

Collegial Partnerships

ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT
by Jeff Doruff

ual:

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This action research project explores the conditions for supporting positive and sustainable collegial partnerships and collegial feedback.



Background & Context



“We work like we’re an **aeroplane**. We’re like multiple jet engines on a wing and we’re all facing in roughly the same direction [...] It’s not like we’re working against one another per se, but we’re **working in parallel lines** alongside one another... siloed.”

- ARP Participant Quote

STARTING WITH VALUES

“In the process of clarifying the meanings of your embodied values, as they emerge in practice, you transform your values into your criteria” (McNiff, 2002).

**Sense of growth
and professional
development**

Collaboration

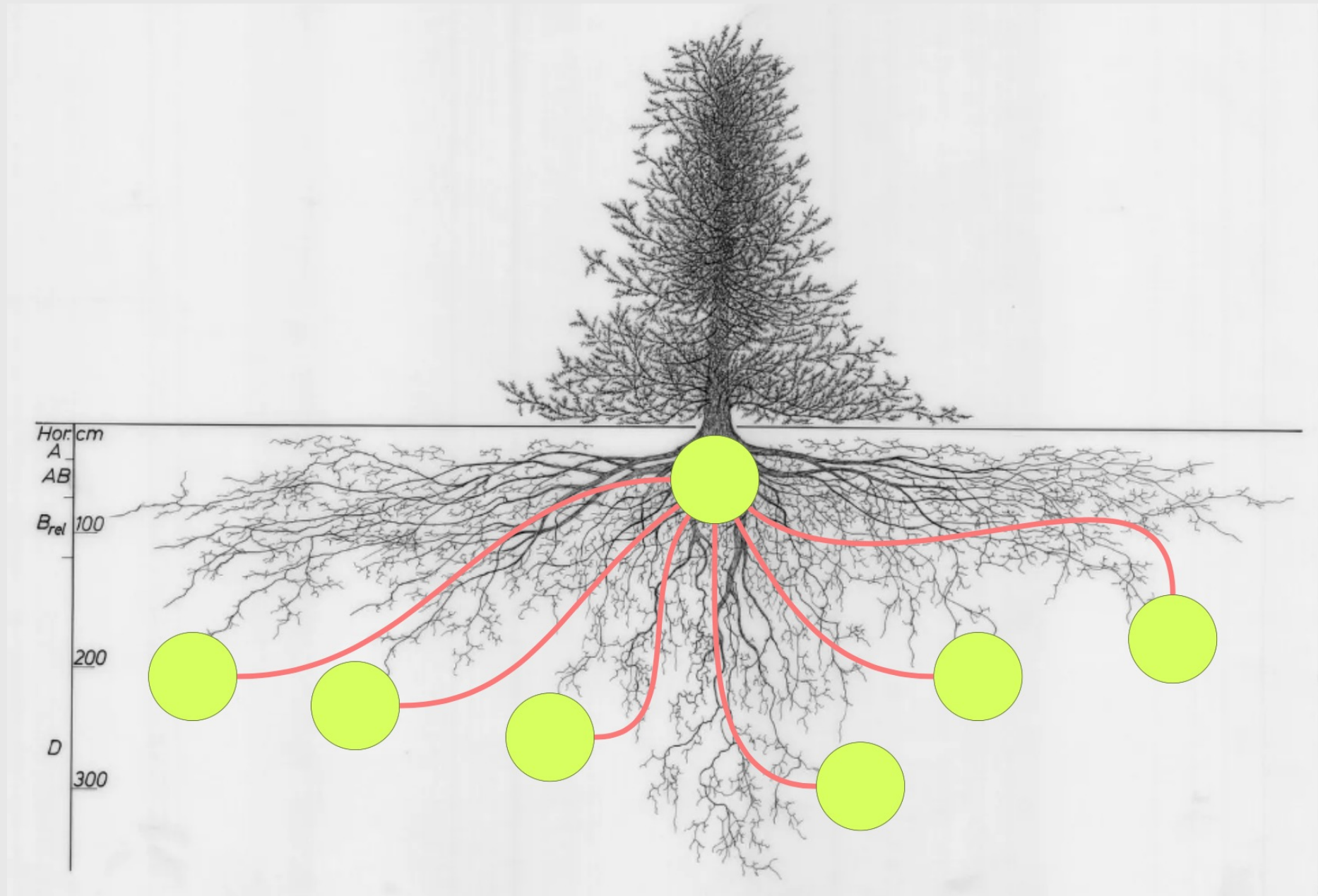
**Reciprocal
learning**

**Shared
leadership**

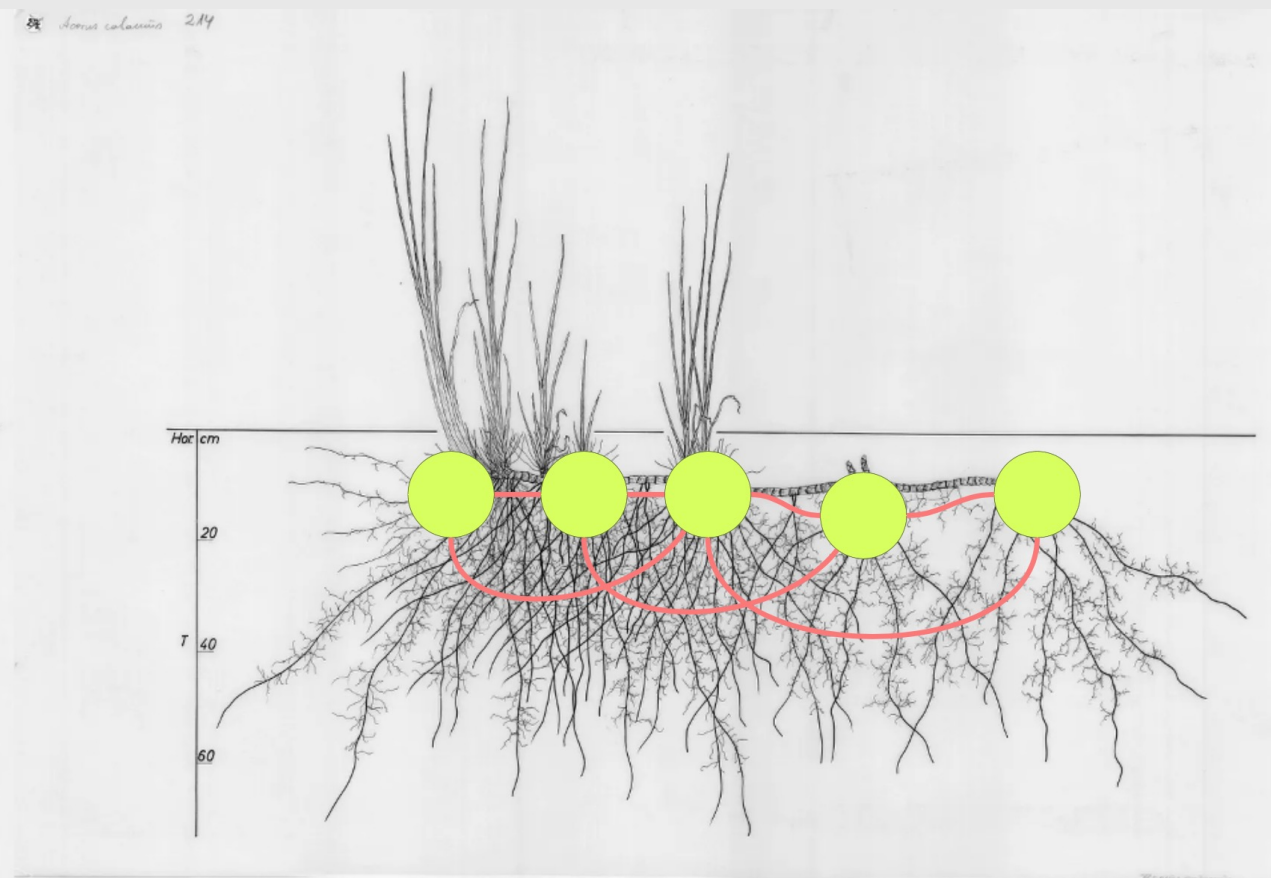
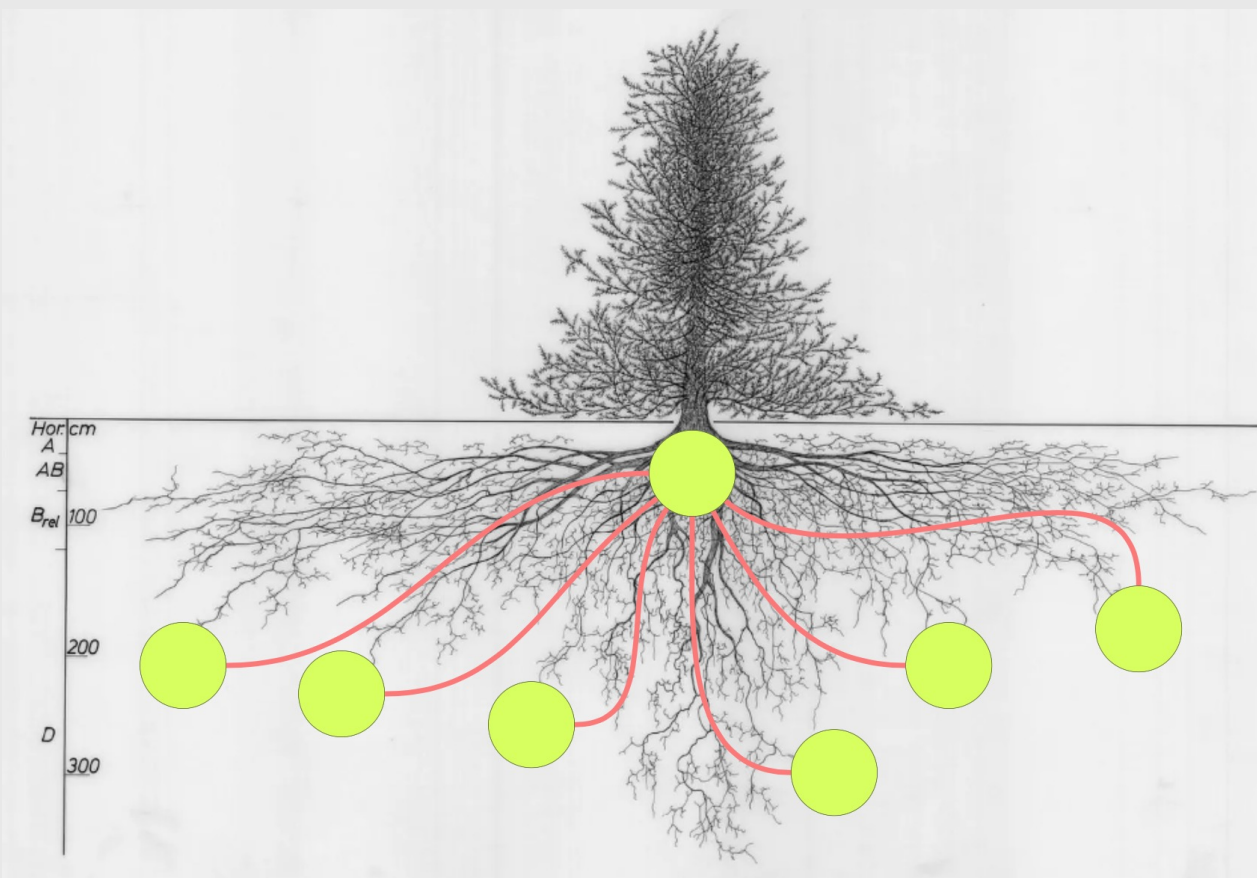
Recognition

