Teaching Awards in Higher Education: A Qualitative Study of Motivation and Outcomes

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Introduction

Teaching awards have become a standard feature in the university sector with a recent focus on award schemes run by students' unions (Thompson and Zaitseva 2012). In addition to school and university level awards, national award programs have existed in the United States since 1981, Australia since 1997, and the United Kingdom since 2000 (Chalmers 2011). Previous research shows that teaching awards are an effective way of raising the profile of teaching and recognizing individual teaching practice, with award recipients reporting feeling encouraged and flattered by the recognition (Mackenzie 2007; Madriaga and Morley 2016). The role played by teaching awards in communicating the significance of teaching is pertinent in the context where tuition fees are rising, and education is becoming increasingly expensive. It can be expected that other countries will follow the example of the UK where the government has introduced a new scheme, the Teaching Excellence Framework, to give the university sector an incentive to focus on the quality of teaching and to provide more structured information to university applicants about their educational experience and future prospects (Gunn 2018).

At the same time, there exists some cynicism about the purpose and effectiveness of teaching awards in recognizing high-quality teaching. For example, a study conducted in Australia suggested that awards have been viewed as a calculated attempt to improve morale without

incurring the financial costs of raising salaries (Mackenzie 2007) or providing opportunities for promotion (HEA 2009). Past research has suggested that teaching awards may also have dysfunctional consequences. Specifically, award schemes have been criticized for being potentially divisive since they single out individuals from teams to receive special recognition (Chalmers 2011). Awards may also cause resentment among non-recipients if individuals feel they are working just as hard but are not receiving the same recognition (Madriaga and Morley 2016). The risk that recognizing individuals may have negative effects on others and on interpersonal behavior is highlighted by a study conducted in a local health care organization by Feys, Anseel, and Wille (2013). The authors found that recognition of a co-worker may lead to harmful interpersonal behaviors such as verbal or physical abuse or deliberately failing to help a co-worker, with the relation between the recognition of others and counterproductive behavior being moderated by relationship quality. In addition to the dysfunctional consequences related to the effect of awards on non-recipients, award recipients sometimes complain of an enhanced pressure to perform at a high level and 'live up' to their reputation as award-winning teachers (Mackenzie 2007, 199). Furthermore, it has been argued that teaching awards recognize the good practice of individual winners, but do not contribute to the wider improvement of university teaching (Halse et al. 2007).

While measures to emphasize and reward high-quality teaching are becoming increasingly central in the contemporary higher education sector, important issues relating to the use of teaching awards to recognize and promote exceptional teaching remain unaddressed by past research. In this article, we develop two research questions to identify and frame these issues in a way that adds to existing knowledge about teaching awards. We then explore the questions further through interviews in three separate UK universities and offer propositions that enhance our understanding of how teaching awards can be designed and used to recognize teaching practice while limiting their dysfunctional outcomes. In this way, we make a contribution to

knowledge about teaching awards (Chalmers 2011; Gibbs 2008; Mackenzie 2007; Ramsden and Martin 1996) by shedding light on the dynamics that underpin the dysfunctional outcomes and proposing ways to change those dynamics.

Theoretical Background

Teaching Awards as a Field of Study

Literature on teaching awards emerged in the 1990s, mirroring the introduction of teaching award schemes in Australia and the United Kingdom. Early studies on teaching awards examined the structure of awards, categorizing them, for example, as traditional awards, teaching fellowship schemes, educational development grants, and bonus schemes (Warren and Plumb 1999). A popular area of research has also been the study of the qualities that make excellent teachers as recognized through award schemes (e.g. Kreber 2000). Teaching awards have also been investigated within wider studies of reward and recognition in higher education (Gibbs and Habeshaw 2003; HEA 2009). Despite the increasing number of teaching award schemes in the higher education sector, research in this field has been scarce, with the exception of reports by The Higher Education Academy (Gibbs 2008; Thompson and Zaitseva 2012) and some academic work carried out mainly in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (Chalmers 2011; Mackenzie 2007). In the present study, our focus is on researching the impact of awards on motivation and teaching quality as perceived by academic faculty. Previous research in this area has explored the positive and negative impacts of teaching awards (e.g. Fitzpatrick and Moore 2015; Madriaga and Morley 2016). We extend this research by exploring the psychological dynamics that explain how academics respond to teaching awards.

