their institution, or department), especial attention has been given to helping prepare individuals for the demands of teaching. In the UK, this process is now underpinned by a national standards framework, with institutional CPL programmes being accredited by the Higher Education Academy (eg Prosser et al., 2006). Typically, individuals participate in graduate certificate, diploma or masters type qualifications, which are now available at nearly all UK higher education institutions.

Table 1: Extracts from a selection of academic job descriptions (and position documentation) in mid-2010

Teaching Fellowship in Pure Mathematics and/or Statistics
(School of Computing and Mathematics, University of Keele)

Teaching **duties and responsibilities** include:
- To give lectures and small group sessions within pure mathematics and/or statistics modules and to assist in the marking of student work…
- To co-operate with colleagues in the continuous review and development of the curriculum …
- To … contribute to the setting of examination papers, and marking formative and summative assessments …
- To provide learning support and guidance for students …

Desirable **experience** includes:
- pastoral support including mentoring students
- curriculum development
- contributing to setting examination papers
- developing own training methods

Lecturer in International Development
(Latrobe University, Australia)

Key **selection criteria** include:
- Capacity to develop and teach undergraduate subjects in international development or other recognized specialization within development studies, and act as unit co-ordinator.
- Capacity to teach post-graduate units in international development or on another recognized specialization within development studies.
- Capacity to teach into the international development subjects offered by the Program, including first year undergraduate teaching.

Teaching Fellow in Mechanical Engineering
(Department of Mechanical Engineering, University College London).

Skills and Previous experience
Some experience in teaching at UG and Masters levels, which should include preparation of teaching materials and assessment (essential)

Personal qualities
- Commitment to university level education (essential)
- Commitment to high quality teaching and fostering of a positive learning environment for students (essential)
- Commitment to continuous professional development (essential)

This is the context in which the development of professional portfolios by academics has become increasingly common, especially for teaching, not only as means for documenting evidence of achievements in practice, but also as a means for supporting the practice-based learning involved (eg Buckridge, 2008; Klenowski et al., 2006;

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

2

Trevitt and Stocks, in press). As reviewed by Trevitt and Stocks, the portfolio is now a well established concept across a wide range of professions (eg medicine, law, nursing, social work, chemistry, as well as primary and secondary education, architecture, photography, creative writing and the arts more generally). Even as this proliferation gets underway ambiguities persist with who the reader is, and what the expectations are (for example in structure and content, as well as purpose).

The purpose of this chapter is to review a range of experience and issues related to the use of portfolios (and associated capstone commentaries, see below) as learning tools in the domain of academic practice. In particular, issues to do with the nature of knowledge, curriculum and assessment are considered. The potential for enhancing participant capacity to self-observe and self-assess, the conditions that enhance the likelihood of achieving this, and the extent to which such capacities can be strengthened earlier rather than later in a professional career, are of special interest. The experience base includes supporting and assessing some 49 participants compiling portfolios during the first few years (in the mid-2000s) of what was then a new Graduate Certificate in Higher Education offered at the Australian National University, as well as more recent work both shaping the Oxford 'Developing Academic Practice' programme, and supporting participants developing portfolios as part of that programme.

What is a portfolio? What are their purposes?

Teaching portfolios comprise '*work samples that a teacher or lecturer has collected over time across various contexts and which are accompanied by reflections*' suggest Tigelaar et al., 2005, 596). Elton and Johnston (2002; 34-35) observe that the exact form will vary with purpose, usage and context, but concur that a portfolio comprises a collection of items and is not necessarily a single coherent piece of work (such as a thesis). They stress the need to clarify whether the portfolio is to be used primarily as a repository for materials produced during a study or work/professional experience programme, or whether it is envisaged as an active learning tool with students expected to engage in analysis and review of the content. In the latter case emphasis would be given to (following Baume 2001):

- *evidence* (e.g. reports, essays, designs) as appropriate in a particular discipline …
- *labelling, signposting, structuring of the evidence*
- *critical reflection or commentary*, very probably written especially for the portfolio … which contextualises the evidence … and makes sense of the evidence.

Elton and Johnston (2002; 34-5)

Intended especially to promote and support a process of reflection, in my experience the portfolio as working concept is something of a double edged sword. On the one hand it offers the benefits of flexibility, permitting individuals to adapt it to accommodate their own particular needs, across a wide range of context-sensitive circumstances; on the other hand much of the initiative for such adaptation has to come from someone who, all too often, is learning to be a portfolio author for the first time, and is faced with a range of uncertainties about what exactly is required. This situation is often exacerbated for time-poor, early-career professionals who, almost invariably, are encountering the portfolio as a concept for the very first time, notwithstanding the increasing ubiquity of use alluded to earlier. This makes the provision of appropriate context-sensitive 'scaffolding' critical. Structures are required that support portfolio writers trying out new ideas, concepts and structures, as well as practising a newly expanded vocabulary (of which, more below).

