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Book Review:

53 Ways to Enhance Researcher Development by Rob Daley, Kay Guccione and Steve Hutchinson (Eds.), Suffolk: Frontinus Ltd., 2017, 208pp. ISBN: 978-1-907076-95-4 (paperback).

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The book '53 Ways to Enhance Researcher Development' is a vital resource that is intended for researcher development professionals. The book is divided into ten chapters, each containing between three and eight short sections. All sections are written in an easy-to-read and practice-oriented manner filled with 'tried and tested practices' from the book's highly experienced contributors. Some helpful features are integrated, such as a thematic grouping of themes indicating 'complementary ideas' at the end of each section. This book is focused, yet comprehensive, with great potential for generating ideas for researchers interested in this area and also for much wider application to practice. The topics include assessing researchers' needs, supporting career development, and culminating in the expansion of researcher development professionals' careers themselves. Nonetheless, its manageable size means a comfortable read in one sitting.

This book gradually reveals hidden insights and applicability beyond researcher development professionals, for whom it was originally written. As the

editors stress, 'Researcher development is a responsibility and activity of far more people than those occupying researcher development posts or roles [including] principal investigators, research supervisors, staff developers, careers professionals, research office staff and research centre managers' (p. xii).

So, what prompted the publication of this book? Constant and significant changes observed in the evolving research landscape – whether at a national or an international level – served as the main catalysts. These changes unsurprisingly created new demands, new standards, new expectations and, therefore, a need for new approaches and skills from researchers as they endeavour to cope and flourish in an increasingly competitive research environment. Such changes are described below:

> The demands of higher education institutions on individual academic
> researchers are constantly changing. This is especially so in an
> increasingly international employment environment where
> institutional and organisational contexts may differ widely. Even
> within familiar environments, what brought success ten years ago may
> not do so now. (p. 115)

Although what was described above pertains to the British context, the changing demands on academic researchers elsewhere due to a combination of factors (including innovation, student demand, and labour market considerations) are widely recognised and experienced, especially by the researchers themselves. The increased strategic focus on internationalisation arguably also plays a prominent role (Magyar & Robinson-Pant, 2011). Against this backdrop, these altered research contexts have

created both new opportunities and distinctive challenges for all stakeholders involved.

As an example, whereas more international research partnerships have progressively become the norm, particularly where countries encounter comparable issues (Knobel et al, 2013; Stead & Harrington, 2000), developing researchers' competencies and behaviours within the national context has also become complex with increasingly diverse groups of researchers who are likely to have distinctive expectations and needs. When combined with further contemporary research demands (such as an emphasis on collaboration and interdisciplinarity, innovative ways of research dissemination, and pressure to work with industry), this need can result in exciting but equally frightening roles, which at times lead to the 'impostor syndrome', or 'the sense that one is not good enough to be in academia' (Keefer, 2015, p. 20). (See also pp 56-58; 64-66 of the text under review.) Predictably, other challenges exist depending upon particular contextual factors, such as the majority of doctoral graduates not pursuing a career in academia (p. 99), that have huge implications for workforce development and future employment. These interactions make continuously assessing expectations in the new research landscape crucial to an ongoing effort to enhance researchers' development.

It is to this end that this book offers its contribution. This resource is a compilation of excellent ideas, bursting with examples of effective and well-tested practice in researcher development. This focus also serves as an attestation of the breadth of the responsibility underpinning the role of researcher development professionals (also called researcher developers). Although a major part of their role supports the professional development of doctoral students and early-career staff members, particularly research associates, assistants, fellows and new lecturers, as

well as staff who might be in other roles but are equally expected to develop research practices (p. 85), the book demonstrates that the role of researcher development professionals is much broader in practice. A closer scrutiny of their responsibilities also highlights the nature of their jobs as interdependent, intertwined, and complementary to other roles in the institution. Taking Principal Investigators (PI) as an example, PIs typically lead a team of researchers, whose motivation and performance are often enhanced by the tailored workshops and engagements organised by researcher developers. Equally, these workshops are strategically employed to seek greater understanding of researchers' distinctive needs, which can then inform the development of recommendations for PIs with respect to 'getting the best from [their] researchers' (p. 159).

