

'Knowingly constructing' our future: Reflecting on individual LAS practice

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There has been considerable debate amongst Language and Academic Skills (LAS) practitioners via Unilearn and LAS-related conferences as to who we are, what we do, why we do it and how we should go about it. The debates have centred on whether there is a particular pedagogical framework that best describes our work (Craswell & Bartlett, 2002), whether we are part of a discipline or a profession (Garner, Chanock, & Clerehan, 1995; Milnes, 2005), whether we should be classified as academic or general staff (Chanock, East, & Maxwell, 2004) and so on. This debate reflects our diversity and an active engagement with our future. LAS practitioners are evolving, as Webb (2002, p. 10) would have it, 'towards the destinies [we] jointly construct, whether knowingly or unknowingly'. But while there is considerable progress towards knowingly and jointly constructing a LAS discourse and destiny, in this paper I reflect on the degree to which, as individuals, we are unknowingly constructing our destinies. I argue that because our profession is our practice, and vice versa, as individuals we must knowingly construct our roles and create perceptions of what we do with students within the academic community and within the institutions in which we work. Unless we do so, LAS professionals risk perpetuating the view that they are 'just' teachers, working at the margins.

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