Elton and Johnson (2002) observe that portfolios not only promote reflection but can provide predictive information about how the author will perform after moving beyond the assessment, and assist with tracking individuals' development over time. Thus portfolios:

- become personal collections of educational experiences over a period of time
- provide a very active means whereby students can participate in their own assessment
- provide a more equitable and sensitive portrait of what students know, and are able to do, than do traditional assessments

Elton and Johnson (2002, 34-5)

All these features have been of interest during my many years of experience working with academic and clinical medical colleagues to produce portfolios. Over this time, we have come to resort to what I now term the 'stonehenge' model of a portfolio. In this model, a *capstone commentary* is constructed by the author, that builds

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum **3**
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

from (sits atop?) a number of items of evidence, much as a literal 'capstone' lies across a number of supporting pillars of rock (eg see Figure 1). This *capstone commentary* comprises a reflective synthesis, and offers insights into the learning associated with a range of professional (eg teaching) activities. A selection of the materials produced for these activities often comprises much of the supporting evidence (eg lecture notes prepared as handouts for students; guidelines issued to students for what is expected in an assignment; student feedback tendered as part of a course evaluation, etc). The educational reasoning associated with the design and use of such teaching materials or the interpretation of student feedback, and some explanation of how it has evolved into its present form should appear in the *capstone commentary*. A *capstone commentary* invariably only begins to resemble its final form during the latter stages of building a portfolio, preparatory to giving it to others to read (or 'assess'; see below).

Figure 1: The 'stonehenge' model of a portfolio. As suggested by the contrasting structures in these two images, the *capstone commentary* may be substantive and supported by a wide variety of evidence, or it may be more modest, relying on (generally) fewer but more substantial pieces of evidence.

Hence, as Trevitt and Stocks (in press) explain:

> The term 'portfolio' then becomes a vehicle to convey programme expectations: what sort of professional learning participants might engage in; what sort of evidence they might seek to collect; what rationale lies behind the choices made; what reflective insights merit discussion, and so on. 'Portfolio' thus becomes a form of shorthand, not only for all this material as it is brought together but also, crucially, for the sorts of judgements involved and decisions being made about what to include or exclude (see Coles, 2002). These decisions go to the core of the sort of personal professional growth – and identity formation – that we are seeking to encourage (see Trevitt and Perera, 2009). 'Authentic [C]PL is as much about ontology (who the professional is) as it is about epistemology (what the professional knows)' argues Webster-Wright (2009, 726).

The *capstone commentary* thus becomes a summative statement within the overall portfolio approach: one that requires participants to draw together key concepts from educational research, take stock of practical issues that arise in their local context, and consider pathways forward in practice appropriate to that context. A strongly reflective stance is encouraged; one that bridges the personal and professional. The emphasis is on personal development: diagnosis of context; review of past performance and approaches and, identification of options for the future. A 'portfolio needs to capture the uniqueness of the learner's story there is no single method or structure for its writing' suggest Klenowski et al. (2006, 277).

With these arguments as background, it is revealing briefly to consider how emphases in 'curriculum' pertain in portfolio work. What similarities and differences in 'curriculum' apply when compiling a portfolio, relative to those associated with more traditional discipline-based academia? What implications follow for supporting the learning involved, and for assessing portfolios?

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum   **4**
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

One curriculum framework

One approach for thinking through the range of emphases in curriculum draws from the work of Barnett et al (2001) and Barnett and Coate (2005).
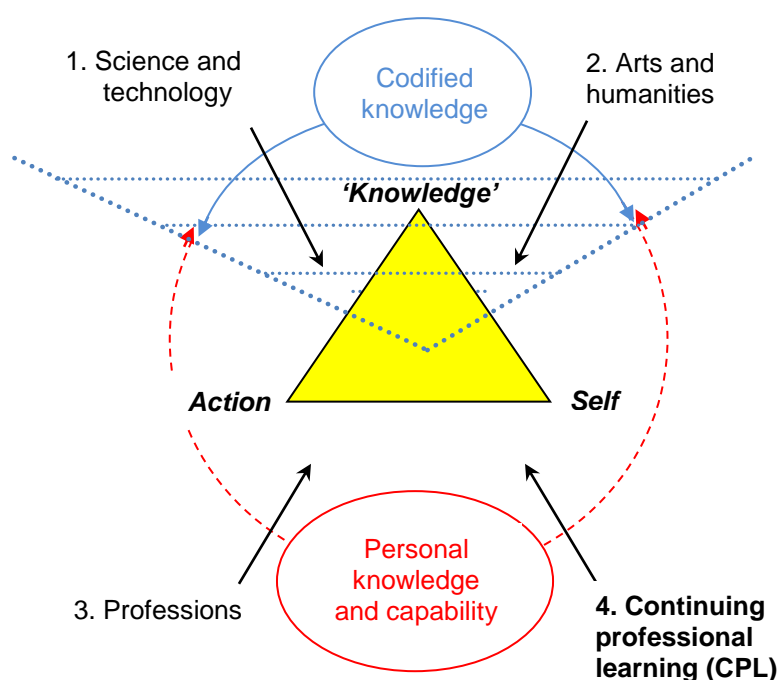

Figure 2: **Four perspectives on curriculum, conceived as an integrated mix of 'knowledge', action and self** (adapted from Trevitt and Perera, 2009; and Barnett et al., 2001), but now suggesting how 'Codified knowledge' has dominated in the worlds of the sciences, arts and humanities, while 'Personal knowledge and capability' comes into the foreground in the worlds of the professions, and CPL (eg Eraut, 2007).

