Professional navel gazing: Flexible learning professionals into the future

Jenny Bird
Teaching and Learning Centre
Southern Cross University

Designers and developers working in Australian universities are an ill defined professional group whose role in the design and development of flexible learning programs and materials is of increasing strategic importance to their institutions. Their roles have undergone significant change over the last 10 years with the rapid and simultaneous impact of flexible learning, new technologies, internationalisation, massification and economic rationalism. This empirical study aims to describe the profession by job title and award, qualification and core activities. Results demonstrate an increasing diversity of job titles, particularly new positions related to web/online and multimedia development, a mix of academic and administrative classifications, changed core duties particularly in the areas of online learning and staff development, and some differences between various groups in the core activities in which they engage. The paper calls for the profession to step outside its comfort zone and reopen the debate about the advantages and disadvantages of professionalisation.

Keywords: designers and developers, flexible learning, professionalism

Introduction

Most Australian universities employ people who work with academic teaching staff in the design and development of flexible learning programs and materials for their students. Depending on the structure, size, history, culture, aims and goals of each university these people are variously employed as instructional or educational designers, educational developers, e-learning or online developers /designers and lecturers with associated specialist titles. The range of titles itself reflects a variety of orientations, approaches and theoretical frameworks. Some of these groups are employed as academics, others as administrative staff. Some of them work within schools or faculties; others work in central facilities like Teaching and Learning Centres or Flexible Learning Centres. Differences between the roles and responsibilities of each group are ambiguous, unstable, contextual and subsequently difficult to map. These groups are not represented by any one professional body or association, share neither a common statement of duties nor a code of practice, have no accreditation or registration requirements, come from diverse professional, theoretical and educational backgrounds and have no obvious career path.

The convergence of traditional distance education and face to face teaching as a consequence of the simultaneous impacts of new technologies, changing student demographics, economic rationalism and globalisation is well documented in the related literature (see for example Inglis, 1999; King, 2003). Inglis (1999:25) makes the observation that 'the boundaries between distance education and other modes of delivery are rapidly breaking down. Replacement of the concept of "off campus" delivery with the concept of "flexible" delivery has diminished the value of distance as a differentiating criterion.' Distance education, once 'seen as a distinct field of practice.' has moved from the margins of higher education and has become mainstream (Inglis, 1999; King, 2003). Traditional distance education centres are reconfiguring into flexible learning centres, merging with academic development units, and adding e-learning specialists, multimedia and web designers to their staff. Converging from the other direction, academic development, once located firmly within the culture and traditions of on campus teaching, is 'increasingly finding itself in centres dominated by materials production and instructional design.' (Webb, 2000:17)

Professional identity

Within this rapidly changing environment the role that designers and developers play in the development of flexible learning programs and materials has become more complex. Designers and developers no

longer work solely within one delivery framework, but across online, print and face to face delivery and are converging with other professional groups like academic developers and web developers. The professional identity of these groups has never been clear and debates about professional identity, roles and responsibilities and academic teaching staff perceptions are apparent in the related literature dating back to the late 80s. (see for example Parer, 1989, 1993, Andresen, 1991, Inglis, 1996, Allen, 1996). This early research can be characterised as reflective and descriptive in nature, attempting to explore, describe and define the profession/s of design/development. The literature is peppered with journal articles and book chapters with titles such as 'Pathways to a profession, what profession?' (Murphy, 1993), 'Educational developers: what do they know?' (Andresen, 1991), 'The developer's identity crisis' (Arger, in Parer, 1989). In much of the literature the titles instructional, educational, design and development are used synonymously. Parer (1989) notes that 'some use the terms educational developer and instructional designer interchangeably, others find it important to make clear distinctions.' The relationship between instructional designers and educational designers is similarly unclear.

