

Learning from the rhetoric of academics using educational technology

Andrew Deacon and Catherine WynSculley
adeacon@ched.uct.ac.za, cwynsculley@ched.uct.ac.za

Centre for Higher Education Development
University of Cape Town
South Africa

Abstract

Seminar presentations, by academics that have had success in using educational technology to support their teaching and learning, are central to many staff development programmes and in developing communities of practice. We draw on classic rhetorical analysis to highlight the epideictic form of these presentations we see as exemplary, which are 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 often 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

Academics, in describing their experiences using educational technology to peers, tend not to cast this as research or as a synthesis of best practices; such work is viewed as what educational technology researchers might do. This is reasonable given that academics own research interests tend to be very different and since they typically have had a comparatively narrow exposure to using educational technology themselves. Here we draw on a rhetorical analysis of presentations by academics, sharing their experiences using educational technologies with peers, to highlight some of the techniques used by these experienced communicators in talking about their adoption of technologies and seeking to persuade and inform others the value of their contributions. Rhetorical analysis is an appropriate tool here as we are interested in identifying the reason-giving activities in a context where typically no formal or absolute proof exists to justify the choices made. Most presenters we heard speak were clearly aware of this context and that others in the audience were in similar positions and would be responsive to particular forms of appeal. We argue that understanding how rhetorical features contribute to effective communication and community building is an important part of reflecting on the contributions of staff development initiatives. This sheds some light on the roles of practice leaders and more peripheral participants as they develop a discourse on how educational technologies can be understood, developed and used in context.

The growing adoption of educational technologies at universities is characterised by greater diversity in the attitudes towards and use of these technologies (Harrington *et al.* 2005, Czerniewicz & Brown 2005). It is thought rare that these are discussed in terms of theoretical research or a comprehensive policy. It has proven to be unrealistic to expect lecturers to become learning designers, content developers or to engage with the research literature; if this ever was a realistic expectation (Able 2005). Generic research and skill development often play a less central role in influencing how academics teach when compared to informal interactions with peers, as Boud & Middleton observed from their earlier research (2003). Formal research communities themselves might not always appear especially collaborative (e.g., Kamper 2004), yet other channels do exist for disseminating some of this knowledge. Staff development activities involve understanding this context and can play an important mediating role in the university organisation, exposing academics to best practices, developing skills, fostering collaborative working relationships and offering theoretical foundations (King 2003, Littlejohn 2002). Thus although the information content of the presentations we analyse are not traditionally viewed as especially significant as research, it is their social function in how understandings of educational technology are communicated with peers that is of interest here.

The communications analysed here are presentations, a type of fleeting public text. Such presentations are familiar means for communicating research and experiences and are an integral part of academic life. The specific presentations focus on how an academic has been using educational technology in

support of their teaching and learning activities. In many cases this involved collaboration with an educational technologist from the *Centre for Educational Technology* (CET), a central university unit. The language used by academics describing their work has the purpose of communicating both information and affect, but unlike what one might anticipate from more formal research oriented presentations, communication of affect and the social functions are more prominent than information. We look at the aspects of the discourse which explicitly organise the presentation, engage the audience and signal the speaker's attitude. The ways speakers guide the audience and display an appropriate professional ethos are important aspects of persuasive presentations. Drawing on classical rhetorical analysis, we show that these presentations aim to persuade their audiences using an *epideictic* form of 'praise' speech. 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, the two other forms of speech Aristotle identified. As Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969:52) observe:

The speaker engaged in epideictic discourse is very close to being an educator. Since what he (sic) is going to say does not arouse controversy, since no immediate practical interest is ever involved, and there is no question of attacking or defending, but simply of promoting values that are shared in the community...

A number of broad observations emerged. The *epideictic* form is primarily concerned with in our case the virtues of the speaker, their collaborators and educational technology. Academics spent much effort talking about the work students produced, why it impressed them and how this was a product of collaboration with educational technologists. There are few references to debates in the literature, technical terms are avoided and mostly anecdotal evidence is offered. The persuasion contributes to community building and their roles and opportunities need to be understood in this context. Although there are elements of forensic or deliberative speech, these are not foregrounded.

