CHAPTER 1

IS LEARNING TO DANCE IN THE RAIN THE SAME AS LEARNING TO DANCE IN THE DESERT?

Lorraine Stefani

BIOGRAPHY

Lorraine is Professor of Higher Education Strategic Engagement at the University Of Auckland (UOA), New Zealand. Her expertise in organizational change and development has led to consultancy roles in many countries including Switzerland, Hungary, Hong Kong, Australia, South Africa and most recently, Saudi Arabia. She was recently on sabbatical from the University of Auckland and spent six months as a consultant in the Development Deanship at Princes Nora University, Saudi Arabia. Lorraine has been involved in many strategic HE initiatives and is currently conducting research on leadership in higher education.

SUMMARY

This chapter offers an exploration of my evolving philosophy of creativity as applied to the practice of academic development and the cultural transferability of that practice based on reflections on my experience of working at Princess Nora University (PNU), Saudi Arabia. The idea of 'development' was at the heart of my project. My role was to help develop the university's capacity to develop its faculty. My concerns were to understand what the development needs of faculty were and to encourage a culture of collaboration and sharing that would support development after my consultancy finished. My personal goal was to develop myself in order to fulfil the brief I had been given. I needed my creativity to adapt and cope with a cultural world that was different to anything I had known and experienced previously: the challenge was to apply my creativity in this different cultural setting. None of the work I describe was easy to carry out and I had to work sensitively and respectfully within the traditions and culture of the institution, whilst performing a role that inevitably was going to disrupt the status quo. Before I went to Saudi Arabia I visualised academic development as being about 'learning to dance in the rain, to do the unusual and achieve remarkable outcomes'. After spending six months in Saudi Arabia I have come to appreciate that to be an effective developer in another culture, we must also learn to dance in the desert.

INTRODUCTION

PNU is the largest women only university in the world with a capacity for over 40,000 students and 5000 women staff. It is also the newest women only university in the world. Derived from former women's colleges, the University is only four years old, its opening having been celebrated in March 2011. The establishment of Princess Nora University marks a commitment to the advancement of women in Saudi Arabia. In a public statement at the launch of the University, King Abdullah stated:

Women carry a responsibility that is more than a duty to maintain the stability of society and contribute to building the economy of the nation, and to represent the community and the nation to the highest standards, outside and inside the country: to be the caring mother, exemplary citizen and productive employee. Outside the nation, to be ambassador of her country and community and to represent well her religion, faith and our values (www.pnu.edu.sa)

Women comprise 58% of Saudi Arabia's college students and 14% of its labour force. Of this 14%, 85% of employed Saudi women work in Education, 6% in public health and 9% in the public sector (Miller, 2011).

Late in 2013 I received an invitation to spend a period of time as a Consultant to the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement (DDSE) at PNU. I was seconded from my position at the University of Auckland, as part of our higher education strategic engagement agenda. The overarching purpose of the consultancy was to support the development of a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching within the PNU Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement and to support the University in strategies to build leadership capacity and capability in learning and teaching.

Prior to receiving this invitation I had been to Saudi Arabia several times and had supported learning and teaching development initiatives in many universities in the Kingdom, and with the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education. I had gained professional credibility and insights into the challenges of change in culturally different universities, but I had not previously had a long-stay academic engagement in a university in Saudi Arabia.

My Evolving Philosophy of Creativity in Academic Development

My philosophy of creativity in academic development is that we must learn to dance in the rain, be prepared for the storm clouds and move with the shifting choreography of 21st century higher education (Stefani, 2013). We need to be flexible and adaptable and show leadership in enabling and supporting our institutions in providing the best learning experiences in the context of major societal changes and shifting expectations of higher education, preparing our graduates for entering a complex and challenging world.

