

## **Learning from the rhetoric of academics using educational technology**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Seminar presentations, by academics successfully using educational technology to support their courses, form a visible part of many staff development programmes. These events contribute to developing a community of academics that use educational technology and are sharing experiences on its use in supporting teaching and learning. We draw on classic rhetorical analysis to highlight the epideictic or ceremonial form of these presentations we see as exemplary of these events. These presentations tend to be quite distinct from how educational technology research or best practice is disseminated. We argue that this epideictic form is a vital component in emerging communities of practice and, for example, communicates the value of working collaboratively. While the underlying intuition is widely acknowledged, our analysis offers a framework to view these conscious and stylistic choices across learning communities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Surveys and broad perspectives of how educational technology is used in practice suggest that staff development initiatives play important roles in addressing teaching and learning challenges (Harrington et al. 2005; Czerniewicz & Brown, 2005; Botha et al. 2005). Traditional educational research and policy have probably had limited roles in directly influencing how academics understand and use educational technology. At the same time, it has proven to be unrealistic to expect most lecturers to become learning designers, content developers or to engage with the research literature, if this ever was a realistic expectation (Able, 2005).

While most staff development activities develop specific skills, best practices and theoretical foundations (King, 2003; Wenger, 1998; Carr et al. 2005; Laurillard, 2002; Littlejohn, 2002), an acknowledged crucial staff development role is the enabling of sharing and the nurturing of learning among academic educators. In researching an emerging community of educators at the University of Cape Town (UCT), we have been interested in how these communities grow and can be supported (Carr et al. 2005). Communities of practice are:

*groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (Wenger et al. 2002:4).*

This paper analyses two academics' presentations regarding their experiences with and learning from educational technology interventions. In particular, we focus on how academics share ideas with peers in an informal and unthreatening environment. We are interested in how seminar presentations (an integral part of academic activities), delivered by academics and concerning their own use of educational technology, contribute to community building. The presentations by academics on their use of educational technology are quite distinct from those of educational technology researchers, since they understandably have few references to debates in the literature and offer mostly anecdotal evidence.

We draw on the classic rhetorical analysis in the tradition of Aristotle, looking at how the text, speaker and audience interact at a particular time and respond to a situation calling for an action. We show that these presentations aim to persuade their audiences using an epideictic form of

praise speech, and they speak about virtue, of the speaker, their collaborators and educational technology. We observe that the purpose is not primarily about presenting facts or an argument about a state of affairs, thus these speeches are not forensic or deliberative in nature. We then make connections with learning in communities of practice about community and the roles of educational technology in higher educational development initiatives.

## THE CASES

The Centre for Educational Technology (CET) staff development team organised the two presentations analysed here as part of the ongoing staff development activities (Carr et al. 2005; Deacon & Brown, 2005). They were held in university seminar rooms, one at lunchtime and the other in an afternoon session, with 10 to 30 academics attending. The audience included academics interested in using educational technology across all faculties, with a few individuals from neighbouring institutions, and some of CET's staff. The brief was to present an overview of their teaching using educational technology, which in many cases involved collaboration with CET. The content of presentations was developed entirely by the academics. While only two presentations are analysed here, most of the others can be characterised similarly.

The presenters emphasised how new educational technology solutions emerged from collaborative design negotiations. In some cases they highlighted the risk factors that technology appears to introduce (Nomdo, 2004). More often they are motivated by enthusiasm to discuss what they have tried and their impressions of its value. We were interested in atypical learning designs that are more challenging and perceived as 'higher risk'. The first case was a presentation by Nic from the School of Architecture and Planning. Nic has been using educational technology in his teaching for several years. The presentation described the creation of a tutorial that established a better link between architectural theory and what students did in an introductory Photoshop editing activity. In his presentation Nic explains:

*It was agreed that ...learning Photoshop should be incidental, should be a secondary outcome to the real learning which is engaging students in theoretical issues about change over time or mapping, or things like that.*

Students were given two photographs of the same street taken 50 years apart and had to compose a synthesised image reflecting the architectural changes. The student chooses from one of several paradigms of possible images by making visible Photoshop layers and then orders these layers syntagmatically with layers chosen from other paradigms; for example, changes to facades, roads, wall colour and trees on a street. Not all these were architecturally significant and using opacity their significance could be adjusted. Exploiting the scripting functionality of Photoshop, the names, order and properties of layers are automatically retrieved and appropriate reflective questions generated as a MS Word document. The students' Photoshop and MS Word documents were submitted for assessment, after the students created their image and responded to the questions.

