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# When we speak Faculty listen: Exploring spaces for students to contribute to the development of lecturers' academic practice.

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Lecturers' engagement in professional development activities to enhance their academic practice is firmly embedded within the landscape of higher education. Although enhancing the student learning experience underpins teaching-related continuing professional development (CPD), interestingly the role of students in supporting such activities has been underexplored. Drawing on data captured from eight student representatives interviewed in the context of an international impact evaluation, we examine student awareness of, and attitudes towards, lecturers' CPD. Participants recognised the value of lecturers engaging in CPD but believed it to be an activity they were removed from and had little opportunity to engage with. We consider how this perspective could be changed in two ways. Firstly, we reflect on the experiences of students at one university where their contributions to lecturers' development were legitimised and valued. Secondly, we discuss the potential of integrative approaches, such as students as consultants or reverse mentoring. We argue that these approaches may challenge existing hierarchies that limit students engaging in lectures and create spaces through which students can positively contribute to lecturers' CPD.

Keywords

Academic development, student voice, continuing professional development, students-as-partners, reverse mentoring

## Introduction

Engaging in continuing professional development (CPD) is recognised as a 'good thing and something all professionals should undertake' (Roscoe, 2002: 3; Daniels, 2017; De Rijdt *et al*., 2013). For many lecturers, however, CPD to support their pedagogic practice is perceived as conflicting with responsibilities to develop disciplinary expertise and research: hence greater esteem is attributed to disciplinary rather than pedagogic success (Gordon & Fung, 2016; Patfield *et al*., 2022; Shaw, 2018). That is not to say lecturers do not engage in teaching-related CPD, (also referred to as academic development), but rather that the priority and status of these activities tends to remain secondary to disciplinary upskilling (Chadha, 2021; Deaker *et al*., 2016). This position has remained largely unchanged for some time, despite recommendations to the contrary made by various reports and researchers (e.g. Daniels, 2017; Gordon & Fung, 2016), and interventions from national governments to

compel universities to be increasingly accountable for their student experience (e.g. National Student Survey and the Teaching Excellence Framework in the UK, National Survey of Student Engagement in the US, Quality Indicators of Student Learning in Australia) (Biswas *et al*., 2022; Tomlinson, 2017). Indirectly, these measures of teaching quality have been positioned as stimulating and supporting academic development, though the extent to which such ambitions are realised is debated (Daniels, 2017; Cathcart at al., 2021; Patfield *et al*., 2022).

Academic development is usually presented in two ways, formal and informal. Formal accredited CPD can include postgraduate teaching qualifications for lecturers with limited previous experience of teaching within HE (Daniels, 2017; Kandlibinder & Pesta, 2009). Experienced colleagues can access CPD though so-called 'experiential' routes, which provide recognition based on an evidence-base of experiences gained in supporting student learning (Cathcart et al., 2021; Shaw, 2018). These formal CPD offers are usually developed by institutions and aligned with external standards. For example, the Professional Standards Framework for Supporting Teaching and Learning in Higher education (PSF) is widely used in the UK, and increased drawn on internationally to frame the practice of teaching, learning and student support in HE. The PSF includes three dimensions of practice: Areas of Activity that address practical aspects of planning teaching and supporting learning, Core Knowledge related to teaching and student support and Professional Values associated with HE practices (Daniels, 2017; Hibbet & Semler, 2015; Advance HE, 2023). Advance HE is an educational agency with charitable status based in the UK that acts as custodian of the PSF and accredits formal CPD provision aligned to this standard (Advance HE, 2020). Universities provide formal CPD aligned to the PSF bestowing recognition for all levels of staff, from those new to teaching, to those with established track records (Cathcart et al., 2021; Shaw, 2018, Turner, 2013). Complementing the formal CPD offer, many HE providers deliver extensive programmes of informal development, often in the form of workshops, conferences and events, as well as pedagogic innovation funds, all centred on teaching and learning (Daniels, 2017; Hibbet & Semler, 2015). Such informal CPD is recognised as supporting a culture of teaching enhancement (Advance HE, 2021).