Figure 2 shows the three perspectives on curriculum posited originally by Barnett and colleagues, along with a fourth perspective (viz. CPL) that is central to our concerns here (following Trevitt and Perera, 2009). In Barnett and colleagues' original schema, science and technology emphasises 'knowledge', with action taking a lesser role, and self residing in the background. Conversely, in the professions action is fore-grounded, with self taking a lesser role, and 'knowledge' in the background, and so on. Figure 2 shows not only how the notion of curriculum varies with broad disciplinary perspective, but the central triangle represents how this three-way mix also comprises an integrated whole. The CPL perspective in Figure 2 foregrounds our concern with the on-going process of negotiation of professional identity(ies) (see Trevitt and Perera, 2009; Hilton and Slatnick, 2005). As I argue below, this process is expedited by the experience and process of sifting through instances of practice, selecting specific materials or artifacts, and then drafting a *capstone commentary* that outlines the reasoning involved in devising and/or selecting these particular examples, and integrates the evidence selected with arguments and concepts put forward in the relevant literature.

As implied by the CPL perspective highlighted in Figure 2, the very notion of curriculum now becomes a more contested one with, as discussed below, learning in context (or participation in the workplace) taking precedence over classroom-based activities. The way we think about 'knowledge' now has to be expanded beyond that implied in the original versions of Figure 2 (hence the use of inverted commas): we are now dealing with 'multiple knowledges' rather than a previously implied singular 'knowledge'.

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum   **5**
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

Knowledge matters

Eraut (2007a, b) observes that in universities knowledge has traditionally been associated with publication: what he calls *Codified knowledge*. He contrasts this with the notion of *Cultural knowledge*, which is not codified, but characterises a group setting in the workplace, and is generally acquired through participation in work-based practices. The individual counterpart he refers to as *Personal knowledge and capability*, which he defines as 'what an individual person brings to situations that enables them to think, interact and perform' incorporates 'aspects of personal expertise, practical wisdom and tacit knowledge that have not yet been made explicit' (Eraut, 2007a, 406).

(Eraut, 2007b, 2-3) argues that 'personal knowledge incorporates all of the following:

- *Codified knowledge* in the form(s) in which the person uses it
- *Know-how* in the form of skills and practices
- Personal *understandings of people and situations*
- Accumulated *memories of cases* and episodic *events* (Eraut, 2000, 2004)
- Other aspects of personal *expertise, practical wisdom* and *tacit knowledge*
- *Self-knowledge, attitudes, values* and *emotions*.

The evidence of personal knowledge comes mainly from observations of performance, and this implies a *holistic* rather than *fragmented* approach; because, unless one stops to deliberate, the knowledge one uses is already available in an *integrated form* and ready for action.'

The 'knowledge' referred to by Barnett and colleagues' in the original version of Figure 2 is what Eraut refers to as *Codified knowledge*. My contention is that the act of compiling a portfolio, and rehearsing how to render a sense of professional self (which should be apparent in a *capstone commentary*), is an explicit mechanism that encourages the portfolio author to explore and articulate not only some of the many and varied dimensions of *personal knowledge* and *capability* just discussed, but also some of the ways these intersect and connect with the *Cultural knowledge* that prevails in their workplace (in which Figure 2 is embedded).

Supporting expanded views of knowledge and learning

Programme activities intended to support portfolio authors (or would be authors) centre around a peer-based action learning process (eg Trevitt, 2008a; Trevitt and Perera, 2009). Individuals are encouraged to step aside from the 'hot action' of day-to-day practice, take stock of the preparations and actions they have been engaged in, and explicitly review the range of eligible 'evidence' they might bring to bear, and rehearse the arguments that might feature in their own *capstone commentary*. They are encouraged to engage in a constructive critique of one-another's approaches, and so benefit from being exposed to peers' insights, challenges and contexts. In this way, they gradually become more deliberative (Coles, 2002) in the selection of actual materials used in practice, and can iteratively rehearse and internalise selected conceptual ideas that capture and frame that practice.

The assumption is that an important potential outcome is enhanced self-insight, with a view to better enabling self-observation, and self-managed self-development thereafter. Gibbs (2007), drawing on Rogers (1969), argues that 'learning is maximised when judgements by the learner (in the form of self-assessment) are emphasised and judgements by the teacher are minimised', adding that 30 years ago he would have dismissed such ideals as impractical. He goes on to note:

> 'The value of self- and peer assessment is that students internalise academic standards and are subsequently able to supervise themselves as they study and write and solve problems, in relation to these standards. It is the act of students making judgement against standards that brings educational benefits, not the act of receiving a grade from a peer.'
>
> Gibbs (2007, 27)

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum   **6**
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

In parallel with this line of reasoning, the act of compiling a portfolio amounts to a 'documented self-evaluation exercise' suggest Wright et al., (1999, 90) which they claim 'is significant because skill at self-evaluation in the form of reflection is desirable'. Tigelaar et al. (2005, 599) make the point that, 'in combination with dialogue and debate' the acts of compiling and writing materials for portfolios 'can help teachers become more self-confident' about their practice and improve their 'insight into what is expected of them as professionals'. In the context of portfolio-based learning and assessment in medical education, Challis (1999, 371-2) argues that the characteristics of adult learning are central when determining 'how professionals in training might most effectively engage in their own learning development.' Adult learners need the freedom 'to define, explore, or even create their own reality': their ability to use dialectical logic, based on a principle of contradiction and the ability to identify problems or pose questions…' lies at the heart of meaningful experience of learning. These sentiments all accord with my experience of supporting participants through the process of compiling a portfolio.