Being an academic developer is about 'learning to dance in the rain', to do the unusual and achieve remarkable outcomes. These remarkable outcomes include changing peoples' behaviours in the classroom on the basis of transforming their beliefs about learning and teaching. Causal links are notoriously difficult to evidence regarding changed teaching

behaviours and enhanced student achievement (Bamber, 2013). It is partly this dilemma of how to show added value that makes academic development a continuous creative pursuit and partly it is because academic developers need to constantly be a step ahead in the rapidly changing environment in which higher education operates.

At different times in my career I have been differently creative depending on my role and responsibilities and the contexts in which I have been working. Developing as an academic developer is a never ending journey. It is not within the scope of this chapter to elaborate on the major changes in higher education over the past three decades which have impacted on the roles and responsibilities of academic development and developers. However at a personal level I made an active decision to change my career from a bioscience lecturer to academic developer because of my passion for teaching. As a lecturer in the biosciences I led the development of innovative teaching projects and won national prizes for my department. I promoted *active learning* in the classroom by *engaging* students in *authentic* learning tasks. I was encouraging student-centered learning before the term came into common usage. The UK-wide Enterprise in Higher Education Initiative (EHE), launched in 1987, the objective of which was to produce graduates in the United Kingdom better able to adapt to a rapidly changing world of work, encouraged many academic staff to engage in department wide and institution wide teaching development projects and subsequently to enter into an academic development career pathway (Stefani, 1999). My significant involvement in the EHE initiative in the university in which I was based at the time, led to my career change into Academic Development.

When I changed my career and took up the role of lecturer in academic development in a different university, I promoted a strategic shift in the way professional development opportunities were provided. Low level participation in generic workshops provided an impetus for change, not least of all as I was much more accustomed to 'engaging' large classes in active learning, through questioning, encouraging dialogue and sharing knowledge. I had developed my concept of teaching to mean facilitating learning, guide on the side rather than sage on the stage (Stefani and Nicol, 1997). The preferred model for academic development in the university in which I was employed changed to one of engaging with faculty within their discipline base. This model offered an opportunity to blend pedagogical understandings and the discourse and practices of the discipline, with a critical mass of staff having a shared understanding of the terrain in which they operate (Becher, 1998) and academic developers bringing their generic pedagogical knowledge and understanding to the partnership.

This was a significant shift for academic development and one which 'gave permission' for creativity to flourish, blending pedagogical and discipline-based discourses was in itself creative. Working with staff in this way across all disciplines means we as developers dance between being a learner and being a teacher. Academic developers can't be experts in all scholarly disciplines, rather we need to understand the challenges, constraints and opportunities within disciplinary terrains for enhancing and innovating learning and teaching and blend the underpinning pedagogies within context.

In this situation a collective creativity is engendered. It is a dialogue to the point of meaningful engagement and a harnessing of the richness of the dialogue within a discipline.

It is a model of active participant-centered learning, and having the courage to translate the discourse of the discipline and the pedagogical literature into pragmatic classroom action. It is an empowering approach intended to give teachers ownership of discipline-based pedagogies (Kreber, 2009)

Working towards changed behaviours in learning and teaching is more effective with a critical mass of engagement and the pursuit of common goals, with the goals being articulated by the academics and faculty members themselves. The discipline-based partnership approach to academic development encourages engagement in the scholarship of learning and teaching (Boyer,1990; Gibbs, 2013). Reflecting on this approach to enhancing learning and teaching through academic development, I understand it is a collective creativity of thought and action, a constructive partnership. Creativity involves sharing, reworking, reflection, questioning and positive morale. It is akin perhaps to a collective choreographing of new dance steps to fit the climate or the rhythm of the context.

My experience, knowledge, skills, understanding and practice as an academic developer are shaped by many factors and my understanding of creativity as a shared initiative has also been shaped and changed according to context and overall institutional culture. This might be visualized as an iterative cycle of my interactions, adaptations to context influenced by cultural factors.