Inglis (1996) uses the term 'teaching learning specialist' to describe this group of people. Inglis used a phenomenographic approach to investigate how instructional designers conceived of their role given 'the absence of any prescribed definition of professional role, such as might be defined by a professional accrediting authority' (270). When asked how they perceived their role as instructional designers, respondents to Allen's (1996) survey most commonly mentioned the following: designing learning materials, acting as a surrogate student or student advocate, being a quality assurance auditor or manager and project management. They also commonly mentioned the fact that the role required a wide range of skills and abilities. Schwier, Campbell and Kenny (2004) researched instructional designers in Canada about their professional identity, communities of practice and their role as social change agents within their institutions. They found that, similar to the experience of designers in Australia, their professional identity was ill defined and highly dependent on institutional culture, that people came to the professional via multiple career paths and were unconstrained by any requirements for credentials, and that informal collaboration with other instructional designers was crucial to the development of communities of practice:

> identity is an important part of any community of practice. It embraces a sense of shared purpose. A successful community needs to have boundaries that define its recognised focus. Sometimes the moniker "instructional designer" is adopted by an organisation before that identity is defined, as organisations create the positions and anoint employees with the label. We speculated that people create identities from their experience and background, and in professional communities they draw on institutional culture, professional literature, professional organisations and reflection to understand the boundaries of their practice. (Schwier et al, 2004:6)

Similar reflections on the professional identity, roles, responsibilities and likely futures of academic and educational developers can be found threaded through the related literature. Andresen's (1995, 1996) flurry of research and writing during the mid 90s indicates that educational and academic developers were similarly busy engaging in 'professional navel gazing'. Andresen (1991:5) captures the issue by describing his difficulty in giving 'an intelligible one line answer when someone at a party asks me "And what exactly do *you* do…..?"' In attempting to answer his own question, Andresen (1991), identified the following areas of expertise amongst educational developers: knowledge of and ability to engage in educational research, knowledge of educational theory and the ability to analyse and solve educational problems, experience in teaching, skills in facilitating adult and professional learning, active members of the university community. More recently Fraser (2003) researched academic developers in relation to their career paths, qualifications and personal professional development, finding that a typical academic developer in Australasia was 'female, 41-55 years in age, having a teaching qualification and a masters degree….. having come into the field "quite by accident" and with long interests in teaching.'(8)

Professional associations

It is difficult to establish the role that professional associations play in the nurturing of communities of practice and in the provision of professional development to flexible learning designers and developers working in Australian universities. Fraser's (2003) survey of academic developers included questions about personal professional development activities. Fraser found that 'while academic developers organise professional development opportunities for academics within their institutions, it is

apparent that nobody within the institutions is responsible for providing professional development opportunities specific to the needs of the developers.' Respondents did avail themselves of professional development activities organised within their universities, as well as seeking out various opportunities externally:

> The professional development sources used by those interviewed varied, with different people belonging to different associations, attending different conferences and reading different journals and books. It is apparent that people in the academic development profession work in a wide range of areas and engage in professional development through a variety of means on a variety of topics. (Fraser, 2003:8)

Flexible learning and its associated convergences of on campus, distance and online teaching and learning cultures has also impacted on the roles and relationships of relevant professional associations. Inglis (1999:25) alludes to this convergence in his comments about the changing relationships of the professional associations which support and represent staff engaged with supporting flexible teaching and learning in their institutions. He argues that the traditional boundaries by which ODLAA (the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia) once distinguished itself from other associations are being challenged:

> Other professional associations are staking a claim to part of the "territory" that ODLAA previously saw as its own. The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia (HERDSA) is staking a claim to staff development; the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) and to a lesser extent the Australian Society for Educational Technology (ASET) are staking claims to the domain of digital materials development; and the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) is staking a claim to the domains of instructional design and evaluation. These claims are not without merit. They are based on long histories of involvement of the respective associations to those domains as they relate to more traditional delivery modes.

Calls for professionalisation

Alongside discussion in the related literatures about the professional identity and changing roles and responsibilities of designers and developers sits calls for debate about professionalisation. Whilst discussion has focused mainly on academic developers, the realities of flexible learning and its associated convergences suggest that the discussion is appropriate to all designers and developers. Debate about professionalisation issues for developers/designers has also been stimulated by recent pressure towards accrediting university teachers and the establishment of national teaching standards and performance indicators.

In 1995 Andresen called for discussion about the professional identity, organisation and a code of practice for academic and educational developers. In his survey of academic developers he found that respondents did not want a universal job description, nor did they want a standardised job title (Andresen, 1995:9). He argued for the development and adoption of a professional code of practice, 'a statement about the values on which the profession resides and the major ethical obligations of practice.'