In most cases the perceived primary beneficiaries of formal / informal academic development provision are the students (Gibbs, 2013; Norton et al., et al., 2010; Onsman, 2011). Yet the role of students within such CPD is rarely considered. This is an interesting and potentially notable oversight, particularly given the prevalence of a discourse of student voice across the sector (Jerome & Young, 2020). Since the advent of increased fees, the concept of 'voice' has become firmly embedded within policy and practice across the sector, with a diverse range of methods and mechanisms through which the student voice in particular can feature (Jerome & Young, 2020; Seale et al., 2014). Depending on the standpoint and context there are multiple definitions of student voice that can be applied. For example, according to McLeod (2011) student voice can be an agent for empowerment, change and inclusion, aligning with the principles of progressive pedagogies. In contrast, the Quality Assurance Agency (2013) position student voice as a measurable commodity that can support monitoring and enhancement, presenting mechanisms for how student voice should be captured and used. This has resulted in a focus on student voice that is captured through surveys (Jerome & Young, 2020; Mendes & Hammet, 2020). In many cases the ways through which student voice is manifest follows guidance set out by organisations (Carey, 2018; Mendes & Hammet, 2020). This has led to student voice practices aligned with external measure of accountability, rather than stimulating enhancement and innovation, as was initially envisaged (Mendes & Hammet, 2020; Tomlinson, 2017).

Freeman (2016) reports that, while student voice has become part of the day-to-day life of UK HE, there is a lack of clarity surrounding the purpose of student voice work, which impacts on the efficacy of these practices. Despite this, student voice has taken centre stage (Seale, 2009) with English HE providers mandated to engage with student voice (Young and Jerome, 2020). Elected student representatives are integral to student voice work (Carey, 2018; Lizzo & Wilson, 2009), overseeing mechanisms for capturing feedback through systems of student representation (e.g. school and course representatives) (Matthews & Dollinger, 2022) and student feedback obtained from the various internal / external surveys administered throughout the academic year is used to inform pedagogic change (Williams, 2011).

Curiously, therefore, students and student voice are absent from the discussion and practice of lecturer CPD, with few scant examples reported within the literature. This does not mean that students do not have a role in other areas of HE practice, such as curriculum enhancement and research, as discussed by Healey et al. (2014). In recognition of the progress and the positive contribution made in these areas of HE, this study was designed to explore the contribution students could make to lecturer CPD and propose areas for future development. Drawing on data captured through a series of interviews with elected student representatives (SR) about lecturers' development as educators, we considered students' existing knowledge and attitudes toward lecturers' pedagogic development, using this to explore opportunities through which students can potentially support lecturers' CPD. This paper concludes by identifying examples of student-led contributions to HE practice which we identified as potential approaches that could be used to integrate students into lecturer CPD.

### *Research Design*

This study was framed by the following research questions, which were based on the authors' experiences as academic developers and knowledge of student voice:

- What do student representatives know about CPD aimed at developing lecturers' expertise as teachers?
- What are student representatives' attitudes towards, and perceptions of, lecturer CPD?
- What contribution do students representatives think students could make to lecturer CPD?

## Research context

The data we draw on here were collected as part of a larger, international impact evaluation commissioned by Advance HE see (*citation removed for peer review*) for full details of this work) which involved 10 HE providers. At the time this impact evaluation study was undertaken, 172 institutions were accredited against the PSF, of which 23 were outside of the UK. As noted above, the PSF was originally designed and operated within the UK context, therefore was shaped by early calls to professionalise the practice of teaching, and more recently rhetoric relating to teaching enhancement, accountability and neoliberalisation

(Tomlinson, 2017). It occupies a complex space which advocates development and enhancement as a professional good (Cathcart et al., 2023), whilst also risking answering the call to evidence excellence and promote teaching quality, often to serve league table positions (Harrison-Graves, 2016). The latter may have led to increased engagement with the PSF, both within the UK and internationally (Cathcart et al., 2023), as having an accredited teaching qualifications for lecturers can be used to evidence teaching is benchmarked to an external standard (Buissink et al., 2017). Irrespectively of the motivation, the increased use internationally is taken to represent its applicability to other HE contexts. This includes Australia and New Zealand where the PSF has been adapted to heed indigenous perspectives, demonstrating the potential for the PSF to integrate local values, concepts, worldviews and perspectives (Buissink et al., 2017). Given the growing use of the PSF, the wider evaluative study from which these data are drawn, included both UK and internationally based HE providers who delivered teaching related CPD accredited by Advance HE.

