

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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53 Interesting Ways in Which Colleagues Resist Change

Stephen Outram, De Montfort University

Introduction

There are two sources of inspiration for this work. The first springs from a very pleasant evening with Mike Laycock from UEL after external examining where, in the company of some colleagues from the University of Utrecht on a study tour of UK higher education, we started to list all of the reasons colleagues give for not doing something. The second source was the outstanding workshop presented by Gus Pennington as a part of the LTSN Generic Centre's initiative on Facilitating Change in June 2003¹.

Managing change is an integral part of the education developer's role. With increasing competition, the convergence of higher education globally (particularly in Europe following the Bologna Agreement) and the quest for excellence within the UK, being an effective change manager is essential. Many companies now know that colleagues must learn and adapt new skills quickly and that it is people who are the real source of growth for the future survival of the organisation. Being able to recognise resistance to change and deal with it effectively is an important aspect of change management. It can be seen and heard in what colleagues say and in their symptomatic behaviour.

Things colleagues say in resisting change

Actually, the title is a misnomer. As every educational developer knows, there are more than 53 ways in which their colleagues resist change and many of them are not very interesting at all. The following list comprises notes from personal contacts (including the threat of litigation) and some secondary sources.

Table 1. What Colleagues Say

- 1 Do it already
- 2 Tried it before but it did not work
- 3 Professional body won't allow it
- 4 Regulations won't allow it
- 5 Isn't this what they tried at...[insert favourite 'scapegoat' university]..?
- 6 Wouldn't get support from the quality assurance people
- 7 Do it when there is a university policy
- 8 Staff are already overloaded – how can you be so insensitive
- 9 We'll do after restructuring/ strategic review/ finances are sorted
- 10 We are a model of good practice already
- 11 Do it only when we get the necessary staff development
- 12 This will need ethical committee approval
- 13 It's just a fad, it will go away
- 14 Can't afford it

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- 15 See how gets on with it first
- 16 To do this would threaten our academic freedom
- 17 Of course we will do it [Passive resistance – yield and then wait]
- 18 I cannot see how it will work if...
- 19 There are health and safety reasons that prevent us from doing this
- 20 The Union must agree to this first
- 21 Students won't support it
- 22 We need more information
- 23 This is a good idea but I am too old – let the new people do it
- 24 Sorry, I am sure it's a good idea but I am having a bad day
- 25 It's OK so long as you do not expect us to work with department/faculty
- 26 Wouldn't this put us out of line with the sector as a whole?
- 27 Not with 'these' students
- 28 It would lead to students not progressing
- 29 We need a committee
- 30 You people at the centre are always telling us what to do. If you did some teaching you would not suggest these things
- 31 - we're too big/small/specialist for this.....
- 32 - fine in theory, but not in practice
- 33 - if it's such a good idea why hasn't it been done before?
- 34 - things are working well, why disturb them
- 35 - we've never done it that way before
- 36 - it's not in the budget, departmental business plan
- 37 We care about our students and you can be sure we'll take care of this matter. [Nothing substantial follows].
- 38 If you take this any further I will contact the vice chancellor/ the union/ my Dean/ my solicitor
- 39 This will not help my promotion
- 40 We will do it when we get some free time
- 41 We will do it when has done their bit...
- 42 We don't do that sort of thing here
- 43 What are you talking about?
- 44 I do research....
- 45 Let's talk about it....and talk about it....and talk about it...and...
- 46 Over my dead body.. I will leave first...
- 47 It's technological determinism.....
- 48 We want proof of concept
- 49 We will do it next year....priorities won't permit this year
- 50 It's too stressful
- 51 We should have been consulted sooner – brought in at the beginning stage rather than at implementation stage
- 52 There is no external support for this
- 53 I want to do it; but only if we can do it my way!
- 54 This is not worth discussion.
- 55 If we do this, we will lose our IPR?
- 56 Do this and we will end up losing our jobs
- 57 The language you are using is offensive– we are not a commercial organisation
- 58 It's not fair to experiment with students

Consider this list. How many have you encountered?

Which one is the most common?

What resistance have you met that is not on the list?

Consider also who is saying it. Your response as an educational developer is likely to differ according to the voice of the resistor. In the change management literature there is often an unspoken assumption that it is the employee rather than the manager who is resistant. Let's take a common one: "We tried it before and it did not work". We can all hear, perhaps, faculty members and maybe even deans saying this and we can respond accordingly. What response do we give, however, when it is the Pro Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching who says it, or the Academic Registrar or Head of Quality?

Indicators of Resistance

It is a sine qua non of academic life to be critical. It is our job, it is what we do and it is what our students learn to do. It is often difficult, therefore, to disentangle the motives that our colleagues might have for being critical of change proposals. Is a critical response based on resistance or simply a reflexive response based on our occupational culture and values? Hultman suggests that there are two types of indicator or symptom of resistance; active and passive.²

Active resistance includes being critical and finding fault, perhaps ridiculing the whole idea. It might include the typical psychodynamics of guilt, blame and shame. A second type of active resistance is the various forms of manipulation, including sabotaging an idea, and might include distorting facts or being deliberately threatening or ambiguous. Consider, for example, a Dean who expresses support for change in one forum only to return to their Faculty and suggest to their academic colleagues that it is something that need not be taken seriously; that it is a passing fad or something that they simply do not do where they are. Thirdly, active resistance may take the form of undermining, of actively working to ensure that the change initiative will fail. Passive resistance can also take several forms. It may include giving verbal agreement to an initiative but

failing to deliver anything. Typically, it may include procrastination or withholding the necessary information or resources to be successful. These indicators of resistance show that resistance is happening but they do not explain the causes.

Reasons for resisting change

In order to be prepared for resistance at any level it is useful to examine the reasons that often lie behind these statements colleagues make and the indicators they manifest. For some students of change management the list can be divided into those statements that refer to personal reasons such as "I am too old for this" and those that are situational – "Not with these students..." In *Leading Change* James O'Toole³ suggests the following, more detailed, common explanations for resistance:

- **Homeostasis:** Stability is the natural order; resistance to change, therefore, is a natural response.
- **Inertia;** it takes considerable force to get a large body to change direction – the cliché analogy is of changing the course of a supertanker.
- **Satisfaction;** most people are satisfied with the status quo in comparison with what an alternative future looks like (or they hanker after a status quo that never really existed; they are nostalgic for a 'golden age' of universities).
- **Lack of 'ripeness';** the necessary preconditions for change have not yet been met.
- **Fear;** we have an innate fear of the unknown: 'better the devil you know..'
- **Self-interest;** change may be good for others or even the organisation as a whole but unless it can be demonstrated that it is good for me I will resist it.
- **Lack of self-confidence;** change threatens one's self esteem. New conditions require us to learn new skills and abilities, even values and

we lack the confidence to engage with new challenges.

- **Future shock;** there is only so much change that we can cope with at any one time. With e-learning; new funding models; restructuring; and implementing PDP all before 2005, I cannot cope with anything else that is new.
- **Futility, Cynicism and Human Nature;** These combine in the view that any proposed change will be cosmetic; that we are all selfish and since change requires a degree of altruism it cannot work and we must suspect the motives of anyone proposing change. "Isn't it the case that Vice Chancellors routinely propose change in order to conceal mistakes and keep people on their toes?"
- **Lack of knowledge;** We do not know how to change or what to change to.
- **Ego;** for O'Toole, this alludes to people in powerful positions having to admit that they have been wrong. Within the context of change in higher education we might be more charitable and allow for rapidly changing external influences. It does raise the question, however, of what those influences are and how many of them our university executives were not able to predict.
- **Collective fantasy;** this is a group response that ignores the direction that reason points to and is based on an inability of organisations to learn from experience. It is linked to *chauvinistic conditioning* which holds that the way we do it is correct and *they* are wrong.
- **Fallacy of the exception;** there is nothing we can learn from others because we are different.
- **Change has no constituency;** this is a Machiavellian notion that the stake that a minority of individuals have in preserving their power is far stronger than the stake that the majority have in bringing about an uncertain alternative. This includes the followers who espouse the notion that the people in powerful

positions have the ability to steer us on the right course and we should not question their leadership.

To this list prepared by James O'Toole we might add

- **Purpose of change not made clear;** change brings uncertainty, confusion and mystery that induce fear.
- **Not involved in planning;** in current 'management speak', this is about 'taking ownership'. We are more likely to be committed to change if we are able to participate fully in the decision-making process.
- **Appeal is based on personal reasons;** personal and institutional loyalty are variable but even the most loyal colleague may come to doubt the need to change if the sole or predominant rationale is based on 'because I say so'.
- **Lack of trust:** a lack of trust, respect and confidence in the proposers of change is often cited as one of the principal causes of resistance.
- **Fear of Failure:** This becomes particularly acute with academic colleagues undergoing change and may be expressed as a fear of embarrassment, loss of status, or the fear of incurring the disapproval of a senior colleague.
- **Excessive pressure;** the scholarly literature on change management is unequivocal when it comes to compulsion. Compulsion often occurs when there is a failure in planning change, in communicating change and when the organisations' leaders are unsure themselves about the change. As Gus Pennington says:

In reality, coercion rarely works as people quickly find covert ways to ensure the change is thwarted or seriously diluted⁴

So what can an educational developer do? Obviously, the opposite of the things identified in the reasons for resisting change cited so far. Clearly, what these represent is a failure to manage change

effectively and properly. For some scholars of change management it is a question of values and beliefs⁵. For example, it is a common belief that the introduction of on-line learning will lead to a reduction in teaching staff. Similarly, the core value of academic freedom is often challenged by the suggestion that there should be some method of quality assuring on-line learning materials. For others there is reference to the innate conservatism of organisational culture and, arguably, a romanticised view of academic life that has probably never existed outside the pages of 'campus novels'. However, we must also look carefully at any expressions of resistance. As Maurer suggests, we must always respect those colleagues who resist change and sometimes join the resistance ourselves⁶. It is common sense that not all change is positive and not all resistance is negative. Looking at the reasons why people resist change we can see that there are times when change is inadvisable; where the preconditions have not been satisfied and where there is no clear articulation of what the outcomes might be. 'Blocking a decision that has good short-term but bad long-term consequences'⁷ might be a good solution. So what can we do to manage change effectively and deal with resistance to change when we need to? These questions will be addressed in the next edition of *Educational Developments*; '53 Interesting Ways of Managing Resistance to Change'.

Stephen Outram is Head of Quality Enhancement at De Montfort University.

¹ See http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/application.asp?app=resources.asp&process=full_record§ion=generic&id=296
Last accessed 21st April 2004

² Ken Hultman, 1998, *Making Change Irresistible: Overcoming resistance to change in your organisation*, Davies-Black Publishing, Palo Alto

³ James O'Toole, 1995, *Leading*

Change: Overcoming the Ideology of Comfort and the Tyranny of Custom, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco

⁴ Professor Gus Pennington op cit

⁵ Hultman, op cit

⁶ Rick Maurer, 1996, *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*, Bard Press, Austin, Texas

⁷ Hultman, op cit page 99

Information for Contributors

The Editorial Committee of Educational Developments welcomes contributions on any aspect of staff and educational development likely to be of interest to readers.

Submission of an article to Educational Developments implies that it has not been published elsewhere and that it is not currently being considered by any other publisher or editor.

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Using the SEDA-PDF to Frame Organisational and Staff Development

Ruth Pilkington, University of Central Lancashire

Introduction

In October 2003, having worked on two consecutive nationally funded projects, I was invited to take over the course leadership of the PG Cert LTHE at a critical point in its development:

- We were due for renewal of SEDA recognition and ILTHE accreditation.
- The programme as a whole was due for periodic review that academic year.
- The programme had acquired a pivotal role supporting learning and teaching within the institution as part of academic, HR and Learning & Teaching Strategy implementation. It provided essential support and training for new academic staff and was to have its role strengthened by becoming an element in successful probationary year completion, through becoming part of a department cost centre structure, and also as part of the institutional drive to ensure all staff had accredited teacher status through either the programme or an equivalent or through ILTHE membership.
- The programme had been experiencing low completion rates. Feedback indicated this was largely attributed to the perceived burden of completing an extensive reflective portfolio as the assessed component of the two module course.
- Finally, academic regulations had recently changed to require three modules for a PG Cert award.