Participants ideally should be skilled self-regulated learners and self-assessors. Inevitably and unsurprisingly this is not the case in reality, and care needs to be exercised to provide sufficient structures and support so that individuals can selectively rehearse and incrementally strengthen these capacities. Ryan and Deci (2000, 76), for example, observe that:

> Contexts supportive of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were found to foster greater internalization and integration than contexts that thwart satisfaction of these needs. … Excessive control, non-optimal challenges, and lack of connectedness … disrupt the inherent actualizing and organizational tendencies endowed by nature, and thus such factors result not only in the lack of initiative and responsibility but also in distress and psychopathology.

Participant confidence with the notion of self-assessment needs to be built up gradually. For many, the expanded view of knowledge that is required, and the way in which they can gain reassurance that meaningful and valid progress is being achieved, can be quite a novel if not alien experience. An iterative approach progressively reinforces the new perspectives being taken, and ensures that the required trust and confidence is built up incrementally. Repeated encounters with practice situations, repeated engagement with key concepts in the educational literature, and repeated discussions with peers are all implicated. It follows that there are certain limits to what can be achieved realistically on a given timescale. Experience suggests that periodic engagement over many months is required. Typically, upwards of 5 or more group meetings are required, perhaps supplemented by a few 1:1 sessions, all of between one and three hours duration. And these need to be spread over some 12 months or more, given the sort of ambitions we share, and all the other professional activities and responsibilities simultaneously being juggled by participants.

Assessment matters

Alongside the need to diversify the way we view the 'curriculum', and expand our perspective on knowledge, comes a requirement to rethink assessment. What university teachers should be able to do, and to represent in their portfolio, according to Biggs (2003, 242) is:

> *Reflect* on their own teaching, *evaluate* their classroom decisions in terms of theory, and thereby *improve* their teaching, *formulate* a theory of teaching that demonstrably drives decision-making and practice, *generate* new approaches to teaching on that basis.

Buried in here, then, is the expectation that such teachers will explicate some of the personal knowledge and capability that they are developing through their teaching role.

It follows that assessors as well as portfolio authors need to be alert to the wider perspectives on knowledge and learning implied by Figure 2 and Eraut's work (amongst others). 'As portfolios can provide a rich view of teaching in context, a portfolio is often seen as a highly valid instrument for teacher assessment' suggest van der Schaaf and Stokking (2008, 245) noting further that 'portfolio contents, being descriptive, context-bound and personal, ask for much interpretation'. Clarity of expectations is obviously most desirable, both for those compiling a portfolio and those assessing one. But how to achieve this, when the very essence of a portfolio is its flexibility? Inevitably, exactly what is required to be successful (as well as what is deemed to be adequate) will vary on a case by case basis. It is for these reasons that, as I have argued elsewhere (Trevitt and Stocks, in press), what is required is not so much a set of 'assessment criteria' as a set of 'typical expectations' to guide both the process of devising

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum **7**
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

and assessing a portfolio. 'There is no universal set of assessment criteria' argue Tigelaar *et al.* (2005, 601-2): assessors 'have no choice but to interpret what is meant and take account of the context'.

One way to characterise such 'typical expectations' is illustrated in Table 2 (adapted from Trevitt and Stocks, in press). Here, 'typical expectations' for extremes of performance ('unsatisfactory'; 'outstanding') are sketched for the four 'criteria for authenticity' proposed by Trevitt and Stocks.

Table 2: Signifiers of authenticity, and 'typical expectations' associated with successful and unsuccessful levels of performance (adapted from Trevitt and Stocks, 2010).

Criteria for 'authenticity'	Unsatisfactory	Outstanding
** 1 ** Biographical/ professional context	A basic instrumental/factual account. Thumbnail outline of job title and main tasks. Often inadequate contextual details provided to enable the concerned reader to appreciate the issues being discussed, or decisions being taken.	Insightful, analytical and/or reflective account of teaching context, and issues and/or challenges faced. Often takes note of influences across a range of levels: international, national, institutional, departmental, and/or disciplinary. Usually contrasts anticipated future role to current context. Often makes reference to one or more 'critical incidents' marking a turning point in thinking: where own ideas become clearer, are altered, etc
** 2 ** Practice development: and *experience* of practice	Little or no sense of practical development. No integration of any of the ideas from wider reading with practical approach to teaching. Little or no attempt to implement any self-evaluation, or solicit feedback from others on own practice.	Increasing congruence evident between theory espoused and theory in use: viz, a well integrated account which inter-relates core concepts and key ideas with specifics of own teaching practices. Any necessary change and adaptation informed by systematic evaluation drawing from multiple sources. Offers clear insights into how and why certain approaches work, and how this is known (evaluated).
** 3 ** Core concepts/ key ideas: especially perspectives on (conceptions of) teaching, but also associated language used in the literature, etc	Little or no use of sources, or else un-integrated, uncritical or inappropriate use; may be jargon ridden. Conceptions of teaching largely confined to teacher-focussed perspective. Sense that candidate is using names/terms that s/he thinks the examiner will be looking for.	Integrates relevant ideas and themes from a useful range of literature into an account of own situated practice. Articulate across a range of teaching perspectives. Likely to engage with the literature in a sustained, thoughtful, novel or critical manner.
** 4 ** CPL purpose and values: perhaps in terms of written aims and/or objectives, etc	Little or no working concept of CPL. Little sense of self, practice and agency. Perhaps a cynical linking of CPL purpose or course objectives with changes in or current understanding of thinking/practice. May use language straight from course booklet and/or adopts an instrumental checklist perspective. Sense of objectives as external imposition – hoops to be jumped through.	Integrated and internalised sense of self, practice and agency. Purpose of CPL explicitly apparent. The purpose and goals of CPL are no longer perceived as an external imposition, but as necessarily underpinning professional practice. Clear sense of professional agency.
** 5 ** Coherence of writing, vocabulary used, writing style, etc	Oversimplification of key ideas or failure to explain issues/ challenges/ thoughts adequately. Makes unjustified assumptions or links across sections. Fails to engage with own practice, key ideas and/or specialist language in a logical way. Disjointed, unstructured, incomplete (or errors in) bibliography.	Fluent, articulate, considered use of specialist language, explicit structure, cogently organised and expressed. Clear sense of learning as journey, involving process of argument and discovery. Rigorous attention to detail in bibliography. May be of publishable standard (or contains elements which are).