Fraser (2003:1) poses the following questions about the professionalisation of academic developers: 'Do we need to have studied specific disciplines? Do we need to be accredited by a national or an international body? And what ongoing professional development do we need to engage in in order to keep up to date?' Fraser (2003:8) concluded however that:

> If in the future the profession chooses to explore formalising the 'accreditation' of members, serious consideration would need to be given to developing a scheme which recognised the diverse career paths which people took to enter the field, the wide range of areas in which members worked, and the subsequent diversity of professional development needs that members have.

Purpose of research

Whilst the context in which university based instructional/educational designers/developers worked has changed dramatically since the mid 90s, there is a paucity of empirical literature articulating the impact on designers and developers of their rapidly changing work environments.

The purpose of this research is:

> to establish national descriptive data about designers/developers of flexible learning materials in Australian Universities – job title, classification, qualification, place in organisation, perceptions of changes in roles and responsibilities and frequencies of core duties.

Methodology

The study involved the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, using an electronically delivered survey questionnaire, from a voluntary sample of staff employed in Australian universities who are engaged in the design and development of flexible learning programs and materials.

The survey questionnaire was drafted and piloted in two iterations, firstly to a small sample of colleagues and then to a sample of five educational designers from three Australian universities who were asked to complete the survey questionnaire and offer feedback. Three experienced educational researchers were also asked to comment on the design of the survey questionnaire.

The sample

Mention has already been made of the difficulties and ambiguities inherent in the task of defining who exactly carries out this work in Australian universities. Both Inglis (1996) and Allen (1996) refer to the difficulty of establishing the boundaries of a sample that contains all staff who work in this field. There is a multiplicity of job titles under which staff work, positions may be dedicated or may be folded within more general job titles (for example, lecturer and no central database exists.

Allen's (1996) study of instructional designers found that 66 of 99 respondents worked under the title of 'Instructional Designer'. However in the development of a database for this study it was found that of 35 Australian universities, 14 universities employed educational designers, whilst only 6 employed instructional designers, suggesting a shift towards use of the title 'Educational Designer'. A further 10 universities employed the title 'Educational Developer'. Other universities used titles such as 'Lecturer', 'Educational Resource Developer', 'Curriculum Designer', and titles which indicate that positions are dedicated to online teaching and learning, for example 'Web Educational Developer', 'E-learning Designer', 'Educational and Online Developer'.

For the purposes of this study the following decisions were made about the sample:

1. Only staff working in dedicated design/development positions would be included in the survey. This excluded staff who may, in the normal course of their teaching duties as lecturers, engage in their own design/development work.
2. Variations on the titles were included where it was obvious that the main stem of the title fell within the category of design/development, for example ' Educational Development Officer'.
3. Only staff working with academics on the design and development of flexible learning programs and materials were included in the sample.
4. Staff who worked purely in the production (as opposed to design/development) of flexible learning materials was excluded.
5. Despite volunteers from the TAFE sector responding to the initial invitation to participate, the sample was restricted to those working in Australian universities only.

In order to establish a national database for the purposes of this research, the following process was entered into:

1. An email was placed on the ODLAA discussion list asking for volunteers for the survey.

2. All 38 Australian University websites were searched for details of staff working in central units in dedicated positions who could easily be identified by their job title. Job titles collected on the database included: 'Instructional Designer', 'Educational Designer', 'Educational Developer' (and variations on same, for example 'Educational Development Advisor'), 'Lecturer: specialist descriptor' (for example Lecturer: Educational Designer), multimedia producers, e-learning designers and online developers.
3. One person in every university with a clearly identified position was contacted by email and asked to a) confirm whether or not the list provided on the website did or did not represent all staff employed as designers and developers of flexible learning materials, b) assist in contacting staff who may be engaged in this work within faculties/schools who did not appear on the website in a dedicated position.

This process occurred over a period of 6 months during 2002 and involved much iteration. Ultimately 200 people were entered into a database from a total of 35 Australian universities.