In November 2003 I attended a SEDA Conference and was present at the launch of the new SEDA-PDF. I found myself caught up by the vision of how the proposed PDF could translate into a powerful framework of externally recognised awards supporting staff development initiatives at my institution.

This is the story of how that vision is becoming reality. It may provide a model for how SEDA-PDF can offer staff developers a means of structuring continuous professional development in response to current HE priorities and institutional learning and teaching strategies.

Stage One:

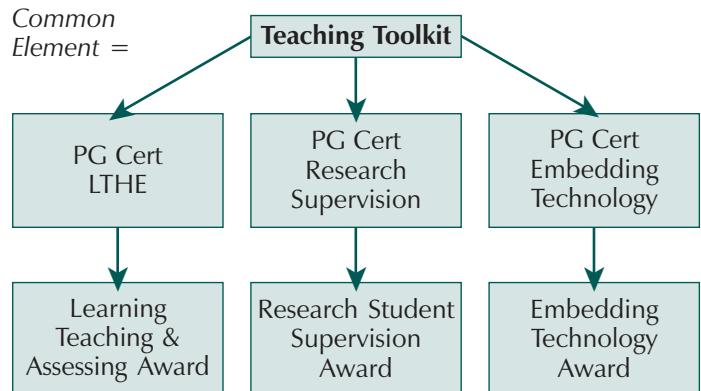
The institution had been piloting a Teaching Toolkit programme of workshops to support the induction of new staff working in teaching, or learning support roles. In addition, a very newly accredited PG Cert Research Student Supervision was in its first year of enrolment. Its purpose was to support staff working on PG research supervisory teams as part of the university high priority research strategy.

In my mind we had the underpinning elements to create at least three programmes mirroring the SEDA-PDF. This would suit the then institutional priorities, and would

have external recognition and status. The institution had a long-standing relationship with SEDA anyway, and the values and common outcomes were very much in tune with the university mission and the various strategic priorities of enhancing student learning, widening participation, diversity, learning, teaching and research excellence. There was also the possibility of supporting those staff working to embed e-learning and distance learning through the PDF too!

At that point I initiated a series of discussions to discuss the ramifications of the new SEDA-PDF alongside our course development work for the PG Cert LTHE.

A preliminary model suggested itself:



As discussions progressed, this model changed and new elements came on board. For example, there was a considerable amount of activity around student support and guidance within the institution. The project leader welcomed an opportunity to collaborate and we felt this would result in another thread using the SEDA PDF. Student Support & Guidance as a further award is currently under development by SEDA.

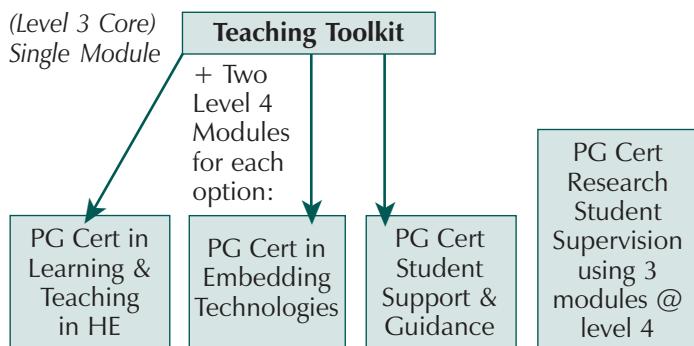
Stage Two:

The revised PG Cert LTHE course adopted the teaching toolkit and created from it a level 3 module. This was supportive and formative in nature and addressed the preliminary training and support needs of any new member of staff working in a teaching or learning support role within the institution. Three assignments focused on front line delivery of learning support activity and reflection on practice, and were strongly situated within the work context. This module could easily be achieved within a probationary year and targeted hourly paid staff, research students undertaking some teaching, as well as new permanent academics and technical, learning, administrative and library support.

The teaching toolkit could be taken as a free-standing

university certificate, alternatively it would form the basis of the PG Cert LTHE, or it could be used as part of an individual's unassessed induction programme when attended simply as a workshop block. Two level four modules, one strongly focused around principles and practice within the lecturing role, and one focused around a project encouraging individual, discipline or generic exploration of a pedagogic issue, were developed to complete the PG Cert LTHE. Assessment on the new course included a series of smaller, focused tasks strongly situated within professional and pedagogic practice, allowing the lecturer to reflect and explore issues to support and enhance his/her developing role. The programme therefore had a clear structure, achievable goals and landmarks and an easily tracked progression through to either an Award of University Certificate or a full postgraduate certificate in Learning & Teaching in HE.

The preliminary model suggested by the SEDA-PDF was revised to encompass a third Student Support and Guidance pathway and to accommodate the Research Supervision strand as an independent route.



As the new PG Cert LTHE structure was clarified and readied for validation, a strategy emerged allowing us to focus our efforts in terms of both SEDA and ILTHE. The institution wished to retain close links with ILTHE in order to retain a national portable accreditation. The new programme also lent itself to the two-tier structure of ILTHE membership; associate membership for teaching toolkit completion and full membership upon completion of the PG Cert LTHE.

As far as the SEDA framework of awards was concerned, it was decided that the most logical first step would be to target institutional recognition in the first place, and then the award in Teaching, Learning & Assessing for the PG Cert LTHE, accompanied by recognition for the PG Cert in Research Student Supervision through the relevant SEDA Award. As a result of a misunderstanding about the focus of the two SEDA awards Supporting Learning and Student Support & Guidance, I missed the early opportunity of gaining recognition for the Teaching Toolkit at the same event, but this is now being pursued alongside awards in Embedding Technologies and Student Support & Guidance, as these courses are now being introduced. The final proposal for the PG Cert CPD Framework has 3 pathways linked to SEDA. It has also become the basis for a Postgraduate Diploma Award. The next step finalised the structure for a flexible

programme of modules and smaller awards which can be combined and built up into an M.Ed.

Stage Three:

The sector is experiencing far-reaching changes. The White Paper and a range of ongoing policies and sectoral trends mean that HE is becoming a very dynamic and complex environment with increasing competition. We can think of current White Paper priorities such as collaborative activity and third leg funding, 'to research or not to research', inclusivity and diversity and widening participation, excellence in teaching, etc. In addition, we have employability issues, skills, work experience, PDP, etc.

These place new burdens on the HE organisation, on its structures, systems, processes and strategies. There have to be new and more flexible ways of working. Teams may no longer focus on an academic discipline, but may work – matrix-like - across the institution and areas of activity. Dissemination of good practice is an urgency, because employees are burdened by accepting and implementing change and adapting to new priorities, so they cannot afford to re-invent the wheel all the time. Culture change is happening across the HE organisation and good, well structured, supportive and pertinent staff development is therefore essential. In addition there are new careers and roles emerging within the most forward-thinking HEIs, and PDP is on the cards for the career-minded.

These issues have fed into a range of initiatives which are currently being implemented, developed, or trialled within my own institution and probably in many others, which reflect staff and institutional development, needs and priorities. Examples might include:

- Leadership Programmes
- Staff mentoring Programmes
- Review of Peer Observation
- Culture change support and staff training activity around priorities such as retention, engagement within schools
- New staff developer roles
- Collaborative activity with employers
- Career Management Training

These initiatives all involve members of staff within HEIs engaging in structured training and staff development which is meant to impact on practice.

The feeling is that these many elements could in each case be enhanced by some sort of reflective task to ensure staff situate all the input and valuable training within the work context, and through reflection, use it to inform their developing practice. Why not add a reflective project or log to enhance a Leadership Programme, for example, or use Action Learning Sets to ensure teams continue beyond the artificial workshop environment? Mentors can learn as much as mentees in mentoring relationships, so would this experience benefit by including a reflective element? Colleagues are increasingly being encouraged to participate in local staff development events. Would they be encouraged if they were required to produce reflective output to disseminate good practice?

To return to the accredited CPD Framework, what emerges then is a range of modules – at level IV because of the nature of the reflection, synthesis, critical review and work-based activity involved, - which would be strengthened by a requirement to inform any assessment tasks by appropriate scholarship, and by the need to reflect on activity within a HEI context that shares the SEDA values in its mission and goals. Each CPD training input could at choice be accredited and reflect an individual's developing career and practice. The outcome would be potentially a very flexible and exciting range of PG Diploma possibilities, which with a little extra thought would be converted into an M.Ed (CPD) through a 3 module project or dissertation (see final diagram).

Reflections on the SEDA Recognition Process

The flexibility of the CPD framework is valuable. It covers a wide range of potential careers and roles in HE. The values and principles of SEDA are in tune with the current ethos and trends in HE but are also enhanced by more specific and operational objectives around individual awards. The cost of the process for recognition requires consideration, especially if an institution is interested in adopting or developing a number of pathways as the SEDA-PDF encourages them to do. The

process of SEDA recognition early on I found unclear and quite difficult. I benefited however from having undertaken the document preparation for ILTHE accreditation previously and I had the strategic referencing documents ready to adapt and fit into a SEDA Framework. The support provided by the more closely managed ILTHE process was lacking in the SEDA approach. I felt there needed to be greater clarity around the institutional document, timings and schedule, roles of the mentor, recogniser, and about the institutional and event management. As the process has become clearer, many of these issues are being resolved. Having said that and in conclusion the actual recognition event was excellent!! It was a discursive, exploratory event, a discussion with informed and experienced peers who were acquainted with similar issues and questions themselves. This made the event extremely reflective and valuable for the participants.

Conclusions

There are precedents within Australia where universities have required academic staff to undertake 'Advanced Lecturing Skills' courses which have been linked to salary increases, although this is possibly an area we should steer clear of? Recent Educational Developments articles

The 9th Annual SEDA Conference

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Tuesday 16th - Wednesday 17th November 2004, Novotel, Birmingham Centre