The second case is Jane from the Centre for Film and Media Studies. She, too, has been using educational technology in her teaching for many years. Students have responded very enthusiastically to her teaching style. She highlighted in her presentation a re-purposing of Photoshop and PowerPoint, an activity developed with a colleague:

*So they have to give a little explanation of how advertising works like that [gesture to screen] and then talk a bit about the particular advert jamming ...just using PowerPoint they don't need Photoshop to do anything sophisticated like that ... so really, students can be as high-tech or as low-tech as they want and still be applying what they learnt about critiquing the media and developing their own technical skills at the same time.*

Other work involving collaboration with CET included developing new course management system tools (Horwitz & Eden, 2004) and various online facilitation strategies. She remarked:

*So they're directly speaking to each other and engaging in this text in the online environment and engaging with the course material – my learning objectives are met, I'm very happy with this.*

Both lecturers emphasised that they viewed the educational technology as one of many tools they employ in their teaching. The educational purpose was more important than technical considerations.

## THE ART OF RHETORIC

Classical rhetoric focuses on how persuasion is used to influence the thoughts and actions of an audience. What makes information convincing and later able to be reproduced can be understood through an analysis of the communications between the speaker and audience. Rhetorical analysis is a methodology applicable in such situations where there is a lack of common focus and the speakers try to promote, as in our case, new ways of teaching with technology that they valued. The art of rhetoric used here, and associated with Aristotle and in more recent refinements (Perelman, 1969), captures the relationship between the speaker, the text and the audience and is concerned with the interaction between these at a particular time, responding to a particular situation and calling for a particular type of action. We believe that these circumstances need to be identified in order to perform a rhetorical analysis. Other situations in which this particular form of rhetorical analysis is used include the rhetoric of political speeches, advertisements, and funeral orations.

We are not concerned with popular notions of rhetoric as devious attempts to mislead the public or texts associated with force, propaganda or demagoguery. Nor do we draw on recent developments in the application of the art of rhetoric to communication not through speech, but using other modes, as in digital rhetoric (Zappen, 2005). Several more recent contributions to rhetoric are concerned with issues of 'identification', particularly unconscious factors in appeal (Corbett, 1990:573). Other distinct types of rhetorical analysis have also been developed and applied to texts that have been created largely in a vacuum and which are not specifically designed to persuade an audience.

In this paper the speakers are successful educators, the text is their presentation, and the audience is the community of practice; all of which is a response to the paradox where educational technology on a broad level seems to involve careful consideration before adoption in courses, but on a micro level is clearly shown to be a persuasive success. Any rhetoric analysis must thus begin by identifying the response, sometimes referred to as 'the crisis' (Gitay, 1981:42). Broadly, the response of our speakers concerns how educational technology can address teaching and learning challenges faced both locally and across higher education.

Rhetorical theory identifies three modes of persuasion (ethos, pathos and logos), three types of speech (deliberative, forensic and epideictic), special and common topics, ways to arrange a speech (disposition, meaning 'arrangement'), figures of speech and metaphor (elocution, meaning 'style'), and inventio (meaning 'discovery') which helps us to identify the broader configuration of the presentation. In addition, rhetoric theory illuminates the means of persuasion by providing definitions for terms such as 'presence' and 'adherence' which can be used to show how we can persuade and create academic communities of practice. In this paper we show that the presentations analysed are epideictic, that is to say, they are ceremonial, praise speeches elucidating issues around the virtue of educational technology and collaboration. This paper then aims to show how new research rhetoric develops and gives an analysis of how a new academic discourse comes into being.

As Perelman (1969) argues, rhetoric allows us to analyse, at an appropriately high level of abstraction, the communications between (in our case) the educator (the speaker), the educational technology (the projects discussed in the presentation) and the community of educators (the audience). The feature of such presentations is not arguments drawing on theory or factual evidence that can be analysed with logic, but a description of thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The way in which we approach the problem means that we first rhetorically analyse the presentations and then link the analysis with the communities of practice framework in order to shed light on kinds of activity we observe.

Analysis of epideictic rhetoric offers insights into the ceremonial style of the academics' seminar presentations. We also ask questions about each seminar presentations' rhetorical situation that includes the audience, purpose and context. A rhetorical analysis scrutinises the techniques of communication and persuasion to put across both technical and education messages to the various audiences that the presentation is designed to address.