The work described here represents a small part of a larger staff development project, researching emerging communities of educators using educational technologies at the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Carr *et al.* 2005). The metaphor of a 'community of practice' is widely used to provide a frame that emphasises significant aspects of organisational learning which otherwise might be overlooked. Here communities of practice are understood as:

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 emphasise the situated practice of, in our case, groups of academic shaped by a history of using and discussing educational technologies. Academics may also participate on the periphery of such communities (Lave & Wenger 1991), an involvement that may involve someone attending seminars and becoming aware of what others are doing for example. Thus this concept of community seeks to avoid narrow deterministic and functional understandings of community by emphasising the engagement of individuals over say static rules governing membership.

Seen broadly, we have been interested in understanding that emerge from looking at a triangulation between the 'public texts', which includes the presentations analysed here, the 'private texts' of academics' understandings of educational technology and lastly the actual use these technologies in teaching and learning. Collectively these allow use to 'read' the university organisation from below and gain insights into how educational technology is used and understood that informs staff development and other higher education development initiatives. We are not focusing on the micro level, involving say cognitive learning processes, and nor are we concerned with the more macro policy or planning level. Rather we seek to deepen our understandings of the university as an organisation in which academics work and in which they need to make choices in how educational technologies is used in support of teaching and learning.

Outline

We begin with describing the background and methodology used in the analysis of the presentations. This draws 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. Drawing on this analysis we make connections with learning in communities of practice about community and the roles of educational technology in higher educational development initiatives.

Background and Methodology

The presentations we analysed are part of a larger staff development programme organised by CET to showcase successful educational technology activities and nurture a community of practice (Carr *et al.* 2005, Cox *et al.* 2005). The other activities of CET, for which staff development served as an entry point, include supporting and engaging with academics using learning environments, developing curriculum interventions and researching teaching and learning (<http://www.cet.uct.ac.za/>).

We also need to acknowledge that academics work in a risk environment where there are academic practices, one of which is self promotion. Eagerness to be seen as a good educator, serve society and be a scholar is central to 'being an academic.' This projects competence and is a marker of their ability to advance professionally. While successful educational technology projects are often seen as a demonstration of a competence, the introduction of educational technology can also often be perceived as introducing additional risk factors (Nomdo 2004). As we have experienced, the reason for wanting to use educational technology might be to make more time for research, for which higher rewards exist or are perceived to exist (Geiger 2004). The presenters discussed here all display a sense of irony about this process. They are at home in their 'lecture' environment and at ease and proud to talk about their work with educational technology, teaching and scholarship.

Broadly educational technology encompasses 'facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources' (Molenda & Robinson 2004). The presentations we analyse here involve collaboration. As would be expected, atypical learning designs are seen as being more challenging and higher risk. Thus we did not consider presentations describing experiences using standard commercial software or course management systems in a more routine low risk setting. The presenters were then specifically concerned with how new educational technology solutions emerged from collaborative design negotiations.

The first case was a presentation by Nic from the *School of Architecture and Planning*. Nic has been using applications in his teaching such as *AutoCAD* and *Photoshop* as well as a course management system for several years. In collaborating with CET he had several interests that involved checking the format of a visual essay and trailing the new the *Sakai (Vula)* course management system at UCT. The work described in the presentation involved the creation a tutorial that established a better link between architectural theory and what students did in an introductory *PhotoShop* editing activity (Deacon & Brown 2005). 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 can 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 have responded to the questions.

The second case is Jane from the *Centre of Film and Media Studies*. She too has been using a range of software applications 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 Marion Walton:

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 advertising ... 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 has involved collaboration with CET, including 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.

Jane also was involved in adapting and developing both film and media tutorial exercises (Deacon *et al.* 2005, Morrison *et al.* 2005). In *NewsFrames* (Deacon 2002) the focus is on learning about the major components of a newspaper's front page layout and discovering how semiotic choices 'frame' both subeditors' construction of news and readers' interpretations. *NewsScripts* and *NewsBreaks* (van der Vliet & Deacon 2004) are concerned with the manufacturing of TV news. Students need to research the story and then write the accompanying voiceover script, with *NewsBreaks* additionally involving selecting and ordering video clips. 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 consideration.

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 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. These circumstances need to be identified in order to perform a rhetorical analysis. Other places where this particular form of rhetorical analysis is used includes 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 using modes other than spoken or written language, as in digital rhetoric (Zappen 2005). 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 by academics in higher education.

Rhetorical theory identifies three modes of persuasion (*ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*), three types of speeches (*deliberative*, *forensic* and *epideictic*), Special and Common topics, ways to arrange a speech (*disposition* meaning arrangement), figures of speech and metaphor (*elocutio* 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 speech persuades. 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 a new research rhetoric develops and gives an analysis of how a new academic discourse comes into being.