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Facilitated by David Baume

Monday 15th November 2004 10.30am - 4.00pm, Novotel, Birmingham Centre

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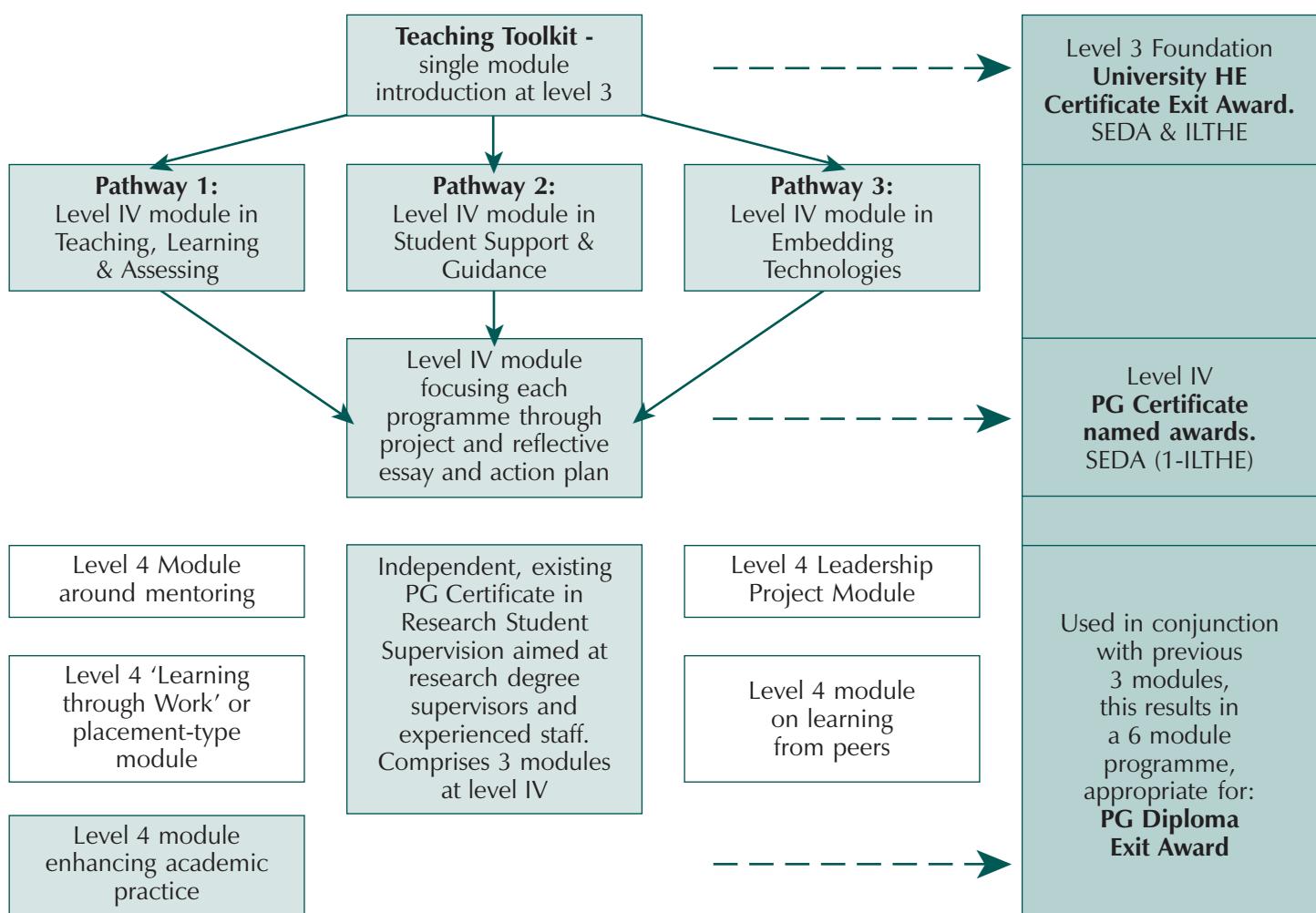
by Jo Tait (Sept 2003), Carol Maynard (March 03) and others show that CPD, staff development in the context of organisational need, and providing progression beyond the basic PG Certificate, ask questions which we do need to address. Within the context of drives towards a new profession and professionalism within the sector, the CPD accredited reflective practitioner is something we are all encouraged to aspire to as being highly desirable and valuable. How and into what form that accreditation can be shaped is as yet unclear, but my feeling is that SEDA does in fact have it right. The new framework can be adapted and adopted to reflect development within a range of roles and through careers, it is up to us as staff developers to determine the institutional shape. A recent survey of institutions engaging in extending their programmes was undertaken by a colleague at Salford. The survey reported on by V.N. Carauna to the North West Regional Course Leaders Group identified only 11 of 21 respondents who were offering PG Diplomas. It seems that whilst many are talking about developing further accredited staff development, not many are implementing it yet. This may mean we are breaking new

ground. For me, the idea of a gradually emerging, staged creation of a potential M.ED (CPD) is one that is attractive. It means current and actual initiatives might have the opportunity to really become part of an embedded career development plan for individuals and of a supported, auditable HR strategy for the organisation. It makes sense, and as an M.Ed, it has the distinction and distinctiveness that might still be seen as attractive to an increasingly highly qualified employee body. I certainly see it as a programme that may engage me for a number of years. I also see it as a means of ensuring that concepts of communities of practice, building culture change, and organisational learning can perhaps be realised.

Carol Maynard, 'Seda's new PDF – the timing seems right' in *Educational Developments* Issue 4.1 March, 2003
 Jo Tait, 'Why SEDA PDF?' in *Educational Developments* Issue 4.3, Sept 2003.

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Making the most of SEDA-PDF - A Framework for CPD Accreditation



It Ain't What You Say, it's the Way That You Say it: an Analysis of the Language of Educational Development

Dr Shân Wareing FSEDA, Royal Holloway University of London

If you had to identify the single most important thing that educational developers do, would communication with the wider community of higher education staff be a contender? My guess is most people would say 'yes'.

Half-joking comments made by colleagues about the jargon in educational development encouraged me to delve a little further into what kinds of language are associated with educational development. I presented a small group of volunteers with two texts. One text was an extract from a university learning and teaching strategy, printed off the web. The other was an extract from an article published in the ILTHE's journal *Active Learning in Higher Education*. I used texts rather than spoken language for practical purposes, but the differences between speech and writing (as discussed by Biber 1988 and Hughes 1996, amongst others) mean that my conclusions can only partially be applied to spoken language. The eleven volunteers were drawn from across the science/arts/humanities range, and included a postgraduate student, newly appointed and established lecturing staff, a professor, and one member of academic related and one member of student support staff. I choose the texts as ones which communicate about educational development issues, and whose target audiences could be assumed to include those in an academic community with an interest in learning and teaching, a description which covered my group of respondents. (I'll consider later whether institutional learning and teaching strategies are supposed to be read by the academic community). I asked my readers to

mark the texts for words and phrases which they didn't understand, which they found confusing, or which they didn't like. I also asked them whether they considered the texts were typical of their expectations of an educational development text.

Their responses suggested what many of us must suspect from experience, that language which is widely used in the texts associated with educational development does not communicate well with the academic community. My texts used expressions which were not understood, and a discourse which was disliked. If expressions which are commonplace in the discourse of educational development are not consistently understood in the academic community, then communication simply does not take place. There is no exchange of information, or at least, of the information which it was the writer's intention to communicate. That the discourse is disliked may be a more serious matter than that it is not understood. How do readers respond to a discourse they dislike? Often by ceasing to read, or by projecting their dislike of the discourse onto the concepts and intention of the writing. In the production of educational development texts, we may be actively building barriers between ourselves and the community which it is our job to influence.

From my respondents' comments, the aspects of the texts which they identified as difficult to understand, or as features they disliked were:

- 1) Use of specialist terms without appropriate explanation; e.g. *experiential learning; reflective activities; learning strategies; reusable learning resources*.

- 2) Abstraction; that is, describing learning and teaching as processes and products in which teachers and students aren't mentioned. For example, "checklists and questioning approaches [...] can foster mere compliance with externally set demands [rather] than genuine self-questioning and appraisal"; "new developments and staff training will be introduced to support the adoption of new web tools to support e-Learning and the creation and capture of content to allow re-use within a virtual learning environment". Arguably, abstraction is a requirement for the discussion of complex phenomena, and is a characteristic of academic language. However, this doesn't mean people who teach like to read about teaching and learning as abstract processes which they have been written out of.
- 3) The discourse of marketing and management; for example, terms such as *new knowledge economy; stakeholders; monitoring learning*, and descriptions of learning and teaching as processes and products. The discourse associated with educational development is partly disliked because it locates higher education in an environment driven by the concerns of management and marketing (i.e. concerns for profit, for efficiency, for results identified because they can be measured rather than because they are valued). Even when there are no explicit indicators of this discourse in a text, there are what are interpreted as indirect markers, such as a focus on processes and results, abstracted from the direct

- experiences of teachers and students; see abstraction above.
- 4) Implicit assumptions not shared by the readers. Texts depend on shared implicit assumptions for coherence. Where these are not shared, the text seems illogical or incoherent to the reader, as explored by Christie (2000) in terms of cross-gender misunderstandings.
 - 5) Habitual collocations, referred to by one of my respondents as 'formulae' and by another as 'mantras'; that is, words that are often used together, so that a writer will use one automatically if they have already used the other. Examples include *checks and balances, robust mechanisms, skills framework, knowledge economy, content capture and maintaining excellence*.
 - 6) Low editorial standards; these included long sentences, poor grammar and punctuation, lack of coherence between subheadings, lack of relationship between sub-headings and the main text, ambiguity, and what might be termed 'poor rhetoric', where the features of language which can be used for emphasis (such as repetition) are used randomly, with no care given to the aesthetic dimension of the writing.

My colleagues viewed these texts as having been written without the intention to communicate with them as readers. They deduced from this that they were not the intended audience, and my interpretation of their reactions is that the texts made them feel as if there was an attempt to diminish their experience and their worldview.

The experience of asking colleagues to consider these texts was salutary. If this is the way the wider academic community feels about educational development texts, then we are failing to communicate, and in fact, are driving a wedge between educational developers and the academic community through using our language. Instead of

progressively informing colleagues of the values and evidence of educational development, and encouraging engagement with its principles, we may be having the opposite effect each time we speak, or press 'print'.

However, perhaps these texts were not in fact typical educational development texts, in which case, the community of educational development might be innocent of the worst of these charges. The learning and teaching strategy certainly may have been the output of some corporate committee with its focus on the requirements of the funding council, without an educational developer ever going near it. The journal article was from the first issue of Active Learning, and perhaps as such not representative of later papers. However, even making this allowance, educational development is not absolved. My readers were almost entirely in consensus that the texts were representative of educational development texts. None said, 'Wait a moment, educational development texts are much more accessible and 'simpatico' than this'. So even if to the eye of another educational developer these texts were a-typical in some respects, my respondents associated texts like these with educational development.

One reader did not think the learning and teaching strategy was a typical educational development text, but a 'management-strategy-jargon thing', and educational developers may agree. But I don't think this lets us off the hook either. Shouldn't learning and teaching strategies be educational development texts and reflect those values? And shouldn't they be documents which have the academic community as a significant target readership? After all, who does the teaching in our universities? Shouldn't academic staff want to read learning and teaching strategies? Shouldn't their departments want to discuss them? What's gone wrong if this isn't the case? Even if the funding council needs documents written in the

discourse of corporate management, isn't the learning and teaching strategy important enough to be edited for internal communication and discussion?

What are the implications for our practice? It's my view that communication is a core element of the work of educational development. The evidence of this small study has reinforced my intuition that our communication practices are problematic. Indeed, texts of which I was previously tolerant, because I understood them and because the ideology was acceptable or invisible to me, I now find troubling. Are there different ways of writing, and indeed talking, about educational development which we should cultivate and promote? Certainly, I am now more critical of texts that I encounter in the course of my work, and more aware of the need to examine my own language as I prepare course handbooks and papers for circulation amongst colleagues.

Communication is not a transparent process; there is not a one-to-one relationship between words and concepts as there would be if each time you used a word, it directed the listener or reader unambiguously to the concept you had in mind (see Singh 2004 for a straightforward discussion of this fundamental linguistic principle). Language is inherently ambiguous and, once written or uttered, communicates information other than the originator intended. And it is far from easy to find out from our readers and listeners what has been understood from our attempts at communication. Furthermore, words and phrases cannot escape the associations of where they have been used before and who has used them. Their effect on the reader relates to the identity and politics of the speakers and writers who have used them in the past (Birch 1996).

Academic disciplines have their own codes as we know (Becher and Trowler 2001), designed to enable communication which deals with abstract concepts, to allow a level of precision in the discussion of shared

concepts, and to permit fine grading of attitude towards the relative strength of a claim. Academic codes also ID speakers and writers, allowing insiders to detect the exact branch of a discipline or school of thought the speaker belongs to, and have a gatekeeper function, intentionally or unintentionally keeping the uninitiated out (discussed in Becher and Trowler 2001 pp104-130).