As my career has progressed to having a significant leadership role, managing and leading teams and individuals in a large central academic development unit, and having the opportunity to influence institutional strategy and policy regarding learning and teaching, my view of creativity as a shared enterprise has strengthened. As a leader in academic development, my experience is that it requires moral courage to lead and it demands the skills of creative thinking, persuading, negotiating, influencing, acknowledging and valuing everyone's contribution to the enterprise. My approach to developing academic developers as leaders involves engaging individuals in coaching and mentoring. This is primarily about inspiring a shared vision, giving many affordances for creative thought and practice, for pushing boundaries and imagining possibilities, empowering for everyone involved.

The common threads throughout my academic development journey are 'engagement' and 'creativity' which can morph into 'creative engagement'. My interpretation of academic development is that it is a complex network of co-created activities that necessitate the sharing of multiple levels of knowledge, skills and understanding, with the over-arching purpose of providing the best learning experience for all students. It is a skillful and a creative dance!

MY SAUDI ARABIAN EXPERIENCE: AN INTERCULTURAL CHALLENGE

In taking on the role of consultant to the Deanship of Skills Development and Enhancement would my metaphor of 'dancing in the rain' be applicable in a context that was radically different to anything I had experienced before? Would I be differently creative within a different cultural terrain, a place with very different culture, power and politics? Would my philosophy, beliefs and practices be applicable in this different culture? To what extent were networks of activities a reality in Princess Nora University?

It is fair to say that as a woman travelling alone, nothing can quite prepare you for the culture shock of arriving in Saudi Arabia. You are one amongst the very many, conspicuous by your presence.

Wearing the Abayah is mandatory at all times for women outside of the home. This issue is non-negotiable, a fact of life in Saudi Arabia and for many Western women this raises the issue of why one would choose to go to live in Saudi Arabia. For me it was about expanding my global perspective on the importance of education and my sense of myself as an academic global citizen, my enthusiasm for challenge, developing and growing my sense of self and my world view. The world is messy and complex and cross-cultural and cross boundary collaborations are educational and developmental. If we can understand each other better whatever our culture we might be able to build a better future.

Princess Nora University is a purpose built state of the art university which boasts a monorail within its vast space to provide for easy movement between colleges, administration offices and staff accommodation. It comprises 17 Deanships, most of which are academic, discipline based Colleges. The term Deanship is also used for support units, such as administrative functions. PNU is described as a self-contained higher education city.

It is a challenging task to develop a university of the size and complexity of PNU yet there is a strong desire for it to become not only the world's largest women only university but also to build a reputation for excellence in academic achievement and the student learning experience. To realise this goal, senior managers within PNU recognise the need to develop all staff, to support and enable them to reach their highest potential. The

ambition of the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement (DDSE) for PNU is expressed in this excerpt from the DDSE website:

The world is changing around us and is accelerating towards the formation of a new competitive era fuelled by global challenges. This requires us to enhance human performance in our organizations to increase our outputs and support the knowledge economy in our beloved country. This goal motivates us to prepare ourselves, our organizations, our educational institutions and our society to face the challenges and the rapid changes around us. Innovative methods that develop essential skills will help us to build the leadership essential to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement has determined a clear well defined pathway under the banner of: "for you we care and for your excellence we

prevail". This phrase presents wonderful goals and our determination to build leadership and excellence. We offer a distinctive group of carefully selected, constructive training programs, which aim to build leadership and improve the working environment. By applying the latest global developments in the field of training, and taking advantage of new technologies and strategies, we aim to disseminate a positive culture of practice in the university community. Success in our efforts will help to achieve the vision of Princess Nora University by supporting all staff in their cultural, academic, administrative, science and research fields. By providing professional development services which reflect positively on the outcomes of the university the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement supports PNU in its march to keep up with the most advanced universities in the world" (www.pnu.edu.sa)

To this end, the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement at PNU is charged with providing development opportunities for all staff, academic and administrative. The university recognises the benefit of engaging individual academics and academic cohorts from national and international institutions to support it in achieving its goals. However, bringing in a raft of experience from international universities is not without its challenges as well as opportunities, both for the host institution (PNU) and for the individuals or groups providing consultancy and expertise.