Awards and Motivation to Excel in Teaching

The reasons for the diverse effects of teaching awards on the motivation of faculty members are not yet fully understood. On the one hand, there are authors who argue that teaching awards

can play a role in lifting morale and enhancing commitment to teaching among faculty members (Mackenzie 2007; Seldin 1999). A recent study at an American university found that awards for teaching innovation had a positive impact on recipients' confidence as a teacher and understanding of and engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning, with recipients being motivated to take risks in their teaching in order to deepen student learning (Willingham-McLain 2015). On the other hand, other literature considers teaching awards to have only a marginal impact on instructor motivation and satisfaction in the context of broader systems of reward and recognition (Forsythe and Gandolfo 1996; McNaught and Anwyl 1993; Ruedrich et al. 1992). The findings of a recent study provide support for the limited effect of awards in showing that only a minority of the respondents viewed teaching awards as an incentive to improve the quality of their teaching (Madriaga and Morley 2016). Similarly, a study conducted in Canada reports that only 45% of the recipients said that the award inspired them to enhance the quality of their teaching (Brawer et al. 2006).

In what follows, we frame awards as extrinsic rewards that can impact on motivation. We review research in the areas of reinforcement, goal-setting, and motivation to explore whether theories from these fields can help us to better understand how awards affect motivation to teach. In doing so, we develop our first research theme as the exploration of the psychological dynamics triggered by teaching awards.

Expectancy

Based on expectancy theory (Vroom 1964), awards enhance motivation when there is a positive correlation between effort and performance as well as between performance and a desirable reward. In the context of teaching awards, awards need to have meaningful value for faculty members in order to lead to better performance. Previous research in the university sector suggests that the value of teaching awards and similar measures is linked to their connection to

appointment, tenure, and promotion decisions (HEA 2009; Parker 2008; Ramsden and Martin 1996). Teaching awards are therefore effective in enhancing motivation when they have a clear relationship to tenure or promotions criteria. It is in this context that some authors (e.g. Chalmers 2011) have advocated the giving of awards in the form of salary increments rather than one-off prizes to demonstrate institutional commitment to teaching. Moreover, research shows that universities are increasingly including teaching excellence as a criterion for academic promotion and introducing specific career paths for university teachers (Pietilä 2017; Young 2006). Indeed, some award winners consider teaching awards as evidence to support their case for promotion and state that just being nominated may play a positive role, although more could be done to link teaching awards and formal promotions criteria (Chalmers 2011; Warren and Plumb 1999). Teaching awards can therefore enhance performance if faculty members believe that applying more effort will result in higher performance which will be recognized through teaching awards, so long as the awards take a form which they value.

Goal Setting

Teaching awards can also be viewed as goals designed to enhance teaching motivation and performance. Research in the area of goal-setting (Locke and Latham 1990, 2002; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2007) suggests that awards can be framed as goals that drive performance if they are perceived as important and valuable. Moreover, specific goals lead to high performance because they are better at directing attention and effort towards goal-relevant activities than vaguer goals (Klein et al. 1999). This relationship between goal specificity and performance only holds, however, for relatively straightforward tasks in comparison to more complex tasks (Wood 1986). Previous research suggests that specific goals do not enhance performance when work is complex and hence requires a high degree of coordination, involves the acquisition of new skills or knowledge, and is dynamic in nature (Brown and Latham 2002).

Vague, do-your-best goals are better at enhancing performance for complex tasks (Wood 1986; Winters and Latham 1996). This suggests that, where teaching involves complexity, the criteria for teaching awards should be vague rather than specific. However, it is possible that experience leads to learning that makes teaching less complex, and the experience level of faculty members may therefore influence how specific and vaguer goals drive their attitudes and behavior.

The effect of goals is not, however, uniform as shown by research investigating easy and challenging goals. According to Corgnet et al. (2015), only challenging goals are associated with performance improvements among high-performing individuals; easy goals do not enhance performance among high-achievers. If the same applies to teaching awards, the criteria for awards should be challenging if the aim is to enhance teaching quality among high-performing instructors. In contrast, weaker performers work more effectively and are more satisfied with goals that are tailored to their skills and general performance levels (Jeffrey, Schulz, and Webb 2012). The concept of growth mindset developed in the field of educational attainment implies that high performance is often associated with individuals who believe they can improve their performance through the application of effort (Dweck 1999; Dweck 2006). These findings in goal-setting and educational theory suggest that the effect of teaching awards depends on how achievable awards appear to faculty members based on their individual mindset, skills and current teaching performance.

