

What is the role of the midwifery link lecturer?

An action research project
by Joy Kemp, Honorary Senior
Lecturer





Background

- CCCU (2008) 'facilitate effective link activities in practice settings'
- Lack of consensus about the role, poorly defined (Brown, 2005; Barrett, 2007)
- New role at Link Site – different University
- Confusion with other roles (PFE, LPs)
- Learning communities project
- What is the essence of the midwifery LL role at CCCU?



Action research

- Insider research (Stringer, 1999) - participatory
- Fits with midwifery: research *with*, not research on (Barrett, 2006); unpredictability and complexity of practice (Deery, 2005)
- 2 action/reflection cycles
- Work in progress – to be developed



Data Collection & Analysis

- Semi structured taped interviews with 2 experienced lecturers (4 invited, 2 declined)
- Interview guide – input from team
- Ethics issues
- Qualitative analysis: Coding, categories, core themes
- Completed December 2008

Data Analysis

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2 / Page

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3 | Page

<p>Mentor – the mentors have to believe that you will support them through their mentorship, that you will stand up with them and address those problems</p> <p>They (mentors) don't think I'm there for the students, they think I'm there for them – and to me that's really important</p> <p>We have to protect mentors as much as we do the students – I truly believe that. I might be wrong!</p>	
<p>It's a balancing role, <i>hugely, delicately balanced</i>. The balance is delicate and you don't always get it right</p>	
<p>It pays to have a coffee with a manager, but they might think 'I could do without this, this is a waste of time'</p> <p>It's <i>you</i> to spend some time setting chatting with a student, or to say 'let me show you how to do this' – that's <i>not</i> a waste of time.</p>	<p>Similarities with the work of animators in community development (Smith, 1999)</p>
<p>Sometimes you think 'you should know by now'</p> <p>You need to be able to connect to people in different units with different cultures, and to know your own credibility</p>	<p>Relationships</p>
<p>And because the mentor has <i>flagged up an issue</i>, I might say 'let me tell what you were doing today, or what it is you've got going on'</p>	<p>Combined roles – adding value to the role of the supervisor</p>
<p>Supervisor of midwives – combining workshops on portfolio development with supervisor (Another lecturer not interviewed is an ASISO instructor)</p> <p>Each unit has its own needs and cultures – I've learned that since I've become a supervisor of midwives</p>	<p>Different units have different needs</p>
<p>Different pathways may have different needs</p> <p>Just to be different</p>	
<p>1. How do you decide how you are going to spend your day?</p> <p>H: I don't, very rarely. It's a tick as it see experience'</p> <p>Sometimes I book in</p> <p>Drop in</p> <p>Portfolio day – every 6 weeks – responding to need. We named it portfolio day but actually they come in for all different reasons</p> <p>Activities evolved</p>	<p>Time planning, approach to the role</p> <p>Choosing nature of the work – I don't choose her, she chooses me – again, similarity with community development principles</p> <p>Benefits of having some structured time but being flexible</p>
<p>... portfolio development</p> <p>Other times I go there, it's quiet, they like to see</p>	<p>Flexibility – being seen</p>