Princess Nora University cannot be seen as a typical Middle Eastern university. It is a university in its infancy, it is derived from women's colleges and as such, it is struggling to change from a college culture to a university culture. It is the first women-only university in the Middle East and, in political terms is under the microscope. Within PNU one can sense the urgency and the need to be seen to be successful. Due to the deeply embedded and complex nature of gender inequality in society, women in Saudi Arabia have not typically held leadership positions (Hamdan, 2005). The issues of class, race and cultural background play a major role in determining the status and the roles and responsibilities of staff and the strength of the hierarchy is tangible to an outsider.

Creativity in a Conservative Culture

Having grown up in a liberal culture my perceptions of creativity have been shaped by concepts of freedom, autonomy and self-expression where my rights entitle me to critique and challenge authority and institutions. But would my views of creativity hold in what I knew to be a much more conservative and autocratic society? In my introductory weeks at PNU, I came to appreciate the scale of the challenge. As an institution it was in its infancy, development of strategic and operational plans were works in progress. A hierarchical structure was in place and the existing policy framework focused on matters of discipline. And yet, across the Colleges, the Deans were doing a heroic job of managing faculty and providing the teaching for large cohorts of students.

As I was meeting with staff at different levels and with different discipline-based and functional responsibilities I was reviewing my mental map of building capacity and creating the conditions for meaningful change to occur. In my mental map the key building blocks on the journey of change are as follows:

- Understand the scope of the challenge and support the development of a vision for the future. Where are we now? Where would we like to get to? How will we get there?

- Promote a culture of leadership across the institution. Place ownership within PNU; offer a tangible and workable concept of leadership; think about sustainability

- Nurture existing leadership by involving leaders at all levels in the project to shift the culture of teaching and learning and promote scholarship. Recognise existing talent, affirm ownership, encourage collegiality, and collaboration

- Build on current success and develop practice based on a positive philosophy as opposed to a deficit model of development. Recognise culture; blend experience; use language of enhancement

- Explore the barriers to meaningful, sustainable change. Emphasise the scope for leaders and leadership within to alter the status quo

- Build development capacity internally through targeted projects, use collaborative approaches to developing appropriate academic and professional development programmes. Build on existing foundations, acknowledging progress, engendering enthusiasm, encouraging creativity

Partly as a result of its genesis and partly because of cultural norms in Saudi Arabia, Princess Nora University is passionately hierarchical in its operational procedures. Not surprisingly, still being in its early stages of organisational development the University currently lacks the sort of Committee structures we take for granted in Western universities. It was a challenge to create the conditions for engagement with critical stakeholders across the university. I had to seek permission at the highest level to visit the Deans and the Colleges albeit that once that permission was granted, somewhat contrary to expectations, Deans and faculty members were more than delighted to engage in dialogue and to talk about their challenges in learning and teaching.

The intention of these visits, which required my translator to engage in the strenuous exercise of managing and making meaning of a complex dialogue, and carrying out instantaneous translation, was to understand the areas of greatest need to support enhanced learning and teaching strategies. In almost all Colleges, the expressed desire was for short, tailored workshops relating to the needs of the discipline. The needs most commonly expressed were not dissimilar to those one would find in most international universities: more hands on input on using technology in learning and teaching; curriculum design strategies; managing large classes; bringing variety in teaching techniques; roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners in the classroom; engaging students in learning responsibilities. The visits to the Deanships revealed that staff in different Colleges had different needs and were at different stages in their own development. This is the norm for complex universities such as Princess Nora and further highlights the importance of engaging in dialogue to determine development needs in any institution.

The Deans expressed a wish for a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching that would respond to their needs. For example it was not always possible or desirable for staff to leave their own College to attend workshops at the DDSE which could be 3-4 hours long. Rather they would prefer a model where shorter sessions within their own colleges could be offered, for example Learning Lunch sessions was a common request. The rationale for such sessions was that many more faculty members could attend and a critical mass of faculty members could engage and question issues.