## Data collection

Student representative from each of the 10 case study HE providers participating in the impact evaluation were invited to participate in this study. The impact evaluation study was undertaken at the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020. As a result, securing access to student representatives was challenging; student representatives from seven of the case study HE providers were available to participate in this study. In total eight student representatives were interviewed from seven HE institutions—four in the UK and four outside the UK (Table 1). All the institutions were members of Advance HE and provided CPD accredited by Advance HE. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with elected student representatives. As elected representatives they have taken on a role that involves them speaking and acting on behalf of their peers (Flint & Goddard, 2021). Institutional practice centred on student voice often positions student representatives in this way (Carey, 2018; Lizzo & Wilson, 2009), and therefore our use of elected representatives to ascertain a broader student perspective is in line with such work. An interview schedule was designed to address the RQ, inviting participants to share their knowledge of, attitudes toward and perceptions of teaching-related CPD for lecturers. The interview schedule was flexible to allow space to promote meaningful dialogue with participants over complex issues (Cousins, 2009) and enabling exploration of multiple layers of meaning and experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

We heeded the advice of Turner *et al*. (2013) in limiting the number of open questions in the interview to allow us to explore what was interesting in the examples respondents shared in their discussions. This research was undertaken with full ethical approval from the Advance HE Ethics Committee. Hereafter we use the acronym SR to refer to the participants in this study.

**Table 1:** Student Representatives geographic location and overview of participating universities

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Interviews took place using Zoom between May and July 2020. Each member of the research team was involved in interviewing participants. The interviews lasted between 20 to 40 minutes, and were recorded. They were transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed using NVivo. Following the staged approach of Braun & Clarke (2006), data systematically analysed though iterative cycles of reading, reflection and discussion. This enabled the research team to identify areas of commonality and patterns within the data. These were refined through progressive readings of the data, until the core themes presented below emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In presenting these data we acknowledge this is a small sample. We thus do not claim to present a position that is representative of the HE sector as a whole, but rather highlight relevant issues to prompt discussion and further debate. This aligns with Hammersley's (1998) theoretical inference approach to generalisation in which we seek to create more generalisable insights relevant to a wider population and of broader interest. We use these data to suggest future innovations in lecturer CPD that could create opportunities for student voice to be more effectively integrated into the enhancement of academic practice.

***Findings***

We presented below the outcomes of the qualitative data analysis with reference to the research questions and wider literature framing this study.

**Students' knowledge of, and attitudes towards, lecturer CPD**

The professionalisation of university teaching began with the ambition of raising the status of teaching, and ensuring committed teachers experienced similar levels of esteem as researchers (Cathcart *et al*., 2021; Patfield, *et al*., 2022). Awareness of this history does not appear to have reached the student body; overall respondents' awareness of lecturers' development as teachers was limited. This is a notable observation; Advance HE accreditation requires institutions to evidence they have practices, policies and support that signal an institutional commitment to teaching enhancement (Advance HE, 2021). Of the eight students interviewed, only three had heard of Advance HE and were confident talking about lecturers' CPD.

Where an SR possessed knowledge of lecturer CPD, it was regarded as valuable, as respondents SR7 and SR8 demonstrate. They could discuss development opportunities available to lecturers, for example:

> 'I can see how the [named university] supports them as I have attended some workshops that were aimed at improving teaching.'(SR7)

They were able to advise their lecturers how to enhance their practice:

> 'We said that their style was not working for us and suggest development - this was taken seriously.' (SR8)

These respondents showed a commitment to supporting their lecturers to develop their practice. This resonates with a co-production approach recommended by Zepke (2018) to foster student engagement in HE through which students can become actively involved. This finding also indicates a potential role for students, with some pedagogic knowledge, to support lecturers CPD. Whilst we do not know who guided these SRs to make these observations, we assume that knowledge of institutional CPD enabled these students to speak from a position of confidence and authority (Freeman, 2016). They also evidenced a sensitivity to engaging in these conversations, echoing the work of Arthur (2004) in

recognising the challenging nature of the conversations they were engaging in with their lecturers.