3 / Page

<p>I sat. I chat with them, it's not an event, and I go home; other days I develop a diary of sessions with people and I'm there until 5 o'clock</p>	<p>... as a catalyst for action</p>
<p>People would see us sitting there with coffee and chatting, and they'd say 'Oh, can we just ask you about...?' and we'd be involved it</p>	<p>... as a</p>
<p>Last time we didn't have any students of junior individuals, but actually the senior individuals who were doing their MScs... and we talked about that. That was fine you know, because we it met somebody's need. You have that flexibility that you can recall and discuss that information at any time</p>	<p>... as knowledgeable nature of the role</p>
<p>... structured activities need to be flexible</p>	<p>When do students want from the link lecturer</p>
<p>No structured activities for students at present, more ad hoc – but open to change.</p>	<p>... Freedom</p>
<p>Today that's not how I do it!</p>	<p>... Freedom</p>
<p>They just want to say to you 'hello, yes everything is OK'</p>	<p>... Freedom</p>
<p>Sharing a link area</p>	<p>... Freedom</p>
<p>The importance of communication – sharing a cohort, meet every couple of weeks</p>	<p>Challenges of sharing an area and also having a very time consuming role in the University</p>
<p>Dining boundaries – we can lecture deal with one issue, steering clear, picking different ways</p>	<p>Conflict with other activities</p>
<p>Unofficial hierarchy of LLs – who has been there longer, has built up trust, is known</p>	<p>... Freedom</p>
<p>I now just cannot do the things I used to do!</p>	<p>... Freedom</p>
<p>Collaboration – I'm for tat. Exchanging teaching</p>	<p>Promoting collaboration</p>

4 | Page

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The image shows a person's hands at the bottom of the frame, resting on a wooden table. On the table is a large, detailed mind map or project plan. The map is organized into several main sections, each with a title in a different color:

- FOCUS** (Pink header): Contains sticky notes with text like "Project", "Team", "Resources", "Time", "Budget", "Risk", "Quality", "Communication", "Stakeholders", "Environment", "Process", "Tools", "Methods", "Outputs", "Inputs", "Feedback", "Evaluation", "Improvement", "Sustainability", "Innovation", "Leadership", "Collaboration", "Transparency", "Accountability", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation", "Leadership", "Collaboration", "Transparency", "Accountability", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation".
- CHALLENGE** (Pink header): Contains sticky notes with text like "Challenge", "Opportunity", "Risk", "Uncertainty", "Complexity", "Ambiguity", "Conflict", "Competition", "Change", "Growth", "Innovation", "Leadership", "Collaboration", "Transparency", "Accountability", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation".
- MONITORING & EVALUATING** (Pink header): Contains sticky notes with text like "Monitoring", "Evaluation", "Feedback", "Improvement", "Sustainability", "Innovation", "Leadership", "Collaboration", "Transparency", "Accountability", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation".
- THE WAY FORWARD** (Pink header): Contains sticky notes with text like "Future", "Vision", "Mission", "Values", "Goals", "Objectives", "Strategies", "Tactics", "Actions", "Results", "Impact", "Legacy", "Innovation", "Leadership", "Collaboration", "Transparency", "Accountability", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation".
- ACTIVITIES** (Pink header): Contains sticky notes with text like "Activities", "Tasks", "Projects", "Initiatives", "Programs", "Campaigns", "Events", "Workshops", "Webinars", "Conferences", "Meetings", "Presentations", "Reports", "Documents", "Tools", "Methods", "Outputs", "Inputs", "Feedback", "Evaluation", "Improvement", "Sustainability", "Innovation", "Leadership", "Collaboration", "Transparency", "Accountability", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation".
- SKILLS QUALITIES ATTRIBUTES** (Pink header): Contains sticky notes with text like "Skills", "Qualities", "Attributes", "Competencies", "Capabilities", "Talents", "Strengths", "Weaknesses", "Opportunities", "Threats", "Challenges", "Obstacles", "Barriers", "Enablers", "Facilitators", "Supporters", "Stakeholders", "Partners", "Allies", "Adversaries", "Rivals", "Competitors", "Peers", "Colleagues", "Mentors", "Coaches", "Trainers", "Instructors", "Facilitators", "Supporters", "Stakeholders", "Partners", "Allies", "Adversaries", "Rivals", "Competitors", "Peers", "Colleagues", "Mentors", "Coaches", "Trainers", "Instructors".
- BALANCING ROLES** (Pink header): Contains sticky notes with text like "Balancing", "Roles", "Responsibilities", "Accountabilities", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation", "Leadership", "Collaboration", "Transparency", "Accountability", "Integrity", "Honesty", "Courage", "Resilience", "Flexibility", "Adaptability", "Creativity", "Innovation".