Taken together, theories of motivation and goal-setting suggest that teaching awards are effective when they are tied to rewards that faculty members value (e.g. promotion decisions). Moreover, awards motivate academic faculty and enhance the quality of their teaching when the awards are viewed as challenging, yet achievable in relation to individual mindsets and

personal teaching practice. Our first research question arises from this research and involves the exploration of the motivational impact of awards on teaching practice.

> Research Question 1: How do awards influence faculty motivation to teach and enhance the quality of their teaching?

Supportive Organizational Culture

It has been argued that teaching awards need to be part of a wider culture in which teaching excellence is valued and supported and where teaching awards play a positive role in teaching enhancement and are not seen as an isolated management tool (Forsythe and Gandolfo 1996; Ramsden and Martin 1996; Smith 2013; Weimer 1991). Without this culture, awards can be viewed as tokenism that evokes cynicism among faculty members (Chalmers 2011). Despite being acknowledged as an important contextual consideration, organizational culture has not been examined in depth as a factor that influences how school and university level awards are perceived and responded to by faculty members.

Menges (1996) defined culture as the network of incentives, rewards and resources related to teaching within higher education institutions. This definition of culture is similar to the pragmatist view of culture where culture is observable through reward structures, resource allocation, and other material manifestations of more fundamental values (Fiol 1991). In the context of our research, it is possible that cultures vary across universities depending on whether they are a research or teaching-focused institution. It is also possible that faculty members on different career tracks (research versus teaching) work within different subcultures.

It is an unavoidable feature of teaching award schemes that, for every award recipient, there will be many non-recipients. Singling out one instructor may not be beneficial for teamwork

or the wider culture of collaboration that enhances the quality of teaching; instead, awards can encourage competition and individualistic behavior (Mackenzie 2007; Madriaga and Morley 2016). In order to avoid the emergence and support of competition that may not enhance the collective quality of teaching, awards should emphasize the cooperative nature of teaching through, for example, awards that reward team teaching, mentoring, or learning across courses (McNaught and Anwyl 1993).

The importance of a supportive culture is highlighted by the experiences of some award winners. Some award recipients report feeling disappointed that their institution values teaching success less highly than research (Frame, Johnson, and Rosie 2006). While most award recipients feel that the impact of their award has been predominantly positive, and they generally receive positive feedback from their closest colleagues, there is little reaction from more remote colleagues with some peers occasionally showing signs of jealousy and resentment (Mackenzie 2007). Consequently, it has been suggested that teaching awards can be divisive. Also, award recipients may have different preferences as to the way in which awards are communicated (Madriaga and Morley 2016). For some, public recognition, which communicates the individual's superior status, can be a source of considerable pleasure and pride for the individual (Exline et al. 2004), while others may find outperforming their colleagues to be a source of interpersonal strain, though privately satisfying (Exline and Lobel 1999; Exline et al. 2004).

Despite regular reference to organizational culture and environment in studies about teaching awards, only one other work focusing on the UK's National Teaching Fellowship (NFT) scheme (Frame et al. 2006) has investigated organizational culture as one of the main factors influencing the effectiveness of teaching awards in rewarding and promoting teaching. These external awards, which are provided by the Higher Education Funding Council for England

(HEFCE), require participants to complete an application for an award which carries a significant monetary reward. This bestows a different set of motivational dynamics on the process compared to intra-organisational teaching awards which typically utilize student evaluations or nominations from line managers, peers or students and have no or a relatively small financial value.

Accordingly, this research focuses on school and university level teaching awards and our second research question pertains to the interaction between the organizational culture and these teaching awards. More specifically, we explore the role played by the organization's culture in shaping how awards are perceived and how they contribute to a culture of teaching beyond the recognition of individual practice.

> Research Question 2: How does organizational culture shape faculty's perceptions of awards?

Methods

We adopted a qualitative approach to data collection to provide a rich and detailed understanding of how teaching awards are perceived by academics (Saunders 2012). Our aim was to investigate the full context within which opinions and attitudes about teaching awards develop in order to shed light on the dysfunctional outcomes identified in past research. Due to the nebulous nature of previous findings, it was important to be flexible and open with our original assumptions and research themes to ensure that we were not omitting important information from our analysis.