The educational development community is currently engaged in a debate about whether educational development is a discipline in its own right (Macdonald 2002, 2003, Stefani 2003, Rowland 2004). The arguments for a discipline of educational development include the existence of an extensive and growing literature, of peer-reviewed journals, of networks of people engaged in conferences, seminars and other activities, and of the learning and teaching programmes throughout the UK, validated within academic frameworks and developed and delivered by educational developers. The arguments against include that educational developers come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, and do not necessarily share methodological approaches, or refer to the same texts as intrinsic to their practice. This debate still has its course to run. However, the argument 'for' might unfortunately include the perception by those in the wider academic community that our use of language is both distinctive (i.e. allowing readers to say 'that looks like an educational development text') and opaque. This surely is a feature of an academic discipline we do not wish to share (at least not in texts such as the ones discussed here, which are apparently aimed at the community of academic staff, rather than at the specialist community of educational developers). Our role is arguably different from that of staff in other academic disciplines; it is not just to talk to one another, but to talk across disciplines to all staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning. As members of a discipline in the process of defining itself, perhaps we

as educational developers need to particularly consider our communication practices.

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Book Reviews

A Guide To Staff and Educational Development

Peter Kahn and David Baume

London: Kogan Page, 2003, ISBN 0-7494-3881-9
Paperback, 262 pages, £22.50

This is a great book. I started flicking through this the way you do when you look at an edited collection and I found myself drawn in time and time again to the text. Of course, I recognise a lot of the names of the chapter authors and I felt I understood many of the key issues, but I actually found it difficult to put down because the authors reframe a number of key concepts with which I am familiar and throw new light upon established questions and issues.

Just about every chapter has something to offer, even to an old hand like me, so it is invidious to pick out individual chapters for comment, but I will do so anyway in order to concentrate on what I regard as the most personally helpful chapters, recognising that the other chapters are equally useful.

For anyone about to organise staff or educational training sessions Diana Kelly's chapter on 'Planning and Running Events' is an excellent primer, since she takes you through all the pragmatics that are necessary for success. Others (including myself) have done this elsewhere, but nowhere as succinctly as here. Don't try to organise your first event without consulting this chapter!

I also really liked Neill Thew's honest and thought-provoking chapter entitled 'Personal and Professional Development: Strategies for Coping and for Growth'. I had to stop reading half way through one of the chapters to undertake one of the tasks he gave readers, and I found it a very helpful exercise in evaluating my own personal achievements and goals. There are a number of activities he recommends that I intend to build into my personal practice.

In terms of setting the scene for educational development, both the editorial and Lorraine Stefani's introductory chapter were apposite and thoughtful, providing a context in which the work of educational developers takes place. For some, 'educational developer' has not always been a complimentary term (more rarely now I believe than in previous years), so these chapters help to unpack the professional character of the role and to make a case for its wide recognition.

Moving on as many of us aim to do from general staff and educational development to a wider stage, Liz Shrives' and Chris Bond's chapter on 'Consultancy in Educational Development' clearly identifies how consultancy differs from everyday educational development practice by working towards more strategic and influential approaches, and this chapter provides some useful pointers on how to take this forward.

Similarly, Rachel Segal's chapter on 'Working on Educational Development Projects' will be invaluable both to colleagues who already have established FDTL (and other) projects and those who are further developing this work and, indeed, aiming for the establishment of CETLs. Rachel proposes approaches that move away from the short-termism that unfortunately characterises much activity using 'soft' money towards embedded and integrated development.

For those who are aiming to place their projects within a national context, Diana Eastcott and Neill Thew guide us in 'Working creatively with national agendas' through the minefield of Funding Council directives and national priorities in a chapter that is both grounded and clear-sighted.

As ever, John Cowan's personal account of 'Learning from Experience' provides insights not only into the topic itself, but also into the character of one of educational development's great gurus.

Reading through the book one might think that one had exhausted the value of the text before getting to the appendix 'Further Sources of Information for Staff and Educational Developers' - by Bland Tomkinson - and the Glossary. This Appendix is really valuable because, as well as providing references to a range of useful texts organised by subject, he provides us with useful critiques of the books, journals, websites and other resources themselves. The Glossary is up to date and comprehensive.

Educational development is an enormous subject which has multiple meanings and a variety of diverse approaches encompassed within it. This book will be really valuable both to people just starting out in this domain and also those who have been immersed in it for decades.

Sally Brown FSEDA

Learning Through Storytelling in Higher Education: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning

Janice McDrury and Maxine Alterio

London and Sterling VA: Kogan Page 2003.
ISBN 0794403844. pp. 198. £19.99.

First published in 2002 in New Zealand, by The Dunmore Press, this book contributes to the still growing number of attempts to systematise narrative approaches to learning. It sets out to demonstrate how: 'Formalised storytelling . . . captures everyday moments and turns them into learning opportunities' (p. 131). In their review section, the authors draw overtly on a range of broadly constructivist thinkers, from L. S. Vygotsky to Jerome Bruner, and emphasise, in particular, the recent literature of reflective practice. Explicitly mirroring Jenny Moon's 'Map of Learning' (1999), they propose and

expound a five-step model of Story: 'Finding', 'Telling', 'Expanding', 'Processing', and 'Reconstructing'. In the second half of the book (Chapters 5-10), while sensibly warning of the dangers of over-using the storytelling technique, they provide an abundance of practical suggestions for individual and workshop activities; and in the closing chapters offer considerations of ethics, assessment, and modes of feedback.

McDrury and Alterio have valuable observations to make at every stage: from how to identify a potential 'story', to warnings about monitoring listeners' responses or maintaining the teller's right to ownership. They make clear that it is crucial to set the activity within formal structures, to turn the telling from an expressive (even cathartic) moment, into part of a larger learning process. Three of their points about the nature of storytelling itself seem particularly worth highlighting here. One is perspective. In suggesting how to help learners move towards understanding, the authors place point-of-view at the centre of their practice. In telling stories, in the educational context, learners gain perspectives on their own experience, and of others within their story. Additionally, in a learning group, the listeners can assist by clarifying the many possible viewpoints, and help to bring to prominence unnoticed features of the situation. Empathy, ambiguity, alternative ways of focusing, all enhance understanding, and create opportunities for positive change. A second point, on which the authors rightly place considerable weight, is voice. They insist that the teller - even if recounting an incident that has happened to someone else - has to have a foothold in the story. If someone is to make use of the stories for learning, he or she has to narrate, in effect, in the first-person. The third point, though it remains undeveloped, is 'the unspoken' (p. 84): the silences and gaps in stories, the stories that remain unsaid. Taken all together, for teachers new to the area, these are potentially among the most productive parts of the book.

In other ways, however, the book roused some anxieties: in particular, in that the five-step model itself seems underpinned by a somewhat narrow, mechanistic, theory of communication. Apart from the exceptions above, the book has little to say about the complexities of narrative: matters of language, metaphor, genre, convention, formula, and emphasis. While McDrury and Alterio suggest that 'the shape and form of stories can be examined' (p. 110), they give little indication of the extent to which 'shape and form' themselves carry meaning, and no advice about how teachers might help others to access these dimensions. 'Story' in itself, as narratologists such as Gérard Genette, Seymour Chatman, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Katherine Young, Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires, and Richard Kearney emphasise, is always informed by the 'discourse' - the way the story is told - its deviations, hesitations and repetitions; its unconscious shaping; the way it is coloured by cultural tradition (e.g. the 'hero' story; the 'Cinderella' narrative); its pace, pitch and rhetoric; how its audience affects it; how long each part takes to tell; how the story begins and ends. Lakoff and Johnson, or

those, like Lissa Paul, in the tradition of feminist pedagogy, demonstrate how a narrative can be changed beyond recognition by transforming its dominant metaphors. It is surprising, then, that none of these theorists are mentioned in the bibliography.

At this point, taking up the book's invitation for readers to bring their own stories into the dialogue, we, as reviewers, feel bound to introduce our own position: we come from backgrounds of English and Cultural Studies, as well as from Education (and, declaring an interest, Ben Knights has explored such areas in his own book, *The Listening Reader*, 1995). On this basis, we think it a great pity that the authors have not availed themselves of the rich resources of literature and literary criticism, as examples and as investigations of stories in action. Despite the occasional reference to creative artists (for instance, to one of the most subtle of American storytellers, Eudora Welty), in this book, narrative and language come across as largely instrumental. In these educational contexts, so this book implies, a story generally moves towards greater clarification: a message is extracted and carried off (in what Louise Rosenblatt called an 'efferent' reading).

Teachers here might well infer that, once the student has picked out which key story to tell, and been through the stages, everything will become clear. Even a brief gesture towards the wealth of nineteenth-century fiction, for example, could have offered a vivid demonstration, in contrast, of the way that '[r]evealing emotional aspects and valuing them as integral to experience enriches storytelling processes' (p. 41). Characters at the crisis points of their stories, in so many classic novels, engage readers actively in what *Learning through Storytelling* rather baldly asserts: in moments that show feeling as 'one of the two major ways in which we make judgements about the world, the other being reasoning (thinking)' (p. 41). Acknowledging a few such instances, from supreme storytellers and from the numerous critical discussions they have inspired, might have helped convey, in ways that the curiously thin educational examples here do not, that the telling of a story is always rich with nuance - subtle, complex, open to debate, intense revision and endless reinterpretation. Furthermore, such fictional models, with their larger social contexts, remind readers, in ways that this book overlooks, that people are often trapped in structures to which the most appropriate response may be political: an act of individual learning may not always be sufficient. Instead, the model of narrative implied by a number of the case-studies here resembles, rather, the nineteenth-century didactic tract, with an optimistic exit-point, where the edified listeners will henceforth modify their behaviour.

The question of style goes further, into the mode of the book itself. To anyone who has participated in one of Maxine Alterio's workshops, and experienced the vivacity of her practice in action, this book will probably come as something of a disappointment. In their autobiographical introduction, the writers claim to be 'passionate' (p. 12)

about their subject, and, throughout, insist on the importance of emotion within storytelling. Sadly, this passion does not come through in the impersonal, expository style of the central part of the book. Perhaps, caught in the requirements of having to formalise their work, McDrury and Alterio have chosen to sacrifice excitement to academic sobriety. The more personal voices they allow themselves in the framing reflective chapters, offer a glimpse of what could have been a more innovative, livelier account.

A final word of caution. Despite the title, McDrury and Alterio are not talking about the whole spectrum of higher education. Their subject is continuing professional development in teacher education, health and social

care; and the conditions they describe (numbers in groups, classroom space, generous timetabling, mentoring opportunities) seem, at times, remote from the day-to-day experience of many teachers in other disciplines. However, the enterprise of the book is welcome, and there is much here of generic interest. For practitioners looking for support in making productive use of what might otherwise remain as inconsequential anecdote, this book may prove very helpful. In its clear recommendations, it may also encourage those less confident about reflective-based learning and teaching to try out and develop fresh approaches.

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Teaching Large Groups: Touring the Learning and Teaching Web Sites

Graham Alsop, Kingston University and **Lorraine Stefani FSEDA**, University of Auckland

Since at least Plato's time there have been anecdotes about how room layout, circles, horseshoes and rows (with a lecturer at the front) can affect learning. Yet how little we have learned or progressed. In the UK now lecture sizes can range from 50 to 800, turning what used to be a relatively intimate experience into one that can be alienating for the student and daunting for the lecturer. Stagecraft, good administration, signposting for learning outside of the lecture, and tricks for interaction in poorly designed rooms have become essential. Contrast this with the style of the 'dry' lecturer reading closely from their notes and reciting a difficult argument. This article offers a tour of web sites that offer advice on how to lecture or teach when faced with large groups and keep the audience both on track and as engaged as possible, both within and beyond the room. It is a multicultural journey with stops in the UK, Australia, Canada and the United States of America. Rarely was a site found that asked what the students thought of the experience (if they are out there please let us know!) We have been reliant on Google for our searches and any omissions of sites are our fault.

Please do let us know of any more - these can be added to the online version of this article.