Methodology

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 will 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 presentations is designed to address.

The rhetorical analysis begins with a description of the rhetorical situation, a summary of the presentations and then analysis the speeches drawing on the five canons of classical rhetoric (*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *pronuntiatio* and *memoria*). Each presentation has a theme, an organization 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.

Classical Rhetorical Analysis

Tony Carr organised the two presentation analysed here (Carr 2005). They were held in university seminar rooms, one at lunchtime and the other in the afternoon, with fifteen to forty 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 some, but not all cases involved collaboration with CET. The content of presentations was developed entirely by the academics presenting. While only two presentations are analysed here, many of the others can be characterised similarly. Some were quite different, including ones where the presenters had difficulties in communicating their message, since they deviated from their planned presentations and did not always complete what they had prepared. Examples include presenters who chose to give detailed demonstrations of how they performed specific tasks using say a learning management system, which we have not analysed rhetorically.

Rhetorical situation

Both presenters are course conveners. The rhetorical situation of Nic's presentation involves a tutorial exercise introducing *Photoshop* to architecture students. The rhetorical situation of Jane's presentation reflects, at the end of her stay at UCT, giving an overview of the use and evolution of educational technology in the undergraduate media programme.

Inventio: formulation of the thesis

Inventio is generally understood to be the macro structure of the presentation. When a speaker prepares 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 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 highlighted 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 to achieve more than had they been working in isolation.

These points of discovery serve to bring about three types of appeal: *logos*, the appeal to reason; *ethos*, the ethical appeal to the audiences judgement of right and wrong (often this appeal focuses on the *ethos* of the speaker); 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. While 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 tools 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). For the purposes of this paper we will focus on introductions and conclusions.

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 aim to 'rouse 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. Neither introduction is especially controversial; both are significant scene setting points of the respective presentations where the speakers are trying to grab the audiences 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, one 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 so that – 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.

Conclusions: The conclusions are very 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, yah, 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, yet 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 a 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 Queensland.

This symbolic conclusion develops a favourable outlook on both the speaker and collaborative work with CET and others. Again we see the *ethos* of the educator as someone who 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 recognize (in both presentations) consists of introducing themselves as an creative educator, working as a collaborative designer of learning activities, assessing what students' produce, evaluating of 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 their credibility while at the same time aims 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 also 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 and the digital artefacts 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 emphasised 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 communicate in informed ways about change over time. Nic uses every day 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 the 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 which changes the pace of the presentation at certain points. Within a few seconds she covers the topics from her lectures which create presence and reality for the audience.

***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 that he was responsible for the project, a critical comment of its success, praises the project and gives his collaborators due credit. It comes across in the presentation in the way it is structured and the way it was delivered that Nic is a dedicated lecturer who used educational technology successfully in his course. When the audience perceives this *ethos* they are persuaded that educational technology could be something valuable in their teaching.

In Jane's presentation she uses the personal pronoun in a similar way for the same effect. She also showed a montage image of her self in her presentation, created by Vera Vukovic of CET. This was amusing to the audience and captured their attention. Examples from Jane's presentation:

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] ...

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 the structure of the speech and situation of the audience, in which Jane comes across as a confident speaker and competent lecturer who is dedicated to her students and enjoys 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.

***Epideictic* address: ceremonial speech**

Aristotle recognised three types of speech: the *forensic*, *deliberative*, and the *epideictic*. 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 epideictic, 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 *epideictic* speech focuses on the noble or base in actions, people, governments or ideas. Aristotle describes *epideictic* 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 *epideictic* 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 *epideictic* flavour of her presentation.

The goal of *epideictic* speech is to strengthen the consensus around particular ideals, values or plans of action (Perelman 1982:20). The *epideictic* 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. Perelman (1982:19) 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.

In the seminars, the presentations are wholly dedicated to establishing education's *ethos*, and promoting the soundness of the ideas presented. The *epideictic* 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:

... Epideictic 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 his audience to working collaboratively and the designs for learning. Through the presentation, the presenter directs his 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* which is 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.