## **ANALYSIS**

The rhetorical analysis begins with a description of the rhetorical situation, a summary of the presentation and then analyses the speeches drawing on the five canons of classical rhetoric (*inventio, dispositio, elocutio, pronuntiatio and memoria*). Each presentation has a theme, an organisation and a style reflecting its response to its rhetorical situation. While it might be straightforward for an educational technologist to distinguish 'description' from 'approach' in a presentation, we must identify how the clues about such differences are provided to the general audience. Drawing on the rhetorical analysis of epideictic speech we will show how the presentations support and build the community of practice.

### **Rhetorical situation**

Both presenters are course conveners, respected in their community of educators. The rhetorical situation of Nic's presentation involves a tutorial exercise introducing Photoshop to architecture students. The rhetorical situation of Jane's presentation is a reflection at the end of her stay at UCT, where she gives an overview of the use and evolution of educational technology in the undergraduate media programme. The descriptions below draw on the words of the presenters. Nic's presentation starts with his context and 'the general themes that this project was located in.' The context is the History and Theory course in the Bachelor of Architectural Studies. The particular tutorial described in this course has the aim to introduce visual representations of change over time to students. The project began with the lecturer and CET negotiating how to assist students to understand change over time. The tutorial helps students to engage in 'serious questions about what makes a streetscape and that kind of visual, of that kind of streetscape.'

Jane's presentation starts with her talking about the Media and Society course, which she has 'been involved with longest, and it's probably the course that's had the most diverse involvement from staff members from the Centre for Educational Technology.' She shows a screen shot illustrative of the look and feel of the Connect course site and describes how, together with Andrea Ressel and David Horwitz, they had 'wanted to ... build a sense of being, a media community, future media practitioners, and a community of media students and media teachers, liaising with one another, discussing ideas outside the classroom' using the web.

### **Inventio: Formulation of the thesis**

*Inventio* is generally understood to be the macro structure of the presentation. When speakers prepare a presentation they use *inventio* as a means of discussing ways of organising the subject matter. In turn, when we rhetorically analyse we should always try to identify this 'guideline' to help us analyse the speech. These are the two opposite ends – aspects of *inventio*. Any speech needs to have a central thesis, and a speech needs to have clearly defined points where the messages are apparent.

Both presentations have a central thesis which can be encapsulated as follows: 'My experience of educational technology has been that it has improved my teaching, my students' learning and the curriculum'. Both presentations have this statement embedded in personal testimony and the higher educational development themes, while they avoid academic discussions of the merits of the specific technologies, teaching strategies, learning outcomes or curriculum designs. Generally both speakers highlight the management of their teaching (e.g., assessment, class size, colleagues, lecture format, macro curriculum), tools (e.g., software applications, hardware, tutorial learning designs, facilitation) and the fact that collaborative design achieves more than if they been working in isolation.

These points of discovery serve to bring about three types of appeal: *logos*, the appeal to reason; *ethos*, which focuses on the personality and character of the speaker as it comes across in the presentation; and *pathos*, the emotional appeal that brings about a consensus on what is acceptable as good and what is to be denounced as harmful.

Aristotle distinguished between artistic and non-artistic arguments or proofs. The non-artistic include, for example, laws, witnesses and contracts. The artistic include *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* that appeals to the reasonableness of the audience, appeals to their emotions, or the speaker's reliance on his own *ethos* to bring about persuasion, respectively (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book 1, 2, 1356a). The presentations include both types of 'arguments', since the functioning software and hardware tool are referred to (the non-artistic proofs) and the designs for learning are discussed (the artistic proofs).

### **Dispositio: arrangement**

In order to put their message across effectively, speakers have to arrange their material 'with the keenest discretion' in order to strategically strengthen their material (Corbett, 1990:278). *Dispositio* is typically concerned with questions about the introduction, the statement of facts, the proof of our case, discrediting the opposition, and the conclusion. This is a classical way to structure a speech, although many will have very different structures, which include all or some of these types. Other considerations include how to appeal to the audience showing the *ethos* of the speaker, moving from readily acceptable arguments, and what sort of evidence to use and when (Corbett 1990:281).

**Introduction narrative:** Generally, introductions aim to capture the audience's attention and set the scene by asking a question, setting up a paradox, demanding change, identifying problems or telling a story. Of the five types of introductions, Nic and Jane's presentations use introduction narrative, which generally 'rouses interest in our subject by adopting the anecdotal lead-in' (Corbett, 1990:296). Prior to these introductions, the audience is settling in and listening to the welcoming remarks by the chair, while others are still arriving. Neither introduction is especially controversial; both are significant scene-setting points of the respective presentations where the speakers are trying to grab the audience's attention and establishing their *ethos*.