From the UK (and Canada!)
Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD)
Teaching tips - handouts, breaks and activities
<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/teachingnews/tips.html>

OCSLD has long been the location of good resources to support the development of learning, teaching and assessment. This teaching tips page focuses on large classes with extracts from one of their 'Teaching More Students' publications and Newsletters all offering useful advice. However, it also provides a link to a piece of streaming video of Graham Gibbs (The Open University, UK) presenting a short piece on Lecturing to Large Groups. He offers an incisive reflection on the problems and strategies that can be used to improve learning in and beyond large lectures, recognizing the significant barriers that the room presents and the potential problems of setting up poor learning through such events. With a cup of coffee, biscuit and 15 minutes to spare it is well worth a watch! The video is held at Dalhousie University in Canada.

From the United States of America
Pennsylvania State University
Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
Forum on Large Classes
<http://www.psu.edu/dept/celt/largeclass/forum.shtml>

Although some of the links are out of date, a variety of useful resources can be found here. Much of the information is built from both staff and students' experiences of teaching large classes. Students are given the opportunity to take staff teaching their 'large class' to lunch. Staff teaching large classes are also invited to lunch together. The conversations between staff and students are shared by email to all local teachers of large classes and staff luncheons summarized for the web. The ideas are added to a growing Frequently Asked Questions area. This discursive and open approach to creating a useful resource brings with it confidence in the tips and ideas being useful, tried and tested. The FAQ is well organized with sub-sections covering: Active Learning, Assignments, Attendance, Planning, Exams, Feedback, Note taking, Resources, Student Participation, and Technology.

In addition there is a brief list of

relevant publications and access to a select Bibliography for Teaching Large Classes. There is gold dust in the brief list of publications that link to old editions of their newsletters. For example, see "Teaching Large Classes Well: Solutions from your Peers".

From Canada
University of Western Ontario
Teaching Large Classes
<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/tlc/>

This is a very good website particularly for staff new to teaching in higher education. The authors highlight that the purpose of the site is "to get large class teachers in whatever discipline talking to one another, and learning from one another, forging a closer community with a common cause: to make learning in large classes as effective, productive and enjoyable as possible."

This is a heartening starting point because as we know there is no simple protocol or prescription for teaching in large classes. This website has 9 easily accessible sections to browse through. It is a simple no-nonsense, no frills site. It addresses the question "Why are we teaching large classes anyway?" While the given response to this question barely hides the author's cynicism regarding the pedagogical correctness of teaching large classes, it is probably very helpful for staff new to the scenario of having to handle classes of up to 400 students, to recognise that they are not alone in questioning the efficacy of this. And besides, that is precisely what we want new staff to do – to reflect on the impact of their teaching on student learning.

A major section of this web-site comprises Allan Gedalf's Green Guide: Teaching Large Classes. The Green Guides are reproduced with permission from the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, which is similar in role to SEDA in the UK and HERDSA in Australasia. The Green Guide can of course be downloaded to become a resource-on-hand. It covers some excellent material on Classroom

Strategies and Behaviours, Interactive Methods in the Classroom, Team Teaching and Suggestions for Further Reading. What the Green Guide does not cover is the use of ICT for teaching large classes. However, the web-site does cover this to some extent within a section entitled Best Practices, which provides 'Quick links' to using overheads, presentation software (which refers primarily to Powerpoint), using simulations and demonstrations and online testing (mainly setting up practice tests for formative assessment). Other issues covered in the web-site include a Powerpoint Primer giving basic advice, an Ask an Expert section and a section on Presentation Tips.

This site gives a good overview of some of the key issues relating to preparing to teach large classes. Without doubt the best aspects of it are the access to the Green Guide on Teaching Large Classes, its simplicity in terms of accessibility, and the section entitled Suggestions for Further Reading which gives an extensive list of good reference material. But they do not give any post 1996 references; some of the earlier ones may not address current issues arising from the constantly changing nature of the student population. We would have no hesitation in highlighting this site in a short introductory course on teaching in higher education, or as a further reading resource in a postgraduate professional development programme on learning and teaching in higher education.

From Australia
Teaching and Educational Development Institute
University of Queensland
<http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/largeclasses/>

One of the better sites on Teaching Large Classes is that funded by the Australian University Teaching Committee (AUTC), the Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) based at the University of Queensland.

The two main purposes of the website are

1. To serve as a resource for academics and course managers involved in the teaching and or management of large classes and
2. To serve as a record of the project's activities.

For staff looking for inspiration, the website has four major quick links taking the reader to Resources, Large Class Teaching Guidelines, Case Studies and a Bulletin Board.

Taking the first 3 of these links in turn: the Resources section allows access to a range of files which address different issues relating to Large Class Teaching such as, "What's Different About Large Classes?", "Student Performance in Large Classes", "Teaching and Assessment in Large Classes" and several others. In addition there is a PDF file devoted entirely to an extensive list of references.

The 'Large Class Teaching Guidelines' section is divided into four parts: Planning and Teaching, Planning and Conducting Assessment; Administration and Management and Tutoring and Demonstrating. These guidelines are derived from a vast range of related research and education literature, information to responses from a survey of over 40 lecturers and summaries of discussion on large classes from a workshop relating to the TEDI project. The guidelines are short, coherent points of advice on all aspects of teaching, assessment, management, etc of large classes. The reader may want to explore further and research other materials but one would look far and wide for an encouraging and supportive resource which is so easily accessible.

The Case Studies Section is superb with access to a range of PDF files on a great variety of topics such as: Flexible Assessment in a Business Course; Reflections on Large Class Teaching in the Social Sciences; The Use of Feedback in the Organisation of a Large Class, etc. All of the Case Studies provide a short abstract, then a mere click of the mouse lets

you download the full text of the Case Study.

The site has clearly been well funded and is the result of a Teaching Development project. One of the final sections of it is a Report on a Survey of Large Class Teaching in Australia. There is a sense of this site being very much a 'live' project. In fact it took us a long time to review this particular site because we kept on getting waylaid reading more of the case studies and dipping into sections of the resources.

This site could be recommended for staff new to Teaching Large Classes, more experienced staff, to encourage reflection and comparison with their own practice

and for educational developers seeking materials to use to support staff in their disciplines. It would be an excellent resource to highlight for staff engaging in professional development programmes relating to learning and teaching in higher education.

What seems to be refreshing is that the problems seem to be so similar across the cultures: the administration of large groups, increasing feedback, and ensuring interaction. Furthermore, the solutions offered by all seem equally helpful as the age of the solutions also seems not to matter. If the problems remain the same, then why do we continually meet them? Is this a reflection of the mismatch of

expectations of staff being largely (but not exclusively) research trained first and learning to teach second, or a wider reflection of a 'human condition', or an indication of the constant lack of access to sufficient teachers to support the ever growing student population?

Whatever the reasons these sites may help...

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Active Artefacts: Representing our Knowledge of Learning and Teaching

Dr. Rhona Sharpe FSEDA, Oxford Brookes University, **Helen Beetham**, Independent Consultant and **Dr. Andrew Ravenscroft**, London Metropolitan University

Introduction

As teaching in higher education becomes more evidence based, there is a drive to integrate research with practice, leaving developers with the challenge of how to support staff to make greater use of available theoretical concepts and research evidence. Bridging this gap between research, theory and practice is now an issue for educational developers in areas such as:

- Postgraduate accredited programmes in teaching in higher education require that participants demonstrate their understanding of relevant theory and adopt a scholarly approach to their teaching. How can we ensure that this process supports the development of effective practice? (e.g. Sharpe, 2004).
- Funded programmes of innovation, dissemination and change have highlighted the need to produce deliverables which translate the knowledge acquired during the life of the project into a shareable and usable form (e.g. Beetham, 2001).
- In our eagerness to be academically credible, and to more thoroughly understand our own work, educational developers are becoming more scholarly (e.g. Eggins & Macdonald, 2003). How can we ensure that our developing understanding of teaching, learning and assessment is made available in a form which can be used by practitioners?
- In the field of e-learning where there is pressure for

rapid changes in response to emerging research, there is discussion on how we develop a more suitable and sophisticated discourse that is shared by researchers and practitioners, and which supports and promotes educational change (e.g. Ravenscroft, 2004).

The focus of this discussion then is on how research and practice can be represented in such a way that is useful to practitioners in changing their practice. This seems to be especially important for new areas of research where it is important for results to be published quickly or where practitioners are being asked to make changes based on established research or theory. We ask if there are ways we can create more sophisticated representations of knowledge which will be useful to practitioners or indeed whether representations will ever be adequate on their own to elicit change. As a contribution to this discussion, this paper reports on data collected from a workshop at the 8th Annual SEDA conference (Sharpe, Beetham & Ravenscroft, 2003). In this workshop practitioners generated and shared ideas for creating representations of knowledge and a possible framework was presented for using these to support practitioners to change their practice.

Examples of representations of knowledge

"It is a tragedy that so much of the energy on learning research in universities has had so little influence on the practitioner. With some powerful exceptions the two

communities seem to work in isolation. This is no longer good enough. A much greater sharing of information and ideas is essential if the research is to be of practical value and practitioner behaviour is to be better informed."

(Sloman, 2002, p. viii)

The problem Martyn Sloman presents so forcefully in the preface to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's publication 'How do people learn?' has largely been brought about because the representations of knowledge used in academia have tended to be difficult for practitioners to access. The ones we are probably most familiar with are text based representations presented as scholarly papers in journals, books and

conferences. It may be that these have little impact because the terms used by educational researchers may be unfamiliar to practitioners – and in any case are often contradictory and contested - while the ways in which practitioners discuss their own work may be context dependent and untheorised. This problem has been recognised and educational developers have been busily interpreting much of the educational literature into more usable formats or devising dissemination strategies for funded projects which emphasise use as well as awareness (see for example TQEF Project Briefing on Dissemination). Table 1 lists some examples of text based representations from the teaching and learning in higher education field.

Table 1: Examples of text based representations of knowledge.

Type of representation	Example (available to view on the web)
Books, papers and articles	Published in journals such as Active Learning in Higher Education or Teaching in Higher Education. ¹
Case studies	ASTER (assisting small group teaching through electronic resources) published 33 case studies from their TLTP project. ²
Guides	e-Learning series of booklets produced by LTSN Generic Centre comprises guides for senior managers, heads of department, teachers, learning technologists and support staff. ³
Principles	Seven principles of effective teaching: a practical lens for evaluating online courses. ⁴ (Graham et al, 2001)
Tools and toolkits	Evaluation Cookbook produced for the Learning and Teaching Dissemination Initiative. ⁵ (Harvey, 1998)
Summaries	ERIC digests ⁶ are short reports on topics of current interest in education providing both an overview and links to more detail.
Databases	The 'No Significant Difference Phenomenon' ⁷ provides links to research studies investigating technology based education.
Bibliographies	Annotated bibliography of research into the teaching and learning of the physical sciences at the higher education level provided by the LTSN Physical Sciences subject centre. ⁸

In the examples in Table 1, the aim has been to represent knowledge in an accessible and usable way. Accessibility has been improved for instance by removing the use of specialist jargon, e.g. the publisher's web pages for the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education's own journal *Active Learning in Higher Education* quotes a reader as saying 'It is refreshing to see both a high practically orientated content in an educational journal, and material that can be easily understood by those without training in Eduspeak.'¹. In addition, resources might be made accessible by appealing directly to different audiences such as the LTSN e-Learning Guides which have been written for different groups of higher

education staff. Of course the resources are also made more accessible by being freely available at the click of a button.

To move the discussion beyond text based representations and accepted formats such as case studies or guides, the 27 workshop participants at the SEDA conference were encouraged to think of other forms by which knowledge and practice can be shared. They generated a wide range of examples of representations including imagery, narrative, face to face discussions, multimedia and performance. Their full responses have been loosely collected into similar types in Table 2 overleaf.

