

## **Academic Staff Development and Communities of Teaching Practice**

Alison Viskovic,  
Senior Lecturer, Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education  
College of Education  
Massey University

Over many years researchers have studied how students learn; how teachers facilitate student learning; how teachers conceptualise teaching and learning; the work of educational development units and developers; the development of expertise; recognising and rewarding excellent teaching; education for the professions; and workplace learning. Yet despite this plethora of literature that could inform the professional education and development of tertiary teachers, and a need to respond to increasing student numbers and diversity by improving the quality of teaching, little seems to have changed in NZ tertiary institutions' provision of academic staff development.

Tertiary teachers belong to communities of practice, such as their institution, department, discipline or profession, and it is mainly in those communities that their working knowledge and identities as teachers develop. Recent research shows that they gain most of their teaching knowledge and skills on-the-job, experientially, often haphazardly and serendipitously, and less through formal courses or professional development workshops and seminars. Such knowledge is mainly tacit and procedural, rather than explicit and propositional. Drawing on three case studies carried out in a polytechnic, a wananga and a university, this workshop will consider some ideas for strengthening initial and on-going professional education for tertiary teachers, and will encourage discussion around Wenger's concept of community of practice.