To build on the momentum of engagement and in response to requests, I facilitated workshops within the Deanships, occasions that enabled me to grasp the strategies being developed to support student learning across different disciplines. They also provided an opportunity for me to share my knowledge, share resources, be me, share my values, and engender trust. Regards my overall intentions I was working to:

- Understand the current models of learning and teaching
- Promote a narrative for learning and teaching at PNU
- Gain insights into the levels of willingness to engage in appropriate professional development opportunities which could be offered by the proposed Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
- Support the development of leadership in learning and teaching

Developing the Developers

Academic development is a strenuous area of work for a variety of reasons including: resistance to change; credibility of the developers; the level of pedagogical knowledge and understanding of the developers and the status and academic level of the developers. The development programmes being offered and the recognition of the different needs of faculty from different disciplines are all critical factors in the success or otherwise of such Centres. These topics are well researched and there is a large body of literature on the challenges inherent in faculty development (e.g. Gosling and Hannan, 2007; Gosling, 2009).

Some work towards realising the goals of the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement had already been carried out by different agencies, institutions and consultants prior to my arrival at PNU. It was important to use and build upon this work as a starting point, to acknowledge that it is a work in progress to achieve the institutional goals. In agreement with a 'road map' towards the development of a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching which had been prepared by the American University of Beirut with whom PNU and the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement (DDSE) enjoy a very productive partnership, many faculty members from across the university were selected as Ambassadors to the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.

These Ambassadors had already been chosen at the time of my arrival on the basis of recommendations from Deans of Colleges. These Ambassadors represented a key stakeholder group in the plan to develop a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. I organised to meet with the Ambassadors in two groups. I facilitated a number of workshops with the Ambassadors of whom there were over 60 representing all Colleges and Faculties. These workshops had to be carefully designed. The reasons for two groups were firstly

pragmatic, taking into consideration faculty commitments, space to work, but secondly and importantly one group of staff was very happy to have the workshops conducted in English. The other group preferred to have the workshops in Arabic, necessitating the services of a translator for me. It is soon to be a requirement that all teaching will be in English at PNU.

The workshops were fun, challenging and highly informative, shining light on the prevailing culture within PNU. There was for example a level of disagreement regarding the training and development of the Ambassadors whose role includes supporting the development of faculty within their colleges and departments. The Dean of DDSE felt that the Ambassadors had been adequately trained where-as the Ambassadors themselves felt they had not had training on their role. The majority also felt that they lacked the status, the credibility and the pedagogical knowledge to fulfil their role. All of the Ambassadors who attended the workshops expressed their interest in the role but emphasised the challenge of it, their need for extensive development input and their lack of expertise in facilitating change in teaching and learning, especially with more senior colleagues. The concept of developing the Ambassadors was an excellent capacity building strategy – but the interpretation of academic development within PNU was lacking in depth and sophistication.

I put a strong emphasis on bridging the development gap for the Ambassadors, to support their development and encourage their input into what should be the critical and core functions of a Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. I hoped to achieve many things during the workshops I facilitated including affirming the significant contribution they were making to PNU; promoting dialogue and meaningful engagement, role modelling a way of facilitating a workshop aiming to inspire and empower the Ambassadors as potential leaders in learning and teaching. I was trying to create the conditions for a narrative of learning and teaching within the context and culture of PNU to emerge.

To engage the Ambassadors and encourage critical thinking and articulation of their pedagogical understandings, I introduced the exercise of writing a Statement of Philosophy of Learning and Teaching. The rationale for choosing such an exercise was to encourage faculty to make their beliefs about learning and teaching explicit and share their models of Statements so as to reveal the variations in expression of teaching and learning used by colleagues in different disciplines. The exercise was also designed to build confidence, promote scholarly thinking on teaching and learning and encourage the Ambassadors to show leadership in learning and teaching, the genesis of a culture of leadership.