Table 2: Further examples of representations generated by workshop participants

Visual & imagery Diagrams Charts Timelines Film, video & DVD Posters Images & photographs Pictures, drawings & paintings Visual maps, mind maps & spider diagrams T-shirts 3-D models Storyboards Displays	Dialogues & stories Discussions Electronic conversations Mentoring conversations Observation of classes Groupings of experts and learners Expert witness Expert panels Peer discussion Stories Narratives Discipline based case studies Pen portraits Action research projects	Presentational Seminar presentations Workshop outlines and materials Groups' explanations OHP inventively used Audio Lecture
Interactive Self-guided field trail Play, puzzles & games Websites CD-ROMs Quizzes Computer models Experiments Tasks Simulations Expert systems	Informational Database Notice boards Summaries Guide – essential 10 points Hypertext guide Advance organiser Patterns and pattern languages	Performance Role play Street theatre Game shows Improvisation Dramatic scenario Puppets Poems Song

With such a broad range of representations to choose from, the obvious question for developers is whether some forms are more effective than others in promoting change.

There has certainly been a move towards using representations that are drawn from the real life experiences of other practitioners, and emphasising the context within which these stories were created. Ottewill, Shepherd and Fill (2002) noted the proliferation in the number of case studies being collected and conducted a comprehensive survey of the case studies available at the time. The collection of cases studies from the ASTER project, explains that 'each case study report contains information on the teaching context, motivations for change, and the C&IT introduced and their effects on both teaching and learning.'². Similarly the Evaluation Cookbook includes not just the information on evaluation methodologies, but also 'serving suggestions' of evaluation methods demonstrated in practice alongside guidance for the practitioner on conducting their own evaluation study³. So what seems to be important in these representations is that they are credible, true to life and context specific.

Enhancing representations of knowledge to support changing practice

Even with such a full and creative list of representations, and the moves to contextualise knowledge for specific groups or situations, it is still a big jump from knowledge

(however represented) to changed or improved practice. Studies which have investigated how practitioners actually adopt new approaches show that the picture is more complex than making a choice between available types of representations. Beetham (2002) found that people who had actually changed their practice reported that a crucial turning point was often the opportunity to witness *the real thing, in the real context, with the real people*, in other words, to actually watch a new approach or tool in action. This might be in the context of a teaching observation or a lunchtime workshop in which a colleague described and illustrated what they had done. When pressed about the kinds of representation that had actually had an impact on their own practice, participants in this study were most likely to cite narratives from colleagues about *what they did, what went wrong, and how they survived*. There was also a strong tendency for these practitioners' use of knowledge resources to be mediated by another person, such as a mentor, staff developer or learning technology specialist. This study then, found that, at least in the early stages of adopting a new approach, practice is most effectively supported by richly contextualised representations, mediated by expert users. As practitioners become more expert themselves, their focus changes to one of 'peer supported experimentation'. In both cases, however, effective use of representations was mediated by collaborative activities, whether between a mentor and mentee or between mutually-supporting colleagues. Other studies which have asked academic staff what they found useful in professional development, have confirmed the

importance of colleagues and collaborative strategies (Ballantyne, Bain & Packer, 1999; Ferman, 2002). This suggests that representations of practice need to become 'living' artefacts, enhanced by their participation in collaborative activities. For example, expert practitioners in Beetham's (2002) study expressed a

preference for representations they could interact with – comment on, adapt, annotate, use in their own work, or contribute to. Some examples of active representations, in which elements of the development process are captured, are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Examples of active representations of knowledge

Type of representation	Example
Papers + responses	The Journal of Interactive Media in Education (JIME) ¹ adopts an open peer review process with papers linked to online discussion forums. Final papers are published with summaries of their review comments. http://www-jime.open.ac.uk/
Case studies + discussion	The Online Tutoring Skills (OTiS) Project hosted an online conference in May 2000 where case studies were presented in advance and delegates had the opportunity to discuss them with authors. The papers and transcripts of discussions were edited into an e-book. http://otis.scotcit.ac.uk/
Editable resources	The Scottish electronic Staff Development Library (SeSDL) hosts a library of digital staff development resources to which users can both submit their own and download other's granules. http://www.sesdl.scotcit.ac.uk/
Interactive toolkits	The Evaluation of Learning and Media Toolkit is an interactive system for lecturers to analyse their teaching methods and mediums for course delivery. http://www.ltss.bris.ac.uk/jcalt/
Group created bibliographies	In the Oxford Brookes Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education, the first online activity asks participants to post a review of a single educational publication which has influenced their practice. The postings are edited into a series of linked web pages creating a bibliography for the course.
Activities using databases	In the UKeU/OU course Learning in the Connected Economy, participants submit completed 'companion' activities to a course database as well as select and analyse other activities retrieved from the database.

Just as representations can be enhanced by activities of this kind, we also know that communities themselves need collaborative tasks and goals if they are to develop. This suggests that collaborative resource development can be a highly effective way of developing shared practice. Another way of expressing this is through the observation that projects have to have outcomes (concrete representations), but that it is often the process that is most valuable. In attempting to assess the value of collections of case studies to changing practice, Ottewill, Shepherd and Fill (2002) confirmed that it was relatively easy to identify the benefits for the creators, but more problematic to evaluate their worth to their intended audience.

Using a combination of workshop responses and the authors' own research experience, we argue that these active representations bring knowledge alive by mediating social and cultural communicative practice. The examples in Table 3 illustrate how they do this through a number of their features that help practitioners to bridge the theory-practice gap:

1. **Ownership.** Most of us follow constructivist principles that we need to create our own knowledge representations, or at least to create our own interpretations or personal meaning of the knowledge base. The enhanced representations allow for such personal contributions such as questioning presenters at the OTiS conference, contributing to course bibliographies or databases. The Learning in the Connected Economy course has used the idea of 'companion' activities in response to the intensiveness of running collaborative, constructivist tasks with online groups of learners. The companion activities use electronic databases to support learners to exchange information, and contribute to and develop ownership of a resource (Weller, Pegler & Mason, 2003).
2. **Reflection and review.** Representations need to be available when practitioners have time and opportunity to think about their own practice. For novice practitioners this will often mean structured time, perhaps in staff development sessions,

workshops and appraisals. However, even highly motivated and expert practitioners need time to engage with representations, prompts to review and reflect on their own practice, and help in translating between the theoretical and practical aspects of the situation.

3. **Contingency.** Representations that offer themselves as 'complete', for example reports, case studies, theoretical articles, are inherently less usable than representations that offer 'room' for the practitioner. Examples of this would be toolkits, reflective pro-formas, or real-life dialogues with other practitioners, which support practice through a form of structured dialogue.
4. **Dynamism.** Enhanced representations are dynamic and frequently changing rather than static and fixed. This is because they are constantly being added to by new users, by peer review etc. The value of dynamism is particularly relevant to practice areas such as e-learning where new tools and approaches are constantly available and representations need to adapt quickly to remain useful. Examples of dynamic representations include the draft documents in JIME, collaborative resources, evolving ontologies and knowledge trees.
5. **Support for peer learning.** The importance of networks for sharing information cannot be overstated. Representations of practice do not just encode 'what to do' in a particular situation but are important repositories for the community's values and culture. If our conclusions about enhanced representations are correct, the need is not simply to distil 'the best examples' of represented practice for future use, but to establish peer processes whereby representations are constantly created, shared and tested.

Effective active representations therefore not only help individual practitioners to bridge the theory-practice gap but also support processes of peer learning. What is most noticeable about these examples is that they blur the distinction between creation and use. Traditional representations of knowledge are created by the author(s) or designer(s) and then published in a final and fixed state, to be accessed by readers and users. Active representations allow for the possibility of collaborative creation and use, offering facilities for commentary and feedback, peer review and refinement in the light of experience.

However, there are challenges in establishing and sustaining these processes. In the academic community it is *authorship* that is valued and rewarded, while in the commercial community it is *product design*. Peer review, collaborative projects and open source software are examples of movements that undercut these prevailing values. However, with time at an absolute premium, it is often difficult to identify the pay-off for individuals who undertake the work of annotating, collating, synthesising, commenting, evaluating, re-contextualising, and re-developing.

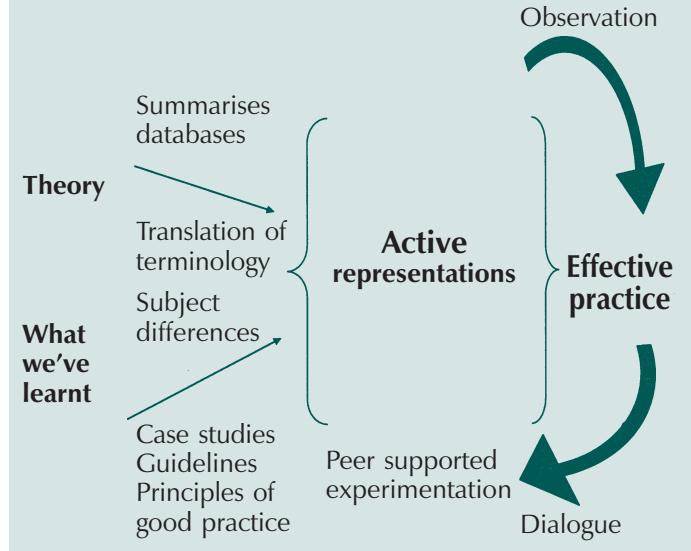
We can make use of external incentives such as

professional accreditation, teaching promotions and small-scale project funding. There are also intrinsic incentives such as the provision of easy-to-use pro-formas as a trade-off against provision of feedback and comment. The JIME journal uses an excellent example of peer review which gives intrinsic reward for participation: commentators are willing to devote time to considering another author's work in the belief that not only will this enhance their own understanding (and prestige), but that they will benefit from the same peer feedback system in their turn. Even without peer review, an organic relationship can be facilitated between authors, developers, users and the artefacts themselves, as in annotated collations of materials such as SeSDL, the Learning in the Connected Economy database or the PCTHE course bibliography.

A framework to support the process of learning from representations of knowledge

Traditionally the types of process outlined above have been possible only by inserting representations into training and development programmes, facilitated by specialist staff. Many of the representations in Table 2 reflect this. However, we believe that new information and communication technologies make it possible to develop and use representations in new ways, which blur the distinction between representations as finished artefacts, and representing as a collaborative activity. Active representations of the kind outlined in Table 3 can support a process of peer supported experimentation within the context of online communities of practice. It is important to say that in focusing on representations within this framework, we do not wish to deny the continuing importance of specialist staff to the process of development, especially for novices to a particular approach, but rather to note the power of well designed representations to fulfil many of the requirements of effective professional development in a fast-changing context.

Fig 3: A framework to support the process of learning from representations of knowledge



Conclusions

We have argued that representations of knowledge need to be accessible, credible and contextualised if they are to be used by practitioners. We have also argued that in order for knowledge to have impact on practice, practitioners need to engage with it through a process of peer- or mentor- supported experimentation. And finally we have argued that this should lead to practitioners feeding back into the representations themselves through active enhancements such as comment, peer review and collaborative development. We have offered some instances of new information and communication technologies being used to support enhanced representations, coupled with communities of shared practice. At present the opportunities and incentives to engage in this kind of representational community are limited. We look forward to a time when they will be more widespread among learning practitioners.