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development) Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

8

These criteria have been devised in recognition that portfolios require authors to talk *about* practice rather than actually *perform* that practice: inevitably this leads to concerns about *authenticity* in the representation offered. Not all elements in Table 2 carry the same importance, of course, and

> '…an unsatisfactory judgment in one of the areas outlined does not necessarily mean that a candidate fails. The portfolio must be judged as whole, and a preparedness is required on the part of examiners to do this (e.g. Coles, 2002; Driessen *et. al*., 2005)'

(Trevitt and Stocks, in press)

Note there is no explicit expectation related to ethical stance: while this is welcome when offered in a given portfolio, we have not felt comfortable at this juncture making it an explicit requirement.

One further point can usefully be made regarding the important topic of assessment of portfolios, and that concerns the stance taken by assessors. There is a reluctance to fail a portfolio just as there is a reluctance to fail PhD theses (Mullins and Kiley, 2002). As with a thesis, the portfolio represents an investment of a lot of time and effort on the part of the author (and in all probability, their tutor and/or mentor as well), and most assessors will do everything within their power to ensure that the assessment process is successful. Further, a resubmission requires additional work on the part not only of the author, but also assessors and those supporting the portfolio drafting process. If that process is working well, then few, if any portfolios should actually be submitted for assessment that are not already known to be adequate (in direct analogy with the situation for PhD theses): the expectation is that the pass rate should, effectively, be close to 100%.

Capstone commentaries in action
Capstone commentaries are compiled by participants undertaking the Australian National University Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (eg see Trevitt 2008a; Trevitt and Perera, 2009). This requirement was framed as an opportunity for participants to review the 'journey they had undertaken' during their study programme, refer back to the overall goals, take stock of what was of value and why in what they had accomplished, and consider ways in which it is likely to be valuable to their future professional work and roles.

Of the records and experience associated with some 49 *capstone commentaries* produced during the first few years of this study programme, 29 were produced by clinicians in the Medical School, and 20 were from colleagues across a wide range of academic disciplines, including humanities, social sciences, science as well as other professions such as Engineering and Law. Thirty-seven of the 49 proved very straightforward to bring into being, with participants needing little additional support beyond the group action learning seminars.

The remaining dozen involved 6 cases where participants needed extended support in the form of one-one coaching and iterative engagement with drafts. A further 6 were, essentially, 'problem' cases. Issues ranged from management (mostly time) through to more fundamental, conceptual, matters. They included:
- Other issues in life crowded out the opportunity to engage meaningfully (eg due to work commitments; personal illness; unplanned family demands, etc). Tardiness occurred in getting drafts turned around (and the 'flow' became 'lost').
- Working with English as an additional language. In some cases there were associated issues related to cross-cultural (mis-)understanding (eg expectations associated with reflective writing).
- Problems with tendering or receiving feedback, eg: dealing with an already well-established professional with an established self-image who was making heavy weather of drafting a reflective *capstone commentary.*

In one or two notable instances
- The notion of reflection-on-practice appeared to be a particularly alien skill/attribute;
- There was a tendency to skate over the surface of issues, and to do so in too few words; and/or
- There was a tendency to add length and superficial detail, but not to dig down and offer the needed depth or insight.

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development) Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

9

Appendix 1 contains illustrative extracts from the range of actual *capstone commentaries* produced. These extracts have been arranged as 4 groups of two examples each against each of the 'criteria for 'authenticity' outlined in Table 2. Note that none of the commentaries as a whole was accepted initially: each required amendment in response to specific feedback on a draft, but none was 'problematic' either; that is, the authors were responsive to feedback and it was 'straightforward' to get the draft into its final, acceptable, form.

What should be apparent from these examples is the extent to which a balanced approach to self-assessment can be accomplished quite readily in most cases, along with the notion of using evidence to back up claims being made (even if most of that evidence is excluded here due to space requirements). Participants are engaging in an exercise of professional judgment about their own performance, using newly acquired concepts and skills. They are, in effect, rehearsing an approach to qualitative appraisal that will, hopefully, become central to their professional role as teachers (eg Biggs, 2003; Driessen et al., 2005).