“I think it's kind of non-existent. [...] maybe the level that [feedback] goes to (in PRCs) isn't that useful in terms of our collegial working and our collaboration

- ARP Participant Quote

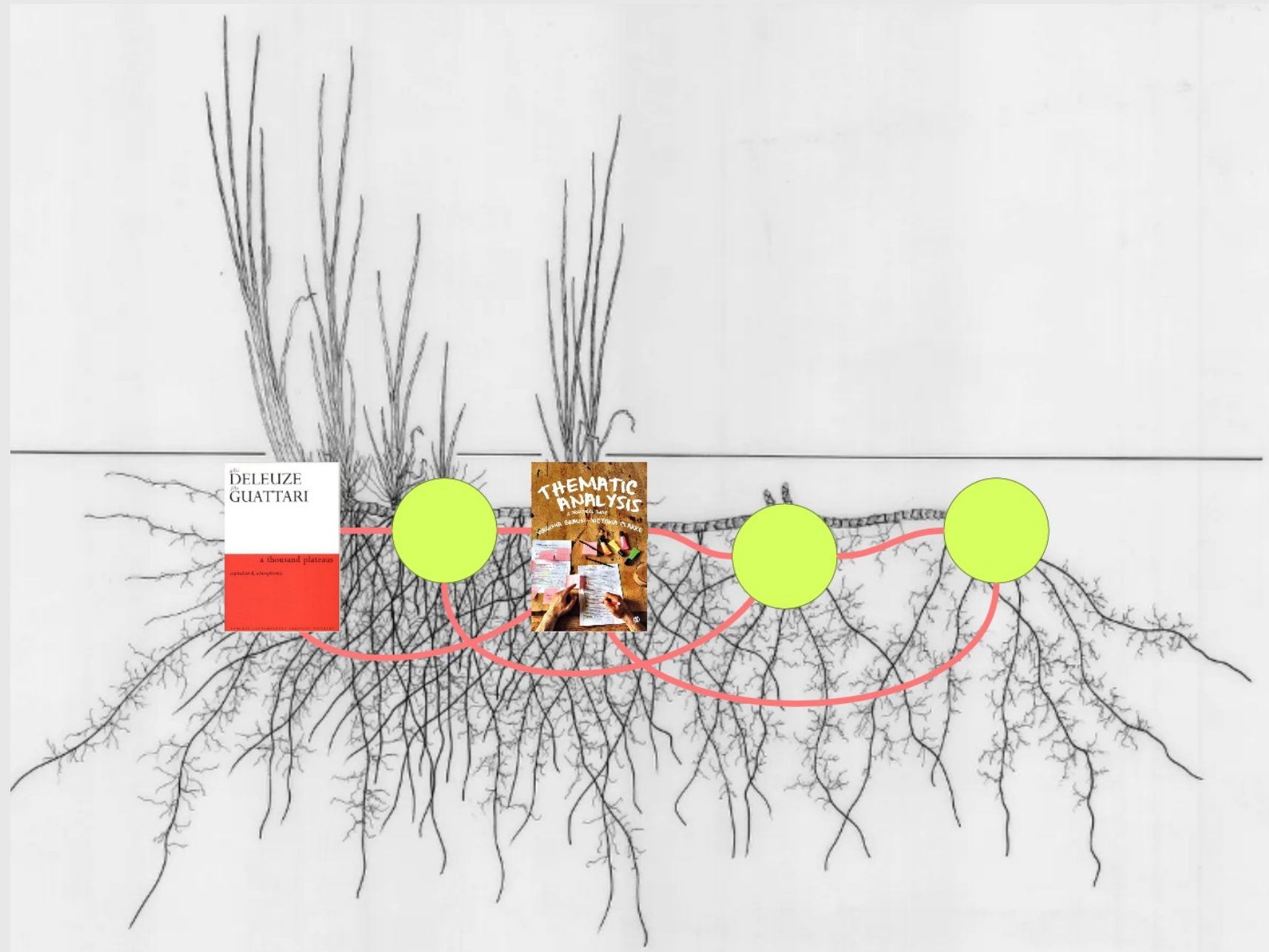


How can we as colleagues support each other's goals, learn reciprocally and share leadership?



Interlude: A key theoretical framework

“A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles”
(Deleuze, 1987)



Inspiration: Camden Council's Service Design Team's Feedback Practices.

Feedback for Elsa

Hey! I'm gathering feedback to improve my skills, ways of working, and collaboration. If you have 15 minutes to share your thoughts, it would greatly help me to reflect and set goals for the coming year. Thank you!