> 'We said to them their style was not working and this was a challenge for them to hear, but it helped motivate change' (SR8).

Four respondents (SR1, SR3, SR4 and SR6) possessed partial knowledge of Advance HE / lecturer CPD – gained from their presence at institutional committees to provide the student voice, for example:

> 'I have heard of Advance HE through sitting on [names a committee] Board, and attending Board of Governors meetings' (SR1)

Though attendance at such committees made them aware of Advance HE, they had no awareness of its purpose, nor had they been involved in discussions around lecturer CPD. Finally, SR4 and SR2 stated that, having not previously heard of Advance HE, they had undertaken internet searches in preparation for the interview connected to this study. They highlighted the value of this newfound knowledge during their interviews, and used the interviewer as a source to find out more. Initially, both SRs asked tentative, exploratory questions: as they found out more, they visibly increased in confidence. SR2 felt empowered 'to go back and ask questions.'

For the UK-based SRs, this limited knowledge was notable but not unanticipated. Similar frustrations have been reported in related work (e.g. Carey, 2018; *citation removed for peer review*), and it seems little progress has been made, despite moves to enhance working relationships between student representatives and university leaders (Brooks et al., 2015a). The limited awareness of lecturer CPD, or the wider systems that support it, may reflect the extent to which the role these students have taken on is being guided and managed by the institution (Matthews & Dollinger, 2022). In effect, these respondents may indicate the potential silencing rather than amplification of voice, meaning that rather than challenging institutional hierarchies, hierarchies are maintained (McLeod, 2011; Naidoo et al., 2011). This was evidenced by SR4, who highlighted not just their lack of knowledge of lecturer development but also their distance from such work:

> ‘We have Programme and School Representatives, they feed into the [named committee] which I chair, and this is a way into discussion around teaching and learning. But then I’m not sure where discussions around teaching and learning are made for academics’ practice, where are decisions around teaching and learning made?’

For SR1 this did not sit comfortably, and they felt it was important to address this:

> ‘I have two weeks left in this job, but I would say to my replacement to find out about student input to lecturers’ development. I would ask where student voice is in this process; though the university is very engaged with the student union and student voice on subjects like this, there is a sense it is left to those that know more about it.’

The limited knowledge the SRs demonstrated regarding lecturers’ CPD was, respondents felt, reflective of the student population more widely. They thought students were likely to possess passive views on lecturers’ development as teachers:

> ‘In terms of what students know, I don’t think many are going to have any clue, whatsoever’ (SR1)

> ‘As a student I wouldn’t have known much about it because you don’t think much about the processes your lecturer goes through to teach at university, rather you just assume they know everything […] you assume they have had training and have a decent understanding of how to teach’ (SR6)

These comments could imply that students do not care about teaching quality, aligning with the consumerist positioning of students (Tomlinson, 2017). Indeed, their lack of engagement may be reflective of wider pressures’ students have upon their time which focus their engagement on activities perceived as directly relevant to their academic progress (Mendes & Hammet, 2020). Our respondents, and related work (e.g. Matthews and Dollinger, 2022), shows this is not the case. Students are seen as being influential in challenging long held notions of teaching and learning practice (Brooman *et al*., 2015). As SR4 commented, ‘the quality of teaching is a hugely important issue to students.’ All the SRs provided examples of discussions in which they had participated that related to teaching quality and student experience. Sometimes these discussions addressed institutional practice (e.g. such as personal tutoring support and inclusivity), and at other times they were limited in scope (e.g. SR1 and SR5 reported responding to students’ complaints). Nevertheless, there was a sense

the SRs perceived their role as having been to primarily present 'the student voice' (SR5) to management, indicating a constrained delineation of the SR role, limiting their capacity to act (Mendes & Hammett, 2020; Lizzo & Wilson, 2009). More broadly, amongst the peers they represent, the SR respondents felt lecturer CPD was something students assumed universities dealt with behind the scenes, and therefore was not something they considered:

> 'What other students know is very little, not sure students entirely think about it' (SR3)

> 'Many students expect their lecturers are trained and know what they are doing, but equally students don't want to know the ins and outs of it' (SR1)

Through the interviews we explored why students possess limited awareness of lecturer CPD. SR3 suggested this was due to the lack of visibility associated with the development of lecturers compared to the development of teachers within compulsory education settings:

> 'At school they [students] come across trainees, give them grief, but at university they are not labelled as such, so there it is not thought of in the same way'

They then went on to question the implications of this:

> 'So, for some of them [referring to students] they will only think of lecturer training when they see a deficit, like poor teaching practice or someone being unable to use technology.'

The SRs felt that action should be taken to counter this identifying value, for example:

> 'There needs to be conversations between staff and students around teaching and learning, where students can express what teaching they would like to receive, discussing what would work well for them, and staff could perhaps understand if that is not how they usually taught, they could learn about other ways to do it' (SR4)

> 'People need to realise they need it: just because they have taught for 20 years doesn't mean they don't need CPD' (SR3)

> 'The learning experience has changed quite a lot from when our lecturers learned at university, they don't understand our experiences and where we are coming from' (SR6).

Several SRs presented assumptions about lecturers' practice being dated and asked questions about lecturer CPD, but lacked a framework through which to engage in such discussions. The SRs went on to identify focal points for lecturer CPD based on observations made through their work as SRs, and identified the potential impact of such work:

> 'I was involved in an internship in my final year, developing resources for first year students. Being in meetings with staff, hearing how passionate lecturers are, how they put the student first. We should be showing this to students, showing staff are proactive […] this would open-up a conversation and put students at ease with what goes on' (SR4)

> 'In my manifesto I had a plan for lecturer training on [names activity]; I had observed in some areas low progression rates and lecturers couldn't always explain why students didn't succeed. If lecturers had specific training in [names activity] they would be able to identify when a student is struggling' (SR2).

As the SR discussed these ideas there was an observable change in expression, from questioning and uncertainty, to speaking with confidence and passion. We interpreted this as showing the students' willingness to act for the benefit of the institution, in line with their role as student representatives (Brooks et al., 2015a; Carey, 2018). This suggests that providing spaces for students to work in consultation or partnership with lecturers, engage in dialogue, and take an active role—all practices inherent to student voice work (McLeod, 2011; Seale et al., 2014) – could challenge existing practice and create a productive space for development. Challenging existing practice might not be easy; there are considerable power dynamics at play that need to be negotiated (Bovill, 2017; McLeod, 2011). Spaces for consultation and dialogue, for example, are often created and controlled by the institution, which can lead to spaces that preserve rather than transform discourse (Fleming, 2007; Seale et al., 2014). Indeed, Bragg (2007) cautions that the normalisation of student voice within institutional practice in compulsory education resulted in a move away from the radical gesturing that challenges hierarchies to the alignment of voice with institutional practice, maintaining power hierarchies and regulating the conduct of those enacting voice. This does not mean students cannot make a positive contribution. Rather institutions need to embed student voice practices that foster empowerment and change, instead of maintaining the status quo (McLeod, 2011; Seale, 2009).

***What role could students play in supporting or promoting lecturer CPD?***

Overall, the SRs thought greater focus should be placed on the contribution students could make to lecturer CPD. Respondents felt that meaningful dialogue could be initiated, and that students should be given a choice whether to engage with such activities. However, this could only happen if information regarding lecturer CPD becoming more transparent and accessible:

> 'I'm a great believer in openness, and students knowing what their institutions does and doesn't do. In practical terms, whether people would read it, if the information was out there, but still, it should be available for if students want it' (SR3)