Concluding comments

In this chapter I have briefly reviewed my perspectives on the nature of the teaching portfolio in higher education. Increasingly, aspiring or newly appointed academics are expected to compile a teaching portfolio at an early stage in their career. My argument is that, when framed appropriately, the notion of a portfolio can act as a valuable tool in supporting professional learning: it acts as scaffolding that helps prompt reflective practice. The proposal is that it should contain two main parts: a selection of materials used in or compiled from practice, together with a *capstone commentary*. A key attribute of the *capstone commentary* component of the portfolio is that it requires participants to identify, value and hold in constructive tension the *personal knowledge* and *capability* emerging from their continuing professional learning and the *codified knowledge* that resides at the core of their primary disciplinary identity. The expectation is that participants become more literate in some of the intricacies of the world of continuing professional learning, even as they continue with their mainstream professional/ disciplinary work. The agency being exercised when amassing evidence and writing a *capstone commentary* may benefit from the expanded ways of thinking about 'knowledge' and 'curriculum' suggested by Figure 2 . A revised stance on assessment is implied accordingly. The portfolio is a flexible tool: demanding that a context-specific account is rendered. Authors need to craft an authentic representation of both their work environment and their actions within it (Trevitt and Stocks, in press) and attention on the part of assessors is required to verify that this is accomplished satisfactorily. For authors, this in itself is an active component of character formation; it is part of the identity work involved in bringing aspects of a newly developing professional self into focus.

While the emphasis here has been on portfolio use by new academics seeking traction in the world of continuing professional learning, I suggest that the issues explored may well have application more broadly. All graduates, across a variety of disciplines and professions, inevitably will experience some version of the need to represent their learning, and capacity to go on learning in the workplace. Is it drawing a longbow too far to suggest that some of the intricacies involved when building a portfolio for use in an academic workplace might have parallels in other employment contexts?

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum   **10**
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

References

Barnett, R., and K. Coate (2005) *Engaging the curriculum in higher education*. Buckingham, UK: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Barnett, R., G. Parry and K. Coate (2001) Conceptualising curriculum change. *Teaching Higher Education*, 6:4, 435-49.

Baume, D. (2001) *A briefing on the assessment of portfolios.* Assessment Series No.6. York, UK: Higher Education Academy.

Buckridge, M. (2008) Teaching portfolios: Their role in teaching and learning policy. *International Journal for Academic Development,* 13:2, 117-127.

Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for quality learning at university.* Buckingham: Society for Research in Higher Education and Open University Press. (2nd Edition)

Cervero, R. M. (2001) Continuing professional education in transition, 1981 - 2000, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20:1, 16-30.

Challis, M. (1999) AMEE Medical Education Guide No 11. Portfolio-based learning and assessment in medical education. *Medical Teacher,* 21:4, 370-386.

Coles, C. (2002) Developing professional judgement. *The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions,* 22, 3-10.

Driessen, E., C. van der Vleuten, L. Schuwirth, J. van Tartwijk & J. Vermunt (2005) The use of qualitative research criteria for portfolio assessment as an alternative to reliability evaluation: a case study. *Medical Education*, 39, 214-220.

Elton, L. and B. Johnston (2002) *Assessment in universities: a critical review of research*. Learning and Teaching Support Network, Generic Centre, UK. 94pp.

Eraut, M. (2000) Non-formal Learning and Tacit Knowledge in Professional Work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70, 113-136.

Eraut M. (2004) Transfer of Knowledge between Education and Workplace Settings. In Rainbird, H., Fuller, A., and Munro, A. (eds) *Workplace Learning in Context,* Routledge, pp. 201-221.

Eraut, M. (2007a) Learning from other people in the workplace. *Oxford Review of Education,* 33:4, 403-422.

Eraut, M. (2007b) Theoretical and practical knowledge revisited. Paper presented at *Developing potentials for learning*, the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) biennual conference, Budapest, Hungary, 28 August – 1 September. 26pp

Gibbs, G. (2007) How assessment frames student learning. Chapter 2, in: Bryan, C. & Clegg, K. (Eds) *Innovative assessment in higher education*. Abingdon and New York, Routledge. pp23-36.

Hilton, S. R and H. B Slotnick (2005) Proto-professionalism: how professionalization occurs across the continuum of medical education. *Medical Education*, 39:1, 58-65.

Klenowski, V., S. Askew and E. Carnell (2006) Portfolios for learning, assessment and professional development in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 31:3, 267-286.

McWilliam, C. (2007) Continuing Education at the Cutting Edge: Promoting Transformative Knowledge Translation. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 27:2, 72-79.

Mullins, G. and M. Kiley (2002) 'It's A Phd, Not A Nobel Prize': How Experienced Examiners Assess Research Theses. *Studies in Higher Education,* 27:4, 369-386.

Prosser, M., M. Rickinson, V. Bence, A. Hanbury and M. Kulej (2006) *Formative Evaluation of Accredited Programmes*, York: The Higher Education Academy.

Rogers, C. (1969) *Freedom to learn* (1st ed.). New York: Macmillan/Merrill.