Nic introduces his presentation by displaying what a group of his students produced towards the end of the course. He says, with an educator's perspective and modest pride:

*[Gesturing towards an image on the screen] Just to give you a quick intro into the what the project was, on the top is a photograph from 1958, and on the bottom is one from 2003, the same street, so clearly there's been quite a major change between these two time periods. The photo in the middle is a student interpretation of that change. This is part of the conclusion of what we did. Just to give you an idea of where the project landed up.*

The audience is intrigued and predisposed towards Nic as an educator. Nic sets himself apart from others who might be talking about specific details, such as programmers, policy maker, or students. It is important for the audience to know who he represents and what his point of departure is.

Even though Jane starts speaking by responding to welcoming remarks, the introduction to her presentation actually starts with the following narrative:

*When I first started, there weren't any courses in film and media studies that were using a web-based platform or encouraging online learning at all. And we also have a lot of students and in fact staff members who are quite uncomfortable in the online environment so we wanted to overcome that. Because we're trying to train people to go into the communications industry, it's very, very important that they know how to use technology in lots of different ways.*

From the beginning Jane makes a personal statement, describing her views of the importance of educational technology to her work. The audience understands that what will follow is more than a bland description of gimcrack software solutions, it is in fact a sequence of events, understandings and learning that are particular to her professional development.

**Statements of facts:** We find in the presentations that there are statements of fact, which are not forensic in nature, but consist of a narrative exposition relating experiences, incidences, thoughts, feelings, ideas, pros and cons. It is more a representation of a 'flow of thought' as the presenters talk using their slides at points where illustration is needed. They engage their audience with free-flowing descriptions, anecdotes and explanations.

**Refutation:** Particularly in Nic's presentation we find a mild refutation which involves appeals to reason and wit (Corbett, 1990:302-307).

*I just want to talk quickly about the problems and difficulties, perhaps we over determined change... It was also difficult to know before hand how the use of layers and opacity would generate appropriate questions. ... So there were a few technical difficulties... those are just technical things that can be streamlined...*

This refutation appeals to reason, because in the audience Nic anticipates that there might be people who are sceptical that software can mimic human judgment and are eager to challenge him for not acknowledging artificial intelligence's inherent limitations. The wit comes in when he tells two humorous anecdotes about the artificial intelligence misinterpreting what a few students had done and secondly how a student erasing other students' work and how it was recovered. With this refutation Nic acknowledges the limitations of automated software. He responds to possible critics in the audience thus building his *ethos* as a pragmatic and informed educator.

**Confirmatio (of temporal sequence):** Throughout Jane's presentation we find evidence for a confirmation of a temporal sequence. The presentation described how from first to third year, educational technology is employed in the curriculum. For each project she makes reference to its origins, before she was involved, her initial involvement and the present state of the project. These quotes exemplify the descriptive timeline Jane uses:

*And the NewsFrames exercise itself is also followed on in second year and third year by two more advanced programs... The in their third year they get to edit news footage as well...*

*Back in 2002, the student intake was much less computer literate than I think they are now. We had to give lectures and run lab session with small groups of students to familiarise them with the website, show them how to navigate, show them how to access lecture notes, actually physically teach them how to post their own little discussion pieces online and so on. The next year we moved the course to second semester, I think which meant that they already had a first semester course which gave them some online learning and so we didn't need to do that, we just had a lecture introduction where we put the website up and gave them a little bit of a tour of it. Andrea did that for us, the lecture time that worked well. By 2004, the students we were getting in were much more familiar with computers in general. The tutors we had working with us were much more confident in working in the online environment and the whole situation was generally improving, not because we'd taught them so well but because time was moving and things were changing.*

Jane is chronologically systematic; she goes to great lengths to explain how various collaborators (some of whom are in the audience) fitted in to the greater pedagogical design. She shows that she understands the macro curriculum structures; she impresses upon the audience that educational technology has contributed to developing her graduates, and demonstrates her consciousness of what and how she teaches. The community of educators present are given a comprehensive view of the undergraduate programme. This builds her credibility with the audience: by praising each collaborator, their projects and how they fit together, Jane allows the epideictic nature of her presentation to come into full view.

**Conclusions:** The conclusions are distinctive in that they end off with remarks of gratitude and leaving the audience with a positive message. Nic's presentation ends with:

*More projects of a similar nature need to be planned, but unfortunately that has to happen now and, you know, obviously we don't have part-time staff, we don't know who is teaching next year, so it's really important to get ahead now for next year. And, yeah, the project was a success from our side, thanks to you.*

This communicates that Nic, like most other educators is under time and resource pressures, remains a creative educator. This helps the audience to identify with Nic possibly even emulating him in future.