This lack of transparency could be rectified, but whether universities would go beyond this may be questionable. Williams (2011) observed that in most cases, when responding to issues captured through student voice, institutions either clarified their procedures to students or sought to take actions to improve processes for future students. Crucially it was noted action was not always immediate or visible or represented what Williams (2011) identified as 'real action.' Consequently, those students who provide feedback could feel overlooked and begin to disengage with the very channel through which they can give their voice (Mendes and Hammet, 2020). Institutional concerns (e.g. student opinion considered 'fickle', the time taken to achieve change, and a lack of awareness of the wider context) hinder rather than promote action as a result of student feedback (Seale 2009; Mendes and Hammet, 2020). Notwithstanding these limitations, several SRs, in what we again note is a small sample, where the opportunity presented itself, were taking an active role in shaping lecturer CPD. Whilst the remainder of SR responded positively when provided with basic information about lecturer CPD - demonstrating the untapped potential for students to contribute to lecturer CPD. The engagement of students in lecturer CPD aligns with the agenda for Students as Partners presented by Cook-Sather *et al*. (2018:2) in which they call for 'an aspiration to work together'. To be successful, such an approach may necessitate the rejection of traditional hierarchies and assumptions about the role of students and lecturers, repositioning students' relationships both with their institution and their peers (Healey *et al*., 2014). The SR comment below is indicative of the positive relationships that develop when students and staff engage in discussions around pedagogic enhancement:

> 'We suggest lecturers adopt the methods of staff who experiment, and we see the students like these individuals better, they get better attendance and engagement than

385 those that use traditional lecturing styles – the students are positive about active
386 learning, they feel they learn more and do better than in sessions where staff don't use
387 this approach' (SR8).

388

389 SR7 and SR8, based at a private teaching-focused institution, showed awareness of the CPD
390 opportunities available to lecturers and were well versed in pedagogy. They discussed the
391 benefits of active learning to student motivation and achievement, as well as the routes
392 through which they could provide feedback on lecturers' practice:

393 'Course evaluations help the lecturer to develop, and we see the impact and so we
394 provide honest feedback to the faculty' (SR7).

395 These SRs were distinct from the other respondents, which may reflect the culture of their
396 university having prioritised lecturer CPD and presented it as an activity in which students
397 could become involved. Indeed, SR8 shared their experience of presenting at the
398 University's teaching and learning conference:

399 'I presented a paper on active learning and student engagement [at the conference];
400 when students [at this institution] talk, they are taken seriously'.

401 Perhaps at this university the calls made by the other SRs participating in this study have
402 been realised; not only are there conversations around lecturer CPD taking place, but students
403 are also directing these conversations:

404 'There is a still a lot of change and improvement needed, but when we speak Faculty
405 listen: they value your perspective, and it is very humbling' (SR8).

406 Students taking an active role in lecturers' CPD at this university appeared beneficial to all,
407 with staff and students collaborating with one another. This exemplifies the ideal of students
408 at the heart of driving change and development within universities (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2018;
409 Healey *et al*., 2014).

410

411 ***Discussion: Creating Spaces for students to engage with lecturer CPD***

412 Following analysis of the interview data we undertook a search of the published literature to
413 identify mechanisms through which students could contribute to lecturer CPD. This reflects

the authors role as academic developers, in that we seek to offer practical, evidence informed solutions to challenges in practice. This also builds on the recommendations of Seale et al. (2014) which call for universities to take deliberate steps to involve students in meaningful student voice work. Acknowledging potential bias in who becomes a student representative (as explored by Brooks et al., 2015b), we sought to identify interventions that could be extended across the student body, rather than limited to elected representatives. Students as consultants (see Cook-Sather, 2009; Cook-Sather & Motz-Storey, 2016 for full details) and reverse mentoring (see Browne, 2021; Morris 2017) emerged as mechanisms through which students could support lecturers' CPD. Students as consultants recognises the expertise students hold from their experiences of sitting in classrooms and learning, drawing on this to provide a new lens through which lecturers reflect on their practice (Cook-Sather, 2009). Cook-Sather (2009) highlights students' potential 'agents in transformative learning' - a principle often at the heart of much student voice work (McLeod, 2011). Cook-Sather and Motz-Storey (2016) detail a successful student as consultants project which paired lecturers with students from a discipline outside of their own to ensure attention was placed on pedagogy rather than content (Cook-Sather and Motz-Storey, 2016). Participants engaged in discussions to determine the pedagogical focus of their work through a process of negotiation, which was considered as essential to build trust. Students undertook classroom observations over a term, then discussed the outcomes of their review, considering what worked and why, as well as areas for improvement (Cook-Sather and Motz-Storey, 2016). This approach was recognised as providing timely reminders of core values (e.g. active learning, inclusivity and sustainability) which are integral to promoting student learning (Stentiford and Koutsouris, 2021).