It is also evident through the numerous cases presented how institutional provision is generally contextualised according to the needs of their institution, but also offers transferable insight for other institutions. For example, this book illustrates how the success of a development programme abroad in a particular university is carefully planned and managed in Section 46. In another context, Section 18 relates how a university responded to the development challenge where research-based doctoral students traditionally did not receive any coursework; there are lessons to be gleaned not only from the success of their optional 30 credit Master's level course but also from addressing the many challenges, especially for distance/non-full-time learners (pp. 59-60). It is also worth noting that in some contexts, there is an indication that research developers are already involved in 'cover[ing] the full spectrum of academic activity – research excellence, inspirational teaching and professional development' (p. 175). Given the wide-ranging nature of work in which

researcher developers are increasingly engaged, it is encouraging to note that this book allocates the final chapter for the growth of researcher developers themselves!

As in other books in Frontinus' Professional and Higher Education series, this book presents ideas with practical applications that are easily transferable to other contexts. In particular, three groups would benefit greatly from this book. Starting with the postgraduate researcher cohort (including doctoral and post-doctoral researchers as well as new lecturers), the book offers an abundance of helpful suggestions. Examples include sections discussing identity formation and transformation (pp. 56-58); finding a voice through writing (pp. 72-74); the value of getting individual writing advice (pp. 75-76); d) reframing one's thinking about themselves, practice and process of writing and power of discussion in resolving issues (pp. 77-79); pursuing opportunities for doctoral internships (pp. 99-101); setting realistic career goals (pp. 115-117); developing an independent research leader (pp. 121-123); and supporting transition to lectureships (pp. 127-129) among others. Likewise, practical suggestions that cater more to supervisors include reflection on their role in developing a 'doctoral repertoire' via co-writing with students and involving students as critical friends on supervisors' own work-in-progress (pp. 61-63). A number of these chapters also aim to empower researcher developers, with a view to the impact being cascaded within and outwith their institutions. The chapter topics include strategically employing genuine case-study based examples for more realistic and relevant discussions (pp. 44-47); the importance of 'undertaking a real implementation task' following a session (pp. 44-47); supporting researchers' creative academic engagement (pp. 95-98); organising a workshop session to combat impostor feelings; raising awareness of career development, promotion policies and processes (pp. 127-129); and adopting a nationwide scheme and tailoring it to a specific

institution, e.g. the Sheffield Crucible (pp. 133-135). Many of these chapters are equally beneficial to academics who organise programmes and events for students and colleagues.

A notable, inherent strength of this book is service as a crucial resource not only for developing novice as well as early-career university researchers, but also supervisors and other researcher development professionals, with sound advice grounded on practical experience. 'Researcher development is very much a shared concern, with multiple actors and multiple stakeholders', after all (p. xii). Apart from the many ideas, suggestions, and references to available resources, readers can expect to be confronted by reflective questions such as, should development activities be compulsory (pp. 12-14), or is it validation or evaluation that is being implemented (pp. 48-49)? On the other hand, where readers may want to read in greater depth on the theoretical basis for some of the concepts mentioned in the chapters, citations are not consistently provided—for example, for the term 'realist evaluation' (pp. 48-49). The book reflects significant discussions on PGR students' identity formation leading to the discussion of theories on learner identity (pp. 56-58) or the notion of 'critical inclusion' (pp. 61-63) where students are 'invited into the discourse' as opposed to the more common 'tips and techniques'. While little doubt exists that such areas are thought-provoking, readers are left with almost no guidance concerning what literature is available should they wish to investigate further. With respect to internationalisation, it would also have been helpful to see more discussion of how to support the research development of the huge number of international doctoral students, including 'strategic learning approaches, tailored study programmes, and university-led interventions and activities' (Elliot et al., 2016, p. 745). Similarly,

enhancing academics' knowledge in intercultural supervision deserves further discussion (Manathunga, 2014).

After weighing all the book's potential strengths and areas for improvement, one of the issues that the book strongly impressed on me as an academic and a doctoral supervisor is: 'How can academics, particularly doctoral research supervisors or principal investigators, work with programme developers?' There is a strong argument that this issue warrants a call for a more unified working partnership between researcher developers, academics and other staff (staff developers, careers professionals, research office staff and research staff managers) towards a shared purpose of enhancing researcher development. They may have distinct responsibilities, but clearly overlapping goals within these roles exist, which arguably necessitate an improved way of working together. In so doing, it is best to end with a helpful reminder: at the heart of a project's success lies recognition of 'institutional strengths, partners, objectives, and organisational structure' among others (p. 100), which are critical not only for planning but also for overcoming challenges to ensure a successful outcome.

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