Table 1: Designers/developers of flexible learning materials – Australian universities 2002

Job title	No in database	University
Educational Designer + Ed Designer - Flexible delivery	97	ANU, CSU, Deakin, Flinders, Griffith, Monash, NTU, QUT, RMIT, SCU, Melbourne, UTS, UQ
Instructional Designer	18	Deakin, Edith Cowan, SCU, Canberra, USQ
Educational Developer + Flexible Ed Developer	27	Deakin, JCU, Macquarie, Murdoch, Swinburne, UNE, UNSW, Sydney, Tasmania
Lecturer + associate/senior +Ed. Resource Developer, Ed Designer, Ed Development	19	Curtin, Latrobe, Murdoch, Ballarat, UNSW, Sydney, UTS, Victoria, Wollongong
Ed./ Consultant	7	UNSW, UWS
Curriculum Designer	6	Newcastle
Academic Developer	1	Adelaide
Web/e-learning specified eg Web Ed Developer, Ed & Online Developer, E-learning Designer,	8	CQU, Deakin, UNSW
Managers/heads/coordinators	8	Deakin, LaTrobe, Monash, Melbourne, UNE, UNSW
Professional Developer	6	USA
Unknown	3	ACU
TOTAL	**200**	

* Note that of the 97 Educational Designers entered on the database 54 were concentrated in two universities which have 24 and 30 Educational Designers respectively employed in Schools or Faculties.

Data collection

The questionnaire was distributed to all names on the database as an attachment to an email. The email contained information about: the URL for the survey, a description of the project, information about ethics clearance, privacy, confidentiality, right to withdraw and contact details.
A reminder email was sent out eight weeks after the initial email.

57 responses to the survey questionnaire were received. This represents a 28.5 % return rate.

There are a number of possible reasons for respondents not participating in the survey:

1. Informal feedback suggested that the survey, because of the qualitative questions attached to each section, took longer than the suggested 20 minutes.
2. The survey was administered over December/January - December being traditionally a very busy period for designers/developers and January finding many staff on leave.

Data analysis

Quantitative data collected for Questions 1-4 in Section 1 of the survey was collected and is presented by frequency. Qualitative data for question 5 in Section 1 was thematically analysed using the method

described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Responses were broken into units. The units contained both of Lincoln and Guber's (1985) characteristics - they were heuristic, in that they added to an understanding of the issue, and they were 'stand alone', in that each unit was a discrete part of the respondent's overall response. Using a process of 'constant comparison' each unit was compared to a previous unit, enabling the researcher to develop a set of categories into which all the units loosely fit. Quantitative data collected in Section 2: Core Activities was analysed by mean, by principal component analysis, by t-test and by one way ANOVA.

Results and discussion

Job title, award classification, position in organisation

Respondents were asked to identify their job classification and the award level at which they are employed. Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by job title and by award classification (either academic or administrative) and the range of associated award levels. Whether or not these positions should be academic or administrative positions has long been debated in the field. The job title and award classification of this group of staff is decided university by university and by contextual factors related to particular university histories, needs, cultures and organisational structures. Whilst overall slightly more respondents were classified as academic, of note is the absence of any academic appointments amongst the cluster of respondents employed in web/online/ multimedia positions who had nonetheless fulfilled the criteria for inclusion in the survey database. All other job titles are represented, in varying proportions, in both academic and administrative classifications. Allen (1996:18) found similar results in a survey conducted with instructional designers, and argued that the ‘variance in the conditions and awards under which instructional designers are employed can only add to the confusion regarding their roles.’ Results from this survey indicate that the variance still exists eight years later, and applies to not only instructional designers but other related job titles as well.

Table 2: Job title & classification

Job Title	Academic	Admin	Unclear	Total
Management: 'Head', "Manager', 'Director', 'Coordinator	4 (level C-D)	4 (level 7-9)	1	9
Instructional Designer	4 (level A-B)	1 (level 7)	-	5
Educational Developer/Advisor/Officer	7 (level A-C)	4 (level 7-8)	1	12
Educational Designer	8 (level B-C)	8 (level 5-9)	1	17
Lecturer (plus specialist title)	6 (level A- C)	-	-	6
Web/online/multimedia	-	4 (level 7-8)	-	4
Other: consultant, advisor, team member	1 (level B)	2 (level 5/6-8)	1	4
Total	30	23	4	57

The majority (71.4%) of respondents to this survey worked in Centres within their universities dedicated to teaching and learning, flexible learning, distance education and so on. A smaller proportion (19.6%) worked within faculties or schools, and 7.1% worked in other sections of the university such as PVC, DVC offices and the library.