Ryan, R.M., and E.L. Deci (2000) Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *American Psychologist,* 55:1, 68-78

Tigelaar, D.E.H., D.H.J.M. Dolmans, I.H.A.P. Wolfhagen and C.P.M. van der Vleuten. (2005) Quality issues in judging portfolios: Implications for organizing teaching portfolio assessment procedures. *Studies in Higher Education,* 30:5, 595-610.

Trevitt, A.C.F. (2008a) Learning in academia is more than academic learning: action research in academic practice for and with medical academics. *Educational Action Research*, 16:4, 495 - 515.

Trevitt, A. C. F. (2008b) Engaging practical legal educators at The Australian National University (ANU): tales from 10 years in the field (of academic development). Paper presented at the 43rd annual conference of the Association of Law Teachers,St Anne's College, Oxford,16-18 March.

Trevitt, A.C.F., and C. Stocks (20XX) Signifying Authenticity in academic practice: a framework for better

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

11

understanding and harnessing portfolio assessment? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* (in press).

Trevitt, A.C.F., and C. Perera (2009) Self and continuing professional learning (development): Issues of curriculum and identity in developing academic practice. *Teaching in Higher Education,* 14:4, 347-359.

van der Schaaf, M.F., and K.M. Stokking (2008) Developing and validating a design for teacher portfolio assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 33:3, 245-62.

Webster-Wright, A. (2009) Reframing professional development through understanding authentic professional learning. *Review of Educational Research,* 79:2, 702-739.

Woollard, R.F. (2008) Continuing medical education in the 21st century. *British Medical Journal,* 337: 469-470

Wright, W.A., P.T. Knight and N. Pomerleau (1999) Portfolio people: teaching and learning dossiers and innovation in higher education. *Innovative Higher Education*, 24:2, 89-103.

The teaching portfolio in higher education and the nature of knowledge, curriculum **12**
and assessment in continuing professional learning (or development)
Learning to be Professional through a Higher Education e-book Chapter A5

Appendix 1 Examples of participants' responses aligned with the signifiers detailed in Table 2.

** 1 ** Biographical/ professional context	**EXAMPLE A** Enrolment in the [Developing Academic Practice] course coincided with my appointment as a part-time lecturer for the Medical Faculty. For the first time I held a formal academic appointment although I had been involved in teaching medical students and junior doctors for more than 20 years. For the first time I was involved in planning and delivering an important part of the curriculum for a medical school. While I was strongly advised by the Dean to enrol in the course, I was concerned that the time and travel commitment would not allow me to do justice to the course; instead, the programme became a vital part of my new role as an academic. For this Capstone Review, I will try to show how my attitudes and practice have changed, and review the implications for my future practice. **Background** Like most long-serving clinicians, I had acquired teaching responsibilities in addition to patient care. In the past I had given bedside tutorials in clinical medicine, done the occasional lecture and had even been involved in the organization of clinical examinations for post-graduate students. However my primary focus had always been patient care, with teaching an add-on activity. I had never received (nor sought) training in educational methods, nor in the principles of pedagogy. Teaching was not in the "foreground" of my mind.	**EXAMPLE B** I completed my undergraduate education in country X in 2000. I started my academic career as a researcher when I came to country Y in 2001 to commence my PhD. After finishing my PhD in Electrical Engineering in 2004, I joined my present Department as a Lecturer. I had my first experience of teaching in 2005 when I was involved in delivering last 4 weeks of lectures for a second year course (90 students), with an experienced Professor as my mentor. Later in that same academic year I coordinated a course for the first time and was involved in team teaching with a postdoctoral researcher (I delivered lectures for the first 7 weeks), under the guidance of another experienced Professor. In the last two and a half years, I have taught a wide range of courses in electronics, signal processing and telecommunications within the Bachelor of Engineering (BE) degree programme.
** 2 ** Practice development: and *experience* of practice	**EXAMPLE C** This review seeks to highlight changes in my academic practice since undertaking this CPL programme. On engaging with this programme of study I was 18 months into my first academic job and found myself on a few PhD panels, as supervisor and as advisor. I realised that I didn't know how to supervise a PhD effectively, what my responsibilities as a supervisor were or what strategies could be used to effectively supervise a PhD project. My expectations on undertaking this course were to "Learn how to supervise PhD students and to understand a bit about management and leadership". This 'goal' was in stark contrast to the outcomes envisaged by the Institute who expected to equip me with 1. an enhanced understanding of the changing context of academic work; 2. a greater awareness of my own practices in graduate supervision – among a range of other academic practices – as well as that of my peers; 3. engage in the ongoing diagnosis of my own individual professional learning and development priorities (informed by literature, practice and my own professional context); 4. develop, implement and evaluate outcomes of plans and actions in pursuit of these priorities; and 5. feel prepared to undertake a leadership and mentoring role in my professional workplace.	**EXAMPLE D** Here I discuss some new contexts that have presented themselves over the past year where I can extend my learning from this programme. I have identified below some emerging areas of interest, as well the identification of some of the possible skills that I would need to develop to undertake those projects successfully. **Projects: Area of interest arising** • Structure of knowledge and culturally inclusive class teaching in the undergraduate programme. • Implementing reflective learning into education. This would involve further work on reflection, and devising ways to support others to implement it in practice. • Exploring the idea of research-led teaching, and how to conceive of the two fields as complementary and mutually beneficial activities. **Skills to develop** • Continue to improve my own self management, planning and leadership skills. Developing the personal skills and the understanding of academic context to be able to enable constructive change, and to work effectively and creatively. • Questioning, discussion leading and facilitating critical thinking – examining further how I undertake questioning in small group teaching to facilitate learning and clarify ideas.