Research Setting

Our primary focus was on individuals and their experiences and views of teaching awards with a secondary focus on organizations in which the individuals operated. Interviewees were drawn

from three different academic departments or schools in the UK in order to ensure that the research findings have relevance beyond one institutional setting. Student experience in the UK is assessed through an annual survey of final year undergraduates, the National Student Survey. All three schools were ranked in the middle category of the National Student Survey (2016) in their subject area. In contrast, the schools had a mix of research rankings in the latest Research Excellence Framework (2015) that measures research performance, with one of the schools at the upper third of the rankings, one in the middle third, and one in the lowest third. Irrespective of their national teaching and research rankings, all three schools employed academic staff on contracts combining teaching and research, as well as contracts described as having a teaching only function, reflecting the sector-wide trend towards increasing specialization of roles and growing separation between teaching and research activity in the UK (Halse et al. 2007; HESA 2018). All three schools had teaching award schemes both at the school levels and university. In addition, student unions recognized excellence in teaching through their own awards. It was notable that the three institutions had similar teaching award schemes that were based on a mixture of criteria including student satisfaction and teaching innovation. Nomination processes included student nominations, peer-nomination and automatic inclusion.

Interview Sample

We recruited participants into the sample by using heterogeneous purposeful sampling (Patton 2002; Pratt 2000) to find interviewees. Such non-probability sampling involves the active inclusion of cases that enable the development of new insights (Saunders 2012). We sought to include interviewees with a mix of genders, career lengths, roles, and nationalities in each school to capture the views of academic staff with varied characteristics identified relevant in previous research. The main characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1. Overall,

we interviewed twenty-one academics or between five and ten interviews in each institution, which is in line with the practice of 15-60 participants in organization and workplace studies (Saunders and Townsend 2016).

We interviewed a mix of male (57%) and female (43%) academics in order to capture any differences in views between men and women. Previous research has suggested that student evaluations of teaching quality are biased towards male academics (Reid 2010) and the increasing awareness of this phenomenon may influence how teaching awards are perceived by faculty. The interviewees included academics on a variety of contracts from combined research and teaching contracts to teaching-only contracts. By interviewing academics on a mixture of contracts, we sought to capture potential differences between academics who had a different focus and performance expectations in relation to their role. The sample also included academics from an early career stage to experienced academics who had more than 35 years of work experience to capture any potential differences between those who are starting their career and those who have worked in the sector for a longer period. The sample was internationally diverse, reflecting the growing numbers of academic staff from outside the UK working in the UK higher education sector (HESA 2017). Finally, almost a third (29%) of the interviewees had won a teaching award because we wanted to collect views from both award-winners and those who had not received an award.

--- Insert Table 1 about here ---

Data Collection

An interview protocol was designed around themes identified from the previous literature and consisted of questions around teaching motivation and reactions to award announcements as well as their impact on teaching quality within the school in order to investigate the two research questions. In line with previous research (Konopaski, Jack, and Hamilton 2015), the protocol started with questions about the interviewee's background and teaching experience in order to establish rapport and start the conversation around non-contentious topics. We used the interview protocol loosely in the sense that, if an interviewee took the conversation to an unexpected direction, we were receptive to this and modified the protocol for subsequent interviews. Two researchers carried out the interviews. Neither researcher was employed by the institutions included in the study when the research was being conducted. If an interviewee was known to one of the researchers, the other researcher carried out the interview.

Data Analysis

We took a thematic approach to our analysis of the data, guided by the general principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Specifically, we began the analysis process by familiarizing ourselves with the data by transcribing the interviews. Immersing ourselves in the data was important at this early stage as it gave us a thorough understanding of the breadth and depth of the content which provided the basis of later analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The next phase of the process was to generate initial codes from the data. Saldana (2009) describes a code as 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data' (3). In practice, the process of coding involved working our way through each individual transcript and identifying important aspects which might form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the rest of the data set, and labelling extracts from the interview transcripts which related to these aspects. As Gray (2017) notes, grounded research 'should commence

with a defined purpose, but with the realization that this purpose may become modified or even radically altered during the research process itself' (699). Therefore, during the coding process, we met regularly to discuss emerging codes and adjust our interpretations of the data.

The next stage was to sort the different codes into potential themes, bringing together all the relevant coded extracts from the transcripts together within the identified themes. This involved considering how different codes could be combined under broader overarching themes. For instance, through this process, we were able to notice the clustering of codes around the motivational properties of teaching awards. Specifically, we started to observe themes around the factors which mediate the potential of awards to motivate (award attainability, career focus and career stage). Throughout the analysis, we constantly compared the data and the emergent themes to ensure that the emerging theory reflected the meanings evident in the data (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Findings