Qualifications

Table 3 summarises the responses to the question ‘What are your qualifications?’ The spread of responses across both different disciplines and different awards indicates that there is no one professional qualification, nor one ‘qualification pathway’ for staff working with academics on the design and development of flexible learning programs and materials. This result concurs with two Australian studies: Allen’s (1996) study of instructional designers and Fraser’s (2003) study of academic developers, as well as Schwier et al’s (2004) study of Canadian instructional designers. The findings from this survey do

however suggest a tendency for staff to focus their postgraduate studies, up to and including the award of Masters, in the discipline of education, even though more than half of the Bachelor degrees reported were from a discipline other than education. Only four respondents reported having completed a PhD (discipline not identified) with another five respondents currently enrolled in doctorates. Allen's (1996) survey of instructional designers did not gather information about multimedia/technology qualifications, perhaps because it was not relevant to the duties of instructional designers in 1996. This survey does report qualifications in this field of study, albeit only a small proportion compared to education and other disciplines.

Table 3: Qualifications by award and discipline

Award	Education	M/media/ online/CBL/ technology	Other discipline	Not identified	Total
PhD (complete)				4	4
PhD (current)				3	3
EdD (current)				2	2
Masters (complete)	21	1	15		37
Masters (current)	5				5
Grad Diploma	12	6	5		23
Grad Certificate	4	2			6
Diploma	11		2		13
Associate Diploma			1		1
Bachelor (Honours)			9		9
Bachelor	15	2	18		35
Certificate	1	1			2
TOTAL	69	12	50	9	140

Impact of organisational change on roles in last 5 years

Qualitative data was collected in answer to the question: 'How has organisational change affected your work roles/responsibilities over the last five years?' Thematic analysis of responses produced the following list, sorted in descending frequency:

- Impact of online/new technologies
- Restructuring
- Conducting more staff development
- Increased opportunities/new positions
- Increased workload/poorer quality service
- Changes in role
- Wider focus (university/faculty wide)
- More project management

Core activities

Respondents were asked to circle one of five responses on a Likert scale to a series of thirty activities considered to be core activities to the staff under research by the researcher and those educational designers involved in the development and piloting of the survey questionnaire.. The 'not sure' responses were not included in the data analysis, so that a score of one was allocated to a 'never' response, two to a 'rarely' response, three to a 'sometimes' response and four to an 'often' response. Activities were clustered into five intuitive groupings: design, production, project management, staff development and academic. Table 4 summarises mean frequencies for all activities.

The data shows that the most frequent activities engaged in by respondents to the survey are designing teaching and learning activities (mean score 3.56, SD .73), staff development: online teaching and learning (mean score 3.49, SD .76), designing for online (mean score 3.46, SD .76), staff development: developing flexible learning materials (mean score 3.36, SD .86) and project management: materials development (3.32, SD .91). This data concurs with the qualitative responses to the question earlier in the

survey about the impact of organisational change on respondents' role/responsibilities. The most frequently mentioned theme was the impact of new technologies on their role, with more staff development as the third most frequently mentioned theme.

Table 4: Frequency of core activities (descending by mean)

Core activity	N	Mean	St deviation
Designing teaching & learning activities	57	3.56	0.73
Staff development online teaching & learning	57	3.49	0.76
Designing for online	57	3.46	0.76
Staff development: developing flexible learning materials	56	3.36	0.86
Project management: materials development	57	3.32	0.91
Designing individual units	56	3.25	0.86
Designing objectives/learning outcomes	56	3.21	0.82
Staff development: assessment	56	3.18	0.83
Designing assessment tasks	56	3.13	0.79
Project management: other	53	3.13	0.9
Designing programs & courses	56	3.04	0.93
Production: editing	57	2.88	1.04
Staff development: curriculum design	57	2.88	1.00
Academic: research/publications	57	2.86	0.99
Academic: program/teaching evaluation	57	2.84	0.92
Production: checking copyright	57	2.82	1.04
Production: proof reading	57	2.72	1.1
Designing for print eg layout	57	2.7	1.12
Production: online materials	57	2.63	1.22
Academic: writing flexible materials	57	2.63	1.03
Designing for audio/video	56	2.62	0.84
Design for CD-ROM	57	2.54	1.00
Designing for face to face	57	2.46	0.85
Production: checking referencing	57	2.42	1.16
Project Management: finances	57	2.35	1.16
Production: CD-ROM	57	2.21	1.14
Academic: teaching online	56	2.13	1.11
Production: desktop publishing	55	2.04	0.94
Production: audio/video	55	2.02	1.06
Academic: lecturing face to face	57	1.95	0.97