Your Name

Your answer

What ideas or advice could **help me grow** in:

- Leading teams and developing their skills
- Delivering high-quality useful work
- Making services fair and inclusive
- Coming up with ideas and testing them
- Making changes that stick

Your answer

What do you think I've done well in my work and where have I made **positive contributions**?

Your answer

What could I do to make it **easier to work with me**?

Your answer

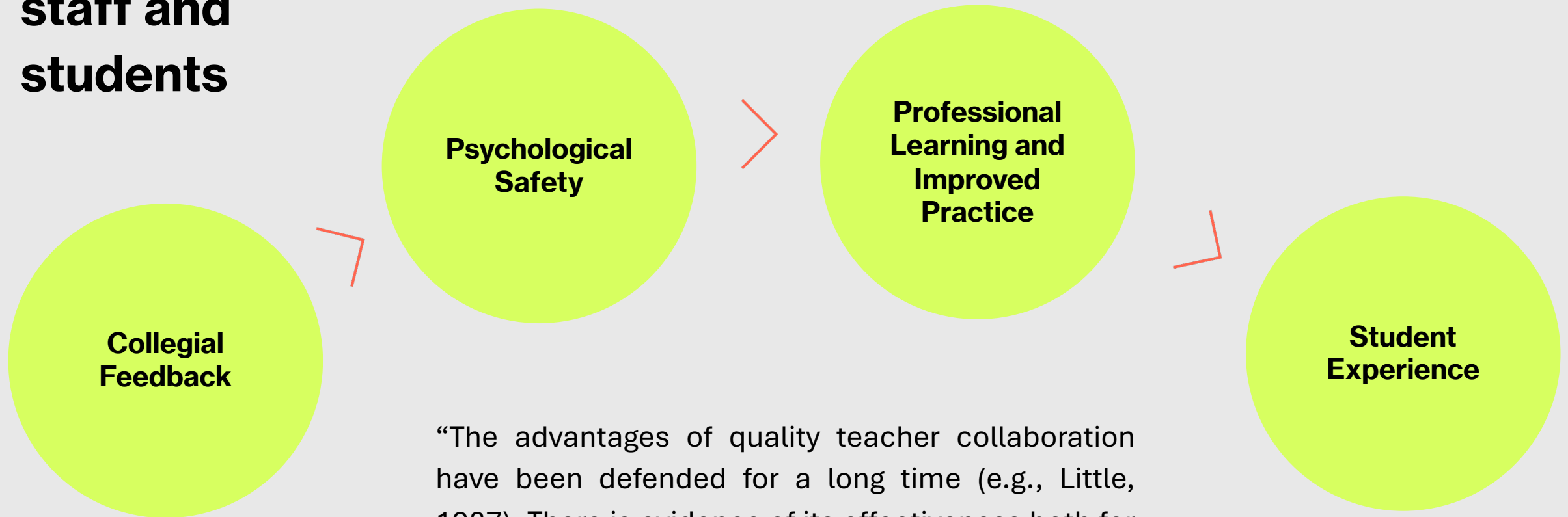
Anything else?

Your answer

1. People write their own questions for feedback.
2. Allows them to ask for help in relation to PDGs.
3. Tied to skills framework.

ual:

Benefits to staff and students



“The advantages of quality teacher collaboration have been defended for a long time (e.g., Little, 1987). There is evidence of its effectiveness both for teacher professional development (e.g., Sun et al., 2013) and for student achievement” (Ribosa et al, 2024).

Initial Research Questions

1.

How to make feedback useful and support personal development goals?

2.

What would help staff feel comfortable giving and receiving peer-to-peer feedback?

Hypotheses

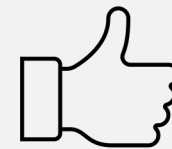
1.

Self-authored collegial feedback questions will result in feedback that's more relevant to one's professional development goals and develop a culture of mutual support



2.

A feedback toolkit would be useful in helping people generate questions and feel more confident and supported when giving feedback.



Assumption:

Self-initiated collegial feedback requests will lead to feedback that's more relevant to one's professional development and develop a culture of mutual support.