Overall, the results suggest that academics view teaching awards as a way of indicating the importance of teaching and recognizing exceptional performance. Teaching awards were seen to signal the importance of teaching, which was viewed positively by academics as expressed by one interviewee: 'I think it is a good idea … it shows that the institution cares about teaching and it is on the agenda.' One academic who had won several awards stated: 'we all get paid to do this but it adds just something else that shows it's not going unnoticed'. Whilst the overall feeling among academics was positive, it was acknowledged that awards can have dysfunctional consequences unless they are carefully designed and communicated. In contrast to research suggesting that awards can be divisive (Madriaga and Morley 2016), the interviewees did not agree with this viewpoint even when prompted by the interviewers: 'I don't think it is divisive too much. I think it would only be that for people who have got a bee

in their bonnet about something anyway.' Another academic said in reference to award winners: 'In all fairness, they are good at what they do'. Some academics strongly defended awards and the recognition of individual excellence: 'If you are better than others, you need to be rewarded.' Awards were not seen as a source of division and conflict because they were not associated with a substantial financial reward. Several interviewees noted that making the awards more valuable could make them more divisive. For example, one interviewee noted: 'If you win the award and £50k, then it can be conflicting of course.'

Motivation Mediated by Career Stage, Focus and Performance

Our first research question pertained to the way in which awards influence faculty motivation to teach and the quality of teaching. In what follows, we formulate three propositions from the interview data to shed light on the relationship between teaching awards and motivation. The propositions relate to the attainability of awards, nature of academic contracts (teaching versus research), and career stage, which emerged as the primary themes during the process of data analysis.

Attainability of Awards

In line with existing research (Brawer et al. 2006; Madriaga and Morley 2016), awards were not generally seen as an incentive to improve the quality of their teaching as noted by one interviewee: 'I get a sense that that's not why people are teaching well'. The interviewees suggested that teaching awards are effective in recognizing high performance, but awards were not believed to fundamentally affect teaching motivation. As explained by one academic: 'The existence of teaching awards only amplifies what I would want to do on my own anyway'. There were, however, some interviewees who admitted being competitive and who thought that awards motivated them. In general, interviewees discussed award criteria in an informed way and had considered their chances of winning an award based on the award criteria and

their teaching. The interviews suggested that the effect of awards was limited to those lecturers who believed the awards were attainable to them. The effect of awards therefore reflects the findings of goal-setting theory (Locke and Latham 1990, 2002) in the sense that the influence of awards is moderated by the attainability of goals in relation to the current performance levels of the individual. The same idea is expressed in expectancy theory (Vroom 1964) as the relationship between effort and outcomes, meaning that awards are effective in motivating faculty when instructors believe applying effort leads to outcomes linked to award criteria and the individual teaching context and performance.

> Proposition 1: The positive association between teaching awards and motivation is moderated by the attainability of awards based on (i) award criteria and (ii) individual performance levels.

Career Focus

Several interviewees noted the importance of teaching awards for teaching-focused academics while awards were seen as less important for research-focused academics. More specifically, the interviews suggested that teaching-focused academics may not consider the importance of awards for their promotional prospects before they apply for a promotion. When they had applied for promotion, they perceived awards as a useful achievement as noted by one interviewee who had been promoted in the recent past: 'I did get promoted two years ago … the fact that I had won awards really helped.'

For research-focused academics, awards were seen to have no or only a marginal impact on promotional prospects, despite some academics being aware that promotions criteria had been reviewed to include both research and teaching goals. It was especially in the research-intensive school where the interviewees believed that teaching had little effect on their career prospects: 'I don't think it is going to hurt if I get a teaching award as long as I also have enough A-

publications, then it's going to be, oh, she's also good at teaching.' In less research-focused schools, it was recognized that a combination of research and teaching excellence was a feasible promotions strategy among other strategies.

The relevance of awards for career prospects in explaining the influence of awards on motivation links to the concept of valence in expectancy theory (Vroom 1964). Accordingly, awards are effective in motivating faculty when they are valuable for career progression through a clear connection to promotions criteria. In general, our findings suggest that the value or valence of teaching awards is closely associated with promotional prospects and this value can be enhanced by schools through the inclusion of teaching awards in promotional criteria.

> Proposition 2: The positive association between teaching awards and motivation is moderated by (i) career focus (teaching versus research) and (ii) relevance of teaching awards for promotional prospects.

Career Stage

The interviews suggested that awards lead to the social recognition of winners and this can be particularly beneficial for early-career academics. Several interviewees noted that awards can be 'a quick way of gaining recognition' in comparison to the production of research outputs. One serial award winner believed that awards had enhanced her profile as a young academic, boosting her confidence and status, especially after she had won her second award: 'when it happened again then I guess it kind of showed it wasn't a fluke'. In contrast, one early-career academic did not feel her award had changed perceptions beyond academic managers: 'I do think my senior colleagues in the department have been really supportive, but I don't think that people perceive me in that way as an award-winning teacher. I don't think that.' Even though awards were generally seen as particularly useful for early-career academics, more senior academics also experienced the social recognition associated with awards: 'once you win a

teaching award you are an award-winning teacher.' The importance of career stage is another example of how the value or valence of awards for the individual can explain the influence of teaching awards on motivation.

