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Title

It's been a wonderful life : accounts of the interplay between structure and agency by 'good' university teachers / Brenda Leibowitz ...

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Abstract

This study is set in an era and a context in which extrinsic forms of motivation and reward are offered by higher education institutions as a means to enhance teaching, and in which teaching is effectively undervalued in relation to research. The study focuses on the role of agency in professional development and demonstrates the relevance of Margaret Archer's description of the interplay between structure and agency for understanding how academics enhance their teaching in research-intensive universities. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted by a team of academic development advisors in order to obtain accounts of teaching academics of their becoming good teachers, in their own words. An analysis of the transcripts of the interviews with the lecturers demonstrates how dimensions such as biography, current contextual influences, individuals' dispositions and steps taken to enhance teaching interact in a spiralling manner to generate a sense of self-fulfilment and agency. Intrinsic, rather than extrinsic motivation, is shown to be significant in propelling individuals towards action. The article concludes with an assessment of the implications of

06.2.2026

the interplay between structure and agency, the need for an enabling environment with a key role for intrinsic motivation for professional development strategies, in research-intensive universities. (HRK

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