Reverse mentoring involves a junior colleague mentoring a senior employee (Browne, 2021; Chaudhuri and Ghosh, 2012). This develops leadership skills and organisational knowledge in the junior colleague whilst the senior colleague benefits from gaining fresh cultural insights, exposure to recent content knowledge and enhanced technical skills (Browne, 2021). Approximately 25% of UK companies report using reverse mentoring (Eaves, 2018) due to its reported efficacy in bringing together diverse employee groups (Browne, 2021). It is seen as a mechanism through which experienced colleagues can simultaneously give back to the workplace and learn and fulfils the drive for younger employees to engage in professional development and have an influence on workplace practice from an early stage in their career

(Browne, 2021). Studies have also reported accounts of established colleague experiencing unexpected insecurity as they are repositioned to learn from junior colleague (Browne, 2021). This has led to both parties needing to engage in careful negotiation of their roles, the contribution they will make to the mentoring process, and how the process will be managed (Browne, 2021). If this does not happen, they caution that established hierarchies can surface, limiting the learning and development that can take place (Browne, 2021). Given the power imbalance that exists between students and lecturers, this is an important consideration. Morris (2017) highlighted the potential of reverse mentoring to promote students' academic integration and to prompt reflection on practice. If applied to support lecturers' CPD, as with students as consultants, the approach would involve a student mentoring a lecturer. This may counter perceptions of academics as being distanced or lacking an understanding of the current life of a student, which was noted by some SRs in this study. Reverse mentoring has already been used in several UK universities, although in slightly different contexts. For example, Middlesex University used reverse mentoring to allow university leaders to learn about issues of equality, diversity and inclusion by being mentored by a student from a minority ethnic background. The process stimulating change and signalled a commitment to race equality (Middlesex University, undated). Three universities in the West Midlands, England, implemented reverse mentoring with students from underrepresented groups to address persistent issues of underemployment of students from these backgrounds. Student mentors consulted on recruitment processes, leading to the removal of barriers these students commonly encountered when seeking employment (OfS, 2021). Evaluation demonstrated the student mentors held organisations to account and actions implemented changed practice (OfS, 2021). Based on these successes we feel there is real potential for reserve mentoring to be applied in the context of lecturer CPD.

Employing either of these approaches is a time intensive process. Staff and students will both need to dedicate time to engaging in training, planning and preparation in order to negotiate power dynamics and maximise chances of success. They also need to be mindful that traditional power dynamics and practices can easily re-emerge (Cook-Sather and Motz-Story, 2016). That said, our research suggests students want to find out more about teaching and learning. With an increasingly diverse student population we should also place value on the diversity of experiences upon which students draw on and how knowledge of these could benefit our institutions (Stentiford and Koutsouris, 2021). Engaging students through either

of these approaches could benefit all involved. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by Tomlinson et al. (2023: 13) reported students having expectations of teaching and learning at university that were 'uncertain, misaligned and unrealistic' with implications for attendance, autonomy and success. These activities could support students to foster more realistic expectations of university, as well as signalling an institutional commitment to dialogue and partnership with students.

## *Conclusion*

In this paper we report the outcomes of the interviews conducted with eight student representatives to explore their views on lecturer development focused on teaching. Though small-scale, we focus here on the often-overlooked issue of student views on lecturers' development as teachers, considering how this connects to agendas that seek to professionalise of university teaching and enhance the student voice. It became apparent that participating in the interviews provided a much-needed space for these SRs to engage in reflection and discussion about teaching and learning. As representatives, it is likely they received appropriate and relevant training, as advocated within the literature (e.g. Matthews and Dollinger, 2022). Critics of student voice work have noted that the remit of training for students is often limited in scope (Carey, 2018; Mendes & Hammet, 2020), resulting in them conforming to the practices and processes supported by the institution rather than fostering a sense of criticality and empowerment (Fleming, 2015). Empowerment emerged through the interview process: SRs wanted to find out more about lecturer CPD within their own institutions. This was an interesting outcome; although SRs occupy a role centred on representation of the student voice, they appear ill-equipped to fully participate in conversations around teaching and learning. This is a tension recently recognised within related work focused on student representative that has yet to be fully resolved (Matthews and Dollinger, 2022).