In contrast Jane's presentation ends with a personal thank you:

*Okay, I hope that gives you sense of how our programme has developed and how it fits together and what our objectives are. And I'd like to end by saying thank you very much to everyone that I worked with in this centre over the past several years, you really have been brilliant and you really have been the most important part of my professional development and given me such satisfaction working with you. Thank you so much and I hope that we continue to have a connection when I move to Queensland.*

This symbolic conclusion develops a favourable outlook on both the speaker and collaborative work with CET. Again we see the *ethos* of the educator shining through, someone that places a high value on collaborative work.

Even though the arrangement of the presentations is not clearly delineated, as the presentation unfolds, the cycle of topics we recognise (in both presentations) consists of introducing themselves as creative educators, working as a collaborative designer of learning activities, assessing what students produce, evaluating the learning activities and concluding with crediting those who contributed to the success of the project. This *dispositio* builds the authority of the speaker and develops credibility, while at the same time aiming to reassure the audience, trying to produce a positive judgment in favour of educational technology projects.

**Elocutio: style**

Style is not simply ornamentation, but is an integral part of the thought processes of the speaker and the way that the audience will perceive the arguments presented to them:

*Style does provide a vehicle for thought, and style can be ornamental; but style is something more than that. It is another of the 'available means of persuasion', another of the means of arousing the appropriate emotional response in the audience, and of the means of establishing the proper ethical image (Corbett, 1990: 381).*

Therefore, we can define *elocutio* as the means of persuasion through the use of style, the level at which the language used makes a difference. In rhetoric we identify three types of style: plain, forcible, and florid (Corbett, 1990: 26). The other important facets of style are the arrangement of sentences and the use of figures of speech (tropes and schemes), metaphor and analogy. In both presentations a plain style is used. The language is clear and straightforward, easy to understand and engaging.

Nic uses discipline-specific phrases from architecture like 'place over time' and 'change over time'. He explains what he expects his students to understand about architectural 'space' and 'change':

*... for an architecture student it is important towards the end of first year to talk about space and special issues and rather than looking at this [gestures to the screen] and saying the colour, it's a beautiful street, not actually getting to grips with the spatial condition, the change that has happened.*

Nic uses words like 'synthesise' and 'synthesis' to refer to both students' understanding of spatial conditions as well as what they have produced. He repeats this because it is important for him that his students have grasped the concept and that the audience understand his concerns. Nic emphasises that Photoshop's ability to change the opacity of layers in an image was important for students to develop in order to 'see through layers' of history so that they would be able to communicate in informed ways about change over time. Nic uses everyday language most of the time, with 'space' requiring a more technical definition. This kind of clarity easily carries his message across to the audience.

Jane also uses a plain style even though she peppers her presentation with technical film and media terms. Jane uses a technique of padding her descriptions in order to display her technical knowledge, for example:

*But the film course is very different. It aims to develop a technical and analytical vocabulary for talking about what's happening on the screen, it will be a vocabulary for cinematography, including things like tracking shots, dollies, zooms, close-ups, wide-angle lenses, and so forth. There'll be a vocabulary for editing jump-cuts, axis-of-action, graphic matches, and so on. They need to be able to use that terminology in order to express their ideas about film.*

*It's a media writing task, it's tied to the section of the course where we first began to look at things like ideal of journalistic objectivity and the conventions of journalistic writing, the inverted pyramid, how to write a headline, how to write sentences for a news report, how to structure a news report, and so on.*

Jane uses a rhythmical recitation of these technical terms and types that changes the pace of the presentation at certain points. Within a few seconds, she covers the topics from her lectures, which creates a sense of presence and reality for the audience.

**Pronuntiatio and memoria: delivery and memorisation**

The *pronuntiatio* of both presentations suggest that the speakers are comfortable in front of an audience. Usually rhetorical analysis neglects these two canons, but it is important to draw attention to the delivery and the *memoria* required of the speakers. For example, even when Nic

makes a mistake, the resulting humour only serves to endear him to the audience. Similarly when Jane speaks passionately, but off topic and asks if the tape could be rewound in order to tape over what she had said, the audience is both enthralled and amused. Neither speaker uses a prepared speech, but speaks to *PowerPoint* slides, from personal experience, and often from the heart. This is consistent with the *ethos* they have created, displaying their confidence working with educational technology in a high risk environment.