Although the reliability of the comparison is somewhat restricted by the different samples used, it is interesting to make reference to results on a similar question in Allen's (1996) study of instructional designers. Table 5 compares results from the two surveys.

Table 5: Five most frequent activities: Allen (1996) compared to Bird (2004)

Allen's (1996) study of instructional designers	Bird's (2004) study of flexible learning professionals
Determining instructional strategies	Designing teaching & learning activities
Designing instructional goals and objectives	Staff development online teaching & learning
Designing layout and appearance of materials	Designing for online
Editing	Staff development: developing flexible learning materials
Project managing the development of materials	Project management: materials development

Clusters of core activities

The list of thirty core activities included in Section 2 of the survey questionnaire were clustered into five intuitive groupings: design, production, project management, staff development and academic. In order to establish empirically whether or not certain combinations of activities clustered together a principal Component Matrix Analysis with Varimax Rotation was conducted on the data collected from Section 2 of the survey questionnaire. The factor analysis produced six factors, all but one confirmed for reliability by Cronbach's Alpha test.

Table 6: Factors

Factor 1: Print and online materials	Factor 2: Design/ pedagogy	Factor 3: Academic/teaching	Factor 4: Multimedia	Factor 5: SD/design online	Factor 6: Project M'ment
Production: proofreading	Design t & l activities	Academic: lecturing f2f	Production: A/V	Staff Dev: online t & l	Project Management: other
Production: editing	Design assessment tasks	Academic: evaluation	Design for A/V	Staff Dev: flexible materials	Project Management: finances
Production: referencing	Design individual units	Design: face to face	Production: CD-ROM	Staff Dev: assessment	
Production: copyright	Design objectives/outcomes	Academic: teaching online	Design for CD-ROM	Design for online	
Production: online materials	Design programs & courses	Academic: research/publications			
Project Management: materials		Academic: writing materials			
Production: DTP		Staff Dev: curriculum design			
Design: print					

These results indicate clear and reliable clusters of core activities. Slight variations from the original intuitive groupings were found in the results, which appear in some instances to cluster more around the medium of delivery rather than the activity itself. For example the first factor includes all activities related to the design, production and management of learning materials for print and online delivery. The second factor includes that subset of design activities which are generic curriculum design or pedagogical activities and excludes those design activities which stipulated a particular mode of delivery. The third factor includes all the academic activities with the addition of designing for face to face delivery and staff development: curriculum design. The fourth factor includes all activities related to the design and production of multimedia learning materials. The fifth factor includes activities related to the online teaching and learning environment, with the addition of 'staff development: assessment', suggesting that staff development about assessment focuses more on assessing online than in other modes of delivery. The final factor includes those project management activities other than the project management of materials.

Who does what?

In order to establish whether or not any significant differences exist between the degree to which staff classified as 'academic' compared to staff classified as 'administrative' engage with the factors described above, mean frequencies were calculated and T-tests were conducted. Mean frequencies indicate that staff employed in both classifications engage in all factors, that is, no factors were exclusive to either academic or administrative staff (see Table 7). The only factor where a significant difference between the two classifications was found was in Factor 3: Academic/Teaching. These results suggest that irrespective of award classification the frequencies with which respondents engaged in all other clusters of activities bar 'academic/teaching' was not significant.

