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Title: **Inspiring teaching in higher education**

Presenters: **Alastair Irons and Siobhan Devlin**
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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- appreciate and understand the concept of the inspiring teacher
- understand why we want to inspire students in HE
- determine what impact there will be as a result of inspiring teaching

Outputs from workshop will include

- a list of the characteristics of an inspiring teacher (and an uninspiring teacher)
- an action plan for participants to develop their own inspirational teaching

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

The purpose of this workshop is to encourage colleagues to reflect on their practice and develop a common understanding (if indeed there is a common understanding) of what it means to be an inspiring teacher and to implement changes which will lead to more inspirational teaching for their students. Ryan (2011) makes the link between inspirational teaching and inspirational learners. It is hoped that the work currently being undertaken to examine and develop inspirational teaching will have a positive impact on the learning experience of students.

We are not advocating a “panacea-like” toolkit of approaches that can be used to make teaching be inspiring – but we hope to consider common themes around which practitioners may wish to reflect.

We have undertaken action research with the objective of identifying and exploring ways in which inspirational teaching can be developed with academic colleagues. The initial stages of our research have focused on examining what the term inspiring teacher means both to students and to staff. So far we have primarily centred on the teaching of the computing disciplines and has evolved from a desire to inspire students to learn, to inspire students to want to learn and to enthuse students about their subjects. According to Bentley-Davis (2010) developing the teaching skills to inspire students takes “effort and the ability to reflect and be honest about your performance and your qualities”.

Preliminary analysis of the results we have so far collated indicate that there are distinctive categories that contribute to inspirational teaching. These are

1. personality and authenticity,
2. experience,
3. approaches/methods used

The workshop is a mix of sharing research findings and activities to encourage participants to consider what inspirational teaching means to them. The activities aim to encourage reflection and consideration around the concept of the inspiring teacher and inspiring teaching in Higher Education. We will also share our initial findings from our action research into inspirational teaching.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Plenary

Introduction, context and why inspirational teaching is important (5 mins)

Activity 1 (whole group)

Participants to consider why they would want to inspire students
Free format and flip chart recording (5 mins)

Plenary

Sharing of the action research methodology we've adopted (5 mins)

Activity 2 (in smaller groups)

"If you wanted to leave your students uninspired, what would you do?"

You may wish to consider classroom activities, assessment activities or learning technology activities.

Post it note and collation (15 mins)

Discussion (5 mins)

Plenary

Sharing data that we have collected in our research (15 mins)

Activity 3 (in smaller groups)

Participants to identify examples when they think they have inspired students? (This could be from the classroom, one to one supervisions, assessment activities or use of learning technologies for example)

Consider what they did to inspire

Consider how they knew the students had been inspired

Consider how to make the inspiration sustainable

Post it note, and collation (25 mins)

Plenary

Discussion summary and questions (15 mins)

Activity 4 (individual) – not to be done in workshop – but as follow on from workshop

Colleagues are encouraged to develop an action plan which takes into account opportunities which will help make learning and teaching inspirational (consider at individual, departmental, faculty and university level)

References

Bentley-Davis, C., (2010) *How to be an Amazing Teacher*, Crown House Publishing Ltd., Carmarthen

Ryan, W., (2011) *Inspirational Teachers, Inspirational Learners*, Crown House Publishing Ltd., Carmarthen