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¹ Details of the journal Active Learning in Higher Education are available from the Sage Publications site at <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journal.aspx?pid=105463&sc=1>

² The ASTER case studies are available on the project's website at http://cti-psyc.york.ac.uk/aster/resources/case_studies/case_studies.html

³ The e-Learning series of booklets are available to download from the Generic Centre's site at <http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/index.asp?id=19519>

⁴ This often cited paper was first published in The Technology Source and is available from <http://ts.mivu.org/default.asp?show=article&id=839>

⁵ The Evaluation Cookbook can be viewed online or downloaded in full from <http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltdi/cookbook/contents.html>

⁶ The ERIC digests are available from <http://www.ericdigests.org/>

⁷ The No Significant Difference Database can be searched at <http://teleeducation.nb.ca/nosignificantdifference/index.cfm>

⁸ The annotated bibliography of research into the teaching and learning of the physical sciences provided by the LTSN Physical Sciences subject centre is available from <http://dbweb.liv.ac.uk/ltsnpsc/AB/AB-html.html>

⁹ The Journal of Interactive Media in Education available from <http://www-jime.open.ac.uk>

Embedding Project Findings in an Institutional Context

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Introduction

The Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) was set up by HEFCE and DENI in 1995. It was based on the idea that the Teaching Quality Assessments (TQA) would identify good practice in the subject departments and then this would be disseminated to others who were not so good. One of the main aims of FDTL was to "secure the widest possible involvement in institutions in the take up and implementation of good practice". (Baume et al 2002). Further rounds of FDTL funding have been granted and it has been subsumed within the HEFCE's Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) which has allocated ring fenced funding to institutions in reward for creating, and then for the second round updating, their institutional teaching and learning strategies. In all these documents there has been an expressed expectation of the dissemination of projects and their findings. The evaluation of these funds have not indicated that dissemination has been overly successful. Seen from the HEFCE perspective, dissemination is an entirely valuable and necessary activity, as it allows the fruits of the expenditure which has been focused in a small number of institutions to benefit a much larger number. However, in the context of the individual institution which has its TQEF allocation, is it so essential that dissemination of good practice is central to the activities that are carried out? If you have been awarded £250,000 over a three-year period, there are plenty of funds and time to allocate to the function of dissemination. If you have been awarded £5000 through the Institutional Teaching and Learning Strategy Funding, or £1000 as an ILTHE Small Grant, or £2500 from an LTSN small project, all to be

spent within one to two years, is it reasonable to expect time and energy to be diverted to dissemination? Interestingly, those who award small pots of money to achieve small projects often comment favourably on the extent of the progress, and dissemination carried out by the winners of these awards in comparison to the much larger grants.

However, the focus of this discussion is not about the value for money aspect of project funding but rather on how we can embed the findings from small projects across their institution. Educational developers are often responsible for bringing about change in their institution, but they are also responsible for TQEF funds within their institution. As TQEF money has been awarded to small projects, there has been the hope and expectation that dissemination across the institution would happen. However dissemination "is not a unitary activity" (Fincher, 2000). It cannot be achieved by the project holder alone, there has to be a recipient and that recipient is the party who, largely, controls the success of dissemination. Within an institution the rationale for funding on a project basis could be transparency – those with enthusiasm, best ideas etc. are 'selected' to receive funding. The quid pro quo is that they share their learning with others, in the department / community / institution / sector. In terms of Learning Organisation Theory these are the first stage activities designed as 'localised exploitation'. The second stage of the process is 'internal integration' where many of the project ideas might join up and filter throughout the University (Ford et al. 1996).

Context of these findings and discussion

The M1/M69 Group of Educational Developers meet three times a year to discuss the world of educational developments and share their practices etc. Once a year their meeting is to provide staff development for themselves, rather than thinking of their constituents. As a comparatively new entrant to the field of institutional educational development, I was looking for guidance about how to use project finding (TQEF) effectively as I was in the throes of setting up small projects across my institution. So I suggested we needed something about how we all go about trying to embed project findings across our institutions. As usual, since I made the suggestion, I got to facilitate a workshop about 'Embedding Project Findings across the University'. In other words how to get the most impact in educational terms from limited expenditure and to quote Graham Gibbs "to get the biggest bang for my bucks".

What findings do we want to embed?

At a SEDA conference I worked with colleagues Paul Martin and Rachel Segal from the National Co-ordination Team (NCT), helping educational developers to think about FDTL projects and what they would like to get from them in their institutional context. We considered what the projects had to offer to others and came up with three different types of benefit that could be shared. These we called *content*, *methodology* and *project management*.

Content: is it a project about assessing group work, or about peer assessment, or learning online, or employability? The project team

finds its dissemination audience amongst those who are interested in some or all aspects of that specific topic. At the NCT, support is provided to projects on a themed basis, e.g. assessment, employability, widening participation. However, any of these themes encompass a wide range of different aspects. So targeting dissemination has to be specific as the audience may only have an interest in a very small part of the overall project.

Methodology: of the project for data collection for example. Projects could collect information by way of case studies, focus groups, questionnaires, interviews and so on. These methodologies could therefore become the focus of sharing good practice – how do you get people to submit case studies? Payment, hand-holding, competition and so on. So this generates an audience for the types of data collection carried out. Despite hearing from each subject community “ah but it is different for us because we are” I am convinced that the difference is probably only to the tune of not more than 10%. All the rest is shared practice. This means that dissemination can readily happen across disciplinary boundaries. It also means that there is an opportunity for the content to be discussed and shared in the course of sharing the project methodology.

Project management: this aspect is particularly relevant for large projects for example FDTL, Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) but there are numerous opportunities for sharing practice within the project management methodology –and that is where the NCT is able to bring substantial expertise to help, as they are exposed to many projects and can observe the different methods adopted to fulfil the same obligations. For example a project Steering Group meeting can be a boring turgid afternoon when the project director reports on what has happened in the last six months and looks forward to the next, or it can be an interactive lively workshop

which genuinely steers the project. Communication among project teams is often an area where projects struggle but some projects solve that problem and they have something to disseminate in addition to the main findings of their project.

It is important therefore, when thinking about embedding project findings across the institution, we are clear what we aim to embed, and are aware of other good practice which may be shared as a by-product.

Why share good practice?

In parallel to deciding what it is you want to embed, it is helpful to consider why you want to embed project findings, or as it is more often described “share good practice”. This assumes that projects generate good practice, but for the purposes of this article we will assume that they generally do. (Although as an aside, in feedback at the SEDA workshop, one participant requested the opportunity to “discuss and learn from failure”. In the context of FDTL and TLTP, there are some excellent examples of where the project failed to achieve what it set out to achieve initially, but achieved some other really useful end. In one case, this was to prove that a specific IT solution would not work in 90% of situations.)

The M1/M69 group discussion around “Why do we want to share good practice” elicited some interesting responses. In preparing for the session I had reflected on the rationale and drawn up a list of reasons. It can be categorised

For the cynics:

- getting the laggards engaged
- showing up sections of the community
- giving people the opportunity to boast
- because you are expected to

For the enthusiasts:

- raising standards across the institution
- encouraging action of a specific kind

- discouraging reinvention of the wheel
- to give people the opportunity to get a reward for their innovative work

For the pragmatists:

- to encourage reflection on practice and provoke people into thinking about their teaching and learning methods.
- to transfer skills, attributes, knowledge, methodologies
- to get new activities introduced across the University.

However on asking the group to consider the question, they came up with a wide range of different suggestions. The answers reflect the “bigger picture” and the theoretical rather than the pragmatic perspective. The list included:

- Making things better for our students
- Making things less stressful for staff
- Providing rays of hope in adverse conditions
- Practising what we preach
- Providing support to enthusiasts
- Creating a research base for ourselves and our academic community
- Much teaching and learning practice is carried out in private, therefore sharing with a group has to be a conscious planned and public activity to be able to engage others
- We won't get the money if we don't indicate an intention to share good practice.

In effect, the two lists match quite closely, in that the first is the operational level, whilst the second reflects a strategic level of thinking. Raising standards across the Institution is the same as making things better for our students; discouraging reinvention of the wheel and providing rays of hope in adverse conditions are both about making things less stressful for our staff.

In comparison to dissemination which is, by its very nature, a very public activity, much teaching and learning practice is done in private

(i.e. between staff and students). Therefore for the project staff to engage in dissemination they may have to step outside their comfort zone and have their teaching and learning activities held up to scrutiny by their colleagues and peers. Subject research is one thing, pedagogic research another. And anyway, they were only carrying out a little experiment for themselves.

Dissemination

Educational development is about change, so how do we make it happen? Looking at the literature about dissemination in large, very expensive teaching development projects (e.g. FDTL) very specific conditions need to be in place for dissemination to succeed e.g. 'End users have to be engaged from the beginning'. This has an impact on the way the small projects are set up at the outset.

Literature about dissemination (NCT 1999, Fincher 2000, King 2000, Baume et al 2002) shows that for a dissemination strategy to be successful there are 4 main elements to be considered:

- a) the source: its perceived competence and credibility
- b) the content: its relevance for the users and its cost-effectiveness
- c) the medium: its flexibility and accessibility
- d) the user: their readiness to change and preferred dissemination media and level of the contextual information needed. (Gravestock 2002)

Keeping these requirements for successful dissemination in mind, consider the barriers to embedding project findings that the group arrived at:

- There is a lack of **convincing** evidence to put before others
- The method of delivery - staff development events are optional, therefore the people who should come often do not.
- The facilitator prevents dissemination because of the way sessions are set up and delivered
- The lack of time available to the recipients

- The lack of openness of others maybe because they see no need for change since "what I am doing is OK".

With this knowledge, what methods can we adopt to make embedding project findings across our institutions successful?

The proposals put forward by the group included:

- Internal papers: generating an opportunity for project findings to be published internally; as a precursor and encouragement to staff new to pedagogical exploration to publish more openly.
- Developing a Community of Practice: linking projects and their staff together to get mutual support can achieve this. It is particularly useful when a project finds itself isolated in its home department. Another method is linking projects to local champions, for example teaching and learning co-ordinators in departments or faculties.
- Running a 'Forum for student learning' with a specially invited audience consisting of PVC(T), Heads of School, Learning and Teaching Co-ordinators. This allows individuals to promote their activities not just to peers but to senior management. Evidence from FDTL shows that it is frequently management issues which prevent the introduction of new and innovative methods of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Creating staff development sessions which are not designed as "tell situations" but rather as round table discussions where the emphasis is on sharing rather than presenting. Informality creates the opportunities for others to construct their own knowledge from what they are hearing. It is unlikely that colleagues will copy good practice exactly but it may be adapted. Indeed it may take an input of three or four ideas before the recipient makes his or her own construction of a
- change to try or to implement.
- Devising opportunities in which project teams or holders can air their preliminary findings and seek feedback and guidance from others who may be working in the same or different areas. These opportunities may come in the form of consultation on preliminary findings in a narrower setting with only two or three people. But the by-product of this consultation is that the colleagues are much more likely to be engaged subsequently as they have already contributed to the project.
- Holding regular networking meetings for all project holders so that they can explore methodology issues as well as share their content. Regular reporting to the budget holder, even a very short account helps to keep a project on track. This has been particularly successful in the context of the ILTHE Small Grants where recipients have to report on a quarterly basis.
- In the setting up of a project, encouraging collaboration or cross-disciplinary teams. Be willing to award more money to projects that are prepared to disseminate widely (and then ensure they do it).
- Good practice could be put on a University website as a just in time and accessible resource.
- Never forget how much can be achieved by enthusiasts who are rewarded with small pots of money, especially when it is for something they would probably have done anyway.

Project findings can be embedded across an institution but certain conditions have to be present to facilitate the sharing of good practice. These include:

- Recipients being open to new practices.
- A management structure which values innovation and explicit good practice.
- Development of 'situated learning' when a culture of innovation exists.
- Enough evidence to convince

people that it is a good practice that is being discussed.

- An element of trust with University Management to allow projects to go ahead without a burden of reporting procedures.

But to go back to an early definition of dissemination about scattering seeds – maybe some fall on stony ground too, so we should not beat ourselves up when not everything is successful. Remember, we learn from the failures too.

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Heads of e-Learning Forum (HeLF) – a Strategic Voice for e-Learning from UK HEIs.

Dr Paul Brett, University of Wolverhampton

This brief article gives an overview of a relatively new group formed to represent the increasingly important educational interests of e-Learning with the University sector - Heads of e-Learning Forum (HeLF).

E-Learning is on the agenda of all UK Universities, whether this is being implemented as fully distance e-Learning or as blended e-Learning further supporting the study of on-campus learners. Last summer saw the release of the DfES e-Learning strategy, followed by the HEFCE e-Learning strategy and of course the £62 million of government backing for the UK e-University, which is now being re-thought.