Rhetorical summary

Classical rhetorical analysis, with its long traditions and established form, captures salient features of speeches which while comparatively easily recognised can sometimes be overlooked. A goal with this analysis has been to cast some light on the contributions of presentations to community building and how educational technology is understood and used. To summarize, the important points from the analysis include:

The rhetorical situation describes the eloquence of educators, who as course conveners are knowledgeable about the pedagogical design, interests of educators, and issues around student learning. 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 management of their teaching environment, educational technology tools and the fact that collaborative design often achieved more than they would have working in isolation.

The *dispositio* used by the speakers followed the plan of short introductions and conclusions. This is in contrast to academic conference presentations where introductions are preparatory and conclusions reinforce what was said in the body. We highlighted Nic's refutation and Jane's use of temporal sequences.

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 that the presentations are *epideictic* which by definition tries to build consensus. Those honoured in these presentations need to appreciate the ceremonial form and the role of praise; similarly for those criticised. Presenters need to see how presentations can build their community, while those in the audience expecting technical detail would have to engage elsewhere. We also need to be reminded that while new technologies promise new modes of communicating and persuading, it is not straightforward to for example use a few short video clips from the presentations analysed here and make these available to others to learn about a project. The speakers' *ethos* and the *epideictic* style, which we see as being carefully constructed, is likely to be difficult to convey outside the context of the presentations.

Community Building

Community of practice gives prominence to community in understanding learning as social participation (Lave & Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998). This has been used to discuss for example the relations to organisational learning, identity, knowledge management and boundary engagements. Below we consider several related concepts Wenger in particular uses in discussing these that illuminate how rhetorical devices can nurture communities of practice. This nurturing is reflected in discourses negotiated through collaboration with for example peers and educational technologists. In turn members of the audience, who likely belong to several different communities of practice, influence the type of rhetoric the presenters use. In this case epideictic was understood as being the most effective by most presenters. We thus see a dynamic exchange between rhetoric and how communities of practice are supported. Our aim here is simply to illustrate some of these relations without analysing the specific presentations and implications in any detail, as this is not feasible given the limited scope of our analysis. Rather the work here feeds into broader research into staff development strategies where nurturing communities of practice has been one of the aims (Carr *et al.* 2005).

Alignment

Presentations are transient once-off events while the concept of a community of practice encompasses many other forms of interactions on an ongoing basis. Thus the role of presentations is limited and rather needs to be understood in how it complements these other activities. The presenters do make reference to collaborative work, learning from peers and other concepts signalling that they are aware of the social learning functions. Successful interaction involves the alignment of individuals with the views of the speaker which in this case are the communal learning tasks, a concept central to rhetoric. The challenge of alignment involves:

... specific forms of participation and reification to support the required coordination... With insufficient participation, our relations to broader enterprises tend to remain literal and procedural: our coordination tends to be based on compliance rather than participation in meaning... With insufficient reification, coordination across time and space may depend too much on the partiality of specific participants, or it may simply be too vague, illusory or contentious to create alignment (Wenger 1998:187).

Here alignment is discussed with specific reference to participation and reification. Epideictic rhetoric is by definition a consensus building activity which promotes participation. The presenters hope to increase the audiences' adherence to the values, ideas and goals. Rhetoric recognises that audiences make choices as to whether they accept or reject what is said. A rhetorical analysis can identify how an audience could be persuaded to become aligned to a particular set of understandings or ways of working. Here we analysed presenters seeking to align members of the audience with their discourse and practices that involve the uses of educational technology. This included invitations to participate and seek more information, which while insufficient on their own, still need to be seen as contributing to a community.

Common ground

One of the recognised characteristics of a community of practice is 'common ground' (see also Hildreth & Kimble 2000). Any community of practice requires common vision, common understanding, common notions of expertise and synergy among members. Rhetoric theory acknowledges that persuasion happens best when the speaker first creates common ground with the audience (especially when the speaker anticipates criticism or a negative reaction). It is important that the speaker understands the reservations and hopes of the audience and addresses them in the presentation:

[The speaker] must start from theses accepted by his audience and eventually reinforce this adherence by techniques of presentation that render the facts and values, on which his argument rests, present to the listener. ... an agreement about common values must be accompanied by an attempt to interpret and define them, so that the orator can direct the agreement to make it tally with his purposes (Perelman 1986:808).

The presenters made every effort to engage the audience and to make their processes transparent. Their lively communication makes the reality of collaboration with educational technologists 'present' to the audience. Part of creating common ground is to choose to make explicit certain processes, issues, problems that all form part of a common understanding. Often common ground is created in the presentations by describing their own courses or teaching challenge as opposed to educational theory.