The person's hands are visible at the bottom of the frame, resting on the table. The mind map is a complex web of interconnected ideas, with each section providing a detailed overview of a specific aspect of the project or process.

Theme 1: the nature of the role

'Getting it right and giving the best you can'

- 1. Who does the role serve?
 - *'Perhaps it doesn't need to be for the student, maybe the focus of the student and the teacher – that bond – is wrong... (it's) more about the facilitation of the experience rather than the people who are experiencing it (Jane, p.10).'*
- 2. Modelling collaboration: bringing people together, catalysts for action
 - *'I see my role as fundamental, building relationships between the university and the placement area' (Mary, p. 13a).*
 - Many other relationships too
 - Clearly defined boundaries

3.Credibility and visibility: being current, being there •



Being there: essential to the role but difficult to achieve.

'For me it's essential... being credible ... if they see we are current in practice...it reinforces practice and develops midwives and enables them... I am very motivated, I go to practice in my own time which is essential' (Mary, p.28a).

4. Purposeful chatting: intentional time wasting

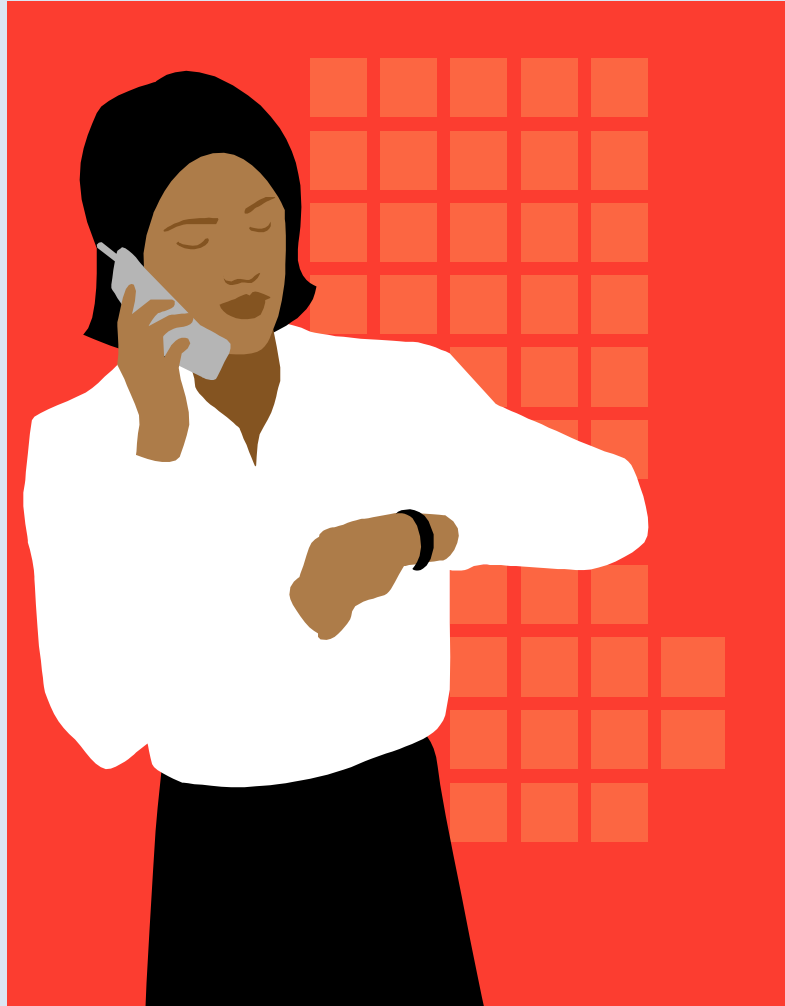
An investment which pays dividends

'It's a bank account... it's investing to get the interest. It's something you have to work for. You have to demonstrate that you value them and you have to do something to make them understand that' (Jane, p. 18).