Following a day's seminar on aspects of e-Learning in Preston last May, three Heads of e-Learning, Paul Brett, Susannah Quinsee and Richard Barber, later joined by Kathy Wiles (then based in the LTSN Generic Centre) realised that there was no association or forum which existed to enable us to share ideas on implementing e-Learning strategies or guiding institutional developments in e-Learning, or on good practice, concerns, ideas etc. - specifically from the position of a 'Head' of e-Learning

within an HEI. There are, of course, many organisations which are concerned either with educational development or with general issues in e-Learning but none which facilitated the unique perspective of a Head of e-Learning.

In September 2003, The University of Wolverhampton began the task of trying to find the Head of e-Learning in each HEI through e-mails and phone calls. Thus far we have a nomination of 'Head' of e-Learning from some 90 UK Universities, which in itself demonstrates the prominence being afforded e-Learning within HEIs. We are continuing to search out members from the remaining HEIs.

HeLF held its inaugural meeting at the Science Park at the University of Wolverhampton on December 8th with some 45 Heads of e-Learning assembled for the first time. We were addressed by Diana Laurillard who spoke on *The value of a forum for Heads of e-Learning* and outlined how she would welcome such a body to assist with and to advise on strategic matters related to e-Learning. We were also joined by Liz Franco from HEFCE who

presented and received feedback on the first draft of the HEFCE e-Learning strategy. Colleagues who wish to view these two presentations can do so at <http://asp2.wlv.ac.uk/celt/elearningforum.asp?ses=&pl=false>

The inaugural meeting was also a chance for members to decide how they wished to see HeLF operate and how we might best be a significant force in shaping the nature of e-Learning in HEIs. This resulted in agreement on the following three main functions for HeLF: as an advisory, consultative and strategic organisation aimed at promoting an integrated approach to excellence in e-Learning, as follows.

(i) HeLF as an advisory body for national and governmental organisations on issues relating to e-Learning. HeLF intends to be proactive in soliciting responses from such bodies and promoting the views of its membership. Members felt that there was a need for a body that represented the particular e-Learning interests of Universities in a coherent manner.

(ii) HeLF as a body with knowledge to share on the strategic implications of developing e-Learning. This includes defining what it is to be a Head of e-Learning and links with other organisations working in the area of e-Learning.

(iii) Implementation of e-Learning - the operation of strategy in practice. Sharing of best practice on e-Learning strategies and implementation is a key function of HeLF. Information, resources and evaluations of e-Learning strategies will be shared among institutions.

HeLF has a thriving discussion list with access by one member per institution and has been sharing our thoughts on issues such as HEFCE's e-Learning strategy, electronic submission of student work, and of course the recent dramatic developments at UK-eU.

The forum is still in its infancy, but judging from the rising importance of e-Learning for the support of learning in HEIs and the positive response from colleagues, HeLF will be able to positively help to shape the future of e-Learning in the UK.

Please get in contact with Dr Paul Brett P.Brett@wlv.ac.uk if you think your institution doesn't yet have a representative on HeLF. The HeLF web site can be accessed at <http://asp2.wlv.ac.uk/celt/elearningforum.asp?ses=&pl=false>

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Being an External Evaluator: My Experience of Evaluating EFFECTS

Julie Hall, University of Surrey Roehampton

In Spring 2003 Glynis Cousin's key note on Evaluation at the SEDA Conference shone an illuminating light on work I had completed some weeks earlier as the final external evaluator of the TLTP3 funded EFFECTS Project (see Educational Developments 4.4.). As I listened to Glynis two key sentences resonated with my recent experience:

'Evaluation has an over rigorous vocabulary; it's too earnest in its attempt to prove that it is research. Thus a low priority is given to the art and craft of it.'

This article aims to explore my experience of its art and craft by looking at some of the lessons I learnt in taking on the task as a novice evaluator. I will begin by exploring some of the literature which helped shape my methodology before describing some of the specific issues and

questions I encountered on my journey through the evolution of EFFECTS. I also share some of the issues raised by it and provide suggestions for others who might find themselves being asked to take on the evaluation of projects. I agree with Professor Murray Saunders at Lancaster University when he says of evaluations, 'making them do-able does not mean making them easy. Evaluations are usually complex.' (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/edres/ltsn-eval/index.htm>)

How to begin?

In many ways, to be an external evaluator at the final phase of a project may be unattractive for an educational developer. Some have argued that the production of a summative document has limited value once the project is over (Deepwell and Cousins, Educational Developments 3:1). However the

EFFECTS project was populated with educational developers keen to continue the project in other forms. It was important for them and for me that, even though this was the final evaluation, it should be developmental and would inform the life of the Project after its conclusion. This had a profound influence on my approach to the evaluation.

On the periphery of the community of practice

With this in mind, the key question for me was which way round should I approach the theoretical underpinnings to my work. Should I first find a theoretical approach which would help frame the task or should I explore the setting I was being asked to evaluate and then find resonances in theory which I could then take to the stakeholders to share understanding? My

inclination was to take the second option – it fitted with my experience as an educational developer and the developmental nature of the project. However at this early stage, I needed more than a gut reaction. I also needed to clarify exactly what was being asked of me as an external evaluator.

I was indeed a novice and needed to find out more about evaluation practice. To use Wenger's (1999) terms I needed to be inducted into the community of practice of evaluators.

How do evaluators start?

I found the LTSN evaluation site (www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/projects/edres/ltsn-eval/index.htm) a helpful first step and particularly Saunders (2000) work on RUFDATA to clarify the exact nature of the evaluation task. His aim in producing the RUFDATA framework had been to develop evaluation capacity and a measure of coherence for the British Council's evaluation work. He recognises that evaluators seldom take on the evaluation task in isolation, that they are usually managers, teachers or project workers, doing this as one part of their role. They are members of a range of communities, some which share the same language and artefacts as evaluators, some which overlap and some which don't. This was certainly the case for me. As an educational developer, the discourse of 'impact', 'audience', 'stakeholder' and 'value' was familiar. What I needed was greater understanding of the practice of doing evaluation.

Saunders relates his work to that of Patton (1998) in exploring the process of evaluation and in particular the journey through goal clarification, discussions about audience and agency and so on; discussions that can be a change-inducing experience.

He goes on to argue 'that to enable evaluation activity to get off the ground, novice evaluators should be inducted into the community of practice of a group of evaluators. The practices characterising the work of evaluators [like any

occupation] are shaped by the knowledge resources they produce and reference. In that it is not always possible for novice evaluators to be actively socialised into a community of practice, we may have to use reifications of embodied knowledge to help. RUFDATA is such a system.' (Sanders 2000)

Using RUFDATA

Saunders' process is made up of reflexive questioning during which key procedural dimensions of an evaluation are addressed leading to an accelerated induction to key aspects of evaluation design. In this way it allows initial dialogue on the aims and scope of the evaluation and enables initial planning to occur and an evaluation to 'get off the ground'. RUFDATA is the acronym given to questions which consolidate this reflexive process.

This 'reification' was useful to me as the novice evaluator in the way in which processes and practices were consolidated into an 'artefact' or enabling tool with which I could tap into the knowledge from within the community.

RUFDATA stands for the following elements:

- Reasons and purposes**
- Uses**
- Focus**
- Data and evidence**
- Audience**
- Timing**
- Agency**

Using this framework I was able to clarify details of the evaluation on two levels:

1. the production of a position paper on the approach the evaluation would adopt
2. clarification of the specific activity to be evaluated

The RUFDATA framework, in this way helped me as the novice evaluator in capturing and representing in a systematic way, that which an experienced evaluator might consider perhaps tacitly in planning the task. 'In other words it accesses their embodied knowledge of considerations useful in starting up an evaluation' (Saunders 2000).

Interesting conversations or evaluation data?

A meeting with the project team, using RUFDATA, quickly focused the evaluation. This initial meeting was key in hearing what they wanted from the evaluation, the extent to which they wanted it to be participatory and developmental, the timescale of the project and the resources available for me to review (being EFFECTS there were a lot!).

It also allowed me to gain an insight into the team and to begin to hear what had excited and frustrated them about the project. This led me to explore models of evaluation which would be appropriate. Here was a complex project with a wide spectrum of stakeholders, a highly inclusive approach and a history of active review and development.

The team wanted to hear participants' 'stories' and I was more than happy to adopt a narrative approach to the collection of data. However I needed a framework.

The framework I adopted came partly from Robert Stake's (1967) countenance model which recognises a range of different levels of data. Some people provided their own narrative evaluations of their experiences of EFFECTS, other data came from responses to formal questionnaires, other groups provided statistical data. Stakes' matrix provided a useful model for analysing this range of formal and informal data.

The work of Caroline Kreber and Paula Brook (2001) on impact evaluation also provided a useful model for exploring the extent of the impact of the EFFECTS project – very important for the team in deciding how the gains of EFFECTS should live on.

Timing can be a factor, as one could spend a huge amount of time researching the literature available for a methodology suitable to the collection and analysis of the data, sharing this and clarifying this with the stakeholders and then finding little time to actually collect the data itself. My time scale was short. I had to pull together the methodological

framework and produce a clear project plan for the team.

This included:

- evaluation aims
- evaluation questions
- key audiences
- methodological approach
- action required, people involved, timescales, and approximate hours

Hearing the stories

The bulk of the evaluation centred around face to face interviews with people involved at a range of different levels. Very quickly it became clear that our initial sample frame was too wide as it became increasingly difficult to arrange interviews in time with some of the groups we had hoped to speak to. Nonetheless, the majority of those approached were happy to reflect upon their experiences, prompted by the broad open questions which framed the evaluation. I found this a fascinating experience, particularly when echoes began to appear both from across the EFFECTS sample, across a comparative sample and from within the project's former evaluations. There is a kind of 'eureka' moment when people start saying things that you have heard others say previously.

Recording these conversations was a huge task and something I underestimated in my planning. Whole transcripts are of course key when using narrative accounts but can take many hours to write up and analyse. It can also be quite tricky to 'manage' these conversations without directing the content or interfering with the story. Some people just did not say the things that others had said, did not emphasise points which others had felt to be key or provided little evidence of the echoes I mentioned earlier. It can be tempting to interject with a prompt question to 'tidy up' emerging themes but of course one must resist.

Pulling it together

After four months most of the data was collected and emerging themes had been shared with the project team. I found this stage to be very

exciting though very time consuming. I had a huge folder of data, reams of paper from EFFECTS and my own notes from things I had read. The pulling together of the different levels of data became a fascinating patchwork of experiences and issues. What helped me here were my regular visits to the initial RUFDATA questions, ensuring my work would meet the original aims. Early in this process it became clear that the project team and I had perhaps been over optimistic in the number of questions this piece of evaluation might address and this was shared with the team before the final report.

The aim of this piece has been to introduce some of the challenges of being a novice evaluator but also some of the references and techniques which helped me develop and learn along my journey. I conclude with some suggestions for colleagues being asked for the first time to undertake an evaluation.

- Use RUFDATA to ensure that you and the evaluands are perfectly clear about the aims of the evaluation, the people involved and timescales.
- Once the RUFDATA process is completed share the draft evaluation strategy with the stakeholders.
- At this stage calculate approximate hours to each task to aid your budgeting.
- Anticipate all costs where possible.
- Invite feedback and discussion where possible throughout the evaluation.
- Agree dates for different stages of the exercise.
- Contextualise the project by reviewing other documentation linked to the initiative – formative evaluations, web sites etc.
- Ask yourself what form the evaluation should take. Review a range of evaluation models and consider which would be most appropriate for this work i.e. are you to be the evaluator as detective, as critical friend, as joker, as judge?
- Review other people's approaches to evaluating similar initiatives, you may be able to use someone else's model.

- If you use a narrative approach as I did, build in time for transcribing people's words.
- When writing up the evaluation, return to your original plan to ensure you are meeting the aims and objectives. If not, share this with the team before the final report.

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