Knowledge and roles

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). As we argued, the *epideictic* presentations, with adherence to values, emphasises the 'care about the domain' over the more structured knowledge. Another characteristic of a community of practice is that it will find a way to document and disseminate its body of knowledge. Wenger (1998) introduces the idea of reification and a shared repertoire which include policies, styles, methods, approaches and networks. The presentations form part of the body of knowledge. Even though they are fleeting texts they are recalled as containing insights on procedures and learnings.

These communities have always existed and we all belong to multiple communities of practice. 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 adherence to the values. The idea of 'thought leaders' and 'community coordinators' in communities of practice also captures some aspects of adherence to values and emulation that a speaker might invoke. 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.

Community of practices recognises various roles such as leaders, members and novices (Northedge 2003). Practice leaders tend to emerge as their competence is recognised.

Communities of practice depend on internal leadership, and enabling the leaders to play their role is a way to help the community develop. ... A community needs multiple forms of leadership: thought leaders, networkers, people who document the practice, pioneers, etc. These forms of leadership may be concentrated on one or two members or widely distributed, and this will change over time (Wenger 2000:231).

We identify Nic and Jane as practice leaders using this construct, although they might not see themselves as such. They are practice leaders because they have found a way to articulate good practice, they are aware of the potential of educational technology and they promote adherence.

The presentations need to be understood in how they might contribute to persuasion and consensus building within a community and how a new academic discourse comes into being. We can link the result of rhetorical analysis using the philosophy of rhetoric to demonstrate how emulation and adherence leads 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)

It is reasonable to 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.

Pereleman, 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 which aims to inspire and bring about consensus; therefore we are not surprised to find that the *logos* is not as explicit. If it were educational researchers presenting, one might expect a clearer theoretical framework and the speaker will reference well known concepts using deliberative speech. Yet presenters describe how the theory they teach in lectures is enhanced through linked practical exercises to produce better outcomes in student learning. Staff development activities seek both to draw on and nurture communities of practice. Traces of this interrelationship can be seen in the discourse communities involving academics, which will only come into being through engagement and instantiation.

Conclusion

If university staff development programmes are to offer genuine opportunities to academics that impact on the quality of teaching and learning then we cannot rely solely on models of support as simply 'knowledge transmission' or convenient 'divisions of labour'. A problem in viewing the gap between theory and practice as a 'staff training problem' is the assumption that all practical knowledge derives directly from research knowledge. Clearly building a community of practitioners also involves how a speaker is viewed as a respected practitioner and is able to stir the human emotions of academics. It is drawing on some of these understandings in acknowledging other possibilities to transform perspectives, identities and practices among academics that staff development is interested in supporting at UCT (Carr *et al.* 2005, Cox *et al.* 2005, Deacon & Brown 2005). In this paper we considered some intersections between rhetorical analyses with community of practice.

We suggest there is value in an analysis of the presentations in terms of how ideas and a sense of community are communicated, not just information. Our rhetorical analysis has shown that the presentations are *epideictic* which implies a consensus and community building activity. A premise has been that there are emerging communities of practice at UCT around using educational technology that can be nurtured by staff development activities (Carr *et al.* 2005). The presentations are one example of

this nurturing. At the most simplistic level this might help explain why some presenters are more effective in persuading an audience and how one might brief presenters. We though have been more interested here in identifying some of the common elements of presentations, such as their *epideictic* form and the role of *ethos*, and their possible implications in the broader context. Educational technologists need to see these alongside more familiar articulations of learning and software designs to open up reflective spaces. Of course this happens all the time, but in the absence of theorising or agreeing on a common language this might not to be fully recognised. If the community of practice had to rely only on *forensic* and *deliberative* texts (such as this one) they will miss out on important ceremonial and emotional communications which are viewed as crucial to community building and enriching the community of practice (Wenger 1998).

The divide between academics who prioritise research and academics who try to improve their practice of teaching and learning or service to the broader community is easily appreciated in universities. This likely privileges forensic and deliberative research 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 risk environment. The very 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 research output at leading universities he has analysed has increased dramatically over the last twenty years, there is no similarly evidence for improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. While increased research output clearly attracts greater income for the university, the relationship between income and the quality of teaching and learning is far less well appreciated. This places many academics and university administrators in difficult positions in how they balance research against teaching and learning activities. This makes it especially challenging in arguing for activities focused on teaching and learning in risk environments.

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