- Activities are a response to stated needs and depends on what people want
 - *It's a suck it and see experience (Jane, p.5).*

Theme 2: Challenges and difficulties

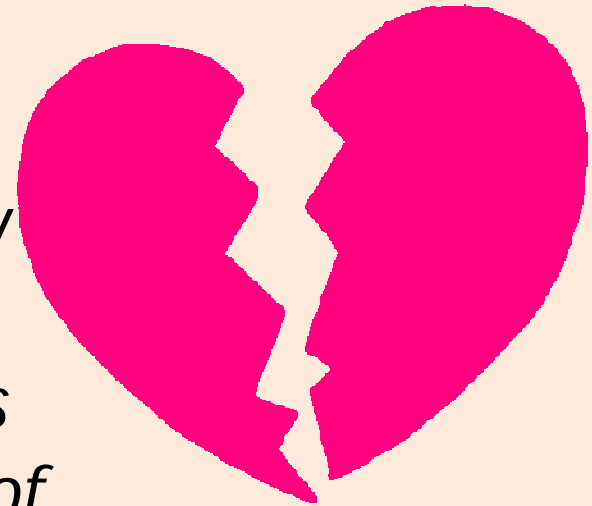


1. Lack of time

- *The timing for my link role is never enough – I think I always give more to my link role than I should be doing – but unfortunately that's what I need to do, it's what the role demands – you want to give the best you can (Mary, p. 14a).*

- 2. Fragmented thinking

- *'I think it's very interesting the way that we are different in the two places... the link areas belong to us as individuals. I think the essence of our team is wonderful but ... people do things subconsciously'. (Jane, p. 21).*



The degree of autonomy and belongingness demonstrated in the link lecturer role indicate personal empowerment (Matthews et al, 2006). Is that true in the University setting?

3. No mechanism for feedback or evaluation

- ▶ Not captured in student's practice evaluations
- ▶ Team's belief that this role functions well but no evidence for it
 - *if we say that we do this well, then we need the evidence for that... that (feedback) should come from everybody we have contact with (Mary, p. 17a)*
- ▶ Concerns about another paper exercise



Theme 3: Future possibilities

- Feeding into curriculum redesign
 - *With this revalidation we should be changing the focus of the way we teach; this is our opportunity to propose a new way of working. It's about being creative isn't it, and challenging the way that we work (Jane, p.17).*
 - *We need to increase hours for practice time. I would like to see one whole week in practice – they can see you out there and it ensures the theory practice gap becomes smaller (Mary, p.27a).*
- the role needs more recognition and more time given to its implementation.



Discussion

- ***Link lecturers as community animators*** – a role model for learning communities within the faculty and for interprofessional working and collaboration
- Fits with NMC (2008) teacher standard
 - *‘teachers must be able to establish effective working relationships in practice and academic settings, create an environment for learning, act as role model and show leadership’.*



Role modelling 'being with'

- 'being' as well as 'doing' is an important aspect of midwifery (Walsh, 2006).
- Ontology, or the nature of being, could be a helpful model for midwifery work.
- Link lecturers play an important part in role modelling this less tangible aspect of practice.

Belonging in practice

- Both participants demonstrated belongingness
- Belonging as a link lecturer can take 7 years! (Ramage, 2004)
- Need to consider student's belongingness and factors that influence this
- The importance of clinical credibility – must it has to be achieved before addressing other issues? (Ramage, 2004). Debate about this in the literature



Conclusions and Way forward

- Complex, organic role
- Powerful model for interprofessional collaboration
- Relies on sense of belonging
- Credibility and visibility in practice
- Facilitates empowerment for lecturers and others
- Our purple cow?
- Students and practitioner's views
- Extend beyond our HEI
- Fed into MINT Project (Midwives in Teaching) report about to be published (Nottingham Uni)

Thank you for listening!

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