My own feedback form

Peer-to-Peer Feedback Form - Jeff Doruff

Hi, thank you for taking the time to give me feedback. This feedback exercise is part of my Action Research Project for the PgCert in Academic Practice.

The project aims it to define beneficial collegial peer-to-peer (P2P) feedback practices, providing a sustainable framework for colleagues to recognise each other's work and support each other's professional development. The hope is to foster an environment of reciprocal learning and regenerative leadership amongst colleagues.

Please take 20-minutes to fill out this form—about 5-minutes per questions. Feel free to answer in any way that suits you (e.g., bullet points); don't worry about grammar! Using AI to assist framing feedback is also acceptable. If you prefer to deliver the feedback verbally or in-person rather than through this form, that's okay, but please let me know.

When you've completed the feedback, I'd like to have a quick conversation with you about your thoughts and experience of writing feedback. This will be part of my research and iterative development of the P2P feedback toolkit and framework.

Thanks!

1. One of my objectives is about understanding **design entrepreneurship**. There's a lot to consider here, but I'm particularly interested in **funding pathways and mechanisms**. Can you give me any advice on how I could grow in this area?

*If aspects of my objectives need clarity, feel free to ask me questions to help me reflect on my intent. *

Enter your answer

2. What are the areas that you think Jeff excels in and has made **positive contributions**? *

Enter your answer

3. What are some areas where you think Jeff could improve or develop his skills and ways of working? *

Enter your answer

4. How can Jeff **better support you** and your work in the future, and what changes can be made to ensure that collaboration is successful? *

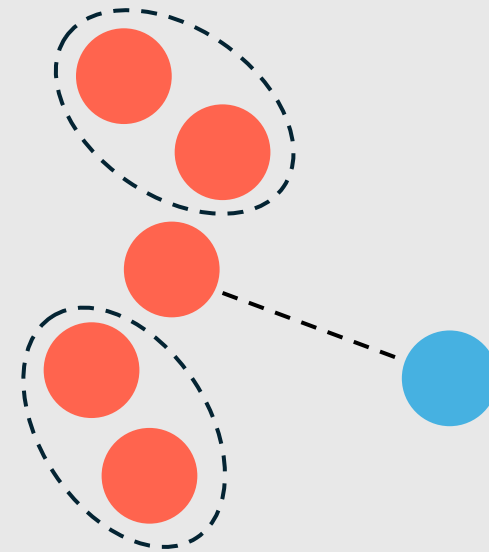
Enter your answer

[+ Add new question](#) [🔗](#)

Participants in Peer Feedback Activity



5 of 13 FTE staff
0 of 4 HPL staff



The 5 participants
were all in
collaborative
partnerships



Semi-Structured Interviews

1.

Peer-to-peer feedback experiences at UAL or externally.

2.

Generating their own feedback questions.

3.

Giving feedback



5

20-30 minutes interviews with participants who had participated in feedback activities

1

interview with UAL's Organisational Development Team

1

playback session of early findings followed by group discussion with course colleagues

ETHICS & CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

“Dual roles may also introduce explicit tensions in areas such as confidentiality”

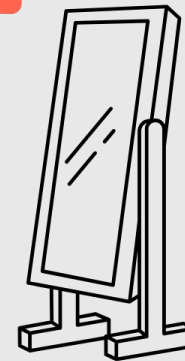
(British Educational Research Association, 2024)

“insider researcher”

(Braun & Clarke, 2021)