> Proposition 3: The positive association between teaching awards and motivation is moderated by career stage because awards provide a quick route to recognition and esteem among peers.

Awards and a Culture of Teaching Enhancement

Based on the interview data, teaching awards are not generally seen as a vehicle for sharing best practice within an institution. In order to make teaching awards more effective in contributing to a culture of teaching enhancement, three themes arose from the analysis of the interview data. First, award announcements are critical events that can be used to share good practice. Second, award-winners play a role in sharing good practice, but the responsibility for building structures around sharing should be held by someone else so that awards are not seen as a burden by faculty. Finally, awards are viewed more favorably, and are more likely to trigger interest in teaching practice, when institutions have taken other measures to emphasize the importance of support for teaching and learning.

Award Announcements as Critical Events

Award announcements are a delicate event that can influence faculty morale in both beneficial and detrimental ways. The interviewees thought it is important to promote a positive culture within which teaching awards highlight and celebrate excellence without implying that non-recipients have not performed well: 'If they're not presented within a context in which you celebrate peoples' contributions more broadly, then I think they have a reverse effect.' It was suggested that award structures can elevate certain instructors to 'celebrities' without having

any positive impact upon the overall value and quality of teaching within a school: 'You get celebrities, if you like, but that doesn't translate into general improvement in teaching unless people take their own initiative.' Interviewees noted that it was important to announce the awards in a way that recognized high-quality teaching whilst at the same time not making non-recipients feeling passed-over or inadequate: 'If you're doing it right, if you're doing it in a positive way, the point is not to make the celebration of success a measure of one person against another, in a culture in which you celebrate success, you shouldn't be communicating a message that says that the rest of you haven't done very well.' Based on the interviews, award announcements should be made in such a way that communicates the value of teaching more broadly.

> Proposition 4: Award announcements support a culture of teaching enhancement when excellence is recognized in the context of acknowledging the contribution of all staff.

While award announcements were seen as an opportunity to share good practice across various boundaries within schools, this only took place in one school and, even then, to a limited extent. Awards were generally viewed as a form of recognition rather than a way of promoting and sharing good practice because announcements about award-winners did not normally specify why a particular academic had received an award. In the school where award announcements were accompanied with a brief explanation of why a particular instructor had won an award, it was found valuable: 'It's also nice to hear the good practice, the reason they received the award. It's not really the recognition, it's a way of sharing good practice.' Several interviewees saw the lack of detail in award announcements as a missed opportunity to share good teaching practice.

> Proposition 5: Award announcements can be used to share good practice through quick tips and ideas.

Role of Award Winners

The interviews provided little evidence that teaching practice was being naturally shared in the period following award announcements. For example, it was relatively rare for the interviewees to approach award winners to ask them about their teaching practice. When this happened, it typically took place through incidental exchanges among academics who already knew each other relatively well, within subject areas (e.g. marketing) and with more experienced academics. It was noted by several interviewees that receiving a teaching award does not attract recognition among colleagues in the same way as research publications. For example, other academics would rarely go and seek advice from a winner of a teaching award in the same way as they might approach a colleague with extensive research experience, although this was seen as more likely if the award winner was a senior member of staff. Based on the interviews, senior faculty were approached because they were well-known by many faculty members.

> Proposition 6: Informal sharing of good practice through award-winners takes place within small communities around subject areas and personal connections.

The interviewees noted that the wider impact of teaching awards on teaching practice depends on the interest of award-winners to share good practice and, while there are individuals who will seek to do this, the majority do not. It was suggested by several interviewees that award winners could share their practice through school events and, for example, peer mentoring: 'People who become winners must be in some ways, must be obligated to contribute to if you like sharing their experience. When award winners had done this, they felt it had been beneficial. At the same time, the majority of interviewees thought the burden of sharing good practice should be on the management rather than the award winner.

> Proposition 7: Award-winners can be asked to share good practice through events and mentoring, but there is a danger this may be seen as a burden by award-recipients.