### **Ethos: appeal of personality**

Arguably the most important and possibly the most powerful type of appeal in the presentations is *ethos*. The presenter makes an ethical appeal by invoking their *ethos*, the characteristics of the person they are, and their academic background. Aristotle defines the ethical appeal as follows:

*[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others] on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt. And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person (Rhetoric, Book 1, 2, 1356a).*

Our rhetorical analyses concentrate on how the *ethos* of the presenter is displayed in and used in the presentations. The ethical appeal can be seen as a feature of the presentations themselves, as opposed to being derived from the speakers' *ethos* already developed outside of the text. The ethical appeal cannot be taught and must be developed by the presenter as a person through the delivery of their speech (Corbett, 1990: 81). Aristotle defines *ethos* of a speaker as:

*... three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character – the three, namely, that induces us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. ... It follows that anyone who is thought to have all three of these good qualities will inspire trust in his audience (Rhetoric, Book 2, 1, 1378a).*

The presenters rely heavily on their personal *ethos* within the speech as well as showing the *ethos* of the presentation as a 'team effort' of the university.

In Nic's presentation he uses the personal pronoun often, as in:

*But I also want to give some background...  
So this is the outcome I was aware of...  
I think this is where Andrew did some amazing work...  
Andrew and I were negotiating... so we decided... Andrew and I worked out...  
That was one of the main things that we wanted to teach students...  
I just want to talk quickly about the problems and difficulties...*

This is Nic's personal testimony showing that he was responsible for the project, providing a critical comment of its success, praising the project and giving collaborators due credit. It comes across in the way the presentation was structured and delivered that Nic is a dedicated lecturer who uses educational technology successfully in his course. When the audience perceives this *ethos*, they are persuaded that educational technology could be something valuable in their own teaching too.

In Jane's presentation she uses the personal pronoun in a similar way for the same effect. She also shows a montage image of herself in her presentation, created by Vera Vukovic of CET. This amuses the audience and captures their attention. Examples from Jane's presentation include:

*I'd try and get in there at every topic...  
I was guided to do that in fact by staff members in this department [CET] because I had rarely worked in online environments before, like the tutors, I hadn't really thought about how to facilitate them very much.  
I'd really tried to encourage tutors to post some things...*

*So I really enjoyed working with the program [NewsFrames] ...  
I am very happy with this...*

*So I was very pleased with the student producing this jam, that's purely the result of  
Marion's Photoshop workshops, a lot of work went into that little image.*

Similarly, here we can see from the use of these self-assured and convincing uses of personal pronouns as well as in the structure of the speech and situation of the audience that Jane comes across as a confident speaker and competent lecturer. She is shown to be dedicated to her students and committed to collaborating around issues involving educational technology. Again, this serves to show her *ethos* to the audience who in turn are persuaded by her bright personality and interesting perspectives based on her own experiences.

### **Epidictic address: ceremonial speech**

Aristotle recognised three types of speech: the forensic, deliberative, and the epidictic. Kennedy (1991: 7) explains that:

*In Rhetoric 1.3 Aristotle identifies three occasions, or species, of civic rhetoric: (1) deliberation about the future actions in the best interest of the state; (2) speeches of prosecution or defence in a court of law seeking to determine the just resolution of actions alleged to have been taken in the past; and (3) what he calls epidictic, or speeches that do not call for any immediate action by the audience but that characteristically praise or blame some person or thing, often on a ceremonial occasion such as a public funeral or holiday.*

The ceremonial discourses are exemplified in funeral orations, graduation speeches, obituaries, letters of reference, and the introduction of a speaker (Corbett, 1990: 139). Here the orator praises the day, the idea, and particular path of action or a person. They seek to obtain the audience's sympathy through paying tribute to people, things or events and criticising others, emphasising what is either honourable or shameful. The epidictic speech focuses on the noble or base in actions, people, governments or ideas. Aristotle describes epidictic speech as ceremonial oratory that is only for display purposes, and believed that:

*Those who praise or attack a man aim at proving him worthy of honour or the reverse, and they too treat all other considerations with reference to this one (Rhetoric, Book 1, Chapter 3, 1358b).*

In Nic and Jane's presentations we see evidence for the epidictic because they speak about the virtues of educational technology, they speak about their own achievements, and they praise their CET collaborators. Both Nic and Jane were given a brief where they knew that at the end of their projects they might be asked to reflect on their project, using their personal testimony, as a future case study. In addition, Jane's presentation was delivered at the end of her tenure at UCT which added to the epidictic flavour of her presentation.