Working with the Ambassadors in this way and receiving a large number of Teaching Philosophy statements was highly encouraging, taking small steps towards building a culture of talking about teaching. While everything written in Arabic had to be translated into English for me, I was heartened at key points that arose from many of the Statements. Here are three examples

'A teacher has to continually develop herself in all directions, and she should not wait for training and development opportunities to come from her work. I love change and renewal especially in the field of teaching where I try out new strategies and many styles that are interesting for my students'.

'I make efforts to use technology effectively in my teaching and with my students using what is available in the classes of Faculty of Education. In one of the lectures about art museums, my student suggested checking Louvre Museum website and she showed the link to her colleagues. They checked the website through their smart phones. This gives an example of students contributing to the teaching and the learning in my classes'.
(Lecturer, Faculty of Education PNU)

When I became a teacher and a trainer at the same time I combined my lectures between these two activities which are complementary to each other. I am interested in giving each student who has performed poorly, security and trust above anything else. I show my delight when such students can overcome her learning obstacles and each time I get fantastic results.

I am interested in understanding my students` ways of thinking and giving them the opportunity to express their positive feelings and learning from them. I value the trust of my students. I provide them with positive opportunities that enable me to learn from them as if they are the teachers and I am the student.
(Lecturer, Deanship of Community Studies)

Directing students to read various books and sources that relate to the course is intended to increase the skills of analysis and critical thinking and not to be limited by any one idea or opinion. In addition it is important to pose many questions to encourage students to think deeply, and to encourage students to participate in learning to prepare them to face everything in this life. A teaching goal is to instil self-confidence in students by let them take the role of teacher for a few minutes and let them share their opinion on certain issues in the lecture.

I believe that my distinctive students have many tasks towards their professor, their colleagues and toward themselves that help them to play their role effectively. Therefore, one of the responsibilities of my students is to accept the views of others, do their homework on time, and convert the theoretical studies in class into practice in their external environment. (Lecturer, Deanship of Languages and Translation)

At the outset of the exercise, an agreement was reached within the DDSE that three full Statements presented in English and three presented in Arabic, would be chosen for the DDSE website, as a way of disseminating the work and giving greater credibility to the Ambassadors. I also liaised with the Deanship of Quality and Accreditation within PNU which was working on a Total Quality Management policy framework. The idea of writing a Statement of Teaching Philosophy was in alignment with the statements relating to quality teaching.

Writing a Statement of Philosophy of Teaching became mandatory for all faculty members. Again the concept is good but the shortcoming of the mandate was that a feedback loop had not been considered. I had written feedback comments on all Statements in the Ambassador pilot project, to role model this critical process, but a strategy needed to be put in place to provide feedback to all faculty otherwise faculty would soon question the rationale and added-value of engaging in the exercise. While many actions were very not within my control, my objective was to guide the initiative in its early stages. Further iterations of workshops and development of the Ambassadors will hopefully gradually result in more sophisticated and creative approaches to engaging all faculties in learning and teaching initiatives.

A further initiative I was able to promote in collaboration with the Deanship of Quality and Accreditation, was Peer Observation of Teaching. I introduced the idea in workshops with the Ambassadors and as follow up I was invited into Faculties to provide an introduction to the process. I decided that a good way to do this would be to role play the process in the Faculties and Deanships.

REFLECTIONS ON MY EXPERIENCE AND MY CREATIVITY

After six months working in the Deanship of Development and Skills Enhancement at PNU, engaging with staff within the DDSE, faculty members, Deans and Ambassadors a number of initiatives were underway, including the launch of Princess Nora University Teaching Excellence Awards.

We need our creativity when we challenge ourselves and put ourselves into situations that lie well outside our comfort zones where both the contexts and challenges are unfamiliar. This was certainly the case with my Saudi Arabian experience. I needed my creativity to adapt and cope with a cultural world that was different to anything I had experienced previously, over a sustained period of time.