** 3 ** Core concepts/ key ideas: especially perspectives on (conceptions of) teaching, but also associated language used in the literature, etc	**EXAMPLE E** A different teaching style which I found attractive was the cognitive apprenticeship model (Brown, J.S., A. Collins & P. Duguid: *Educational Researcher*, 1989; 18; 32-42). Clinical medicine lends itself to this approach, with inexperienced junior doctors working with (and being supervised by) senior clinicians acquire some of the attributes of the more experienced doctor. I had always hoped that I acted as a role model for interns and resident doctors, and drew on this concept as developed in a literature review (Paice, E. S. Heard, & F. Moss: *British Medical Journal* 2002; 325: 707 – 710). This article emphasized a more collegiate, two-way approach which the authors described as mentorship or coaching. Rather that the learner unconsciously modeling himself on the senior doctor, the authors advocate regular, formalized sessions involving feedback, acting as a sounding board, and "asking more questions than giving answers". I have tried to incorporate this approach in my dealings with junior doctors. This is another example where teaching and learning practice has moved more to the "front of my mind" rather than operating on the unconscious level.	**EXAMPLE F** I now aim for constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999)[1] in my courses by communicating clear learning outcomes to the students at the start of the course. The teaching & learning activities and assessment in my courses is then designed to address the learning outcomes. I divide the learning outcomes for my courses into three broad categories: (i) knowledge base which includes the fundamental knowledge and technical expertise (ii) engineering ability which includes problem formulation and problem solving skills and ability to conduct an engineering project (iii) practical skills which includes practical hardware and software simulation skill. These three categories are broadly aligned with the core set of skills expected of Professional Engineers by Institution of Engineers, Australia. A five-page curriculum document, containing the learning outcomes for my 2nd year course is included in the Appendix. [1] Biggs, J.B. (1999) Teaching for Quality Learning in University, Buckingham, Society for Research in Higher Education and Open University Press.

** 4 ** CPL purpose and values: perhaps in terms of written aims and/or objectives, etc	**EXAMPLE G** The programme has offered a valuable and important experience for me, at a time when my professional life took a new turn with a formal academic appointment. I believe the course has helped me to move teaching and learning into the foreground of my mind, allowing me to make important changes in practice and attitudes which I hope will make me a more effective teacher. I believe the course has guided me to become less teacher-focused and more interested in the student's perspective, and to act more as a mentor or coach than a transmitter. By encouraging a more student-centered approach with an emphasis on self-directed learning I have also been able to relax a little and enjoy the teaching role. I no longer feel I need to cover all the facts and talk myself hoarse in the process. The experience of working with colleagues has also been illuminating and I hope a collaborative approach will continue into the future. Reflective practice and life-long learning have also entered my consciousness, and I hope to make these qualities a permanent part of my teaching and learning life. Finally, the course has encouraged me to "take control" of my teaching work, and to have a more informed and active role in planning, delivery and evaluation of teaching in my particular context. I look forward to the next phase of my academic career.	**EXAMPLE H** Let me cut to the chase before going into the details. This is back to front but I feel that it makes more sense to state my change in approach and then explain how the change related to the course. I will have a student attached to the practice next month. I have made substantial preparation for this student's attachment whereas previously I had made none. The preparation is at two levels, practical and conceptual. The practical aspect starts with a reading package for the student. It contains a diagrammatic overview of general practice demonstrating the range of activities such as illness prevention, health promotion, early disease detection, screening etc. through acute illness and chronic disability in its various stages. This is followed by a table showing the difference between the hospital environment and the environment of general practice. Then there are three chapters from three different textbooks on general practice. I will spent some time with the student before we see any patients to learn of their background, their level of knowledge and their expectations. I have broken down the patient doctor encounter into its constituent parts, history taking, examination, investigation, diagnosis and treatment and follow-up. I intend to focus on a single one of these during each consultation and demonstrate and discuss the relevant factors. At the end of each morning or afternoon session I will ask the student to take three minutes to write reflections on some aspect of the experience with the added instruction to look beyond the immediate clinical issue. I will also ask them to chase up specific clinical matters and present them to me as a discussion. Whereas previously I tended to concentrate on the unique features of each patient encounter, I will now focus on the consistent features, the constants of general practice. The aim is that the student will at the end of the month's attachment see their experience as cohesive and structured rather than a series of disjointed and random clinical events. And the purpose of that is to have the learning process in a teaching environment that encourages a deeper understanding of general practice. I will use the student's daily reflections for my own reflection on the progress and for ongoing planning so my curriculum will be dynamic. It is hard for me to convey the enormity of the change in my approach. For an experienced teacher, the plan I have outlined probably seems fairly basic and not very imaginative. I have changed from an active doctor who tried to make doctoring more interesting and a laise fair [sic for laissez faire?] and passive educator to the complete reverse. I want to be an active educator who can make the learning situation stimulating and interesting, yes but more than that, to give the student a focus and a framework, to give them the opportunity to not just to learn, but to think. I want to see my student change. I see my new approach as a start, as a new way of looking at my role, a perspective that will demand continuing appraisal and reappraisal, development and continual planning.