The goal of epidictic speech is to strengthen the consensus around particular ideals, values or plans of action (Perelman, 1982: 20). The epidictic address does not merely focus on the artistry of the speaker, but is integral to shaping reality through showing the audience what is praiseworthy or not. In the seminars, the presentations are wholly dedicated to establishing education's *ethos*, and promoting the soundness of the ideas presented. The epidictic speech is used because it will create a positive view of the learning activities, and aims to encourage the audience to think favourably of them:

*... Epidictic oratory has significance and importance for argumentation because it strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing adherence to the values it lauds ... [The orator] tries to establish a sense of communion centered around particular values recognised by the audience (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969:50-51).*

The presenter wishes to 'increase the adherence' of the audience to working collaboratively and grappling with designs for learning. Through the presentation, the presenter directs the audience towards engaging with the ideas of the speech as praiseworthy, and reasonable. But in the speech, the presenter also aims to mirror the values and aspirations of the audience so that it will be easier for them to accept their ideas. This speech seeks to stir the audience, to inspire them given the vision presented by the speaker.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969: 27) note that the epideictic also has an element of the argumentative or deliberative discourse since it is not just a ceremony that is being performed, but people are being asked to engage with the ideas being presented. Even though we might be able to see deliberative and forensic aspects in the presentation, the principled classification to which these are most closely associated is epideictic. In the case of the seminars, the presenter seeks to justify and give reasons for the way that the presentation has been structured and the educational motivations behind it.

The presentations analysed are not argumentative; they seek to unify the audience while promoting learning and research, but not merely in terms of the evidence and theories. Rather, they seek to involve the audiences in the speaker's experience and vision, which is presented as the university's or a department's vision. The presentations reflect the values of a successful educator using technology tools and it seeks to bring others to recognise the reasoning, values and the ethos behind their innovations. The presentations are epideictic speeches because they aim to bring about a common agreement amongst the audience to consider a particular use of educational technology because it is good, because it is praised by the presenter in his speech, and so made worthy in the minds of the audience.

## TOWARDS BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Classical rhetorical analysis, with its long tradition and established form, captures salient features of the presentations. A goal of this analysis has been to recognise contributions of these presentations to community building. To summarise, the important points from the analysis include:

- The rhetorical situation describes the eloquence of educators, who as course conveners are knowledgeable about pedagogical design, the interests of educators, and student learning issues. Their brief was to speak about collaborative projects and their experiences using educational technology. This type of rhetorical situation lends itself to epideictic speech.
- Both speakers' *inventio* highlighted the management of their teaching environment, educational technology tools and the fact that collaborative design often achieved more than they would have been achieved had they worked in isolation.
- The *dispositio* used by the speakers took the shape of short introductions and conclusions. This is in contrast to presentations on research where introductions are preparatory and conclusions reinforce what was said in the body of the speech. Nic's refutation and Jane's use of temporal sequences are highlighted here.
- Both presenters used the plain style of *elocutio*, which is aligned with their *ethos*. Sometimes technical terms were used to illustrate the speakers' command of their discipline.
- The *pronuntiatio* is relaxed and informal, and the *memoria* is characterised by the presenter speaking freely from experience which is in keeping with their *ethos* and epideictic speech.

The rhetorical analysis highlights the epideictic form of presentations which, by definition, tries to build consensus. Those people honoured or criticised in these presentations need to appreciate the ceremonial form and the role of praise. It is a role of staff developers to create awareness among presenters that their presentations can build community. For those in the audience expecting technical details there are other more appropriate opportunities to engage. Simply

making the information about the work of academics available online is unlikely to achieve the same effect. The speakers' ethos and the carefully constructed epideictic style would be difficult for the presenters to convey outside the context of the presentations.

The speeches are fleeting text, transient, once-off presentations, while the concept of community is more concerned with interactions on an ongoing basis. They are just one of opportunities for academics to share and learn. Our interest in the presentations is in part because they were in a public space and one anticipates an acknowledgment of the other less visible activities. The presenters make reference to collaborative designs, communities of practice and divisions of labour in relation to CET. The presenters remark on how their students impressed them both in a relative and complimentary sense. They implicitly encourage the audience to consider social constructivist inspired designs for learning over those where technology is primarily used for the transmission of information or administration.

The presentations need to be understood in terms of how they might contribute to persuasion and consensus building within a community and how a new academic discourse comes into being. The rhetorical analysis demonstrates how emulation and adherence lead to the enrichment of the community of practice. Aristotle, in explaining what emulation means rhetorically, wrote:

*Emulation makes us take steps to secure the good things in question, envy makes us take steps to stop our neighbour having them. Emulation must therefore tend to be felt by persons who believe themselves to deserve certain good things that they have not got, it being understood that no one aspires to things which appear impossible. (Aristotle, Rhetoric, Chapter 21, 1388b)*

Here one can infer that the audience, as a result of the epideictic presentation, would want to emulate the successful speaker or emulate the processes the speaker has experienced. In any community of practice one would hope that success will be emulated, or that fellow academics will aspire to similar achievements in their teaching practice. This suggests the community of practice is reinforced when members identify with successful educators who have made use of educational technology in interesting ways.