Table 7: Mean frequencies for factors by job classification

Factors	Job Classification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1. Print & online materials	Academic	30	2.62	.780	.142
	Administrative	23	2.84	.708	.148
2. Design: pedagogy	Academic	30	3.35	.705	.129
	Administrative	23	3.08	.640	.134
3. Academic/teaching	Academic	30	2.88	.485	.088
	Administrative	23	2.21	.670	.140
4. Multimedia	Academic	30	2.19	.807	.147
	Administrative	23	2.60	.925	.193
5. Online design & staff development	Academic	30	3.49	.585	.107
	Administrative	23	3.28	.672	.140
6. Project management	Academic	30	2.63	.999	.182
	Administrative	23	2.76	.987	.206

An one way ANOVA analysis was also conducted to establish whether any significant differences occurred between the frequencies with which different job titles (ie. ‘manager’, ‘instructional designer’, educational developer’, ‘educational designer’, ‘lecturer’, ‘web/online/multimedia’ and ‘other’) engaged in the clusters of activities confirmed by the factor analysis. Results confirmed that the frequencies with which staff employed under different job titles engage in the factors was significant for two of the factors only: Factor 2. Design/pedagogy activities and Factor 3. Academic/teaching activities. No significant differences were found between the frequencies with which the various groups of staff engaged in the other factors: print and online materials, multimedia, online design and staff development and project management.

Looking more closely at the two clusters of activity which did show a significant difference, multiple comparisons ($p<.05$) demonstrated that:

1. The frequency with which managers engage in design activities is significantly less than educational developers, educational designers and lecturers.
2. The frequency with which educational designers engage in design activities is significantly greater than web/online/multimedia staff.
3. The frequency with which instructional designers, educational developers and educational designers engage in design activities was not significantly different.
4. The frequency with which web/online/multimedia staff engage in academic/teaching activities is significantly less than all other groups.
5. The frequency with which lecturers engage in academic/teaching activities is significantly greater than managers and educational designers.

Conclusion

A number of general conclusions can be made from the results of this study:

1. Issues about professional identity, professional organisation, and roles and responsibilities have been studied and debated in the related literature for the past decade, and relate similarly to instructional designers, educational designers, educational developers and academic developers.
2. The diversity of job titles under which staff is employed is proliferating, particularly with the addition of online, e-learning web and multimedia specialists.
3. Staff continues to enter the field with a wide variety of qualifications, although qualifications in education, particularly at the post graduate level are most common. The majority of staff is qualified at the Masters degree level.
4. The nature of the work has changed over the last five years, with more frequent activity in online and staff development reported.
5. There are a reliable set of six clusters of core activities with which staff engage which tend to be defined more by mode of delivery than by the nature of the activity itself.
6. Staff employed under both academic and administrative awards engage in all clusters of core activities, with a statistically significant difference occurring for academic/teaching activities only.
7. Significant differences in frequencies between groups employed under different job titles occurred only for design/pedagogy and academic/teaching activities, with the most frequent differences occurring between web/online/multimedia staff and all other groups.

Questions arise as to how these results sit within the wider context of changes in higher education in Australia and how this group of staff should locate themselves in relation to these changes. How best should people who work in this field prepare for the future and protect their professional identity? Can the profession predict where it might be in ten years time, what knowledge and skills it might need, what roles and responsibilities it might engage in, and how it might be located politically and organisationally within the higher education sector? Is the rate of change so fast that no-one can ‘catch their breath’? Is professional diversity an asset or a liability? What will happen to professional standing if academic teachers become accredited and institutional funding is tied to evidence of quality teaching by nationally agreed performance indicators?

As it struggles to do more with less in national and international markets, Australian universities will continue to mainstream flexible learning and flexible delivery, converged teaching and learning

environments and resource based learning. Crucial to the success of this project is the group of staff under study here, yet its professional identity remains clouded, its professional boundaries indeterminate, and its industrial and political position in higher education unclear.

Is it time once again to issue the clarion call for professionalisation? Locke (2001:33-34) suggests:

> that there are a number of salients or markers a professional group desiring to defend its knowledge base, autonomy and client relationship might well be interested in occupying. These include:
>
> 1. Determining what constitutes relevant professional knowledge;
> 2. Determining what constitutes appropriate and desirable professional practice;
> 3. Establishing goals, processes, content and conditions of training [professional development];
> 4. Defining desirable conditions of work and service (including remuneration);
> 5. Establishing the processes of registration, standard setting, monitoring, appraisal and discipline;
> 6. Determining the appropriate processes and avenues of association and relationship.

Perhaps it is timely to reopen the professionalisation debate and consider Locke's 'markers' in relation to designers and developers working in the field of flexible learning.

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