There is a need to carefully consider where and how the contribution of students to lecturers' CPD is positioned. CPD is on-going, and therefore lecturers are expected to engage with it on a regular basis to maintain currency (De Ridjt *et al*., 2013; Daniels, 2017). The development new lecturers undergo is generally centred on initial teaching qualifications (Gibbs, 2013; Parsons *et al*., 2012); it is a platform for lecturers to experiment with their practice in a

supportive and safe space, be introduced to pedagogic theory and engage in reflective practice (Kandlbiner and Peseta, 2009). In contrast, on-going lecturer CPD is often grounded in local needs or policies, and is therefore potentially more flexible, as it is not tied to the expectations of an accreditation body or academic regulations (citation removed for peer review). It represents a way through which we can respond to the call to engage students in their higher education (Zepke, 2018). Nevertheless, as Bovill (2017) reports, we recognise that students working in partnership with staff is not always an easy process given the cultures that exist in universities. However, our data demonstrate there is an appetite for students to contribute to lecturers' development. Indeed, where students took an active role, positive change was reported.

As this is an area of academic development practice that has received limited attention, further research is clearly needed. As this work presents a snapshot of the student voice, the attitudes of academic staff and other key stakeholders (e.g. teaching and learning leads) should also be sought. This would enable us to develop a comprehensive picture of the potential challenges as well as opportunities that may shape future practice in this area. Equally, the implementation of CPD activities that seek to actively involve students should have an explicit evaluation plan to gather evidence of impact that is sensitive to the roles and remits of both students and staff (Bamber, 2013).

The positioning of lecturer CPD as an activity distanced from students counters the goals of much academic development practice, particularly that for new lecturers, namely, to promote student centred methods embracing principles of innovation, reflection and development (Hanbury, 2008). Despite this student-centred mantra, it appears that most pedagogic development is lecturer centred. Whilst for certain activities this is appropriate, particularly when you consider the anxiety new lecturers often report as they begin to teach (Arthur, 2004), this may also be a missed opportunity to engage the student voice. Many studies have shown the positive contributions students can make to pedagogic change and curriculum enhancement activities (e.g. Brooman *et al*., 2015 *et al*., Bovill *et al*., 2017: Healey *et al*., 2014; Seale et al., 2014). Specifically, engaging students in activities to promote lecturers' CPD could counter narratives about the low status of teaching compared to research (Deaker

et al., 2016) and foster potentially inclusive and mutually beneficial relationships between students and staff (Cook-Sather *et al*., 2018; Seale et al., 2014).

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The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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725 **Table 1:** Student Representatives geographic location and overview of participating
726 universities

| Student Representative (SR) | UK / International | Institution type | Overview of CPD offer |
|---|---|---|---|
| SR1 | UK | Publicly funded, teaching-focused university. AHE accreditation since 2018 | CPD Scheme (D1-D3) / Taught postgraduate course |
| SR2 | UK | Research-led, publicly funded. AHE accreditation since 2007 | CPD Scheme (D1-D3) / Taught postgraduate course |
| SR3 | UK | Publicly funded, Teaching focused. Advance HE accreditation since 2016 | CPD Scheme (D1-D3) |
| SR4 | UK | Publicly funded, research-intensive | CPD Scheme (D1-D4) / Taught postgraduate course |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | university. Advance HE accreditation since 2016 | |
| SR5 | International | Publicly funded, research university. Advance HE accreditation since 2013 | CPD Scheme (D1-D4) |
| SR6 | International | Publicly funded, research University. Advance HE accreditation since 2016 | CPD Scheme (D1-D4) / Taught postgraduate course |
| SR7 and SR8 | International | Private, non-profit teaching focused university. AHE accreditation since 2019 | CPD Scheme (D1-D2) |

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