Perelman, whose contributions to rhetoric include the introduction of the term 'adherence,' observes that:

*...the epideictic genre is central to discourse because its role is to intensify adherence to values, adherence without which discourses that aim at provoking action cannot find the lever to move or to inspire their listeners (1982: 19).*

Adherence to values of good teaching and learning can be brought about with epideictic speech. Since the speeches are epideictic, they aim to inspire and provoke action; therefore it is not surprising that the *logos* is less explicit. If it were educational researchers presenting one might expect a clearer theoretical framework and the speaker would be more likely to reference well-known concepts. The logical appeals here are not in the forms of straightforward syllogism or enthymeme.

The epideictic exhortation found in these presentations can be analysed as follows: in the teaching as described by both presenters, theory in isolation is not enough and nor are practical exercises in isolation of theory effective. The presenters describe how the theory they cover in lectures is enhanced through linked practical exercises to produce better outcomes in student learning. While the presenters do not use an educational theory framework in the cases analysed, the structure of the presentations makes the case for the use of educational technology. Here it is clear that the presenters are increasing adherence to the thought that the use of educational technology is good and worthy and that others should follow their examples.

The social learning theory of communities of practice, as developed by Lave & Wenger (1991), establishes links between informal and formal learning by educators related to organisational

goals. All communities of practice share common structural features that include 'a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain and the shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain' (Wenger et al. 2002: 27). The epideictic presentations, with adherence to values, emphasises the 'care about the domain' over more structured knowledge. Through leaders and 'community coordinators' in communities of practice some aspects of adherence to values and emulation might be invoked by a speaker (Wenger et al. 2002: 78-80). The presentations concern informal learning. While some members of the audience are established members of communities, the presentations will be 'boundary encounters' for others (Wenger, 1998: 112). Such boundary encounters can be important in the negotiation of meaning and the emulation of others.

Wenger (1998) explains that participation within communities of practice promotes learning among experts and novices alike since peripheral participation in the practices of the community is as legitimate as full participation. Peripherality can then only provide access to a practice if it 'engages newcomers and provides a sense of how the community operates' (Wenger, 1998: 100). The epideictic form and speakers' ethos are easily recognised by newcomers, contributing to greater peripheral participation and possibly encouraging adherence to community values.

## **CONCLUSION**

A problem with viewing the perceived gap between theory and practice as a 'staff training problem' is the assumption that practical knowledge derives directly from research knowledge. Clearly building a community of practitioners also involves considering how a speaker is viewed as a respected practitioner and is able to stir the human emotions of fellow academics. Drawing on some of these understandings acknowledges other possibilities of transforming perspectives, identities and practices among academics that staff development is interested in supporting (Carr et al. 2005).

There is value in an analysis of how ideas and a sense of community are communicated by academics who have had experience with successful collaborative projects. At one level this might help explain why some presenters are more effective in sharing their experiences and persuading an audience. This would be useful when briefing presenters. Of more interest has been the identification of some common elements of presentations, such as their epideictic form and the role of ethos, together with their possible implications in the broader context. Alongside more familiar articulations of learning and software designs, such perspectives open up reflective spaces. While this is surely common existing practice, in the absence of theorising or agreement on a common language this might not to be fully recognised. If the community of practice relied only on forensic and deliberative texts, it is likely that important ceremonial and emotional communications crucial to community building and enrichment would be left invisible.

The apparent divide between academics who seek to minimise their teaching roles and those academics who continually try to broaden their practice of teaching and learning or service to the broader community is easily appreciated in universities. A research focus is likely to privilege forensic and deliberative outputs, yet a community can only be built and flourish when the humanity of the practitioners is recognised. Nic and Jane's presentations were delivered in a risky environment. The idea that epideictic speech was used to carry across a message about the success of a small educational technology project brings about the situation where the presenters open themselves up to criticism. Geiger (2004) observes that while the research output at leading universities he has analysed has increased dramatically over the last 20 years, there is no similar evidence for improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Generally the relationship between a university's income and the quality of teaching and learning is not acknowledged as much as say the relation between income and increased research output. This places many

academics in difficult positions as to how they should balance research with teaching and learning activities. Here we suggest that understandings of rhetoric shed light on staff development initiatives that are concerned with communicating how academics are making such difficult choices in practice.

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