Embeddedness in Learning and Teaching Support

The interviewees discussed a number of mechanisms that schools had in place to enhance teaching including departmental meetings, learning and teaching events, workshops and mentoring. Awards were found to be most useful in supporting a culture of teaching enhancement when they were a part of a broader set of learning and teaching activities that took place over a particular period of time: 'In the summer we have the award ceremony, we also have a lot of other activities such as for example the learning and teaching conference so they all happen pretty quickly around the same time so what I can definitely say that at the end of that three, four week period, you do come out with some good ideas.' The interviewees therefore implied that awards were a useful tool for raising interest and attendance in learning and teaching events, especially when the events were scheduled close to award announcements.

> Proposition 8. Awards increase attendance in learning and education events when these are scheduled in temporal proximity to award announcements.

Discussion

Contribution to knowledge

Our research contributes to knowledge about teaching awards in three primary ways. First, our research contributes to a better understanding of how teaching awards motivate faculty members. The findings of past research have shown that teaching awards can signal the importance of teaching and act as a motivator (Mackenzie 2007; Madriaga and Morley 2016), but there has been little research investigating the underlying psychological mechanisms determining how awards impact upon faculty members. Our findings suggest that awards motivate instructors through their instrumentality for career progression and esteem among

colleagues. Our research therefore contributes to knowledge about teaching awards by providing support to the arguments made about the importance of tying teaching recognition to formal rewards and promotional criteria. For example, Ramsden and Martin (1996) argued on the basis of their empirical research in Australia that teaching is not valued appropriately in promotions and appointment decisions and change is needed in this area. There are also others who have made similar observations (Fairweather 1996; HEA 2009; Mackenzie 2007; Parker 2008).

Theoretically, we drew on expectancy theory (Vroom 1964) and research in goal-setting (Klein et al. 1999; Locke and Latham 2006) to explain the importance of the link between teaching awards and career progress. Accordingly, awards motivate faculty members when they are seen as valuable. More specifically, our data suggests that this value relates to the relevance of awards for career progression and esteem among peers. The idea of value reflects the concept of valence in expectancy theory (Vroom 1964) where valence arises from personal needs, priorities, and other sources of motivation. Our data suggests that, in the context of teaching awards, the value, or valence, is a result of the instrumentality of teaching awards for career progression rather than something intrinsically valuable for the individual. Second, the analysis of our interview data suggests that awards can motivate faculty members as goals that are seen as attainable by academics. This motivational mechanism can be explained in relation to goal-setting theory where goals direct behavior (Locke and Latham 1990; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2007), but also by expectancy theory because the goals guide behavior only as far as they are perceived as realistic for instructors so that effort leads to expected outcomes. Based on our data, the perceived attainability of awards is linked to both award criteria and the current performance levels of the individual. Award criteria are particularly important because they may exclude some courses from consideration as a result of non-instructor related factors.

Our research also adds to literature about teaching awards by identifying individual factors that explain when awards are effective in motivating faculty members. These individual factors help to shed light on the mixed findings about the motivational impact of teaching awards (Madriaga and Morley 2016). Based on our research, teaching awards are particularly effective in motivating early to mid-career faculty members on a teaching contract who perceive the awards as attainable given their current performance level. These individual characteristics have not been identified before as factors that can moderate the motivational impact of awards. Our interviewees did not discuss gender or ethnicity as individual characteristics that would moderate or otherwise affect the value of awards. Our impression from the interviews is that the effect of individual characteristics is covert with the exception of career focus (teaching versus research) which was specifically raised by several interviewees. Bringing together our findings and past research about gender and ethnicity, the influence of individual characteristics on the value of teaching recognition appears predominantly unconscious, which makes it more difficult to address. Following the approach taken by Risquez and Moore (2013) in their study of individual responses to organisational change, we suggest that one direction future research could take is to adopt a psychoanalytic perspective to further examine and interpret those unconscious and unarticulated attitudes towards teaching awards which impact on individual motivation. The authors propose an archetypal framework based on the concepts of individuation and congruence (between individual and organisational priorities) which may be used by human resource practitioners as 'an instrument for individual and group reflection…revealing underlying organizational and relational dynamics (Risquez and Moore 2013, 336).

Secondly, our research contributes to a better understanding of the interaction between organisational culture and teaching awards. Our findings suggest that teaching awards should be presented within an organizational environment that encourages collaboration and the

development of teaching practice. The importance of the organizational environment has been noted by several authors (HEA 2009, McNaught and Anwyl 1993; Ramsden and Martin 1996; Frame et al. 2006), but it has not been previously analyzed in detail in the area of intra-organisational teaching awards. Our findings support the work of Thomson and Trigwell (2016) who found that informal conversations about teaching between colleagues represent a form of continuing professional development for early and mid-career academics. We found that informal conversations take place after award announcements, but mainly within subject areas and through personal connections to award winners. This finding echoes Healey's (2000, 169) warning that 'the scholarship of teaching needs to be developed within the context of the culture of the discipline within which it is applied' due to faculty perceptions of subject-related differences in teaching style and methods which make it difficult to apply best practice from one discipline to another.