PARTICIPATION

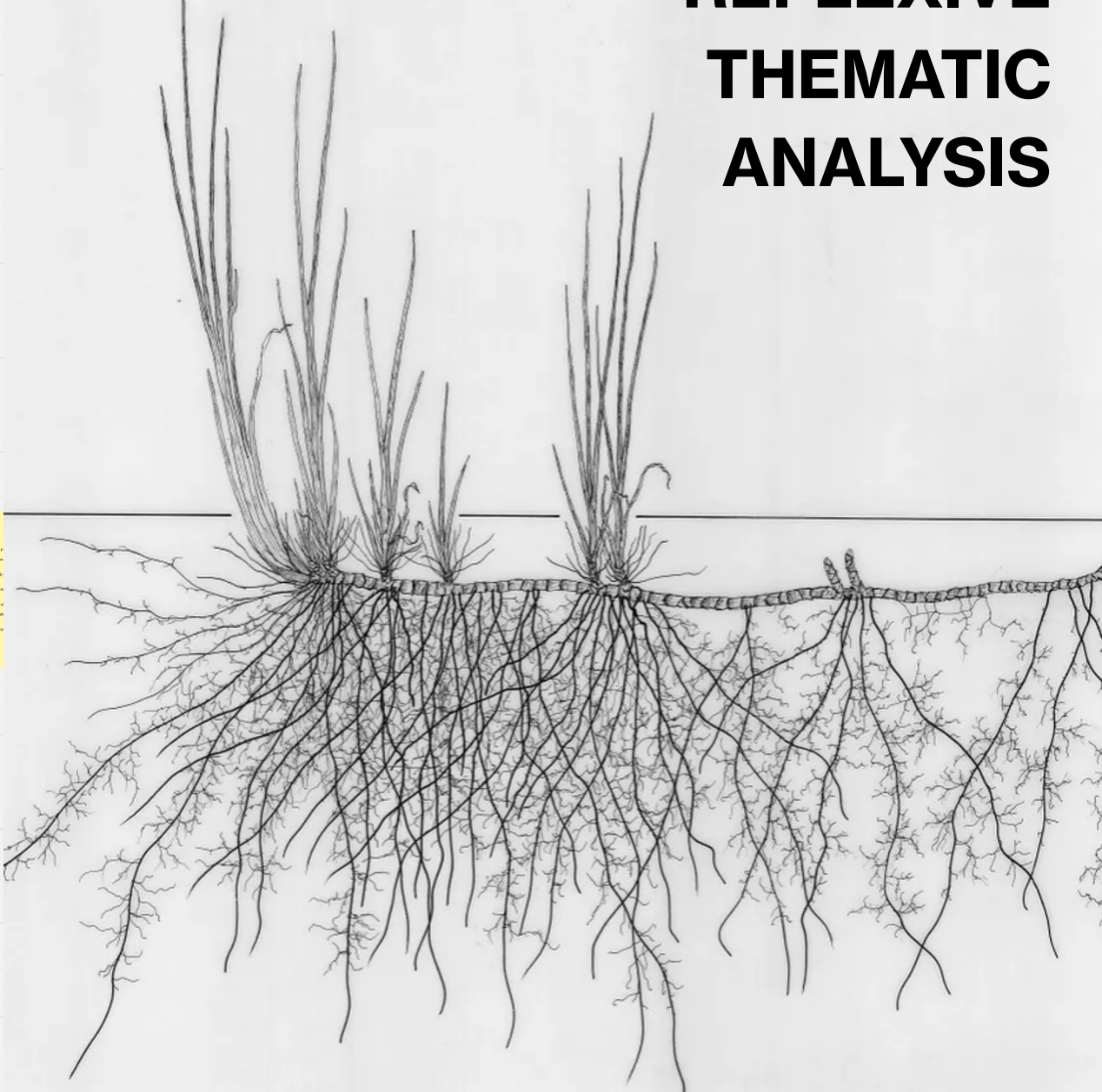


REPRESENTATION

A NEW PRIMARY QUESTION:

What conditions would support positive and sustainable collegial partnerships?

REFLEXIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS



CONTEXTUAL THEME

Siloed organisational cultures inhibit the emergence of collegial feedback

Participants locate the absence of collegial feedback not at the level of individual willingness, but within organisational cultures and structures that operate in siloes.