None of the work I described was easy to carry out and all of it required permissions to be granted to visit the Colleges and Deanships, and to work with the Ambassadors. I had to work sensitively and respectfully within the traditions and culture of the institution, whilst performing a role that inevitably was going to disrupt the status quo.

Without consciously doing so, I brought in a different dynamic that involved engagement and dialogue which created tensions within the hierarchy of power. It was not fully understood that development involves change and change can be disruptive. Empowerment of staff can create challenges.

Reflecting on my changing philosophy of creativity, my experience of working at PNU suggests that I carried my creativity with me across cultural boundaries. It also affirmed for me that even within such a different culture as Saudi Arabia, academic staff are working to similar goals; they have similar concerns, challenges and aspirations for their students as academics in universities in more liberal western societies. They are seeking development opportunities that will enable them to enhance their classroom practice and their students' learning.

The most significant barrier to sustainable change lies in the wider political culture and the importance of hierarchy and social status.

Finding a framework to describe the dimensions of my own creativity that emerged through the process I described and which fits my understanding and articulation of creativity, is a work in progress. I list below some features I think are relevant to the creativity I needed to undertake in my work as a developer at Princess Nora University.

A high level of self-awareness and empathy - as an individual consultant embedded within a new culture, working to engender trust with new colleagues is essential. This takes time and energy, generosity of spirit and a positive attitude. Sharing knowledge, understanding and skills is not a one-way street. There is the challenge of language, translation between different languages and different forms of articulation. In the intercultural collaboration under discussion it was necessary to take it on trust that not too much is lost in translation between Arabic and English and vice versa.

Behavioural flexibility and mindfulness - ways of working in different cultures are inevitably different and potentially personally and professionally demanding. In one's own culture it is possible to challenge peers, leaders and managers. This may even be expected given that one of the functions of universities is to engender and engage in critical thinking, questioning, debating and challenging. The language of learning communities and learning organisations is the norm in Western universities but is not necessarily the norm in other cultures. It can be a delicate balance knowing when to challenge and when to accept authority in a different culture. One must be mindful of the potential for misinterpretation of challenge even if the challenge seems reasonable within your own norms of behaviour.

Information gathering and analysis - it is important to be cautious about making assumptions. It is easy to assume that practices from one university can simply be transplanted into a different cultural setting. Each and every university has its history, its cultural ethos and its way of being. It is wise to gather intelligence from as many sources as possible. If effecting change is the goal it is important to gain an understanding of the institutional and individual levels of readiness for change.

Information integration and transformation - change does not occur easily in any setting. It is important to develop positive and sustainable relationships with key personnel who can act as advocates for change and who can help to clear hurdles and roadblocks on the change journey.

Resilience and persistence - managing yourself in challenging circumstances.
My experience of working for a sustained period of time at Princess Nora University was profound. It was challenging and stretching and required every fibre of my creativity, to live, work, and embrace the context.

Confidence - We develop through the professional work we undertake - that includes our creative development. Having developed myself through my Saudi Arabian experience I

have grown in confidence and would be willing to take on similar assignments in future. The experience and my own development will enable me to take on future challenges.

On the basis of my intercultural experience, through the lens of academic development, I would now add courage into the mix: courage to immerse myself in a culture I did not understand and courage to swim against the status quo - although perhaps in some ways it is easier to be a prophet in another culture!

Other consultants, faculty members, senior managers and governance personnel will continue to develop the university, which has huge potential in the ongoing transformation of opportunities for women in Saudi Arabia. I can only feel proud and privileged to have had the opportunity to contribute in however small a way to the future success of this unique university. Before I went to Saudi Arabia I visualised academic development as being about 'learning to dance in the rain, to do the unusual and achieve remarkable outcomes'. After spending six months in Saudi Arabia I have come to appreciate that to be an effective developer in another culture, we must also learn to dance in the desert.

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