Practical Implications

To increase the potential for teaching awards to contribute to the wider improvement of university teaching, we recommend that teaching award schemes should be linked to a broader suite of practices aimed at instilling a culture which values teaching and learning enhancement, including departmental meetings, learning and teaching events, workshops and mentoring. When awards are announced within this context, they can increase faculty interest in learning and education events. In order to encourage sharing, we propose that there should be higher numbers of awards that reward team teaching, mentoring, or knowledge sharing over awards which recognize individuals (McNaught and Anwyl 1993). We anticipate that this may have the added benefit of promoting the development and maintenance of positive relationships between co-workers which benefit team work and the sharing of knowledge which reduce the

potential for negative interpersonal counterproductive behavior in situations where one individual is singled out from a team for special recognition (Feys, Anseel, and Wille 2013).

Sharing of good teaching practice has generally been examined separately from teaching awards, but our research suggests that award announcements and related events are a useful way of sharing teaching practice. Based on the interviews, concise tips and examples of good teaching practice would be most effectively shared when award winners are being announced. Whilst the sharing of good practice is seen as a 'management responsibility', some winners are happy to become mentors focused on teaching practice and innovation. The interviews imply that mentoring may work best within subject areas or around particular areas of teaching (e.g. large class teaching, learning technology). We do not believe that award winners should be obligated to become mentors however, as the perception of an increased workload was viewed negatively by the majority of our interviewees. Further research is needed about how awards can be used in the promotion of high-quality teaching through mentoring and other measures.

Finally, our findings also contribute to knowledge in the broader area of pay and promotion. Earlier research has shown that pay and promotion are seen by academics as the most important ways of rewarding high-quality teaching (Fairweather 1996, 2005; HEA 2009; Parker 2008). Our findings suggest that teaching awards are currently seen as somewhat separate from the main structures of academic reward and recognition, even when instructors acknowledge that teaching features increasingly in academic promotions criteria. The perceived lack of connection between teaching awards and pay and promotion decisions may hamper award effectiveness, but it may also explain why awards are generally well-received even when there is awareness of the imperfections in award nomination and decision criteria. Several interviewees noted that because awards rarely carry a substantial financial reward, they are not seen as controversial or divisive. These findings suggest that it is important to keep awards as

a non-financial form of recognition or to improve award nomination and decision criteria in such a way that biases relating to class size, subject matter and other contingencies are addressed. Our findings also contribute to existing knowledge about pay and promotions criteria (HEA 2009) by suggesting that teaching awards may be more important for early career and teaching-focused academics in comparison to more experienced and research-focused academics.

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Table 1. Interview sample

	Gender	Career stage Early = < 5 yrs Middle = 6-10 yrs Experienced = > 10 yrs	Home country	Contract type	Award recipient N=No Y=Yes	School
Interviewee 1	M	Experienced	UK	Teaching	N	1
Interviewee 2	M	Experienced	Overseas	Teaching and research	Y	1
Interviewee 3	M	Experienced	Overseas	Teaching	Y	1
Interviewee 4	M	Middle	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	1
Interviewee 5	F	Middle	UK	Teaching	N	1
Interviewee 6	F	Middle	EU	Teaching	N	1
Interviewee 7	M	Early	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	1
Interviewee 8	F	Early	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	1
Interviewee 9	F	Early	Overseas	Teaching	Y	1
Interviewee 10	F	Early	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	1
Interviewee 11	M	Experienced	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	2
Interviewee 12	F	Experienced	UK	Teaching and research	Y	2
Interviewee 13	F	Experienced	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	2
Interviewee 14	M	Middle	EU	Teaching and research	Y	2
Interviewee 15	M	Early	EU	Teaching and research	N	2
Interviewee 16	F	Early	Overseas	Teaching and research	Y	2
Interviewee 17	M	Experienced	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	3
Interviewee 18	F	Experienced	UK	Teaching and Research	N	3
Interviewee 19	M	Middle	UK	Teaching and research	N	3
Interviewee 20	M	Early	Overseas	Teaching and research	N	3
Interviewee 21	M	Early	UK	Teaching	N	3