CORE THEME 1

Protected space/time signal that collegial feedback ‘counts’ as work

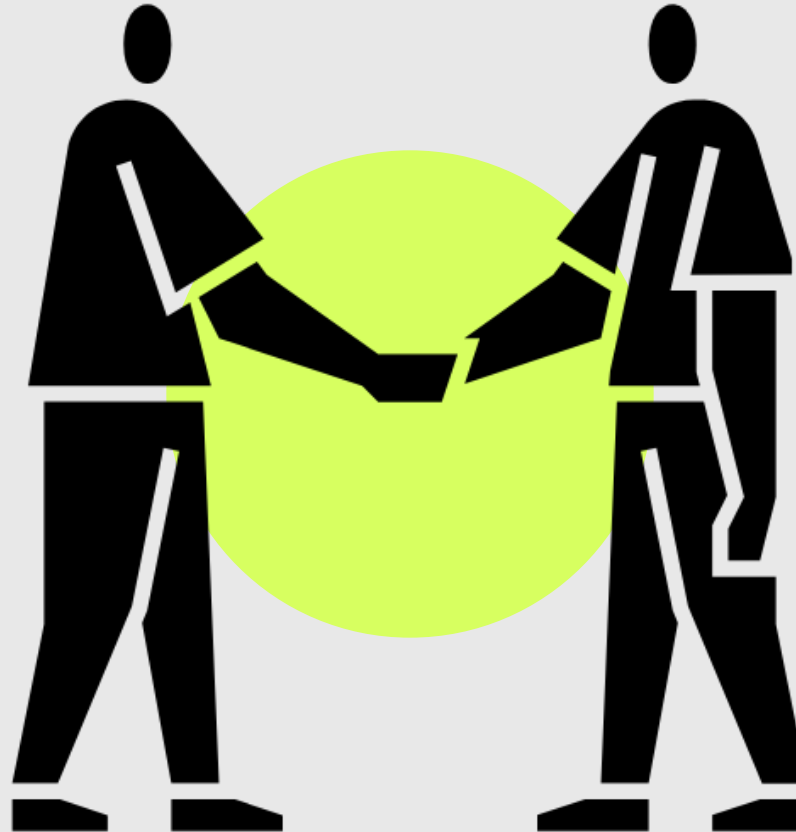
Collegial feedback becomes possible when there is a culturally endorsed signal that partnership-building is legitimate, valued work.



CORE THEME 7

You Can't Force Collegial Partnership

Collegial feedback partnerships are more likely to form and be sustained when they emerge voluntarily through aligned interests, compatible objectives and mutual willingness to offer support.



“For trust to exist, a kind of humus – a fertile ground – needs to be cultivated and nourished. And yet, there is also something spontaneous and organic in how trust grows. It cannot be engineered through policy language alone; it emerges through relational attentiveness, timing and genuine intent.”

- Written reflection from
ARP Participant

CORE THEME 2

Meaningful, growth-oriented work underpins feedback in collaborative partnerships

Collegial feedback becomes sustainable when collaboration is anchored in work that participants experience as meaningful because it supports personal or professional development goals.



CORE THEME 3

Let's Be Honest About What We Want

Collegial feedback is more likely to be effective and sustainable when partners are explicit about what they personally want from the relationship.

*Being upfront about “*selfish*” goals clarifies purpose and prevents imbalance and misunderstanding.



”I really like [mentoring] and I can do it well. It's a mix of personal, almost selfish reasons to be able to know I was – in a tiny, tiny part – responsible for that person’s growth. I think it's incredible. It's a huge part of my satisfaction, way more than sitting in a committee.”

- ARP Participant

CORE THEME 4

Specific Enough to Be Useful

Collegial feedback is experienced as useful when it is specific, timely and grounded in concrete work rather than general impressions.

“Because of the organic nature, [they] had a closeness with a particular thread of my work and it felt like because it was focused on a particular thread rather than a generalisation, it allowed for a kind of usefulness in the feedback that wasn't general.”

- ARP Participant Interview
Quote



CORE THEME 6

Safety Makes Candour Possible

Psychological safety and reciprocity sustain vulnerability and candour in collegial partnerships.



“The professional development here is really about working with the right line management to do the right thing at the right time, and getting a very rounded approach [...] it’s a very safe method how we are working together.”

- ARP Participant
Interview Quote

EVALUATION?

“... [REDACTED] began offering informal mentoring, which will now evolve into a more formalised arrangement as a result of this process. [...] This collegial feedback exercise opened up a valuable conversation about establishing clearer boundaries and expectations, helping ensure that [REDACTED] is recognised for the additional work she takes on in offering her knowledge and support. This process accelerated that acknowledgement and allowed it to be a shared, openly discussed point for improvement.”

THANK YOU